

Jacobitism, Coastal Policing, and Fiscal-Military Reform in England after the Glorious Revolution, 1689–1702

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Abstract Customs activity during the 1690s has mainly been studied from a fiscal-military perspective that attributes administrative growth and bureaucratic efficiency to the rise of fiscal necessities in the wake of the Nine Years' War. This article challenges that view with a focus on the one truly momentous change of the Customs during the 1690s: the establishment of a preventive coastal police. Changes in the Customs were occasioned not primarily by fiscal concerns but resulted from the government's preoccupation with Jacobitism and the successful lobbying of Parliament by the wool interest. As the politics of the wool ban before 1689 demonstrate, coastal policing was a losing bargain in fiscal terms and mainly reflected the interests of certain sections of the merchant community. Fiscal pressures alone do not, therefore, explain the fundamental reform of the Customs in the wake of the Glorious Revolution. The beginnings of systematic coastal policing are instead linked to the rise of Parliament and anti-Jacobite precautions of William III's government. The article offers a new, coherent picture of such changes and calls into question the validity of a central assumption about the rise of the fiscal-military state in Britain after the Glorious Revolution, suggesting a more complicated explanation for fiscal reforms.

The English and Welsh Customs administration during the 1690s was in transformation. Staff numbers were steadily increasing, new regulations governed port business, and systematic coastal policing became part of Customs responsibilities. Rather than relating simply to internal institutional developments, this transformation is intricately linked to broader trends of that decade. The reign of Mary II and William III witnessed profound and lasting changes in the nature of the British state. Such changes are typically identified in relation to constitutional developments, European power politics, and fiscal-military policies.¹ The manner of the pair's succession tipped the constitution toward a balanced course with

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¹ J. H. Plumb, *The Growth of Political Stability in England, 1675–1725* (London, 1967); Henry Horwitz, *Parliament, Policy and Politics in the Reign of William III* (Manchester, 1977); Craig Rose, *England in the 1690s: Revolution, Religion and War* (Oxford, 1999); Julian Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty? England, 1689–1727* (Oxford, 2000).

the ascension of Parliament and the birth of party politics. The revolution settlement, moreover, forced Britain to commit to continued engagement in continental and colonial theaters of war and European dynastic politics. The costs of such commitment in turn provoked domestic changes that are generally taken to signal the rise of the fiscal-military state, such as increasing volumes of economic legislation, newly formed or re-formed bodies of financial and fiscal organization, and a growing civil and military administration. The revenue departments of Customs and Excise are usually considered to be at the heart of such changes. The Excise is in fact regarded as a model case of administrative reform firmly tending toward fiscal efficiency and modern bureaucracy. The Customs, on the other hand, has generally been seen to fall short of such standards both in terms of revenue returns and administrative efficiency.² Yet the overall trend of its institutional development, with rising numbers of staff, a newly formed preventive service for coastal policing, and growing dimensions of fiscal duties, was still considered to contribute to the fiscal-military overhaul of English government structures, its capability for European commitment, and the related trend toward monarchical accountability.³

While the transformation of the Customs is itself undisputed, its significance and consequences are not. In a challenge to the fiscal-military interpretation of the Customs championed by John Brewer and partly reiterated by William Ashworth, a growing body of literature has recently debated the alleged inefficiency of the Customs relative to the Excise. Julian Hoppit and Spike Sweeting have argued that revenue returns from the Customs have been systematically underestimated.⁴ Moreover, various case studies demonstrate that the Customs administration was much less corrupt than formerly assumed and that administrative reforms indeed worked toward a more competent and accountable bureaucratic apparatus. Additionally, Patrick Walsh has shown that general assumptions about the alleged inefficiency of the English and Welsh Customs, even if correct, are not necessarily valid for Ireland, where the Customs continued to be the most profitable fiscal branch.⁵ Such work evidently contributes to a rehabilitation of the Customs and its performance in the fiscal apparatus. Perhaps ironically, however, such revaluations of

² Patrick K. O'Brien, "The Political Economy of British Taxation, 1660–1815," *Economic History Review* 41, no. 1 (1988): 1–32; John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (London, 1989); Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies, 1680–1780* (New York, 1998), 158–200; William Ashworth, *Customs and Excise: Trade, Production, and Consumption in England, 1640–1845* (Oxford, 2003), 117–205.

³ Brewer, *Sinews of Power*, 64–87.

⁴ Julian Hoppit, *Britain's Political Economies: Parliament and Economic Life, 1660–1800* (Cambridge, 2017), 277–305; Spike Sweeting, "Policing the Ports: The Regional Dimensions of Eighteenth-Century Customs Activity in England and Wales," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute London* 40, no. 2 (2018): 32–67.

⁵ Colin Brooks, "Interest, Patronage and Professionalism: John, 1st Baron Ashburnham, Hastings and the Revenue Service," *Southern History*, no. 9 (1987): 51–70; Stephen A. Timmons, "The Customs Service in the West Country, 1671–1692," *Mariner's Mirror* 92, no. 2 (2006): 148–67; William B. Stephens, *The Seventeenth-Century Customs Service Surveyed: William Culliford's Investigation of the Western Ports, 1682–84* (Farnham, 2012); William Farrell, "The Silk Interest and the Fiscal-Military State," in *The British Fiscal-Military States, 1660–c.1783*, ed. Aaron Graham and Patrick Walsh (London, 2016), 113–30; Hannes Ziegler, "The Preventive Idea of Coastal Policing: Vigilance and Enforcement in the Eighteenth-Century British Customs," *Storia della Storiografia*, 74, no. 2 (2018): 75–98; Patrick Walsh, "The Irish Fiscal State, 1690–1769," *Historical Journal* 56, no. 3 (2013): 629–59.

older empirical work on the fiscal-military state ultimately strengthen its validity as an interpretation. With the Customs placed on a more equal footing with the Excise in the quest for fiscal efficiency and bureaucratization, the Customs sits even more comfortably in the fiscal-military narrative.⁶ What risks being lost in such a view are elements and tendencies that diverge from or even contradict the general thrust toward the fiscal-military state in that crucial decade.

One perspective from which the fiscal-military narrative can indeed be questioned is that of the one truly momentous alteration of the Customs during the 1690s: the establishment of the preventive service, which was a designated coastal police force. Without falling back on claims of the relative fiscal and administrative inefficiency of the Customs, one of my aims in this article is to locate the preventive service beyond exclusively fiscal rationales. Rather than serving primarily or exclusively fiscal ends, I argue, considerable parts of the administration were geared toward mercantile interests. At the same time, many policies answered the need of the fragile Williamite regime for internal security or resulted from constitutional struggles between crown and Parliament. In other words, the Customs, unlike the Excise, was not solely an arena of fiscal activity but was tied to much broader economic and political agendas.⁷ Losing sight of these agendas seriously distorts our understanding of the Customs in this period. Yet in order to uncover this broader context of Customs activities and preventive policing during the 1690s, a better understanding of the events and the underlying motives is needed than is currently available.⁸ Thus my second, related aim in this article is to establish basic clarity regarding the early years of the preventive service. Although the preventive service was a constant feature of coastal activities for well over a hundred years, the when and how and why of its beginnings remain surprisingly hazy. Ultimately, the genesis of the Customs' coastal policing branch and the issue of internal security suggest a more complicated picture of how the fiscal-military state came into being.

THE WOOL BAN AND COASTAL POLICING UNDER CHARLES II AND JAMES II

Government attention to coastal matters during the reign of Mary and William was intense. Various executive departments, in addition to the Court, conducted surveys of England's coasts from as early as 1690. These surveys continued throughout the

⁶ Graham and Walsh, introduction to *Fiscal-Military States*, 1–26.

⁷ Though this contrast of the Customs with the Excise in terms of their fiscal duties is true in relative terms—the Customs encompassing a much wider ambit of enforcement measures—the reduction of the Excise to a purely fiscal agency is perhaps too tempting. It, too, worked as an important tool of central government in the localities, realizing, among other things, an entirely new set of scales and measures important not only in economic terms but also in their political and cultural implications. See, for instance, Miles Ogborn, “The Capacities of the State: Charles Davenant and the Management of the Excise, 1683–1698,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 24, no. 3 (1998): 289–312; Michael Braddick, *The Nerves of State: Taxation and the Financing of the English State, 1558–1714* (Manchester, 1996), 155–79.

⁸ Neville Williams, *Contraband Cargoes: Seven Centuries of Smuggling* (London, 1959); Edward Carson, *The Ancient and Rightful Customs: A History of the English Customs Service* (London, 1972); Graham Smith, *Something to Declare: 1000 Years of Customs and Excise* (London, 1980); Elizabeth Hoon, *The Organization of the English Customs System, 1696–1786* (1935; repr., New York, 1968); Ashworth, *Customs and Excise, 165–83*. Histories of the coastguard remain superficial on the preventive service; see Bernhard Scarlett, *Shipminder: The Story of Her Majesty's Coastguard* (London, 1971).

decade and resulted in numerous plans and schemes for better guarding and policing the coast. Parliament was equally as eager in passing legislation that targeted coastal activities such as smuggling. A first act had already been passed in 1689, with at least four more acts to come within the decade.⁹ Aside from the fervor of such activity, what is truly surprising is how starkly it contrasts with that of the years prior to 1689. Certainly, James II's administration had devoted much time and energy to Customs reforms as far as this related to regular port business. Coastal policing, however, remained excluded from such concerns.¹⁰ The common explanation for this neglect prior to 1689 and the subsequent policy change is typically found in relation to tariffs. Comparably low import duties during the previous reigns abruptly ended with British engagement in the Nine Years' War. Spurred by the costs of war, tariffs spiked. This increase, along with the import ban on French goods and the general disruption of trade, prompted a sudden rise in smuggling activities and therefore necessitated stricter coastal policing.¹¹ In relation to policies relative to overall Customs activity, this explanation obviously holds some validity, yet it only partly explains the markedly different attitudes to coastal policing. Most of the schemes for coastal policing and the vast majority of parliamentary legislation during William's reign targeted the prohibited exportation of wool. This ban, however, had been in place for decades and so cannot on its own explain the sudden obsession with coastal prevention. Because wool was entirely banned from exportation, moreover, the policing of wool smuggling was not likely to produce larger revenue returns, at least not in any direct fashion.¹² Yet if differences in tariffs alone cannot account for the stark contrast in attitudes toward coastal policing, what can?

During the reigns of Charles II and James II, government showed little interest in coastal policing. It had no need to. As Michael Braddick has shown, Customs activities after the Restoration provided the crown with steady returns. A comparably small number of Customs officials largely confined to the main ports and their dependent members and creeks levied the duties enacted by Parliament.¹³ That the revenue collected by the Customs was voted for Charles II and again for James II by Parliament for life obviously meant that the monarchs took an active interest in the system's efficiency.¹⁴ The exportation of wool and, by extension, coastal policing,

⁹ Woollen Manufacturers Act, 1688, 1 W. & M., c. 32; Wool Act, 1695, 7&8 Will. 3, c. 28; Exportation Act, 1697, 9&10 Will. 3, c.40; Exportation Act, 1698, 10 Will. 3, c.16; Wool Act, 1698, 11 Will. 3, c.13.

¹⁰ Stephens, *Customs Service*; Brewer, *Sinews of Power*, 144.

¹¹ Most accounts attribute the creation of the preventive police to the increase in smuggling activities, with the increase in tariffs and the disruption of trade implicitly or explicitly assumed to be the main driving force; see Ashworth, *Customs and Excise*, 165–70; Paul Muskett, "Military Operations against Smuggling in Kent and Sussex, 1698–1750," *Journal for the Society of Army Historical Research* 52, no. 222 (1974): 89–110; Paul Muskett, "English Smuggling in the Eighteenth Century" (PhD diss., Open University, 1996), 90, 288–89; Carson, *Ancient and Rightful Customs*, 45–47; Smith, *Something to Declare*, 40–42. Some acknowledge that political concerns about Jacobites played a certain role; see Paul Monod, "Dangerous Merchandise: Smuggling, Jacobitism, and Commercial Culture in Southeast England, 1690–1760," *Journal of British Studies* 30, no. 2 (1991): 150–82; Williams, *Contraband Cargoes*, 87–89.

¹² On the wool ban, see Hoppit, *Britain's Political Economies*, 216–48; Peter J. Bowden, *The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1962), 184–217.

¹³ Braddick, *Nerves of State*, 49–67. See also C. D. Chandaman, *The English Public Revenue, 1660–1688* (Oxford, 1975), 9–36.

¹⁴ Clayton Roberts, "The Constitutional Significance of the Financial Settlement of 1690," *Historical Journal* 20, no. 1 (1977): 59–76, at 62.

however, did not figure large on their agenda. To be sure, the export ban, previously in force by royal proclamation only, was enacted in 1660 and further tightened in 1662.¹⁵ But while parliamentary debate during the 1670s was hot, no further act followed during the next twenty-seven years, and James II confined himself to two royal proclamations, restating older provisions.¹⁶ More importantly, on the level of everyday Customs activities, no administrative measures were introduced nor, it seems, considered.¹⁷ This is all the more telling when other areas of Customs business did not escape attention. The 1680s witnessed intense efforts to reform regular Customs operations in the English and Welsh ports. Apart from matters of political loyalty that repeatedly sparked concerns about the Customs, these efforts were aimed at stricter efficiency in the ports, which would in turn result in larger shares of revenue returned into the Exchequer.¹⁸

In the absence of government initiative, the wool ban and the policing of the shores was predominantly left to private hands. For the period to 1671, this was reflected in the overall structure of the administration. During most of the period until 1671, the Customs were farmed out to contractors in return for fixed rents. Any incentives for the improvement of the Customs lay firmly with the farmers.¹⁹ Yet even after the Customs resorted to governmental management, the export ban continued to be a matter of private interest. Similar to certain periods in the sixteenth century, coastal policing in the second half of the seventeenth century remained in the hands of the occasional informer or the self-interested entrepreneur.²⁰ All the crown and Parliament did was to grant rewards for their service. As these rewards came in the form of moieties of seized and condemned goods, both the energy and costs of such enforcement remained conveniently outsourced.

A closer look at such private enforcement reveals two factors that help explain the government's reluctance to systematically engage with the enforcement of the ban: first, coastal policing was unlikely to produce large returns, and second, the preoccupation with the wool ban reflected the vested interest of only a certain section of the merchant community and the wool manufacturers. Both points are illustrated by the case of William Carter.²¹

Carter was a clothier by trade, born around 1630. As early as 1667, he started to petition for better enforcement of the wool ban.²² He also published several tracts

¹⁵ Wool Act, 1660, 12 Carl. 2, c.32; Wool Act, 1662, 14 Charles II, c.18.

¹⁶ Hoppit, *Britain's Political Economies*, 221–27; Eighth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, Report and Appendix (Part 1), 1881, C. 3040, at 127–28, 137–38; Privy Council Registers, The National Archives, PC 2/72, pp. 473, 648. (Hereafter this repository is abbreviated as TNA.)

¹⁷ Hoppit, *Britain's Political Economies*, 221–27.

¹⁸ Stephens, *Customs Service*; Timmons, "Customs Service."

¹⁹ Braddick, *Nerves of State*, 60–63; Chandaman, *Public Revenue*, 21–29.

²⁰ Geoffrey Elton, "Informing for Profit: A Sidelight on Tudor Methods of Law-Enforcement," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 11, no. 2 (1954): 149–67; Maurice W. Beresford, "The Common Informer, the Penal Status and Economic Regulation," *Economic History Review* 10, no. 2 (1957): 221–38.

²¹ Williams, *Contraband Cargoes*, 78–80; Kenneth M. Clark, *Many a Bloody Affray: The Story of Smuggling in the Port of Rye and District* (Rye, 1968); Smith, *Something to Declare*, 40–41; Muskett, "Military Operations"; Ashworth, *Customs and Excise*, 167; Rachel Weil, *A Plague of Informers: Conspiracy and Political Trust in William III's England* (New Haven, 2013), 95–103.

²² William Carter, *An Abstract of the Proceedings of W. Carter; Being a Plea to some Objections Urged against HIM* (London, 1694), 1–4. See also William Carter, *An Abstract of the Proceedings to Prevent Exportation of Wooll un-manufactured* [. . .] (London, 1689).

defending the ban on economic grounds.²³ Over the years, his zeal attracted much attention from the authorities, and his opinion was occasionally also heard in Parliament and at Court.²⁴ In other quarters, he was ridiculed as “Wool-Carter.”²⁵ What makes Carter somewhat unusual among the many pamphleteers for the mercantile interest in the wool ban is his commitment to action. Starting in 1669, he was busy preventing the exportation of wool by employing a network of informers, riders, and ships to perform a rudimentary policing operation.²⁶

To some degree, such private activity for enforcing the ban was successful.²⁷ Running of wool was prevented and the nation’s wealth maintained. In less abstract terms, however, economic success was far less certain. On a personal financial level, Carter was, if one believes his petitions, truly left out of pocket. In 1689, he claimed to have lost his estate and a profitable trade over expenses.²⁸ Preventive action indeed incurred considerable costs. An account from 1687 to 1689 details expenditures totaling £380.²⁹ Another account from 1691 puts his expenses for the previous twenty years at £1180.³⁰ In several petitions to the Treasury, he claimed to be “still unpaid several hundred pounds,” while “still spending my money dayly in this affaire.”³¹ Such spending was incurred on several counts. They include his personal travel expenses between London and the coasts of Kent and Sussex, monies disbursed to his agents, and the costs of prosecuting seizures in the Court of Exchequer. These accounts, moreover, did not include any salary for his “Labours and Paynes.”³² These “Paynes” included heavy debts.³³ His personal situation, apparent from his petitions, was desperate.

Fortunately for Carter, central authorities showed compassion. Between November 1689 and May 1690, he received almost a thousand pounds for his troubles. Presumably, this was because the Treasury and the Customs Board recognized the value of his work.³⁴ Yet the Customs commissioners in particular stressed that it “was never

²³ Carter, preface to *Abstract of the Proceedings of W. Carter*; [William Carter], *England’s Interest Asserted in the Improvement of its Native Commodities; and more especially the Manufacture of Wool* [. . .] (London, 1669); [William Carter], *The Proverb Crossed, or A new Paradox Maintained* [. . .] (London, 1677); William Carter, *The Usurpations of France upon the Trade of the Woollen Manufacture of England* [. . .] (London, 1695).

²⁴ Eighth Report of the Commission on Historical Manuscripts, at 127–28, 137–38.

²⁵ Carter, preface to *Abstract of the Proceedings of W. Carter*.

²⁶ Carter, *Abstract of the Proceedings of W. Carter*, 1–12.

²⁷ Aaron Smith to Treasury, 13 May 1690, TNA, T1/8, no. 25.

²⁸ Carter, preface to *Abstract of the Proceedings of W. Carter*; Customs to Treasury, 18 November 1689, TNA, T1/6, no. 3; Carter to Treasury, 9 December 1690, TNA, T1/11, no. 23.

²⁹ Customs to Treasury, 18 November 1689, TNA, T1/6, no. 3.

³⁰ Customs to Treasury, 18 December 1690, TNA, T1/11, no. 30.

³¹ Carter to Treasury, 9 December 1689, TNA, T1/11, no. 23; Customs to Treasury, 18 December 1690, TNA, T1/11, no. 30.

³² Customs to Treasury, 18 November 1689, TNA, T1/6, no. 3.

³³ Customs to Treasury, 18 November 1689, TNA, T1/6, no. 3; Carter to Treasury, 9 December 1690, TNA, T1/11, no. 23. Some of his petitions were simply to obtain enough money to proceed with trials: Customs to Treasury, 27 November 1689, TNA, T1/6, no. 15; Aaron Smith to Treasury, 13 May 1690, TNA, T1/8, no. 25. Debts are mentioned in Aaron Smith to Treasury, 13 May 1690, TNA T1/8, no. 25; Carter to Treasury, 9 December 1690, TNA, T1/11, no. 23.

³⁴ Customs to Treasury, 18 December 1690, TNA, T1/11, no. 30; Aaron Smith to Treasury, 13 May 1690, TNA, T1/8, no. 25; Customs to Treasury, 18 November 1689, TNA, T1/6, no. 3; Order of Privy Council, 14 May 1691, TNA, T1/14, no. 17.

intended that his charge was to be borne by the King.” Instead, Carter was to finance his operations out of shares of prosecuted seizures and by what the merchants had promised him. It was only because such promises were not forthcoming and he had run himself into debt for what they considered valuable service that they recommended to alleviate his troubles.³⁵ Clearly, such conditions were very unfavorable. Expenses were likely to outstrip potential rewards, which in turn depended on uncertain court cases. Indeed, Carter indicated that he at least was “finding none ready to adventure in this affaire (upon these discouraging terms).”³⁶

In the face of such odds, the government’s reluctance to enforce the wool ban is understandable. To be sure, Parliament acknowledged early on that depending on private initiative in such matters was imperfect. The House of Lords had recommended in 1669 that the management of these things should ideally be undertaken by Christ’s Hospital in London “because the charge for employing persons effectually to prevent this growing evil is too great for any private person.”³⁷ Yet when Christ’s declined, no centrally organized attempt followed until 1690. Financially, it was simply unattractive to do so. Unlike regular port staff in the Customs who were often funded not by salaries but by merchants’ fees, and who levied duties on imports and exports as a matter of course, the Customs commissioners could easily learn from Carter’s experiences that preventive service on the coast was likely to be a heavy investment in staff and court proceedings with only occasional and uncertain returns.³⁸ As a result, Customs returns were likely to decrease, not increase, with the undertaking of systematic coastal policing.

The government’s reluctance was reinforced by the fact that petitions for the wool ban reflected a particularly outspoken but no less partial interest of only a specific section of the woolen trade. As Bowden has shown, the wool ban rested on the assumption that continental manufacturing was in desperate need of British wool and that the leakage of such wool to the continent gave continental cloth manufacturers advantages over their English counterparts. This assumption was wrong: English and Irish wool was not superior to continental wool; nonetheless, the wool ban did profit certain sections of the English woolen interest. Whereas wool growers such as those in Kent and Sussex, where few clothiers were left around 1700, would have welcomed open trade routes to the continent and were clearly willing to seek those routes even under the ban, the manufacturers, clothiers, and traders of woolen manufacture, concentrated especially in the West Country, liked the ban because it kept domestic prices for raw materials low. It was clothiers and merchants such as Carter, therefore, who defended the wool ban at all costs. His pamphlets were part of a “sustained and organized propaganda” that attempted to make the clothiers’ partial interests a matter of national interest.³⁹

³⁵ Customs to Treasury, 18 November 1689, TNA, T1/6, no. 3.

³⁶ Carter to Treasury, 9 December 1690, TNA, T1/11, no. 23.

³⁷ Eighth Report of the Commission on Historical Manuscripts, 138. Approaching Christ’s Hospital may seem odd, but they were, as Hoppit suggests, governors of Blackwell Hall, a London market for woolen manufactures and were thought to have the relevant expertise; see Hoppit, *Britain’s Political Economies*, 223.

³⁸ Hoon, *Organization of the English Customs System*, 211–19; Ashworth, *Customs and Excise*, 157–64. For a contemporary view, see Henry Crouch, *A Complete Guide to the Officers of His Majesty’s Customs in the Outports* [. . .] (London, 1732).

³⁹ Bowden, *Wool Trade*, 184–217, at 217.

To support their case, propaganda in support of the wool ban usually referred to its economic benefits in a mercantilist fashion. By way of this policy, trade was protected and the entire nation was to profit.⁴⁰ Lobbying of Parliament and the Court relied on similar arguments.⁴¹ The often thinly veiled hidden agenda of these appeals to the benefit of the nation and the common good was in fact to underscore the direct relevance of the policy for the crown's revenue. Carter was, not accidentally, a key promoter of this particular vested interest. In his 1669 work, *England's Interest Asserted*, he devoted much space to illustrating the damage of wool exportation to the nation and more particularly to the merchants, all the while laying particular stress on the losses to the king's revenue, which he estimated to be £100,000 a year. The king was indeed suffering the most, "because so great a Revenue comes directly into him upon the Trade, occasioned thereby."⁴² Proceeds of the woollen manufacture, Carter claimed, accounted for three-quarters of the Customs returns. Moreover, as he stated in one of his petitions, "it doth not only give life to all Trades but a Value to all Lands in England by which means all other Branches of his Majesties Revenue are proportionably increased."⁴³ Evidently a keen observer of domestic politics, Carter even pushed this argument one step further in the midst of the Nine Years' War. In his 1695 pamphlet *Usurpations of France*, he expressly linked the proceeds of the woollen manufacture to the ability of a nation to wage war.⁴⁴ The aim of such lobbying was to convince the Court that the policing of the wool ban was ultimately in the government's fiscal and the king's financial interest. At the same time, his effort was a blatant attempt to bring the government in line with what primarily constituted partisan interests.⁴⁵

For the administrations of Charles II and James II, such strategies did not work. Though Parliament produced many failed bills regarding the wool business, actual legislation was negligible, and so were James's lifeless proclamations.⁴⁶ Beyond the prescriptive level, the record was even bleaker, as except for a few Customs ships, there was no systematic effort at coastal policing.⁴⁷ On the contrary, a number of coastal offices were suspended (or "sunk"), with reference to how much was thereby saved to the king's revenue.⁴⁸ The unwillingness of the Court to invest was unmistakably expressed as late as August 1688. In February, the Privy Council discussed a petition from several wool traders who had entered into an association funded by voluntary contributions whose aim was to prevent the exportation of

⁴⁰ Thomas Manley, *A Discourse shewing that the Exportation of Wooll is destructive to this Kingdom* (London, 1676). See also John Smith, *Chronicon Rusticum-Commerciale; Or, Memoirs of Wool. Being a Collection of History and Argument, concerning the Woollen Manufacture and Woollen Trade*, 2 vols. (London, 1747), 2, 196–381.

⁴¹ Eighth Report of the Commission on Historical Manuscripts, at 127–28; Privy Council Registers, TNA, PC 2/72, p. 617; Perry Gauci, *The Politics of Trade: The Overseas Merchant in State and Society, 1660–1720* (Oxford, 2001), 195–233.

⁴² [Carter], *England's Interest Asserted*, 14–15.

⁴³ Customs to Treasury, 18 November 1689, TNA, T1/6, no. 3.

⁴⁴ Carter, *Usurpations of France*.

⁴⁵ Chandaman, *Public Revenue*, 10–21.

⁴⁶ Hoppit, *Britain's Political Economies*, 221–27.

⁴⁷ Graham Smith, *King's Cutters: The Revenue Service and the War against Smuggling* (London, 1983), 7–22. See also Customs Establishment, Lady Day 1682, TNA, CUST18/12.

⁴⁸ William A. Shaw and F. H. Slingsby, eds., *Calendar of Treasury Books, 1660–1718*, 32 vols. (London, 1904–1962), 8:429–30, 435. (Hereafter the source is abbreviated as CTB.)

wool. Since the men appointed for the task were not legally empowered to actually seize any wool, they asked for a commission to that effect.⁴⁹ Privy Council approved such measures in June and confirmed the commission by proclamation in August.⁵⁰ Its provisions are a striking reminder of the government's attitude: As "the method taken for prevention of the great abuses therein [that is, in exportation of wool] have not hitherto mett with answerable success," an association of clothiers and traders was empowered to enforce the ban and were authorized to collect private funds to this end. The king, for his part, was "not doubting but our Loving Subjects will cheerfully and readily assist and promote so usefull and publick a work."⁵¹ Unmistakably, this policy put the admittedly "publick work" of coastal policing once again squarely into the hands of those who stood to profit from it. Since the king's revenue appeared secure without such measures, additional policing only amounted to additional costs.

PRESSURES FOR CUSTOMS REFORMS UNDER MARY II AND WILLIAM III

Things changed rapidly after Mary and William succeeded to the English crown. The first session of Parliament of their reign passed an act "for the better preventing the exportation of wool" that created improved legal and practical measures for coastal prevention in 1689.⁵² In June of the same year, the crews of the Dover Customs smacks were significantly increased.⁵³ Throughout the following winter and spring, surveys of the English south coast revealed the inadequacy of the administrative setup and witnessed the appointment of several riding officers for patrolling and guarding the coasts of Kent and Sussex.⁵⁴ The trend continued throughout William's reign. This shift in the attitude toward coastal policing requires explanation. It can be found, I argue, in the combination of three distinct trends that, though only marginally related, all favored the emergence of a preventive coastal police force. The economic impact of the war and its fiscal demands obviously cannot be fully eliminated from this equation. Secondly, the constitutional upper hand that Parliament was intent to maintain in the wake of the Declaration of Rights was another dynamic, for it significantly strengthened the influence of the wool interest on government policies. A third factor was political sensitivities at Court and in the executive that were specific to William's regime and its perceived instability: its responses to Jacobitism and the threat to internal security.

In comparison to the relative economic stability and prosperity of previous reigns, England's plunge into European conflict hailed an era of relatively lean years. As Brodie Waddell has shown, the years after the regime change witnessed considerable

⁴⁹ Privy Council Registers, TNA, PC 2/72, p. 617. Efforts for such a private commission were already under way a year earlier, and apparently Carter was involved; see Shaw and Slingsby, *CTB*, 8:1191.

⁵⁰ *CTB*, 8:1825; Privy Council Registers, TNA, PC 2/72, pp. 688, 725–27.

⁵¹ Privy Council Registers, TNA, PC 2/72, pp. 725, 726.

⁵² Woollen Manufacturers Act, 1688, 1 W. & M., c. 32. Even before this act, James's proclamation against wool exportation had been revived; see Privy Council Registers, TNA PC 2/73, p. 57.

⁵³ Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1689–1692, TNA T11/12, p. 18.

⁵⁴ Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1689–1692, TNA T11/12, pp. 112, 162–63.

“economic distress.”⁵⁵ Merchants and traders were the most heavily afflicted, but with ensuing increases in the prices of necessities and a worsening currency crisis, “people in every corner of the country felt the pinch of hardship.”⁵⁶ The war was the main cause of these developments. Apart from the disruption of trade routes, both foreign and coastal, the war’s hungry need for cash pushed Parliament and the Treasury to look for new sources of income. The war consumed an extraordinary 79 percent of government expenditures.⁵⁷ Government loans, the establishment of the Bank of England, and the creation of public debt were one way of creating new income.⁵⁸ Another was squeezing more money out of traditional sources of revenue. Thus, schemes for extending the Excise, increases in the land tax, and fresh Customs duties all contributed to wartime spending.⁵⁹ It ended the era of comparably low levels of Customs duties, introducing a growing network of high and complicated tariffs.⁶⁰ Aside from their toll on merchants’ purses, these charges also created more administrative work for custom-house staff. Moreover, the combination of high tariffs and relative economic distress was an ideal stimulator for illicit trade.⁶¹ Both trends required additions to the establishments of the ports. According to Brewer, Customs staff increased from 1,313 in 1690 to 1,839 in 1708.⁶² More precisely, for the reign of William, establishment lists have Customs staff at 1,202 in 1688 and 1,727 in 1702.⁶³ Moreover, the war also required adaptations in the way that coastal policing was organized. In June 1690, the Dover Customs smacks that had been strengthened in the previous year were replaced by riding officers, since coastal cruising was unfeasible during the war. Incidentally, this also saved money.⁶⁴ All things considered, fiscal necessities resulted in administrative growth in the Customs and impacted ideas of coastal policing.

Straightforward though it may seem, this explanation leaves some explanatory gaps when it comes to the preventive service. Despite concerns over increases in smuggling during the war, numbers of preventive officers stagnated until 1697, and concerted schemes of coastal prevention only emerged near the end of the

⁵⁵ Brodie Waddell, “The Politics of Economic Distress in the Aftermath of the Glorious Revolution, 1689–1702,” *English Historical Review* 130, no. 543 (2015): 318–51. See also D. W. Jones, *War and Economy in the Age of William III and Marlborough* (Oxford, 1988); Jones, “Defending the Revolution: The Economics, Logistics, and Finance of England’s War Effort, 1688–1712,” in *The World of William and Mary: Anglo-Dutch Perspectives on the Revolution of 1688–89*, ed. Dale Hoak and Mordechai Feingold (Stanford, 1996), 59–74.

⁵⁶ Waddell, “Politics of Economic Distress,” 325.

⁵⁷ O’Brien, “Political Economy,” 2.

⁵⁸ Charles Wilson, *England’s Apprenticeship, 1603–1763* (London, 1965), 206–25; P. G. M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit, 1688–1756* (Aldershot, 1993), 46–58.

⁵⁹ Brewer, *Sinews of Power*, chap. 4.

⁶⁰ Brewer, 211–13; Hoon, *Organization of the English Customs System*, 25–37; Ralph Davis, “The Rise of Protection in England, 1689–1786,” *Economic History Review*, n.s., 19, no. 2 (1966): 306–17.

⁶¹ W. Owen, *A Free Apology on Behalf of the Smugglers, So far as their Case affects the Constitution* (London, 1749), 21; Ashworth, *Customs and Excise*, chap. 10.

⁶² Brewer, *Sinews of Power*, 66. See also Plumb, *Growth of Political Stability*, 122.

⁶³ Customs Establishment, Midsummer 1688, TNA, CUST18/25; Customs Establishment, Midsummer 1702, TNA, CUST18/59.

⁶⁴ Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1689–1692, TNA, T11/12, pp. 155, 162–63.

war.⁶⁵ In the meantime, these efforts continued to be tentative and piecemeal. Such efforts, moreover, remained tied to the wool interest. Officers established for coastal duties in 1699 were officiating “for the wooll business.”⁶⁶ The connection between the wool ban and the fiscal necessities of the war effort, however, was a loose one at best. The Wool Act of 1689 is a good example. Rather than serving the executive’s fiscal needs, it highlights the constitutional significance of Parliament and the reinforcement of certain mercantile interests.

The Bill “for the better Prevention of the Exportation of Wool” was first read in the Commons on 14 March 1689.⁶⁷ This was just weeks after the passing of the Declaration of Rights and shortly before the coronation of Mary and William in April. Moreover, though it was foreseeable by that stage, it was also before the declaration of war with France in May. Even if the act received royal assent only in August, after England had entered the war, its content bore no signs of that circumstance.⁶⁸ Rather, it was a direct continuation of the interests of clothiers and wool manufacturers expressed at the end of James’s reign, inasmuch as the main provisions of the act are strikingly similar to the 1688 commission granted by James.⁶⁹ Both created a Wool Commission of merchants to enforce the ban. The act, moreover, formed part of a larger trend. As Tim Keirn and Perri Gauci have shown, the wool lobby—already vocal during previous reigns—gained a strong influence on Parliament after the Glorious Revolution. During the 1690s, Parliament was flooded with mercantile projects by traders, clothiers, and wool factors, with as many as eighty-two textile bills considered during the decade.⁷⁰ This was in part due to the economic crisis, but Parliament was also in a better position after 1689 to participate in the formulation of government policies. For one, Parliament was more accessible, as it was sitting more frequently, and this was of course part of its enhanced power. At the same time, the quasi-contractual nature of the revolution settlement combined with William’s fiscal needs gave Parliament new leverage. It was immediately used with a view to the king’s revenue when Parliament broke with tradition and refused to grant him the income from the Customs for life.⁷¹ The struggle over William’s finances was certainly the most prominent case of parliamentary confidence, but it was visible elsewhere as well. For as similar as the 1689 Wool Act was to the 1688 commission in terms of content, there was one striking difference. Whereas the latter was granted by the monarch, the Wool Act was statutory legislation. Yet the individuals named in the commission for executing the Wool Act were not only merchants but to a certain extent also MPs. Even if the Wool Commission

⁶⁵ There is a modest growth of 117 percent from 1688 to 1697, which corresponds to the overall growth of the Customs of roughly 120 percent. See Customs Establishment, Midsummer 1688, TNA, CUST18/25; Customs Establishment, Midsummer 1697, TNA, CUST18/40.

⁶⁶ Customs Establishment, Midsummer 1700, TNA, CUST18/51, p. 15.

⁶⁷ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 10, 1688–1693 (London, 1802), 47.

⁶⁸ *Journal of the House of Commons*, 10:270.

⁶⁹ Privy Council Registers, TNA, PC 2/73, p. 18.

⁷⁰ Tim Keirn, “Parliament, Legislation and the Regulation of English Textile Industries, 1689–1714,” in *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems in England, 1689–1750*, ed. Lee Davison et al. (New York, 1992), 1–24; Gauci, *Politics of Trade*, 195–233.

⁷¹ E. A. Reitan, “From Revenue to Civil List, 1689–1702: The Revolution Settlement and the ‘Mixed and Balanced’ Constitution,” *Historical Journal* 13, no. 4 (1970): 571–88; Clayton Roberts, “The Constitutional Significance of the Financial Settlement of 1690,” *Historical Journal* 20, no. 1 (1977): 59–76.

created by the 1689 Wool Act did not take any practical action until after the war, this still constituted a serious infringement of Parliament on the executive side of government.⁷² Constitutional issues aside, however, the 1689 Wool Act—as direct an expression of the wool interests as one can imagine—did lead to new measures of coastal policing with, according to some claims, as many as three hundred riding officers around 1699.⁷³ As it was during previous reigns, therefore, mercantile support of the wool ban continued to be an important factor for coastal policing.

Mounting fiscal and mercantile pressures thus put the issue of coastal prevention on the executive's agenda. This trend was strongly reinforced by a third factor, namely, the obsession with internal security. The legitimacy of William's succession was, by everyone's standards, dubious, and the exiled James II continued to maintain his superior—legally speaking—claim to the English throne.⁷⁴ This situation would have been less of a problem had not the issue of succession possessed a shared line of antagonism with the battle lines of the Nine Years' War. After all, it was France, the war enemy of the League of Augsburg, that supported James's claim. In other words, the Jacobite threat was not a matter of a few exiled noblemen but could potentially rely on the strength of the French army—even if James's Irish expedition in 1689 illustrated early on what the limits to such support were. Beyond external issues, allegiances to the exiled king were also a matter of concern on domestic grounds, as some parts of the English elite and some segments of the army evidently harbored feelings of loyalty to him. Oaths of allegiance, quickly introduced by the Williamite regime, only served to abate fears of Jacobites to some extent. This was especially so because Jacobite threats of invasion and insurgence often failed to materialize, as when the English and Dutch navies lost control of the channel after the defeat at Beachy Head in 1690, again in the winter 1691–92, and in the aftermath of the assassination plot.⁷⁵ In the absence of clear indicators of the real extent of domestic and foreign opposition to William's rule, the extent of the Jacobite threat remained a matter of conjecture, thereby nurturing “a world of gossip, suspicion, and secrecy.”⁷⁶ As Hoppit has emphasized, it was “the perceived and not the real scale of the Jacobite threat to William's regime that mattered”; William was “forever worried by the possibility of plots, risings, and invasions.”⁷⁷

In this political climate, much attention was inevitably fixed on the English southeast coast. To some extent, this was a logical response, for it was through the Essex, Kent, and Sussex ports that most traffic with the continent—open and clandestine, loyal and treasonous—was channeled. For all the government knew, there was—as informants reported to the Earl of Nottingham in 1692—no place on that coast “that is not infested

⁷² Robert M. Lees, “The Constitutional Importance of the ‘Commissioners of Wool’ of 1689: An Administrative Experiment of the Reign of William III,” *Economica*, nos. 40–41 (1933): 147–68, 262–74, at 141.

⁷³ Smith, *Memoirs of Wool*, 2:166–67.

⁷⁴ Paul Hopkins, “Aspects of Jacobite Conspiracy in England in the Reign of William III” (PhD diss., Cambridge, 1981), <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.16051>; Eveline Cruickshanks, ed., *Ideology and Conspiracy: Aspects of Jacobitism, 1689–1759* (Edinburgh, 1982); Paul Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People, 1688–1788* (Cambridge, 1989); Daniel Szechi, *The Jacobites: Britain and Europe, 1688–1788* (Manchester, 2019).

⁷⁵ Hoppit, *Land of Liberty?*, 37–39, 136–41; John Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William III, 1689–1697: Its State and Direction* (Cambridge, 1953), chap. 10.

⁷⁶ Hoppit, *Land of Liberty?*, 39. See also Weil, *Plague of Informers*.

⁷⁷ Hoppit, *Land of Liberty?*, 138.

with ill minded people to the Government.”⁷⁸ It was here, therefore, that any attempt at preventing Jacobite designs was most promising. At least to a certain degree, however, attention to the domestic scene was also a makeshift response. Presumably William and his secretaries of state would have preferred to surveil Jacobite invasion schemes closer to their breeding ground at the Court of St. Germain. William’s intelligence service was, however, comparably weak and ineffective.⁷⁹ In view of this deficiency, authorities focused their attention more closely on the domestic scene, which served the additional purposes of ascertaining the loyalty of officials at critical posts along the coast and providing—to use modern parlance—counterintelligence.

Throughout the first years of his reign, when William’s grasp on the executive was still tenuous, such sensitivities were quickly picked up upon by mercenaries, informers, and adventurers of often dubious reputation, who unfailingly sensed the insecurities of the Williamite regime.⁸⁰ Among them is William Carter. At first sight, Carter seemingly only continued his preventive activity. Apart from his vigorous petitioning of the Treasury for payment of his debts, he continued to enforce the wool ban. In December 1690, he was granted for his efforts the assistance of four men with horses. In the same month, he was busy on the coast of Kent. In February and March 1691, Carter was ordered to be protected and encouraged in his activity by Privy Council and was even appointed messenger extraordinary for the prevention of wool smuggling.⁸¹ Such endorsement of Carter’s activity by the authorities was in line with his services in the 1680s, and yet it still looks odd, seeing that there were misgivings at the Treasury for continuing him further in government service.⁸² Apparently, Carter had sensed the changing preferences at Court and had quickly adapted. In a petition to the king in the spring of 1691, he had shifted the weight of his argument from the exclusive focus on the problem of wool that his earlier writings displayed to an express concern with French and Jacobite designs. Despite efforts to prevent this, he maintained, the French king held correspondence with “Ill affected” English subjects, while “Dangerous Corresponding” was carried on that provided ample opportunities for disaffected persons to come and go in and out of England as they pleased.⁸³ Whether he was interested in such activity or not, Carter was clearly willing to make his case by whatever means available and had easily picked up on suspected links between smuggling and Jacobitism. Beginning in spring 1691, he was employed as an agent of the Earl of Nottingham during the earl’s first tenure as secretary of state. In this role, Carter commissioned agents to conduct journeys into France and to provide Nottingham with intelligence about the French fleets and garrisons.⁸⁴ As Rachel Weil has noted, Carter effectively

⁷⁸ Abraham Stock to William Blathwayt, 18 October 1692, British Library, Add. MS 33924, fol. 84. (Hereafter this repository is abbreviated as BL.)

⁷⁹ Hopkins, “Aspects of Jacobite Conspiracy,” 154–70.

⁸⁰ Weil, *Plague of Informers*, chaps. 2–4.

⁸¹ Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1689–1692, TNA, T11/12, p. 270; Carter to Treasury, 10 December 1690, TNA, T1/11, no. 25; Carter to Treasury, 12 December 1690, TNA, T1/11, no. 26; Privy Council Registers, TNA, PC 2/74, pp. 124, 138; Privy Council Registers, TNA, PC 2/74, p. 143.

⁸² Customs to Treasury, 18 December 1690, TNA, T1/11, no. 30.

⁸³ Order of Privy Council, 14 May 1691, TNA, T1/14, no. 17.

⁸⁴ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of the Late Allan George Finch Esq., of Burley-on-the-Hill, Rutland*, 5 vols. (London, 1913–2004), 3:41, 52, 87, 161, 177, 375. (Hereafter this

tried to frame wool smuggling as a “security issue” to further his own interests, albeit with varying degrees of success.⁸⁵

To the authorities, such an ambiguous position may have been less troubling than Weil suggests, for to the men in office and their agents on the ground, smuggling and traitorous correspondence were two sides of the same coin that could, ideally, be countered by the same methods. Both Paul Hopkins and Paul Monod have noted that in contemporary imagination—if not always in reality—the hatching of Jacobite plots and the running of contraband were inextricably linked.⁸⁶ To stop the latter was to seriously weaken opportunities for the former, many observers believed. And yet the degree to which contemporary responses and practical institutional solutions to such problems seamlessly mixed both issues has so far escaped attention. To many contemporary observers, these were not separate issues. For them, fighting the smuggling trade provided the government with a grasp on something real as a means to prevent something more serious, yet much more elusive. This is not to say that such men did not, as Carter obviously did, have their own agendas in proposing schemes of prevention. Yet beyond those individual interests and on a more abstract level, the genesis of schemes for systematic coastal prevention can unmistakably be found in counterintelligence schemes. Both were fixated on ideas of prevention and coastal surveillance.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of Richard Kingston. Previously studied for his role as a notorious figure in Jacobite intelligence, he has many connections to ideas of coastal prevention.⁸⁷ According to Hopkins, Kingston was “the best agent the Government ever had,” whereas Weil has highlighted his dodgy profile.⁸⁸ He worked for several highly placed officials around William, such as his trusted advisor, the Earl of Portland, and several of the secretaries of state such as Nottingham, the Duke of Shrewsbury, John Trenchard, and William Trumbull. In this role, he infiltrated Jacobite networks and provided intelligence of their activities to the government.⁸⁹ In July 1695, he was, however, also sent on a tour to inspect the English south coast from London to Brighton. Chiefly this was “to settle your Honour [i.e., Nottingham] a correspondence there;”⁹⁰ yet he also reported on the loyalty of the officers and the state of the forts along the coast, both of which appeared to him “much perverted.” Jacobite plots were so advanced, he claimed, that only “the extraordinary care of the Government can prevent it.” Such issues he directly related to the smuggling trade that neither the Customs officers nor the dragoons stationed on that coast were, he asserted, able or willing to prevent.

source is cited as *Finch*). See also Weil, *Plague of Informers*, 95–103. Carter occasionally had agents in France before 1689, but this was in the wool interest; see Shaw and Slingsby, *CTB*, 8:1819–20.

⁸⁵ Weil, *Plague of Informers*, 101. See also Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Finch*, 3:52; Carter to William Trumbull, 25 January 1697, BL, Add. MS 72569, fols. 150–51.

⁸⁶ Hopkins, “Aspects of Jacobite Conspiracy,” 141–42; Monod, *Jacobitism*, 113–15; Monod, “Dangerous Merchandise”; Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Finch*, 5:xxxviii–xliii. See also Szechi, *Jacobites*, 35.

⁸⁷ Weil, *Plague of Informers*, 188–216; Paul Hopkins, “Sham Plots and Real Plots in the 1690s,” in Cruickshanks, *Ideology and Conspiracy*, 89–110.

⁸⁸ Hopkins, “Sham Plots,” 92; Weil, *Plague of Informers*, chap. 5.

⁸⁹ Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Finch*, 4:113, 196, 330, 352, 408, 437, 457, 499; Weil, *Plague of Informers*, chap. 5.

⁹⁰ Kingston to Trumbull, June 1695, BL, Add. MS 72570, fol. 18.

Those smugglers in fact “glory in being called Jacobites” and “drive this common trade of smuggling persons as well as goods.”⁹¹ In his assessment, therefore, smuggling and treason were closely related. This perception also informed his proposals for a solution.

Already in 1692, the Earl of Portland had forwarded to the hand of Nottingham “suggestions for an intelligence service” that were probably Kingston’s. Among other things, he proposed a watch on the roads toward the borders of Scotland “as also on the sea-coasts, from Gravesend along, what lyes towards France,” which could be effected cheaply, if the revenue officers could be made to undertake such things.⁹² In another set of proposals for Secretary of State William Trumbull from 1695, Kingston and a Captain Barron developed a more elaborate way of policing that same stretch of coast.⁹³ A ship was to be stationed at Gravesend to search all ships, including English and Dutch men-of-war. With this, “great service” would be performed, “both in respect of the better security of his Majesties Customs and the more effectually preventing the escape of dangerous persons.” Moreover, as it was obvious that both evils flourished due to the “negligence or disaffection” of the Customs officers, it was necessary to encourage these officers with rewards, remind them of their duties, and further to “cause frequent surveys upon the coast” and a “strict inspection” of such officers. The civil magistrates needed to be encouraged to support such duties where possible, troops needed to be stationed on the seacoast, and ships had to be ordered to cruise coastal waters. Above all, such a setup required—as a form of supervision and control—a superior officer in charge of these operations. This newly formed office ought to “have the Character of Surveyor General of the Coast of Kent and Sussex.” All these measures were—rather emphatically—meant “for the better obstructing the owling trade and this other of Intelligence which for the most part are inseparable.”⁹⁴

To be clear, the significance of these proposals does not lie in the practical measures they proposed. Some of that, in the form of orders, personnel, and tactics, was already in place. In September 1690, William had ordered that officers of the Customs should not suffer persons to come and go into and out of England without passes.⁹⁵ The Wool Acts, moreover, provided that Customs officers were to prevent the running of goods, and these commands had been revived by way of royal proclamation.⁹⁶ Privy Council had also ordered justices of the peace to

⁹¹ Kingston’s report to Trumbull, 1695, BL, Add. MS 72570, fols. 50–51.

⁹² Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Finch*, 4:160–61. See also Weil, *Plague of Informers*, 197.

⁹³ Barron’s proposal, 11 June 1695, BL, Add. MS 72569, fols. 16–17; for Kingston’s comment on this proposal, see Kingston to Trumbull, 24 June 1695, BL, Add. MS 72570, fol. 12. There is a second proposal (Anonymous proposal, June 1695), BL, Add. MS 72569, fols. 18–19, which is strikingly similar to Barron’s. It could be another scheme from Barron or one that Kingston claims to have written himself and that was forwarded by Nottingham to Portland; see Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Downshire*, vol. 1 (London, 1924), 483–84. It could also have been one written by a Mr. Wells of Horsham, which Kingston mentions and was requested by Aaron Smith, the solicitor of the Treasury; see Smith to Kingston, 18 June 1695, BL, Add. MS 72750, fols. 6 and 8. Both proposals are similar in content and were clearly written in the same vein.

⁹⁴ Barron’s proposal, 11 June 1695, BL, Add. MS 72569, fols. 16–17; Anonymous proposal, June 1695, BL, Add. MS 72569, fols. 18–19. The wool smugglers were nicknamed “owlers” because of their nocturnal activity.

⁹⁵ Anonymous proposal, June 1695, BL, Add. MS 72569, fol. 19.

⁹⁶ Privy Council Registers, TNA, PC 2/73, p. 57.

enforce these laws, and had advised the Admiralty to have ships cruise on the south coast in February 1690 and again in August.⁹⁷ From as early as 1690, there was talk of involving the militia in the defense of the coast.⁹⁸ It was ordered, moreover, that companies of dragoons should be stationed at various posts along the coast such as Romney Marsh.⁹⁹ Nottingham engaged personally in this task, using Abraham Stock, the postmaster at Dover and his trusted agent, to devise the best ways of placing these soldiers. Specifically, these dragoons were to assist the Customs officers in Kent.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, in many of these measures the same blurring of the lines between coastal prevention and counterintelligence is visible. The few riding officers already on coast duty since spring 1690 were ordered in 1696 to help find three suspected persons on the coast. They were, however, to keep this a secret and to “give it out” that they were after “seizing of goods not persons.”¹⁰¹ There are in fact a number of individuals whose service for the government sat somewhere between the two tasks. Carter is one example, and so is Stock, who, aside from his service as postmaster and trusted informer to Nottingham, also provided the latter with intelligence regarding movements of the French fleets or carried out more specific tasks such as an inquiry into suspicious tampering with the Dungeness lighthouse.¹⁰² Telling is also the case of John Macky, a Scotsman, who informed Nottingham and Portland of the French invasion plans in 1692. As a reward, he was made riding surveyor on the coast near Harwich to discover and apprehend “dangerous persons.” Some years later, he was put in charge of the Dover packet service.¹⁰³ On the whole, it is clear that some elements of what Barron and Kingston had in mind were already in place by 1695. But their ideas signaled the necessity for a new approach that government officials could not overlook. Macky in fact proposed a similar scheme for coastal surveillance to Trumbull in 1695. Again concerned chiefly with the prevention of “Correspondence with France,” his ideas were intricately connected to wool smuggling, for he suggested that because of the obvious connections between the crimes, the Wool Bill being discussed in Parliament should include provisions against correspondence. Apart from more vigorous legal penalties and a systematic surveillance of passengers, he too felt that customhouse officers were well placed to implement such provisions.¹⁰⁴

What the schemes from 1695—perhaps unintentionally—suggested was the necessity for a systematic, centrally organized approach to coastal surveillance. The current state of things was piecemeal, and it was dependent on the activities of a

⁹⁷ Privy Council Registers, TNA, PC 2/73, pp. 385, 525. See also Customs to Treasury, 18 June 1692, TNA, T1/18, no. 74; Customs to Treasury, 13 June 1693, TNA, T1/22, no. 54.

⁹⁸ Letters of William Brockman, MP, BL, Add. MS 42586.

⁹⁹ William Blathwayt to Treasury, 4 February 1696, TNA, T1/43, no. 27.

¹⁰⁰ Abraham Stock to William Blathwayt, 18 October 1692, BL, Add. MS 33924, fol. 84; Privy Council Registers, TNA, PC 2/75, p. 279.

¹⁰¹ Copy of an Order, 30 October 1696, BL, Add. MS 72569, fol. 125.

¹⁰² Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Finch*, 3:101, 110, 163, 197.

¹⁰³ John Macky, *Memoirs of the Secret Services of John Macky, Esq. During the Reigns of King William, Queen Anne, and King George I*, 2nd ed. (London, 1733), 1–4; William John Hardy, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: William and Mary, 1689–90* (London, 1895), 126; Edward Bateson, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: William III, 1699–1700* (London, 1937), 222; John Macky to Treasury, 5 May 1696, TNA, T1/43, no. 67; John Macky to Treasury, 15 February 1702, TNA, T1/84, no. 80.

¹⁰⁴ John Macky to Trumbull, 1695, BL, Add. MS 28879, fols. 296–97.

number of officials in different executive departments and with different informal agents. This was neither systematic nor accountable. Internal rivalries and party interests flourished.¹⁰⁵ Agents hired as spies often connived at smuggling, while others played a double game or ruthlessly pursued private interests.¹⁰⁶ Even Kingston and Barron agreed that this made for an ineffective approach. The second point that their proposals inadvertently stressed was that there was indeed no department better placed to serve both the interest of the revenue and the interest of internal security than the Customs. Not by accident, Trumbull, receiver of these schemes, forwarded them to the Treasury within days, suggesting that an “effectual course” with a view to the Customs should be considered.¹⁰⁷

“A MORE THAN ORDINARY WATCH UPON THE COASTS”

Given that in the quest to prevent Jacobite plots many eyes were fixed on the coast, it is no surprise that much pointed to the Customs. After all, fiscal pressures and lobbying for the wool interest—pressures coexistent with anxieties about internal security—pointed in the very same direction. And yet to think that the apprehension of suspected persons and the interception of Jacobite spies was a natural task of the Customs sits awkwardly with an understanding of the Customs as a primarily fiscal agency. It is important to stress, therefore, that already before 1689 this was not the case. Given that revenue is the only quantifiable Customs activity, it is tempting to reduce its activity (and efficiency) to numbers. Contemporaries, however, and historians like Elizabeth Hoon, Braddick, and even Brewer, were (if grudgingly) aware that the Customs was more than that.¹⁰⁸ Even in terms of economic policies, the implementation of trade laws, Navigation Acts, embargos and quarantines fell into Customs duties. Beyond the economic sphere, Customs officers assisted the press gangs or apprehended criminals. Most importantly, the Customs was an agency that employed hundreds of royal officers around the coasts of the kingdom, and both their loyalty to the crown and their influence in local affairs carried much weight. To be sure, the prevention of traitorous correspondence was an entirely different matter, and it is dubious that many would have seen this as a natural task of the Customs before William’s reign. Yet William and his administration became increasingly persuaded that Jacobite plots were a problem at least partly linked to the coast and to the smuggling trade. Because of this link, schemes for preventing traitorous correspondence could hardly do without a reference to the officers of the Customs, conveniently placed in all the ports along the coast. The question is rather why, against this background, the Customs were not, in the first years of William’s reign, at the center of efforts for coastal surveillance.

¹⁰⁵ Hopkins, “Aspects of Jacobite Conspiracy,” 153–241.

¹⁰⁶ Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Finch*, 5:xxxviii–xlxiii; Weil, *Plague of Informers*, 140–87; Customs to Treasury, 6 November 1693, TNA, T1/24, no. 62.

¹⁰⁷ Trumbull to Treasury, 6 July 1695, TNA, T1/34, no. 10. Aaron Smith, solicitor to the Treasury, also received them: Aaron Smith to Kingston, 18 June 1695, BL, Add. MS 72570, fol. 6; Kingston to Trumbull, 21 June 1695, BL, Add. MS 72570, fol. 8.

¹⁰⁸ Hoon, *Organization of the English Customs System*, 37–44, Braddick, *Nerves of State*, 58; Brewer, *Sinews of Power*, 101.

The answer is that William and his advisors did not believe the Customs to be very reliable. According to Weil, the Customs was a “weak link in England’s defense against Jacobite infiltration.”¹⁰⁹ This unreliability was perhaps especially the case in the southeast, as local Customs officers were likely to be sympathetic to local trading interests entirely disrupted by the war with France—a disruption from which many local ports never recovered. Because Customs officers in general were also subjects with their own views on loyalty, moreover, the Customs administration—inherited, as other parts of the executive, from the previous monarch—caused much concern about sheltering Jacobites. In this regard, it was similar to concerns about the Post Office.¹¹⁰ Godolphin, lord of the treasury for much of William’s reign, expressed the opinion in 1694 that “the commission of the Customs cannot be made worse than it is at present.” There were board members who were corrupt or could credibly be linked to Jacobite sympathies. Similar concerns were expressed regarding parts of the wider Customs administration, and unsurprisingly, given that some commissioners had a known “bias towards employing under-officers disaffected to your [i.e., William’s] government.”¹¹¹ Shrewsbury also believed that these under-offices were “filled generally with the most declared Jacobites of the country” and that therefore a change was “absolutely necessary in point of state.”¹¹² True as this was in the summer of 1694, the ensuing purge of the Customs posts must have improved William’s opinion of its administration. To be sure, the purge was also a product of raging party conflict, as Godolphin observed.¹¹³ And even after 1694 the Customs was not held in the highest of esteems in some quarters. Kingston, for his part, had little faith in the organization, suggesting to Nottingham that matters left to the Customs would inevitably be “slubberd over and come to nothing.”¹¹⁴ Yet the trust placed in the administration in the following years suggests that the purge at least partly restored the faith in the Customs’ reliability.

In a way, therefore, the conditions for systematic coastal policing were only met by 1695. To some extent, the new situation clearly also reflects the changing party-political influences at the center of the government. Coastal measures were certainly discussed during Nottingham’s tenure as secretary of state, not least the ones by Kingston, but it is worth noting that only when these same proposals came into Trumbull’s hands in 1695 did the executive proceed to act on them. By 1695, moreover, the Customs, like most of the executive, was securely in the hands of the Whig Junto, which displayed much more eagerness to act against the threat of Jacobite infiltration and invasion than previous Tory ministers.¹¹⁵ Although the executive

¹⁰⁹ Weil, *Plague of Informers*, 74.

¹¹⁰ Weil, 76–86; Hopkins, “Aspects of Jacobite Conspiracy,” 162–70.

¹¹¹ William John Hardy, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: William and Mary, 1694–5* (London, 1906), 179–86.

¹¹² William Coxe, ed., *Private and Original Correspondence of Charles Talbot, Duke of Shrewsbury, with King William, the Leaders of the Whig Party, and other Distinguished Statesmen* (London, 1821), 51. Shrewsbury had firsthand knowledge of Customs officers assisting French spies; see Mayor of Dover to Earl of Shrewsbury, 9 May 1690, TNA, T1/8, no. 19.

¹¹³ Mayor of Dover to Earl of Shrewsbury, 9 May 1690, TNA, T1/8, no. 19. See also Horwitz, *Parliament, Policy and Politics*, 133–34.

¹¹⁴ Kingston to Trumbull, 24 November 1695, BL, Add. MS 72570, fol. 85.

¹¹⁵ Horwitz, *Parliament, Policy and Politics*, 123–43; Hoppit, *Land of Liberty?*, 145–65.

was slow at first in stepping up its efforts, a new approach was gradually emerging. In 1696, Parliament passed a second Wool Act. It mainly increased the penalties on illicit trade without adding new practical measures, and yet it also made a passing mention of “a correspondence with France” that the smuggling trade encouraged.¹¹⁶ In December 1696, provisions for a “more than Ordinary Watch upon the coasts of Kent & Sussex” were made “by the King’s express Command” and ostensibly as a direct reaction to the schemes forwarded by Trumbull. The purpose of these provisions was “to prevent the Communication and passage of Intelligence and passengers to and from France.”¹¹⁷ In January 1697, five new riding officers were appointed on the Kent coast “for preventing of Trade & correspondence with France.”¹¹⁸ In February, Henry Baker, one of the solicitors of the Treasury, was appointed by the Treasury to supervise preventive measures against the wool trade on the Kent and Sussex coasts.¹¹⁹ Just a few days later, early in March, Baker received an additional order from Trumbull. Here, the running of wool was once again understood to be an indicator of something more sinister. Baker was to prevent the “dangerous correspondence with the King’s enemies” who used the illicit coastal traffic for their own designs.¹²⁰ Over the next months, Baker surveyed the coast repeatedly.¹²¹ New riding officers were appointed, stricter orders given, and additional ships set on coastal cruises, until finally, in the autumn of 1699, a new systematic setup was introduced.¹²²

This new setup was—in its bureaucratic shape and geographic layout—ostensibly influenced by both security concerns and the wool interest. Henry Baker was appointed as surveyor general of the Coasts Kent and Sussex by King William—a title and station first conceived in the counterintelligence schemes from 1695.¹²³ And just as these schemes had advocated, the cordon of altogether more than fifty riding officers placed along the entire Kent and Sussex coast from Gravesend to Chichester was put under strict supervision and frequent surveys by especially appointed supervisors. In addition to the Customs ship at Gravesend, moreover, another three vessels were appointed to cruises at Dover, Rye, and Shoreham—again, an idea first voiced in the 1695 proposals by Kingston and Barron.¹²⁴ Solutions overtly meant for the enforcement of anti-smuggling legislation in 1698 and

¹¹⁶ Wool Act, 1695, 7&8 Will. 3, c.28.

¹¹⁷ Customs to Treasury, 11 December 1696, TNA, T1/41, no. 50.

¹¹⁸ Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1692–1698, TNA, T11/13, pp. 320, 325.

¹¹⁹ Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1692–698, TNA, T11/13, p. 330; Stephen Baxter, *The Development of the Treasury, 1660–1702* (London, 1957), 249–54.

¹²⁰ William John Hardy, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: William III, 1697* (London, 1927), 51–52.

¹²¹ Baker to Customs, 18 September 1698, TNA, T1/56, no. 29; Baker to Customs, 22 September 1698, TNA, T1/56, no. 4; Baker to Treasury, 25 April 1699, TNA, T1/60, no. 74; Baker to Board of Trade, 12 January 1699, TNA, CO388/7.

¹²² Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1692–1698, TNA, T11/13, pp. 389, 390, 404, 416, 428, 430, 436, 441; Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1698–1706, TNA, T 11/14, pp. 23, 30; Privy Council Registers, TNA, PC 2/77, pp. 104, 111, 122, 159, 162; Customs to Treasury, 14 March 1698, TNA, T1/51, no. 77.

¹²³ Shaw and Slingsby, *CTB*, 15:20.

¹²⁴ Privy Council Registers, TNA, PC 2/77, pp. 190–91; Treasury Minutes, 1698–1700, TNA, T29/11, fol. 173 (6 September 1699); Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1692–1698, TNA, T11/13, pp. 416–17; Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1698–1706, TNA, T11/14, pp. 41–42.

1699 thus bore striking resemblances to ideas first formulated in counterintelligence schemes of 1695.

Similar concessions to the enforcement of the wool ban and the preoccupation with internal security are also reflected in the geographic layout of this new scheme. While reforms were afoot in Kent and Sussex, the Board of Customs and the Treasury also started to survey other parts of England and Wales. Among the first regions, the Scottish borders were reviewed by the collectors at Berwick and Carlisle.¹²⁵ Formerly, the borders were inspected by officers of the Customs and Excise men of the respective collections. In February 1698, a surveyor had been appointed to supervise these efforts; now this was complemented with another set of riding officers.¹²⁶ Around the same time, the western ports—Portsmouth, Southampton, the Isle of Wight, Weymouth, Exeter, and the ports all the way down the Devon coast and around the Cornish peninsula including Dartmouth, Plymouth, Falmouth, Penzance, and St. Ives—were put under stricter guard. In September 1699, additions were made on the Lincolnshire coast;¹²⁷ in December, additional officers were appointed in the ports from Beaumaris in northern Wales to Carlisle on the borders;¹²⁸ in November 1701, the coast from Newcastle to Bridlington also received extra preventive officers for the “better Guard of the several Rivers, Bays & Creeks”;¹²⁹ finally, occasional appointments were also made in Hampshire, Dorset, Devon, and Norfolk.¹³⁰ All these officers were complemented by a new scheme of fourteen Customs ships for the entire Welsh and English coastline that were to guard—rather Anglo-centrally—“the whole Coast of England.”¹³¹

With these measures, the Customs commissioners and the Treasury perhaps reacted to concerns expressed by Henry Baker and the Board of Trade that the successful suppression of smuggling in Kent and Sussex was likely to push the smugglers elsewhere.¹³² A closer look at such appointments reveals, however, that the bulk of government spending in these reforms remained concentrated on Kent, Sussex, and the Scottish Borders. The scheme for a comprehensive watch by Customs ships was not, at this stage, implemented beyond Kent and Sussex.¹³³ Appointments in the West, East Anglia, and Wales, moreover, tended to be cosmetic: rather than new appointments, these regions either saw existing funds reallocated to preventive officers or were granted officers who combined preventive tasks with port

¹²⁵ Customs to Treasury, 16 August 1698, TNA, T1/55, no. 54; Customs to Treasury, 28 April 1699, TNA, T1/60, no. 80.

¹²⁶ Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1692–1698, TNA, T11/13, p. 404; Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1698–1706, TNA, T11/14, pp. 333, 390.

¹²⁷ Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1698–1706, TNA, T11/14, p. 44.

¹²⁸ Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1698–1706, TNA, T11/14, p. 53.

¹²⁹ Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1698–1706, TNA, T11/14, pp. 149 (quote), 155.

¹³⁰ Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1692–1698, TNA, T11/13, pp. 397, 403, 406, 408, 428; Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1698–1706, TNA, T11/14, pp. 42, 97, 287.

¹³¹ Customs to Treasury, 14 March 1698, TNA, T1/51, no. 77; Customs to Treasury, 23 August 1698, TNA, T1/55, no. 75; Customs to Treasury, 10 September 1698, TNA, T1/56, no. 12.

¹³² Baker to the Board of Trade, 12 January 1699, TNA, CO388/7; Report by the Board of Trade, 28 October 1702, TNA, PC 1/1/171.

¹³³ Customs to Treasury, 23 August 1698, TNA, T1/55, no. 75; Customs to Treasury, 31 May 1700, TNA, T1/69, no. 61.

business.¹³⁴ The reforms, in other words, remained concentrated on those regions in the south and the far north that were linked to the illicit export of wool. These were the same regions, moreover, that were havens of Jacobite sentiments among the landed gentry and conveniently placed for traitorous correspondence, as Monod has shown.¹³⁵

When the new scheme for a “more than Ordinary Watch upon the coasts” came to full fruition over the course of 1699, there is no clear statement why this was done. The wool ban and the Jacobite threat seamlessly mixed or were used interchangeably as the main purpose of the coastal police. Just as Carter had done before, the wool manufacturers and traders cited the Jacobite threat as an additional reason for enforcing the wool ban. And the woolen lobby in Parliament was certainly unrelenting; after 1696, another three Wool Acts were passed.¹³⁶ Moreover, the Board of Trade, evaluating English trade balances and the importance of the wool trade, readily agreed that something needed to be done to prevent the losses to the kingdom’s wealth.¹³⁷ Visible increases in smuggling and illegal trade with French goods supported such a view. The import ban on certain French goods after 1695 in fact further increased the profitability of smuggling, for it provided illicit exporters of wool with a valuable cargo for their return journey to England.¹³⁸ These developments also help explain why the end of the war in 1697 and the end of the immediate threat of military invasion did not stop the push for institutional reforms in the Customs with a view to the coast: the initiative, born in the midst of war, had taken on a life of its own and could convincingly be linked to fiscal and mercantile interests not immediately connected to the war.

The Jacobite threat, on the other hand, did not immediately disappear with the end of the war either. James II was still alive and, in the absence of security in the question of succession, his claim to the throne continued to be a threat. Tensions with France, moreover, never entirely abated between Ryswick and the death of Charles II of Spain.¹³⁹ It is likely, therefore, that William and his government continued to be worried about Jacobite plots and invasion plans with a view to Kent and Sussex. The unsuccessful yet no less frightening Jacobite plot of 1696 to assassinate the king and the uncovering of a seemingly enormous Huguenot smuggling network in 1698 could easily be understood as calling for more systematic efforts at preventing traitorous correspondence with the king’s enemies.¹⁴⁰ Tellingly, it was only in Kent and Sussex that the preventive service of the Customs was consistently complemented by Admiralty cruisers and troops of dragoons.¹⁴¹ If smuggling was the

¹³⁴ Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1692–1698, TNA, T11/13, pp. 461–63; Treasury Out-Letters to Customs, 1698–1706, TNA, T11/14, p. 53.

¹³⁵ Monod, “Dangerous Merchandise.” See also Ashworth, *Customs and Excise*, 166–68; Bowden, *Wool Trade*, 41–106.

¹³⁶ Exportation Act, 1697, 9&10 Will. 3, c.40; Exportation Act, 1698, 10 Will. 3, c.16; Exportation Act, 1698, 11 Will. 3, c.13.

¹³⁷ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 12, 1697–1699 (London, 1803), 425–40; Report by the Board of Trade, 28 October 1702, TNA, PC 1/1/171.

¹³⁸ Privy Council Registers, TNA, PC 2/76, pp. 503, 509, 564; Monod, “Dangerous Merchandise.”

¹³⁹ Rose, *England in the 1690s*, 144–51.

¹⁴⁰ Weil, *Plague of Informers*, chap. 7; Williams, *Contraband Cargoes*, 87–88; Ashworth, *Customs and Excise*, 168; Shaw and Slingsby, *CTB*, 19:133.

¹⁴¹ Shaw and Slingsby, *CTB*, 14:96, 15:102; Customs to Privy Council, 17 December 1716, TNA, PC 1/3/50; John Childs, *The British Army of William III, 1689–1702* (Manchester, 1987), 177; Muskett, “Military Operations”; Copy of an Order in Council, 23 June 1698, TNA, T1/54, no. 8.

foremost concern in government circles, then notorious regions such as East Anglia—open to clandestine trade from the Dutch Republic—would not have been excluded from the strict coastal crackdown visible in Kent and Sussex. On the surface, such measures still answered the need to fight the owling trade. After all, the geographical focus on Kent and Sussex also served the interest of the “wool interest,” as it subjected a region with many wool growers—naturally interested in an additional market overseas—to the interest of clothiers mainly in the southwest and East Anglia who needed cheap wool for domestic manufacturing.¹⁴² And yet the instructions to Baker, his detailed accounts, and the occasional comment in the Treasury and the Board of Customs illustrate that “intelligence and correspondence with France” continued to be an important concern after 1697.¹⁴³

It is impossible then, in the final analysis, to isolate fiscal pressures, the wool ban, or the Jacobite threat as the sole cause for institutional reforms, especially when the evidence is circumstantial, and statements tend to be equivocal. The wool lobby was happy to link its own concerns to political sensitivities in the executive. The ministers, on the other hand, appeared more than willing to grasp an opportunity that had the benefit of pleasing the merchants and traders and their representatives in Parliament, which carried the (however faint) additional hope, expressed by the Board of Trade, of increasing English trade balances and presented itself at the same time as a convenient tool for heightening their own sense of security vis-à-vis Jacobitism.

CONCLUSION

In the quarter ending midsummer 1688—the last months of James’s reign—the number of preventive officers in the Customs department was 3.4 percent in relation to the total numbers of Customs staff.¹⁴⁴ In the quarter ending midsummer 1697—in the months before the Peace of Ryswick, when fighting had stopped—those same numbers are not very different: preventive numbers were at 3.7 percent. Moreover, the overall growth of the Customs department was similar to the modest growth in preventive staff, as the figures in [table 1](#) show. The real divergence follows after 1697. In the quarter ending midsummer 1702—just after William’s death in March—preventive staff made for 13.1 percent of the numbers and 16.4 percent of the costs of the Customs establishment. This increase is even more striking if one excludes the London establishment—with its costly central office—from the equation: compared to the overall outport numbers, the preventive service accounted for 17 percent of the numbers and 24.6 percent of the costs. To put it differently, while the department had grown from 1,202 officials in 1688 to 1,727 officials in 1702, the preventive staff accounted for more than 35 percent of that growth. From a few riding surveyors and Customs smacks in 1688, numbering forty-one in total, the service had swollen to 227 officers in 1702. Striking as these numbers are, they are a conservative

¹⁴² Bowden, *Wool Trade*, 41–76.

¹⁴³ Customs to Treasury, 8 December 1698, TNA, T1/58, no. 8; Baker to Treasury, 25 April 1699, TNA, T1/60, no. 74; Petition to the Treasury, around 1702, TNA, T1/83, no. 107; Treasury Solicitor Accounts, TNA, AO 3/1101/1.

¹⁴⁴ All statistics in this section are derived from the figures below, which are drawn from the establishment records at TNA CUST18/19, 18/25, 18/40, 18/59, 18/105 (see [table 1](#) below).

Table 1—Customs staff numbers and costs, 1685–1714

Customs staff numbers	1685	1688	1697	1702	1714
Staff (London)	370	366	501	513	558
Staff (Outports)	749	836	940	1214	1312
Staff (total)	1119	1202	1441	1727	1870
Staff (Prev. Officers*)	68	41	54	227	280

*To avoid ambiguity, only officials solely devoted to coastal duties are considered as preventive officers, such as riding surveyors, riding officers, and the Customs smacks and their crews. The continuously rising number of port officials provided with horses and boats for coastal policing is not included.

Customs costs ^o	1685	1688	1697	1702	1714
Costs (London)	6124	5076	5605	5958	7278
Costs (Outports)	5163	5651	6987	9951	10848
Costs (total)	11287	10727	12592	15909	18126
Costs (Prev. Officers)	675	420	728	2612	3056

^oTotal costs for the respective midsummer quarter, rounded sums in £. Whenever proportions of preventive costs exclusively to outport costs are given in the text, the costs of the smacks on the London establishment (typically at Gravesend) are excluded.

All the above figures are drawn from TNA CUST18/19, 18/25, 18/40, 18/59, 18/105.

estimate. For reasons of clarity, they include only officers solely devoted to coastal duties and do not account for the growing number of port officers equipped with horses and boats to perform additional coastal duties. Also, they include only Customs staff registered on the official establishment list and do not account for the large number of officers paid by incident.¹⁴⁵ The real proportions were, if anything, higher. After William's reign, the numbers still show a modest rise, but those at the end of Anne's reign—in 1714—indicate a stagnation of growth both in total and preventive staff.

While bare figures reveal little about the causes of such developments, the numbers still support my arguments. The reign of William saw profound changes to the revenue service of the Customs, most notably the establishment of a preventive coastal police within the span of just a few years. The correlation of this development to the war and to fiscal demands, however, is far from straightforward. For one thing, the decisive changes occurred after the war. Secondly, preventive staff was costly and therefore prone to diminish Customs returns. Of the overall rise in establishment costs from 1688 to 1702, preventive staff accounted for 42 percent. Consistently, the establishment lists show that preventive staff—with highly salaried riding officers and costly Customs smacks—was much more expensive in relation to their numbers than port staff. Their share of costs is always higher than their proportion in numbers.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, they were much less productive in fiscal terms than regular

¹⁴⁵ For incident staff, see Hoon, *Organization of the English Customs System*, 198, 218.

¹⁴⁶ Total staff numbers and total costs compared to the proportion of preventive staff and costs shows the relation at 3.4 percent to 3.9 percent (1,688), 2.7 percent to 5.8 percent (1,697), 13.1 percent to 16.4 percent (1,702) and 15 percent to 16.9 percent (1,714). Once again, the difference is more pronounced if

port staff. They did not collect duties. Returns, if any, came in the form of penalties on the import or export of prohibited or highly taxed goods, but these were contingent on successful condemnation in the Exchequer, itself a costly and uncertain procedure. Given that smuggling in the 1690s concerned mainly the import of French goods and the export of wool, both of which were prohibited, Customs returns by way of legal import or export were still not going to rise even if the preventive service was successful in its task. Fiscally, the preventive service did not pay off. The general attitude of the Treasury after 1698—when changes were inevitably underway—supports this view. They were extremely reluctant to expend more than strictly necessary for the service. They repeatedly declined to establish a systematic Customs cruisers scheme due to its cost.¹⁴⁷ They stubbornly haggled with Baker over the costs of his scheme of riding officers and attempted to cut the costs at all corners.¹⁴⁸ From their point of view, this was only sensible. When Baker's reduced scheme was finally adopted, it still cost £4,880 per annum, roughly 8 percent of the entire establishment in 1699.¹⁴⁹ To be sure, Baker made substantial seizures and was fairly successful in court,¹⁵⁰ but the money necessarily extended toward prosecution and the uncertainty of returns still made for an unreliable base of income.

Contrary to the general view of the Customs in this period, therefore, changes in the department cannot solely be attributed to fiscal pressures. More tariffs certainly accentuated the need for stricter enforcement, which in turn required more staff. The heavy investment in a coastal police that accounted for over a third of the overall growth in the Customs and whose fiscal balance was prone to be negative must, as this article has shown, be attributed to a combination of other factors. The woolen interest—bolstered, as it was, by a strengthened Parliament—and concerns at Court and in the highest political offices about the dangers of Jacobite infiltration each contributed to reforms in the revenue departments. To isolate one of these factors as decisive remains difficult. Perhaps intentionally, statements from each interested party tended to be equivocal: just as the clothiers and wool manufacturers claimed that such efforts would also improve the internal security of the Williamite regime, politicians at court recognized that creating a coastal police against elements subverting the regime had the additional benefit of pleasing an important fraction of the merchant community and an important interest group in Parliament. With the realization, around 1695, that stricter coastal policing was politically called for—driven home by the events of 1696 and 1698—the subsequent dedication of resources to Kent, Sussex, and the Scottish Borders reflected both concerns

only output figures are considered, for example, 5.1 percent to 9.5 percent (1697) and 17 percent to 24.6 percent (1702). See Customs Establishment, Midsummer 1688, TNA, CUST18/25; Customs Establishment, Midsummer 1697, TNA, CUST18/40; Customs Establishment, Midsummer 1702, TNA, CUST18/59; Customs Establishment, Midsummer 1714, TNA, CUST18/105.

¹⁴⁷ Customs to Treasury, 23 August 1698, TNA, T1/55, no. 75; Customs to Treasury, 31 May 1700, TNA, T1/69, no. 61.

¹⁴⁸ Customs to Treasury, 8 December 1698, TNA, T1/58, no. 8; Customs to Treasury, 28 April 1699, TNA, T1/60, no. 79; Customs to Treasury, 4 May 1697, TNA, T1/45, no. 5a; Baker to Treasury, 9 November 1699, TNA, T1/64, no. 33; Customs to Treasury, 11 November 1699, TNA, T1/64, no. 42.

¹⁴⁹ Customs to Treasury, 28 April 1699, TNA, T1/60, no. 79; Customs Establishment, Christmas 1699, TNA, CUST18/49.

¹⁵⁰ Baker to Board of Trade, 12 January 1699, TNA, CO388/7; Baker to Treasury, 16 November 1698, TNA, T1/57, no. 57.

equally. The exact shape of this new branch of the Customs was clearly modeled on schemes first conceived in counterintelligence plans, and for a time, this may have been the overriding concern in the executive. But the government was prudent enough to see the opportunity for killing two birds with one stone.

All this is not to say that coastal policing did not benefit fiscal objectives in the long run. When smuggling shifted—by the eighteenth century—to goods such as tea, tobacco, or brandy, the government's revenue was much more directly at stake.¹⁵¹ At the moment of its inception, however, other motives prevailed, and these initial motives frequently resurfaced during subsequent decades.¹⁵² Bearing this background in mind ultimately helps to see the preventive service and the Customs in a different light. Rather than portraying the Customs as an economically inadequate and fiscally deficient agency when measured against fiscal-military parameters, its failure to meet those standards perhaps calls for a questioning of these parameters. Any reduction to solely fiscal concerns understates the range of activities of a supposedly fiscal agency such as the Customs and, by extension, oversimplifies the complexities of the origins of the fiscal-military state. After all, even during the 1690s, the growth of state institutions was possible where no additional revenue was to be achieved and where such growth went directly against the dominant urge for a positive fiscal balance sheet.

¹⁵¹ Ashworth, *Customs and Excise*, 170–83.

¹⁵² The War of the Spanish Succession prompted similar concerns: see Interview between Baker and Robert Harley, 1707, BL, Add. Ms 61607, fols. 115–16; Various letters from and to Baker, 1708, BL, Add. Ms 61608, fols. 11–26; Shaw and Slingsby, *CTB*, 22:365–66.