"No Standing Armies!"
Schwoerer, Lois G.

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The climax in the history of protests against maintaining professional soldiers in peacetime occurred between the fall of 1697 and the spring of 1699, following the Treaty of Ryswick. The immediate practical question was what to do with King William’s large, victorious army. The ideological issue at this time was not whether Parliament had the right to approve the military force in peacetime (that had been established at the Revolution), but whether the king would accept Parliament’s decision on the size of the army and abide by it. For about eighteen months, William III and his supporters fought over this issue against a Tory coalition in the House of Commons, which was supported by a group of radical Whig pamphleteers. The confrontations in Parliament and press illuminate the continuing struggle for power between the king and the House of Commons. The question of maintaining a standing army in peacetime also reached a crescendo in the press in 1697–99. For the first time, the issue was discussed directly and fully, instead of in connection with some other question.

Both sides regarded the contest as one of special importance; the parliamentary debates were notably stormy and the pamphlet literature contentious and voluminous. For King William there was no question during his reign which touched his interest more deeply or involved him more directly in English domestic politics. For his opponents, the issues were the historic, decisive ones of many generations. What was the relative power of king and Parliament? Would
not a standing army threaten law, liberty, and Parliament? Would military power in the court control the power of party groupings in Parliament? The whole combined was further complicated because it exacerbated the deep division in the Whig party between court or ministerial Whigs and so-called “Old Whigs,” men who did not hold office and who represented the interests of country members.

For several reasons, the king lost his battle to keep a large standing army in peacetime. This outcome was never seriously in doubt as the strength of the two sides was disparate. Parliament voted to reduce the army to ten thousand men in 1697, to cut it further to seven thousand natural-born subjects in 1698, and to deny the king his Dutch Guards in 1699. Still, a contest did take place, and as the votes on the motions about the army prove, sometimes the court made a very respectable showing. A compromise was reached in the end, and a small force was allowed. By the end of the century, no one in Parliament suggested that England could be safe with no standing force at all.

Planning and decision in this controversy were concentrated in the king’s hands. Like his predecessors, William felt that the military establishment of the nation was the “fittest” of all subjects for a king to quarrel about. If he had been blessed with a more outgoing or winning personality, his dealings with his Parliament and ministers on the army issue might have been more effective. He was never a popular king. He was regarded as too “solemn and serious,” too cool and withdrawn. His Dutch favorites, his obvious preference for Holland, and his European rather than English orientation (in a reign of thirteen years, he was away from England about five years) were resented by many Englishmen. He was brusque in manner and never suffered fools gladly. He was never in robust health. He shared his thoughts and emotions with very few men, and these not Englishmen. This habit, combined with his view that foreign affairs should be conducted by the king as an undoubted prerogative of the crown, led him to exclude Englishmen close to him in government from the secrets of international negotiations. He favored neither Whig nor Tory and was

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willing to use as his ministers men from either party, so long as they would support his foreign policy of resistance to Louis XIV. For an English monarch to rule above party groupings is not novel, but in William's case it is pertinent to understanding the failure of his military aims. There was no group of men who were committed, as a party, to his general interests or to his specific goal of a sizable army.

The standing army issue was not argued in 1697-99 with innuendo that William wanted an army to Catholicize the nation or bring England within the French orbit, as had been the case with his predecessors. But William was suspected of holding as high notions about royal prerogative as any Stuart king. His rule as Stadholder of Holland had demonstrated such convictions, and in England he made it plain that he had not come "to establish a commonwealth." But there is no evidence of a calculated ulterior motive of using a standing army to set up an absolute government in England behind William's military policy. He candidly told Camille d'Hostun, due de Tallard, Louis XIV's ambassador, that "if he proposed and insisted on retaining the troops, it was not for any private interest or to uphold his authority, or to make himself master; that such ideas might occur to him if he had children or if the crown were to remain in the hands of some member of his family, but that he was alone; and, therefore, it was the affair of the nation rather than his..." William undoubtedly wanted as large a force as he could get, but he seems to have been willing to think in realistic terms of an army of around thirty-five thousand men, a reduction of almost two-thirds of the total number on hand in October 1697. Such an army would have been small indeed in comparison to Louis XIV's huge establishment. Even so, William plainly was insensitive to the real possibility of danger to English liberties which


Grimblot, Letters of William III and Louis XIV 2: 31-32; but cf. ibid. 3: 236, in which Tallard reported that Portland told him William might have handled things differently if he were younger and his passion more ardent.

The total number of land forces, exclusive of officers, on hand in October 1697 was 90,172 (C.S.P.D., 1697, p. 454). The size of the projected army was reported variously (ibid., pp. 484, 512); Narcissus Luttrell, A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs from September 1678 to April 1714 (Oxford, 1857), 4: 281, 284; Grimblot, Letters of William III and Louis XIV 1: 133-34, 137-38; Northamptonshire Record Office, Delapré Abbey, Shrewsbury Correspondence, vol. I, letter no. 154.
an army implied, and could write that "people here only busy themselves about a fanciful liberty."\(^7\)

William III's interest, with single-minded intensity, was focused on the vexing problem of Louis XIV's ambition. He had no illusions about the need for England to maintain a strong military posture. His personal correspondence with his two closest confidants, Anthony Heinsius, grand pensionary of Holland, and William Bentinck, earl of Portland, provides a backdrop for the progress of the several army bills. His letters repeatedly reflect anxiety, lament, anger, frustration. He was certain that Louis was planning to resume the war, that Parliament had weakened his hand in the Partition Treaty\(^8\) negotiations and embarrassed him before the world, that the army reductions were encouraging France to formulate plans she had not even thought of before, that England must commit herself to a continental role, that Englishmen were so fatuous that "one would say, either this island is the only thing on the face of the earth or that it has nothing to do with the rest of the world."\(^9\) More effectively than anything else, these letters reveal William's acuteness in plumbing Louis's motives and explain William's persistence in the standing army controversy.

Further testimony of William's determination to win a sizable army was his effort to make himself more ingratiating during the standing army contest. An observer noted that "upon this occasion...[the king] behaved himself much different from the haughty character he had all along maintained."\(^10\) Another wrote that "the King is more than usually pleasant and shows outwardly no resentment."\(^11\) In view of his private correspondence and of recurrent poor health during this time, one can imagine what it cost him to convey an impression of "extreme patience" and "imperturbability," and to appear never "to be hurt at any resolution which may have been taken."\(^12\) The modification in the king's demeanor underscores the seriousness of his purpose.

\(^8\) For a brief account of the Partition Treaty negotiations see Baxter, *William III*, chapter 26.
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William found support for his position in varying degrees of enthusiasm and conviction. John lord Somers, who had recently been appointed lord chancellor of England, was the most prestigious man who defended the king’s need for a standing army. On April 22, 1697, he was appointed lord high chancellor and on December 2 was raised to the peerage. The consequence of this recognition was that Somers was removed from the House of Commons where the battle of the land force was most bitterly fought. Tallard reported that Somers was the only Englishman who had any “real share in public affairs” and described him as “very honest, and much esteemed by all parties.” At the same time, however, Tallard noted that he had no part in international policies. Respected as he was by all parties, Somers was a Whig. A contemporary styled him a few years later as “the life, the soul and the spirit of his party.” As a minister of the king, Somers must have felt some reluctance in supporting a measure which violated a traditional Whig principle and, one suspects, his own convictions. His major contribution was to write a tract defending the king’s policy entitled *A Letter, Ballancing the Necessity of Keeping a Land-Force in Times of Peace: With the Dangers that May Follow on It*, which will be discussed below.

In addition to Somers, a few of the king’s ministers and officeholders argued William’s case in the House of Commons. Sir Thomas Littleton, who held a post as lord of the Admiralty, was described as “the best and most artificial advocate against disbanding ... [the army] at all.” Charles Montague, formerly chancellor of the Exchequer and in 1697 first lord of the Treasury (in 1701, earl of Hali­fax), was singled out as an effective speaker for the king’s project. He countered the attack on the army by using ridicule and suggesting that William’s critics should take the advice of men wiser than themselves. Others, like William Blathwayt, the secretary of war, Richard

Jones, earl of Ranelagh, the paymaster-general of the army, and Thomas Coningsby, earl of Coningsby and in 1698 paymaster of the forces in Ireland, were also mentioned as participating in debate.\textsuperscript{17} As the votes on some of the motions about the army show, there were a number of men in the House of Commons who voted with the king, some undoubtedly from sincere agreement with his proposal and others, as the antiarmy pamphleteers charged, probably from fear of losing their credit with William. Further, a majority of the members of the House of Lords and the Judges of the Circuit supported the policy of a large land force.\textsuperscript{18}

Outside the government several paid and volunteer pamphleteers wrote to vindicate the king’s policy. Arguing for William’s position were chiefly Daniel Defoe and, less significantly, Matthew Prior and Richard Kingston. That there were more pamphlets justifying a paid army than attacking it and that some tracts were written by private citizens suggest more unorganized, general sympathy for the king’s policy than hitherto recognized. Some members of the army tried to exert their influence in favor of William’s proposal. According to one source, “thousands of . . . subjects of enlightened intellects and considerable fortunes”\textsuperscript{19} concurred with William’s judgment.

Strong reasons, more fully discussed below, were presented in debates and pamphlets for William’s project. It was argued that the continued threat from France made a standing army essential. England could no longer rely upon the fleet and the old militia and count upon her island fortress to protect her from such a menace. Despite the recent treaty, the French king continued to threaten the peace of Europe, Protestantism everywhere, and England. The changes in warfare, which required professional training to master, and the threat of Jacobitism were offered in justification of an army. Further, a standing army would not endanger England’s free institutions, because it would be paid by Parliament and its size annually reviewed by Parliament in relation to the requirements of the international situation. Such points as these won adherents, changed votes and, at least in one case, persuaded an individual who was closely connected with the antiarmy pamphleteers that the army should not be entirely dis-

\textsuperscript{17}C.S.P.D., 1697, pp. 506-7, where still other supporters are named.
\textsuperscript{18}For judges, see H.M.C., Mss. of the Earl of Westmorland and Others, p. 334.
banded. But they failed to persuade a majority of the members of the House of Commons.

Opposing William’s project was an increasingly important coalition of Tories and Whigs, which had begun to form as early as 1693 under the leadership of former Whigs Paul Foley and Robert Harley: the latter to become the earl of Oxford and lord treasurer under Queen Anne. Sometimes called “The New Country Party,” this coalition had by 1695 established close connections with Tories such as John Granville, Sir Christopher Musgrave, and Sir Edward Seymour, the former speaker of the House of Commons and, as noticed before, a champion of the militia under James II. It also attracted “Old Whigs,” men who wished to be distinguished from court or ministerial Whigs, such as Simon Harcourt, Harley’s cousin (later Viscount Harcourt), John Grubham Howe, known as “Jack Howe,” Sir William Williams, Sir Charles Winnington, former solicitor-general, and his son Salway. The “New Country Party” had tested its power on various measures against the Whig Junto in previous parliamentary sessions and, in 1697 and 1698, it could count on men of various political interests, Jacobites and republicans, to vote with it against the army. All of these men had experienced the standing armies of Charles II, and James II and could remember the arguments against the army and the political uses to which the army issue had been put in those decades. Although most of the former spokesmen against the standing army (Powle, Birch, Lee, Sacheverell, and Clarges) were dead, Musgrave, Seymour, and Williams had earlier opposed standing armies, and might be expected to show special sensitivity to the question in 1697. Among the strengths of the “New Country Party” in the contest against the army in 1697-98 were the remarkable political and parliamentary skill of Foley and Harley, their ubiquitous social and family connections in the House of Commons and in the shires, and their talent for marshalling arguments that would appeal to different elements in Parliament.

The opposing coalition had developed identities on other questions, but the issue of the army served to bind it together more firmly,

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20James, Letters to Shrewsbury by Vernon, 1: 444; Luttrell, A Brief Historical Relation 4: 313.
even as that issue had united earlier Whigs in the 1670s. Political opportunism figured in the opposition to the standing army. For almost thirty years, the cry “No Standing Army” had proved its efficacy in rallying opponents of the court. Despite the genuine apprehension and the distaste that the idea of a peacetime standing army aroused, William’s friends correctly charged that some of the men who protested the army did so because they were unfriendly to the government, not because they disliked a standing army on principle. Indeed, there is evidence that Foley and Harley had been prepared not to oppose William’s military proposal on a quid pro quo arrangement with the king but backed away from such a deal when they gauged that sentiment in the House was running predominantly against the army.

Harley and his friends maintained that a standing army in peacetime would endanger the liberties of Englishmen, enlarge the already swollen power of the monarchy, and threaten the country’s form of government. In theory, they wanted no standing army at all; in practice, they were willing to accept a small army. They gave lip-service to the idea that the nation would be safe with a remodeled militia. In both sessions of Parliament, the coalition introduced bills to reform the militia, but failed to push them. At the same time, under Harley’s leadership the House of Commons slashed the size of the army and forced the king to send back to Holland his beloved Dutch Guards. They justified these actions by arguing further that England was at peace, that a standing army was costly, and that paid soldiers were morally irresponsible and a threat to the sanctity of property. They expressed deep resentment that William’s army contained so many foreigners and that in the reductions the court proposed so many foreigners were retained while Englishmen were dismissed. As will be shown, these and other points were more fully articulated in the press by such pamphleteers as John Trenchard, Walter Moyle, and Andrew Fletcher, of Saltoun.

Weeks before debate opened in Parliament, in December 1697, king and court were aware of mounting resistance to the army. As

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24Feiling, History of the Tory Party, pp. 326-27. A contemporary described the antistanding army sentiment as a “fixed” principle among country gentlemen (P.R.O., S.P 32 11 87).
25A. McInnes, “The Political Ideas of Robert Harley,” History 50 (1965): 309-22. McInnes stresses that Harley was preeminently a country gentleman who in this period of his career was concerned to fetter royal power because it imperiled England’s mixed and balanced constitution (especially pp. 319, 320-22).
early as September 28, 1697, James Vernon, secretary of state, predicted that the counties will "press their members to make haste to disband" the army. Two days later, it was observed that members of Parliament were "almost jaded with giving" and may hold their hands this session.26 In October, a pamphlet, An Argument, Shewing That a Standing Army Is Inconsistent with a Free Government, and Absolutely Destructive to the Constitution of the English Monarchy, appeared, the first blast in the pamphlet warfare which was to continue for many months. Written by John Trenchard, it was widely circulated in London and the counties and was popular enough to require a second printing within a month. The army issue rapidly became the "common topic," "the talk of the town," and was hotly debated on both sides. It was generally known that the majority of the Western members, indeed the country gentlemen as a whole, were staunchly opposed. It was believed that Parliament would be well attended and that many members would be on hand at the opening.27

William took steps to counteract this growing anxiety. He allowed rumors to spread in London as early as September 21 and throughout October that a substantial disbandment would take place and that regiments of French Protestants and Dutch soldiers would be sent to Holland.28 On October 18, William, still at Loo, approved the earl of Galway’s plan for keeping certain troops in Ireland and confided his intentions of making some reductions "to remove all jealousy in England."29 In October and November, several regiments were dismissed to "sweeten people" as Robert Harley put it, and some public dissatisfaction was noted at a meeting of the lord justices because English regiments were broken while regiments of foreigners were kept up.30 On November 17, the very day after his triumphal return,31

26James, Letters to Shrewsbury by Vernon I: 409, 414.
27H.M.C., Portland Mss. 3: 592, 593; H.M.C., Mss. of J. J. Hope Johnstone, p. 102; C.S.P.D., 1697, pp. 474, 479, 483, 498; Grimblot, Letters of William III and Louis XIV I: 137-38; B.M. Bonnet, Add. Mss. 30,000 A, 391.
30C.S.P.D., 1697, pp. 445, 446, 447, 466; H.M.C., Portland Mss. 3: 593; Luttrell, A Brief Historical Relation 4: 313.
31He was received with unusual warmth. See Luttrell, A Brief Historical Relation 4: 269-306 passim; H.M.C., Mss. of Lord Kenyon, pp. 422-423; de Beer, The Diary of John Evelyn 5: 273; B.M., Bonnet, Add. Mss. 30,000 A, 376. Many of the laudatory sermons and congratulatory poems written for the occasion are at the Houghton Library, Harvard University.
William met with his council at Kensington in anticipation of the "warm debates" in Parliament. Two days later, his decision was reported to prorogue Parliament in order to gain more time to formulate plans. At the same time, the court newsletter made the point that the king wanted the army matter to be "regulated according to . . . [Parliament's] resolution." Toward the end of November, William confessed to Heinsius that the idea of keeping up troops "will meet with more difficulties in Parliament than I had expected" and complained of the "infinite pains" taken to discredit the policy "in the eyes of the public by speeches and by pamphlets." But, he went on, "nothing is neglected to oppose this notion."32

Before Parliament convened, at least three tracts appeared to answer Trenchard's *An Argument*. One, already referred to, was Somers's "Ballancing Letter." The author's reputation, his position as lord chancellor, his dignified, reasonable style must have lent the pamphlet uncommon importance. Another came from the ready pen of Daniel Defoe. His *Some Reflections on a Pamphlet Lately Publish'd, Entituled, an Argument Shewing That a Standing Army Is Inconsistent with a Free Government, and Absolutely Destructive to the Constitution of the English Monarchy* went through two editions before Parliament opened. The third tract, *Some Remarks upon a Late Paper, Entituled, an Argument Showing, That a Standing Army Is Inconsistent with a Free Government, and Absolutely Destructive to the Constitution of the English Monarchy*, was anonymous. The fact that William and the court were able to meet the challenge of Trenchard's pamphlet so promptly and effectively says much for the king's understanding of the power of the press and his ability to move swiftly.33

On December 3, William opened Parliament with a speech that dealt with a standing army in the most circumspect terms. The words "standing army" were not even used. Instead, he mentioned the "circumstances of affairs abroad" and declared himself "obliged" to convey his "opinion" that for the moment England would not be safe "without a land force." This reference to the army was buried between a comment on the size of the navy and a promise to employ his "thoughts in promoting trade," remarks designed to appeal to the interests of the members of Parliament. Probably with the same kind


33William's adroit use of pamphlets at an earlier stage in his political career has been detailed by Haley, *William of Orange and the English Opposition, 1672-74* passim.
of calculation, William did not specify the size of the “land force” that he felt was necessary. Such euphemism and discretion were not lost on the contemporary diarist, John Evelyn, who thought it “an handsom speech” and the king wise not to mention a standing army.\textsuperscript{34} When compared to the address on the same topic delivered by James II in 1685, just twelve years before, it is extraordinarily discreet. But unhappily for William, the House, according to Burnet, did not “like the way the King offered them his opinion.”\textsuperscript{35} Men opposed to the army seized the initiative, and on December 10, with the House sitting as a committee of the whole, Harley opened the debate with a resolution that the army be reduced to the size it was in 1680. The acid-tongued Howe followed and a debate of four hours ensued. It was a noisy affair. Friends of the court tried to introduce another motion that the question should be whether a land force was not necessary for the public safety. Upon their own account, they could not make themselves heard, and with sentiment running in favor of Harley’s motion, they gave up the effort.\textsuperscript{36} The king’s ministers, Ranelagh, Montague, Coningsby, and others, argued in vain that the consent of Parliament for a temporary force to meet the necessity of the times could not be regarded as a breach of the Bill of Rights. The resolution to reduce the army to its size in 1680 was carried with “a cry” by three-to-one that afternoon.\textsuperscript{37} It was calculated that in 1680 the army had numbered around 6,500 men, but no specific figure was allowed to be mentioned in the debate.\textsuperscript{38}

According to a contemporary, the “sudden and unexpected vote did amaze and astonish” the king and his friends.\textsuperscript{39} One foreign observer attempted to explain the vote by the xenophobia of the members present and by the absence of some others,\textsuperscript{40} but the fact was that men who were known to be for William such as Sir Herbert Crofts, Sir Richard Onslow, and Sir William Strickland abandoned him on the standing army issue. They were joined by others whose emotions carried them along with the popular antiarmy sentiment. The debate had been carried on with vigor and violence enough to arouse the members to a high pitch.\textsuperscript{41} But, after the resolution about the army had passed by a majority of only thirty-seven on December 11, it was

\textsuperscript{34}De Beer, \textit{The Diary of John Evelyn} 5: 278. William was always careful not to offend the prejudice for the navy and the militia.
\textsuperscript{35}Burnet, \textit{History of My Own Time} 4: 376. \textsuperscript{36}C.S.P.D., 1697, p. 507.
\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., p. 506. \textsuperscript{38}Ibid., pp. 506, 507.
\textsuperscript{39}H.M.C., Mss. of Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry 2 (parts 1-2): 593.
\textsuperscript{40}B.M., Bonnet, Add. Mss., 30,000 A, 399.
\textsuperscript{41}C.S.P.D., 1697, pp. 506-7, 514. A duel was narrowly averted.
observed that the vote on December 10 was the "effect of the gentlemen's first heat and aversion to a standing army" and that "many who were so hot have grown easier." The large vote was also explained as an attack on the king's ministers. It was reported that a "peak of country gentlemen against Mr. Montagu [sic] occasioned that hot resolve." Some members plainly regarded the vote on the army as a means of destroying Robert Spencer, earl of Sunderland, who was widely blamed for the army policy. It was suggested, too, that the rumors about disbandment and the shifting of regiments exacerbated rather than allayed English fears about a standing army. However explained, the vote on December 10 was a staggering setback for the king. Yet, large as Harley's majority was, the diverse nature and motivation of the opposition gave hopeful opportunity to the king's continuing efforts.

The king grasped every opportunity to assure as large and effective an army as possible. His efforts reveal a political adroitness. Throughout the session of 1697-98, he put pressure on members of Parliament and persuaded others of the wisdom of his army plans. The Brandenburg ambassador reported that ever since William's return he had been busy receiving peers and "deputés des villes," while Harley wrote home that "great endeavours have been used to make converts." Trenchard complained that "members of Parliament were discoursed with as they came to town" and declared that threats were made: "'twas whispered about that the Whigs would be turned out of employments." William summoned the duke of Devonshire "into his cabinet" and made "him some reproaches" because the duke's two sons had opposed him in the House of Commons. Probably bribes were used and there is direct evidence that at least one man was omitted from a government job because of his antiarmy atti-
There is also some evidence that William approached the most radically opposed men. On November 30, 1697, Robert Harley wrote his father about the efforts the Court was making and said "our friend in Essex Street is sent for at eleven tomorrow." The remark probably referred to the Grecian Coffee House, located in Essex Street, where John Trenchard met with his friends to write pamphlets against the army. It is possible that William contacted his old friend, Trenchard, who at the Revolution had advanced William £60,000 to urge him to soften the literary attack. The next year, William refused to allow Montague to take Trenchard into custody for writing *A Short History of Standing Armies in England*. Other maneuvers employed by the king included spreading rumors at opportune times to soften the resolve of the opposition, using his prerogative to delay the opening of Parliament in 1697 and 1698, and inducing Parliament to take a long Christmas recess in 1698, in each case to gain time to make converts to his cause. Members on whom he could count were urged to attend Parliament. Both Vernon and Harley mentioned that a political club was set up—"to retrieve ourselves" as Vernon put it.

William was also at pains to prevent any incident by the soldiers, some of whom were opposed to being dismissed. Macaulay recounts that some veterans threatened reprisals for the insults hurled at the army in debates in the House of Commons, and that William, mindful that a single untoward episode could undermine his army project, ordered officers to their quarters and "succeeded in preventing all outrage." Some army officers, as members of Parliament, did create a stir. But for the most part, the officers and men wisely enough seem to have made no effort to intrude themselves in the controversy raging about them.

In 1698, William resorted to subterfuge to maintain his army. His defiance of the parliamentary vote of January 11, 1698, to reduce

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49 James, *Letters to Shrewsbury by Vernon* 2: 149. 50 H.M.C., Portland Mss. 3: 593.
51 Grimblot, *Letters of William III and Louis XIV* 2: 27. Tallard said he traced the rumor to Lord Godolphin. It was circulated in anticipation of Commons's request for a report on the army. Also, de Beer, *The Diary of John Evelyn* 5: 323.
the army to ten thousand men raised the constitutional question that
the king was violating Article VI of the Bill of Rights and it was around
this point that he was attacked. As early as December 27, 1697,
Vernon wrote, “We are coming upon a ticklish point, which is the
keeping up a greater number of forces than the Parliament seems yet
to intend.” In his personal correspondence, William was quite candid
about his scheme. On April 8, 1698, in a detailed letter to Heinsius,
William wrote of his plan to enlarge the Mediterranean squadron and
“hasten its departure.” The troops already in the West Indies were to
be joined by others and to remain there. “This will make a consider­
able squadron,” he estimated. He also mentioned sending four or five
regiments to Jamaica “under pretence of defending our possessions
in those parts.” He concluded that he felt he could “at least for some
time... put off any further reduction of troops.” In August 1698,
he cancelled further reductions, awaiting news of the life-and-death
struggle of the king of Spain. Skillfully, he avoided complying with
requests for an accounting of reductions, and before leaving for Hol­
lund in 1698, left sealed instructions with his ministers that sixteen
thousand men be kept up. Throughout the months, he used lack of
funds as an excuse for the slow disbanding and blamed disorders in
the nation’s coin and credit. In making reductions, William kept the
officers and dismissed the men, following the French fashion. Thus,
the regiments could more readily be re-formed. William was delighted
when Parliament agreed in January 1698 to keep native (not foreign)
officers on half-pay. He estimated their number at fifteen hundred
and calculated that they would allow the speedy reassembling of a
substantial army. Later Vernon hoped that the Commons would not
object that “so many officers are appointed to so few men.” William
also kept up a greater proportion of cavalry than infantry, because he
felt cavalry was more effective in an emergency, took longer to train
and permitted more rapid regrouping. In December 1698, the actual

56Delapré Abbey, Shrewsbury Correspondence, vol. 1, letter no. 171. Cf. Luttrell,
A Brief Historical Relation 4: 318.
57Grimblot, Letters of William III and Louis XIV 1: 348-49.
58Burnet, History of My Own Time 4: 384.
59Grimblot, Letters of William III and Louis XIV 1: 322, 481; 2: 3, 29; cf. James,
Letters to Shrewsbury by Vernon 2: 85.
60Northamptonshire Record Office, Delapré Abbey, Shrewsbury Correspondence,
vol. 1, letter no. 154.
62C.S.P.D., 1699, p. 73.
63H.M.C., Portland Mss. 3: 605; Grimblot, Letters of William III and Louis XIV 1:
149-50.
number of soldiers came to over thirty thousand men, an army far larger than Parliament had intended.

Subterfuge gave way to supplication in late 1698. William confronted a recently elected House of Commons containing many new men who were bent on reducing the army. On November 25, Trenchard's *A Short History of Standing Armies in England* appeared, a tract which was so popular that it went through three editions before the end of the year and which, as already noted, incensed Montague so much that he wanted to take Trenchard into custody. On December 16, the House voted to reduce the army to seven thousand natural-born subjects of England. The vote deeply upset William. "I am so chagrined," he wrote to Heinsius, "at what passes in the Lower House with regard to the troops, that I can scarce turn my thoughts to any other matter. I foresee that I shall be obliged to come to resolutions of extremity." This letter hinted at a threat to resign and return to Holland. William drew up a speech to deliver to Parliament and took into his confidence Somers, John Churchill, earl (later duke) of Marlborough, Montague, and Edward Russell, earl of Oxford, as well as "divers others," so Somers believed. The threat became generally known, but there is no evidence that the knowledge created any apprehension in the House. William was dissuaded (principally by Somers), but he continued to rely heavily upon personal prestige and entreaty. Interestingly enough, there is no evidence that he entertained the idea of vetoing the Disbanding Bills, a fact which again testifies to his political sensitivity and respect for public opinion.

In January 1699, the House of Commons made it plain that it was unwilling to include William's Dutch Guards in the establishment. Hoping to arouse parliamentary sympathies for an aggrieved king, William twice made a direct plea that his Guards, of whom he was especially fond, be allowed to remain with him. On February 1, 1699, when he assented to the Disbanding Bill, he stressed that he regarded himself as "unkindly used." This speech made an impression on the Lords, but nothing came of their efforts to oblige him. Therefore, on

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65 *C.J.* 12: 359. Matthew Prior noted that many men in Parliament thought even that figure too high. See his *The History of His Own Time* (London, 1740), p. 44.
March 18 William made another personal effort. He had Ranelagh read a special message for him begging the House of Commons to keep on the Guards as a special favor to him. But the timing was poor, his friends lacked the courage to speak and the dramatic appeal misfired. To his embarrassment, the plea was rejected, the House returning what the king termed an "impertinent address." Wrote Vernon, wearily, "Nobody that heard of it could imagine that it would have any effect. However, his Majesty would have it attempted."69

Opportunities were missed, however, by both the king’s spokesmen in Parliament and his friends in the press to turn to William’s advantage the fact that the opposition was not serious about the bills to reform the militia which were introduced and then ignored in both the 1697 and the 1698 sessions of Parliament. It might have been argued from the history of those bills that national defense was being neglected by an irresponsible opposition, that the interest in the militia was perfunctory and that, therefore, the standing army recommended by the court was necessary. Two militia bills were introduced, one in December 1697, the other in December 1698. But nothing came of either of them.70 In Parliament, where actions could have made a real difference, there were obviously few men who believed in the militia. The handling of the two militia bills well illustrates that the cry “Reform the militia,” like the cry “No Standing Army,” had propagandist rather than substantive meaning. For the politician, as opposed to the intellectual, the militia had become a sacred cow. In a measure, the standing army menace had become a bogey which could be invoked to discredit the court while the demand to reform the militia could be served up to assure the politically conscious that the defense of the nation was not being neglected. By the end of the seventeenth century, this tactic was assuredly a pan of the antistanding army ideology. The friends of the court missed an opportunity to make this point in Parliament and press.

William’s efforts were undermined by several fundamental factors. He confronted an antiarmy sentiment which over the century had become deeply rooted in English political and constitutional thinking.

Besides this, he had no ministerial body which could effectively influence the House. Already weakened before the standing army controversy, the Whig Junto had to deal with an acutely self-conscious House of Commons, markedly jealous of royal prerogative and sensitive to royal influence. William’s ministers were asked to press a measure which they knew was repugnant to the majority of the House of Commons and to members of their own party. Their dilemma of reconciling their obligations to the king with the political realities in the House was never resolved. Further, they were neither individually nor as a group properly informed about international affairs nor instructed on the details of William’s army requirements. It was said that during the entire winter of 1697-98 William “would not speak to any in his Service about his affairs,” because he wanted to see how things would turn out and which party would prove the stronger. His willingness to use anyone who could help him was partly responsible for his ministers’ lack of vigor in promoting his military scheme. In the fall of 1698, Lord Chancellor Somers, reputedly the king’s closest English adviser, confessed that he was “entirely at a loss, what is to be aimed at.” Somers declared the king had no real ministry and asserted that the consequence was that “everybody (seeing the little credit those have who serve him), is in a manner, invited to endeavour to ruin or expose” the men about him.

So uncommunicative was William that his ministers lacked specific instructions about the size of the army he hoped to win and were, thus, at a disadvantage in the numbers game Harley played with the army establishment. In December 1697, the ministers were not authorized to aim for a specific size for the army. Hence, they offered no certain alternative to Harley’s resolution of December 10, 1697, that the military establishment be reduced to the level of 1680. In December 1698, the ministers told the king they thought the House could be brought to give ten thousand men, but William felt this figure was grossly inadequate and refused to authorize them to propose it. Harley again took the lead in debate and proposed seven thousand men. It was felt that the members, not knowing what figure would be decided upon if the seven thousand was rejected, accepted Harley’s

72See Betty Kemp, King and Commons, 1660-1832 (London, 1959), chapter 5 for ministers in this period.
74Hardwicke, Miscellaneous State Papers 2: 435 (Somers to Shrewsbury, undated, but written in the fall of 1698).
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If some of his ministers had been privy to the plans and secrets which William shared so generously with his Dutch confreres, his army policy might have been championed in Parliament with considerably more energy. Even so, plans were laid, and parliamentary counter-attacks were from time to time made on the army bill, which, as already indicated, never resulted in victory but did significantly cut majorities. On December 11, 1697, a motion to recommit was defeated by only thirty-seven votes; on January 8, 1698, the question was reopened by surprise, “contrary to all order,” and the court was beaten back only after eight hours of debate by a majority of twenty-four. On December 23, 1698, an attack on the Disbanding Bill was lost after a two hour debate and another effort failed, but “not shamefully,”76 in January 1699. On March 20, 1699, the decision to refuse the king his Dutch Guards passed by only six votes.

William was disgusted with the faltering way in which his ministers, as a whole, handled the army issue and blamed them for “their easy giving way.”77 It is true that more than once the ministers bungled the effort, remained silent, refused to divide, argued for one reason or another for accepting the Disbanding Bills and actually voted for them. As a result of their half-hearted efforts, they lost their standing with both king and Commons, were accused by the one of supporting an army and blamed by the other for failing to secure the establishment William wanted.78

A closely related weakness in the king’s campaign was that he had no leader upon whom he could count as “manager” for the cause. Although several ministers were singled out by contemporaries as working for the king’s project, no one took charge. Perhaps most disappointing to the king was the unenthusiastic activity of Somers, the lord chancellor. Nor did William find among members of the House of Lords resolute commitment to the army project. A majority among the lords, including Godolphin, Sir John Thompson, baron of

75James, Letters to Shrewsbury by Vernon 2: 235-236; B.M., Bonnet, Add. Mss. 30,000 C, f. 5 recto and 5 verso; Burnet, History of My Own Time 4: 399-400. The same kind of thing occurred in the authorization debate in January 1698 (C.S.P.D., 1698, pp. 23, 24). William told both Heinsius and Portland that he had not kept his ministers informed (Grimblot, Letters of William III and Louis XIV 1: 416, 434).
76P.R.O., S.P. 32 11 121.
77James, Letters to Shrewsbury by Vernon 2: 241; 239-10, 245, 267-68, 277; H.M.C., Portland Mss. 3: 601.
78Grimblot, Letters of William III and Louis XIV 2: 232, 234, 244; James, Letters to Shrewsbury by Vernon 2: 262-63, 270, 293-94; C.S.P.D., 1699, pp. 5, 6; de Bev., The Diary of John Evelyn 5: 309; B. M., Bonnet, Add. Mss. 30,000 B, ff. 8 verso, 279 verso; Burnet, History of My Own Time 4: 399-400, 106.
Haversham; Sir Thomas Osborne, earl of Danby and in these years duke of Leeds; John Sheffield, duke of Buckingham and Normanby; Portland; Laurence Hyde, earl of Rochester; and Forde Grey, earl of Tankerville, sincerely believed that peacetime troops were necessary. Their conviction was buttressed by their anger that the shrewd leaders in Commons had used the device of tacking the Disbanding Bill on to a money bill, a tactic which made it difficult for the Lords to change the terms of the disbanding at all. But the Lords were unwilling to press the issue because they feared the consequences of a rupture with the House of Commons. Their dilemma is illustrated in the passage of the Disbanding Bill in 1699. Plainly, the several props which supported the king lacked cohesiveness, resoluteness, and courage.

William’s effort was further weakened by the many pamphlets arguing against a standing army in peacetime which appeared in 1697–99. Taken together these tracts formed a carefully woven, eloquently written statement of antimilitary ideas that had appeared in bits and pieces throughout the seventeenth century. The themes these pamphlets explored were derivative, revealing the inheritance of earlier works that had dealt with the evils of standing armies. The reprinting of some of that earlier literature in the decade of the 1690s shows how immediate the influence was. For example, Neville’s translation of all the works of Machiavelli was reissued in 1694 and 1695 and Neville’s *Plato Redivivus* was reprinted in 1698. The tracts written by Shaftesbury and his circle and Shaftesbury’s speeches from the fall of 1675 were made readily available in 1693 in the reprinting of *A Collection of State Tracts . . . Privately Printed in the Reign of Charles II*. In that volume, Samuel Johnson’s *Several Reasons for the Establishment of a Standing Army* was included which, with such heavy sarcasm, had urged members of the Parliament of 1685 to oppose James II’s demand for an army. The account of the debates in November 1685 about the army were also printed in 1697. James Harrington’s *Oceana* and his other works, which were freely drawn on by all the writers against the army, were edited by John Toland and republished around the time of the controversy, in 1700.
Edmund Ludlow’s *Memoirs*, which criticized Cromwell’s New Model Army, and Algernon Sidney’s *Discourses Concerning Government*, one of whose principles was the need to protect a free government from the tyranny of a standing army, were both printed in 1698. In December 1693, Robert Molesworth’s *An Account of Denmark As It Was in the Year 1692* appeared: five editions of this work published before 1696 testifies to its widespread popularity. It had a deep impact upon the ideas of the major pamphleteers.

John Trenchard was the most important of the men who opposed the army in the press. He was involved in politics or polemical writing all his life. Born in 1662, the son of Sir William Trenchard and a distant relative of Sir John Trenchard, King William’s secretary of state, he was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and studied law in London. By inheritance and marriage, Trenchard became wealthy enough to be able to support the Revolution of 1689, as already noted, by lending William £60,000. Although not elected to Parliament until 1722, Trenchard was appointed in 1699 by the Commons to investigate the forfeited Irish estates and was among the four commissioners who signed the report which sharply criticized the king and his ministers.

Described by Thomas Gordon, with whom he collaborated in the 1720s in writing *Cato’s Letters* and other polemical tracts, as the “great tutor,” Trenchard was well qualified by his wide knowledge and able pen to inspire individuals with intellectual and political interests. He was widely read in ancient and modern historians, and had been profoundly influenced by Machiavelli, Bacon, and Harrington. He was deeply obligated to Molesworth, Sidney, Ludlow, Milton, Locke, Neville, and William Molyneux. Plainly his thought had been nurtured in the liberal traditions of the seventeenth century. There is no evidence, however, that he was influenced by Leveller tracts which had sought, it should be recalled, to restrict the military obligations which a government could impose upon an individual. Nor was he touched in any way by the Renaissance tradition of Christian universalism and pacifism.

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83The report and other papers are reprinted in *State Tracts during William III* 2: 709–773.

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Trenchard possessed an attractive and compelling personality which also helped him to win the affection and respect of men. It was said that he never wrote himself, but declaimed while standing or walking about while another person took down his words. Possibly the young Walter Moyle served as Trenchard’s amanuensis. Gordon, who knew Trenchard well, said that he was “one of the worthiest, one of the ablest, one of the most useful Men that ever any Country” could have. Discounting the personal prejudice, this remains high praise indeed.

Although Trenchard was not himself a member of Parliament in 1697-99, his friends Moyle and Molesworth were. He was also close enough to Harley to ask him for some information about the development of the army under Charles II and James II. Although there is no direct evidence, it seems likely that the connection between Trenchard and the parliamentary opposition was close enough to allow for coordination between the appearance of the pamphlets opposing William’s project and the motions in the House of Commons calling for the disbandment of the army.

It was Trenchard who initiated the pamphlet warfare in October 1697 with An Argument, Shewing. He was busy again in December 1697 with A Letter from the Author of the Argument against a Standing Army, to the Author of the Ballancing Letter and the Second Part of an Argument . . . with Remarks on the Late Published List of King James’s Irish Forces in France. When it became evident that the army was not being reduced to the limits set by the parliamentary vote, he was responsible in November 1698 for reopening the pamphlet controversy with A Short History of Standing Armies in England. An Argument, Shewing and A Short History provoked prompt replies from Somers, Defoe, and others. Both tracts gave such offense that the secretary of state, James Vernon, ordered the printer, John Darby, to appear before him to identify the author. At a meeting of

83Richard Baron, an eighteenth-century dissenter and literary heir of Thomas Gordon, noted on the flyleaf of his copy of Essays on Important Subjects (London, 1750), now at the Houghton Library, Harvard University, that Trenchard declaimed while others took down his words.


87B.M., Lans, 29/282. I am indebted to Professor Henry Horwitz for this reference.


89Luttrell, A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs 4: 313, 315.
the king’s council, Montague argued that Trenchard should be taken into custody for writing *A Short History*, but as already noted, William would not permit this. There is no evidence that any of the other anti-army pamphlets agitated the court to such an extent.

The other men associated with Trenchard were also wealthy intellectuals and reformers, interested in political theory, history, the classics, languages and economics. Walter Moyle, the young scholar among them, was the most familiar with the life and thought of the ancients and possibly contributed the classical allusions in *An Argument, Shewing*.\(^90\) It is unlikely that he alone wrote *The Second Part of an Argument*, but the fact that the authorship was disputed underscores his reputation. As already noted, he sat in the House of Commons during the height of the controversy, as a member for Saltash (1695–98) and served on one of the committees relating to disbandment. At the same time, he was busy translating ancient texts and publishing his own essays on classical governments.\(^91\)

The Rev. Samuel Johnson, who, it will be remembered, had protested James II’s demand for a standing army in 1685 and in 1686 had urged the king’s forces to desert, was asked\(^92\) by Trenchard’s circle to respond to John Somers’ *Letter, Ballancing*. Accordingly, *A Confutation of a Late Pamphlet Entituled, A Letter Ballancing the Necessity of Keeping a Land-Force in Times of Peace, with the Dangers That May Follow on It* was published in early 1698 and was followed in 1700 by *The Second Part of the Confutation of the Ballancing Letter, Containing an Occasional Discourse in Vindication of Magna Charta*. Johnson was steeped in the thinking of constitutional and legal authorities, such as Bracton, Fortescue, Gerson, and Grotius. Because of this theoretical background, and because of his connection with the trial of Lord Russell, he was especially interested in the question of resistance to constituted authority. Despite Johnson’s experience in pamphleteering, his erudition, his interest in the history and complexities of a theory of resistance, and his discursive style make heavy reading of his two contributions to the controversy. They are, to the twentieth-century reader, the least effective of the tracts which were written.


Andrew Fletcher, of Saltoun, the famous Scottish patriot, is remembered in this controversy for his keen grasp of history, his perceptive analysis of the decay of liberty in Europe around 1500, and its implications for peacetime armies, and his scheme for improving the militia.\(^93\) Published in London in 1697, and then in Edinburgh in 1698 under a different title with a few minor changes, his *A Discourse concerning Militias and Standing Armies, with Relation to the Past and Present Governments of Europe, and of England in Particular*, enjoyed a long history of reprints. John Toland, pensionary of Molesworth and Shaftesbury and known in 1697 for his unorthodox views on religion, was concerned in this debate like Fletcher with formulating a practical scheme for revitalizing the militia. His ideas were presented in *The Militia Reformed; Or an Easy Scheme of Furnishing England with a Constant Land-Force, Capable to Prevent or to Subdue Any Foreign Power; and to Maintain Perpetual Quiet at Home, without Endangering the Publick Liberty*, which he said he wrote partly at the “request of the person I honor.”

In the standing army controversy, these men and their friends were a closely knit group which met for conversation, pamphleteering, and drink at coffee houses in London. Most often the scene of their conversations was the Grecian Coffee House in Devereux Court off Essex Street, but if a contemporary can be believed, they also met at the Old Devil at St. Dunstan’s, The Young Devil, the Long Dog, and Tom’s Coffee House in Newgate. It was widely alleged that the pamphlets were resolved upon by the “club” as the result of these meetings.\(^94\) The “club” was ridiculed for “affecting as zealous a look as if every man were a Machiavel,” and for using “the grave nod, the solemn face, the whisper, the wise and politick forehead.”\(^95\) Luttrell reported that Edmund Waller gave *An Argument, Shewing* to the ded-


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icated republican, Isaac Littlebury, who in turn took it to the printer. The tracts were printed almost always by John Darby in Bartholomew-Close and sold by Andrew Bell at the Cross-Keys and Bible in Cornhil and Andrew Baldwin in Warwicklane, near Oxford Arms Inn. Baldwin advertised himself as the book seller "of whom may be had all the pamphlets against a standing army." Some of the tracts appeared just before the opening of Parliament in 1697 and 1698, in time to influence the course of debate, and were widely circulated between sessions. It was complained that the pamphlets were "so industriously handed about" that they appeared in the "remotest counties" before they were seen in London, where they were "bagged" about the streets. Partly because of the tracts, the views and votes of members of Parliament were changed.

The court's response to these pamphlets was made largely by Somers and Daniel Defoe. As already noted, Somers wrote *A Letter, Ballancing* in November 1697, a dignified and restrained plea for William's proposal, which must have assumed uncommon importance because of the author's position. The very reluctance which Somers expressed in recommending a standing army made the point of necessity all the more convincing. Yet, Somers made no sustained effort in Parliament or the press on behalf of the king's cause.

Defoe was a more enthusiastic and faithful advocate. During the decade of the 1690s he had served the court as a paid pamphleteer. His interest in military affairs enabled him to write convincingly on military requirements for national safety. Travel abroad and information from the court circle gave him an intimate knowledge of international affairs. Defoe wrote three highly effective tracts: *Some Re-


99 John Robert Moors, *Daniel Defoe, Citizen of the Modern World* (Chicago, 1958), especially chapters 10, 16. Moors estimates that during William's reign Defoe wrote at least twenty-seven tracts or poems to win support for court policies. Defoe was not the close intimate of king and court that Moors implies.

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flections, already mentioned, An Argument Shewing, That a Standing Army, with Consent of Parliament, Is Not Inconsistent with a Free Government, which was printed in early 1698, and A Brief Reply to the History of Standing Armies in England, which appeared in November 1698. The second tract is the most persuasive. Written with conviction and precision, it is a rapidly paced, hard-hitting statement, directed to the "English freeholder" and urging a reasonable, sensible course.

In addition to Somers and Defoe, men of lesser political and literary reputation argued for a standing army in peacetime. Matthew Prior, the poet and diplomat, was well aware of the international probabilities, distressed over the parliamentary attitude, and interested enough to send the earl of Galway a paper on the standing army. Possibly his friend, Montague, encouraged him to write a poem, A New Answer to an Argument against a Standing Army, which was printed in 1697. Richard Kingston was a paid political pamphleteer who had been employed by the government since 1689. In 1698, his A True History of the Several Designs and Conspiracies, against His Majesties Sacred Person and Government, as They Were Continually Carry'd On from 1688 to 1697 was printed to persuade people of the dangers facing England so that they would not voluntarily "drop the sword out of [their] hands." In 1699, Cursory Remarks upon Some Late Disloyal Proceedings in Several Cabals appeared.

Further, William's cause was justified by a score of nameless writers. One tract was written by a man proud to call himself a Whig, another by a military man, two others by private individuals, writing out of a sense of civic responsibility, another by a man

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100 Defoe is identified as the author by John Robert Moore, A Check-List of the Writings of Daniel Defoe (Bloomington, 1960), and Donald Wing, Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland . . . 1641-1700 (New York, 1945), 1: 435.

101 Prior's correspondence and a "Journal of the Proceedings at Ryswick, 1697" are in H.M.C., Bath Mss. vol. 3, passim, 186-87.


103 A Short Vindication of Marine Regiments, in Answer to a Pamphlet, Entitled, a Letter to a Member of Parliament, concerning the Four Marine Regiments (London, 1699).

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who insisted his indignation compelled him to write with undue haste. The antiarmy argument reflected a radical Whig philosophy. For Trenchard and his friends the issue was a political one. They equated a standing army in peacetime with absolutism and argued that an army would alter the separation and balance which they saw among the parts of government—king, Lords, and Commons. In this balance lay the excellence of England's government. The English monarchy was strictly limited, not only by law, but also by the right of the people to resist tyrannical acts of the prince. Those limitations demanded vigilance. Already the balance of government was overweighted in the king's favor by his vast prerogatives, and a standing army apart, the nation was challenged to protect itself against the power of the court. If a standing army in peacetime were added, the possibilities for patronage would be increased, Parliament would be corrupted by the presence of army officers who would have only the interest of the court at heart, the power of the king's ministers would be enlarged, and the mixed and balanced government (the old Gothic constitution) would be destroyed. Fletcher argued that professional armies are composed of men whose trade is war, and that "no well-constituted Government ever suffered any such men in it." Trenchard believed that a "deluge of tyranny" was overspreading the world, and that English liberty had been preserved only because of the absence of a standing army.

The antiarmy writers belabored the idea that the right to resist, which had justified the Revolution and was an important point in the thought of the radical Whigs, would be nullified by a standing army. Trenchard reminded his readers that if Charles I had had an army the Grand Rebellion would never have been fought, and that if James I had not united the nation against him in opposition to his Catholicizing policy, his army on Hounslow Heath would have enslaved the country. It was also predicted that a standing army would inevitably destroy Parliament as a free and effective force. The history of Denmark and of England during the rule of Cromwell illustrated the fate of representative institutions. Trenchard, Fletcher, and Johnson adopted the extreme position that Parliament could not control the army through its control of appropriations and Trenchard went even further saying that an army established by act of Parliament was

106 Fletcher, Discourse Concerning Militias, pp. 16, 17.
more, rather than less dangerous, because it thereby became part of the constitution. 108 This point was one of the weakest in the antiarmy argument. 109 But it permitted the pamphleteers logically to reject the assertion that Parliament would fetter the army and was consistent with their position that an army, no matter the restraints imposed upon it, was dangerous to liberty.

History was freely used to confirm the relationship between absolutism and a peacetime army. Trenchard declared that history offered incontrovertible proof that “in all ages and all parts of the world a standing army has been the never-failing instrument of enslaving a nation.” 110 Fletcher’s analysis of the decay of liberty around 1500 was directed to the same point. Luxury, made possible by economic and social changes, led to the abandonment of the old, frugal, feudal military way of life. The defense of the realm thus slipped into the hands of kings who eliminated ancient freedoms and rights. England should learn that “nothing” can prevent her “from following the fate of all the other kingdoms in Europe” unless she avoids a standing army in peacetime. 111

The antiarmy writers were ill-informed about international affairs. Trenchard asserted that with a peace just concluded “we can never disband our army with so much safety as at this time.” Fletcher agreed that England was in no danger from France. 112 In none of the antiarmy tracts is there evidence of a sense of responsibility for the liberty and religion of the continent or understanding that what happened there would affect England. These men were the isolationists of the seventeenth century, interested in the fleet, colonies, and overseas dominion. They were not willing, beyond engaging the fleet, to use England’s strength to contain the power of France. Trenchard reasoned that should war occur, “tis our interest to let the Dutch and Germans manage it, which is proper to their situation, and let our province be to undertake the sea.” Should England be forced to maintain troops

109 It is paradoxical that these radical Whigs who were champions of parliamentary authority should not have found merit in the court’s proposal to place the standing army under parliamentary authority. See MacKenzie, Andrew Fletcher, p. 340, n. 2.
111 Fletcher, Discourse concerning Militias, pp. 9, 12, 28.
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abroad, then "we may hire men from Germany for half the price we can raise them here and they will be sooner ready."113 Such an attitude by no means weakened the thrust of the antiarmy argument; it reflected the opinion of most Englishmen, whose disinterest in international affairs was the king's frequent complaint.

With the exception of Fletcher, Toland and the nameless author of The Late Prints for a Standing Army, the antiarmy writers were as little informed about modern warfare as they were about foreign affairs. Political theorists rather than military strategists, they dealt with the question of defense in perfunctory fashion. One writer went so far as to recommend that the royal Guards be reduced to twelve hundred men. He argued that the militia could defend the Tower by turns and declared, quoting Aristotle and Machiavelli, that guards were an insult to a free people.114 This pamphleteer also believed that the marine regiments should be dismissed. He scored a telling point, charging that the marine regiments were really designed as a land force, but were called marines "'to deceive unthinking Men.""115 The sea was regarded by all the writers as England's natural empire and the fleet as capable of giving "'laws to the universe.""116 While making passing reference to the need to strengthen the navy, they seem to have been unaware of the navy's tangled financial and administrative affairs, and of the sharp criticism levelled at it, especially since 1695, by other pamphlet writers.117 Unwilling to entertain the idea that another nation could be superior to England in naval power, they discounted the growth of the French navy. The same kind of optimism was reflected in their attitude toward the militia. Admitting that the militia was in deplorable shape, they blamed its condition on proarmy men, whom they charged with refusing to remodel it so as to have an excuse for a standing army. Trenchard and his colleagues categorically averred that a trained militia, from the technical as well as the political point of view, was a superior military instrument. They dismissed the idea that war had become so complex technologically that professional soldiers were necessary. Revealing a surprising naïveté,

113 Trenchard, A Short History of Standing Armies, in State Tracts during William III 2: 676; cf. Fletcher, Discourse concerning Militias, p. 27.
114 A Letter to a Member of Parliament concerning Guards and Garrisons, in State Tracts during William III 2: 678-79.
115 A Letter to a Member of Parliament Concerning the Four Regiments Commonly Called Marines (London, 1699) in ibid., 2: 683.

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Trenchard wrote that the technical advances in warfare "are as much gained in the closet as in the field," and that the militia organization was quite competent to deal with their instruction.

Of the three pamphlets offering detailed plans for reorganizing the militia, Fletcher's is the most significant. Developed in the 1698 edition of his Discourse concerning Militias, the plan reveals close affinities to Harrington's ideas. None but propertied men were to be included in the militia. Their service would be compulsory, lasting from one to two years, depending upon financial ability. The militia would be divided into four camps, and the techniques of marching, provisioning, strategy, and tactics would be taught by moving the camps every eight days. The strictest discipline would build character as well as train soldiers, and the knowledge and training would be kept fresh by a kind of reserve training program, involving exercises fifty times a year and attendance at a local summer camp. The radical idea of foreign service on a rotating basis was suggested. Such a blueprint for creating an alternative to a standing army had no practical significance at the end of the seventeenth century, but such schemes were recalled at various times in the eighteenth century, and as Fletcher's biographer has pointed out, Fletcher's plan, without the element of compulsion, has been realized today in the formation of the territorial forces.

Trenchard and his colleagues were not unaware that social and economic prejudices were at the root of many a country gentleman's fear of a standing army. Social and economic themes thread through their pamphlets, but on a subordinate level. Trenchard is plain that he "purposely" neglected the "lesser inconveniences" of a standing army because he felt they were "trivial" compared to those he wrote about "which strike at the heart's blood of our constitution." Even so the various tracts deal with the lesser dangers: depletion of the labor market, cost of quartering and maintaining troops, unfortunate social composition and moral implications, and threat to the sanctity of property. Indeed, Fletcher stressed the economic implications of a standing army in a tract entitled The First Discourse concerning the Affairs of Scotland, printed in 1698. Fletcher asserted that, so far as Scotland was concerned, a standing army would increase the poverty of the country and reduce it to total desolation. No country endeavoring to establish manufacturing and advance trade should spend her substance on soldiers. The money could be more effectively used in

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119 MacKenzie, Andrew Fletcher, pp. 135-36.  
120 Trenchard, An Argument, pp. 28-29.
promoting various economic enterprises. Finally, the sons of the nobility were far better off in trade than in war.\(^{121}\)

In response, the royal writers had to deal with two formidable challenges: one was to answer Trenchard’s central charge that a standing army meant the overthrow of a balanced government and the end of English freedom. The second was to persuade the reader that an army was necessary without antagonizing the widespread pride in the fleet and faith in the militia. One way they blunted the thrust of the antiarmy argument was to offer their proposals in circumpsect fashion. Insisting upon a fine distinction which Trenchard did not hesitate to ridicule, Somers wrote, “When I seem to prepare you to consider the necessity of keeping a land-force, I am far from the thought of a standing army.” He confessed that if international and military conditions were different, he would “reject the proposition with horror.”\(^{122}\) Or again, the proarmy writers insisted the standing army they envisioned would be different from past or present examples. For example, the standing army would be in the hands of Parliament and by this device rendered harmless. Somers asked for a “reasonable force from year to year” whose size would be determined annually by Parliament according to the demands of the international situation. Such annual reviews would make it impossible for the army to violate the constitution. Other writers pointed out that the army would be unlikely to attack Parliament, its paymaster. Defoe maintained that the consent of Parliament made the army legal, and thus standing troops, established by law, could not logically be inconsistent with a free government.\(^{123}\) This kind of logic, convincing to some, failed to dispel the objections of Trenchard and his friends.

Another way the proarmy writers dealt with the equation of an army and tyranny was to appeal to England’s devotion to freedom. Paid troops, Somers said, could do no harm so long as the country was dedicated to the principles of liberty and willing to protect its constitution.\(^{124}\) Some royalist writers insisted that far from harming freedom, the army would protect English liberties which otherwise would be swallowed up in a French conquest.\(^{125}\) Another argument was that the army’s past behavior was exemplary. Readers were reminded that

\(^{121}\) In *The Political Works of Andrew Fletcher* (London, 1737), pp. 91, 92, 93, 98.


\(^{125}\) Some Queries, p. 11; *The Case of Disbanding*, p. 8; *Reflections on the Short History*, p. 14.
James II's army had taken sides for the Protestant religion and political freedom and saved the country from a Catholic tyranny. Still another answer was the flat rejection of the "club's" use and interpretation of history. The royal pamphleteers charged Trenchard and his friends with deliberate misstatement, omission, misunderstanding, and useless display of pedantry. Unfortunately for their cause, however, they never dealt systematically with the "club's" theory of mixed, balanced government. Only Defoe and the author of *A Letter to A, B, C, D, E, F, G, etc.* came to grips with the question of Gothic government. Defoe denied out of hand that the Gothic arrangement provided a true balance and a protection for liberty, arguing that the true balance was for the king to hold the sword and the people the money and for no war to be made without both concurring. *A Letter to A, B, C, D, E, F, G, etc.* extended the analysis. Admitting that the outward form of government was threefold, the author argued that the "collective body of the people . . . with a King at the head of them" was the real government. Rejecting the theory that the constitution and English liberties were protected by any mechanical method of balance among the parts of government or by any military arrangement, the author argued that freedom had been preserved by the power of the people and by God.

The major writers were more successful in meeting the second challenge: exposing the weakness of the fleet and militia as the only instruments of national defense. One argument stressed the manifest changes in the art of war. Defoe was the most effective in handling this point. He wrote that professional soldiers were necessary because war "has become a science and arms an employment," and "requires people to make it their whole employment." Paid troops, he reminded his readers, could be sent abroad (the militia could not), thus protecting England by keeping the fighting away from her shores. Somers was the most sensitive to the general prejudice in favor of the militia. Lacing the "Ballancing Letter" with compliments for this force, he averred that he would never "disparage" or "derogate from" the mili-

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126 The references are numerous. For example, Somers, *A Letter, Ballancing*, in *State Tracts during William III* 2: 587; *A Brief Reply*, p. 6; *An Argument Proving That a Small Number of Regulated Forces*, pp. 20, 23; *A View of the Short History*, pp. 8-9.


tia, that he regarded them as “much the best in the world.” But, the methodology of war and the tense international situation could not wait upon the necessary training of the militia. None of the royal pamphleteers exploited the opportunity to show from the history of Charles II and James II that there was always much talk and little action about revitalizing the militia, just as they neglected to mention that the committee set up by the House of Commons in 1697 to bring in a bill to reform the militia was poorly attended and made no progress. Somers and Defoe must have known this—certainly Vernon did.130

Another argument was that international affairs required a strong defense. Somers argued that “the best guaranty of a peace is a good force to maintain it.”131 Despite the sufferings of the last war, France was extremely strong. Not only did she have an army on hand, but she had retained strategically important places, such as Strassburg and Alsace, enjoyed untouched sources of wealth such as the church lands, and had enlarged the size of the French fleet. It was argued that Louis was shrewdly playing upon the jealousies of the former members of the League to make another coalition as difficult as possible, and that his ambitions were nothing less than to be a universal monarch. One pamphlet, The Argument against a Standing Army Rectified, and the Reflections and Remarks against It in Several Pamphlets, Consider’d treated with deepest insight the relationship between France and Spain and the implications for England. The author stressed that Louis’s determination to unite the crown of Spain and France and the delicate health of the Spanish king, Charles II, made a stable peace impossible. If France should win the Spanish crown upon the death of Charles II, she would then have an excellent title to Flanders, which meant that England would be “blockt up on all sides, our trade must everywhere be at their mercy, and we are liable to their invasions without any prospect of relief.”132

In addition, the threat of Jacobitism was offered as justification for a standing army. Somers and Defoe underplayed the threat of the Jacobites, but the lesser pamphleteers insisted that the exiled James, supported by Louis’s army and by traitors at home, presented an immediate danger.133 The most persuasive pamphlet was A List of King

130James, Letters to Shrewsbury by Vernon 2: 35.
133The Case of a Standing Army Fairly and Impartially Stated (London, 1698), p. 24; Reflections on the Short History of Standing Armies, pp. 8, 10; An Argument Proving, That a Small Number of Regulated Forces, p. 1.
James’s Irish and Popish Forces in France, Ready (When Called for), in Answer to an Argument vs. a Land-Force, Writ by A,B,C,D,E,F,G, or to Whatever Has Been, or Ever Shall Be, Writ upon That Subject. This was an exaggerated statement of James’s military forces. It must have had an impact because two answers were immediately forthcoming from Trenchard’s group. Although there were many compelling qualities about the proarmy argument, it failed to move the majority of the people in and out of Parliament. Few of the tracts were reprinted, testimony to lack of organization among the writers and lack of enthusiasm for their message. Yet the evidence shows more general, unorganized agreement with the king’s policy than has been granted.

The antiarmy pamphlets had a significant influence at the height of the controversy. They generated and maintained more interest in the question than might otherwise have existed, and they changed views and votes in Parliament. They are a major factor in explaining why William’s proposal failed. Moreover, taken as a group, the pamphlets by Trenchard and his friends marked a climax in the history of the antistanding army ideology. Although the themes they explored were derivative, these tracts made an important contribution to political and intellectual history by summing up and fully articulating the antistanding army attitude which had been stated in fragments before, and by emphasizing the political dangers inherent in a professional, permanent military force. Further, the tracts played a vital role in the transmission of this attitude to eighteenth-century England and the American colonies. The antistanding army attitude became an intellectual tradition which, in modified form, still exists. At the same time, of course, the royal proposal of a small standing army in peacetime under the control of Parliament actually triumphed; it was this arrangement which was accepted in eighteenth-century England and in general terms has been followed ever since in England and in the United States.

134 A List appeared probably between October and December 1697, not in 1699 as noted in Somers Tract 11: 473. It was answered by Trenchard in “Remarks on a Late Published Lisi.” appended to his The Second Part of an Argument, printed in December 1697, and Some Queries for the Better Understanding of a List (London, 1697).