

War

Controlling Escalation

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Harvard University Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts
and
London, England
1977

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Part One
The Problem of Escalation

CASE STUDIES

which at several crucial junctures influenced policy toward more escalation, and the sheer complexity of the interactions among the five powers deeply involved.

Perhaps the most crucial element in the sequence, and the one that might have been most readily reversible, was a continuing failure by the British and French to comprehend and exploit the potential of their progressive fleet advancement to fulfill an escalation-control function as well as a deterrent function. The squadron was not used to prevent *both* sides from using the Black Sea, and at no time was its deployment made contingent upon Turkish behavior. Neither did the British and French realize, in the weeks preceding the Sinope massacre, that they themselves had set up nearly all the *preconditions* for some event like Sinope that would propel the escalation sequence to the very edge of war.

The Seven Years War

Almost exactly a hundred years before the escalation sequence that culminated in the Crimean War, there was another sequence that had still greater consequences. Britain secured a vast empire in the Seven Years War of 1756-1763, generally known in the United States as the French and Indian War. (Paradoxically, by making that empire's most valuable component, the American colonies, safe for the first time on their own continent, the war also set the stage for the revolution of these colonies two decades later.) Neither Britain nor her opponent, France, had intended to fight. The war grew, against all efforts to contain it, out of a long cycle of escalations.

Historical Overview

In October 1747 the War of the Austrian Succession had come to an end, a conflict in which Britain and France had found themselves on opposite sides, as usual in the eighteenth century. Whatever its merits, the resulting Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle papered over and evaded grave questions still at issue between the British and French colonial empires. Neither a decisive victory in the fighting nor a clear decision in the bargaining emerged to settle the conflict where these empires met at four strategic locations. In India, the English and French competed for control of the Deccan and the Carnatic, regions that were keys to mastery of the subcontinent. In the West Indies, they disputed ownership of certain islands which if added to either empire promised control of the Caribbean. Along the west coast of Africa, they clashed over access to slaves, the main source of manpower for the labor-intensive Caribbean economies. And in North America, the expanding English colonies along the eastern seaboard and the expanding colony of New France (Canada) dis-

puted control of the key areas along their mutual border and in the continent's interior.

The failure of Aix-la-Chapelle to settle any of these conflicts led in the following years to what has been called a "cold war" between the two empires.¹ In the West Indies, the French and British maneuvered furiously for *de facto* dominance of the strategic islands because, according to the mercantilist theory of the day, control of the Caribbean was crucial to the homeland's economy. Along the African and Indian coasts, open battles sometimes accompanied the competition for strategic footholds. By midcentury, "local and desultory clashes . . . in the four quarters of the globe had become the normal accompaniment of the . . . rivalry."² A joint Anglo-French Delimitation Commission proved unable to settle the issues by negotiation.

In North America the rivalry at first was somewhat less acute. But during the early 1750s gradually more serious incidents occurred between the English colonials and the French troops and their Indian allies. Appeals from both sides for help from the homeland found willing ears in London and Paris. Strong measures were taken, which to each side's dismay received even stronger replies. By early 1755 war seemed possible; before the end of the year, certain.

Its outbreak was deferred while the principals searched for allies. For decades, Austria had been allied to Britain and Prussia to France. The Diplomatic Revolution of 1756, however, reshuffled the balance of power under the design of Count Kaunitz, the master *realpolitik* minister in Vienna. In the ensuing Seven Years War, Prussia under Frederick the Great fought a coalition of Austria, Russia, Saxony, and Sweden, partly supported by France. King George II of England, who was also monarch of Hanover, aided Frederick with the resources of that German state, and with British money and some troops. In a simultaneous but mostly separate war, France and Great Britain and their respective empires battled each other around the globe. Subsequently Spain allied herself to France and Portugal to Britain. As one historian has described it, "Fighting took place in the Philippines, India, the Mediterranean, Spain, Portugal, and West Africa; in Germany, Austria and on the coast of France; in North America, the Caribbean, and Cuba; by sea and on land. All the great powers were involved . . . This wide geographical spread; this involvement of the major powers; this

loss of life and outpouring of treasure; marked the greatest upheaval the world had yet seen. The Seven Years War may well claim to be the First World War."³

The ultimate causes of the war were many, the reigning European balance of power being delicate, adrift, and buffeted by many hostilities. But the immediate cause was the outbreak of violence in North America and the sequence of escalations that followed. Voltaire later wrote that "such was the complication of political interests that a cannon shot fired in America could give the signal that set Europe in a blaze."⁴

The Escalation Sequence

Through most of this sequence policy-makers in London and Paris wanted no major war—neither a war between their two worldwide empires nor a general European war. They were determined, in fact, that the conflict between their representatives in North America remain strictly limited if indeed it could not be resolved completely. In both capitals decision-makers were willing to make what they regarded as major sacrifices to ensure that the conflict not expand. Nevertheless, the escalation continued and mounted all the way to general war. This chapter will look into how this occurred.⁵

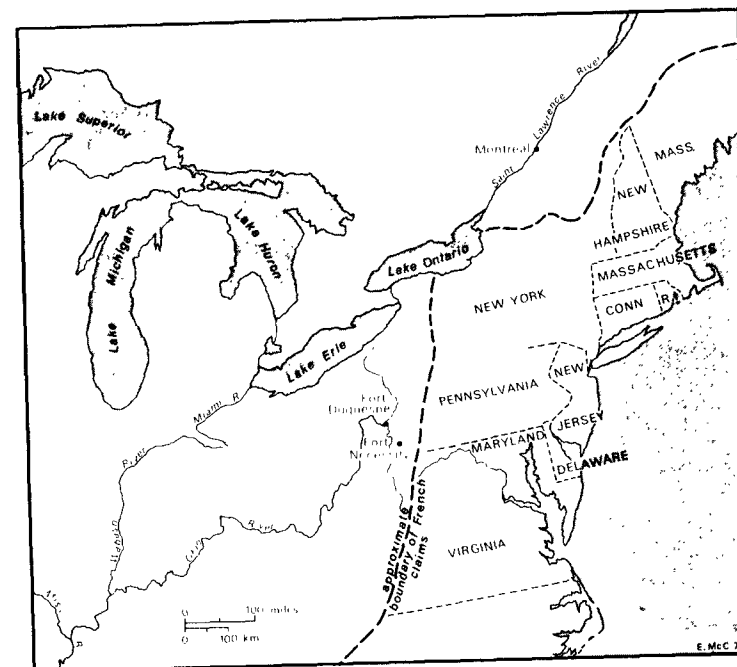
There were somewhat different perceptions in Paris and London of how the conflict in America had started.⁶ To the French it seemed that the English colonists were beginning to trespass on an area that had long been under French influence. La Salle had explored the Ohio River valley and claimed it for France as early as 1679. The river was the obvious and easy link between the established settlements of New France along the St. Lawrence and the small French colony along the lower Mississippi, in "Louisiana." Only two short portages were required along this route: between Lake Erie and the headwaters of the Ohio; and even shorter, around Niagara Falls. Otherwise the entire journey from the mouth of the St. Lawrence to New Orleans could be made by water. Although there were few established French forts or posts along this route before 1750, the route itself was traveled with some frequency. Development of New France and Louisiana seemed to depend upon this link being maintained.

Yet in the 1730s and 1740s, a trickle of Englishmen has started to enter the region south of the Great Lakes, and by 1750 some three

hundred of them were crossing the Appalachians every year to explore, to trade with Indians previously contacted almost exclusively by Frenchmen, and to begin to establish posts. As the English colonies along the coast were much more populous than the French colony along the St. Lawrence, this incursion would be likely to increase. Clearly action was required with some urgency if the vital connection between New France and Louisiana was to be protected. Starting in 1753, a new governor of New France, Duquesne, began to establish a defensive chain of forts in the Ohio Valley to protect this lifeline and to keep France's colonies in North America from being split in two. And he ejected—by force when necessary, to be sure—the Englishmen who crossed the mountains.

There were other conflicting claims in North America between the two great European colonial powers. The French considered the British fort at Oswego on lower Lake Ontario (in what is now western New York State) to be on French territory. The border between the two areas was poorly defined, too, in the (upper New York State) region of Lake Champlain and Lake George. Finally, conflict had been rife for many years in the Nova Scotia area, where the two empires' claims overlapped seriously. But these conflicts were not urgent and had not, in the period following Aix-la-Chapelle, broken into open fighting (with the exception of Nova Scotia, where occasional raids were limited to a very small area). It was the accelerating English penetration of the Ohio River valley that seemed to the French to be the most serious threat to their interests.

To the British, Duquesne's action of fortifying the Ohio territory was a highly aggressive seizure of land "notoriously known to be the property of the Crown of Great Britain." The original charters held by the English colonies clearly specified British claims of North American territory between two latitudes "from sea to sea." While there might be a conflict between Virginia's charter and Pennsylvania's (both of which seemed to include the Ohio territory), there was no doubt that it was English land. French colonists were not living in the Ohio area, but the English colonists, who felt they were becoming somewhat crowded, wanted to begin to live there. The traditional principle had been that steady occupation, not mere occasional passing through, gave possession. The British found it absurd that New France and Louisiana, sparsely settled even in their own territories and with comparatively poor and slow-grow-



Map 5 North America in the 1750s: the Anglo-French conflict over the Ohio area.

ing economies, should try to deny the Ohio region to the energetic, richer, more ambitious, and vastly more numerous English colonists. In any case, the French claim, if allowed to stand, would have the long-range effect of penning the English colonists into a narrow coastal strip along the Atlantic seaboard, and clearly this was intolerable. Accordingly, in August 1753 the English secretary of state, the Duke of Holderness, ordered Virginia—and secondarily Pennsylvania—to "require any intruders" in the Ohio area to withdraw. He sent cannon to Virginia with instructions that two forts were to be built in the Ohio region.

Hence both the French and the English tended to see themselves as acting *defensively*, as the conflict warmed up in the early 1750s. In June 1752 the French attacked and destroyed a British trading

post on the Miami River, a tributary of the Ohio, and in the spring of the following year Duquesne began his forts—one on the southern shore of Lake Erie (Presque Isle) and one halfway between it and the forks of the Ohio (Fort LeBoeuf). Late that autumn the Virginians, in obedience to Holderness's instructions, sent a mission to Fort Le Boeuf requesting the French to leave. The message was passed on to Montreal but received no answer. Accordingly, the following February (1754) a Virginia detachment began to construct a fort at the forks of the Ohio (the site of present-day Pittsburgh) to serve as a base for English clearing operations in the area. In April, before it could be completed, a much stronger force of some five hundred French troops with light cannon besieged it, and the English were obliged to surrender and withdraw. Completed and strengthened by the French, it was named Fort Duquesne.

The governor of Virginia, an appointee of the king, considered that the forcible ejection of his men under threat of artillery bombardment was an act of war. He ordered all immediately available forces—about three hundred men—to gather and establish themselves on the western slope of the Appalachians (in what is now southwestern Pennsylvania). One detachment, commanded by Major George Washington, discovered it was being stalked by a group of French and Indians and attacked, killing a French officer and nine men. These were the first casualties in any engagement where an officer of either king commanded.

When the news reached Montreal, reinforcements were sent to Fort Duquesne with orders to eject all Englishmen from the Ohio area immediately. Shortly a powerful detachment commanded by a brother of the slain officer found Washington and his Virginians camped in a place called the Great Meadows, behind hastily erected defensive works named Fort Necessity. After a day-long battle on July 3rd, the British-Americans were obliged to surrender, conditional on their safe-conduct home. By the fourth of July, "not an English flag . . . waved beyond the Alleghenies."⁸

Since transatlantic communication at the time was by sailing ship, it was early September 1754 by the time Paris and London received word of the killing of French soldiers and an officer by Washington's troops, and of Washington's subsequent defeat at Fort Necessity. In France, officials were angered that a British officer and unit should have attacked Frenchmen on—as Paris saw it—French territory. Still, no immediate action beyond a protest

seemed required. The French hoped to maintain the peace, and the Fort Necessity victory had repelled the incursion. French forces were in full possession of the Ohio area.⁹

In Britain, policy-makers were equally angered at the French attack upon Fort Necessity and the ejection of the British forces from—as London saw it—British territory. From this point forward there was a division of opinion within the Whig government. Prime Minister Newcastle and most of his cabinet believed for many months that a negotiated solution to the North American problem might be found, or at worst that a military conflict could be held limited to that continent. "It was . . . held that hostilities . . . might proceed some lengths in America without leading to a general European war . . . The conflict in America would thus be isolated . . . This was the idea of the limited war and it was the one upon which Newcastle and his inner cabinet worked."¹⁰ A few influential figures, however, interpreted the French attack as an indication that Louis XV intended to pursue maximum objectives not only in North America but all around the world, with the implication that he was ready to risk a major war. Therefore they were skeptical about the possibility or desirability of trying to keep the war limited. This group included the Duke of Cumberland, then commander of the British army; Henry Fox, undersecretary at the War Office; George Anson, First Lord of the Admiralty, and William Pitt, a Member of Parliament who was later to become prime minister.

In late July Governor Dinwiddie in Virginia had sent to his superiors a request for two regiments of British troops; this was received in London hard upon the news that all English forces had been compelled to retreat from the trans-Appalachian region. With the French firmly in possession of the disputed territory, it was felt that some positive response must be given to Dinwiddie. At first, Newcastle proposed that Virginia be sent only a sum of money with which to raise and equip colonial troops, and officers to command operations and give advice and training to the colonials. Although the proposal was considerably less than what Dinwiddie had requested, the king initially supported Newcastle's preference not to commit British forces. By the end of September, however, he had reversed his opinion. The Duke of Cumberland—the king's son—after repeated efforts had succeeded in persuading George II that regular troops would be required to cope with the French forces in

America. The Newcastle cabinet agreed, if the mission remained a secret as long as possible. Although tactical surprise in America was hardly to be hoped for, French discovery of the mission only after it had landed in America might be too late for them to take effective countermeasures. Seizure of the Ohio would then confront Paris with the difficult problem London had just faced—the need to take positive action because the opponent was in possession of the objective—with the additional disadvantages that the British forces would have a much greater logistical and manpower base to draw on than Duquesne in Montreal did, and that the Royal Navy could take control of the sea at any time.

However, the prime minister did not achieve his *fait accompli*. In October, while the British force was being outfitted, the fact of the mission was deliberately leaked to the London press by the “war party” within the government. This group thought that Britain was better prepared for a major war than France; since they believed that war was inevitable in any case, they felt it would be better to precipitate it quickly while Britain held the advantage.

The distress in Versailles was limited by prompt action on Newcastle's part. He quickly ordered the English ambassador, Albe-Marle, to assure the French that the intent of the mission was peaceable and that orders given the English commander, General Braddock, were strictly defensive. In the first days of 1755, however, French intelligence obtained what was believed to be an actual copy of Braddock's orders and learned that the intent was certainly not defensive only. The orders included recapture of the entire Ohio region (which might be considered defensive in London, but not in Paris), plus the capture and destruction of the long-standing French forts at Niagara and Crown Point and a French fort in eastern Canada that guarded the overland approach to the St. Lawrence from Nova Scotia.

Louis XV and his advisers decided on a double response: to send Mirepoix, the ambassador to England currently home on leave, back to London to make a new effort to negotiate the North American issues; and to reinforce New France. Orders were sent to the seaport city of Brest to prepare for a counterexpedition to America. “The force scheduled was out of all proportion to that of Braddock's two poor battalions . . . Six of the finest regular battalions in the French service were to go . . . three thousand men in all, with a squadron of eighteen sail to carry and escort them.”¹¹

As soon as the English cabinet learned of the French preparations, it resolved that the counterexpedition should not reach its destination. The Royal Navy was put on a war footing, Brest was guarded with frigates to bring word the instant the French flotilla should sail, and in April Admiral Boscawen was sent with a still more powerful squadron to cruise off Newfoundland and intercept the French flotilla.¹²

In ordering the interception performed in North American waters rather than near Brest (which would have been much easier), English policy-makers deliberately were signalling the French that they hoped to keep the conflict limited to the Western Hemisphere. Boscawen's mission essentially failed. The French flotilla sailed from Brest on 3 May, and in the heavy fogs off Newfoundland, all but two ships slipped past the English squadron. On 10 June Boscawen did succeed in capturing the *Alcide* and the *Lys*, vessels carrying only a few troops.¹³

The news of Boscawen's seizure of two of the eighteen ships in the French expedition reached Europe in mid-July. Yet the French did not immediately declare war; they only recalled Mirepoix and broke relations with Great Britain. Shortly the news arrived that Braddock's force had been decimated by a French and Indian detachment in western Pennsylvania and Braddock himself had been killed. Later the French flotilla, which Admiral Boscawen had been blockading inside the mouth of the St. Lawrence, used a little-known channel to break out into the North Atlantic; with considerable good luck it reached Brest without being intercepted by Royal Navy detachments.¹⁴

Thus the situation of the late summer and early autumn of 1755 came to resemble that of the previous late fall and winter. The French were still in unchallenged control of the Ohio region; the British retained control of the seas and had won a victory in Nova Scotia during the summer. Both sides had suffered losses, but not yet major ones.

This state of affairs might have permitted a renewal of efforts to negotiate the issues, and each side, having been blooded to little profit, might have had an incentive to pull back from the brink. But negotiating efforts had collapsed late in the spring, and relations had since been broken. All the major policy-makers in London and Paris were now convinced that a major war was inevitable, necessary, and, some felt, even desirable.¹⁵

The Continental balance of power was so constructed at this point that either nation would be disadvantaged by being the first to declare war or commit large-scale aggression. (For instance, most of the major treaties in force could be activated only for defensive action; hence the state taking the offense risked losing its own allies while activating its enemy's.) The result was a period of about ten months of phony war, while the French and British engaged in furious diplomatic activity aimed at rejuggling the complicated system in a way that would permit launching a war under advantageous circumstances. This activity intersected and became part of Count Kaunitz's schemes for a Diplomatic Revolution. In January 1756 an alliance was formed between Britain and Prussia, previously traditional enemies, and this was followed by a "reversal of alliances" and an unprecedented agreement among Louis XV, Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, and the Czarina Elizabeth of Russia. Meanwhile the French had seized Minorca, at that time part of the British Empire. In London the cabinet declared war on France, and the Franco-British portion of the Seven Years War began in earnest, on 18 May 1756.¹⁶

The Pattern of Escalation

The sequence of escalations leading to the Seven Years War is summarized in Table 5. In this chapter we shall not dissect the intricate diplomatic maneuvers in search of allies of the English and French before war was declared, for this process involved complicated eighteenth-century practices of little relevance to the contemporary era. The lengthy sequence of steps up to the mutual decision for general war, however, has many features of interest and importance.

The pattern that emerges is a classic instance of what we have called *cyclical-sequence escalation*: an open-ended action-reaction cycle, wherein each step by one side triggers a reply by the other, and so on "inexorably" up the scale of violence. The beginning of the sequence in this case is difficult to specify, so gradually did the conflict start; the end of it was a worldwide war.

It is partly because this chain of events seems to be a textbook case of cyclical-sequence escalation that I have been willing to include in this study a war from as long ago as the mid-eighteenth century. It seems relevant for other reasons as well: the conflict was

a *bipolar* one during its main escalation sequence; it began as a *proxy war* in a geographically remote theater, in which the principals were determined to limit their involvement; and it had its origins in what has been called a cold war between the principals around much of the world—one that had been continuing for a considerable time. All these features lend it a certain familiarity for the late twentieth-century politico-military analyst.

Undoubtedly a great many things were very different in the eighteenth century, one of the most significant being the long time lag in communication between the principals and the proxies. This factor lends a slow-motion quality to the escalation sequence by contemporary standards. A passage of three years between the first important hostilities and the decision for general war between the principals (and almost another year before its actual outbreak) would hardly be accepted among analysts today as a hypothetical scenario of escalation going out of control! Three weeks or three days, conceivably three hours, would be more realistic.

Yet the striking aspect of the slow-motion process in this case is that *despite* it, a seemingly inexorable escalation cycle took place anyway. Neither in London nor in Paris did decision-makers want an escalation sequence or a major war (except, later, a minority of officials in London), and indeed they tried hard to prevent it. Furthermore, none of the significant steps up the ladder taken by either side was decided upon in haste, with a sense of crisis urgency, or under an overwhelming flood of communications. *Still* the escalation process cycled back and forth, seemingly inexorably and out of control, all the way to general war.

This is powerful evidence that however important such factors as haste, fatigue, information overload, or a felt sense of crisis urgency may be in narrowing policy-makers' perceptions and encouraging "irrational" decisions—and undoubtedly these factors are extremely important in many situations—they do not by themselves fully explain how escalation processes go out of control. There are other important elements, which exacerbate and are exacerbated by these factors, but which also exist and operate independently. It is these that we shall try to identify and assess as they operated in this particular instance of uncontrolled escalation. To facilitate the analysis, this case study is organized according to logical categories, not chronologically. First, policy-makers' objectives.

Table 5 The main escalation sequence of the Seven Years War.

Approximate Date	Event
Before about 1750	Scattered English and French explorers, predominantly French, enter the area south of the Great Lakes and west of the Appalachian Mountains. The French and Indians establish trade and some simple alliances.
About 1750 and thereafter	Frenchmen and their Indian allies begin to warn Englishmen not to enter the Ohio region. The warnings are ignored, and the number of English explorers and traders in the trans-Appalachian area steadily increases.
1752: June	French attack and destroy a British trading post on the Miami River.
1753: Spring and summer August	Duquesne, governor of New France, begins to have forts erected in the Ohio region. English secretary of state, Lord Holderness, orders Virginia and Pennsylvania to defend British interests in the Ohio region.
December	Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia requests the French to leave the Ohio area, asserting that it belongs to England. Montreal gives no reply.
1754: February	Virginians begin construction of a fort at the fork where two tributaries join to form the Ohio River (now Pittsburgh).
April	French forces eject the Virginians from the half-finished fort and continue to construct it under their own flag, renaming it Fort Duquesne.
Late June	A group of Virginians under the command of Major Washington approaches Fort Duquesne and finds that it is being stalked by Frenchmen and Indians. Opening fire, the Englishmen kill ten Frenchmen, including an officer. When Montreal learns of this attack, reinforcements are immediately sent to Fort Duquesne.
3 July	A strong sortie from Fort Duquesne besieges Washington's force at Fort Necessity, and after a day-long battle compels its surrender and retreat across the mountains.
Late July	Governor Dinwiddie requests assistance, including two regiments of regulars, from Great Britain.
1755: Winter May	The regiments, about a thousand men in all, are dispatched under General Braddock. French send reinforcements to Canada that number three times Braddock's force.
10 June	Admiral Boscawen and a squadron of the Royal Navy attempt to intercept the French convoy off Newfoundland, but capture only two vessels.
9 July	Braddock's expeditionary force is ambushed and badly defeated before reaching Fort Duquesne, its first target. Braddock himself is killed.
Summer (through spring 1756)	Britain and France engage in complex diplomatic maneuvers in search of allies among the other great and middle-range powers of Europe.
1756: 18 May	Britain declares war on France.

The Pattern of Objectives

The previous chapter noted that near the beginning of the Crimean War escalation sequence there was one action that clearly represented an offensive step deliberately intended to alter the status quo, and another action that more ambiguously was so intended. The sequence of events leading to the Seven Years War represents a different, perhaps more common, version of cyclical-sequence escalation: the version where *none* of the steps—including the first one, if a first one can be identified—seem to the respective actors to be offensive. From the very beginning of the conflict, both the proxies and the principals on both sides saw themselves as acting chiefly from defensive motives.

It seems possible that where motives are consistently defensive, escalation might be more difficult to control than in cases where at least one party admits to offensive motivations. The essential preconditions establishing such situations seem to be two: a standing disagreement that has been in existence for some time; and, more essential, *differing perceptions of the status quo*. It was primarily because the British and French both saw themselves as protecting interests that were really already theirs that they could both believe that they were acting defensively. It then followed logically that the other party must be acting offensively.

This instance also provides a striking illustration of just how far the defensive justification can be taken. Let us consider some observations of the famous English military historian and strategist, Julian Corbett, which are worth quoting at some length.

At first sight [Braddock's orders] will appear as a complete plan of attack upon Canada, but it must be observed that there was one line of operation left out of the programme, and this was the most important of all—the one which finally succeeded [later in the war]. No provision was made for a direct attack upon Louisbourg to open the way up the St. Lawrence to Quebec. It is obvious that such an operation would have differed entirely from all the others. All those operations that lay within the four corners of Braddock's instructions were directed against points that were actually in dispute between the two countries, and had been actually *sub judice* before the Delimitation Commission. Louisbourg was in a different category. It was a recognised French possession, to which we ad-

vanced no claim whatever, and any attack upon it must be a measure of conquest, an open act of war, which would fix us beyond dispute with a fatal act of aggression. Thus we may see how cleverly Newcastle's action was adjusted to the difficult situation. Nothing was to be done to which the French could take exception without condemning their own previous action. "You will try," wrote Newcastle to Albemarle, "to give such a turn to these defensive measures as may make the French Ministers ashamed to complain of them." Thus we were able, without taking a step that could be called first aggression, to commence a widespread strategical defensive.¹⁷

The logic is impeccable, on its own terms. What Corbett fails to note is that precisely the same reasoning had lain behind France's "own previous action." From the French point of view, all *their* activities along the Ohio were also a "strategical defensive," and not even a particularly "widespread" one!

The French failure to "demarcate the limit of their intentions," as Thomas Schelling terms it, had contributed somewhat to the fears of the British and hence to their motives for these actions. Neither in Virginia nor in London were officials in 1754 certain how far the French objectives extended. In actuality, the intent of the French was defensive. The chain of forts along the Ohio River, indeed, represented a far less vigorous strategical defensive than did the Braddock operation, since it involved no attacks upon any established British fort or position, whereas Braddock was ordered to seize many established French forts. To apply Corbett's reasoning, Duquesne could have gone much farther; for instance, he could have attacked the British fort on Lake Ontario (Fort Oswego) and British installations in Nova Scotia, all of which were within French-claimed territory. Such attacks presumably would have called forth a much more severe British counterreaction than did erecting a chain of forts along the Ohio; yet they would have been just as defensive as Newcastle believed the Braddock mission to be.

Thus not only did decision-makers in both capitals take no steps that they considered offensive, but in only one of the two capitals did they even interpret generously the scope of what defense might allow. (In the other capital they interpreted defense cautiously.) Yet the action-reaction phenomenon *still* operated.

What made this possible, more than anything else, was the large

physical area where the two powers' claims overlapped; too many possibilities for clashes could arise. Had the area of overlapping claims been much smaller and had policy-makers of at least one capital still interpreted defense cautiously, the conflict might have been held to North America and escalation controlled. The action-reaction process was also made possible by the fact that the immediate conflict took place against a background of more general conflict in North America (and around the world). Additional feasible objectives for Braddock's mission—the French forts at Niagara, Lake George, and on the Nova Scotian peninsula—were therefore "connected," albeit loosely, to the battle over the Ohio and thus could be added to his orders with some plausibility.

This matter of the scope of the two empires' overlapping claims and interests is not the same as the observation most commonly made about defensive justifications in escalation. As noted in Chapter 2, there is a frequently employed image of escalation in which a belligerent takes additional steps in order to defend forces deployed or commitments made in earlier steps, and then must take more steps to defend these, and so on. The stakes rise, in short. But a defensive justification can also apply, as here, to the *first* steps each belligerent takes, to protect the original stakes.

The more familiar version of stakes-raising is also illustrated in the Seven Years War escalation sequence at a later stage. During 1753 and the first half of 1754, Prime Minister Newcastle's main objective was to improve British control of the Ohio territory by erecting a fort at the forks of the Ohio.¹⁸ When the colonials (apparently) proved themselves unable to do this without help, Braddock's mission was launched with this as his highest-priority objective. Then, to protect Braddock's chances of accomplishing this, Boscawen had to be sent out to intercept the French reinforcements to Canada. It was the same on the other side. It was only because it was (apparently) necessary to protect the Ohio forts from Braddock that Louis XV dispatched six battalions. At these points and perhaps others in the escalation sequence, the threat that the opponent's actions seemed to pose to one's original objective "compelled" one to raise the stakes by committing more and more forces to the struggle.

This is one form or version of stakes-raising. Another is what might be more precisely termed a progressive *rise in motivation*. The sequence of escalation in the Seven Years War provides a

particularly rich illustration. Early in the competition, policymakers on both sides were uncertain of their motivation for involvement in the affairs of North America. In London, decision-makers perceived the British colonists as insolent, uncooperative, and in many ways determined not to play their proper mercantilist role. In Paris, high officials perceived Canada and Louisiana as liabilities, not assets, to the French mercantile and imperial system, because both cost more to maintain and develop than they yielded in economic returns to France.¹⁹ In each capital, then, policy-makers had reason to detach their primary mercantilist and imperial interests from the interests of their American colonists. Had this ambivalence continued, a negotiated compromise might have been worked out, or at worst a war limited to the proxies might have ensued. However, as escalatory steps were taken on each side, for several reasons officials in London and Paris *increasingly identified their major national interests with those of their proxies, and their motivation hardened*. This important process is worth discussing in a little detail.

As actual fighting occurred and after each side had suffered casualties from the other's military attacks—the English at Fort Necessity and the French immediately before—the competition seemed to engage the honor of each nation (as it was called then; today it might be called their credibility).²⁰ The same argument was heard in London and Paris in the 1750s that was to become so familiar in Washington, D. C., in the 1960s and 1970s: if we do not stand by our proxy, our commitment to all our alliances will be called into question. However convincing this was or was not in the 1960s and 1970s, it was much more convincing in the 1750s, for the colonists in America were citizens of England and France, who flew the flag of the homeland. The linkage between principal and proxy was much tighter than in nearly any of the cases that contemporary analysts are familiar with.²¹

There was also a subtler and more complicated, but at least equally important, set of reasons why motivations hardened in London and Paris as escalation proceeded in the early 1750s. They concern the relations between each side's minimum and maximum objectives.

In the first place, policy-makers in both capitals gradually came to believe that there was an irreconcilable conflict between what might be called the *immediate minimum* objectives of each side.

Following the attack on Fort Necessity, all members of the Whig government perceived the minimum French objective in America to be control of the Ohio region. This appeared to conflict (actually it did not) with the minimum British objective of providing the English colonists room in which to expand westward. In addition, the war party within the cabinet came to see the French as pursuing a maximum objective of pushing back English influence throughout North America and around the world.²²

Decision-makers at Versailles suspected that the minimum British objective was possession of the Ohio territory. This appeared to conflict (actually it did not) with the minimum French objective of maintaining communications between New France and Louisiana. In addition, after Braddock's orders were penetrated, the French saw their opponents as pursuing a maximum objective of pushing back French control throughout North America.²³

Thus some policy-makers in each capital came more and more to suspect the other of pursuing maximum objectives; in any case they all came to perceive the opponent's immediate minimum objective to be irreconcilably in conflict with their own. At one level this may be said to have been a major source of the escalation sequence that resulted, finally, in general war. But behind the problem of immediate minimum objectives lay a far graver problem of what might be termed *long-range minimum* or *absolute minimum* objectives. To illuminate this, a little background is required.

For decades the French and British had been building worldwide colonial and mercantile empires that, in a general way, competed with each other. Under the reigning mercantilist doctrine, the purpose of these empires was economic enrichment of the mother country, and comparative profitability was one medium in which the Anglo-French competition was conducted. However, this goal was increasingly being supplemented (and in the minds of some policy-makers superseded) by more general "imperial" goals such as overall political strength, total military resources, aggregate population, control of geopolitically strategic areas, and the like. The expectation in London and Paris was that this general or background competition between them—this "cold war"—would continue for a long time to come.²⁴

For economic and other reasons, certain areas seemed to both sides to offer particular advantages: various locations in North

America, the West Indies, locations on the western coast of Africa, and the Deccan and Carnatic districts of India. For these the competition was more direct and more violent. An advantageous position in most or all of them would give the advantaged power superior economic resources that would allow it subsequently to pull ahead in the more general competition for world empire. At the same time, the advantage offered by a *moderate* gain for one side or the other in most of these locations was not so large or so immediate as to warrant a major war. And from time to time, various opportunities arose, some of which had been seized upon and usefully employed, to divide the spoils, postpone some issues, and otherwise defuse actual or potential crises.

Much more vital in the long run than the positive, but only slowly achievable, objective of gaining the superior world empire, was the negative objective of denying the opponent any really decisive advantage that might foreordain the results of the general competition. Here North America, and particularly the central area of the continent, was far more important than any of the other disputed areas, even though it was of much less short-term or even medium-term economic significance. For the North American continent, temperate and very similar to Europe, promised eventually to be the home of a populous and powerful political entity or entities. Beyond the hope of policy-makers in London and Paris that this foreseeable entity might belong to their own empire, more important was their fear that it might belong to the other. Versailles had long recognized that New France and Louisiana would not pay their own way for many years to come. But to give most or all of the North American continent to Great Britain could be extremely dangerous in the long run to France herself, for an England backed by the wealth and manpower of a continent would be overwhelmingly preponderant in Europe. Just the reverse calculation was made by the British, who feared that their colonies—if not eventually driven into the sea by a French America—might be forever shut in to a narrow coastal strip, while France controlled the vast interior and North America as a whole, and went on to become overwhelmingly dominant in Europe and the world.²⁵

In both London and Paris, therefore, policy-makers held it as an absolute minimum objective not to allow a situation to develop whereby the colonists of the opposing empire could seize such a preponderant position in America that it would be virtually

impossible to dislodge them, and from which they could then go on subsequently to colonize and control the great bulk of the continent. This absolute minimum objective had been recognized for some time. It was not new in 1753. What *was* new was the interpretation that now became accepted in London and Paris of what this meant operationally. Policy-makers in both capitals came to the conclusion, for somewhat different reasons, that the Ohio territory was the key to the American continent.

Officials in France believed (erroneously) that the Ohio River was the only major water route between the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi. They thought that to allow the English to control the Ohio River would be to lose ready access to the lands farther west, in the center of the continent, and to the Indian tribes living there who so far had been contacted almost exclusively by Frenchmen. The waterway represented by the Ohio River appeared to the French to be critical to the American interior.²⁶

The British were not primarily interested in the Ohio River; what they were interested in was the surrounding land. In the late 1740s and early 1750s, the expansion-minded citizens of Virginia concluded that desirable new land, land that could readily be cleared and farmed, lay not to the southwest or due west, but to the northwest. Explorers reported that the land was mountainous in the other directions, but to the northwest only a few mountains (the Alleghenies) needed to be crossed before broad fertile plains began, extending indefinitely westward. The Virginians in turn reported to London that the Ohio area represented the only real opening westward for the English colonists in America.²⁷ With benefit of hindsight, we know that perceptions in the two European capitals were exaggerated, and in some respects false. Yet in the early 1750s the expectation in Paris was that to lose control of the Ohio River was probably to lose access to the American interior, and the expectation in London was that to lose possession of the Ohio territory was to give up the door to the west from the eastern seaboard.

What is analytically important here is that these perceptions *activated* the long-standing absolute minimum objective of each side. Previously this goal had seemed somewhat abstract and generalized, however vital in principle—a possible problem for the future. The events of the early 1750s crystalized this diffuse objective on each side. They brought a possible, future, and nonoperational

problem down to a real, immediate, and operational one; they made concrete what had been abstract. Policy-makers in London and Paris came to perceive their respective colonists' scrap over a couple of small forts as actually being the opening engagement in "the battle for North America."²⁸ It was this *crystalization of long-standing but previously diffuse objectives* that was one of the most important reasons why attitudes on both sides now hardened rapidly, motivation rose to gain the goal even at a high price, and decision-makers proceeded to fling more and more powerful forces into the fray.

The Transformation of Perceptions and the Narrowing of Expectations

Both French and British had been wearied by the War of the Austrian Succession, and in the years after the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle they included in their foreign policies explicit efforts to maintain the peace between the two nations if at all possible. As one historian has noted of the French during this period, "A general war with Great Britain was not part of the design of the French government. For the sake of peace it had sacrificed . . . [important gains] in India, and . . . it was prepared to suffer the most humiliating indignities to avoid a general war."²⁹ A similar generalization could be made about the British government at this time.

To a degree both capitals recognized that they shared the objective of maintaining the peace. In addition to a symmetrical perception that the two world empires were competing, there was also a roughly symmetrical perception that their competition, however serious over the long run, would be restrained at any one time. The term *limited adversary*, which has been used to characterize Soviet-American relations since the end of the acute Cold War, describes perfectly relations between the French and English empires in the late 1740s and early 1750s, as perceived in both capitals. Despite the serious long-term conflict, the perception on both sides was that the opponent was *not* seeking specific short-term objectives around the world that would give it decisive advantage in the world competition. (And the absolute minimum objective on each side of not allowing the other to obtain hegemony in North America had not yet crystalized.)

Decision-makers in both countries therefore entertained a wide

range of expectations about plausible future developments and anticipated being able to employ a substantial range of policy instruments, with direct military action included only rarely. They expected that various political, economic, and diplomatic maneuvers would gain them modest advantages from time to time. They may have expected to employ military, but not too violent, demonstrations for deterrent and compellent purposes. And they certainly expected to employ diplomatic negotiations for resolving, compromising, or at least freezing, serious disputes.³⁰

As events unfolded, all these things changed. On both sides *the perception of the opponent was gradually transformed*, until policy-makers were perceiving the opponent as striving rapidly for a decisively superior competitive position. Their *range of expectations about the plausible future* narrowed steadily, until acute competition—and very possibly war—seemed the only realistic expectation. The *range of policy instruments that could be expected to be useful* also narrowed, until only major military action still seemed to offer a reasonable expectation of securing fundamental objectives.

The important part played in this process by crystallization of the absolute minimum objectives has already been indicated. Let us look next at changes in the range of apparently useful policy instruments, and in the related range of expectations about plausible futures. First, the matter of negotiations.

Recognizing the potential seriousness of their disputes in the West Indies, in the western and northern parts of the English colony of New York, and in Nova Scotia, the French and British in 1750 created a joint Delimitation Commission to negotiate all territorial disputes in the Western Hemisphere. (The Ohio was hardly yet an issue.) The meetings of the commission were infrequent, however, and almost completely nonproductive. The commissioners discovered fairly early that the fundamental conflict between Britain and France in North America was too basic to be resolved by the limited authority they had been given by their governments. Paradoxically, though, none of the disputes seemed to be pressing enough to demand energetic bargaining. The combination of little reason for speed on immediate issues, and an expectation of inevitable failure on the central questions, meant that the commissioners had the least possible incentive to proceed with vigor. There were also technical impediments, such as differences in the English and French maps of North America. And

despite the ample time available, individuals with expert knowledge of the disputed areas in North America were not called in to assist the commission. Finally, after four fruitless years, it was dissolved.³¹

As the Delimitation Commission's activities ground to a halt, a perception grew among policy-makers on both sides of the channel that many extensive efforts to negotiate an understanding in North America had all ended in failure. In actuality, inspection of the commission's deliberations suggests that by no means had all avenues been tried, and some that had been tried had not been explored very thoroughly.³² To high-level decision-makers at the time this was less clear. What was more visible was the evident fact of an attempt to negotiate for years, and failure. The expected value of negotiations now declined considerably.

Motivation to negotiate in other ways fell victim to the growing suspicion on both sides. The British, reacting against the slow pace of the commission, had repeatedly proposed direct negotiations at the ambassadorial level. Until 1754 these were rejected by the French as a possible British effort to evade the semijudicial commission and gain a more advantageous outcome through diplomatic maneuver. The French rejection, in turn, was interpreted in London as suggesting that Louis XV's real goal was to keep the commission going in a desultory and inconclusive fashion while his agents maneuvered in the colonies. The British constantly saw the French as evasive about their overall intentions in North America and elsewhere, and once caught the French foreign minister lying (at least in the British perception) about French activities in the West Indies. Subsequently, Versailles discovered that Prime Minister Newcastle had lied (at least in the French perception) when he gave assurance that General Braddock's orders were strictly defensive. Another factor that deepened the mutual distrust was a growing suspicion in each capital that the other side was stalling for time. The English observed a steady effort, alarmingly successful, to build up the French navy. The French perceived a steadily rising threat to the Ohio area from the English colonists in America and growing English influence on the Continent, including in capitals such as Madrid that traditionally had been friendly to Paris.³³

Negotiations were discouraged, then, by mounting suspicions on each side about the opponent's real objectives, and by the important happenstance that policy-makers in each capital calculated that *their opponents stood to gain more from the passage of time*

than they did themselves. Seeming evidence that their opponents might be delaying and obstructing real progress in the bargaining became translated into *changing perceptions about the opponent's probable objectives and changing expectations about what the future was likely to bring.*

After military action had begun in North America, policy-makers in France and England, anxious to terminate the conflict or at least to limit the scope of the war, had a new and more urgent motive to negotiate. Bargaining now began at the ambassadorial level. But Albermarle, the British ambassador to His Most Catholic Majesty, died in December 1754 and was not immediately replaced. The French ambassador to the Court of St. James's, Mirepoix, did not return to London from leave until mid-January and was ignorant of North American affairs. Several rounds of bargaining proposals were made, but the French accompanied theirs with the demand for an end to all military action *prior* to the resumption of full negotiations on the issues. For the British to have agreed to this would have meant that they could not prevent the French from reinforcing Canada with the six battalions, which potentially could do tremendous damage. So the French demand was refused. For this reason and others to be mentioned shortly, this round of bargaining ended in deadlock like its predecessors. By May 1755 policy-makers on both sides became convinced that the opponent's objectives were intolerable and that further negotiations offered little expectation of agreement.³⁴

As the negotiating instrument came to seem useless, so eventually did the instrument of military demonstrations for deterrent and compellent purposes. The effects of earlier attempts by both sides to use this instrument, though, were extremely significant.

Almost every step early in the escalation sequence was taken primarily for its politico-military effect (deterrence or compellence), and only subordinately to accomplish some specific military end. Governor Dinwiddie's original message to Montreal, and subsequent dispatch of a few hundred armed men to an area where they could expect to meet many more Frenchmen and hostile Indians, was intended mainly to demonstrate to the French Great Britain's "official" legal and military interest in the area. Earlier, Duquesne in Montreal had been aware that his line of forts could be conquered by the English colonies, but by constructing them he hoped to show that New France was resolved to hold the Ohio, and

could and would impose a high cost on any attempt to take it. A similar demonstration of resolve was one ingredient in the decision in Paris to dispatch six of its finest battalions to the New World. Similarly, Prime Minister Newcastle in London agreed to the Braddock mission quite explicitly on the grounds that it would indicate to the French how seriously Britain intended to defend its ownership of the Ohio; whereupon Louis XV, he hoped, would disavow Duquesne's "aggression."³⁵

Almost any of these steps might have been successful if the opponent had perceived it as the *deterrent* measure it was intended to be; in each case the opponent perceived it instead as a *compellent* action. As we have had occasion to note before, compellence is much harder to accomplish than deterrence, and every one of these steps failed in its primary purpose of coercing the opponent to withdraw from the competition. Again we observe a consequence of each side's belief that it was basically the defending power and that the opponent was acting offensively: it was this belief that allowed each of these actions to be intended as deterrent while simultaneously being perceived as compellent.

Because of this continuing illusion on both sides, policy-makers in London and Paris gradually found that, contrary to expectation, their efforts to demonstrate their resolve were not succeeding. Hence the demonstrative line of policy, too, came to offer less and less expectation of achieving fundamental objectives. With the (apparent) failure of negotiation as a promising line of policy at about the same time, the only major line of policy left was overt military action to achieve objectives by force. The range of plausible futures, which had always included major war as a possibility, now was narrowing to the point where major war appeared to be the main probability.

Unlike the British and French effort to negotiate the issues, which could have succeeded, this decline in the expected usefulness of "demonstrations of motivation" was the inevitable consequence of policy-makers on both sides having entered the problem *failing to comprehend the fundamental perspective and assumptions of the opponent.* In effect, although not in intent, the escalating sequence of demonstrations of resolve became a process of mutual discovery of the opponent's profound motivation not to give away the Ohio. By the time this was ascertained, however, the sequence had proceeded to the point where the direct military consequences of each step back and forth (as opposed to the symbolic politico-military

effects) were so great that each step by the opponent absolutely demanded a counterescalation if the absolute minimum objective in North America was not to be abandoned.

This is the essence of how a process that began as a relatively controlled series of escalatory steps gradually went out of control. The earlier steps in the sequence were intended primarily for their value as politico-military demonstrations, and only very secondarily for their concrete military benefits. But the demonstrations back and forth were based on inadequate and uncomprehending ideas, entertained on both sides, about the opponent's basic assumptions and perceptions of the situation. Therefore the demonstrations did not achieve their demonstrative intent. Collectively they merely succeeded in revealing to policy-makers in both capitals how deeply committed their opponents were to the objective of retaining the Ohio. By the time this had been accomplished, however, the ratio of demonstrative value to direct, military consequences of each step had shifted. Each step was distinctly tilting the advantage in-theater one way or the other. The concrete military implications of each step were becoming so great that from then on neither group of decision-makers could afford to allow the opponent to enjoy the military consequences of his deed, unless they were prepared to abandon their absolute minimum objective in North America. That objective was assessed on both sides as so vital that it could not be abandoned even at the risk of general war; the competition, which by now was largely military, proceeded to full-scale conflict.

When one remembers that in addition, the early steps in the sequence had the effect of crystallizing the absolute minimum objectives on both sides, the two themes in combination provide much of the answer to why the escalation process was so inexorable, even though it stretched over years.

Even after this crystallization and after the demonstrations, there still were opportunities to decouple the two sides' absolute minimum objectives from the developing situation, by negotiating a compromise solution for the immediate conflicts and pushing into the future the long-range problem of hegemony in North America. The most important opportunity of this kind was a proposal made by the English on 20 February 1755. They suggested that the Ohio territory be made a neutral zone, in which English Americans would have some limited trading rights with the Indians, but which

they would not settle or colonize. The French would not use the upper Ohio River to communicate between Canada and Louisiana; instead they would use a route along the Wabash River (which flows into western Lake Erie from the southwest) and the Miami River (which flows southward into the lower Ohio in what is now Illinois). This was a route the French had already used occasionally and along which they had a couple of small forts; it was at least as direct as the route via the upper Ohio and required an almost equally short portage. The question of the ultimate ownership of the Ohio area was to be deferred indefinitely.³⁶

Even though it failed, this proposal is a striking one for London to have made, for in effect it would have protected French interests in North America somewhat more thoroughly than British. It is notable evidence of the extent to which Newcastle and most of his colleagues still sought to avoid general war, and also of the extent to which they were willing to sacrifice the interests of their American colonists in trying to do so.

A proposal of this sort could have been used—and to some extent may have actually been used—by the British as a means of *testing the opponent's objectives*. Acceptance by the French would not just have indicated their ability and willingness to decouple their absolute minimum objective from the immediate issues. It would also have thoroughly scotched the argument of the war party in London that Louis XV had decided to go for maximum objectives in North America and worldwide. In fact he had not. As it was, the failure of this proposal (and more generally, the evident failure of the bargaining in this period to get anywhere) underlined the war party's perception of French objectives and helped to transform the perceptions held by other, less suspicious British policy-makers.

The French initially rejected the British plan of 20 February because they could not accept several of its secondary features, such as a demand for English trading privileges along the shores of the Great Lakes and another concerning Nova Scotia. In the course of the next two months the English were to express willingness, at one time or another, to greatly soften all of these demands, although there was no one time when the gaps between the shifting English and French positions on all these complex issues narrowed enough *simultaneously* so that actual agreement seemed within reach.

The underlying problems were that policy-makers on both sides had now grown skeptical about the value of a serious negotiating

effort and about their opponents' real intentions and goals; and, equally important, that time was running out. The English were unsure when the flotilla carrying the reinforcements to Canada would sail from Brest; they estimated that it could leave anytime from the end of March on. The decision to send Admiral Boscawen out to intercept it was made at a meeting of the "inner cabinet" on March 18th. That decision could hardly be postponed, and presuming (as the cabinet did) that Boscawen would be successful, the action could very well lead to war.³⁷ In short, the negotiating process by this point had gotten enmeshed in the cogs of the relentless clock set by military actions and preparations on both sides.

In fact, the British may have purposely delivered a mortal wound to the negotiations in March by putting forward a new demand (for land adjoining the St. Lawrence River) they may have realized the French could not possibly accept. While definite evidence is lacking, it seems likely that the cabinet, with little time left before the Royal Navy would have to be ordered out to intercept the French fleet, was trying to provoke Louis XV and his ministers into declaring war first and thereby allow the British to invoke their defensive alliances in Europe.³⁸

Expectations by this point had narrowed sharply on both sides. Negotiations had been tried and apparently had failed. Military demonstrations of resolve by each side had not convinced the opponent; they had only inspired him to similar demonstrations, which had brought the situation to the point where the feasible next steps would have a tremendous impact on the military situation in North America and would sharply heighten the risk of general war. Where previously several alternative lines of policy had offered reasonable expectation of protecting basic objectives in North America, increasingly only strong military action seemed to. Where previously a number of futures had been plausible, now only acute crisis, and very possibly a major war, seemed plausible.

That the range of acceptable options and plausible futures had narrowed so sharply and so rapidly was partly the product of what might be called technical aspects of the politico-military situation. These deserve attention next.

Asymmetries and Disproportionalities

Central to the cyclical escalation sequence of the Seven Years War was a set of asymmetries in the capabilities of the various

actors. Similar to these in their structure and in their effect, and potentially more controllable by decision-makers in the short run, were several "disproportionate" actions they took. Let us look at each of these categories in turn. First, the asymmetries.

(1) The desire and efforts of all parties during much of the sequence to limit the conflict to North America failed in part because of a strong asymmetry, in favor of the French, in the capabilities of the two proxies on that continent. Unlike the thirteen English colonies (fourteen, if we count Nova Scotia), New France was a single unitary state, controlled for all practical purposes by one all-powerful governor. In military power, New France was much more than a match for any one of the British colonies acting alone—as Virginia, the most powerful colony, discovered. The English colonies, if they could act together, were potentially far stronger than New France. But, as the French knew, they were highly particularistic and mutually uncooperative; so far they had proved totally incapable of banding together for any political purpose whatsoever. Dinwiddie in Williamsburg had made repeated efforts to get assistance from the other colonies in dealing with the French, but with a couple of minor exceptions had failed to receive any effective aid at all. (Pennsylvania, which along with Virginia had perhaps the most direct interest in the Ohio, was governed at this time by a majority of pacifist Quakers who refused to involve the colony in military action.) Subsequently, Benjamin Franklin and others called an intercolonial congress at Albany in 1754 to discuss the French and Indian situation; the congress' scheme for united action was subsequently ignored by most of the colonies.³⁹

It was partly for this reason that Duquesne and his associates in Montreal believed that their policy of fortifying the Ohio territory could be successful. They had long held the expectation with considerable confidence that, as long as the Old World was not called in to redress the balance of the New, their cause would prevail. Any single English colony could not oust them from the Ohio, and all the colonies together clearly would not.⁴⁰

It was on the basis of this expectation that the Virginians felt compelled to appeal for help to the mother country; and it was on the same basis that London felt compelled to respond. If the English colonies in America, or even most of them, had been able to act in concert, Duquesne might have been deterred from fortifying the Ohio. Even if they had waited until after this action and then been

able to act in a fairly unified way, the subsequent contest would probably have been recognized in both London and Paris as a proxy war, which both capitals would have urgently desired to limit to such. It was the total inability of the individualistic (and in some cases pacifistic) Englishmen to unite for action even after frontier fighting had broken out, that "compelled" the involvement of Great Britain herself.⁴¹

(2) New France and the English American colonies were also asymmetrical with respect to the *kind* of forces they maintained. The English colonies were self-sustaining, with no British forces regularly stationed there. New France, on the other hand, was much more a military creature of Versailles; regular French troops were routinely stationed there in significant number and routinely rotated back and forth to France. For the French this represented a kind of counterweight to the greater population of the English colonies. Still, the English colonials in any action against Canada were facing regular French forces, while themselves not maintaining regular British troops. Dinwiddie's request to London for two regiments of regulars therefore seemed highly reasonable, and the English cabinet could say that with the Braddock mission it was only beginning to do what Louis XV had been doing all along. Yet from the French point of view, the Braddock mission was an unprecedented act that broke the previous limits of the conflict and established new ground rules.⁴²

In this way, the previously existing asymmetry in *kinds of forces* in the Western Hemisphere became translated into an asymmetry in *perceptions* in the Eastern Hemisphere. What could be seen in London as merely an equalizing action that corrected an asymmetry, was seen in Paris as an unprecedented escalation that threw out of line a previous rough balance between the French soldiers and the far more populous British civilians in America.

(3) The next asymmetry was introduced by the fact that Britain was a sea power and France primarily a land power. Despite French efforts to catch up, the Royal Navy in 1755 was over twice as large as the French navy, the nearest competitor, and promised complete control of the sea to Britain in any war. France's army, though, with over a hundred battalions, was the largest in Europe and far larger than Britain's. Accordingly, the French could send to Canada

two or three soldiers for every one sent to America by Britain, whereas the two regiments sent with Braddock represented a significant fraction of the entire ready British army.

It was for this reason that when Versailles replied to the Braddock mission by sending 3,000 men to Canada, the Whig government could not easily respond by sending an additional army detachment to reinforce Braddock. Had the two powers had even roughly symmetrical capabilities in ground forces, a pattern of responding to each troop deployment with a troop deployment of one's own might have gone on for some time. Although still an escalation, it would have been an escalation within the North American limits of the conflict. Also, additional time would have been made available for the principals to engage in the negotiations both sought, and part of the time were pursuing. The conflict would not have so readily and so rapidly escalated to general war.

The limited number of British ground forces available made this impossible. London's options were reduced to two: to allow Braddock to be confronted by superior forces and defeated, or to prevent the French reinforcements from arriving in America. British naval supremacy seemed to promise the latter with high confidence of success. So rather than throw Braddock's force away with no gain, London opted for halting the French reinforcements.

(4) The Whig government attempted to stay within the North American limits of the conflict by having its navy perform the interception in North American waters (although it would have been easier and surer in European waters). This effort to control escalation was unsuccessful because in its turn it confronted the French with a severe asymmetry in capabilities.

It was recognized in Paris that the reinforcement mission to Montreal had gotten past the British fleet by luck. The French were compelled to agree with the calculation the British cabinet had made—that in general the Royal Navy could intercept and capture reinforcements sent to Canada. Policy-makers in both capitals expected that under such ground rules New France could be cordoned off from aid, while the British could assist their colonies at their leisure. Had the French possessed a naval capability comparable to the British, this conclusion could not have been drawn. The French could have attempted naval missions to Canada and the result might have been a series of naval engagements in the North At-

lantic. Like the repeated reinforcements of ground forces that also did not occur, this series of naval engagements might have offered the principals some additional time and incentive to find the negotiated settlement they both desired.

However, the possibility of a serious naval challenge to Britain was lacking. Paris was confronted with the identical two options that London had just chosen between: to allow the opponent to reinforce his proxy at will without reinforcing one's own proxy (a sure recipe for defeat in theater), or to *apply one's asymmetrical advantages* to halt the opponent's reinforcements.

The French possessed the latter option in an army (and potentially, a set of allies) that could draw off the opponent's troops into European battles, or even keep them at home under threat of invasion. (Twice during the Seven Years War the French made preparations for an invasion of the British Isles.) Versailles therefore chose just as London had—to escalate, rather than to abandon the proxy. By threatening Hanover, by threatening an invasion of England, and by finding allies who could help him do both, Louis XV brought George II's attention back from the Ohio valley to the defense of his most immediate and vital possessions and ensured that no major reinforcements of the American colonies would be made.

In effect, the French chose to protect their proxy by raising the stakes. Just as King George had decided to expand the conflict from the North American continent to include the North Atlantic Ocean, where his comparative advantage lay, so Louis XV decided to expand it to include the European continent, where *his* comparative advantage lay. Each relieved the pressure of a disadvantageous asymmetry by throwing a new part of the world into the cauldron.

To sum up: from a technical point of view, escalation proceeded from the banks of the Ohio River to the Seven Years War up a ladder of four situationally generated asymmetries in the players' capabilities. The absence of any of them might have at least slowed the process, and perhaps halted it.

Similar to asymmetries in logic and effect are steps that actors take during an escalation sequence which represent disproportionate responses to preceding steps. Two stand out in the escalation sequence leading to the Seven Years War.

Newcastle's original plan for responding to Dinwiddie's appeal

for assistance was to send advisers, equipment, and financial support, but no troops. This would have been much less likely to trigger a serious French response than his actual dispatch of two regiments of regulars. A sufficient financial commitment on Newcastle's part would certainly have raised volunteer colonial troops in the numbers required to regain the Ohio. Contrary to the Duke of Cumberland's belief, colonials would have had a higher probability of success than British regulars, since the English Americans were experienced in fighting Frenchmen and Indians in the backwoods.⁴³ The Braddock mission was a disproportionate response, because a lesser response would have served the objective at least equally well and would have been much less likely to trigger an escalatory response by the opponent.

Similarly, the French reply to this mission was, in Corbett's words, "out of proportion to Braddock's two poor battalions." For Louis XV to send six elite battalions to New France suggested strongly to decision-makers in London that he might have additional, offensive objectives in North America beyond the defeat of Braddock. The French action further helped to transform British officials' perceptions and expectations, and provided them with a partial basis for their belief that Boscawen's interception mission was defensive.⁴⁴

The French shared the great British overestimation of the effectiveness in the American forests of Braddock's two battalions of regulars. Even granting this, the French might have better controlled escalation and better served their own immediate goals in the New World by sending reinforcements to Duquesne that roughly matched Braddock's force—some two battalions only. It is entirely possible that this would still have motivated English decision-makers to send out Boscawen's naval squadron. But French policy would not have seemed to the British to be such convincing evidence that Louis XV was willing to accept general war in pursuit of greatly elevated objectives, and would not have discouraged the British as strongly from pursuing negotiations.

Both of these disproportionate steps were meant, in part, to be demonstrations of policy-makers' resolve and of the seriousness with which they viewed the developing situation. Disproportionate moves are sometimes made because decision-makers wish to signal their resolve and seriousness to their opponents and feel that a proportionate action, being too obvious and natural from a purely

practical viewpoint, might not get the message across as clearly. This is an understandable, and on its own terms reasonable, motive; from this viewpoint a disproportionate action could even serve as an escalation control device by warning the opponent to back off from the situation before it is too late.

The assumption, sometimes unspoken, that underlies this viewpoint is "policy-makers on the other side are less motivated than we are." If they really are equally or even more motivated, the disproportionate action will not cause them to back off, nor will it control escalation. As suggested earlier, it will merely narrow the range of expectations and harden motivations on both sides; simultaneously it will shift the conflict to a higher level of violence, where the purely military aspect of actions is relatively more important than their politico-military, signalling aspect.

Furthermore, it is often hard to separate the signal of serious motives from the signal of elevated objectives. A disproportionate action and even many proportionate escalations usually are just as likely to suggest the latter as the former (if not more so). The principal exception to this generalization is the case of a skillfully constructed dual policy, where the action intended to signal serious motivation is coupled with another action that credibly communicates the limit of one's objectives. Most often this second action will be a serious negotiating proposal, one that offers to settle the dispute on terms that meet one's less extensive goals.

Because the escalatory action is likely to speak more loudly to the opponent than the conciliatory words, policy-makers must try to surround the negotiating proposal with as many indications of its seriousness as they can. (Often, regrettably, they do not, and it is the escalatory action that gets most of the attention in, for instance, declaratory policy.) If the British had coupled the rather generous plan that in fact they developed on 20 February 1755 with the revelation of Braddock's mission the previous fall, and if they had communicated to the French that Braddock's mission would be called off in the event of successful negotiations, subsequent events might have been quite different. As is so often the case, though, the British moved first to secure their objective by military means, and only afterward tried to control the escalatory effect of what they had done by means of negotiations. But meanwhile the military means had damaged the opponent's expectations about the usefulness and meaningfulness of negotiations.

Analytic Failures

Another aspect of the escalation sequence of the Seven Years War is a series, on both side, of analytic failures, as they are being termed here. It is, of course, easier to identify these in retrospect. Even so, almost every step in the sequence betrays some instance of policy-makers failing (in ways that hardly seem inevitable) to analyze their information fully and calculate their steps carefully, or to seek important additional information that could have been obtained.

(1) In the first place, the fundamental objective of the French was impossible. In the long run and probably even in the medium run, the French colonists in America could not hope to keep penned in against the ocean a population twenty times the size of New France and even disproportionately richer. Quite apart from any action by Britain, the French economy could not possibly have afforded to sustain an expeditionary force in America remotely adequate to make up the difference.

The chain of defeats inflicted upon Virginia by New France encouraged Versailles in its misestimate and contributed importantly to the dispatch of the 3,000 elite troops. Decision-makers in Paris did not clearly comprehend that it had taken a significant fraction of Canada's total military power to defeat English Americans whose numbers were utterly trivial compared to the potential mobilizable manpower resources of the English colonies. Had the French made a more accurate estimate of the cost involved in any sustained and systematic defense of the Ohio—even presuming the Royal Navy did not interfere—they would have discovered it to be prohibitive. Even before the original French effort to fortify the Ohio was begun, it should have been clear that the French hope of seizing the continent was doomed. But appropriate negotiation *then* could have secured a large French Canada and probably guaranteed its communication with the small settlement in Louisiana.⁴⁵

(2) As the French failed to analyze their capabilities, the English failed to analyze the threat. In reality, no action by Great Britain was required. The asymmetry between the *potential* power of the English and French colonies in America was evident enough, as was the inability of France to make up the difference. That the *actual*

power of New France was relatively so great, compared to any one English colony, was the best argument for the partial and pragmatic union of the colonies that British policy-makers were seeking anyway. Had they not intervened dramatically in America, British policy-makers would not have permanently lost the Ohio to France, since the English Americans in any case could take it whenever they were determined to do so. And by not intervening, the British would have maintained the colonists' dependence upon the homeland. By conquering Canada, as they did in the subsequent war, England removed the last threat to the American colonies and set the stage for their rebellion—as a few farsighted observers perceived at the time.⁴⁶

(3) No British action being required, the Duke of Holdernessee's orders to the colonies to resist French encroachments were superfluous. Significant encroachments would have been resisted in any case. His orders, however, made Virginia's later request for troops—to carry out the orders—appropriate, plausible, and difficult to refuse. The orders tended to create in both colonial and English minds the fallacious assumption that Britain had a direct interest in a military defense of trans-Appalachia and hence could be expected to assist therein. Without the full realization of English policy-makers, they created a potentially hazardous commitment for the future.⁴⁷

(4) If one allows for the above miscalculations, the sequence of events then follows reasonably to the point where Virginia requested troops from Britain. But London's acquiescence was a serious error. The belief of the war party in London that British regulars were needed to cope with the French forces in Canada was wrong. Indeed Braddock's troops were subsequently decimated because their tactics were utterly unsuitable for the kind of fighting they were required to do.⁴⁸

Far more appropriate than the decision to send Braddock was Newcastle's original plan: to respond to Virginia's request with moral support, money to pay colonial volunteers, officers to help plan and lead a campaign and give some military training to colonial troops, and perhaps a few specialists in artillery and engineering to provide needed technical skills. Such a response could have secured the Ohio with colonial forces and would have been less likely to draw any severe French reaction.⁴⁹

Had the French not responded to the Braddock mission as they did, triggering Boscawen's naval effort and so on up the ladder, English policy-makers would have discovered through Braddock's defeat that a British expeditionary force was inappropriate for his mission. Options for merely assisting the colonies to fight their own battle would probably then have been reexamined, and the conflict perhaps de-escalated.

(5) The French did not need to reinforce Canada as they did, since the forces already available to Duquesne were ample to deal with Braddock. By sending a force so overwhelming, the French encouraged officials in London to fear that the French troops might have not only defensive orders to defeat Braddock, but also offensive orders to attack British forts in New York and Nova Scotia.

Further than this, Versailles presented British policy-makers with an enormous temptation. The French wanted their expeditionary force to arrive in Canada as quickly as possible to meet Braddock and did not think the British would risk war to halt it at sea. So the French decided not to send the force in slow troopships, but to strip their fastest and largest warships of most of their guns and carry the troops in them. (A handful of fully armed warships went along as escort.) The flotilla of eighteen ships, therefore, *both* made up of the pride of the French navy *and* was unable effectively to defend itself against Boscawen's squadron.⁵⁰ If the French had been trying to present the British with the greatest possible temptation to escalate the conflict by means of a naval action, it is hard to imagine how they could have better done so. To destroy or capture the French flotilla whole, as British officials expected Boscawen to do, at one blow would have prevented the French reinforcements from arriving in Canada, would have captured or destroyed six of the finest battalions in the French army, and would have captured or destroyed approximately one-third—the highest-quality third—of the major fighting vessels in the French navy. Versailles so crippled could hardly contemplate a major war with Great Britain, and it was partly for this reason that the English expected that Boscawen's mission might not actually lead to war.⁵¹

(6) However, British policy-makers failed to think through the full implications of the admiral's mission. Here the cabinet displayed a strange mixture of perspicacity and easily avoidable

miscalculation. To order Boscawen to perform the interception in North American waters rather than in European waters demonstrated a sophisticated awareness of the requirements of escalation control. So it is mystifying why this appreciation fled while his exact objectives were being penned. Boscawen's orders should have specified clearly that hostilities were to be opened only if the tactical situation offered the capture or destruction of *all*, or at any rate most, of the French flotilla. Such a coup would have virtually won the war it might have caused. But English decision-makers contented themselves with *expecting* this outcome, and neglected to *order* Boscawen to risk beginning a war only if he could victoriously engage the entire flotilla. That the capture of a few French ships was too much or too little was realized in London only afterward.⁵²

Intragovernmental Factors

In addition to the factors that have been discussed so far, institutional and other factors played a role in the escalation sequence leading to the Seven Years War.

Policy-makers both in London and in Paris were excessively dependent upon very few channels of information. The French colonial system heavily emphasized the role of the military. Duquesne and his predecessors as governors of New France in the period from the late 1740s on were all military officers, as were most of his staff. It appears that almost all the reports that Versailles had from Canada originated from or passed through the hands of these men. In London, decision-makers had a slightly wider range of information sources, but the bulk of their information came from the several governors of the American colonies who were most involved with the problems of the western frontier. As noted earlier, neither in Paris nor in London did policy-makers make an effort to bring lower-ranking individuals familiar with the Ohio region back to the capital for consultation.

The significance of the few information channels on both sides was enhanced by the fact that governors Dinwiddie and Duquesne both had a stake in securing the Ohio. Dinwiddie was a major stockholder in the Ohio Company, the group of Virginians most anxious to expand their land holdings into that region. He therefore had a direct personal interest in obtaining Great Britain's military protection of the territory where the Ohio Company was beginning

to stake out its claim. Furthermore, much of his information (and the basis of his reports) came from other members of the company. Although the evidence is less clear, it appears that Duquesne in Montreal may have been involved with the Grande Société, a group of French businessmen anxious to expand their trade with the Indians in the Ohio area. On both sides, then, the real importance of the Ohio region and the significance of events therein were undoubtedly exaggerated in the reports on which higher-level policy-makers partially based their decisions.⁵³

An example of the problems created by policy-makers' limited sources of information is a report sent to London by Governor William Shirley of the colony of Massachusetts. In the spring of 1754 Shirley, a firebrand imperialist who was convinced that the British should take over Canada at the first opportunity, reported on slender information that the French had begun a settlement on what was unquestionably Massachusetts territory, in an area that had not previously been under dispute. It later turned out that this information was completely false, but Shirley did not send a second report canceling the first until August. Meanwhile the news of Washington's defeat at Fort Necessity had reached London. Shirley's report provided a germ for the developing perception among British decision-makers that the French had elevated their objectives and were shifting over to a general offensive, and it helped create the climate of opinion in which Braddock's mission could be ordered.⁵⁴

Decision-making in both capitals was further handicapped by the sudden deaths in 1754 of key figures—in London of Pelham, who had been a cornerstone of the long-standing Whig government; in Paris of St. Contest, the foreign minister. Partly for this reason, during 1754 policy-makers in both capitals saw the opposing regime as being disorganized and more than usually engulfed in intragovernmental politics. The British, not inaccurately, perceived the new French foreign minister, Rouillé, as peripheral to the center of decision-making, and suspected that the king's favorite, Madame de Pompadour, enjoyed heavy and somewhat unpredictable influence. The French, not inaccurately, perceived the Whig government as torn by infighting among Newcastle, Pitt, Fox, and a number of others and suspected that the cabinet was heavily influenced by "capitalistes" in London.

Thus on both sides there was a suspicion during 1754 and early

1755 that the initial tendency of policy-makers in the opposing capital to back up their proxies in North America was a product not of high policy but of high-level politics. Correctly believing that on the whole the upper echelons of the opposing government did not want a major war, decision-makers on both sides concluded that the opponent's escalations to date had been caused by overeager subordinates in North America and by hawkish, but minority, elements at the capital. As one historian remarks, "The question of ministerial unity . . . conditioned the intransigence of both governments, since each thought the other to be fundamentally divided and vacillating. It also enabled the warmongers on both sides of the channel to deprecate the usefulness of negotiation and to question the authenticity of the other nation's peaceful intents."⁵⁵

Part of the motive for the politico-military demonstrations that ensued on both sides was an effort to awaken the whole of the opposing government to the potential gravity of the situation—after which, it was assumed, previous deeds would be disavowed and serious negotiations could begin.⁵⁶ In fact, these demonstrations did succeed in forcing the issue to the center of attention of both governments, but thereby only narrowed expectations, crystallized previously diffuse objectives, and heightened and unified motivation to achieve them.

Until well into 1755 there were no ardent advocates of war with Great Britain in the highest policy-making circles in France, with the exception of the Abbé de la Ville, an adviser to Rouillé. French decision-making in this period, however, was a maze of intrigue, in which secret Continental diplomacy by some officials, unknown to others, was also involved. The effect was to complicate and cloud all issues. With no first-rate statesman in French councils at this time, it is not surprising that the labyrinthine decision-making process lumbered into an escalation sequence abroad, and subsequently into the designs of the Austrian Count Kaunitz in Europe.⁵⁷

Although decision-making in London was more rationalized, there was a war party that had a powerful and direct effect on policy. This group's deliberate leak of the secret of Braddock's expedition failed to ignite immediate war, as was intended. Earlier, though, the Duke of Cumberland had successfully persuaded his father that Virginia should be sent regular troops, not just advisers, money, and other support, and thereby had caused the reversal of a cabinet decision that might well have halted the escalatory process. The war party was also successful, during early 1755, in so

denigrating the prospect of any further negotiations with the French that they were dropped and were not resumed late that summer when the approximate status quo of a year earlier had reoccurred.

In these efforts and in their continuing general influence in favor of war, this group was more determined, and more definite about what British objectives should be, than Newcastle and other policy-makers. Cumberland, Anson, Fox, and Pitt were all able and aggressive men, with informal influence far beyond their formal authority; they were positive that the war policy they promoted was right, necessary, and even urgent. By contrast, Newcastle, although prime minister, was weak-willed, unintelligent, ignorant of the details of both Continental and North American issues, and extraordinarily vacillating and uncertain in his policy goals. He was much more anxious to maximize and perpetuate his own personal influence and his political power than to pursue *any* particular policy, and in coping with issues he took the initiative as little as possible. Inevitably he was much swayed by the war party (although never to the point of promptly taking some extremely vigorous actions the war party urged, which if well-timed might have finished the war almost as quickly as they began it).⁵⁸

Like the dog in the Sherlock Holmes story that does not bark in the night, what is probably most significant about the intragovernmental politics in London in this period is the group that was not present at all. English policy-making circles at this time did not include *any* ranking individuals who were as motivated to explore all options for controlling the conflict as the war party was to activate all options for escalating it. Such an element, had it existed, might or might not have been able to balance the opposing group in influence. But it almost certainly could have demanded, and helped to create, a more analytic policy debate, and perhaps could have succeeded in uncovering and correcting some of the analytic failures as they developed.

Analytic Summary

The escalation sequence leading to the Seven Years War has been summarized in Table 5. Until its last stage the conflict was a bipolar one; the respective proxies were backed by stronger and stronger moves of their principals, which thereby generated a classic instance of cyclical-sequence escalation.

The competition mounted up a chain of asymmetries imbedded in

the situation and a couple of disproportionate actions, the absence of nearly any of which would have slowed and perhaps halted the sequence and given the concurrent negotiations more time to succeed. Some half-dozen failures of analysis, the result in part of intragovernmental factors, permitted the progression to continue.

Unlike many escalation sequences, this one witnessed no offensive steps by any player at any time. The different perceptions held in London and Paris of the long-standing disagreement in North America made it possible for every action by both sides to be undertaken defensively. Indeed, on one side the scope of what defense might allow was interpreted cautiously.

Nonetheless, each side perceived the other's moves as offensive and compellent, because each failed to comprehend the other's fundamental perspective and assumptions. The result was that the actions each side took to demonstrate its own resolve did not have a demonstrative effect. Instead they progressively narrowed the other side's expectations about likely futures and transformed its perception of a limited adversary into an implacable enemy. And they crystallized each side's absolute minimum objective of avoiding the final loss of North American hegemony. By this time the direct military consequences of each step were outweighing the symbolic meaning and tilting the in-theater advantage so decisively that thereafter policy-makers could not afford to hold back their responses unless they were ready to abandon their absolute minimum objective.

Part Three Toward the Control of Escalation

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Notes to Chapter 8 - The Seven Years War

1. This is the title of chapter 18 of Savelle, *Origins of American Diplomacy*.
2. Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, p. 281.
3. Savory, *His Britannic Majesty's Army in Germany*, p. i.
4. Quoted by Parkman, *Battle for North America*, p. 471.
5. A comprehensive study of escalation in this war should include at-

tention to the later accession to the conflict of Spain and Portugal. This aspect is excluded here, however, to avoid a cumbersome case history and because the decisions by Madrid and Lisbon depended heavily upon considerations of little relevance today.

Charles III, King of Spain, was a Bourbon and hence related by blood to Louis XV, the Bourbon king of France. This fact had not been sufficient to bring Spain into the war at once, but by 1761 the Spaniards were becoming concerned about the potential threat that British victories in the Caribbean and North America might pose to the Spanish Empire in the Americas. In addition, there were several long-standing grievances against the English, and a large number of fresh ones: British privateers, for example, enforcing the blockade of France, had taken goods from Spanish merchantmen in European waters and even seized whole ships. These factors, added to the dynastic link, were sufficient to cause the Spaniards to sign the so-called Family Compact in August 1761. Under its terms the French agreed not to terminate the war until Spanish objectives had been met.

For many decades friendship between Portugal and England, waxing periodically into military alliance, had been traditional for a number of reasons, notably a mutually profitable trade arrangement. When Spain allied with France, the two powers sought to wage economic warfare by closing as many European ports as possible to English commerce; to this end they ordered the Portuguese to cease trade with Britain. The Portuguese declined, were attacked across the Spanish frontier, and invoked the traditional alliance with Britain.

6. The following account of the perceptions in London and Paris of the origins of the conflict, and of events early in the process of intensification, is drawn mainly from Parkman, pp. 471-500; Dorn, pp. 281-288; and Gipson, *British Empire*, vol. 5, chaps. 10 and 11.

7. From Dinwiddie's message to the French of December 1753, quoted in Parkman, p. 488.

8. Parkman, p. 500.

9. Higgonnet, "Origins of the Seven Years' War," pp. 68-69; Gaxotte, *Louis XV and His Times*, p. 193. The French were also in possession of a copy of the surrender document from Fort Necessity, signed by Washington, which confessed to the "assassination" of a French military officer. Washington, who knew no French, thought he had merely admitted killing the officer.

10. Osgood, *American Colonies*, pp. 356-357. This and the next three paragraphs are drawn mainly from Dorn, pp. 287-290; Gipson, vol. 6, pp. 54-60; Corbett, *England in the Seven Years War*, vol. 1, chap. 2; and Charteris, *William Augustus Duke of Cumberland*, chaps. 9-12.

11. Corbett, vol. 1, p. 31; Braddock's orders are described on pp. 25-26. On French policy at this point, see Higgonnet, pp. 81-83.

12. Corbett, vol. 1, pp. 41-50. As late as February, policy-makers in

London and Paris almost unanimously expected no war (Higgonnet, pp. 71 and 82-83). London underestimated the strength of the force that the French would commit and initially sent Boscawen west to wait for it with a squadron weaker than the French fleet that actually sailed. When the size of the flotilla departing Brest was discovered, the admiralty quickly sent Boscawen reinforcements.

13. Gipson provides a dramatic account of the details of Boscawen's mission and encounter with the French (vol. 6, pp. 101-104). See also Corbett, vol. 1, pp. 53-56.

14. Gaxotte, p. 193; Dorn, pp. 289-290; and Corbett, vol. 1, pp. 63-67.

15. Thistlethwaite, "Rivalries in America," p. 538; Wrong, *Rise and Fall of New France*, vol. 2, p. 761; and Dorn, pp. 290-291.

16. Dorn lucidly explains the somewhat complicated Diplomatic Revolution of 1756 in *Competition for Empire* (chap. 7). On the penalty for offensive action see, for instance, Corbett, vol. 1, pp. 20, 23, and 41.

17. Corbett, vol. 1, p. 27.

18. "Before the crisis of the summer of 1754, Newcastle and his colleagues would have liked to limit the action of the mother country to two well-defined objectives: financing the building and maintenance of a fort at the forks of the Ohio and encouraging a union of the colonies that would have made it possible for them to resist Canadian offensives" (Fregault, *Canada*, p. 75).

19. Dorn, pp. 286-287; Cobban, *History of Modern France*, vol. 1, p. 69; Savelle, "Diplomatic Preliminaries," p. 20; and Thistlethwaite, p. 530.

20. For instance, see Gaxotte, pp. 192-193.

21. Thistlethwaite, p. 537.

22. Charteris, pp. 121-122; Corbett, vol. 1, p. 16; and Higgonnet, p. 72.

23. Gaxotte, pp. 193-194; Savelle, *Origins*, pp. 399-400, and "Diplomatic Preliminaries," p. 20.

24. Dorn, pp. 251-268; Gipson, vol. 5, pp. 31-32, and vol. 6, pp. 15-16.

25. Savelle, "Diplomatic Preliminaries," p. 125; Higgonnet, p. 72; Parkman, pp. 472-473; Fregault, p. 20; and Charteris, p. 125.

26. Fregault, pp. 31, 69-70, and 76. In addition, the French sought to protect their access to an important settlement of theirs in what is now Illinois, which they perceived the English to be threatening (Thistlethwaite, p. 531).

27. Charteris, p. 125; and Higgonnet, pp. 60-65 and 84.

28. This is the title of John Tebbel's condensation of Parkman's multi-volume *France and England in North America*.

29. Dorn, p. 287. See also Corbett, vol. 1, p. 31. The British, for their part, offered several negotiating proposals to the French, that would have denied the Ohio territory to the English Americans for an indefinite time. See also Higgonnet, p. 71.

30. Corbett, vol. 1, p. 26; Higgonnet, p. 68.

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31. On the commission, see Gipson, vol. 6, chap. 10; and Savelle, *Origins*, pp. 391-395, and "Diplomatic Preliminaries," pp. 22-25. The commission was briefly revived again later at French insistence, with no significant result. For most of its life, one of the British commissioners was William Shirley, governor of the colony of Massachusetts and one of the most aggressive of the English Americans; one of the French commissioners was Marquis La Jonquière, ex-governor of New France and one of the fathers of the scheme for fortifying the Ohio. Their failure to come to a meeting of minds is scarcely surprising. At the same time, neither they nor anyone else involved with the commission had first-hand knowledge of the Ohio area, nor much of the other disputed territories. On the lack of any felt need for urgency, see Higonnet, p. 68.

32. See Gipson, vol. 5, chap. 10.

33. Savelle, *Origins*, pp. 395-399; and Gipson, vol. 5, chap. 10.

34. Higonnet, pp. 81-89; and Savelle, *Origins*, pp. 399-418. The month, almost, between the death of Albemarle and the return of Mirepoix to London, during which neither power had an ambassador in the other capital, was a particularly critical month during which negotiation should have been pressed (Higonnet, p. 69).

35. Corbett, vol. 1, p. 16. Newcastle's hope was not an unreasonable one. After learning of Duquesne's high level of activity in the Ohio region in 1753, but before the battles of 1754, Versailles decided to dismiss Duquesne for going too far (Higonnet, p. 67).

36. Savelle, *Origins*, pp. 406-407; and Gipson, vol. 6, pp. 335-338. Gipson, who discusses the plan in some detail, concludes that it "might have given the [American] continent a long period of peace" (p. 335).

37. Corbett, vol. 1, pp. 41-42.

38. The likelihood of this sequence is argued by Higonnet (pp. 87-88). He also presents evidence (pp. 85-86) that during the previous month (February) policy-makers in both capitals, because of certain false information, had temporarily become overoptimistic about the prospects of a peaceful resolution through diplomacy and hence did not negotiate as energetically as the situation in fact demanded.

39. Fregault, pp. 36-41; and Thistlethwaite, p. 536.

40. Wrong, vol. 2, pp. 741, 745, and 750; and Parkman, p. 477.

41. Gipson, vol. 5 chap. 11; and Charteris, pp. 127-128.

42. Charteris, pp. 118 and 134. The British expected that the Braddock mission would not ignite a general war, but there is no evidence that they gave much consideration to French options for a limited military response.

43. Fregault, pp. 63 and 95; Parkman, pp. 507 and 518-519.

44. Corbett, vol. 1, pp. 42-43.

45. Gipson, vol. 5, pp. 335-338; Dorn, pp. 284-285; and Wrong, vol. 2, p. 745.

46. Parkman, pp. 472-473.

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47. Higonnet makes the same point (p. 65).

48. Robson, "Armed Forces and the Art of War," p. 173; and Parkman, pp. 513-522.

49. An obvious counterpart is the American decision to send quantities of regular forces to Southeast Asia in the mid-1960s.

50. Corbett, vol. 1, p. 67; and Fregault, p. 89.

51. Corbett, vol. 1, pp. 37-39. Another ingredient of this expectation was the cabinet's belief at this time that Britain's alliance relationships with other European powers were improving and that therefore it was less likely that the French would find it advantageous to begin a war.

52. Gipson, vol. 6, p. 117; and Corbett, vol. 1, pp. 57-59. Corbett also points out the failure of the cabinet to give Admiral Boscawen more careful orders.

53. Corbett, vol. 1, pp. 60-62.

54. Higonnet, p. 59. There was a somewhat similar alarmist report from Dinwiddie at about the same time (pp. 72-73).

55. *Ibid.*, p. 74; see also pp. 69 and 73.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

57. Cobban, vol. 1, chaps. 1 and 2; Dorn, pp. 23-25; and Higonnet, pp. 73, 75, 81, and 83.

58. To repeat again a phrase employed by several historians, the reputation of Newcastle has been handed down from generation to generation in a blaze of derision. Universally he is considered one of the least able prime ministers Great Britain has ever had. The diplomatic policies of his cabinet, however, have been judged less inept than those of Louis XV's regime in this period. See Lecky, *History of England*, vol. 2, pp. 345-351; Corbett, vol. 1, pp. 62-68; and Dorn, pp. 293-294.

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Notes to Chapter 9 - On the Assessment of Conflicts

1. *Parametric variables* might be a more precise, or at least more formal, term. I avoid it because *parameter* has lost some of its original meaning and become something of an all-purpose jargon word.

In addition to the two aspects of escalation mentioned here, decisions about escalations are made through complex policy-making processes. This aspect will be taken up later.

2. *Strategy of Conflict*, pp. 3-4.

3. The extent to which decision-makers are or need to be *consciously aware* of the bargaining aspect of war limitation and escalation is a slightly ambiguous area in Schelling's theory of limited war. To the extent that the theory is viewed as prescriptive, clearly they must be quite consciously aware. To the extent that it is viewed as descriptive, the issue is a little more complicated.

Presumably the process of selecting saliences as limits occurs about as readily among those who do not realize that this is their criterion of selection as among those who do. If only a single saliency is available, one does not need to know the principle to be likely to hit on the saliency. If, as is usual, multiple saliences are available, it is not clear that players who attempt to coordinate their behavior consciously by that criterion will do a great deal better than those who attempt to coordinate their behavior without any conscious criteria. In its general form Schelling's saliency principle, as he points out, is a psychological hypothesis about subconscious pattern recognition, of a type familiar to gestalt psychologists.

The way belligerent nations maneuver for advantageous ground rules in war can be usefully analyzed as a tacit bargaining process, whether or not decision-makers are highly conscious of this process. And determining empirically in any particular past case how conscious of it policy-makers actually were is difficult. Both in the interpretation of historical documents and in the interviewing of still-living policy-makers, the exact definition and wording of the research questions are likely to have a considerable effect on whether one reaches a generally affirmative or generally negative conclusion. Certainly a great many diplomats and other policy-makers in the pre-World War II eras understood that both the limitation and the expansion of armed conflicts required maneuvering in a context that included elements of conflict and of cooperation (tacit, or even sometimes explicit). But they would not have used, as Schelling does, the words *tacit bargaining*, or even *bargaining*, and of course never *nonzero sum game*.