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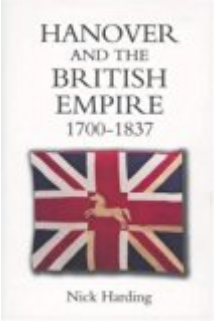
Nick Harding. *Hanover and the British Empire, 1700-1837.* Boydell & Brewer, 2007. ix + 292 pp. $105.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-84383-300-0.



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Hanover, the spiritual homeland of George I and George II, was never absent from the foreign policy considerations of British diplomats and statesmen over the course of the eighteenth century. This German dimension to Britain's international identity is widely perceived to have, at best, competed with; and, at worst, retarded, the development of Britain as an imperial power during the first half of the eighteenth century. The apparent conflict between continental and colonial priorities can best be seen in Jeremy Black's *America or Europe? British Foreign Policy, 1739-1763* (1998), and, notwithstanding the appearance of more recent texts stressing the primacy of Britain's European identity in international affairs, Nick Harding has resolved the apparent contradiction by situating Hanover's relationship to Britain within contemporary discourses of empire. Given that the Ph.D. dissertation upon which this was based was supervised by David Armitage, this is not to be wondered at.

This book is an intellectual history of international relations that seeks to trace the development of British and Hanoverian ideas about sovereignty primarily through the print cultures of both states. This is not a diplomatic history that relies primarily upon official or private records. As a result, what Harding elucidates are *mentalités* in the public domain. The tale he tells is nevertheless very important, and his work fits into an emerging genre of what could be called "international political culture" in its emphasis upon the intellectual and cultural "unrealities" behind diplomacy. Harding is consequently sensitive to the importance of religion as a discourse within and between Protestant states, not to mention the significance of Saxon myths about liberty to British notions of their place in Europe. What comes as a surprise to modern readers is the importance of imperial concepts, whether of domination or submission, to Hanoverian, as well as British, perceptions of joint monarchy. John Toland and Gottfried Leibnitz presented what in some respects were similar accounts of royal sovereignty in which supremacy, be it British or Hanoverian, over the other was vested in the per-

son of the king. More could have been done by Harding to delineate the contours and complexities of these complementary theories of empire, but he does well to illustrate some of their uses in the political discourse of the time. The notion of a Hanoverian empire over Britain, for example, was deployed by Jacobites in Britain to illustrate the illegitimacy of the Georgian monarchy as late as 1745.

Although Hanoverian attitudes towards Britain and its king changed little until the 1740s, British views of Hanover began to change during the War of the Austrian Succession. By the time of the American Revolution, Britain's maritime priorities had taken precedence in the nation's political mind over the dues owed to Hanover as a partner in Europe. Hanoverians accepted this subordinate position with some misgivings, preferring to maintain the myth of a personal union of crowns. Given that the Hanoverian government was a separate entity, this sense of autonomy was possible to maintain. The British side of this story has been told before, but Harding breaks new ground in his coverage of the Hanoverian material, and takes both sides of the story through the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Hanover is acknowledged by political and diplomatic historians to have played an important role in British thinking about Europe throughout the 1790s and 1800s, reverting to British "ownership" in 1815, thanks primarily to Hanoverian lobbying. Since no woman could inherit the crown of Hanover, the accession of Victoria in 1837 put an end to the special relationship that had begun in 1714.

Despite increasing hostility to Hanover on the part of British politicians and journalists from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, the electorate and its affairs had the power to stir British passions on subjects from military service to Catholic Emancipation. Despite a good deal of grousing about the perceived deficiencies of the union, both Britons and Hanoverians accepted that it affected their politics and policies in numerous ways. Harding is to be commended for revealing both the ways in which Britain's political culture was affected by the Hanoverian connection but, equally and--in some ways more importantly--how Hanoverian public debates and the Hanoverian polity were shaped by union with Britain.

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