

## Castellano García, Manuel Alejandro, *Gran Bretaña y la Paz española de Utrecht, Valencia, Albatros, 2022, 303 págs. ISBN: 978-84-7274-399-1*

Christopher Storrs  
University of St. Andrews  

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In 1709-1710, the War of the Spanish Succession, the “Great War” of the early eighteenth century, looked set to end with the crushing defeat of Louis XIV of France and his grandson, Philip V of Spain, by the Grand Alliance powers, who had conquered most of Spanish Flanders and Spanish Italy and were intent on the invasion of France and on Philip’s expulsion from Spain and the Indies. Louis would agree to almost any terms to obtain peace. However, the allies demanded too much, including Louis’ co-operation against Philip, and the war went on. Almost miraculously, the peace of Utrecht (1713) left Philip in possession of Spain and the Indies. That peace followed secret negotiations between England and France, from the summer of 1710, which led to a settlement which, while benefitting Britain’s allies was most advantageous for Britain. The war of succession ended –like so many of France’s wars in previous decades– with Louis first buying off one of the states opposing him. By 1710, queen Anne, her Tory ministers, and most of her subjects, were tired of a “Whig” war in which Britain’s allies seemed intent on their own interests at Britain’s expense and were no longer confident of achieving the war aim of “no peace without Spain” (a far cry from the original aim of a partition of Spain’s empire). This attitude was confirmed by the allied setbacks in Spain in 1710, and later by the death of Emperor Joseph I, to be succeeded by his brother, “Charles III” of Spain; a war to secure Spain and the Indies for Charles threatened the balance of power, whose preservation against the Bourbons was the original objective of the war of succession. By October 1711, Philip having allowed his grandfather to act for him, preliminary terms had been agreed which would be the basis of the final settlement; Philip would remain in possession of Spain and the Indies in return for the cession to Britain of the *asiento de negros*, of Gibraltar and of Port Mahon. These, plus French concessions and measures to satisfy Britain’s allies, were then approved by Parliament and imposed on those allies, who were vilified in Jonathan Swift’s best-selling pamphlet, *The Conduct of The Allies*. A peace congress opened at Utrecht in January 1712. The allies not yet having formally acknowledged Philip as king of Spain, he could not send representatives to Utrecht until his position was resolved, such that Louis XIV continued to negotiate for Philip, whose negotiating team was only admitted to the congress in the spring of 1713. In fact, as in 1710-1711, the crucial deals were worked out not in the congress, but between the British secretary of state, Henry St John (viscount Bolingbroke), and the French minister, Torcy, although lord Lexington in Madrid in late 1712 and the marques de Monteleon in London from December 1712 also facilitated a settlement between Britain and Spain. But peace between Britain and Spain was only concluded at last in July 1713, delayed among other things by the need to work out a solution –Philip’s renunciation of his claim to French throne– to the threat to the balance of power posed by the deaths in the French royal family in 1712 which raised the prospect of Philip inheriting that throne.

The story of the making of the Utrecht settlement has been told many times, but Manuel Castellano’s more specific focus is the peace between Great Britain and Spain. Trade issues

figure –understandably– largely in this account, although just why the British insisted so much on the *asiento* (as opposed to other commercial concessions) might have merited discussion. Prominent, too, is the question of the Catalans, one of the most contentious points in the last stages of the discussions. Queen Anne, whose honour was said to be at stake in the matter, her ministers and most members of parliament were satisfied –too easily?– with reassurances that the Catalans would enjoy the same privileges as Philip V's Castilian subjects, suggesting at best ignorance of Spanish political institutions and practices among Britain's elite. But while the Catalan issue loomed large, so too did religion – ie the formal toleration of Catholicism in the ceded Spanish territories, a toleration contrary to British law and which the British ministers claimed might well lead them to lose their heads, in a situation in which the peace-making was one more element in the “rage of party” between Whigs and Tories (The Tory ministers were also vulnerable to accusations of treason, that they were concluding a “Jacobite” peace which facilitated the subversion of the protestant Hanoverian succession in favour of Anne's half-brother, James Edward Stuart, the Old Pretender). Manuel Castellano juggles well the many different strands –the competing interests of Britain and its allies, the domestic and foreign interactions, the different phases and locations of the negotiations– of this dynamic situation, making excellent use of the English, French and Spanish primary sources and of secondary sources which include not only Baudrillart's classic account of relations between the French and Spanish Courts but also a great body of more recent work, by Joaquim Albareda and others. The coverage is wide-ranging. But were any private interests in play? Were any efforts made, for example, by the Colon family in respect of their claims on Jamaica, which had been effectively sacrificed in the treaty with England of 1670? The role of the duke of Savoy, Victor Amadeus II, Philip V's father-in-law and the maternal grandfather of Ferdinand VI (who was very aware of his Savoyard identity) also merits fuller consideration in the specific context of the settlement between Britain and Spain. The duke's interests were championed almost from the start of the negotiations by queen Anne's ministers. They needed a collaborator among the allies in their separate dealing, finding one in Victor Amadeus whose own agreement with Louis XIV in 1696 had neutralised Italy and triggered the end of the Nine Years War in 1697. Significantly, Swift's *Conduct of the Allies* did not castigate the duke as it did the Dutch and the Emperor. But queen Anne was also the cousin of the duke's consort, Anne-Marie of Orleans, whose claim to the English succession had been set aside in the Act of Settlement (1701) which favoured the house of Hanover; she might be compensated for that exclusion in the peace of 1713. As for Victor Amadeus, the British candidate to replace Philip V in Spain should he prefer the French succession, the duke was a descendant of Philip II, his claim to the Spanish succession acknowledged in the wills of Philip IV and Carlos II, and in the settlement of 1713. Victor Amadeus did not secure Spain and the Indies, but he did receive Sicily (and with it the royal status long sought by his family), which would also benefit England's Mediterranean trade, especially as the duke had no navy. Victor Amadeus therefore gained much in 1713, despite Manuel Castellano's suggestion that none did well out of the Utrecht settlement. But Manuel Castellano must be congratulated on a fine example of diplomatic history, a genre –above all the study of bilateral relations between states– which has long been out of fashion, and which now largely survives in various forms of “new” –cultural, gendered and so on– diplomatic history. But in this very readable study, which reveals just how much Philip V and some of his subjects resented the Utrecht settlement, helping us understand just why Europe would be so disturbed by Philip's revanchist aspirations after 1713, Manuel Castellano shows how much can be gained from an approach a little closer to what might be thought of as “old” diplomatic history.