

**PARLIAMENT IN CRISIS:
THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE
PARLIAMENTARIAN WAR EFFORT DURING THE
SUMMER OF 1643**

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ABSTRACT

In the summer of 1643 a series of catastrophic defeats brought the parliamentary war effort to the brink of disaster. The scale of the emergency precipitated a political crisis in which the House of Lords attempted to orchestrate a negotiated surrender. This thesis sets out to understand the reasons for parliament's military collapse and to examine in detail the dynamics of the ensuing political crisis. It will be argued that the events of summer 1643 came much closer than is generally recognised to bringing the civil war to an end, and that the unexpected survival of the parliamentary cause fundamentally shaped the subsequent course of the conflict.

At the heart of this thesis is a day-by-day analysis of events at Westminster during the first week of August 1643. Parliament's military disintegration prompted the House of Lords to draw up a series of peace proposals amounting to capitulation. Fear that the king would accept these terms induced militant activists in the City of London, led by Lord Mayor Isaac Pennington, to unleash an unprecedented campaign of threats and intimidation aimed at their defeat. The battles that raged in the House of Commons to decide the fate of the peace proposals marked the high watermark of parliament's crisis. Had the proposals been carried it was rumoured that leading members of the peace party would be arrested and the City would take control of the war effort.

These truly extraordinary developments indicate the enormity of parliament's military failure and the pivotal nature of the resulting political struggle. This is a new interpretation of a neglected moment in the history of the English Civil War, one that seeks to re-establish the true significance of parliament's 1643 crisis.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

The arguments deployed in this thesis concerning the battle of Adwalton Moor were originally presented in the author's *Adwalton Moor 1643: The Battle That Changed A War* (Pickering, 2003).

INTRODUCTION

During the high summer of 1643 parliament's war effort was plunged into crisis by a succession of catastrophic defeats: the destruction of Lord Fairfax's northern army at the battle of Adwalton Moor (30 June), the annihilation of Sir William Waller's western army at the battle of Roundway Down (13 July), and the capture of Bristol by Prince Rupert (26 July). Despite the fact that these unprecedented disasters brought parliament to the brink of a negotiated surrender, the reasons for parliament's military disintegration have never been properly examined or explained. Instead historians have tended to consider the broad sweep of the civil war from 1642 to 1644 as a homogeneous and self-contained period: essentially a phase of the conflict preceding the New Model Army in which the king enjoyed success and parliament struggled. It is a historiography characterised by a subconscious division of the war into two distinct parts: pre New Model Army - parliamentary failure; post New Model Army - parliamentary success. As a result parliament's crisis has been largely side-lined in favour of the military instrument that ultimately decided the civil war. Therefore this thesis proposes to investigate the catastrophic failure of parliament's armies during the summer of 1643, to show how close the resulting political crisis came to capitulation, and to reveal the impact of the emergency on the subsequent prosecution of the war effort. It is the purpose of this study to re-establish the importance of this pivotal period, one that altered the course of the civil war and helped to determine that parliament, and not the king, would ultimately prove victorious.

In presenting a new interpretation of these momentous but relatively neglected events, this thesis will attempt to provide a fresh understanding of both the crisis itself and its impact on the civil war in 1643 and 1644. The analysis will show how parliament's military collapse was precipitated by a debilitating lack of cooperation amongst commanders (a deficiency exacerbated by the remarkably effective collaboration of royalist generals); how the increasingly militant City of London overawed parliament and influenced the course of the war effort; how parliament's 1643 crisis was considered by contemporaries to herald an almost inevitable royalist victory; and how parliament's unexpected survival minimised and clouded the collective and historiographical memory of this critical period.

In terms of historiographical position this thesis is not a strict military history, neither is it a wholly political analysis, it is an attempt to synthesise the two in order to deepen our understanding of an underrepresented yet vital period of the conflict. Parliament's 1643 crisis is important because it describes the very real possibility of a

royalist victory or parliamentary surrender. The disintegration of parliament's war effort during the summer of 1643 sparked a political crisis that came perilously close to ending the war in a negotiated surrender. One vital aspect of the emergency, generally underplayed by historians, is the key role of the City of London. It will be argued that at the height of the crisis in the first week of August 1643, the City's threat to take control of the war effort compelled the House of Commons to overthrow a capitulation peace initiative drawn up by the House of Lords. Contemporary evidence suggests that these abject terms would have been readily accepted by the king and that the war would have been brought to a swift conclusion. This thesis will argue that the Lords' attempt to impose a political surrender was defeated by the menaces and intimidation of a militant minority in City of London led by radical Lord Mayor Isaac Pennington.

Consequently this study will attempt to convey the full magnitude of parliament's crisis and the great sense of danger it engendered. In mid April 1643, when the Oxford peace talks reached deadlock, a parliamentary army officer recalled that 'our army was master of the field.'¹ But by early August, when the Lords attempted to reopen negotiations with the king, 'parliament had no army capable of keeping the field.'² The military situation had been transformed and the strength of Charles' position was undeniable. Some historians have argued that in early August 1643 a determined push for London would have swept all before it. In the north and the west parliamentary resistance had crumbled, while all that remained of Essex's once impressive field army had fallen back towards the capital. After more than a month of catastrophic setbacks, parliament faced the prospect of imminent defeat.

Parliament's crisis is also important because it dictated the subsequent course of the civil war and prosecution of the parliamentary war effort. Following the defeat of Lord Fairfax's northern army at Adwalton Moor on 30 June the Houses authorised the negotiation of a military alliance with the Scots. This thesis will show how the deep-seated political and religious divisions that crystalized as the Independent-Presbyterian split were a direct consequence of the Solemn League and Covenant and, therefore, of parliament's 1643 crisis. This is an important connection, generally unrecognised by historians, but essential for a proper understanding of the gravity of the crisis. The Scottish alliance was absolutely critical. Once parliament had rejected a reopening of peace talks only one course of action remained: total war. It was this stark new reality that enabled John Pym, widely regarded as parliament's unofficial political leader, to pursue a more resolute, efficient, and effective war effort. Amongst these initiatives the

¹ C. H. Firth (ed.), *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow* (Oxford, 1894), p.50.

² C. H. Firth (ed.), *Life of William Cavendish Duke of Newcastle* (London, 1906), pp. x-xi.

Solemn League and Covenant was paramount. For parliamentarians like Pym, and the increasingly militant City of London, the king's advantageous military position disqualified any real prospect of meaningful talks. It had long been suspected that Charles' only objective was absolute victory; if he would not negotiate a settlement at Oxford in April 1643, why should he do so in August when his military prospects had never been better? As far as parliament's committed supporters were concerned the hard won religious and political gains of the Long Parliament must not be abandoned. Capitulation would surely witness a reintroduction of 'that arbitrary and boundless prerogative which the King endeavoured to set up over the people'.³

It is therefore appropriate at this point to familiarise ourselves with the military campaigns that led to parliament's crisis in the summer of 1643. This preliminary scene setting is not intended to provide an extensive or thoroughly detailed analysis – that will form the basis of subsequent chapters – it is merely to provide a framework that will facilitate a ready grasp of the arguments to be deployed. Because of the manner in which the civil war developed, it is best achieved by dividing the campaigns of 1643 into three sections: the central front where Robert Devereux third earl of Essex commanded the principal field army; the northern front where parliament's forces were led by Ferdinando Lord Fairfax; and the western front where Sir William Waller commanded Parliament's Western Association. It was the near simultaneous demise of these three armies that plunged parliament into crisis and opened up the prospect of a decisive royalist victory.

We will begin with the earl of Essex and the critically important central front. By the close of the Oxford peace negotiations in mid April 1643 Essex had assembled an army of no less than 19,000 men. On the 13 April he marched from Windsor towards Reading, intent upon laying siege to the town or bringing the king's Oxford based army to battle.⁴ Three months later the earl's plans were in tatters. He wrote to parliament on 9 July suggesting, in a letter seized upon by his political opponents, that negotiations with the king should be reopened, and that the war should be settled by a prearranged battle if talks prove unsuccessful.⁵ Essex's once numerous army had been reduced to only 6,000 foot, of which half were sick and unfit to march, plus a cavalry arm of no more than 2,500 horse.⁶ This alarming wastage was not however the consequence of some catastrophic defeat inflicted by the invincible Rupert, but the result of a devastating outbreak of camp fever, a serious want of pay and clothing, widespread

³ Firth (ed.), *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow*, p. 52.

⁴ V. F. Snow, *Essex the Rebel* (University of Nebraska, 1970), p. 359.

⁵ W. B. Devereux, *Lives and Letters of the Devereux Earls of Essex 1540-1646* (London, 1853), vol. ii, pp. 367-369.

⁶ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 160.

desertion to other parliamentary armies, and a scurrilous attempt to denigrate the competence and character of the earl and his senior officers.⁷ Essex complained to the Speaker of the House that 'unless present order be taken for the supplying the army with money, their necessities are so great, it will be impossible for me to keep them together.'⁸

By early August the earl had withdrawn the remainder of his forces to a defensive position centred on Uxbridge to the west of London. While the disintegration of the army was serious enough, the general sense of crisis was magnified by the personal position of Essex. As both General of parliament's forces and Member of the House of Lords, Essex embodied (as no other) the conflict of interests inherent in the soldier-statesman, a conflict that would ultimately pave the way for the Self Denying Ordinance and the formation of the New Model Army. The earl's commitment to the war effort was absolutely crucial, particularly for men such as John Pym who believed that the religious and political gains of the Long Parliament could only be secured by military victory. At the same time the peace party recognized that a disenchanted and disgruntled Essex might well throw his weight behind new proposals to treat with Charles. This is an important point for this study. The possibility that the earl would abandon the armed struggle stands at the heart of current historiography concerning the political crisis of late July and early August.⁹ It is an orthodoxy this thesis will seek to challenge.

In the north of England parliament's forces were commanded by Lord Fairfax, ably assisted by his son and lieutenant general, the soon to be famous Sir Thomas Fairfax.¹⁰ Throughout 1643 the earl of Newcastle's large and well-drilled royalist army dominated Yorkshire. That the hopelessly outnumbered parliamentarians were able to maintain an effective resistance, under the severest of pressure, testified to the courage, tenacity and ingenuity of the Fairfaxes. Yet by the close of the Oxford peace talks in April a difficult military situation was becoming much more serious. In February, the queen's return from the continent, accompanied by significant quantities of money and munitions, provided a new impetus for the royalist war effort. Sir Hugh Cholmley, who held Scarborough and its castle for parliament, quickly defected to the king, while

⁷ Devereux, *Lives and Letters*, p. 375.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

⁹ The importance of Essex's adherence to Pym's political programme is a constant theme of the secondary literature. See, for example, S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War* (London, 1904), vol. i, ch. IX; J. H. Hexter, *The Reign of King Pym* (Harvard, 1941), ch. V-VII; Snow, *Essex the Rebel*, ch. 14.

¹⁰ The introductory outline given here of Parliament's northern campaign 1642-1643 is based upon Gardiner, *Great Civil War* vol i; P. Young and R. Holmes, *The English Civil War: A Military History of Three Civil Wars 1642-1651* (London, 1974); P. R. Newman, *Atlas of the English Civil War* (London, 1985).

Captain John Hotham, son of the parliamentary governor of Hull, concluded a private agreement with the earl of Newcastle by which parliamentary forces would not attack the queen and her convoy if Newcastle would spare the East Riding. In addition the governor of Hull, Sir John Hotham, whose animosity had been simmering since the summer of 1642, refused to lend any assistance to the increasingly beleaguered Fairfaxes. What might have been an effective triumvirate of relatively small parliamentary armies based on Scarborough Castle, the walled port of Hull, and the seat of Fairfax power in the West Riding cloth towns, disintegrated under the accumulated weight of mutual mistrust, rivalry and ambition.¹¹

Consequently, on 30 March, the Fairfaxes were compelled to abandon their quarters around Selby and fall back on Leeds, suffering substantial casualties at Seacroft Moor in the process. Though the Fairfaxes retained an army in being they were effectively confined to the West Riding cloth towns, with little or no prospect of assistance from either Scarborough or Hull. On 30 June they were completely routed at Adwalton Moor near Bradford, taking refuge at Hull, where the governor, Sir John Hotham, had been arrested two days earlier on suspicion of treason. All of Yorkshire, save for the walled port, now lay under royalist control, and by the end of July most of Lincolnshire had been similarly subjugated. Both Gainsborough and Lincoln fell to Newcastle as the earl belatedly pushed south. At the beginning of August an alarmed Oliver Cromwell moved his cavalry to Peterborough, in order to protect the eastern counties, while desperately imploring the County Committee at Cambridge to mobilize all forces without delay. As Gardiner correctly observed, 'If Newcastle could break through Cromwell's scanty band of troopers, London, and with it the whole parliamentary cause, would be gravely imperilled.'¹²

In the west of England the civil war was altogether more complicated.¹³ A royalist breakthrough in the spring of 1643 propelled the campaign through four counties in a matter of weeks, eliminating in the process almost all parliamentary resistance, and creating the circumstances in which many historians believe Charles threw away his best chance of outright victory. When, in mid April, parliament withdrew from the Oxford peace talks, hostilities in the far south west had just recommenced following a forty day truce agreed by local commanders. The campaign had reached stalemate: the Cornish royalists were unable to break out of their native

¹¹ For a detailed analysis of the personal animosities that beset parliament's commanders in Yorkshire see, A. J. Hopper, *"The Readiness of the People"* (University of York, 1997); A.J. Hopper, 'Fitted for Desperation,' *History*, vol. 86 (April, 2001).

¹² Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 192.

¹³ The introductory outline presented here of parliament's 1642-1643 campaigns in the west and south-west is based upon the secondary sources given in footnote 10.

county, and the Devonshire parliamentarians were likewise unable to make any headway west of the Tamar. By early August the situation had changed beyond recognition; two large parliamentary armies had suffered decisive defeats, leading to the fall of the entire west and South West save for a handful of isolated towns and ports.

The deadlock had been broken in May when Sir Ralph Hopton, commander of the Cornish royalists, won an astonishing victory at the battle of Stratton against a much stronger parliamentary army commanded by the earl of Stamford. During the first week of June at Chard in Somerset Hopton facilitated a long planned rendezvous with royalist forces under the command of Prince Maurice and the marquis of Hertford. In response the parliamentary general Sir William Waller concentrated his forces around Bath, blunting the royalist advance in a fierce encounter at Lansdown on 5 July. However the reprieve was short lived. Eight days later his army was completely destroyed at the battle of Roundway Down near Devizes in Wiltshire. Waller's defeat enabled the victorious royalists to storm the strategically important port of Bristol on 26 July, a triumph that marked the high water mark of the king's war, and the onset of parliament's political crisis.

By the beginning of August 1643 the crushing defeat of parliament's northern and western armies, plus the catastrophic loss of Bristol, had opened up the alarming prospect of a royalist advance against London, the king's primary objective since his enforced departure from the capital in January 1642. In addition the earl of Essex's field army, operating in the Thames valley against the king's Oxford army, had virtually ceased to exist as a fighting force. Disease, desertion and want of pay had destroyed any prospect of offensive action, leaving the bedraggled remainder to fall back towards London. The war effort had collapsed; parliament was on its knees facing an almost inevitable royalist victory.

This thesis will argue that a combination of two diametrically opposed factors brought parliament to the brink of defeat in 1643. On one hand an almost total lack of cooperation amongst parliamentary commanders, and on the other, a complete willingness of royalist commanders to collaborate effectively together. While this remarkable contrast in military effectiveness undermined the parliamentary war effort in 1643, its reversal in 1644 led to the royalist disaster of Marston Moor and the loss of the old royalist north. As we shall see, these findings represent a new emphasis in the study of the English Civil War and a new interpretation of the military course of events.

It is also appropriate at this juncture to say something about the political crisis that followed parliament's military collapse. During the first week of August 1643 a whirlwind of activity in the House of Lords and the House of Commons determined not

only the immediate fate of the parliamentary war effort but arguably the outcome of the civil war itself. It is these tumultuous days at Westminster that lie at the heart of this thesis. In the wake of parliament's military disintegration the House of Lords rushed through a series of peace proposals intended to end the war in a negotiated surrender. The sheer panic of this knee-jerk clamour for peace is indicated by a comparison of these proposals with the settlement terms demanded by the king four months earlier.

Talks had convened at Oxford on 1 February 1643, but after a month and a half of proposal and counter proposal agreement remained beyond reach. The king submitted his final terms on 12 April 1643, only to have them rejected by parliament two days later. Charles required satisfaction on a number of key points: the restoration of his revenues, magazines, ships and forts (to be controlled by royal appointees); the restoration of all members of parliament expelled since January 1642; and the physical relocation of Lords and Commons to a new site not less than twenty miles from Westminster (thereby preventing unruly and intimidating public demonstrations against the king and his supporters).¹⁴ Significant, then, that the proposals endorsed by the Lords in early August should closely match those demanded by Charles in April. The king *was now* to be granted his revenues, navy, forts and magazines – commanded by those he deemed fit – while all excluded members were to be readmitted to parliament, guaranteeing an immediate royalist majority in the upper chamber and an almost certain numerical superiority in the Commons. In addition the Assembly of Divines, convened at Westminster on 1 July to consider further reformation of the protestant religion, was to be abandoned in favour of a new ecclesiastical Assembly directed by the Crown. As Gardiner put it, 'Such propositions as these were not a compromise but a capitulation.'¹⁵ The Lords were convinced that the war was lost and that these carefully crafted terms represented a final opportunity to salvage an agreement before it was too late.

Conceived by a committee of the upper chamber, the peace proposals received the assent of the House of Lords on 4 August.¹⁶ Aware that any move to reopen talks with Charles would face considerable opposition in the Commons, peers attempted to justify their actions in a preamble specifically addressed to the lower house:

My Lords believe that it is all too visible to the Understanding of all Persons, that this Kingdom, with all those Blessings of Plenty and Abundance, the fruits of our long and happy Peace, must be forthwith turned into the Desolation and Famine that accompany a Civil War; and that those Hands and Hearts, which should secure this land, do now endanger it, by our unnatural Division; which Considerations have moved my Lords to return again Propositions to His

¹⁴ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 108.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 184.

¹⁶ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 171.

Majesty, in which they do desire your Concurrence; the Reasonableness and Justice of them being such as, if they be rejected, our Cause may thereby be strengthened, and the Kingdom encouraged to preserve themselves in their just Rights.¹⁷

The hopes of the Lords were initially raised. On the following day, Saturday 5 August, a majority of the Commons, following a 'very large and serious debate,'¹⁸ decided by a majority of 29 to take the proposals into 'further Consideration.'¹⁹ However, the session ended without resolution, and was adjourned until the morning of Monday 7 August, when, in a dramatic finale, two separate votes were required to settle the opinion of a sharply divided House. The first ballot declared in favour of the Lord's peace proposals by a margin of only two votes (81 for, 79 against), but the 'House not being satisfied with the report of the Tellers'²⁰ divided again, and this time overturned the propositions by a majority of seven votes (81 for, 88 against). To the consternation of the peace party terms would not be submitted to the king and the war would continue.

This, in brief, represents the current interpretation of events at Westminster during the first week of August 1643. However, this thesis will argue that the Lords' proposals were not defeated by the democratic process of the House of Commons, but by a wave of intimidation reinforced by the City of London's thinly veiled threat to take control of the war effort. Valerie Pearl had shown that in moments of crisis a vociferous and highly organised minority of radicals, backed by influential supporters like the City's puritan Lord Mayor Isaac Pennington, were fully capable of seize the initiative.²¹ It was this burgeoning militancy that lay behind the rejection of the first ballot on 7 August and the imposition of a second vote in which the proposals were defeated. Political chicanery and coercion overturned a narrow Commons majority in favour of peace. The City's threatened takeover forced the war party to sacrifice parliamentary procedure in order to retain control of the lower House and the war effort. These admittedly controversial findings underpin the re-establishment of parliament's crisis as a truly pivotal moment in the history of the civil war.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ British Library Thomason Tracts (BLTT), E. 249, 31, *A perfect diurnall of some passages in parliament*, 31 July-7 August 1643.

¹⁹ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 196.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

²¹ The City radicals drew their support 'from one or two highly placed individuals on the Militia Committee, some City clergymen, and more humble followers in the City and suburbs'. V. Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford, 1961), p. 274.

Historiography

The structure adopted in this thesis requires the historiography of the 1643 crisis to be divided into two parts. The first, discussed here, examines the *impact of crisis*, while the second, part of chapter four, considers the *causes of crisis*. By and large historians have not considered parliament's near fatal emergency sufficiently important to justify detailed scrutiny. As an event the crisis has been somewhat marginalised, and parliament's military collapse has not been seen as a determining moment in the history of the conflict. Consequently identifiable historiography is predominantly indirect, and even historians who have attempted to explore these events more fully have often done so without specific reference to the crisis itself. It should be noted that the following survey is confined to historians who have specifically addressed the period, and is not intended to represent a general historiography of the English civil war during 1642-1643.

Samuel Gardiner's *History of the Great Civil War* is an appropriate starting point for any historiographical treatment of the 1643 crisis.²² Gardiner, according to Ivan Roots, is largely responsible for the creation of John Pym as the dominant figure in the House of Commons during the early years of the Long Parliament.²³ This is significant because Pym's pre-eminence is now universally recognized, while his supervision of the Commons during July and August 1643 has become synonymous with parliament's response to the crisis. However, despite a clear acknowledgement of Pym's central role during the period of greatest danger,²⁴ it is Gardiner's evocation of the mood at Westminster, and in the City of London, that is particularly striking. Amid the gloom and despondency that later historians were to emphasise, Gardiner presents an almost heroic image of a parliamentary leadership fiercely determined to overcome all adversity, allied to a City authority equally resolute in its support for parliament's cause.²⁵ Gardiner draws attention to the critical issues which pressed most heavily upon Pym: the need to secure the loyalty of the earl of Essex in the face of a desperate peace party campaign to win the Lord General's support for negotiations, and the diplomatic imperative of securing a military alliance with the Scots. Gardiner's interpretation presents a crisis that did not prompt a widespread defeatism, but rather a clarion call to arms, to which parliament's leaders and their supporters readily responded. Gardiner does not view the menaces of the City of London as the real reason for the defeat of the

²² Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, 4 vols.

²³ I. Roots, 'Gardiner, Samuel Rawson (1829-1902)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

²⁴ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 258.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 175 & p. 180.

Lords' peace proposals. Instead he paints a picture of a defiant parliament, rejecting the propositions as a matter of principle, and not as a result of threats and intimidation.

Half a century later, Professor J.H. Hexter subjected John Pym's political conduct during 1642 and 1643 to a rigorous and searching scrutiny.²⁶ Setting out to challenge a widely held view that Pym had led the war party in the House of Commons, Hexter conceived a new balance of forces in which Pym, supported by a small but shifting group of political allies (the Middle Group), steered a moderate course between the extremists in both Lords and Commons. With Pym centre-stage, Hexter conjured up the despair of London during the summer of 1643, speculating that only a miracle appeared likely to save parliament. And yet if there was a miracle, argued Hexter, it was performed by Pym, whose astute political management constructed an administrative machine that secured the long-term survival of the parliamentary war effort.²⁷ The significance of Professor Hexter's research is widely recognized: John Morrill, for example, paid tribute to its elucidation of both Pym the man and Pym the political operative.²⁸ In terms of this study Hexter's political biography is notable for the fact that it subjects parliament's crisis to a far greater scrutiny than the standard histories of the period.

C. V. Wedgwood's *The King's War* is arguably the most well known and widely read general history of the English Civil War.²⁹ The book was intended to form the second part of a civil war trilogy: preceded in 1955 by *The King's Peace 1637-1641*, and eventually followed by *The English Republic*. However, the projected third instalment was abandoned in favour of the *Trial of Charles I*, which appeared in 1964.³⁰ In terms of methodology Wedgwood was at pains to explain that, as a narrative history, *The King's War* necessarily subordinated the question *why* to a consideration of *what* happened and *how* it happened.³¹ Nevertheless Wedgwood depicts, amid the desperation of crisis, Pym's composed and guiding hand, correctly observing that the alliance with Scotland became an 'urgent necessity' upon the defeat of the Fairfaxes at the battle of Adwalton Moor. This contrasts sharply with the more pervasive, but erroneous, view that Sir William Waller's later defeat at the battle of Roundway Down finally pushed parliament into the Solemn League and Covenant.³² The Lords' peace proposals, Wedgwood argued, were voted down when it became clear that Essex was

²⁶ Hexter, *King Pym*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-132.

²⁸ J. S. Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces* (London, 1976), p. 52.

²⁹ C. V. Wedgwood, *The King's War 1641-1647* (London, 1958).

³⁰ C. V. Wedgwood, *The King's Peace 1637-1641* (London, 1955); C. V. Wedgwood, *The Trial of Charles I* (London, 1964).

³¹ Wedgwood, *King's War*, p. 11.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 239.

not prepared to support negotiations on such 'pusillanimous' terms.³³ Although the major issues are addressed, the brevity of Wedgwood's approach tends to reinforce the historiographical status quo.

Despite its primary purpose as a textbook for teachers and students of sixteenth and seventeenth-century parliamentary history, Conrad Russell's *The Crisis of Parliaments* deals in some detail with the Civil War and its consequences.³⁴ Russell touches briefly upon the crisis of 1643, highlighting poor parliamentarian morale and a number of desertions to the king during the course of the year. It is, however, in his treatment of the Scottish alliance that Russell produces a characteristically telling analysis. Making the point that Pym had to rescue parliament's military situation without concession to those radicals who would scare more supporters to the king, Russell argued that the political and religious conservatism of the Scots would enable parliament to secure a moderate settlement once Charles had been defeated in the field.³⁵ Given the perilous state of parliament's affairs during July and August 1643, the Solemn League and Covenant appeared to offer a timely and workable solution: a more effective prosecution of the war effort underpinned by a strong determination to preserve the political and social order. However, this thesis will emphasise parliament's urgent need for military assistance, arguing that considerations such as the social and political conservatism of the Scots did not enter into the equation.

Lawrence Kaplan broke important new ground in a highly perceptive study of the Scottish alliance and its political background.³⁶ Kaplan's thesis, argued from a Scots perspective, provided an illuminating dissection of the complex and often delicate process by which the Solemn League and Covenant was forged. Kaplan demonstrated that the English parliament completely underestimated Scottish willingness to take up arms against Charles, so much so that an agreement could have been reached earlier and on less demanding terms. By the time parliament opened serious negotiations the Scots were fully aware of the dire military situation south of the border. It was readily understood in Edinburgh that the English call for help was solely the consequence of imminent disaster, and not, as some Scots had earlier dared to hope, a shared and principled desire for uniformity of church government. Parliament's decision to despatch commissioners to the Scottish capital represented an official recognition of crisis. As the Scots would come to realise, such an emergency had to exist before both Lords and Commons would accept the religious and financial price of Presbyterian

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

³⁴ C. Russell, *The Crisis of Parliaments: English History 1509-1660* (Oxford, 1971).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

³⁶ L. Kaplan, 'Steps to War: the Scots and Parliament, 1642-1643', *Journal of British Studies*, IX 2, (May, 1970).

military assistance. It seems certain that Pym could not have secured parliamentary backing for a Scottish invasion of northern England without the catastrophe of Lord Fairfax's defeat at the battle of Adwalton Moor.

One of the best military histories of the English Civil War is that published by Peter Young and Richard Holmes in 1974.³⁷ Despite a quite natural concern to describe campaigns, battles and sieges, there is a limited attempt to place the war in a political context. In terms of the 1643 crisis Young and Holmes take the view, perhaps surprisingly, that Pym's strategy amounted to little more than a day to day management of a steadily deteriorating situation. Pym's contribution is acknowledged to be vital, but only in so far as it influenced parliamentary morale.³⁸ This interpretation is indeed notable, for it contrasts markedly with Hexter and others, who see in Pym's patient programme a long-term appreciation of administrative and military requirements. In addition Young and Holmes correctly identify the desperate campaign to relieve the siege of Gloucester (10 August – 5 September), and the subsequent battle of Newbury (20 September), as a critical rebuff to an increasingly decisive run of Royalist triumphs. Had the earl of Essex failed here, the war, in all probability, would have been quickly and decisively lost.³⁹

John Morrill's celebrated survey of provincial reaction to the civil war assesses the impact of the 1643 crisis in terms of an increasingly draconian parliamentary response. Morrill described how the principles of the Petition of Right were largely set aside in favour of a series of tyrannical ordinances, 'outrages committed to custom, tradition and the common law'.⁴⁰ The imperative of self-preservation underlined the seriousness of parliament's crisis. As Morrill demonstrated, the pressing need to avoid defeat - at virtually any cost - quickly justified an unprecedented ruthlessness.

Mark Kishlansky, without specific reference to the 1643 crisis, characterised the 1642-1644 period as one in which parliament and its war effort lurched from one crisis to another.⁴¹ The Houses waged a desultory and defensive war, intending only to avoid military defeat and calculating that this would be sufficient to bring the king to a negotiated settlement. As Kishlansky's purpose was to account for the emergence of the New Model Army, it is perhaps understandable that his perspective should tend towards a homogeneous treatment of the pre 1645 civil war. Nevertheless, Kishlansky's work is broadly indicative of English Civil War historiography as a whole. The later significance of the New Model Army has tended to overshadow the events of mid-1643;

³⁷ Young and Holmes, *English Civil War*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 149-150.

⁴⁰ Morrill, *Revolt of the Provinces*, pp. 52-53.

⁴¹ M. A. Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army* (Cambridge, 1979).

to the extent that parliament's crisis does not figure as a pivotal event in the history of the conflict.

Barry Coward has provided an alternative interpretation of parliamentary failure. As the spring and summer of 1643 progressed, so the increased likelihood of an unconditional royalist victory effectively sabotaged the possibility of a negotiated settlement.⁴² The inference appears to be that Charles was not prepared to compromise while he and other leading royalists remained supremely confident of a relatively quick and decisive military victory. Though Coward's analysis may well be correct, it is nevertheless the case that the greatest royalist successes took place during the summer of 1643. In addition, the King's ability to fight an effective campaign remained severely restricted until a large supply convoy of arms and munitions reached Oxford in May. As this thesis will show, Royalist momentum did not become decisive until the end of July 1643.

The joint editorship of John Kenyon and Jane Ohlmeyer produced in 1998 an important military and political survey of the entire civil war period up to the Restoration of 1660.⁴³ Underpinned by a firm belief in the 'British' nature of the English Civil War, the editors set out to emphasise the interconnected nature of politics, religion and ultimately military action in the three Stuart kingdoms. Describing the civil wars in Scotland, Edward Furgol lent support to the views discussed earlier of Lawrence Kaplan; that the prospect of a royalist victory in England fostered a ready willingness north of the border to recommence military action against Charles.⁴⁴ A second distinguished contributor, Ian Gentles, reinforced the significance of parliament's Scottish alliance, observing 'It is now possible to see that the [military] tide turned [against the king] in the first months of 1644.'⁴⁵ Although the crisis is not singled out for particular attention, Gentle's emphasis on the Scottish alliance, which was a direct consequence of parliament's crisis, indirectly flags up the significance of parliament's military collapse.

Austin Woolrych's *Britain in Revolution*, a magisterial survey of virtually the entire seventeenth century, provides a fitting tribute to the career of a notable civil war historian. In terms of parliament's 1643 crisis, Woolrych argued that the approval of the Lords to seek Scottish assistance was only granted as a consequence of crisis, and that the inconclusive first battle of Newbury, fought in September 1643, emphasised, as

⁴² B. Coward, *The Stuart Age 1603-1714* (London, 1994), p. 207.

⁴³ J. Kenyon and J. Ohlmeyer (eds.), *The Civil Wars: A Military History of England, Scotland and Ireland 1638-1660* (Oxford, 1998).

⁴⁴ E. Furgol, 'The Civil Wars in Scotland', in Kenyon and Ohlmeyer (eds.), *The Civil Wars: A Military History of England, Scotland and Ireland 1638-1660*, p. 49.

⁴⁵ I. Gentles, 'The Civil Wars in England', in Kenyon and Ohlmeyer (eds.), *The Civil Wars: A Military History of England, Scotland and Ireland 1638-1660*, p. 137.

Edgehill had done a year earlier, the inability of the principal parliamentarian and royalist field armies to secure a war-winning victory.⁴⁶ There was a clear need for outside help. Fortunately for parliament, John Pym lived long enough to negotiate the Solemn League and Covenant, and, argues Woolrych, to implement those administrative reforms upon which victory was ultimately achieved. Indeed, Woolrych claimed that Pym's contribution to parliament's eventual triumph was greater than that of its generals.⁴⁷ This echoed John Morrill's bold assertion that 'The battles which were fought in the inns and secluded manor houses of rural England were to prove more decisive in deciding the outcome of the civil war than were most of the events on the battlefield.'⁴⁸ However Ronald Hutton reached a different conclusion, strongly suggesting that battles did indeed have a decisive effect upon the course of events.⁴⁹ This thesis will demonstrate that in 1643 at least, it was the tide of military events that drove the political agenda. Parliament's military collapse not only necessitated the Solemn League and Covenant, but also precipitated a political crisis that nearly ended the war in a negotiated surrender. The evidence strongly suggests that the campaigns and battles of the civil war dictated both the course of events and the final outcome of the conflict.

In 2004 John Adamson transported parliament's crisis into the realms of a fleeting historiographical fashion dealing with counterfactual history.⁵⁰ It is perhaps indicative of way in which the crisis is perceived that a long overdue analysis such as this should emerge in the context of a historical 'what might have been'. While Adamson's work is exceptionally perceptive, its inclusion in a volume of similar crystal ball attempts to predict alternative historical outcomes tends to recast the crisis as somehow less than serious, existing only in a kind of science-fiction world occasionally visited by historians for light relief or public entertainment. Nevertheless, having made what may appear a rather harsh judgement, it has to be conceded that Adamson builds a vivid and strongly coherent picture of the events which provide Charles I with a war winning opportunity in the summer of 1643. One unfortunate consequence of the terms of the essay, however, is that the focus of the argument becomes a royalist missed opportunity rather than a battle for control of the parliamentarian cause. There is no mention of the tumultuous parliamentary debates in the Lords and Commons that decided the fate of the peace proposals, or the threat of Lord Mayor inspired militants to

⁴⁶ A. Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 265&267.

⁴⁷ A. Woolrych, *Battles of the English Civil War* (London, 1991), p. 49.

⁴⁸ J. S. Morrill, *The Revolt in the Provinces* (London, 1999), p. 74.

⁴⁹ R. Hutton, *The Royalist War Effort 1642-1646* (London, 1982), p. 203.

⁵⁰ J. Adamson, 'King Charles I Wins the English Civil War', in A. Roberts (ed.), *What Might Have Been* (London, 2004), pp. 40-58.

take control of the war effort. This is a great shame because Adamson is without doubt the best equipped historian to cut through the inertia of the current historiography and produce a definitive account of these neglected days.

In 2005 Richard Cust published an important and deeply empathetic political biography of Charles I. Cust correctly identified the king's military victories in the summer of 1643 as a vital breakthrough, providing the royalist with the potential to deliver 'a decisive blow'. In addition, Cust linked the political crisis which followed parliament's military disintegration with the publication, on 30 July, of a royal declaration. As we shall see in chapter three, it was this proclamation that prompted the House of Lords to draw up a series of peace proposals amounting to surrender. The king's declaration, Cust observed, was a carefully calculated attempt to exploit his military victories by splitting the parliamentary movement apart. Cust's analysis represents an important contribution, confirming the seriousness of parliament's crisis from a royalist perspective.⁵¹

This review of the 1643 crisis has revealed a variety of historiographical views and conclusions. Though divergences of opinion are apparent, there remains a broad consensus in terms of importance. The period is occasionally described as pivotal, offering the very real prospect of a royalist triumph, but instead producing a renewed parliamentary determination to continue the war. Although the crisis has not been subjected to a thorough and detailed analysis, two particular themes have nevertheless emerged: firstly the leadership of John Pym and secondly the creation of the Solemn League and Covenant.

Pym's pre-eminence is perhaps remarkable given the absence of a well-defined or officially constituted party structure within the parliamentary system. According to Hexter, Pym managed a loose and fluid coalition of like-minded politicians, the composition of which, at any given moment, reflected the business in hand. Pym emerges as both a short-term fixer and a long-term planner. He has become synonymous with parliament's survival, the man who orchestrated the relief of Gloucester and paved the way for the Scottish alliance. It is Pym's political skills, rather than the crisis itself, which have become the dominant feature of this critical period. Pym's historiographical reputation has effectively relegated the near terminal condition of parliament's war effort to a stage upon which Pym performed his magic.⁵² This thesis will take an alternative tack, emphasising the key political differences between Pym and

⁵¹ R. Cust, *Charles I A Political Life* (Harlow, 2005), pp. 378-379.

⁵² The whole tenor of Hexter's *King Pym* is that of the master-craftsman at work. See, for example, pages 31-34 for a telling assessment of Pym's political acumen.

London's radical Lord Mayor and war party MP Isaac Pennington. It is in this context that we shall view Pym's role in the dramatic events of early August 1643.

Though the summer crisis of 1643 is eminently visible right across the historiography of the period, it has not to date received the kind of attention proposed here. While historians clearly acknowledge the existence of an emergency, its real significance as a pivotal moment in the conflict is not adequately expressed. Here we return to the point made at the beginning of this Introduction: Fairfax's New Model Army, the device by which the civil war was won, has effectively usurped parliament's crisis. The emergence of this war-winning force has divided the conflict into two distinct periods, its decisive impact obscuring the real importance of summer 1643. In redressing this historiographical imbalance it is the purpose of this thesis to show that parliament's crisis was as significant as the army that ultimately decided the conflict.

Sources

Historians of the English Civil War are fortunate to be able to draw upon a wide range of source material. The diversity of the surviving records allows a relatively detailed reconstruction of most civil war events. While the following survey is not exhaustive, it is nevertheless representative of the primary evidence underpinning this thesis.⁵³

Indispensable to any student of the civil war are the daily records of the Houses of Parliament. The *Journal of the House of Commons* and the *Journal of the House of Lords* provide an important chronological account of parliamentary procedure and business. While the *Journals* do not present a verbatim account of debates and speeches, they nevertheless supply a detailed report, enabling complimentary sources to be identified and located. For example, the *Journal of the House of Commons* dated 5 July 1643 reports a letter from Thomas Stockdale concerning events in the north of England. Though somewhat concise - the *Journal* outlines the contents of Stockdale's letter in the most succinct terms - it is possible to trace a complete transcription in a volume of the Historical Manuscripts Commission.⁵⁴ In addition, the *Journal's* matter-of-fact recording of daily events supplies much raw data for close and detailed studies of specific aspects of the civil war. Jack Hexter's political biography of John Pym and Lotte Glow's analysis of the Committee of Safety are two particularly good examples.⁵⁵

⁵³ G. Davies and M. F. Keeler (eds.), *Bibliography of British History: Stuart Period 1603-1714* (London, 1970); G. E. Aylmer and J. S. Morrill, *The Civil War and Interregnum: sources for local historians* (London, 1979).

⁵⁴ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p.155; Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC), *Portland Mss.*, vol. i, p.718.

⁵⁵ Hexter, *Reign of King Pym*; Lotte Glow, 'The Committee of Safety', *English Historical Review*, 80 (1965), pp. 289-313.

The *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642-1660* provide an excellent example of a printed primary source that works in perfect harmony with the Journals of the Lords and Commons.⁵⁶ Consisting of complete transcriptions of individual pieces of parliamentary legislation, the *Acts and Ordinances* supply some of the fine detail lacking in the *Journals*. Here are to be found the fruits of parliament's daily labours: the unprecedented imposition of direct and indirect taxation, the financial punishment of committed royalists, the direction of military policy, and the provisioning of the armed forces. Although dry, mundane, and often dauntingly voluminous, the invaluable detail of the *Acts and Ordinances* rarely fails to illuminate the wider military and political situation.

The *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series* is a similarly important and complementary source of official information. The *Calendars* contain full summaries of government papers received and despatched. The accuracy and coverage of the 1640-1660 transcriptions are such that consultation of the originals is generally considered to provide little additional data.⁵⁷ Also calendared, in a parallel series, are the papers of two parliamentary revenue-raising committees established in 1643: the *Calendar of the Committee for Compounding with Delinquents* and the *Calendar of the Committee for the Advance of Money*. These committees represent important financial innovations, and are indicative of the increasing complexity, scale and gravity of the conflict. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for this study, the *Calendar of the State Papers Venetian* contains an enormous amount of pertinent material. The correspondence of the pro-royalist Venetian ambassador reveals a unique and thoroughly candid picture of political life in the capital.

The Thomason Tracts, an extensive collection of political and religious publications assembled between 1640 and 1660 by the London bookseller George Thomason, constitutes one of the most celebrated collections of primary sources associated with the civil war.⁵⁸ Though a good proportion of the books, pamphlets, and newspapers exhibit a clear propaganda function, many contain valuable political and military information, which can, on occasion, be crosschecked with more reliable sources. In order to obtain a better understanding of what parliamentary newspapers were anxious to conceal or downplay, this thesis has made extensive use of the rival royalist publication *Mercurius Aulicus*. Though it is undoubtedly the case that the

⁵⁶ C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, (London, 1911).

⁵⁷ Aylmer and Morrill, *The Civil War and Interregnum: sources for local historians*, p. 6.

⁵⁸ The importance of the Thomason Tracts may be gained from the fact that in 1908 the British Museum published a two volume index of the collection. British Museum Dept. of Printed Books, *Catalogue of the pamphlets, books, newspapers, and manuscripts relating to the Civil War, the Commonwealth, and Restoration, collected by George Thomason, 1640-1661* (London, 1908), 2 vols.

Thomason Tracts have to be handled with extreme care, especially the weekly newspapers, it is equally evident that the collection represents an indispensable aid to civil war study.

John Rushworth, a contemporary of Thomason, was also an avid collector of civil war tracts. Many formed the basis of the later volumes of his *Historical Collections*, an attempt to allow the documentary 'evidence' of the 1640s to speak for itself, devoid of any interpretation or commentary. During the early years of the civil war Rushworth held the position of clerk-assistant to the House of Commons, an appointment that helps to explain royalist attacks upon his impartiality as a historian. It was Rushworth's method to arrange his documents, reports and speeches chronologically, so that the reader was informed of the events they described without the interpolation of the historian. Consequently Rushworth's *Historical Collections* became an invaluable tool for later historians, and remains an important adjunct to the Thomason Tracts and other collections of printed works.

The Historical Manuscripts Commission maintains and publishes further collections of printed works. The Commission began its work towards the end of the nineteenth century, making available calendared reports of a large number of privately held collections, many of which contained substantial quantities of civil war material. The reports, which include the testimony of both royalists and parliamentarians, emanate from all parts of the kingdom, and are an important indicator of provincial outlook and non-official London opinion. In addition, some of the reports contain transcripts of documents that cannot now be traced; the example quoted above, Thomas Stockdale's letter to the House of Commons, being a case in point.

Clarendon's illustrious *History of the Rebellion* is the most important contemporary history of the civil war.⁵⁹ Edward Hyde (created earl of Clarendon in 1661)⁶⁰ was elected MP for Saltash in the Long Parliament, but spent the war years as Charles' principal civilian adviser. A moderate and constitutional royalist, Clarendon favoured a negotiated settlement with parliament. Though rewarded with rank and office at the Restoration, Clarendon's subsequent political career was a disaster, ending in the humiliation of an Act of Banishment and lifelong exile. However, Clarendon's close proximity to the king placed him at the very centre of national events, and helped to secure a posthumous accolade of the highest order: the greatest writer of

⁵⁹ W. D. Macray (ed.), *The History of the Rebellion by Edward, Earl of Clarendon* (Oxford, 1888), 6 vols.

⁶⁰ B. H. G. Wormald, *Clarendon: Politics, Historiography and Religion 1640-1660* (London, 1951); R. W. Harris, *Clarendon and the English Revolution* (London, 1983).

'contemporary history' in the English language.⁶¹ Clarendon has become the official voice of the royalist war effort. An almost encyclopaedic recollection of personalities and events provides historians with an incomparable account of the entire civil war. Although partisan and forthright, Clarendon's position at the epicentre of the king's war bestows an unimpeachable importance upon virtually every word.

We turn now to the military campaigns of 1642 and 1643. The publication of a number of eyewitness memoirs (many of whose authors held positions of command or seniority) has afforded an invaluable insight into the battles and strategy of the civil war. Several memoirs are directly concerned with parliament's 'crisis' armies of 1643, illuminating the campaigns that brought parliament to the brink of total defeat.

Although Robert Devereux, earl of Essex, Lord General of parliament's forces, failed to leave an autobiographical account of his military service, much of importance can be gathered from his surviving letters and dispatches.⁶² Furthermore, a number of those that served under the earl during 1642 and 1643 subsequently committed their experiences to writing. One such was the regicide Edmund Ludlow (1616-1692), who enlisted in Essex's bodyguard at the outbreak of the civil war.⁶³ A vehement opponent of the king, Ludlow first saw action at Edgehill (23 October 1642) and was also present at Turnham Green (13 November 1642). Although he did not witness Essex's capture of Reading in April 1643 or the disintegration of the army in the weeks that followed, Ludlow's testimony nevertheless provides important evidence for the 1642 campaign and a more realistic assessment of Essex himself.

A day-to-day record of the earl's army for 1643-1644 is supplied by the *Journal of Sir Samuel Luke*.⁶⁴ Having fought for parliament as a captain of horse at Edgehill, Luke (1603-1670) was commissioned by Essex in January 1643 to raise a regiment of dragoons in his native Bedfordshire. Present during the siege of Reading (for which his diary was published in 1802), Luke distinguished himself at Chalgrove Field (18 June 1643) alongside the mortally wounded John Hampden. He accompanied the earl's army on the march to relieve Gloucester, and took part in the first battle of Newbury. The *Journal*, a product of Luke's appointment as scoutmaster-general in January 1643, documents his service from February 1643 to March 1644, during which time he was twice the recipient of official parliamentary thanks. The importance of the *Journal*

⁶¹ C. P. Hill, *Who's Who in Stuart Britain* (London, 1988), p. 103. For a further endorsement of Clarendon's literary and historiographical achievements, see Paul Seaward, 'Hyde, Edward, first earl of Clarendon (1609-1674),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

⁶² W. B. Devereux, *Lives and Letters of the Devereux, Earls of Essex, 1540-1646* (London, 1853), vol. ii; John Morrill, 'Devereux, Robert, third earl of Essex (1591-1646)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁶³ Firth, *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow*.

⁶⁴ I. G. Philips (ed.), *Journal of Sir Samuel Luke*, (Oxfordshire Record Society, 1950-1953), 29, 31, 33.

lays in its unusually detailed portrayal of reconnaissance and information gathering, despite the editorial reservations of I. G. Philips over the effectiveness of the intelligence itself. Always at the forefront of the action, Sir Samuel Luke earned a reputation for efficiency, dogged commitment and personal courage.

A brief glimpse of everyday rank and file life in the earl's army is provided by a small collection of letters written by Nehemiah Wharton, a junior officer.⁶⁵ A native of London, Wharton probably enlisted in the capital during July 1642. His correspondence records the progress of the parliamentary army from its arrival at Acton on 8 August 1642 to the occupation of Worcester on 24 September. The date of Wharton's final letter, written at Worcester on 7 October, prompted speculation that he might have perished at Edgehill on 23 October. The modern reader would almost certainly be struck by Wharton's emphasis on religion. Whether describing the frequent preaching of uplifting sermons, the Lord's part in healing divisions within the parliamentary army, or the ungodliness of the citizens of Worcester and Hereford, man's relationship with the Almighty was never far from the author's thoughts. Wharton's piety - and that of others like him - supports the argument that the issue of religion was the principal cause of the civil war.

Essex's campaigns of 1642 and 1643, waged against the king's principal field army, brought the earl into direct confrontation with the most dynamic royalist commander of the war: Prince Rupert. Rupert's ceaseless activity generated an enormous correspondence, much of which was administered by his secretary Colonel Benett. The collection, consisting of more than one thousand letters, formed the basis of Eliot Warburton's *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers*.⁶⁶ Warburton makes it clear that the work was intended as a source of reference rather than a definitive portrait of Rupert's career. While the *Memoirs* are undoubtedly a useful starting point for any military study of the civil war, of particular interest is the political situation in which the book was conceived. Published in 1849 (a year after continental Europe had been convulsed by a series of revolutions), Warburton argued that England had avoided a similar fate because divisive constitutional issues had been resolved by the civil wars of the seventeenth century. However, the author went on to warn the nation's leaders that educational and material neglect might well persuade the lower orders to follow in the footsteps of their European counterparts.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Sir H. Ellis (ed.), Nehemiah Wharton, 'Letters from a Subaltern Officer of the Earl of Essex's Army', *Archaeologia*, 35 (1853), 310-334.

⁶⁶ E. Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers* (London, 1849).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, vol.i, pp. 14-16.

The memoirs of Sir Thomas Fairfax (1612-1671) record the Yorkshire campaigns of parliament's northern army from 1642 through to 1644.⁶⁸ Commanded by Sir Thomas' father, Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, the northern army was confronted from December 1642 by the earl of Newcastle's relatively well-trained and numerically superior royalist forces. Appointed general of the horse and second in command to his father, the younger Fairfax captured Leeds in January 1643 and stormed Wakefield against tremendous odds four months later. Though the northern army suffered a crushing defeat at Adwalton Moor (June 1643) the Fairfaxes refused to capitulate. From within the stronghold of Hull new forces were quickly raised, which proved to be a constant thorn in royalist flesh throughout the remainder of 1643 and into 1644. Though Sir Thomas' memoirs were composed towards the end of his life, they remain an invaluable account of the relatively neglected but fundamentally important northern war.

One of the two principal royalist memoirs of the Yorkshire war occurs in a biography of William Cavendish, earl of Newcastle, commander of the king's northern army, written by Margaret Lucas his second wife.⁶⁹ Though published during Newcastle's lifetime, Lucas relied upon John Rolleston, her husband's secretary, for details of his military career. The paucity of information provided by Rolleston, when he would in all probability have known a great deal more, is a defect much regretted by the biography's twentieth century editor Charles Firth.⁷⁰ However, it appears that Lucas' primary purpose was the rehabilitation of her husband's reputation. Newcastle's flight into exile following the devastating parliamentary victory at Marston Moor in July 1644 left a long shadow over the earl's loyalty to the royalist cause.

In the west of England Sir William Waller was commissioned Major General of parliament's Western Association army in February 1643. Although Waller (1598-1668) left several accounts of his life, none could be described as a military memoir in the conventional sense. Sir William's *Recollections* provide the greatest detail, but even here the narrative takes the form of a philosophical reflection rather than a campaign history.⁷¹ It was Waller's unflinching conviction that his battlefield triumphs, and a number of timely deliverances from a variety of dangers and disasters, were a manifestation of God's providence. Conversely, he was equally convinced that his several defeats were instances of divine punishments, the inevitable consequence of

⁶⁸ Thomas Lord Fairfax, 'A Short Memorial of the Northern Actions During the War There, From The Year 1642 Till 1644,' *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. viii (1884).

⁶⁹ Firth (ed.), *Life of William Cavendish*.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

⁷¹ William Waller, 'Recollections,' in H. Cowley, *The Poetry of Anna Matilda* (London, 1788), pp. 103-39.

regrettable lapses in character. Despite Waller's determination to reconcile the vagaries of his civil war experiences with a strongly held belief in the intervention of the Lord, *Recollections* nevertheless contains one or two useful insights into parliament's western campaign of 1643. For example, Waller attempted to explain his defeat at Roundway Down by accusing Essex of a dereliction of duty in not preventing the decisive intervention of reinforcements from the king's Oxford army.

The course of the western war in 1643 pitted Waller against one of the most effective commanders of the entire conflict. Sir Ralph Hopton (1596-1652), lieutenant general of royalist forces in Cornwall, led a remarkably tenacious and extremely effective army. *Bellum Civile* ⁷² records Hopton's epic struggle against Waller during July 1643 when the royalists narrowly avoided disaster at Lansdown, were almost compelled to surrender at Devizes, and finally triumphed in spectacular fashion at Roundway Down. Hopton's memoir is supplemented by additional eyewitness accounts of Lansdown, Roundway Down and Prince Rupert's storming of Bristol, rendering the work an indispensable source for the entire west-country campaigns of 1642-1644.

Methodology and Structure

The way in which historians construct their work and the methods they employ vary greatly. Many historical works take a themed approach in which a concept is developed to illustrate a larger truth relating to the subject under consideration. This may be justified on the grounds that a particular aspect of a historical investigation or controversy is particularly relevant to a deeper understanding of a wider problem. Approaches such as this are undoubtedly valuable and have found an increasingly prominent place in both academic and popular histories. This thesis, which acknowledges the validity of such techniques, will nevertheless adopt an altogether more traditional approach. Because of the nature of parliament's crisis it is appropriate to pursue, in some parts of the thesis, a day-by-day dissection of events. This adherence to the strict discipline of chronology is required to unlock the truth about a crucial but largely hidden period of the English Civil War. The events of the first week of August 1643 have received a passing and sometimes perfunctory treatment by historians. This failure to dig deep has ensured that a pivotal moment in the conflict has languished in almost complete obscurity. Perhaps hindsight has prevented a proper appreciation of the real gravity of the situation. For example, Michael Braddick has observed that historians

⁷² C. E. H. Chadwyck Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile: Hopton's narrative of his campaigns in the West, 1642-1644*, (Somerset Record Society, 1902), 18.

are able to impose some kind of artificial order on the various campaigns fought in different parts of the country. Yet for those living through the civil war, news received on a weekly basis was probably confusing and made much less sense.⁷³ It is precisely this type of real time analysis that will be employed in this thesis to cut through the fog of a retrospective approach and uncover the truth about an unrecognised turning point in the civil war.

The structure adopted in this thesis consists of six chronologically sequenced chapters. The first two consist of a military and administrative study of the parliamentary war effort from the outbreak of fighting in the summer of 1642 to the eve of crisis in mid to late June 1643. Chapters three and four describe the crisis itself, portraying the calamitous high summer of July and August 1643, and presenting a detailed analysis of the military and political factors that led to the collapse of the parliamentary war effort. Chapters five and six focus on reactions and effects, examining both parliamentary and royalist responses to the crisis, and illustrating the longer-term military, political, and religious consequences.

Chapter one provides a military examination of the parliamentary war effort from the beginning of the conflict in mid 1642 to the eve of parliament's disintegration in June 1643. The discussion concentrates upon the respective commanders and campaigns of parliament's 'crisis' armies: Robert Devereux earl of Essex (Lord General of the principal field army), Ferdinando Lord Fairfax (General of the Northern Army) and Sir William Waller (Major-General of the West). The chapter is divided into three case studies, exploring the military capabilities of each general, their individual campaigns, and the wider impact of war effort. The case studies aim to evaluate Essex, Fairfax and Waller as potential causes of crisis, while simultaneously elucidating the course of campaigning during the first year of the civil war. The results of this approach will be fully discussed in a wider analysis of parliamentary failure in chapter four.

Chapter two seeks to consider the development of parliament's political and financial strategy as a potential cause of crisis. The chapter will show how parliament's inherent caution resulted in an administrative machine that was largely unfit for purpose. During the first half of 1643 the overbearing influence of the peace party ensured that negotiations received the same priority as the military pursuit of the conflict. The outcome was a war effort that teetered towards crisis as peace talks broke down and the king grew in military strength.

Taken together, chapters one and two form the background to parliament's crisis, revealing the events that led to the eventual collapse of the war effort in the

⁷³ M. Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire* (London, 2008), p. 266.

summer of 1643. The separate campaign studies of chapter one sit alongside and complement the political analysis of chapter two. These chapters attempt to emphasise factors that are normally ignored or underplayed, resulting in a fresh view of the civil war from a largely neglected angle.

Chapter three describes and analyses the disintegration of the parliamentary war effort from late June through to early August 1643. The chapter describes a withering succession of royalist military triumphs, resulting in a political emergency that almost ended in parliamentary capitulation. The seeming inevitability of defeat persuaded a dwindling and demoralised House of Lords, supported by similarly pacific elements in the Commons, to offer a political surrender in order to avert a military catastrophe. Parliament, it appeared, was now prepared to abandon the hard won religious and political gains of the Long Parliament in exchange for a pardon and a way out. The crisis came to a head in the House of Commons on 7 August 1643 when peace proposals matching those demanded by the king four months earlier were defeated by intimidation and political chicanery. Parliament was hauled back from the very edge of capitulation by the City's threat to take control of the war effort. It is an extraordinary and largely untold story, affirming the importance of parliament's crisis and the defeat of the peace proposals.

Chapter four will attempt to explain the collapse of the parliamentary war effort during the summer of 1643. The first section examines the way in which historians have understood and commented upon the causes of parliament's crisis; the second brings together evidence provided by chapters one and two of the thesis; while the third consists of a comparative analysis of both historiography and thesis findings. The chapter will argue that a failure to properly investigate the causes of parliament's military collapse has resulted in a diminution of the crisis in current histories of the conflict.

Chapter five describes contemporary reactions of both parliamentarians and royalists to parliament's military collapse, revealing the extent to which a sense of parliamentary defeat was matched by a comparable sense of royalist triumph. This is important. The degree to which the king and his supporters believed the crisis to constitute a genuine war-winning opportunity is a significant indicator of the situation's true gravity. The contemporary impact of the emergency once again reveals the extent to which modern historians have failed to appreciate the real seriousness of parliament's crisis. As far as those caught up in these epic events were concerned, parliament's military collapse signalled the end of the civil war.

Chapter six discusses the repercussions of parliament's crisis, showing how the disintegration of the war effort affected the subsequent course of the conflict. The urgent need for military assistance forced parliament into a Scottish alliance – the Solemn League and Covenant – which compelled both sides to make important and at times uncomfortable compromises. A hugely significant consequence of the Solemn League and Covenant was the emergence of the Independent-Presbyterian split, a series of religious and political divisions that characterised parliament's war effort for the remainder of the conflict and beyond. The significant point, as far as this thesis is concerned, is that these divisions were a direct result of parliament's 1643 crisis. Finally the chapter will demonstrate that the dramatic upturn in parliament's military fortunes during 1644 was due to a transformation in cooperation between commanders and a corresponding failure of cooperation amongst royalist commanders. This twist in the story of military collaboration underlines the importance of cooperation, both as a key to parliament's crisis and to military success as a whole.

THE MILITARY ROAD TO CRISIS: ESSEX, FAIRFAX AND WALLER, JULY 1642-JUNE 1643

The catastrophic collapse of the parliamentary war effort during July 1643 resulted from three military disasters: the disintegration of parliament's principal field army commanded by Robert Devereux earl of Essex; the destruction of parliament's northern army commanded by Ferdinando Lord Fairfax; and the annihilation of parliament's Western Association army commanded by Sir William Waller. In order to identify the reasons for these failures, chapter one will examine the campaigns of Essex, Fairfax, and Waller from the outbreak of civil war in July 1642 to the eve of military breakdown in June 1643. Relevant findings will be incorporated into a detailed examination of parliament's crisis in chapter three, followed by a wider analysis of parliamentary failure in chapter four.

Robert Devereux earl of Essex

As one historian with considerable understatement put it 'Historiography has not been kind to Robert Devereux, third earl of Essex.'⁷⁴ With one or two exceptions⁷⁵ the earl's military reputation has been subjected to an almost continual assault, and the view that Essex 'was a mediocre general even by the amateurish standards of the Civil War' is now fairly well entrenched.⁷⁶ Samuel Gardiner set the tone, declaring that 'During the whole of his career [Essex] never showed any sign of ability to regard a campaign as a whole, in which the activities of each separate force is to be combined for the achievement of a common end.'⁷⁷ And as if to account for, or possibly excuse, the virulence of these attacks it has been explained that 'His deficiencies are more obvious to us than they were to his contemporaries in 1642.'⁷⁸ However, it will be argued here that criticism of Essex's 1642 and 1643 campaigns largely fails to appreciate the serious difficulties that confronted the Lord General. Indeed, it is the purpose of this study to demonstrate that the earl's military abilities were not incommensurate with the onerous

⁷⁴ G. Seel, 'Cromwell's Trailblazer? Reinterpreting The Earl of Essex,' *History Today* (April 1995), p. 23.

⁷⁵ Most notably G. Davies, 'The Parliamentary Army under the Earl of Essex, 1642-1645', *English Historical Review*, 49 (1934), pp. 32-54.

⁷⁶ A. Woolrych, *Battles of the English Civil War* (London, 1991), p. 13.

⁷⁷ S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War 1642-1649* (London, 1904), vol. i, p. 134.

⁷⁸ J. Kenyon, *The Civil Wars of England* (London, 1988), p. 33.

demands placed upon him, and that historians have generally ignored the real reasons for his apparent ineffectiveness.

The question of the earl's *character*, as opposed to his military prowess, has elicited a much more favourable response from both contemporaries and historians alike. It is these well-attested qualities that provide a much surer guide to his mettle during the arduous campaigns of 1642 and 1643. Edmund Ludlow, who fought in the earl's army at Edgehill, declared that nothing could 'hinder him from discharging vigorously that trust which the Parliament had reposed in him.'⁷⁹ In the 1940s Jack Hexter asserted that Essex 'had accepted a trust which men less resolute than himself would have shirked; he was the only man Parliament was willing to put in charge of an army.'⁸⁰ It is not surprising therefore that the earl's manifest integrity should recommend itself to his soldiers, for as Essex's most recent biographer has commented 'He was a good commander, showing concern and compassion for his men, and they followed him loyally.'⁸¹

As the Lord General failed to provide an account or memoir of his participation in the civil war, the grounds upon which he opposed the king have given rise to alternative explanations. His principal biographer places the earl's dissatisfaction and antagonism within the late medieval context of aristocratic opposition to royal policy. Essex, it is argued, would 'foster the removal of those councilors who surrounded the King,' retaliating 'against his enemies through parliamentary means.'⁸² This analysis, however, tends to bracket the earl with the great majority of those politically or religiously alienated by the king and his advisers. It places Essex in the mainstream and rather inadequately defines his opposition as unexceptional. The earl was the leading aristocrat in the House of Lords to side with parliament, and as an earlier biographer deduced, his conduct betrayed a more personal agenda:

I would therefore conclude, that the ambition of leading a great party, and of being a principal means in humbling the Sovereign by whom he conceived he had been ill-used, added to the suspicions he entertained of Charles's sincerity, led Lord Essex to adopt a line of conduct which was certainly inconsistent with his professions of loyalty.⁸³

⁷⁹ C. H. Firth (ed.), *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow* (Oxford, 1894), pp. 36-37.

⁸⁰ J. H. Hexter, *The Reign of King Pym* (Cambridge, 1941), pp. 92-93.

⁸¹ John Morrill, 'Devereux, Robert, third earl of Essex (1591-1646),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁸² V. F. Snow, *Essex the Rebel* (University of Nebraska, 1970), p. 300.

⁸³ W. B. Devereux, *Lives and Letters of the Devereux, Earls of Essex, 1540-1646* (London, 1853), vol. ii, pp. 340-341.

In fact it was Charles' father, James I, who initially slighted the earl. In 1613 Essex was forced to suffer the disgrace and ridicule of a Royal Commission of Inquiry into his marriage with Frances Howard. Following the personal intervention of the king, the union was humiliatingly dissolved on the grounds of impotence.⁸⁴ It is from this point that Essex became an assiduous opponent of royal policy; in every parliament from 1614 onwards he was a principled but dogged 'thorn in royal flesh.'⁸⁵

Clarendon's assessment of the earl was altogether more charitable. He exonerated Essex of knowingly committing treason, but believed he was manipulated by dishonorable and superior intellects. A muddled figure, sadly out of his depth in the politics of rebellion:

No man had credit enough with him to corrupt him in point of loyalty to the King ... But the new doctrine and distinction of allegiance, and of the King's power in and out of Parliament, and the new notions of ordinances, were too hard for him, and did really intoxicate his understanding.⁸⁶

This relatively moderate, if misguided, political position appears to have coincided with the earl's religious views, for as John Morrill has recently commented, 'He was a man of conventional godly piety' who 'showed precocious alarm at the demands for a reconstruction of the church settlement, clearly fearing the political and social consequences of root and branch reform.'⁸⁷ Thus Essex was neither a religious radical nor a rabid threat to the institution of monarchy, so the ease with which he appears to have drifted into *armed* rebellion is interesting. It is perhaps significant that following his public humiliation in 1613 Essex was advised by a sympathetic friend to remember that he was the son of a great man, a national hero.⁸⁸ Essex, it seems, was determined to prove that he was not impotent when it came to matters of politics and principle, and that he was prepared to lead armed opposition to the king if the situation demanded it. Here was an opportunity to face down those lesser men who had found his marital affairs amusing, and to show that he was a figure to be reckoned with, much as his father had been before him. He would demonstrate, on the most public of stages, that he was worthy of the Devereux name and the earldom of Essex.

The earl's military experience was greater 'than anyone of his rank in the English peerage.'⁸⁹ Yet, according to John Morrill, the effect of serving in largely

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 246, 254, 256, 271-272.

⁸⁵ Morrill, 'earl of Essex', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁸⁶ W. D. Macray (ed.), *The History of the Rebellion by Edward Earl of Clarendon* (Oxford, 1888), vol. ii, p. 542.

⁸⁷ Morrill, 'earl of Essex', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁸⁸ Devereux, *Lives and Letters of the Earls of Essex*, vol. ii, pp. 272-273.

⁸⁹ Morrill, 'earl of Essex', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

unsuccessful protestant armies in the Rhineland from 1620 to 1624 made Essex 'a negative and reactive commander, which helps to explain his failings in the civil wars.'⁹⁰ But on the eve of political breakdown the military setbacks of the 1620s mattered little to the House of Commons. During the spring and summer of 1642 Essex led parliament's military and diplomatic preparations, initially to suppress the Irish rebellion, and subsequently to raise an army to fight the king. Such was the earl's prestige that a resolution to appoint him 'General in this Cause' passed unopposed in both Houses on 12 July. Without the slightest reticence or hesitation, parliament emphatically declared that it would 'live and die with the Earl of Essex.'⁹¹

One important factor often overlooked by historians is the degree to which Essex's strategy during 1642 and 1643 was influenced by the sheer unreliability of many of his soldiers. To a greater or lesser extent this would have been a consideration for all civil war commanders, but the fact that Essex carried parliament's political fate onto the battlefield only made a difficult situation worse. He appeared to adopt a cautious approach because a single defeat could bring about the collapse of the entire parliamentary cause. Essex had to balance the military capabilities of his untried army against the onerous burden of his political responsibilities. When he first reviewed his forces at Northampton on 14 September 1642 he was confronted with widespread ill discipline and insubordination. Nehemiah Wharton, a junior officer, described how his regiment had threatened to 'surrender their arms' unless arrears of pay were made good, and how units of parliamentary cavalry 'sometimes pillaged and wounded' their own infantry.⁹² The king's secretary of state, Sir Edward Nicholas, wrote from Derby on 15 September that 'Essex's men are very mutinous, saying still that they are all fellow traitors, insomuch that he stirs not with them out of Northampton.'⁹³ Five regimental commanders wrote to Essex warning that unless discipline improved, the army 'will grow as odious to the country as the cavaliers.'⁹⁴ Essex was forced to petition the Lord Mayor of London for a 'speedy loane of one hundred thousand pounds,' explaining 'you well know our Army consists of such as cannot be kept one day together without pay: what a ruine it would bring upon us all if a disbanding should happen'.⁹⁵ Part of the

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Snow, *Essex the Rebel*, pp. 301-307; *House of Commons Journal*, vol. ii, p. 668.

⁹² Sir H. Ellis (ed.), Nehemiah Wharton, 'Letters from a Subaltern Officer in the Earl of Essex's Army', *Archaeologia*, 35 (1853), p. 321.

⁹³ W. D. Hamilton (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Domestic (CSPD)* (London, 1887), 1641-1643, p. 390.

⁹⁴ S. D. M. Carpenter, *Military Leadership in the British Civil Wars* (Abingdon, 2005), p. 69.

⁹⁵ British Library Thomason Tract (BLTT), 669. f. 5. [77], *A Letter sent from his Excellency, Robert Earle of Essex, to the Lord Maior of London, 15 September 1642*; Stanley Carpenter has pointed out that 'more regular pay in the New Model decreased incidents of plundering, a crime that Essex could not reasonably control given the problems of constant arrears and the need for free quarter,' Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 108.

problem may have arisen from a lack of officers, for as early as 7 August 1642 it was observed that 'for want of others, many Scotchmen are entertained to assist the commanders of the Parliament forces.'⁹⁶ If Essex had shared the optimism of the future regicide Edmund Ludlow, 'that the justice of that cause I had engaged in ... [was] so evident, that I could not imagine it to be attended with much difficulty,' then the situation at Northampton would have quickly dispelled any complacency.⁹⁷

The first skirmish of the campaign, at Powick Bridge south of Worcester on 23 September, provided the earl with further cause for concern.⁹⁸ A royalist detachment commanded by Prince Rupert defeated forward units of the parliamentary army as they approached the town. Though consisting of less than 2,000 combatants all told, the action nevertheless exerted a significant influence upon Essex's subsequent strategy. Once broken the parliamentary troopers fled in considerable disorder, despite the efforts of one or two officers to maintain discipline. Particularly worrying was the manner in which the earl's lifeguard, uninvolved in the fighting, became caught up in the blind panic of retreat. An eyewitness reported that the lifeguard 'retired to the army in a very dishonorable manner,' where they 'received but cold welcome from the general.'⁹⁹ The ignominy of the lifeguard's flight was such that 'nothing but some desperate exploit will wipe [it] off.'¹⁰⁰ While Powick Bridge established Prince Rupert's reputation as a fearless and terrifying cavalry commander, Essex was faced with the growing worry that his soldiers were simply not up to the job.¹⁰¹

On 24 September the earl entered Worcester where the army remained for almost four weeks. Parliament instructed Essex 'to fight, at such Time and Place as you shall judge...the Army raised in his Majesty's Name' and 'in some safe and honourable Way, to cause the Petition of both Houses of Parliament...to be presented to his Majesty.'¹⁰² Parliament's petition was crucial because it was intended as a precursor to any major military action. The document humbly beseeched the king to withdraw from the 'wicked Persons' assembled about him, so that they might be 'suppressed by that Power which [the parliament] have sent against them.'¹⁰³ Essex has been criticized for

⁹⁶ *CSPD*, 1641-1643, p. 367.

⁹⁷ Firth (ed.), *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow*, p. 38.

⁹⁸ For a detailed account of Powick Bridge see P. Young & R. Holmes, *The English Civil War: A Military History of the Three Civil Wars 1642-1651* (London, 1974), pp. 69-71.

⁹⁹ Firth (ed.), *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁰ Ellis (ed.), *Nehemiah Wharton*, p. 326.

¹⁰¹ Malcolm Wanklyn has suggested that the shock of Rupert's victory at Powick may have deterred Essex from further attempts to disrupt the concentration of the king's army at Shrewsbury. M. Wanklyn, *Decisive Battles of the English Civil War* (Barnsley, 2006), p. 36.

¹⁰² *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. ii, p. 778.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 775-776.

the length of time spent at Worcester,¹⁰⁴ but it was 18 October before he was able to inform parliament that Charles, who was recruiting an army at Shrewsbury, had refused the second of two protracted attempts to present the petition.¹⁰⁵ Moreover it was obvious to Essex that his men were in no condition to fight, so the delay at Worcester was occupied with much needed drill and weapons training. In a speech given to his officers before the town was entered, Essex revealingly requested:

that you be careful in the exercising of your men, and bring them to use their arms readily and expertly, and not to busy them in practicing the ceremonious forms of military discipline; only let them be well instructed in the necessary rudiments of war, that they may know how to fall on with discretion, and how to retreat with care; how to maintain their order, and make good their ground.¹⁰⁶

If, as one historian has suggested, parliament underestimated the size of the task that lay ahead, then the battle of Edgehill, fought on 23 October, must have come as a sobering experience.¹⁰⁷ The evidence presented above strongly suggests that Essex was acutely aware of the army's shortcomings. But what the earl cannot have foreseen, and what many historians have tended to misunderstand, is the real nature of the crisis that confronted the Lord General in the immediate aftermath of the first great clash of arms.

Charles I left Shrewsbury on 12 October hoping to reach London before Essex could intervene. The earl had intelligence of the king's movements by 18 October but was unable to place his forces between the royal army and the capital. Essex is sometimes criticized for allowing Charles to interpose his forces at Edgehill, but as Clarendon candidly admitted 'neither army knew where the other was.'¹⁰⁸ In early civil war England large armies moved slowly (particularly during the wet autumn) and reconnaissance was poor. Essex was in fact no better or worse than the king.

There was a hope, an expectation even, that Edgehill would finish the war at a stroke.¹⁰⁹ Yet it has been suggested that Essex was reluctant to attack first,¹¹⁰ that he was honour bound to allow Charles I to initiate combat. This is a misreading of circumstances. Clarendon stated that once the two armies made contact it was in Charles I's interests to precipitate a battle:

¹⁰⁴ Peter Newman stated that 'the earl showed a fateful indecisiveness,' P. R. Newman, *Atlas of the English Civil War* (London, 1985), p. 21. Edmund Ludlow, on the other hand, confirmed that Essex was waiting for the king's response to the petition, Firth (ed.), *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁵ For an account of how Charles I avoided the petition see Snow, *Essex the Rebel*, pp.331-333.

¹⁰⁶ Devereux, *Lives and Letters of the Earls of Essex*, vol. ii, p. 352.

¹⁰⁷ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p.34.

¹⁰⁸ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, p. 356.

¹⁰⁹ For a detailed account of the battle see P. Young, *Edgehill 1642: The campaign and The Battle* (Kington, 1967). Austin Woolrych, however, disputed the notion that a single decisive battle would have decided the war. A. Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution* (Oxford, 2002), p. 242.

¹¹⁰ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 74.

two of [parliament's] strongest and best regiments of foot, and one regiment of horse, was a day's march behind with their ammunition...the King's numbers could not increase, [but] the enemy's might.¹¹¹

If it appeared that Essex was in no hurry to fight it was because he was waiting for reinforcements. But when the opposing armies were finally drawn up it was, in fact, Essex who began the battle! The official royalist account states that the parliamentary ordnance opened fire first,¹¹² and Edmund Ludlow recalled that part of the bombardment was directed 'upon that part of the army wherein, as it was reported, the King was.'¹¹³ These are hardly the actions of one who took a deferential view of fighting his king.¹¹⁴

Edgehill is generally considered to be a draw.¹¹⁵ Though the severity of the fighting shattered both armies the critical consequence, as Vernon Snow has demonstrated, was that a royalist seizure of London was forestalled.¹¹⁶ The day after the battle Essex received the 4,000 reinforcements he had been waiting for, but to the dismay of some parliamentarians the earl ordered a withdrawal to Warwick rather than a reengagement with the enemy.¹¹⁷ As a result, it has been claimed, Essex lost his reputation as a general.¹¹⁸ What these criticisms fail to recognize, however, is the almost terminal condition of the parliamentary army in the days that followed Edgehill.¹¹⁹ Clarendon stated that the number of parliamentary dead was far greater than reported, and that the subsequent failure to prevent the loss of Banbury revealed Essex to be 'more broken and scattered than at first he appeared to be.'¹²⁰ Two days after the battle Prince Rupert discovered 'houses full of wounded and sick men' behind the now evacuated parliamentary lines.¹²¹ In addition the official Parliamentary account,

¹¹¹ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, p. 357 & p. 358.

¹¹² Young, *Edgehill*, p. 262.

¹¹³ Firth (ed.), *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow*, p. 42.

¹¹⁴ Nathaniel Fiennes, who was present at Edgehill, took a different view, observing that if Essex 'had charged them before their cannon and all their foot were come down [from the ridge of Edgehill], we might have had a great advantage.' BLTT, E. 126[38], *A most true and exact relation of both the battles fought by his Excellency and his forces against the bloody cavaliers* (London, 9 November 1642), p. 5.

¹¹⁵ Malcolm Wanklyn endorses the view that 'the battle was clearly a draw,' but goes on to argue that 'Essex's army had a lot to be proud of,' despite the habit of historians to 'praise the royalists, the cavalry for their initial success, the infantry for their fortitude.' Wanklyn, *Decisive Battles*, p. 55.

¹¹⁶ Snow, *Essex the Rebel*, p. 337.

¹¹⁷ Edmund Ludlow, for example, failed to understand why Essex refused to pursue an enemy who were 'marching off as fast as they could.' Firth (ed.), *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow*, pp. 45-46.

¹¹⁸ Devereux, *Lives and Letters of the Earls of Essex*, vol ii, p. 359.

¹¹⁹ The Venetian Ambassador claimed that Essex's army had been reduced to only 5000 infantry and 1000 cavalry by the time London was reached on 8 November 1642. A. B. Hinds (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Venetian (CSPV)* (London, 1925), 1642-1643, p. 198.

¹²⁰ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, p. 375.

¹²¹ Young, *Edgehill*, p. 272.

written jointly by six senior officers because Essex was too busy,¹²² conceded that the army required three or four days rest before any resumption of the campaign could be contemplated.¹²³ Clarendon added that the earl had lost a great many officers taken prisoner, and that the king's herald, following an interview with Essex himself, reported 'so much trouble and disorder...and so much dejection' that Essex and his army 'had no farther ambition than to keep what they had left.'¹²⁴ It seems clear that the parliamentary army was in a pretty desperate condition.

Because parliament knew in advance of the king's strategy to strike for London,¹²⁵ it is assumed that following Edgehill the Lord General's overriding priority became a race to reach the capital before Charles I. The evidence, however, suggests otherwise. In withdrawing to Warwick on 25 October it is clear that Essex abandoned any thought of an immediate march southward. Rather, one is forced to conclude that the earl's principal concern became the consolidation of his depleted forces. The official royalist account of the battle claimed that 'the sudden returning back of the rebels to Warwick is ... a sure argument of the weakness of their army.'¹²⁶ And the official parliamentary account concluded with an appeal to the Houses to raise the southern counties standing between the king's army and London.¹²⁷ While Charles advanced unhindered, it was reported that an increasingly nervous parliament dispatched 'Expresses...to the Earl of Essex, to make all possible Haste with the Army to London, and prevent the King's Coming before him.'¹²⁸

But the earl was unable to respond, and it is the view of the present writer that his sole objective became, quite simply, the preservation of the army he commanded. At Edgehill the parliamentary cavalry, save for a couple of regiments deployed amongst the foot, had been chased from the field. The infantry had fought with real determination, led by Essex himself,¹²⁹ but had sustained critical losses in terms of casualties and subsequent desertions.¹³⁰ The Lord General feared that the remnants, though reinforced, were unlikely to prevail in a second battle, particularly as the parliamentary cavalry had been so decisively defeated at both Powick Bridge and Edgehill. Essex realized that political resistance at Westminster would disintegrate if he

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 305.

¹²³ J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1721), vol. v, p. 38.

¹²⁴ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, p. 365.

¹²⁵ Snow, *Essex the Rebel*, p. 333.

¹²⁶ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 35.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹²⁸ Sir Richard Bulstrode cited in Young, *Edgehill*, p. 273.

¹²⁹ The official parliamentary account revealed that Essex 'did gallantly adventure himself' exposing 'himself to more danger than we would have wished.' Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 39.

¹³⁰ Malcolm Wanklyn has argued that Essex 'must be praised for keeping his head' at Edgehill 'and making the most effective use of the forces he had left.' Wanklyn, *Decisive Battles*, p. 49.

were to be defeated in the field, and so it became his main concern to avoid any confrontation with the royal army, a priority that took precedence over out marching the king to London.¹³¹ Essex almost certainly calculated that the capital would organize its own defence so long as he remained at the head of an undefeated parliamentary army.¹³²

In the event it was the dilatory progress of the king that enabled Essex to reach the capital first.¹³³ Vernon Snow has demonstrated that the earl's overriding consideration remained his disintegrating army. Between 1 and 5 November Essex wrote to the deputy lieutenants of Lincolnshire and Buckinghamshire, earnestly requesting arms and equipment, and to John Pym at Westminster, appealing for a search of London and the county of Essex for those soldiers who had deserted the army.¹³⁴ But it was not long before the king's army reached the outskirts of the capital, attacking Brentford on 12 November.¹³⁵ Despite fierce resistance Prince Rupert stormed the town and inflicted severe casualties. Parliament immediately ordered the London Trained Bands, together with the remaining Edgehill veterans, to rendezvous at Turnham Green. The following day the two armies faced each other without coming to blows. Though Essex commanded 24,000 men (an advantage of two to one), he was fully aware of the folly of abandoning his strong defensive position in favor of an assault. Rupert had triumphed in three successive engagements; a fourth defeat now would herald nothing less than total and final defeat. Thus Essex declined to outflank the royal army with forces positioned to the south at Kingston, and later aborted a similar encircling movement via Acton to the north.¹³⁶ When the king finally withdrew many disgruntled parliamentarians believed certain victory had been squandered. 'The Parliament-men and Gentlemen that were Officers, were for engaging, but the Soldiers of Fortune,' on whose judgment the Lord General most relied, 'were altogether against it.'¹³⁷ Essex was guided, rightly, by the reality of the military situation, for 'it was too hazardous to follow the enemy, and honour and safety enough to the parliament that the king was

¹³¹ The Venetian Ambassador reported that Essex 'has taken a route away from the royal army.' *CSPV*, 1642-1643, p. 198.

¹³² On 16 October, one week before Edgehill, 'the captains of the trained bands of the City renewed, in the name of the 8,000 men whom they commanded, their resolution to live and die with the parliament, and the great majority of the men declared themselves ready to follow their leaders in the service of the City even beyond the City precincts.' Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 38. Before this, on 26 August, Lords and Commons had directed Essex to leave two regiments of foot and four troops of horse for the safety of the City. C. H. Firth & R. S. Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642-1660* (London, 1911), vol. i, p. 24.

¹³³ The future James II, who was present at Edgehill, observed that the king 'delayed his opportunity so long that he lost it and the Earl of Essex got before him to the city.' Young, *Edgehill*, p. 280.

¹³⁴ 'The situation was grave, Essex admitted, but all was not lost.' Snow, *Essex the Rebel*, p. 340.

¹³⁵ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 59.

¹³⁶ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, pp. 58-59.

¹³⁷ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 60.

retreated.¹³⁸ Although Essex had avoided disaster, the campaign created a perception that he was a sluggish and reactive commander, and that an opportunity to win the war had been squandered. However, as the above analysis has demonstrated, Essex prevented a royalist victory at Edgehill with an unreliable army, denied the king an opportunity to destroy the remnants of his forces in the aftermath of battle, and, heavily reinforced, defended the capital at Turnham Green. By carefully preserving the army entrusted to his command, Essex ensured the survival of the parliamentary cause.

It has been argued that during the winter of 1642-1643 'Essex was quite prepared to hibernate' and 'was only too happy to live a quiet life.'¹³⁹ This assessment fails to appreciate the earl's priorities in the wake of the Edgehill campaign and the great problems that prevented any major offensive until the spring. While the king withdrew to fortify Oxford the Lord General concerned himself with the defence of the capital. Having established his headquarters at Windsor, Essex 'got as much ground as at that time of the year could reasonably be expected' and 'brought those adjacent counties entirely under the obedience of the parliament, which would at least have kept themselves neutral.'¹⁴⁰ Despite political pressure to launch an attack, the poor condition of the parliamentary army precluded any possibility of a winter campaign. Reduced in terms of quality and quantity by reorganization, desertion, sickness, want of pay, and even defections, Essex could in reality do little more than 'defend the home counties from royalist incursions.'¹⁴¹

On 13 April 1643, the day after the collapse of the Oxford peace negotiations, Essex finally set out to besiege Reading (and ultimately Oxford) with a newly recruited army of 18,000 men.¹⁴² The earl was able to recommence hostilities so quickly because parliament had continued military preparations throughout the period of talks.¹⁴³ It was vitally important that parliament brought the king's forces to battle before substantial reinforcements reached Oxford from Yorkshire.¹⁴⁴ By late March early April it was reported that the king's situation was so precarious that he would make for the north if parliament launched an offensive.¹⁴⁵ The Venetian ambassador wrote of 'the utmost

¹³⁸ B. Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs* (Oxford, 1853), p. 193.

¹³⁹ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 83.

¹⁴⁰ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, p. 429. Essex also garrisoned Gloucester, Bristol, Exeter, Dover, Southampton, Plymouth and Marlborough. Snow, *Essex the Rebel*, p. 347.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 346-353. See also G. Davies, 'The Parliamentary Army under the Earl of Essex', pp. 38-40.

¹⁴² 15,000 foot and 3,000 horse. Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 265.

¹⁴³ A joint declaration of both Houses dated 2 November 1642 proclaimed 'That the Preparations of Forces...shall be prosecuted with all Vigour.' *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. v, p. 431.

¹⁴⁴ The Queen landed at Bridlington with a large shipment of soldiers, money and munitions on 22 February 1643. The earl of Newcastle escorted the convoy to York on 5 March. Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, pp. 94-95.

¹⁴⁵ I. G. Philips (ed.), *Journal of Sir Samuel Luke* (Oxfordshire Record Society, 1950-1953), 29, pp. 46-47, 58, 60.

danger to the king and his house unless he receive prompt assistance from his victorious forces in the north.¹⁴⁶ At Oxford there was only sufficient ammunition for an action of four hours, and less than 'a hundred spare arms in the magazine.'¹⁴⁷ And at Reading it was reported that a determined siege might reduce the town in four days due to want of powder, arms and munitions.¹⁴⁸ Royalist and parliamentary sources agreed that the king's situation was critical. Indeed, Clarendon was later to recall that an advance against Oxford, had it taken place, might well have succeeded.¹⁴⁹ This relatively neglected aspect of the Thames Valley campaign was to have an important bearing on subsequent events.

Superficially parliament's operation to take Reading appeared to be a success: Essex began the siege on 15 April, repulsed a royalist attempt to rescue the 3,000 strong garrison ten days later, and finally negotiated the surrender of the town on 27 April.¹⁵⁰ Yet according to Clarendon the parliamentary assault opened with a debate, the cavalry officers favoring a storm while the commanders of foot pushed for a more cautious approach.¹⁵¹ Essex elected to pursue the latter, arguing in a letter to the Lords that Reading was too strongly fortified to 'to venture the Soldiers upon such works, being probable that many may be lost.'¹⁵² Strategically it was absolutely crucial that Essex preserve his forces for a siege of Oxford, or, if the king elected, a pitched battle. The weather however was appalling - 'colder than the winter'¹⁵³ - and problems of food supply, which had to be transported from London, meant that the soldiers suffered severely. In order to bring the siege to a close - before it had to be abandoned - Essex granted extremely generous terms of surrender, including the return of the garrison soldiers to Oxford. But importantly, as Clarendon claimed, Charles was delighted, 'for indeed the men and the arms were all that the king desired, and the loss of either of which was like to prove fatal to him.'¹⁵⁴

Though Essex had achieved his first objective, the poor condition of the army now threatened further progress.¹⁵⁵ The frosts and rain to which the soldiers had been exposed 'produced great decay and sickness,' rendering Essex immobile at Reading for

¹⁴⁶ CSPV, 1642-1643, p. 269.

¹⁴⁷ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 65n.

¹⁴⁸ Philips (ed.), *Journal of Sir Samuel Luke*, pp. 48-49.

¹⁴⁹ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 25.

¹⁵⁰ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, pp. 128-130.

¹⁵¹ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 16.

¹⁵² *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, pp. 16-17.

¹⁵³ CSPV, 1642-1643, p. 269.

¹⁵⁴ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, pp. 23-24.

¹⁵⁵ The royalist press crowed that the capture of Reading had 'cost his Excellency very many of his men, which have been either killed by the defendants, or perished by sickness and disease, or made unserviceable by their wounds, or else were run away to avoid those dangers.' BLTT, E. 101[10], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 17, 23 - 29 April 1643, p. 215.

about six weeks.¹⁵⁶ An insufficient and erratic supply of pay only added to the growing number of desertions.¹⁵⁷ On 12 May, while his soldiers grew ever more restless, Essex returned to Westminster to plead for money and provisions, 'which is the Reason why the Army cannot march, and take the Advantages which occur to them.'¹⁵⁸ This was a view shared by the enemy, for Sir Samuel Luke, parliament's scoutmaster general, reported that the royalists at Wallingford believed Essex's army to be greatly reduced by a lack of regular pay.¹⁵⁹ Essex's inability to push on from Reading was effectively cancelled out by the king's apparent inability to launch any offensive action from Oxford. The existence of what amounted to a military stalemate in the Thames Valley has largely escaped the attention of historians. It is important nevertheless to recognise this delicate balance of power because the manner in which it was overturned placed Essex at a severe disadvantage.

On 15 May - while Essex continued to petition parliament - forty wagonloads of vital arms and munitions dispatched from York by the queen reached the safety of Oxford unopposed.¹⁶⁰ As a result the situation in the Thames Valley was completely transformed. Essex was furious, complaining to the House of Lords:

That he gave command to the Lord Gray, Colonel Cromwell, and other forces in the north, to draw themselves into a body, which has not been done according to his direction, by which neglect, the convoy with wagons of ammunition are come to the king without any interruption.¹⁶¹

While the Lord General's army continued to hemorrhage men,¹⁶² royalist forces were now restored.¹⁶³ The king 'sent a very courteous message to parliament' declaring that 'God, favouring the justice of his cause had put him in a position in which he had nothing to fear.'¹⁶⁴ He was particularly keen to emphasise that 'the condition of his

¹⁵⁶ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 53.

¹⁵⁷ Snow, *Essex the Rebel*, p. 363; On 4 May 1643 it was reported that '800 of the Essex men which served at Reading were departed homewards.' BLTT, E. 102[1], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 18, 30 April – 6 May 1643, p. 228.

¹⁵⁸ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 43; On 11 May it was reported in the royalist press that parliament had 'received intelligence from the earl of Essex that, without present supply of money, neither horse nor foot would advance forward.' BLTT, E. 103[10], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 19, 7 – 13 May 1643, p. 243.

¹⁵⁹ Philips (ed.), *Journal of Sir Samuel Luke*, 29, p. 75.

¹⁶⁰ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 122.

¹⁶¹ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 43; The royalist press claimed that Essex was so embarrassed by his neglect that he attempted to blame commanders in the north for the passage of the convoy. BLTT, E. 104[21], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 20, 14 – 20 May 1643, pp. 256-257.

¹⁶² Parliament instructed county officials to apprehend deserters and return them to their regiments. *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 107.

¹⁶³ 'Ian Roy, the leading authority on the royalist army, has argued that until the king's shortage of ammunition was remedied in May it was almost impossible for the king to contemplate offensive action with the Oxford army.' R. Cust, *Charles I A Political Life* (Harlow, 2005), p. 375.

¹⁶⁴ CSPV, 1642-1643, p. 279.

armies in several parts, the strength of horse, foot, artillery, [and] his plenty of ammunition, (when some men lately might conceive he wanted) [are] well known and understood.'¹⁶⁵ Meanwhile, of course, Essex's sickly, disintegrating army was in no condition to confront the king's rejuvenated forces. This lack of mobility, as Michael Braddick has pointed out, is something that was held against Essex.¹⁶⁶ However, it was the inability, or reluctance, of parliament's regional commanders to combine in accordance with the Lord General's orders that proved vital, in stark contrast to the efficient collaboration which allowed the queen's convoy to march unmolested from the northern theatre to the central front. This, clearly, is an important but relatively neglected aspect of the campaign.

On 6 June Essex broke camp and advanced towards Oxford. Though the army had been reinforced and supplied with money, Clarendon claimed that Essex was merely responding to political pressure.¹⁶⁷ Without a full payment of arrears the Venetian Ambassador seriously doubted whether Essex could 'induce his sickly and undisciplined troops to march.'¹⁶⁸ However on 10 June he occupied Thame to the east of Oxford, scattering his forces over a wide area despite the risk of attack to which his soldiers were thus exposed.¹⁶⁹ This appears to confirm Vernon Snow's conclusion that the 'army was totally unprepared for a siege or a direct engagement with the Royalists.'¹⁷⁰ Essex's deployments amounted to a tacit admission that the army was in no condition to fight, and may have been influenced by the need to contain future outbreaks of camp sickness, as well as to receive badly needed supplies. It suggests, moreover, that Essex sought to avoid any confrontation whatsoever with Charles' replenished forces, less 'the looseness and inconsistency of the soldiers'¹⁷¹ result in total defeat. Once again factors beyond the Lord General's control dictated strategy. As in the aftermath of Edgehill, Essex's political responsibilities meant that his vulnerable army could not be risked. To do otherwise would have been to court disaster.

Unfortunately for Essex the military situation continued to deteriorate. On 18 June John Hampden, the celebrated politician and colonel, was mortally wounded in a fierce encounter with Rupert's cavalry. Clarendon hailed the skirmish at Chalgrove Field a great victory and Hampden's death a mighty blow, for he was 'much more relied

¹⁶⁵ BLTT, 245: 669.f.7[16], *His Majesties Message*, 20 May 1643.

¹⁶⁶ M. Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire* (London, 2008), p. 287.

¹⁶⁷ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 53.

¹⁶⁸ *CSPV*, 1642-1643, p. 283; It was reported that 'the army of the rebels is so visited with sickness, that upon Thursday 1 June six barges full of sick men were brought thence to London.' BLTT, E. 55[14], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 23, 4 – 10 June 1643, p. 307.

¹⁶⁹ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p.150.

¹⁷⁰ Snow, *Essex the Rebel*, p. 366; BLTT, E. 56[11], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 24, 11 – 17 June 1643, p. 315.

¹⁷¹ Essex to Sir T. Barrington, cited in Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, p. 154n.

on by that party than the general himself.¹⁷² Rupert's triumph, coupled with the loss of Hampden, appeared to confirm Charles' recent boast of military supremacy.¹⁷³ The king no longer feared that Essex might lay siege to Oxford or seek to engage the royal army in battle. It was a clear indication that by the middle of June 1643 the tide had turned and that Essex, for the present at least, could only interpose his forces between the king and the capital.

Until the arrival of the queen's supply convoy Charles was incapable of facing Essex in the field or defending Oxford against a prolonged and determined siege. As long as the king remained short of arms and ammunition he was unable to threaten Essex's deteriorating forces. But the inability of parliament's northern commanders to intercept the queen's convoy overturned this delicate balance of power and left Essex's enfeebled army at the mercy of Rupert's cavalry. Essex was effectively undermined by what appeared to be a wilful lack of cooperation amongst regional generals, a development that placed his weakened forces firmly on the defensive. Essex has been traditionally portrayed as something of a military buffoon, but his martial abilities were clearly not to blame for parliament's declining prospects in the Thames Valley. Rather, this study has shown that Essex' heavy political responsibilities were a determinant factor in military strategy, and that the non-cooperation of subordinate commanders was a primary cause of royalist supremacy. This emphasis is new, representing an alternative explanation for the apparent ineffectiveness of Essex as a general and the slow and painful decline of his army. The accuracy of these findings will be further considered in chapter three when attention turns to parliament's military collapse and political crisis of July and early August 1643.

Ferdinando Lord Fairfax

In contrast to the earl of Essex, Lord Fairfax's leadership has produced a more evenly balanced division of historiographical opinion, largely because historians have separated the circumstances in which Ferdinando assumed command of parliament's northern army from the manner in which he subsequently exercised military authority. In 1870 Clements Markham praised Lord Fairfax's skill, enterprise, bravery and resolution as a military leader.¹⁷⁴ Samuel Gardiner, on the other hand, chose to criticize Ferdinando's attempt, upon becoming general, to negotiate a pact of neutrality with

¹⁷² Clarendon claimed that three or four enemy regiments were utterly broken and lost. Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 59 & 63.

¹⁷³ The royalist press reported that the scale of the victory at Chalgrove was much greater than originally believed, particularly the mortal wounds suffered by John Hampden. BLTT, E. 59[8], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 25, 18 – 24 June 1643, pp. 323-324.

¹⁷⁴ C. R. Markham, *Life of the Great Lord Fairfax* (London, 1870), p. 34.

Yorkshire's royalist leaders.¹⁷⁵ While Markham sought to highlight the tenacity with which Lord Fairfax prosecuted the war effort from October 1642 onwards, Gardiner emphasized parliament's hostility towards Fairfax's arrangements for a local peace treaty in September 1642. Similarly, Andrew Hopper has depicted as a major failing the 'procrastination and reluctance to take up arms' which characterized Lord Fairfax's initial response to civil war,¹⁷⁶ an assessment that may have provoked Jack Binns' rejoinder that 'Ferdinando proved himself to be a gifted military commander' superior 'to both Newcastle, his opponent, or Essex, his senior.'¹⁷⁷ There seems therefore to be a puzzling inconsistency between Fairfax's rather reticent behaviour in September 1642 and his subsequent conduct as a fully committed military leader. This apparent contradiction, as the following analysis seeks to explain, reflects the volatile nature of national politics as the country drifted towards armed conflict. While the prospect of peace remained alive Lord Fairfax strove to neutralise Yorkshire and to keep military activity out of the county. When civil war became inevitable Fairfax, under the influence of his immediate circle, fully embraced his role as parliament's northern general. Indeed, Ferdinando would prove to be an extremely effective commander demonstrating a 'high level of strategic vision.'¹⁷⁸

Remarkably perhaps the earliest known reference to Lord Fairfax's military abilities provided no indication of his future success. His father, Sir Thomas Fairfax, is reported to have complained, 'I sent [him] into the Netherlands to train him up a soldier, and he makes a tolerable country justice, but is a mere coward at fighting.'¹⁷⁹ Though Ferdinando commanded one of the Yorkshire trained bands in the first Bishops' War (1639), his troops were ordered, frustratingly, to Westmoreland, well away from the main English army.¹⁸⁰ Fairfax was thus denied the opportunity to prove himself in action and confound his cantankerous old father. It is hardly surprising that the disastrous and humiliating Bishops' Wars¹⁸¹ should force Ferdinando into opposition. In September 1640 he assisted the Yorkshire gentry in petitioning the king for a recall of parliament, and the following year participated in the trial of the earl of Strafford.¹⁸² When the king set up court at York in March 1642 Ferdinando headed a committee of MPs representing parliament. Charles greeted the delegation with 'displeasure and high

¹⁷⁵ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 33. Gardiner's history of the civil war was first published in 1886.

¹⁷⁶ A. J. Hopper, *The Readiness of the People* (York, 1997), pp. 2-6.

¹⁷⁷ J. Binns, *Yorkshire in the Civil Wars* (Pickering, 2004), p. 55.

¹⁷⁸ Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 88.

¹⁷⁹ Markham, *Great Lord Fairfax*, p. 12.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 27 & 29.

¹⁸¹ M. C. Fissel, *The Bishops' Wars* (Cambridge, 1994).

¹⁸² A. J. Hopper, 'Fairfax, Ferdinando, second Lord Fairfax of Cameron (1584-1648)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

indignation' and subsequently 'did severally threaten their imprisonment' when 'some private passage' was disclosed to the House of Commons.¹⁸³ Ferdinando also disagreed with king's controversial ecclesiastical policies.¹⁸⁴ During the 1629 parliament he appeared to share the hostility of the Commons to the growth of Arminianism,¹⁸⁵ and in 1641 he reacted sympathetically to the Bill to circumscribe the power of the Bishops.¹⁸⁶ On the eve of civil war Ferdinando was clearly recognized, by both parliament and Charles I, as an opponent of royal policy.¹⁸⁷

Before leaving Yorkshire on 16 August 1642¹⁸⁸ the king was dissuaded from arresting the Fairfaxes and their closest associates by the county's leading royalists. Although 'governed by two or three of inferior quality,' it was generally conceived that neither Ferdinando nor his son, Sir Thomas Fairfax, 'were transported with over-vehement inclinations to the parliament, [and] would willingly sit still, without being active on either side.'¹⁸⁹ Indeed Sir Thomas confirmed his father's resolve 'not to stir from his own house' despite the king's intention to make him a prisoner.¹⁹⁰ The situation was however transformed by royalist attempts to execute the Commission of Array at York. A reluctant Ferdinando, 'being much importuned by those that were about him,' was thus persuaded to abandon neutrality.¹⁹¹ On 29 August 1642 he lead the Declaration of Otley, a protestation against 'the raising of forces of Horse and foot in this County, the levying of monyes for the maintenance of them, and taking away the Armes of some peaceable Subjects.'¹⁹² Eighteen Yorkshire knights and gentlemen signed the document, including, no doubt, those who had persuaded Ferdinando to become actively involved. One such was Thomas Stockdale, a Justice of the Peace and close associate.¹⁹³ As secretary to Lord Fairfax, Stockdale was to exercise, along with fellow signatory Sir Thomas Fairfax, a significant influence upon subsequent events.

Although Lord Fairfax had been compelled to re-engage, he did not anticipate offensive military action on behalf of parliament. The Declaration of Otley demanded the preservation of peace in the county, and a commitment to uphold it if an outbreak of

¹⁸³ Minster Library, C. W. T. 42-05-24, 'Horrible News from York, Hull and Newcastle.'

¹⁸⁴ In 1635 Ferdinando feared 'nothing less than the subversion of the established religion.' Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 176.

¹⁸⁵ G. W. Johnson (ed.), *The Fairfax Correspondence* (London, 1848), vol. i, p. 155.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, pp. 180-181.

¹⁸⁷ John Rushworth reported that the Fairfaxes viewed Charles as 'excessively in love with his darling prerogative' and that they feared the establishment of a Spanish-style absolute monarchy. Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 176.

¹⁸⁸ Binns, *Yorkshire in the Civil Wars*, p. 35.

¹⁸⁹ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, p. 287.

¹⁹⁰ Thomas Lord Fairfax, 'A Short Memorial of the Northern Actions During the War There, From The Year 1642 Till 1644,' *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. viii. (1884), p. 201.

¹⁹¹ Fairfax, 'Northern Actions,' p. 201.

¹⁹² BLTT, E. 116[17], *A Reall Protestation of Many and Very eminent persons in the County of Yorke, Otley 29 August 1642*, p. 3.

¹⁹³ Hopper, *Readiness of the People*, pp. 7-8.

fighting or an invasion of foreign forces took place. It was principally a political statement; any resort to arms would be purely defensive. However, during September 1642 both sides sought to strengthen their position, and a meeting of parliamentary supporters at Leeds on 19 September elected Lord Fairfax commander of Yorkshire's forces.¹⁹⁴ But instead of preparing for military action, Ferdinando organized a treaty. On 29 September he authorized six of the Otley signatories, including Sir Thomas Fairfax and Thomas Stockdale, to agree a countywide pact of neutrality with six leading royalists.¹⁹⁵ Lord Fairfax clearly felt an obligation to provide *political* leadership; his concerns were for peace, order and security. Yet the attempt to impose the Declaration of Otley in partnership with the enemy provoked a furious response. Parliament repudiated the treaty as 'very prejudicial and dangerous to the whole Kingdom,' providing 'advantage [to] the Forces raised against the Parliament.'¹⁹⁶ Sir John Hotham, the parliamentary governor of Hull, and his son, Captain John Hotham, condemned the pact as both a personal insult and a breach of parliamentary privilege.¹⁹⁷ Contemporary reports suggest that Lord Fairfax may have negotiated the agreement on condition of parliamentary approval, and thus abandoned it when none was forthcoming.¹⁹⁸ Equally, he may have renounced the treaty in response to warrants and commissions issued by Charles in mid-October 1642 authorising Yorkshire royalists to 'plunder the estates, to kill and destroy all those that are well affected to the parliament.'¹⁹⁹

Clarendon argued that Yorkshire's gentry agreed to neutrality because the first battle of the war was expected to prove decisive,²⁰⁰ which may explain the support of Sir Thomas Fairfax and Thomas Stockdale. But it is possible that Lord Fairfax's peace initiative was in fact based on sound and advantageous military principles. It is recorded that following his commission in June 1642 to command the four northern counties of Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland and Durham, the earl of Newcastle 'took a resolution to raise an army for his Majesty's service,' and that he had 'put them in a condition to march' by the beginning of November 1642.²⁰¹ By organizing an act of neutrality Lord Fairfax may have sought to prevent the earl's army marching through Yorkshire to join the king. The Declaration of Otley, signed by Fairfax on 29 August,

¹⁹⁴ A. Woolrych, 'Yorkshire's Treaty of Neutrality', *History Today*, 6, p. 700.

¹⁹⁵ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. ii, p. 791.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 794.

¹⁹⁷ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, p. 242; Stanley Carpenter has argued that the absence of key signatories such as the Hothams, the earl of Cumberland, and his assistant Sir Thomas Glenham condemned the treaty to failure. Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 61.

¹⁹⁸ BLTT, E. 119[24], *Special Passages*, 27 September - 4 October, 1642, p. 62.

¹⁹⁹ Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 62.

²⁰⁰ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, pp. 461-462.

²⁰¹ C. H. Firth (ed.), *Life of William Cavendish Duke of Newcastle*, (London, 1906), pp. 12-13.

vowed to resist any invasion of Yorkshire by 'foreign' (i.e. non-county) forces.²⁰² A pact of neutrality would thus undermine the wider royalist war effort by blocking Newcastle's army before the first, and possibly decisive, battle of the war had taken place.

Once it was clear that the treaty was dead Lord Fairfax abandoned political leadership for that of military command.²⁰³ Earlier in 1642 he had sponsored a series of sermons reminding West Riding congregations of the murderous fate suffered by Ireland's Protestants during the rebellion of November 1641. Consequently many of the county's 'middling-sort' linked the Irish uprising to a royalist backed Catholic plot to destroy the godly in England. Anti-catholic fears enabled the Fairfaxes to recruit highly motivated soldiers who saw the king as the enemy and the defence of the protestant religion as the principal issue.²⁰⁴ On 21 October Lord Fairfax's embryonic army defended Bradford against an attack by Leeds based royalists, and with the assistance of horse and dragoons under Captain Hotham, forced the cavaliers to retreat to York.²⁰⁵ Although Captain Hotham's interjection provided much needed support, his earlier invasion of the West Riding had so alarmed the county's royalists²⁰⁶ that they requested the earl of Newcastle's northern forces to march to their rescue. Negotiations had commenced on 26 September, three days *before* senior royalists signed Lord Fairfax's pact of neutrality. Royalist desperation to secure either military assistance or some form of pacification indicates that Lord Fairfax's leadership, allied to 'Mr Hotham's infesting the country,'²⁰⁷ gave parliament the upper hand in Yorkshire during the early months of the war.

The earl of Newcastle entered Yorkshire on 1 December 1642²⁰⁸ at the head of 6,000²⁰⁹ relatively well-drilled soldiers, which combined with those formerly commanded by the earl of Cumberland, provided Charles I with a northern army of no fewer than 8,000 horse and foot.²¹⁰ Newcastle's overwhelming numerical superiority

²⁰² It has been observed that provincial forces were sometimes raised to prevent invasions, and that treaties were organized to prevent extremists dividing the county. M. A. Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 4.

²⁰³ Stanley Carpenter has argued that the mediation skills demonstrated by Lord Fairfax during the neutrality negotiations enhanced his reputation for trustworthiness and reliability. Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 62.

²⁰⁴ A. Hopper, 'Black Tom': *Sir Thomas Fairfax and the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 135-137.

²⁰⁵ BLTT, E. 126[1], *Special Passages*, 25 October – 1 November 1642, p. 102; Fairfax, 'Northern Actions,' pp. 207-208.

²⁰⁶ BLTT, E. 119[24], *Special Passages*, 27 September – 4 October 1642, p. 57.

²⁰⁷ S. Reid (ed.), *A Declaration made by the Earl of Newcastle* (Leigh-on-Sea, 1983), p. 2.

²⁰⁸ Markham, *Great Lord Fairfax*, p. 71-72.

²⁰⁹ Fairfax, 'Northern Actions,' p. 208.

²¹⁰ R. Bell (ed.), *The Fairfax Correspondence* (London, 1849), vol. i. p. 25.

transformed the civil war in Yorkshire.²¹¹ In desperation Lord Fairfax wrote to parliament, describing how his own forces had been compelled to retreat from Tadcaster to Selby and how the forces commanded to support him had retreated to their strongholds or simply melted away. About 800 of the 1000 men raised in Richmondshire, Cleveland and North Yorkshire had returned to their homes, while Sir Hugh Cholmley, the governor of Scarborough Castle, had taken the 700 strong garrison back to the port, despite orders to reinforce Fairfax at Tadcaster. In addition Colonel Boynton's regiment of 800 foot had set off towards Hull, also in direct contravention of orders to join Lord Fairfax. And despite requests to Sir John Gell in Derbyshire and Sir Anthony Irby in Lincolnshire there was no prospect of assistance from neighboring counties.²¹² The refusal of parliamentary commanders to support Lord Fairfax is an important yet relatively neglected feature of the campaign, standing in marked contrast to the cooperation that allowed the earl of Newcastle's forces to enter Yorkshire at the behest of the county's beleaguered royalists. Moreover, it provides a further example of the kind of parliamentary insubordination that would allow the queen's supply convoy to pass unmolested from York to Oxford in May 1643. Just as Essex would complain about the failure of subordinate commanders to intercept the queen's arms convoy, so Lord Fairfax warned that unless men and money were urgently supplied the enemy would 'become absolute masters of Yorkshire,' forcing 'contributions and succours from the country,' and raising 'a very formidable army,' which will 'put the whole cause in peril.'²¹³

Newcastle's invasion drove a wedge between Lord Fairfax's army at Selby and parliament's heartland of West Riding cloth towns.²¹⁴ Royalist garrisons in Leeds and Wakefield destroyed all local trade, prompting Sir Thomas Fairfax to declare that unless the parliamentary army launched an offensive the increasingly impatient people 'must rise of necessity of themselves in a thing of so great importance.' He virtually begged his father to 'raise the country to assault the enemy,' optimistically predicting the recruitment of 3000 men or more.²¹⁵ While Sir Thomas was clearly moved by the pitiful condition of the populace, Lord Fairfax's secretary, Thomas Stockdale, supported a

²¹¹ Stanley Carpenter has argued that the 'disadvantage in troop numbers forced Lord Fairfax to prosecute a war of attrition by strategic defence,' in practice a 'series of attacks and retreats as opportunities occurred,' producing 'small incremental wins eventually leading to a substantial, culminating victory.' Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 63.

²¹² Bell (ed.), *Fairfax Correspondence*, vol. i. pp. 25-30.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 29; Fairfax's letter was dated 3 January 1643, *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. ii, p.912; Its contents were accurately reported in the royalist press, BLTT, E.86[22], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 2, 8-14 January 1643, p. 11.

²¹⁴ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 101; Fairfax 'Northern Actions,' p. 209.

²¹⁵ Bell (ed.), *Fairfax Correspondence*, vol. i, pp. 33-34; BLTT, E. 88[23], *The Rider of the White Horse*; Fairfax, 'Northern Actions,' p. 209.

general mobilisation for quite different reasons. A committed Calvinist, Stockdale was acutely aware of the violent anti Catholic feeling generated by the Irish rebellion of November 1641.²¹⁶ He was particularly keen to harness the radical Puritanism of the West Riding cloth workers 'in opposing that Popish army commanded by the Earl of Newcastle.'²¹⁷ Lord Fairfax wasted little time in approving what amounted to a popular rising; within two weeks Sir Thomas had mustered a small but enthusiastic army of 1300 men.²¹⁸ In the absence of support from parliamentary commanders in the region, Lord Fairfax's decision to 'join with the readiness of the people'²¹⁹ amounted to a last ditch attempt to oppose Newcastle's conquest of the county.²²⁰

However, the mobilisation of the lower orders horrified the Hothams.²²¹ Though Captain John Hotham had terrorized Yorkshire's royalist gentlemen during the autumn of 1642, the prospect of the poor and religiously radical in arms filled him with dread. He opened a correspondence with the earl of Newcastle, who now appeared a saviour rather than an enemy, in which he praised the earl's intervention and warned of the 'utter ruin of all the nobility and gentry' should the 'necessitous people...rise in mighty numbers.'²²² And when Sir Thomas Fairfax stormed Leeds on 23 January 1643,²²³ at the head of this new and dangerous army, Hotham's hostility boiled over. Sir Thomas complained to his father that 'No order will be observed by [Captain Hotham] but what he please.'²²⁴ Finally, in order to appease the Hothams, the earl of Essex was forced to grant both father and son complete autonomy of command.²²⁵ Once again Lord Fairfax was denied the assistance and cooperation of a fellow parliamentary officer. In defying the king from the walls of Hull during the summer of 1642, while Lord Fairfax quietly attempted to remain at home, the Hothams had risked everything. Overcome with resentment, they indignantly refused to recognize Ferdinando's commission to lead parliament's northern army.²²⁶ Even the intervention of the earl of Essex, who hoped to

²¹⁶ Binns, *Yorkshire in the Civil Wars*, p. 24.

²¹⁷ Bell (ed.), *Fairfax Correspondence*, vol. i, p. 30.

²¹⁸ Fairfax, 'Northern Actions,' p. 209.

²¹⁹ Bell (ed.), *Fairfax Correspondence*, vol. i, p. 34.

²²⁰ In terms of military strategy Lord Fairfax had two objectives, to avoid total royalist territorial control in the north and to prevent a junction of Newcastle's troops with the king's southern army. Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 65.

²²¹ On 4 January 1643 Sir John Hotham wrote to the Commons describing the 'danger which both himself and they were in, by the continuance of the war, and of the convenience and necessity of peace, persuading them to accept of it upon as good terms as they could, if they could not get in on such terms as they would.' BLTT, E. 86[22], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 2, 8-14 January 1643, p. 21; The Commons was appalled, ordering that the letter 'be delivered to Mr Speaker, to be kept that no man might see it.' *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. ii, p. 920.

²²² A. J. Hopper, 'Fitted for Desperation,' *History*, vol. 86 (April, 2001), p.141.

²²³ BLTT, E. 88[19], *A True and Plenary Relation of the Great Defeat Given by My Lord Fairfax Forces unto My Lord Newcastle's Forces in Yorkshire* (London, 6 February 1643).

²²⁴ Bell (ed.), *Fairfax Correspondence*, vol. i, p. 36.

²²⁵ Hopper, *Readiness of the People*, p. 3.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

establish a 'happy concordance betwixt your lordship [Fairfax], Sir John Hotham, and his son Captain Hotham',²²⁷ had little or no effect.²²⁸ The circumstances in which the Fairfaxes operated meant that they were particularly vulnerable to a lack of assistance from disaffected fellow commanders. In the words of Andrew Hopper:

They had no fortified castles or towns to defend. They received little money or effective assistance from parliament. They had only a slim base of support amongst Yorkshire's leading gentry, and their foremost ally, Sir John Hotham at Hull, eagerly awaited their destruction.²²⁹

It was a situation that completely undermined military opposition to the earl of Newcastle and further isolated the increasingly desperate Fairfaxes.

On 22 February 1643 the disembarkation of the Queen at Bridlington on the Yorkshire coast signalled a further deterioration in parliament's affairs.²³⁰ Accompanied by substantial supplies of weapons, soldiers and money,²³¹ Henrietta Maria's return from the continent acted as a catalyst for further anti-Fairfax collusion. Captain Hotham negotiated an agreement with the earl of Newcastle by which the Queen's safety would be guaranteed in exchange for an absence of royalist military activity in the east riding.²³² It is ironic that having objected so vehemently to Lord Fairfax's pact of neutrality, Hotham should take it upon himself to orchestrate what amounted to a local cessation. But even worse was to follow. On 20 March 1643, after a clandestine audience with the Queen, Sir Hugh Cholmley, the parliamentarian governor of Scarborough Castle, defected to the king.²³³ Clarendon maintained that Cholmley's support for parliament rested on nothing more than a personal friendship with Sir John Hotham. In the absence of any real ideological commitment, Sir Hugh was easily persuaded to abandon the rebel cause.²³⁴ Recent research suggests however that Cholmley's position was altogether more complicated. Binns has argued that Sir Hugh

²²⁷ Bell (ed.), *Fairfax Correspondence*, vol. i, p. 37.

²²⁸ It was reported in the royalist press that 'although the Houses of Parliament have endeavoured to reconcile them, yet they still stand upon their distance.' BLTT, E. 245[36], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 3, 15-21 January 1643, p. 28.

²²⁹ Hopper, 'Black Tom', p. 33.

²³⁰ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 102.

²³¹ The queen brought '1000 old experienced soldiers as a guard to her person, 2000 case of pistols, a good proportion of arms and other ammunition, and £80,000 in ready money.' BLTT, E. 86[41], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 9, 26 February – 4 March 1643, p. 109; 'Weapons for 10,000 soldiers, 32 canon, a thousand mercenary soldiers and a staggering £80,000 in ready money.' Binns, *Yorkshire in the Civil Wars*, p. 63.

²³² Hopper, 'Fitted for Desperation,' p. 143.

²³³ BLTT, E. 59[9], *A true and exact Relation of all the proceedings of Sir Hugh Cholmley's Revolt* (London, 7 April 1643), p. 5; The royalist press reported that 'at night Sir Hugh Cholmley in a disguise kissed the Queen's Majesties hand, and the next day delivered Scarborough into the hands of Lieutenant General King.' BLTT, E. 96[5], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 13, 26 March – 1 April 1643, p. 165.

²³⁴ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, p.468.

sided with parliament to protect his north riding possessions from royalist raids. But by March 1643 Newcastle's increasing dominance meant that only a change of allegiance could safeguard both his territory and tennantry.²³⁵ Moreover, Sir Hugh had reluctantly come to the conclusion that 'the preservation of Religion...and [the] liberties of the subject' were no longer safe in parliament's hands.²³⁶ Cholmley's abandonment of Lord Fairfax further imperilled parliament's increasingly fragile presence in Yorkshire.²³⁷ The occupation of the county by Newcastle's overwhelming numbers was serious enough, but the intervention of a dynamic and divisive Queen finally destroyed any prospect of cooperation amongst parliament's northern commanders.²³⁸

The Fairfaxes were now isolated and desperate. Sir Thomas described how the intrigues of Captain Hotham 'almost ruined my father and the forces that were with him; For being now denied help & succor from Hull & the East Riding, He was forced to forsake Selby, and retire to Leeds.'²³⁹ On 30 March 1643 the parliamentary army withdrew in two columns, and while that commanded by Ferdinando reached Leeds in safety, Sir Thomas' contingent was badly mauled by royalist cavalry on Seacroft Moor.²⁴⁰ Though the younger Fairfax managed to escape, 200 men were killed and as many as 800 captured.²⁴¹ This disastrous turn of events was seized upon by the Hothams to prepare the way for their own defection. The Venetian Ambassador reported that intercepted letters dated 7 April from Sir John Hotham and his son to the House of Commons blamed the ineffectiveness of the military campaign in Yorkshire on Lord Fairfax's decision to retire to the west riding. They warned that the earl of Newcastle's army was both numerous and well officered, and that Thomas Stockdale and his associates had so discontented the county that 'all men of courage have left [the Fairfaxes] but their own clan.'²⁴² Having completely undermined the Fairfaxes in Yorkshire, the Hotham's were determined to discredit their detested rivals in the eyes of parliament itself. Such open hostility and unwillingness to cooperate was a major factor

²³⁵ Binns, *Yorkshire in the Civil Wars*, pp. 63-64.

²³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 50; It is also possible that Cholmley may have been alarmed by the development of parliamentary 'faction.' Kishlansky, *New Model Army*, p. 16.

²³⁷ BLTT, E. 96[5], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 13, 26 March – 1 April 1643, pp. 153-154.

²³⁸ 'The war in Yorkshire altered dramatically in favour of the royalists in February. Queen Henrietta Maria, sent to the continent earlier to raise men, returned from Denmark with a large contingent of French and Walloon troops.' Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 72; BLTT, E. 91[5], *Special Passages*, 21 – 28 February 1643, p. 239.

²³⁹ Fairfax, 'Northern Actions,' p. 211.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 105; BLTT, E. 97[10], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 14, 2 - 9 April 1643, p. 174; Seacroft Moor was 'the first defeat suffered by Sir Thomas,' it 'tarnished his reputation and caused him great anguish.' Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 73.

²⁴² CSPV, 1642-1643, pp. 219-220; BLTT, E. 100[18], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 16, 16 – 22 April 1643, pp. 195-196; By mid April the situation had become so desperate that Lord Fairfax appealed to parliament for a thousand horse and ten thousand pounds to 'carry through the business of Yorkshire.' BLTT, E. 101[6], *Special Passages*, 2 - 9 May 1643, p. 320.

in circumventing the undoubted military talents of the Fairfaxes, the one advantage parliament possessed over the numerically superior forces of the earl of Newcastle.

The Fairfaxes however responded with characteristic audacity and dynamism. On 21 May 1643 Sir Thomas attacked Wakefield with the intention of taking sufficient prisoners to exchange for those captured at Seacroft Moor.²⁴³ Wakefield turned out to be one of the most astounding engagements of the civil war; an incredulous Sir Thomas described it as 'more a miracle than a victory.'²⁴⁴ Having completely underestimated the strength of the royalist garrison, Sir Thomas successfully led 1100 men against a defending force of more than 3000 horse and foot. This astonishing triumph resulted in no fewer than 1500 prisoners, which were quickly swapped for those taken at Seacroft Moor.²⁴⁵ Even royalist observers were compelled to acknowledge 'the greatest loss that hath befallen His Majestie in the North, during the course of all this War.'²⁴⁶ Wakefield provided a stunning demonstration of Fairfax tenacity and leadership, an indication of what might have been achieved had Lord Fairfax and his son enjoyed the wholehearted support and cooperation of the Hothams and Sir Hugh Cholmley.²⁴⁷

Despite the euphoria of victory the Fairfaxes remained confined to their strongholds of Leeds, Bradford and Halifax.²⁴⁸ In a long letter to the Commons dated 23 May 1643, Lord Fairfax described how he had abandoned Wakefield because 'Numbers and Strength [were] too weak to keep it;' how Newcastle's invasion of the county had stopped all provision 'both of Corn and Flesh, and other Necessaries' so that the people 'now begin to be sensible of Want;' how pay for the army was so far in arrears that the soldiers 'grow very mutinous;' how powder, arms and ammunition 'cannot be supplied until the Passage to Hull be forced open;' and how he will be compelled 'to accept of dishonorable Conditions' unless 'the Aids often promised may presently march away to us,' including 'Colonel Cromwell, with his Horse and Foot,' so that 'being joined together I may be able to draw this Army into the field.'²⁴⁹ And in a second letter to the

²⁴³ Fairfax, 'Northern Actions,' p. 212.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.213.

²⁴⁵ Binns, *Yorkshire in the Civil Wars*, p. 67.

²⁴⁶ BLTT, E. 106[2], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 22, 28 May – 3 June 1643, p. 284; Stanley Carpenter argues that 'the leadership effectiveness of Lord Fairfax shows most brightly in his ability to rally defeated forces, rebuild his forces through vigorous recruitment' and 'defeat royalist detachments in detail.' The manner in which the Fairfaxes responded to the defeat at Seacroft Moor by storming Wakefield is a case in point. Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 64.

²⁴⁷ Roger Manning has described Sir Thomas Fairfax as 'an effective, calm and inspiring battlefield commander'. R. B. Manning, *An Apprenticeship in Arms: The Origins of the British Army 1585-1702* (Oxford, 2006), p. 162.

²⁴⁸ During April 1643 the earl of Newcastle briefly laid siege to the Fairfaxes in Leeds. Lord Fairfax reported to the Commons that the earl's army consisted of 16000 foot and 60 troops of horse, while his own army consisted of no more than 2500 men. BLTT, E. 101[10], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 17, 23 – 29 April 1643, pp. 212-213.

²⁴⁹ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, pp. 66-67; At the beginning of May 1643 Lord Fairfax warned parliament that he was effectively surrounded following Newcastle's capture of Sheffield and Rotherham,

Commons, written on the same day, Thomas Stockdale urgently reiterated the pressing need for reinforcements:

If we had now any Force of Horse to join with us, we should in all Probability utterly rent the Enemies in this Country, or shut them in Holes; which if it do not speedily come, we shall be in Danger to perish, if the Enemy draw his whole Force upon us.²⁵⁰

It was reported that Newcastle, reeling from the loss of Wakefield, had ordered royalist regiments based in Derbyshire to concentrate at Pontefract Castle.²⁵¹ As Lord Fairfax and Thomas Stockdale had warned, a royalist counter stroke would not be long in coming.

By late May/early June 1643 a strong parliamentarian force of 6,000 horse and foot had assembled at Nottingham with the intention of marching into Yorkshire to save the Fairfaxes.²⁵² Colonel Cromwell was indeed one of the commanders present. On 28 May he wrote to the Mayor of Colchester emphasising the danger posed by Newcastle's northern army and the absolute need for urgent assistance:

I thought it my duty once more to write unto you for more strength to be speedily sent unto us...We assure you, should the force we have miscarry, expect nothing but a speedy march of the enemy up unto you...judge you the danger of the neglect; and how inconvenient this improvidence, or unthrifty, may be to you...I tell you again, it concerns you exceedingly to be persuaded by me...The enemy draws more to the Lord Fairfax: our motion and yours must be exceedingly speedy, or else it will do you no good at all...I beseech you hasten supplies.²⁵³

Unfortunately for Lord Fairfax the increasingly duplicitous Captain Hotham was also present at Nottingham. On 2 June Hotham wrote to Fairfax explaining that due to the weakness and 'distraction' of Newcastle's army, and a strong royalist presence only four miles from Nottingham, 'we think it best to stay here, and not to draw down into Yorkshire.'²⁵⁴ Though signed by five parliamentarian commanders the letter 'was in the

and that he would be unable to keep Leeds unless he was immediately supplied with 1000 horse and dragoons and £1000 in ready money. BLTT, E. 103[10], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 19, 7 – 13 May 1643, p. 247; *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 77.

²⁵⁰ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 67.

²⁵¹ BLTT, E. 106[2], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 22, 28 May – 3 June 1643, p. 284.

²⁵² The royalist press reported that 'it is conceived that their design is to fall into Yorkshire to aid their party there, which is reduced to such extremities, that without seasonable help the whole game is lost.' BLTT, E. 55[14], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 23, 4 – 10 June 1643, p. 296.

²⁵³ Oliver Cromwell to the Mayor of Colchester, Nottingham, 28 May 1643, S. C. Lomas (ed.), *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell by Thomas Carlisle* (London, 1904), vol. i. p. 137.

²⁵⁴ Bell (ed.), *Fairfax Correspondence*, vol. i, p. 46.

handwriting of Captain Hotham, and doubtless it conveyed his sentiments.²⁵⁵ Lord Fairfax angrily rejected Hotham's excuses and demanded that he march immediately:

with all the forces you have, and join with me to suppress this Popish army here, which else, whatsoever report gives it out to you, is of power, without God's miraculous deliverance, to destroy our force, and so by degrees to ruin the kingdom.²⁵⁶

But Fairfax's protestations fell on deaf ears, sabotaging any hope of substantial reinforcements. It would appear that the younger Hotham was able to exaggerate the success of Sir Thomas Fairfax's victory at Wakefield and convinced his fellow commanders at Nottingham that the real danger lay in the Midlands and not Yorkshire. While Captain Hotham's enmity isolated the Fairfaxes, Newcastle's forces were permitted to recover from the disaster of Wakefield and prepare for a further assault.

On 4 June 1643 Henrietta Maria finally left York with a large contingent of soldiers and supplies for the king's Oxford army.²⁵⁷ The earl of Newcastle accompanied the queen as far as Pontefract Castle in order to prepare for a major campaign against the West Riding.²⁵⁸ The intensions of the royalists were however well known to the Fairfaxes. Two important letters captured at Wakefield revealed that Colonel George Goring, Newcastle's Lieutenant General of horse, had been urged to 'get between Bradford and Leeds' and 'Cudgel them to a treaty.'²⁵⁹ Goring's correspondent betrayed the increasing desperation with which the royalists sought to crush their obstinate opponents, and inadvertently paid a fitting tribute to the tenacity with which the Fairfaxes had opposed Newcastle's much larger army.

By mid June 1643 the situation in Yorkshire had reached crisis point. Isolated by the treachery of Cholmley and the disaffection of the Hothams, Lord Fairfax had taken refuge in the parliamentary heartland of West Riding cloth towns. In the continued absence of substantial assistance from outside the county, he faced the very real prospect of imminent and total destruction. Despite a huge disadvantage in troop numbers Lord Fairfax and his dynamic son had proved remarkably resourceful and determined opponents, demonstrating a 'degree of aggressiveness, boldness and risk taking,' that had 'made Newcastle reticent to engage in bold operations outside the north.'²⁶⁰ However, they were continually undermined by a crippling lack of support

²⁵⁵ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 159.

²⁵⁶ Bell (ed.), *Fairfax Correspondence*, vol. i, p. 47.

²⁵⁷ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, pp. 110-111.

²⁵⁸ D. Parsons (ed.), *The Diary of Sir Henry Slingsby* (London, 1836), p. 95.

²⁵⁹ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, pp. 67-68.

²⁶⁰ Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 59.

and cooperation from fellow parliamentarian commanders. At Nottingham in early June the open treachery of Captain Hotham effectively sacrificed the Fairfaxes and virtually handed the north to the earl of Newcastle. The hostility, disloyalty and insubordination of supposed comrades in arms imperilled the cause and threw the campaign into crisis. Such a prevalent and damaging lack of cooperation was clearly a major reason for parliament's military decline in Yorkshire. Its importance as a potential cause of parliament's crisis will be subjected to further examination in chapter three.

Sir William Waller

Sir William Waller will forever be remembered as the author of the civil war's most celebrated letter. Written in June 1643 to his friend and royalist adversary Sir Ralph Hopton, Waller lamented how 'That great God who is the searcher of my heart knows with what a perfect hatred I detest this war without an enemy.'²⁶¹ Waller's political and military activities up to June 1643 were relatively uncontroversial, and have not provoked the condemnation visited upon Essex or the polarity of opinion generated by Fairfax. His skillful exploitation of battlefield terrain was readily acknowledged in contemporary royalist writing,²⁶² while his insistence on military victory as a necessary precursor to constitutional negotiations has also been emphasised.²⁶³ Rather less certain is the claim that Waller's 'considerable talent for the art of war' helped to save parliament from 'the lethargy and limited strategic sense of Essex as a commander-in-chief.'²⁶⁴ It is a view contested by David Underdown who has argued that 'Waller had a somewhat inflated reputation as one of parliament's few commanders who had won any battles at all.'²⁶⁵ In seeking to establish which of these contradictory claims is closer to the truth, this study will assess the extent to which Sir William can be held responsible for the demise of parliament's western campaign in the summer of 1643.

Clarendon attributed Waller's support for parliament to a personal grievance in which he was fined a considerable sum following a violent altercation with a royal servant. This, Clarendon claimed, 'produced in him so eager a spirit against the court that he was very open to any temptation that might engage him against it.'²⁶⁶ Adair dismissed Clarendon's story as uncorroborated, arguing instead that Waller had been alienated by the king's favour of papists, and that he 'was a constitutional monarchist

²⁶¹ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p.168.

²⁶² Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 116.

²⁶³ J. Adair, *Roundhead General* (London, 1969), p. 15.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-15.

²⁶⁵ D. Underdown, *Somerset in the Civil War and Interregnum* (Newton Abbot, 1973), p. 50.

²⁶⁶ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, pp. 80-81.

who believed that the traditional order needed restoring rather than abolishing.²⁶⁷ Consequently Waller deemed it 'necessary in 1642 to resort to arms to defend this conservative equilibrium.'²⁶⁸ It was Sir William's profound belief that God's providence had preserved him in childhood and youth for a purpose, and that his active participation in the civil war was in accordance with a higher cause.²⁶⁹

It seems that Waller's pre civil war military experience was rather limited. Although Clarendon reported that he 'spent some years abroad, and some time in armies there, [and] returned with a good reputation,'²⁷⁰ the idea that Sir William could be considered a professional soldier was completely rejected by Austin Woolrych.²⁷¹ Indeed, John Adair concluded that Waller's service in the Venetian army during 1617 and his participation in Sir Horace Vere's expedition to the Palatinate in 1620 'could be better called part of his general education than an apprenticeship to war.'²⁷² Yet the impression cultivated by Clarendon, that Waller possessed a respectable degree of martial ability, may account for his election to parliament's Committee of Safety on 4 July 1642. As Adair has pointed out, the appointment took place after only eight weeks service as an MP, and as Sir William had demonstrated no interest in county politics or the House of Commons before the civil war, his elevation may well reflect 'an exaggerated contemporary notion of his military experience.'²⁷³ This in turn sheds some light upon the decision of the Commons in August 1642 to entrust the reduction of Portsmouth to an army under Waller's command.

Because Portsmouth was a vitally important port for French aid, local parliamentarians expressed their concern to the Commons when the governor, Colonel George Goring, unexpectedly declared for the king.²⁷⁴ On 15 August 1642 it was reported that Waller, ably assisted by the Scottish professional Colonel John Urry, had launched a vigorous siege.²⁷⁵ And when parliamentary forces stormed Southsea castle under the cover of darkness on 4 September, a royalist mutiny forced Goring to surrender.²⁷⁶ There can be little doubt that the capture of Portsmouth reflected well upon

²⁶⁷ Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 37.

²⁶⁸ Barbara Donagan, 'Waller, Sir William (bap. 1598?, d. 1668)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 80; Interestingly, Roger Manning has argued that 'a higher proportion of royalists had foreign military experience because they tended to be younger and more widely travelled than parliamentarians'. Manning, *An Apprenticeship in Arms*, p. 161.

²⁷¹ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, p. 244.

²⁷² Adair, *Roundhead General*, pp. 14-15.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 14 & 41.

²⁷⁴ Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC), *Portland Mss.*, vol. i, pp. 50-51.

²⁷⁵ BLTT, E. 112[8], *A True Report of the Occurrences at Portsmouth* (15 August 1642); According to Roger Manning more than half the senior officers in Waller's army were Scottish veterans of continental European armies. Manning, *An Apprenticeship in Arms*, p. 161.

²⁷⁶ HMC, *Portland Mss.*, vol. i, p. 61.

Waller, for as one parliamentarian source proclaimed, 'we have great cause to praise God, considering the great terrors the design there menaced not only these parts, but the rest of the kingdom.'²⁷⁷ Yet Adair's conclusion that a 'more likely candidate for high command could scarcely be found in the ranks of parliament'²⁷⁸ is perhaps a little premature, particularly when one considers Clarendon's thinly disguised disappointment in Goring and the royalist garrison.²⁷⁹

Following the heady success of Portsmouth, the battle of Edgehill (23 October 1642) proved to be a sobering experience. While most of parliament's cavalry was swept away, the stubborn resistance of the earl of Essex and the roundhead infantry saved the day. Waller's regiment was one of many ignominiously routed by Rupert's cavaliers - but the ordeal provided a valuable lesson. Thereafter Waller ensured 'that his horse never stood still to receive a cavalry charge, but spurred forward to take it at the trot.'²⁸⁰ Despite the trauma of defeat, it was not long before Sir William was presented with an opportunity to redeem himself. The failure of Edgehill and then Turnham Green to bring the civil war to a conclusion prompted the establishment of a number of royalist garrisons to the south west of London. Waller spent the remainder of 1642 successfully reducing these outposts, earning the appellation 'William the Conqueror.'²⁸¹ But as the following analysis will attempt to show, the public acclaim that attended Waller's triumphal progress may well have been misplaced, particularly as it appears to have taken little account of the favourable circumstances in which it was achieved.

The campaign began at Farnham in Surrey where 'the poet-courtier Sir John Denham, with a party of gentlemen and their servants,' seized the castle in the name of the king.²⁸² Clarendon contemptuously recalled how these gentlemen-soldiers 'were taken with less resistance than was fit by Sir William Waller.'²⁸³ Though Clarendon ungraciously failed to mention the personal bravery with which Waller led the assault, the inference that the castle should have been defended with greater determination perhaps qualifies Sir William's achievement. Three days later on 3 December 1642 the royalist Lord Grandison occupied Marlborough in Wiltshire with four troops of horse and 600 dragoons, threatening the passage of trade between London and Bristol. Waller led a substantial force of between 2,000-3,000 mounted men, forcing Grandison to retreat to Winchester, where Sir William accepted the surrender of the castle on 14

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 47.

²⁷⁹ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, p. 314.

²⁸⁰ Adair, *Roundhead General*, pp. 48-49.

²⁸¹ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 115; Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 53.

²⁸² Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 50.

²⁸³ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, p. 405.

December 1642.²⁸⁴ Though Grandison had proved to be a tougher opponent than the gentlemen of Farnham,²⁸⁵ Waller's conduct in the aftermath of victory placed a question mark against his credentials as a commander. A parliamentary source revealed how 'the Towne by paying 1000 pounds made their peace with us,'²⁸⁶ yet Sir William permitted his soldiers to sack the city. The royalists complained bitterly that 'it was our men's misfortune to be so treacherously used at Winchester.'²⁸⁷ Though much to Waller's subsequent regret,²⁸⁸ the episode was nevertheless symptomatic of the way in which Sir William's troops were to gain a reputation for ill-discipline.²⁸⁹

In mid November 1642 'some well effected gentry of Sussex...possessed themselves...of the city of Chichester, which, being encompassed with a very good old wall, was very easy to be so fortified.'²⁹⁰ The royalist garrison consisted of no fewer than 1,000 men supported by a number of large cannons from the arsenal at Portsmouth.²⁹¹ Waller arrived on 21 December with a force of 2,500 horse and foot,²⁹² and after his men 'besieged the City...seven days and nights, and had given several assaults upon it, to the losse of about twenty men of both sides, it was surrendered.'²⁹³ Clarendon was once again dismissive of what he believed to be an inexcusably feeble resistance; 'they were compelled, upon no better articles than quarter, to deliver that city, which could hardly have been taken from them.'²⁹⁴ A condition of the surrender was that the town should not be plundered; yet Waller's unruly soldiers sacked the cathedral, blackening his reputation still further.²⁹⁵ One irate royalist complained 'At Chichester they used the same perfidious treachery they had formally shown at Winchester.'²⁹⁶

But none of this mattered at Westminster. In the wake of the king's march on London in mid-November, and Newcastle's invasion of Yorkshire in December, any news of parliamentary success was welcomed with open arms. On 16 January 1643 the Commons ordered that 'Mr Speaker do give thanks, from the House, to Sir William Waller, for the great Service he has done.'²⁹⁷ It is undeniable that during this short

²⁸⁴ Adair, *Roundhead General*, pp. 50-51.

²⁸⁵ HMC, *Portland Mss*, vol. i, p. 84.

²⁸⁶ BLTT, E. 83[8], *The Latest printed news from Chichester, Windsor, Winchester, Chester, Manchester, and York* (22 December 1642), p. 1.

²⁸⁷ HMC, *Portland Mss*, vol. i, p. 84.

²⁸⁸ Adair, *Roundhead General*, pp. 50-51.

²⁸⁹ Donagan, 'Waller, Sir William', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

²⁹⁰ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, p. 446.

²⁹¹ Adair, *Roundhead General*, pp. 52-53.

²⁹² HMC, *Portland Mss*, vol. i, pp. 84-85.

²⁹³ BLTT, E. 83[36], *Brave news of the taking of the City of Chichester* (30 December 1642).

²⁹⁴ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, p. 446.

²⁹⁵ Adair, *Roundhead General*, pp. 52-53.

²⁹⁶ HMC, *Portland Mss*, vol. i, pp. 84-85.

²⁹⁷ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. ii, p. 929.

campaign Waller acted swiftly, diligently and efficiently. And although Clarendon (hardly an impartial observer) continually bemoaned the quality of royalist resistance, it would be churlish to deny the impact of Waller's achievements. He created an impression of dynamism that contrasted markedly with the perceived inertia of the earl of Essex. However, such a comparison fails to recognize the wholly different circumstances in which the two commanders operated. Essex carried the hopes and aspirations of at least half the political nation, and the defeat of his army would, at a stroke, render all of Waller's triumphs irrelevant.

Yet as the war drifted unresolved into 1643 it became clear that parliament, while continuing to explore the possibility of a negotiated settlement, would have to prepare for conflict on a wider scale. On 11 February 1643 Waller was commissioned Sergeant Major General of the newly formed Western Association.²⁹⁸ Intended to co-ordinate military activity in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Somerset, Worcestershire and Shropshire, the Association stood 'between the royalist capital of Oxford and the royalist recruiting grounds of south Wales.'²⁹⁹ In order to control this vital corridor, Waller was granted 'wide-ranging powers to levy money from delinquent's estates and by taxation to raise up to ten regiments'.³⁰⁰ The Association signaled the establishment of a regional strategy in the west, and confirmed Waller's status as a commander worthy of responsibility.

Sir William's first objective was Bristol, which he entered unopposed on 15 March following a series of expertly executed night marches. His immediate concern was the parliamentary garrison of Gloucester, under threat from 2,000 newly levied Welsh foot and horse under the command of Lord Herbert.³⁰¹ Striking northeast, Waller headed first of all for the royalist garrison of Malmesbury in Wiltshire. Arriving with 2,000 – 3,000 men in the early afternoon of 20 March, Sir William found the town strongly fortified and defended by 300 foot.³⁰² By the early hours of the following morning three determined assaults had been repulsed, and having decided to withdraw, Waller assembled his forces in order to mask his real intentions. Fearing a further attack the garrison panicked, requested a parley, and surrendered the town upon quarter.³⁰³

²⁹⁸ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. v, pp. 602-603.

²⁹⁹ Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 55.

³⁰⁰ A. R. Warmington, *Civil War, Interregnum and Restoration in Gloucestershire, 1640-1672* (Bury St Edmunds, 1997), p. 45; However, a royalist report claimed that Waller's army consisted of no more than '500 foot, a regiment of horse, and another of dragoons, six field pieces, and four cart loads of muskets.' BLTT, E. 92[25], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 11, 12 -18 March 1643, p. 129.

³⁰¹ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 116.

³⁰² BLTT, E. 97[10], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 14, 2 - 9 April 1643, pp. 172-173.

³⁰³ BLTT, E. 94[12], *A Letter from Sir William Waller...of a Great Victory he obtained at Malmesbury* (London, 28 March 1643); Unfortunately Waller's troops once again demonstrated a propensity for ill-discipline, breaking the terms of the treaty and attacking the besieged as they left. The royalist press

Though the success was undoubtedly blessed with good fortune, it nevertheless demonstrated Waller's grasp of tactical subterfuge, a talent he quickly repeated in dealing with the threat to Gloucester posed by Lord Herbert. 'By a sudden night march (in which he was very dexterous and successful),'³⁰⁴ Waller crossed the Severn to the south of the town and, in a surprise attack, destroyed Herbert's inexperienced Welsh royalists at Highnam on 24 March.³⁰⁵ Importantly for parliament Sir William's victory secured Gloucester, while Clarendon's disparaging verdict, that the Welshmen 'kindly delivered up themselves and their arms,'³⁰⁶ reflected a keenly felt sense of royalist disappointment.³⁰⁷ The triumph was however diluted by news that Malmesbury had fallen to Prince Rupert only days after Waller vacated the town.³⁰⁸ Sir William explained to parliament that 'It was not for us to have stood long there, nor for the Advancement of your Service for us to garrison Towns, unless it is intended we shall leave the field.'³⁰⁹ Like the Fairfaxes in Yorkshire, Waller's resources did not permit an active field army *and* an extensive chain of properly garrisoned towns.³¹⁰

Sir William's crushing victory at Highnam prompted a rapid royalist response, one that presented a new and much more formidable opponent: the king's nephew Prince Maurice. While Waller advanced into Monmouthshire in early April, Charles dispatched the prince with a detachment of the Oxford field army into the Severn Valley.³¹¹ Having rendezvoused with Lord Grandison at Tewksbury, Maurice deployed his forces in the Forest of Dean, intending to prevent Waller's return to Gloucester.³¹² But Sir William was alive to the danger, and by a skillful division of his forces, in which the foot, baggage and ordinance crossed the Severn at Chepstow, Waller led his mounted troops through the forest to safety, skirmishing with the enemy at Little Dean.³¹³ Though Sir William re-entered Gloucester on 11 April the situation remained hazardous. In order to forestall Maurice, Waller ordered the governor of

complained that 'the like perfidiousness we hardly find examples of amongst Christian nations'. BLTT, E. 247[26], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 12, 19 – 25 March 1643, pp. 148-149.

³⁰⁴ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, p. 483; 'Marching by night, as commonly his custom is.' BLTT, E. 247[26], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 12, 19 - 25 March 1643, p. 145.

³⁰⁵ In his dispatch to parliament Waller described the capture of 1,600 prisoners. *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, pp. 4-5.

³⁰⁶ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, p. 483.

³⁰⁷ The royalist press attempted to portray Herbert's defeat as a tactical withdrawal, and Waller's subsequent occupation of Gloucester as a retreat. BLTT, E. 96[5], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 13, 26 March – 1 April 1643, pp. 158 & 162.

³⁰⁸ Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 63.

³⁰⁹ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, pp. 4-5.

³¹⁰ In early April 1643 it was reported that 'Waller's forces were not above 2000 men and four pieces of ordinance.' BLTT, E. 97[10], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 2 – 9 April 1643, p. 178.

³¹¹ R. Hutton, *Royalist War Effort 1642-1646* (London, 1982), pp. 55-56; Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 64.

³¹² Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 119.

³¹³ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, pp. 4-5; For a royalist account of how 'Waller [was] chased out of Little Dean by Prince Maurice' see BLTT, E. 99[22], 15, *Mercurius Aulicus*, 9 – 15 April 1643, p. 186.

Gloucester, Colonel Edward Massey, to secure the passage over the Severn at Tewkesbury.³¹⁴ While this relieved the immediate threat, Maurice could not be prevented from reaching the bridge at Upton, below Worcester, on the evening of 12 April, allowing his men to cross to the east bank the following morning.³¹⁵ Despite Waller's best efforts a major confrontation was now inevitable. Sir William's advance into the sensitive 'frontier' counties of Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire was always likely to provoke a determined royalist counter stroke. The war in the west was in effect entering a new stage, for in Prince Maurice 'William the Conqueror' now faced a much more tenacious and tactically proficient adversary.

On the morning of 13 April Waller marched north from Tewksbury, perhaps still hopeful of beating Maurice to Upton Bridge.³¹⁶ As Adair has pointed out, Sir William's small army of 1,500 men included only 100 foot and a few pieces of ordinance, totally inadequate for a pitched battle in open terrain yet potentially sufficient to hold a bridge.³¹⁷ Unfortunately Waller encountered Maurice three miles north of Tewkesbury, just beyond the village of Ripple. Following an ineffectual artillery duel and a brief foray by the Roundhead cavalry, Sir William concluded that he possessed too few foot to oppose a 2,000 strong royalist army. Despite the enthusiasm of some officers, Waller reluctantly ordered his men to withdraw.³¹⁸ Waller's line of retreat lay along a narrow lane, and though he attempted to defend the vulnerable entrance with musketeers, 'Maurice fell so unexpectedly upon the enemy with his main body that he made them flie, killing 80 in the place besides as many more who were drowned in the river attempting to escape.'³¹⁹ It was only the intervention of reinforcements from Tewkesbury under the command of Colonel Massey that prevented further loss. While it is true that Maurice was the first royalist general to inflict a serious defeat upon Waller, some historians have attributed his failure to an uncharacteristic misuse of terrain.³²⁰ It may be pertinent to note however that this was Waller's first experience of command in a conventional battle situation, with the enemy properly deployed to receive him. Worst still, he was handicapped by a chronic shortage of infantry and totally incompetent artillery. It is hardly surprising that he was unable to make any headway against Maurice's balanced and effective army. Disadvantaged by

³¹⁴ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, pp. 4-5.

³¹⁵ Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 66.

³¹⁶ BLTT, E. 99[22], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 15, 9 – 15 April 1643, pp. 188-189.

³¹⁷ Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 67.

³¹⁸ For an excellent description and analysis of the battle of Ripple Field, including useful topographical detail, see Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, pp. 120-122.

³¹⁹ BLTT, E. 99[22], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 15, 9 – 15 April 1643, pp. 188-189.

³²⁰ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, pp. 121-122.

circumstance and opposed by a resolute enemy, Ripple Field confirmed that the defence of the west would be no easy matter.³²¹

Ironically, it was the timely breakdown of the Oxford peace talks that came to Sir William's rescue. As described above, Essex marched to besiege Reading as soon as parliament rejected the king's final terms on 12 April. Consequently Charles recalled many outlying garrison forces, both to strengthen the defences of Oxford itself and to permit the mounting of a substantial relief effort. When Maurice was ordered to return to Oxford,³²² Waller fortuitously found himself unopposed in the Severn valley, a situation he quickly exploited.³²³ He had received intelligence that Hereford was vulnerable to a surprise attack.³²⁴ On the morning of 24 April Waller 'assaulted the Town in three several places, and some sallies and contestations there were; but before three of the clock, their Sallie was turned to a Parley'.³²⁵ Sir William completed the formalities of Hereford's surrender the following morning. Though Clarendon once again ridiculed the half-hearted resistance of the garrison,³²⁶ a second royalist source admitted that the town could have been defended with greater determination.³²⁷ Waller however had no intention of keeping Hereford. Mindful of the royalist snare that almost trapped him in Monmouthshire, he returned to Gloucester in early May carrying captured munitions and a collection of money.³²⁸

Waller's repeated capture and subsequent abandonment of royalist towns and garrisons may suggest a lack of strategic awareness. However, his actions need to be considered in terms of his leadership of the Western Association and his role in the wider war-effort. Complete domination of the Severn Valley lay beyond his resources, but as long as he controlled Bristol and Gloucester he could disrupt royalist plans to move recruits from south Wales or to land soldiers from Ireland. The longer he starved the king's Oxford army of such reinforcements, the greater the chance that Essex might deliver a decisive victory. And as Warmington has demonstrated, Waller's presence created sufficient security to reinvigorate the collection of much needed revenue from a whole swathe of parishes strongly disposed to parliament, and may even have helped prepare Gloucester for the siege of August and September 1643.³²⁹

³²¹ BLTT, E. 99[22], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 15, 9 – 15 April 1643, pp. 188-189.

³²² BLTT, E. 100[18], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 16, 16 – 22 April 1643, p. 208.

³²³ Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 68.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68-69.

³²⁵ BLTT, E. 100[7], *Mercurius Bellicus*, 30 April 1643, p. 4.

³²⁶ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, pp. 17-18.

³²⁷ BLTT, E. 102[1], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 18, 30 April – 6 May 1643, p. 222.

³²⁸ Hutton, *Royalist War Effort*, p. 58; According to the royalist press 'Sir William Waller had quitted Hereford and was returned back again unto his starting hole in Gloucester.' BLTT, E. 103[10], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 19, 7 – 13 May 1643, p. 240.

³²⁹ Warmington, *Civil War Gloucestershire*, p. 47.

Yet it was Waller's handling of a new threat that ultimately plunged parliament's western campaign into crisis, and which brought to an end his hard earned reputation as 'William the Conqueror.' Royalist correspondence captured in April 1643 revealed that the king's general in Cornwall, Sir Ralph Hopton, had been commanded by Charles to march his army towards Oxford.³³⁰ This was as yet impossible because the earl of Stamford, parliament's general in the South West, commanded substantial forces in Devonshire. But on 16 May the outnumbered Hopton destroyed Stamford's army at Stratton in perhaps the most brilliantly conceived and executed victory of the civil war.³³¹ Crucially, this stunning royalist triumph coincided with the arrival at Oxford on 15 May of the first of the queen's great supply convoys, allowing Charles to dispatch westwards towards Hopton a substantial force of cavalry under Prince Maurice and the Marquis of Hertford. Essex, as we have seen, ordered the interception of the queen's convoy and was understandably furious to receive news of its successful passage, particularly as the disintegration of his own forces around Reading meant that Charles was free to reinforce Hopton without concern for the security of Oxford.³³² This strategic breakthrough linked the three major theatres. The convoy of foreign arms and munitions had been assembled in Yorkshire under the supervision of the earl of Newcastle, while its arrival at Oxford strengthened the king's position on the central front and permitted the redeployment of cavalry to augment the western campaign. These breathtaking examples of inter-regional cooperation, which stood in marked contrast to the disunity of parliament's failing war effort, threatened the destruction of Waller's Western Association and a royalist march against the capital. With the benefit of hindsight it seems obvious that Waller should have done all in his power to prevent the union of Hopton's western army with Maurice and Hertford's cavalry.³³³ But from what happened next it is evident that Sir William had other objectives, which he clearly believed were more pressing and strategically more important.

Sir Walter Earle, the puritan MP for Lyme, rode from Dorchester to Gloucester to impress upon Waller the absolute imperative of confronting Maurice and Hertford at Salisbury before Hopton could join them. But to Earle's astonishment and frustration Sir William decided to march in the opposite direction towards Worcester.³³⁴ Sir Robert Cooke, a member of the committee at Gloucester, defended Waller in a letter to parliament dated 2 June. It was necessary, Cooke explained, to slight Worcester first so

³³⁰ BLTT, E. 100[7], *The Fourth Intelligence from Reading*, 1 May 1643, p. 7.

³³¹ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 96-97; BLTT, E. 104[21], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 20, 14 – 20 May 1643, pp. 262-263.

³³² Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 122.

³³³ The combined royalist armies numbered more than 6,300 horse and foot, a formidable force in the context of the 1643 western campaign. Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 72.

³³⁴ HMC, *Portland Mss.*, vol. i, p. 710.

‘that it might not remain a strength for parliament’s enemies.’³³⁵ However Waller’s assault was fiercely resisted, and when, on the evening of 29 May, he received a succession of urgent messages ‘out of the west, exclaiming that all would be lost there, if he did not immediately advance that way,’³³⁶ the attempt on Worcester was abandoned.³³⁷ But worse was to follow. On returning to Gloucester a mutiny broke out amongst Sir William’s soldiers, ‘for want of money neither can the new [regiments] be completed, nor the old encouraged.’³³⁸ Disastrously Waller remained immobilized at Gloucester for a whole week whilst the two royalist armies joined together at Chard in Somerset on 4 June.³³⁹ Sir William’s decision to safeguard the Severn Valley before opposing Maurice and Hertford had backfired and now appeared a grave error of judgment.³⁴⁰ If his troops had not mutinied at Gloucester he may still have been able to intercept Maurice and Hertford somewhere between Salisbury and Chard, but it was by no means certain and would have been a close run thing.

Yet even at this eleventh hour there remained a faint glimmer of hope. Waller’s admittedly demoralized forces still stood between the united royalists and further progress towards Oxford or possibly London. Underdown has argued that although Waller’s infantry couldn’t hope to match Hopton’s Cornish foot, he was well provided with cavalry from the capital, among them Sir Arthur Heselrig’s heavily armoured regiment of ‘Lobsters,’ and he may even have enjoyed a numerical superiority if the parliamentary garrison at Bristol was included.³⁴¹ Nevertheless, the material point is that Waller’s inability to prevent the union of two potent royalist armies threw the campaign into crisis, imperilling parliament’s fragile hold on the region and opening up the possibility of a royalist advance against London.

Summary

The case studies presented above have attempted to highlight potential reasons for parliament’s military collapse in the summer of 1643. Perhaps surprisingly, in an analysis concerned with military failure, the fighting abilities of parliament’s principal commanders do not appear to be the point of contention. The evidence suggests that Essex’s often-criticised strategy was in fact governed by political necessity, and that he

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 709-710.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 710.

³³⁷ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 18; BLTT, E. 106[2], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 22, 28 May – 3 June 1643, pp. 287-288.

³³⁸ HMC, *Portland Mss.*, vol. i, p. 712.

³³⁹ Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 72.

³⁴⁰ The royalist press claimed that the combined forces of Hopton and Hertford amounted to no fewer than 9,000 men. BLTT, E. 56[11], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 24, 11 – 17 June 1643, p. 303.

³⁴¹ Underdown, *Somerset in the Civil War*, p. 50.

fought effectively at both Edgehill and Reading despite the dubious quality of his troops. He successfully maintained the parliamentary cause in difficult and trying circumstances, not least an irregular supply of pay and a debilitating outbreak of camp sickness. Despite these problems Essex managed to preserve an army in being, which, crucially, sustained the political cause upon which parliament's hopes depended. In the north the Fairfaxes fought tenaciously amid great adversity, demonstrating a quality of leadership and martial skill that was superior to that of their opponent the earl of Newcastle. They were let down however by an unrelenting failure of fellow parliamentary commanders to provide desperately needed support. It was this total absence of cooperation that allowed the first of the queen's great supply convoys to reach Oxford unopposed, rescuing the king's principal field army at a critical juncture in the campaign. The replenishment of the Oxford army frustrated any possibility of an attack on the royalist capital by Essex's disintegrating army, and permitted the deployment of substantial forces to reinforce Sir Ralph Hopton's campaign in the west. Although Waller performed energetically, and with some degree of success, the aggressive Maurice finally brought a check to his run of victories. But much more serious was the strategic miscalculation which permitted the union of Hopton's army with reinforcements from Oxford under Maurice and Hertford.

What emerges from this analysis is not a consistent or clear-cut picture of parliamentary inferiority, either in terms of leadership or fighting ability, and certainly not one that accounts for parliament's military collapse. Overall Essex, Fairfax and Waller appear perfectly capable of holding their own against their royalist opponents. And if they failed to achieve decisive victories, they similarly failed to suffer decisive defeats. While the king may appear to hold some kind martial edge, symbolised most effectively by Rupert's cavalry, the truth is that by June 1643 this supposed superiority had not produced a war-winning breakthrough. Instead we are presented with a remarkable and highly significant contrast. While parliament's war effort was continually undermined by a destructive lack of cooperation, royalist forces worked effectively and efficiently together. As we shall see, this key difference appears to explain royalist success and parliamentary failure during the high summer of 1643. Royalist armies continued to mount combined operations in pursuit of the king's military objectives; whereas parliament's insubordinate and independent minded commanders remained incapable of this basic military requirement. It was an advantage that would enable Charles to take the strategic initiative and bring the parliamentary war effort to the brink of disaster. These important and hitherto

neglected findings will be developed further in chapter three. In the meantime attention turns to the political causes of parliament's military collapse.

Chapter Two

THE POLITICAL ROAD TO CRISIS

JULY 1642 – JUNE 1643

This chapter will attempt to show how parliament's political and administrative preparations for civil war were essentially defensive, and how this reticent approach contributed towards the onset of the summer 1643 crisis. During the first twelve months of the conflict parliament pursued a reactive war effort, designed to avoid defeat rather than inflict a crushing victory. However, the king's determination to suppress parliament's rebellion by force, and bring its treasonous members to account, exposed the deficiencies of this overly cautious policy. It would take the collapse of the war effort, and the prospect of imminent defeat, before parliament would abandon its defensive outlook and attempt to win the war from a position of military supremacy.

King and Parliament: Contrasting Attitudes and Experiences

Charles I entered the civil war with important advantages over his parliamentary opponents, advantages that have not been fully recognised by historians. First, Charles had developed a strong disposition to resort to force when diplomatic means appeared incapable of yielding appropriate results. Second, he had gained valuable experience raising armed forces for the Bishops' Wars without the financial support normally afforded by parliamentary taxes. And third, after more than a decade of Personal Rule, Charles had grown accustomed to ruling the country without the participation of parliament. As the following analysis will demonstrate, these significant advantages sprang from the historically unequal relationship between crown and parliament.

In the seventeenth century parliaments did not sit in continual session; they were 'called on an *ad hoc* basis whenever the monarch felt the need to consult more widely among his subjects; most commonly in times of war or political instability.'³⁴² The right to call and dissolve parliament was a fundamental royal prerogative, as was the authority to veto any legislation passed by the two Houses.³⁴³ In marked contrast to the sweeping powers wielded by the crown, parliament's principal functions were much more modest; to offer counsel to the monarch, to vote taxes, and to pass laws.³⁴⁴ Parliament had, in effect, inherited the subservience of its medieval predecessors. As

³⁴² D. L. Smith, *The Stuart Parliaments 1603-1689* (London, 1999), p. 4.

³⁴³ D. Scott, *Politics and War in the Three Stuart Kingdoms, 1637-49* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 2.

³⁴⁴ Smith, *Stuart Parliaments*, pp. 6-7.

the king's great council it remained devoid of executive power and any direct involvement in governing the country.³⁴⁵ In the national consciousness however parliament was more than a mere legislature, it was the protector of English liberties 'such as habeas corpus and the principle of no taxation without consent.'³⁴⁶ David Smith has argued that during the Personal Rule the 'perception of parliament as a valuable conciliar body and a remedy for grievances remained especially strong in the popular memory'.³⁴⁷ And David Scott has pointed out that 'regular parliaments were thought to act as lightning conductors for domestic discontent', vitally important in a country where 'government depended upon the consent of the governed and the voluntary cooperation of local office-holders'.³⁴⁸ But as a decade of Personal Rule demonstrated all too clearly, parliament's ability to fulfil its constitutional obligations depended entirely on the willingness of the crown to summon its members to Westminster.³⁴⁹

Charles was strongly disposed to rule without parliament if, in his view, the Houses became too obstructive or acted in an overtly critical manner. As far as he was concerned parliament did not possess an inalienable right to sit. It convened, as we have seen, at the express wish of the monarch, whenever it was deemed necessary. Parliament was in every conceivable sense the junior partner in an emphatically unequal relationship. Eleven years of Personal Rule had merely served to confirm this constitutional imbalance, revealing a king determined to assert the role of the crown, even if it meant alienating the political nation and denying parliament its accustomed role. Little wonder then that in 1640 'widespread anger' should prompt the Long Parliament to pass a series of measures 'intended to prevent such a prolonged period of non-parliamentary government from happening again.'³⁵⁰

It will be argued that the experience of Personal Rule encouraged Charles to fight the Bishops' Wars of 1639 and 1640 from a position of financial weakness, and that this, paradoxically, provided the king with a future advantage over parliament. In order to wage his Scottish campaigns Charles twice mobilised and financed large armies without the consent or cooperation of a parliament. According to Mark Fissel the king was 'politically, financially and administratively' unprepared to deal with the Scots,

³⁴⁵ Scott, *Politics and War*, p. 2

³⁴⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 2-3.

³⁴⁷ Smith, *Stuart Parliaments*, p. 120.

³⁴⁸ Scott, *Politics and War*, p. 3.

³⁴⁹ For the causes and impact of Charles I's decision to rule without parliament see, for example, K. Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven, 1992), A. Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 49-84; R. Cust, *Charles I A Political Life* (Harlow, 2005), pp. 104-196.

³⁵⁰ Smith, *Stuart Parliaments*, p. 120.

'yet he persisted rather than alter his political agenda'.³⁵¹ As a result the king became accustomed to the difficulties of recruiting substantial military forces in the absence of parliamentary taxes. Even though these campaigns turned out to be unmitigated disasters, they prepared Charles for the unparalleled financial demands of civil war. Moreover, the fact that Charles was prepared to risk two Scottish conflicts without parliamentary finance demonstrated a resolve to deal forcefully with rebels. As one historian has pointed out, 'Charles I went about making war in the same way as he had governed during the Personal Rule.'³⁵²

In the case of the First Bishops' War (1639) this amounted to an improvised strategy involving full use of local government officials, a ruthless exploitation of the crown's feudal prerogatives, the personal contributions of councillors and courtiers, and financial expedients such as loans based on future crown receipts.³⁵³ Despite these desperate measures the First Bishops' War ended in a hastily arranged treaty, partly because Charles realised his army was unfit to fight, and partly because he suspected his officers and commanders did not support his Scottish adventure.³⁵⁴ David Scott has argued that the king's decision to negotiate with the Scots in 1639 rather than risk battle was one of the greatest mistakes of his life, and that the 'enormity of his error quickly became clear to him.'³⁵⁵ So when the Short Parliament refused to back another Scottish war Charles dismissed it and set about raising a second army. The Lords and Commons were adamant that eleven years of grievances should be redressed before anything else was considered.³⁵⁶ But Charles, on the other hand, was only interested in raising money for his army.³⁵⁷ Characteristically, the king took the view that parliament should not sit unless it supported royal policy. Instead he would secure loans from London's mercantile community, while Ship Money would be collected as never before. This, the king was assured, would be more than enough.³⁵⁸

Charles' relentless determination to dispense with disobedient parliaments provided a steely resolve with which to deal with the constitutional fallout of the equally disastrous second Bishops' War. The Long Parliament met in November 1640 to oversee the political and financial arrangements by which the crown planned to settle with the victorious Scots. However, the strength of national feeling aroused by the injustices of the Personal Rule ensured that it quickly developed into a forum for

³⁵¹ M. C. Fissel, *Bishops' Wars* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 289.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³⁵⁵ Scott, *Politics and War*, p. 22.

³⁵⁶ Smith, *Stuart Parliaments*, p. 120.

³⁵⁷ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, p. 129.

³⁵⁸ Fissel, *Bishops' Wars*, p. 48.

unrelenting attacks on royal policy.³⁵⁹ On 4 January 1642 Charles attempted to arrest his severest critics, five members of the Commons and a member of the Lords, on a charge of treason.³⁶⁰ This 'blunder' shattered the fragile relationship between king and parliament and, according to Anthony Fletcher, 'did much to make the political crisis insoluble'.³⁶¹ Charles' unsuccessful use of armed aggression against his principal opponents meant 'that he must either accept a massive humiliation or raise the stakes and fight a civil war'.³⁶²

The debacle of the Five Members provided further evidence of the king's reliance on force. He was absolutely insistent that neither parliament nor the Scots should be allowed to challenge his authority. Such an attitude, hardened by bitter experience, provided a potentially decisive psychological advantage over intrinsically *political* parliamentary opponents. Charles, it seemed, had single-handedly redefined the role of the monarch. Anthony Fletcher has argued that as a result the king could not be trusted to rule according to the law.³⁶³ Following the prayer book rebellion in Scotland, and the insolent demands of the Long Parliament, Charles stood ready to assert the rights of monarchy by force of arms. In the view of the present writer it was an attitude that afforded a tangible advantage once the breach became irreparable and the fighting began.

The failed attempt to arrest the Five Members appeared to be a disastrous miscalculation, but once again a royal calamity would furnish the king with yet another advantage over parliament. In the resulting furore Charles quickly decided 'that his capital had become too hot to hold him' and that his only option was to leave as quickly as possible.³⁶⁴ Clarendon stated that:

They who wished the king best were not sorry that he then withdrew from Whitehall; for the insolence with which all that people were transported, and the animosity which was infused into the hearts of the people in general against the court, and even against the person of the king, cannot be expressed.³⁶⁵

When Charles vacated London he took with him his secretaries, a whole family of departments that formed the royal household, and the bulk of the Privy Council.³⁶⁶ This,

³⁵⁹ Smith, *Stuart Parliaments*, pp. 122-123.

³⁶⁰ John Kenyon, *The Civil Wars of England* (London, 1996), p. 27. For a partisan yet vivid contemporary account of this dramatic event see C. H. Firth (ed), *The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow* (Oxford, 1894), pp. 25-26.

³⁶¹ A. Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (London, 1981), p. 414.

³⁶² Cust, *Charles I*, p. 322.

³⁶³ Fletcher, *Outbreak of the English Civil War*, p. 414.

³⁶⁴ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, p. 214.

³⁶⁵ W. D. Macray (ed.), *The History of the Rebellion by Edward Earl of Clarendon*, vol. i, p. 508.

³⁶⁶ G. E. Aylmer, *The King's Servants* (London, 1974), pp. 409-411.

as John Adamson has pointed out, 'left a power vacuum at Westminster – and a gaping hole in the edifice of government'.³⁶⁷ Parliament was left with little alternative but to take up the reins of executive power. 'From being an instrument of the king's government, with legislative, judicial and conciliar functions, the Houses now became an alternative to that government'.³⁶⁸ As parliament had never previously held executive power, a new system of government had to be improvised, 'and many of the functions it was now forced to undertake were therefore pretty much unprecedented'.³⁶⁹ However, as John Adamson has perceptively observed, there was a general belief that parliament was 'ill equipped to make the sort of managerial decisions necessary for the efficient conduct of war'.³⁷⁰ This provided Charles with a significant administrative advantage. While the bulk of government officeholders joined the king at Oxford, parliament was left bereft of experienced administrators.³⁷¹

It is clear that parliament entered the civil war at a distinct disadvantage. The machinery of government was in the process of vacating the capital, leaving parliament to fill the void created by the departure of the Privy Council and royal household. In order to raise the necessary finance to equip an army and fight a major battle parliament had little choice but to form an alternative government. Set against this the king had recruited two armies for the Bishops' Wars, which although unsuccessful, nevertheless provided invaluable experience of financing armed forces without parliamentary taxes. In addition the failure of the Scottish wars did not dissuade the king from using force when he believed it necessary – as the attempt to arrest the Five Members demonstrated. Charles had developed a psychological toughness and a disposition to rely on force, while the Personal Rule revealed a real strength of purpose to rule without parliament. Anthony Fletcher has argued that the king's experiences gave him 'a jaundiced view of parliaments', and that the Bishops' Wars 'strengthened his belief that Puritans were inherently seditious'.³⁷² But it is perhaps the views of Kevin Sharpe that provide a closer understanding of the king and his attitudes. Charles, Sharpe maintained, 'was no politician, but a man of profound conscience and deep principle'. Throughout his reign 'honour and order were the principles he held to'. Charles was absolutely convinced that he 'pursued courses for the good of the commonweal', that he

³⁶⁷ J. Adamson, 'The Triumph of Oligarchy: the Management of War and the Committee of Both Kingdoms, 1644-1645' in C. R. Kyle & J. Peacey (eds.), *Parliament at Work* (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 102.

³⁶⁸ Smith, *Stuart Parliaments*, p. 130.

³⁶⁹ M. Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire* (London, 2008), p. 271.

³⁷⁰ Adamson, 'Triumph of Oligarchy', p. 102.

³⁷¹ Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire*, p. 284.

³⁷² Fletcher, *Outbreak of the English Civil War*, p. 413.

held convictions 'a politician might have surrendered', and that he believed some principles 'worth adhering to whatever the political repercussions'.³⁷³

So how precisely do Sharpe's insights inform our perception of the king? Originally it was intended to argue that Charles was mentally prepared for conflict, that he was accustomed to dealing with parliament as an adversary rather than a partner in government, that 11 years of Personal Rule had reduced his tolerance of parliament and opposition in general, and made him more likely to lash out with armed force, as the Bishops' Wars appeared to demonstrate. But in the light of Sharpe's assertion that Charles was 'no politician, but a man of profound conscience and deep principle', can we see the king in a slightly different way? Do we need to think of Charles as a quasi-religious figure rather than a political operator? It is possible that his very status as monarch provided a fundamental advantage over parliament, not because he was head of state and ruler of the kingdom, but because he believed he was entrusted by God to govern a peaceful and harmonious realm, one that respected a natural order of God, king and man. If this order was threatened, if the equilibrium was destabilised, it was incumbent upon Charles to rectify the position, even if it meant the use of force. A potential consequence of this interpretation is that we are presented with a subtle difference between peace and natural order. A peace that fails to reflect this divinely ordained relationship is not a real peace because it denies a natural order of God, king and man. This is perhaps why Charles had to have peace on his terms, because in his view they were God's terms. Thus the Personal Rule was intended to restore, as Charles believed, a natural order in governance; similarly the Bishops' Wars were required to restore a natural order in religion following the prayer book rebellion; and the Long Parliament had clearly gone too far, and had to be curtailed, because it was on the point of assuming for itself prerogatives that underpinned royal authority, and by definition, the natural order. It is entirely possible that Charles saw himself as the custodian of this divine hierarchy, and believed that the Almighty would hold him to account if it were overturned. So perhaps it was for these reasons that the king was willing to rule without parliament, reasons of 'profound conscience and deep conviction', and why he was equally prepared to crush parliament's leaders if they became too threatening or destabilising. It was, if true, an uncompromising mind-set, one bolstered by bitter and keenly observed experience, and one which provided a strong advantage over parliament in the build-up to civil war.

³⁷³ Sharpe, *Personal Rule*, p. 954.

Descent to War

Parliament's preparations for conflict were essentially a reaction to actual or perceived royal aggression. The following analysis is intended to show that Charles' propensity for belligerence left parliament with little option but to act in self-defence, a course of action that has often been interpreted as escalatory, provocative and pre-emptive. In reality parliament faced an almost intractable problem, primarily because the king's authority was universally recognised, and any attempt to challenge that authority would be construed as an act of sedition. The spectre of treason prompted parliament to tread carefully, to react to the actions of the king rather than pre-empt them. This, by definition, placed the Houses on the defensive, and ensured that they adopted a reactive and proportionate approach. In matching the king's preparations parliament hoped that conflict would be averted and a negotiated settlement would result. But once Charles raised the royal standard at Nottingham on 22 August 1642 this became more difficult, principally because the king had effectively declared war on his parliament. The Houses were confronted by a monarch who was determined to retain the political initiative and to demonstrate that royal authority could not be compromised. As far as Charles was concerned pre-emptive action was justified on the grounds that parliament had orchestrated a rebellion and committed treason. The Houses, on the other hand, were equally determined to defend the reforms of the Long Parliament, and so were prepared to respond in kind when the king appeared to threaten force or the possibility of civil war. Thus two factors were in play: royal insistence that the authority of the king should be maintained at all costs, and parliamentary reticence to go any further than was absolutely necessary. The combination of these conflicting dynamics gave rise to a parliamentary war effort that was both reactive and defensive.

A prime example of parliamentary self-defence construed as a calculated act of open hostility concerned the enactment of the Militia Ordinance on 5 March 1642. In the judgement of Austin Woolrych nothing 'led so inexorably to war' as the quarrel over this particular piece of legislation.³⁷⁴ It is clear from the text of the Militia Ordinance that parliament felt genuine fear at the prospect of renewed royal violence.³⁷⁵ In the wake of Charles' attempt to arrest the five members it is difficult to escape the conclusion that parliament's decision to take control of the country's armed forces was anything other than a defensive measure.³⁷⁶ Conrad Russell has argued that the Lords

³⁷⁴ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, p. 215.

³⁷⁵ C. H. Firth & R. S. Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642-1660* (London, 1911), vol. iii, p. xv.

³⁷⁶ Indeed, the term 'Militia Ordinance' is simply a convenient abbreviation. The full title, 'An Ordinance of the Lords and Commons in Parliament, for the Safety and Defence of the Kingdom of

concurrent with the Commons over the Militia Ordinance in order to prevent a royal war against parliament.³⁷⁷ Certainly, the Militia Ordinance could be interpreted as a peacekeeping initiative, a necessary expedient to prevent Charles getting his hands on the nation's arms and soldiers. Anthony Fletcher has argued that it was essentially 'a defensive tactic and a political weapon, rather than a means to wage war'.³⁷⁸ What needs to be emphasised here is that the battle for the Militia Ordinance provided a first example of parliament's defensive and reactive approach. The conviction that Charles was poised to unleash armed force against his unrepentant parliament compelled the Houses to create a legal instrument emasculating the king. The Militia Ordinance was not intended to precipitate armed conflict. It was, in the view of the present writer, a bold and necessary measure designed to prevent the mobilization of a royal army. Far from angling for military confrontation, parliament was doing all in its power to prevent it.

By early June 1642 parliament was as certain as it could be that the king was preparing for civil war. Charles had summoned the Yorkshire gentry to attend him at York on 20 April, and had subsequently raised a personal bodyguard. On 3 June the king invited all ministers, freeholders, farmers and substantial copyholders to gather on Heworth Moor outside York. Reports put the crowd at anything between forty and a hundred thousand.³⁷⁹ Andrew Hopper has argued that Charles intended the gathering as a reminder to the Yorkshire gentry of their allegiance to their king, and that his real purpose was to win their armed support in order to 'capture the critical arms magazine at Hull'.³⁸⁰ Lords and Commons agreed the need to raise finance, but such a decision had to be justified if it was to allay the suspicion of treason. On 9 June the preamble to The Propositions, an ordinance 'for bringing in Plate, Money and Horse', set out the position as parliament saw it.³⁸¹ The king had been seduced by wicked counsel and fully intended to make war against the parliament. He had actually begun to raise horse and foot and had issued a summons throughout the county of Yorkshire. Others in the royal service had been employed elsewhere to raise troops in the king's name, while 'several sorts of malignant men,' who were close to His Majesty, continued to threaten the overthrow of parliament by force. In order to preserve 'the blessed fruits of this present parliament' the Houses appealed to the 'well affected' for material assistance. The *voluntary* terms on which the Propositions requested plate, money and horse

England, and Dominion of Wales,' more accurately conveys the intentions of its authors. Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i. pp. 1-5.

³⁷⁷ Cited in Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, p. 217.

³⁷⁸ Fletcher, *Outbreak of the English Civil War*, p. 334.

³⁷⁹ J. Binns, *Yorkshire in the Civil Wars* (Pickering, 2004), p. 31.

³⁸⁰ A. Hopper, 'Black Tom': *Sir Thomas Fairfax and the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2007), p. 1.

³⁸¹ Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, pp. 6-7.

encapsulated the defensive nature of the ordinance. Parliament intended to do no more than replicate the king's military preparations, *reacting* to the threat of royal aggression in proportionate terms. All donors would have their money repaid at a set rate of interest, their plate valued, and the expense of providing horses would be met in full. But just as important was the precise use to which the proceeds of the ordinance would be put, for these were exactions that broke new ground and had to be explained in purely defensive terms. No mention was made of a war against the reigning monarch; instead the ordinance was intended to protect the protestant religion, the person of the king, the law of the land, and the privileges of parliament.³⁸² In fact Mark Kishlansky has argued that parliament's claim to fight for the king actually prevented an offensive war.³⁸³

During the remainder of June the king prepared openly and energetically for war. Charles issued orders to the Lords Lieutenant of each county to execute Commissions of Array in order to raise forces for the royal cause; the king's commander in the north, the earl of Newcastle, seized the port of Newcastle and began to fortify the river Tyne; and in the Netherlands Henrietta Maria assembled large quantities of arms and munitions for shipment to England.³⁸⁴ At York Charles gathered a small army and, at the beginning of July, marched to besiege Hull.³⁸⁵ Austin Woolrych has argued that the king's activities provided the Houses with a 'pretext' for reciprocal belligerence.³⁸⁶ But the evidence appears to suggest that Charles provided Parliament with a valid reason rather than a 'pretext'. Consequently, on 4 July, Lords and Commons agreed the appointment of a Committee of Safety, a war cabinet initially composed of five activists from the upper chamber and ten from the lower.³⁸⁷ Charged with the organisation and direction of parliament's war effort, the committee was intended 'to fill the void created by the withdrawal of the Privy Council.' John Adamson has pointed out that the committee came into existence without an empowering ordinance, and that the Privy Councillors remaining at Westminster seem to have constituted themselves, along with leading members of the Commons, as a suitable body to deal with the forthcoming campaign.³⁸⁸ Lotte Glow has argued that the committee's real purpose was to exclude from government those who might favour peace at any cost.³⁸⁹ But the addition of a large number of peers in September 1642

³⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁸³ M. A. Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 6.

³⁸⁴ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, p. 228.

³⁸⁵ C. V. Wedgwood, *The King's War 1641-1647* (London, 1958), p. 106.

³⁸⁶ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, p. 228.

³⁸⁷ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. ii, p. 651.

³⁸⁸ Adamson, 'Triumph of Oligarchy', p. 102.

³⁸⁹ L. Glow, 'The Committee of Safety,' *English Historical Review*, vol. 80 (1965), pp. 291-292.

meant that the committee became, in effect, 'the politically active membership of the House of Lords.'³⁹⁰ This, as we shall see more fully in chapter four, led to a conservative and peace orientated war effort in which the committee's principal aim was to work towards a negotiated settlement by avoiding defeat.³⁹¹ Indeed, by the summer of 1643 the body that had been formed to 'facilitate the waging of war' was considered a positive obstruction to military success.³⁹²

The very first act of the Committee of Safety was to *respond* to the king's siege of Hull. On 6 July parliament passed an ordinance for the raising of two thousand men to relieve the port, the troops to be recruited in the City of London and the counties of Middlesex, Essex, Kent, and Surrey.³⁹³ Three days later the Commons voted by a majority of 125 to 45 to recruit an army of ten thousand *volunteers*, again from the City of London and its environs. 'Considering the [king's] preparation in the north it is desired these may be put into a speedy way of dispatch; and that within three or four days, if possible.'³⁹⁴ And on 15 July parliament appointed Robert Devereux, earl of Essex, a member of the Committee of Safety, to be Captain-General and Chief Commander of all its forces.³⁹⁵ No matter how unconstitutional or treasonous the raising of forces may appear, it is difficult to avoid the impression that these were essentially defensive and proportionate measures, deemed necessary by the king's pre-emptive action. This was the position adopted by the future regicide Edmund Ludlow, who enlisted for parliament because the king was 'resolving to impose that by the force of his arms which he could not do by the strength of his arguments.'³⁹⁶

By 18 August the mobilization of a royal army appeared so far advanced that the Houses declared the king's supporters to be traitors.³⁹⁷ A report from the north stated that the king had left Yorkshire, escorted by as many as four thousand horse and a smaller number of foot, intending to raise the royal standard at Nottingham on 20 August.³⁹⁸ In his place Charles appointed the earl of Cumberland to raise an army for the defence of the county and to levy contributions for its support on the local

³⁹⁰ Adamson, 'Triumph of Oligarchy,' p. 103.

³⁹¹ It seems that the Commons soon became dissatisfied with the cautious approach of the enlarged committee, voting on 23 February 1643 to reduce the committee's membership to its original size. *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. ii, p. 976; This, according to a royalist report, was because 'many of the supernumerary Lords were suspected to be turned Malignants, partly the multitude of those who were last admitted.' BLTT, E. 86[41], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 9, 26 February – 4 March 1643, p. 112.

³⁹² Adamson, 'Triumph of Oligarchy,' p. 103.

³⁹³ Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, pp. 13-14.

³⁹⁴ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. ii, p. 663.

³⁹⁵ Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, pp. 13-15.

³⁹⁶ Firth (ed.), *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow*, p. 38.

³⁹⁷ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. v, pp. 303-304.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*; Charles issued a proclamation on 17 August announcing that he intended to raise the royal standard at Nottingham on 22 August. In the proclamation, he declared as traitors any who refused to obey the orders of the commission of array and called on all loyal subjects to rendezvous at Nottingham. S. D. M. Carpenter, *Military Leadership in the British Civil Wars* (Abingdon, 2005), p. 42.

populace.³⁹⁹ As we have already seen in chapter one, it was the escalation of affairs in Yorkshire that finally persuaded a reluctant Lord Fairfax to abandon neutrality and openly declare himself for parliament. And in the south there was further cause for alarm. By 18 August the parliamentarian commander Sir William Waller had begun a siege of Portsmouth, which, unexpectedly, had declared for the king. The port was of immense strategic importance, particularly as a landing point for potential French aid for the royalist cause.⁴⁰⁰ The news reaching Westminster must have painted an alarming picture. Charles was moving south, recruiting soldiers as he marched, while Goring had declared Portsmouth for the king. In addition the Houses had been informed that Charles would shortly raise the royal standard at Nottingham. As far as parliament was concerned the king was intent upon war and was assembling the wherewithal to fight.

The raising of the royal standard amounted to a categorical declaration of war. It was the act of a monarch determined to retain the initiative and to demonstrate that he was dealing with a rebellion. No matter how difficult the king's military preparations may have been,⁴⁰¹ this deeply symbolic act of aggression could only increase tension at Westminster. Given parliament's manifest apprehension, one might have anticipated a ready willingness to enter into peace talks. Yet when the king proposed such a course of action on 25 August⁴⁰² it was rejected with an intransigence that suggested both fear and mistrust. Gardiner has argued that the king was 'sincerely anxious to make peace, if it could be made on his own terms,' but it was also likely that he intended to 'place his opponents in the wrong, or even gain time to prepare for war.'⁴⁰³ Unless Charles was prepared to retract 'those several proclamations and declarations against both the houses of parliament, whereby their actions are declared treasonable, and their persons traitors...and until the standard set up in pursuance of the said proclamations be taken down' negotiations could not take place.⁴⁰⁴ This was, in the view of parliament, a position of principle, forced by the king's wholly unwarranted declaration of war. Parliament's dogmatism appeared to make war more likely, but it is a strategy that cannot be divorced from the example of the Bishops' Wars. The Scots had twice demonstrated that an unflinching defence of key national principles could bring a

³⁹⁹ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. v, pp. 301-302.

⁴⁰⁰ Kenyon, *Civil Wars of England*, p. 60.

⁴⁰¹ Clarendon describes the wretched plight of the king and his embryonic army as the standard was raised at Nottingham on 22 August 1642: Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, pp. 289-291; see also Cust, *Charles I*, p. 352.

⁴⁰² *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. v, pp. 327-328.

⁴⁰³ S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War* (London, 1904), vol. i, p. 13.

⁴⁰⁴ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. v, p. 328.

humbled Charles to the negotiating table.⁴⁰⁵ It is inconceivable that parliament's rationale was not influenced by the events of 1639 and 1640.

Parliament had attempted to avert war by standing up to the king and defending the achievements of the Long Parliament. It was an attitude typified by Sir Symonds D'Ewes on 16 May 1642:

For mine own part I think they must have a wisdom beyond the moon that dream of any happiness to themselves after the ruin of this parliament, which I shall never desire to over live.⁴⁰⁶

Until the raising of the royal standard it was hoped that such a policy would persuade Charles that his opponents could not be overawed, and that meaningful negotiations were the only realistic solution. However, the king would not compromise what he felt were fundamental royal prerogatives, most notably the unprecedented Militia Ordinance. Parliament's gamble had therefore failed, leaving the Houses to face the inevitability of civil war. By 15 October a mounting sense of apprehension was evident in parliament's order to ready the trained bands:

Two *English* armies are near together, even ready to join in a dreadful and bloody encounter...the king...hath raised an army...giving liberty to plunder and rob all sorts of people...[the trained bands] for the most part their arms are taken from them, and put upon those who are more mercenary...and so likely to be fitter instruments of rapine and spoil...[the king] would march towards London, those rich and fruitful counties in the way being like to yield them a supply of their necessities...where they likewise think to find a party, which, upon His Majesty's approach, may make some disturbance, and facilitate their designs upon the city.⁴⁰⁷

The threat was clear, for 'if the king's army prevail...the kingdom will again fall under the government of those mischievous counsels, who before this parliament had even brought both religion and liberty to ruin; and we shall have no hope left of any more parliaments, but such as shall be concurrent and subservient to these ends.'⁴⁰⁸ Lords and Commons were now resigned to a pitched battle. In 1639 and 1640 the Scottish Covenanters had successfully defended cherished national interests by military force. Two years later in the autumn of 1642 it seemed that parliament would have to emulate their northern neighbours or face the certainty of royal retribution.

⁴⁰⁵ Clarendon described the English defeat at the battle of Newburn in the Second Bishops' War as that 'infamous, irreparable rout' and 'most shameful and confounding flight that was ever heard of,' Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. i, pp. 189-190.

⁴⁰⁶ Cited in Fletcher, *Outbreak of the English Civil War*, p. 412.

⁴⁰⁷ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. v, p. 402.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 403.

Edgehill to the Treaty of Oxford: Preparing for a Longer War

When Essex finally faced the king at Edgehill on 23 October the savagery of the fighting and the horrific possibility of a second battle provoked an immediate demand for peace. Within days the Lords had brought forward a proposal to reopen negotiations:⁴⁰⁹ 'that it might be taken into consideration, how to prevent further bloodshed between the two armies; and to consider of some means to beget a peace.'⁴¹⁰ On 2 November Pym declared that while the Committee of Safety would prepare an address aimed at renewing negotiations, the continued preparation of armed forces 'shall be prosecuted with all vigour.'⁴¹¹ The following analysis will attempt to demonstrate that Pym's dual track policy was the result of parliament's military weakness in the aftermath of Edgehill and the standoff at Turnham Green.

Between the king's march on the capital in November 1642 and the collapse of the Oxford Treaty in April 1643 parliament was forced to expand the war effort on a huge scale. The failure of Edgehill to bring the conflict to a conclusion pushed the civil war in to uncharted waters. Parliament had to face the possibility that the Oxford talks might not deliver peace and that the principal field armies of king and parliament would once again face each other in a major confrontation. The voluntary and temporary nature of parliament's preparations for the Edgehill campaign required a complete overhaul once it became clear that the conflict would pass unresolved in to 1643. Hence Pym's insistence that military preparation would continue alongside the search for a negotiated settlement. It was a strategy described by Hexter as 'treat for peace and prepare for war',⁴¹² but explained by Kishlansky as an example of parliament's search for consensus; where agreement could not be found, contradictory policies would be simultaneously pursued.⁴¹³ Although parliament had to construct the means to support a new war effort, its principal initiatives during this period indicate a shoring up of a defensive position. It appeared, as we shall now see, that the intention was to avoid defeat rather than launch a major offensive against the king.

As 1642 drew to a close parliament had to face a new danger gathering force in the northern most counties of the kingdom. As we have already seen, by the beginning of November the earl of Newcastle had assembled an army of 8,000 horse and foot in Northumberland and County Durham and was poised to march south to reinforce the

⁴⁰⁹ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 53.

⁴¹⁰ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. v, p. 424.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 431. The Venetian Ambassador claimed the Commons only agreed to talks in order to buy time and to appear committed to an accommodation. A. B. Hinds (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Venetian* (London, 1925), 1642-1643, p. 199.

⁴¹² J. H. Hexter, *The Reign of King Pym* (Harvard, 1941), p. 21.

⁴¹³ Kishlansky, *New Model Army*, pp. 18-19.

king.⁴¹⁴ The threat was so great that on 7 November parliament issued a direct invitation to the Scots to enter England and suppress Newcastle's army. The king, parliament declared:

Hath given commission to divers eminent and known papists to raise forces and compose an army in the north ... for the destruction of this parliament, and of the religion and liberty of the kingdom. And hereupon we further desire our brethren of the nation of Scotland ... to assist us in suppressing the army of papists and foreigners. Which, as we expect, will shortly be on foot here; and if they be not timely prevented, may prove as mischievous and destructive to that kingdom, as to ourselves.⁴¹⁵

Parliament's approach to the Scots indicated the seriousness of the situation. It was an appeal that would be repeated in earnest eight months later when Newcastle finally crushed Lord Fairfax's northern army at Adwalton Moor. But Parliament's willingness to request Scottish assistance long before Adwalton Moor in November 1642 revealed the underlying weakness of the position in the north. With Newcastle preparing to march south, a shell-shocked parliament had little option but to plead for Scottish help.

In addition to the deteriorating military situation parliament's financial programme constituted a further source of weakness. The outbreak of civil war placed parliament in a new situation; instead of dealing with government requests for taxation the Houses now faced the need to raise and disburse large sums of money. Initially parliament attempted to finance its war effort through loans and contributions, but in London not all City merchants were eager to lend, and as we have seen, the Propositions depended upon the willingness of the public to donate money and materials.⁴¹⁶ As Hexter quite correctly pointed out, by November 1642 the Houses 'had yet to pass even the most necessary and obvious measures for the successful prosecution of a war.' Parliament had no regular revenue and no machinery to collect taxes; it had only a volunteer army paid by voluntary contributions.⁴¹⁷ Parliament's financial provisions were essentially temporary, an expedient rather than a coherent strategy. On 1 February 1643 the inadequacy of this system became startlingly apparent. Sir Gilbert Gerard, treasurer of the army, announced 'that he had not a penny left with which to pay the troops,' and that it was now essential to replace the system of voluntary contributions with a programme of regular taxation.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁴ C. H. Firth (ed), *Life of William Cavendish Duke of Newcastle* (London, 1906), pp. 12-13.

⁴¹⁵ J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1721), vol. v, p. 393; *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. v, p. 437.

⁴¹⁶ P. Edwards, *Dealing in Death: the arms trade and the British Civil Wars* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 44-45.

⁴¹⁷ Hexter, *King Pym*, p. 15.

⁴¹⁸ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 91.

On 24 February, the Lords gave their assent to an ordinance establishing a weekly assessment of every county and city in England and Wales. All persons and corporations were to be taxed, Popish recusants would be charged double and those who unjustly avoided taxation would pay treble. The ordinance created a network of county-based committees, each charged with the appointment of assessors and collectors. The first instalment was due on or by 1 March, while subsequent weekly payments would continue for three months, 'unless the king's army shall be disbanded in the meantime.'⁴¹⁹ Clarendon, though obviously hostile, placed, with chilling effect, the unprecedented scale of the new tax in a national and historic context:

They passed an ordinance for a weekly assessment throughout the kingdom towards the support of the war; by which was imposed upon the city of London the weekly sum of ten thousand pounds, and upon the whole kingdom no less than a weekly payment of three and thirty thousand five hundred and eighteen pounds, amounting in the year to one million seven hundred forty-three thousand pounds; a prodigious sum for a people to bear who before this war thought the payment of two subsidies in a year, which in the best times never amounted to above two hundred thousand pounds, and never in our age to above one hundred and fifty, an insupportable burden upon the kingdom; and indeed had very seldom borne the same under all the kings that ever reigned.⁴²⁰

And on 27 March the Houses passed an ordinance sequestering the estates of those who assisted the king.⁴²¹ The preamble declared that 'it is most agreeable to common justice, that the estates of such notorious delinquents, as have been the causers or instruments of the public calamities...should be converted and applied towards the supportation of the great charges of the commonwealth.'⁴²² Yet for Clarendon and other royalists the sequestration ordinance was a source of even greater indignation than the weekly assessment. 'By their own authority they directed all the lands of bishops, deans, and chapters to be sequestered, and inhibited the tenants to pay any rent to them.'⁴²³ The royalist newsbook *Mercurius Aulicus* claimed that the ordinance was little more than a device to reward parliament's leading supporters 'with the rents and lands of the king's good subjects.'⁴²⁴ But as far as parliament was concerned the ordinances for the weekly assessment and the sequestration of delinquents represented a necessary sea change in strategy. Long before the Oxford Treaty drew to an unsuccessful

⁴¹⁹ Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, pp. 85-100.

⁴²⁰ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, p. 501.

⁴²¹ The Venetian Ambassador claimed the Lords only assented to the sequestration ordinance because the Commons threatened to proceed independently if they refused. *CSPV*, 1642-1643, p. 277.

⁴²² Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, pp. 106-117.

⁴²³ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 11.

⁴²⁴ BLTT, E. 99[22], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 15, 9 - 16 April 1643, p. 187.

conclusion in April 1643 it was obvious that parliament's finances were totally inadequate and required a thorough overhaul. The weekly assessment and the sequestration of delinquents confirmed that the war had entered a new stage, and would now be managed on a scale previously unimagined.

Parliament's mounting financial and military difficulties were exacerbated still further by the gradual removal of government departments from the capital. Following Turnham Green the king set up headquarters at Oxford and began to establish the university town as a new seat of government. The dean's lodgings at Christchurch became a royal palace, the law courts reopened for business in the Oxford Schools, the exchequer operated out of All Souls, and the Ordinance Office established workshops at Christchurch and the Schools. Although this fledgling system of government retained at its heart the old Privy Council, authority was now shared with the king's council of war.⁴²⁵ The departure of governmental infrastructure to Oxford left parliament seriously bereft of administrative expertise and, moreover, the cloak of legality. The Houses had little alternative but to establish an alternative government as best they could, adding to the military and financial problems outlined above.

Yet another parliamentary difficulty concerned the large quantities of arms, commanders, and soldiers reinforcing the royalist cause from abroad. From the beginning of the civil war parliament's control of the capital meant that the king could not have secured sufficient weapons from domestic suppliers, so he was compelled to import them on a colossal scale. Without arms shipments it would have been impossible for Charles to sustain an effective war effort. Indeed Peter Edwards has argued that the loss of royalist ports in 1644 and 1645 'proved fatal to the king's cause'.⁴²⁶ But in 1642 the problem of royalist imports was so acute that on 29 November parliament introduced an ordinance 'for the speedy setting forth of certain ships (in all points furnished for war) to prevent the bringing over of soldiers, money, ordnance, and other ammunition from beyond the sea, to assist the king, against the parliament'.⁴²⁷ The ordinance made specific reference to the 'very great quantities of ordnance, arms, and other warlike ammunition brought into Newcastle and other parts of the kingdom', and empowered the fitting out of ships to act as privateers 'to prevent and hinder all such supplies as shall be sent from any foreign parts to the prejudice of this nation'.⁴²⁸ In the longer term, as Peter Edwards has observed, parliament's control of arms industries in the south east would prove significant. But at the outbreak of hostilities the situation

⁴²⁵ Cust, *Charles I*, p. 368.

⁴²⁶ Edwards, *Dealing in Death*, pp. 210-211.

⁴²⁷ Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, pp. 42-44.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

was completely different; royalist arms imports and the relocation of the Ordnance Office to Oxford meant that parliament was in disarray.⁴²⁹

The king's acquisition of Oxford and the earl of Newcastle's invasion of Yorkshire on 1 December 1642 resulted in a major parliamentary initiative: the grouping together of neighbouring counties to form regional Associations. On 15 December Northampton, Leicester, Derby, Rutland, Nottingham, Huntingdon, Bedford and Buckingham were drawn together - 'for the mutual defence of one another' - to form a Midland Association.⁴³⁰ Five days later Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Cambridge, Isle of Ely, Hertfordshire and Norwich were similarly combined into an Eastern Association, and on 31 December Warwickshire and Staffordshire were also amalgamated.⁴³¹ It was intended that the constituent shires of each association would raise armed men under the direction of a committee; they would then be placed under the overall command of a Major General, who would have the power to lead them 'to such places as he shall think fit.' Of particular significance for this study is the geographical distribution of the associations themselves. The king's withdrawal to Oxford and the earl of Newcastle's march into Yorkshire defined, in effect, a new front line. Despite Michael Braddick's assertion that these measures lacked coherence, the counties associated in December 1642 broadly acknowledged this development, running in a wide sweep south of Yorkshire and to the east of Oxford.⁴³² This did not mean that Yorkshire was to be given up or that any thought of advancing on Oxford was to be abandoned. Rather, it focussed attention on a large section of England that now fell between the principal areas of royalist and parliamentary domination. As far as the Houses were concerned these crucial counties stood in the path of the king's Oxford army and Newcastle's northern army, royalist forces that needed to subdue London in order to achieve victory.

Gardiner has argued that the decision to combine counties was based on a realisation that individual shires were too small to provide effective military forces.⁴³³ Peter Newman, on the other hand, believed that they were intended to counter the effects of *localism*, a militarily debilitating condition characterised by a determined neutralism or 'an attachment to local defence and local leadership.'⁴³⁴ Clearly there is an element of truth in these assertions, but given their geographical distribution it would appear more likely that they were a defensive measure. Parliament's offensive strategy

⁴²⁹ Edwards, *Dealing in Death*, p. 211.

⁴³⁰ Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, p. 49.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 51 & 53.

⁴³² Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire*, p. 268.

⁴³³ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 77.

⁴³⁴ P. R. Newman, *Companion to the English Civil Wars* (Oxford, 1990), p. 91.

depended upon Essex defeating the king's principal field army while parliament's regional forces held local royalists in check. The associations were intended to suppress county-based enemy action and to prevent locally raised reinforcements reaching the king. These large swathes of amalgamated counties represented a physical reaction to the trauma of the king's drive towards London following the battle of Edgehill. The defence of the capital would become a greater preoccupation for parliament than actually defeating the king's army. As long as London held out Charles would have to consider reopening negotiations. This, essentially, was parliament's fallback position, security against the possibility that Essex might prove unable to secure outright victory on the field of battle.

This review of the post Edgehill and Turnham Green situation has emphasised the weakness of parliament's position. It is an aspect of the civil war that has to some extent been obscured by the opening of the Oxford Treaty on 1 February 1643. Parliament's military, financial, and administrative frailties during this period have tended to remain unrecognised, but as we shall see in chapter four, they played an important part in the onset of the summer crisis.

Spring to Summer 1643: The Slide to Crisis

When military operations recommenced in the Thames Valley following the collapse of the Oxford Treaty in mid-April 1643 parliament was thwarted by the inadequacy of its financial programme. It was a weakness that allowed the royalists to escape the consequences of a major parliamentary offensive at a time when the king was in a vulnerable position. The ramifications of parliament's inability to exploit a momentary military advantage would be profound, enabling the royalists to recover and bring parliament to the brink of total defeat in a little over three months. At the same time that parliament's financial problems were undermining military effectiveness; the security of the capital became an increasing source of concern. The following analysis will show how parliament's military hopes were dashed by a chronic inability to finance the war effort, and how the incessant scheming of the king and his advisers almost hatched a plot that captured the capital and ended the war. It was during the months of spring and early summer 1643 that parliament showed the first indications of a slide towards crisis.

As we have already seen in chapter one, the demise of the Oxford Treaty enabled Essex to launch a new campaign in the Thames Valley with a large and freshly recruited army.⁴³⁵ When Reading surrendered to the Lord General on 26 April parliamentary intelligence indicated that the king's military position was weak and

⁴³⁵ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, p. 258.

that a determined assault against Oxford might well succeed.⁴³⁶ However, on 29 April joy quickly turned to despair when news reached Westminster that Essex's army could not advance until his troops were paid.⁴³⁷ It was a setback that could not have occurred at a worse time. Only four days earlier, as Essex was about to bring the siege of Reading to a successful conclusion, the Houses were forced to deal with the equally onerous financial demands of Lord Fairfax in Yorkshire and Sir William Waller in the Severn Valley. Reluctantly declining Fairfax's request for immediate assistance against the earl of Newcastle, the speaker of the Commons bluntly admitted:

The true reason is, that, in this general combustion of the kingdom, the contributions of most counties are consumed in their own defence; and the City hath been so extremely exhausted, that it can hardly support the Lord General's army, unto which a great arrears remains unpaid, both for pay and supplies of the magazine.⁴³⁸

And in the same session the Lords passed an ordinance appealing for horses, armed men and money to be *lent* to the army of Sir William Waller, which had been badly defeated by Prince Maurice at Ripple Field on 13 April.⁴³⁹

At a time of rapidly increasing military expenditure parliament's inability to finance Essex, Fairfax, and Waller demonstrated the inadequacy of the taxation and disbursement system. The seriousness of the situation meant that Essex was denied the means to capitalise upon a potentially decisive breakthrough, while both Fairfax and Waller were effectively left to fend for themselves. The reality was that the weekly assessment and sequestration ordinances had yet to achieve an efficiency of extraction that could even begin to address parliament's needs. Since its introduction on 1 March 1643 the Eastern Association's weekly assessment, for example, should have produced a total of £4,367 every seven days.⁴⁴⁰ But 'in two months the whole of the payments from the five counties which composed the association reached no more than £3,372, of which the share borne by the single county of Cambridge, in which Cromwell's influence was the highest, was little less than £2,000.'⁴⁴¹ The financial crisis prompted royalist agents in London to report that parliament 'want money for their army

⁴³⁶ The Venetian Ambassador commented that parliament 'is rendered so insolent by this signal victory that they no longer doubt carrying their designs to completion.' CSPV, 1642-1643, p. 272.

⁴³⁷ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 131.

⁴³⁸ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 18.

⁴³⁹ Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, p. 135. *Mercurius Aulicus* claimed that Waller's losses against Prince Maurice were thus far greater than the Houses were prepared to admit. BLTT, E. 101[10], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 17, 23 – 29 April 1643, p. 216.

⁴⁴⁰ Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, p. 86.

⁴⁴¹ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 144.

extremely'.⁴⁴² As Hexter has demonstrated, there was an impossible balance to be struck between imposing unprecedented financial burdens and retaining political support.⁴⁴³ Though the Lords and Commons had passed the weekly assessment and sequestration ordinances during the Oxford Treaty, Pym's other revenue raising measures, most notably the Excise, were strongly rebuffed.⁴⁴⁴ 'A tax on consumption', Michael Braddick has observed, 'was regarded with deep hostility in Stuart England'. There was outrage that Pym 'who pretended to stand so much for the liberty of the subject should propose such an unjust, scandalous, and destructive project'.⁴⁴⁵ While negotiations continued a tax on consumer products remained a step too far for the majority of members. It was the inevitable reality of the early civil war that Pym's legislative agenda could not attract sufficient support until faced by the crisis of imminent defeat. It was only after the destruction of parliament's northern and western armies at Adwalton Moor (30 June) and Roundway Down (13 July) respectively that the 'inhibition about the Excise was finally broken' and the measure reluctantly adopted (22 July).⁴⁴⁶

On 5 May it was announced in the Lords that the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council of the City of London had agreed to make an emergency loan of forty thousand pounds for the support of the army. However, the advance was accompanied by a number of *considerations*, which the Lords were *invited* to take into account. One of the considerations desired:

that their Lordships would please pass the ordinance brought from the House of Commons, for the cessing of the twentieth parts of the estates of ill-affected persons, in the several counties of the kingdom, because divers citizens that have got great estates in land have left the City, and live in the country.⁴⁴⁷

An ordinance to assess non-contributors had been passed by the Commons on 4 February 1643,⁴⁴⁸ but for three months it had 'lay neglected and apparently quite dead in the House of Lords'.⁴⁴⁹ The City authority was a financial source the Houses could not afford to alienate under any circumstances, and so the following day, after consultation with the lower chamber, the Lords gave their assent to the required

⁴⁴² Edwards, *Dealing in Death*, p. 47.

⁴⁴³ Hexter, *King Pym*, pp. 25-27.

⁴⁴⁴ Edwards, *Dealing in Death*, p. 46.

⁴⁴⁵ Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire*, p. 269.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

⁴⁴⁷ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 32.

⁴⁴⁸ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. ii, p. 955.

⁴⁴⁹ Hexter, *King Pym*, p. 24

ordinance.⁴⁵⁰ Royalist propaganda claimed that the Lords capitulated because the Commons threatened to enact the ordinance independently, thus creating a precedent for future legislation.⁴⁵¹ What is certain, however, is that the City's thinly disguised threat to withhold the loan provided an early example of the growing militancy of the Lord Mayor and Common Council. As we shall see in chapter three, the strong arm tactics of the City militants would play a decisive role in averting a parliamentary surrender at the climax of the summer crisis in August 1643.

As mentioned above, a further problem preoccupying parliament during this period concerned the safety of London. At the collapse of the Oxford Treaty, as Essex marched away to confront the king's forces in the Thames valley, the Houses prepared to defend the capital in the Lord General's absence. On 12 April the Lords gave their approval to an ordinance authorising the militia committee of London to recruit, train and command new regiments of volunteer soldiers. These would guard the city, parliament and parts adjacent 'in these times of imminent danger.'⁴⁵² It seems pretty clear that parliament was anxious to avoid a repeat of the near panic that had swept London in the wake of Edgehill. The Houses were absolutely determined that adequate forces would be ready to repel any future attack. However, the threat posed by the king's army was not the only danger to parliamentary security. On 6 June Pym reported the discovery of a plot which, had it succeeded, would have ended the war at a stroke.⁴⁵³

While the Oxford peace talks were in progress Charles had issued a secret commission authorizing seventeen prominent London citizens to organise an armed rising in the capital.⁴⁵⁴ At the end of May the plot was uncovered and the conspirators exposed. Chief amongst them was the MP and poet Edmund Waller, who had only recently acted as a parliamentary commissioner during the Oxford Treaty. The details of the plot were truly shocking. Leading members of the Commons and City authority were to be seized in their beds, while pro-royalist members of the capital's trained bands would enable a force of 3,000 men to enter the city and crush the rebellion. Though *Mercurius Aulicus* scoffed at 'such a noise and tumult raised about it over all the City, as if the *powder treason* had not been half so horrible,'⁴⁵⁵ the situation was in

⁴⁵⁰ Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, p. 145.

⁴⁵¹ BLTT, E. 103[10], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 19, 7 – 13 May 1643, pp. 238-239.

⁴⁵² Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, pp. 130-131.

⁴⁵³ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 117.

⁴⁵⁴ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, pp. 257-258.

⁴⁵⁵ BLTT, E. 55[14], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 23, 4 – 10 June 1643, p. 300.

fact deadly serious. In the days that followed parliament enacted two ordinances amounting to a state of emergency.⁴⁵⁶

On 9 June the Houses passed, with almost no opposition, an ordinance authorising a national covenant binding the kingdom to reveal plots. The preamble declared that 'there hath been a treacherous and horrid design lately discovered', which required 'all who are true-hearted and lovers of their country' to 'bind themselves each to other in a sacred vow and covenant.'⁴⁵⁷ The oath committed the populace to a reaffirmation of support for the parliamentary cause, and an obligation to expose and oppose any further plots. The covenant amounted to a pledge of allegiance and all who refused would be deemed delinquent and an enemy of the state. Edward Vallance has observed that the Vow and Covenant 'failed to claim that it was made for the defence of the king's person and authority'. Instead it emphasised that parliament's forces were justly raised for the security of the two Houses, the true Protestant religion, and the liberty of the subject, against the armies raised by the king.⁴⁵⁸ The introduction of a vow and covenant represented a personal triumph for Pym. Before the battle of Edgehill, and at every subsequent opportunity, he had unsuccessfully pressed the Houses for an association of the Godly.⁴⁵⁹ Following the discovery of the 'Waller Plot,' parliament finally accepted that the royalist/papist threat had penetrated the walls of parliament itself.⁴⁶⁰

On 14 June the Houses gave their assent to a further instrument of state control, an ordinance regulating the press.⁴⁶¹ It was intended to suppress the 'late abuses and frequent disorders in printing many false, forged, scandalous, seditious, libellous, and unlicensed papers, pamphlets, and books to the great defamation of religion and government'. The ordinance attempted to bring the entire publishing industry under licensed control, from the authorised printing of parliamentary orders to the proper supervision of all books, pamphlets and papers. The ordinance empowered a range of officials to search for unlicensed printing presses, to apprehend those responsible, and 'in case of opposition to hack open doors and locks'. The enactment of the national covenant and the imposition of press censorship revealed a growing sense of unease at Westminster. Although parliament had yet to face the military catastrophes that would

⁴⁵⁶ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, pp. 144-149.

⁴⁵⁷ Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, p. 175.

⁴⁵⁸ E. Vallance, "'An Holy and Sacramentall Paction", Federal Theology and the Solemn League and Covenant in England', *English Historical Review*, vol. 116, 465 (February, 2001), p. 55.

⁴⁵⁹ Hexter, *King Pym*, pp. 28-30.

⁴⁶⁰ *Mercurius Aulicus* claimed that the Covenant was intended to 'enrich' the parliament by exposing those who opposed the war, expelling them from the House, and seizing 'the spoil and waste of their estates.' BLTT, E. 56[11], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 24, 11 – 17 June 1643, p. 314.

⁴⁶¹ Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, pp. 184-186.

shortly precipitate a political crisis, the discovery of the Waller plot served to underline the sheer vulnerability of the parliamentary cause.

Summary

This chapter has attempted to show how parliament entered the civil war at an administrative and political disadvantage. The departure of government departments to Oxford left parliament bereft of administrative expertise, while the fear of committing treason ensured that the Houses adopted a defensive approach. The result was a reactive war effort that attempted to do no more than match the king's preparations. As Conrad Russell put it:

At Westminster, the aim had never been to start a war, but to use the threat of war to force Charles to come to a political settlement which would enable them to avoid fighting. It took a long time for many members to appreciate that their mere appearance in arms would not be sufficient to convince Charles that they meant business, and to bring about satisfactory negotiations.⁴⁶²

Before the war, as Russell intimated, the king established a reputation for dealing with disobedience by force. He had gained valuable experience raising armed forces for the Bishops' Wars without the support normally afforded by parliamentary taxes. And during a decade or more of Personal Rule the king had become accustomed to ruling the country without parliament. Charles's determination to uphold the obligations of a divinely bestowed kingship provided an important psychological advantage. In stark contrast to the defensiveness of his opponents, the king was adamant that parliament had orchestrated a rebellion, overturning the natural order of God, king and man, and that he was honour bound to suppress it.

Once the war began parliament's strategy centred on a single campaign followed by a negotiated settlement. However, after Edgehill parliament was thrown onto the defensive by the inadequacy of its voluntary financial system, substantial royalist arms imports, and the threat posed by the earl of Newcastle's northern army. In December 1642 the creation of county associations signalled a defensive reaction to these developments, intended to provide the capital with a buffer against further royalist attacks. The bankrupt state of parliament's finances meant that the capture of Reading could not be exploited, a setback that enabled the royalists to recover with disastrous consequences. Though the original system of voluntary contributions had given way to a programme of taxation in 1643, monetary yield fell way short of what was actually

⁴⁶² C. Russell, *Crisis of Parliaments 1509-1660* (Oxford, 1971), p. 342.

required. Despite the clear need for increased revenue, members were reluctant to endorse more draconian financial legislation while the prospect of a negotiated settlement remained alive. As spring turned to summer, the discovery of the Waller plot seemed indicative of parliament's slow slide towards crisis. Although Pym recognised that diplomatic progress was impossible as long as the king remained undefeated, it seemed that even the advocates of war simply wished to avoid military defeat.⁴⁶³ As we shall now see, it would take the collapse of parliament's armies, and the imminent prospect of an overwhelming royalist victory, before Pym could win support for a more vigorous prosecution of the war. As Mark Kishlansky put it, 'until they were palpably in danger of losing it, the men at Westminster were never intent on winning the war.'⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶³ Kishlansky, *New Model Army*, p. 24.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Chapter Three

CRISIS:

MILITARY FAILURE - POLITICAL ANARCHY

JUNE – AUGUST 1643

Chapter three will show how the disintegration of the parliamentary war effort precipitated a political battle for control of the war effort. This was not, however, a struggle confined to the peace and war parties in parliament, but a much more sinister clash involving a radical faction in the City of London led by Lord Mayor Isaac Pennington. It was a momentous confrontation that came to a head in the first week of August 1643. As the following analysis will try to demonstrate, a City campaign of mob violence, backed by the threat of a political coup, succeeded in overthrowing a desperate attempt by the House of Lords to orchestrate a negotiated surrender.

Adwalton Moor, Roundway Down, and Bristol

Parliament's crisis began on 30 June 1643 when Lord Fairfax's northern army was completely destroyed by the earl of Newcastle's forces at the battle of Adwalton Moor. As we saw in chapter one, the disaster was precipitated in late May by the failure of parliamentary commanders at Nottingham to march 6,000 reinforcements into Yorkshire. The abandonment of the Fairfaxes enabled the earl of Newcastle, still reeling from the devastating loss of Wakefield, to launch a new offensive against his stubborn adversaries. At Pontefract in early June Newcastle ordered a council of war, at which it was decided to divide the army, a proportion would escort the queen and her second great supply convoy to Oxford, while the bulk would advance into the West Riding to confront the Fairfaxes.⁴⁶⁵ The royalists struck first at Howley Hall, taking it by storm on 22 June.⁴⁶⁶ Then, as Sir Henry Slingsby recalled, Newcastle 'lay to consider of that which must be the master piece, the taking of Leeds and Bradford, or giving battle if my Lord Fairfax durst venture in the field.'⁴⁶⁷

In anticipation of an imminent assault the Fairfaxes concentrated all available forces at Bradford. They had been reinforced, at the eleventh hour, by a contingent of

⁴⁶⁵ Rev Daniel Parsons (ed.), *The Diary of Sir Henry Slingsby* (London, 1836), p. 95; Oliver Cromwell reported that the Queen's escort consisted of 1200 horse and 3000 foot. Newcastle's ability to spare such numbers gives an indication of the size of the army at his disposal. Historic Manuscripts Commission (HMC), *Seventh Report*, Appendix, pp. 551-552.

⁴⁶⁶ John Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1721), vol. v, p. 279.

⁴⁶⁷ Parsons (ed.), *Slingsby Diary*, pp. 95-96.

1500 infantry from Lancashire, increasing their normally small army of around two thousand men to no fewer than four thousand horse and foot.⁴⁶⁸ These modest additions hardly alleviated Lord Fairfax's desperate plight, but in the absence of the six thousand parliamentary reinforcements resting idly at Nottingham, they at least provided an opportunity to defend the west riding. Bradford however 'was a very untenable place,' made worse by the fact that there was 'not above 10 or 12 days provisions for so many as were necessary to keep it.'⁴⁶⁹ With no prospect of withstanding a prolonged siege, and little chance of defeating Newcastle's ten or twelve thousand men in a conventional battle, the Fairfaxes decided to:

attempt his [Newcastle's] whole army as they laid in their quarters [at Howley Hall], 3 miles off: hoping thereby to put him into some distraction; which could not (by reason of the unequal number) be done any other way.'⁴⁷⁰

Encouraged by Sir Thomas' stunning capture of Wakefield in May, which had been achieved against overwhelming odds, a surprise attack on Howley Hall represented a calculated, albeit audacious, gamble.

However, the earl of Newcastle had also resolved to launch an attack on the morning of 30 June. While the parliamentary army marched towards Howley Hall, Newcastle was advancing in the opposite direction towards Bradford. Sir Henry Slingsby described how the simultaneous mobilization of both armies provoked a battle that neither commander foresaw.⁴⁷¹ When the respective armies unexpectedly ran into each other, close to the small village of Adwalton, the parliamentarians immediately suspected that they had been lured into a trap. Thomas Stockdale complained that the royalists, 'hearing of our preparation had left their quarters about Howley and chosen that place of advantage being both a great hill and an open moor or common, where our foot could not be able to stand their horse.'⁴⁷² Sir Thomas Fairfax went one step further, claiming that a fellow officer, Major General John Gifford, had been ordered to ensure that the army was ready to march at four o'clock in the morning, but 'so delayed the execution of it, that it was 7 or 8 before we began to move; and not without much suspicion of treachery in it.'⁴⁷³ Yet as Slingsby revealed, the confrontation at Adwalton was quite simply an accident, as unexpected for Newcastle and his commanders as it was for Stockdale and Sir Thomas.

⁴⁶⁸ HMC, *Portland Mss.*, vol. i, p. 717; BLTT, E. 59[1], *Certain Informations*, 26 June – 3 July 1643.

⁴⁶⁹ Thomas Lord Fairfax, 'A Short Memorial of the Northern Actions During the War There, From the Year 1642 Till 1644,' *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. iii (1884), p.213.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷¹ Parsons (ed.), *Slingsby Diary*, p. 96.

⁴⁷² HMC, *Portland Mss.*, vol. i, p. 717.

⁴⁷³ Fairfax 'Northern Actions', p.213.

What is remarkable about the battle of Adwalton Moor is just how close the parliamentarians came to victory. Despite a numerical disadvantage of two or three to one,⁴⁷⁴ the sheer tenacity of Fairfax's men almost carried the day. Initially, in fierce close quarter fighting, the parliamentarians expelled large detachments of royalist infantry from a series of hedged enclosures. Here the parliamentarians halted, for as Sir Thomas Fairfax recalled, 'we kept the enclosure, placing our musketeers in the hedges in the moor, which was good advantage to us who has so few horse.'⁴⁷⁵ Newcastle then sought to regain the initiative by launching his cavalry against Fairfax's well-entrenched foot. Sir Thomas described how 'they strove to enter, and we to defend; but after some dispute, those that entered the pass found sharp entertainment; and those that were not yet entered, as hot welcome from the musketeers that flanked them in the hedges.'⁴⁷⁶ Despite two ferocious attacks the massed ranks of royalist horse were forced to retreat.

It was at this critical juncture that the parliamentarians plucked defeat from the jaws of victory. Thomas Stockdale bemoaned the fact that 'the success of our men at the first drew them unawares to engage themselves too far upon the enemies.'⁴⁷⁷ It appears that the repulse of the royalist horse enticed cavalry under Sir Thomas Fairfax and infantry under Major General John Gifford to pursue their fleeing opponents across the moor. John Rushworth described how the parliamentarians 'almost encompassed the earl's train of artillery, and put his forces to the rout, when a stand of pikes gave some check to their success.'⁴⁷⁸ This was confirmed by Sir Thomas, who described pursuing the broken enemy horse as far as their cannon, only to be halted by Newcastle's pike, which 'broke in upon our men' who 'lost ground.'⁴⁷⁹ Though Fairfax and his cavalry retreated to the relative safety of the enclosures, the infantry under Gifford, disordered by Newcastle's pike, finally broke. Stockdale described how the royalists swiftly exploited their unexpected success, sending 'some regiments of horse and foot by a lane on the left hand to encompass our army, and fall on their rear, which forced us to retreat, and our men...instead of marching fell into running.'⁴⁸⁰ Sir Thomas accused Gifford of failing to mobilise the reserve, 'which the enemy seeing, pursued their advantage by bringing on fresh troops. Ours being herewith discouraged, began to flee,

⁴⁷⁴ Thomas Stockdale, whose account of Adwalton Moor was written the day after the battle, estimated the parliamentary army at around 4,000 horse and foot, while Sir Thomas Fairfax, who committed his recollections to paper many years later, stated that the royalist army consisted of ten or twelve thousand men. HMC, *Portland Mss*, vol. i, p. 717; Fairfax, 'Northern Actions', p. 213.

⁴⁷⁵ Fairfax, 'Northern Actions', p. 213.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁷ HMC, *Portland Mss*, vol. i, p. 718.

⁴⁷⁸ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 279.

⁴⁷⁹ Fairfax, 'Northern Action', p. 214.

⁴⁸⁰ HMC, *Portland Mss*, p. 718.

and so were soon routed.⁴⁸¹ It was a remarkable transformation, 'the fortune of the field being changed in an instant, Fairfax's army was utterly defeated, several pieces of ordnance taken, four or five hundred slain, and many taken prisoners.'⁴⁸² Adwalton Moor was a crushing defeat.

The Fairfaxes narrowly escaped to Hull, where, crucially, the Hothams had been arrested attempting to betray the port to the king.⁴⁸³ With only 4,000 men, of whom 1500 were last minute reinforcements from Lancashire, they had almost defeated an army three times their size. Had Cromwell's 6,000 horse and foot entered Yorkshire in late May as originally planned the situation would have been entirely different. For the first time in the campaign Lord Fairfax would have possessed the means to defeat Newcastle's army, while the mere presence of Cromwell's reinforcements would have automatically prevented the queen and her precious convoy of men, arms and munitions leaving for Oxford. Andrew Hopper has argued that 'Cromwell must share the blame for Adwalton Moor', but as we have seen in chapter one, it was the duplicitous Captain Hotham who was largely responsible.⁴⁸⁴ Almost exactly one year later Cromwell would indeed lead his cavalry into Yorkshire, playing a decisive role in parliament's historic victory at Marston Moor, a success that led directly to the fall of York and the capture of the north. In the summer of 1643 it is highly probable that Cromwell's 6,000 reinforcements would have averted the disaster of Adwalton Moor and created the possibility of a triumph similar to Marston Moor. Instead, Adwalton Moor became the most damaging example to date of parliament's reoccurring failure to combine military forces in pursuit of strategic objectives. Chapter one of this thesis identified a lack of cooperation amongst commanders as a principal cause of parliament's crisis. The result was that Yorkshire's remaining parliamentarians were now confined in Hull, leaving Newcastle theoretically free to advance south through Lincolnshire towards the king or London. The ramifications of Adwalton Moor were potentially catastrophic, and, as we shall presently see, were to have profound implications for parliament's subsequent war effort.

The second disaster to rock parliament during the summer of 1643 occurred two weeks later on 13 July when Sir William Waller's western army was totally destroyed at the battle of Roundway Down. It will be recalled from chapter one how Waller's campaign in the west had been thrown into crisis by a failure to prevent Cornish

⁴⁸¹ Fairfax, 'Northern Actions,' p. 214. Interestingly Sir Henry Slingsby claimed that the parliamentary reserve was in fact sent for, but could not arrive in time. Parsons (ed.), *Slingsby Diary*, p. 96.

⁴⁸² Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 279.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 275-276; For an outline of the circumstances that provoked the Fairfax/Hotham schism see A. Hopper, 'Black Tom' *Sir Thomas Fairfax and the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 24-28.

⁴⁸⁴ Hopper, 'Black Tom', p. 210.

royalists commanded by Sir Ralph Hopton, and Oxford based cavaliers under the marquis of Hertford and Prince Maurice, joining forces at Chard in Somerset on 4 June. While the royalists took control of western Somerset and established their forces at Wells, Waller sought to make up for his miscalculation by concentrating all available forces at Bath. This brief interlude prompted Edmund Ludlow's rather optimistic claim that Waller 'was become so considerable, as to put a stop to the march of the king's western army.'⁴⁸⁵ The truth, however, was markedly different. Gardiner correctly observed 'that the advantage remained with the royalists,' Waller was 'unwilling to abandon the defensive,' his forces were 'weak and ill-provided, and he feared to leave [the parliamentary garrison of] Bristol unprotected,'⁴⁸⁶

Waller's difficulties were exacerbated by the quantity and quality of his royalist opponents. Hopton, Maurice and Hertford commanded 4,000 foot, 2,000 horse, 300 dragoons and about 16 field pieces,⁴⁸⁷ the Cornish infantry had established their unparalleled worth at Stratton in May, and in April Maurice's cavalry had soundly trounced Waller at Ripple Field. Though it is almost impossible to determine the precise size of the parliamentary army, it seems fairly clear that Waller was severely outnumbered. It has been speculated that he commanded around 2,500 horse,⁴⁸⁸ and this appears to be supported by Sir William's claim, in a letter to the Speaker dated 22 June, that he possessed 'a body of horse by God's blessing able to do the kingdom good service.'⁴⁸⁹ In addition Sir Arthur Haslerig's well-disciplined regiment of heavy cavalry had also arrived from London, so it is not inconceivable that Waller may well have matched the cavaliers in horse. But, with no more than 500 foot at his command, Waller's lack of infantry was a serious weakness. On 24 June the parliamentary committee at Bath pleaded with the governor of Bristol to send 500 foot without delay, or as many as could be spared.⁴⁹⁰ The governor later confirmed that he was urged to march 1,200 foot to Waller at some point following the latter's arrival in Bath.⁴⁹¹ It is difficult to determine the precise timing of these reinforcements, or whether they materialised at all. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to suppose that in 'early July Waller

⁴⁸⁵ C. H. Firth (ed.), *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow* (Oxford, 1894), p.53.

⁴⁸⁶ S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War* (London, 1904), vol. i., p. 167.

⁴⁸⁷ C. Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile: Hopton's narrative of his campaigns in the west 1642-1644* (Somerset Record Society, 1902), 18, p. 47.

⁴⁸⁸ J. Adair, *Roundhead General* (London, 1969), p.73.

⁴⁸⁹ Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile*, p. 84. Sir William Waller and Sir Arthur Heslerig to William Lenthall, 22 June 1643.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 89. Edward Cooke to Colonel Nathaniel Fiennes, Governor of Bristol, 24 June 1643.

⁴⁹¹ BLTT, E. 64[12], *A Relation by Nathaniel Fiennes concerning the surrender of the City and Castle of Bristol*, 5 August 1643, p. 5.

could muster no more than between 1,200 and 1,500 foot'.⁴⁹² As a result the royalists entered the campaign with a potentially decisive advantage in infantry and morale.

On 2 July Hopton advanced from Wells by way of Frome to Bradford-on-Avon, four miles or so to the south east of Bath.⁴⁹³ In the early hours of 3 July, under the cover of darkness, Waller despatched a party of 300 horse and foot to block the Bath road at Monkton Farleigh. Day break revealed the inadequacy of Waller's precautions; and despite a belated attempt to reinforce the beleaguered parliamentarians, Hopton's Cornish foot stormed the pass and drove Sir William's men north to Batheaston.⁴⁹⁴ The retreat was described by one parliamentarian officer as 'one of our greatest disadvantages,' for despite the presence of Waller's main army to the west of the Avon on Claverton Down, the advance of the royalists threatened to encircle Bath from the north, compelling Sir William to retreat into the town.⁴⁹⁵ But with commendable forethought and energy Waller quickly re-emerged, once again during the hours of darkness, to occupy Lansdown Hill, interposing his forces directly between Hopton and Bath.⁴⁹⁶ On the morning of 4 July the dismayed royalists duly discovered Waller blocking further progress from the heights of Lansdown. After a morning of sporadic fire from parliamentarian field pieces, Hopton withdrew north east to Marshfield, perhaps to discuss a resumption of the advance towards Oxford.⁴⁹⁷ Waller, despite defeat at Monkton Farleigh, had managed to safeguard Bath by the skilful anticipation of the enemy's movements. His judicious deployments not only gave notice that he would be a tough nut to crack, but also earned the genuine admiration of at least one cavalier officer.⁴⁹⁸

Nevertheless, Hopton's march to Marshfield suggested that any further attack upon Bath would almost certainly come from the north, via the high ground of Lansdown Hill.⁴⁹⁹ In expectation of such a move Waller occupied Lansdown on the night of 4 July, and early the following morning positioned the entire army on its north eastern edge looking towards Marshfield. Sir William erected earthworks on the brow for his ordinance, lined the woods to either side with musketeers, and pushed forward units of horse towards the royalist camps.⁵⁰⁰ It appears that Hopton, provoked by Waller's cavalry raids, advanced his entire army two miles towards the parliamentarian

⁴⁹² Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 75.

⁴⁹³ Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile*, p. 51.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 52.

⁴⁹⁵ HMC, *Portland Mss*, vol. iii, p. 112. Edward Harley to Sir Robert Harley at Westminster, Bristol 15 July 1643.

⁴⁹⁶ Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile*, p. 91.

⁴⁹⁷ BLTT, E.60 [12], *A True Relation of the Great and Glorious Victory*, 14 July 1643, p. 3.

⁴⁹⁸ Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile*, p. 91.

⁴⁹⁹ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, p. 169.

⁵⁰⁰ Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile*, p. 53.

position on Lansdown Hill.⁵⁰¹ But after a period of inconsequential skirmishing, during which Waller demonstrated no inclination to descend from the hill, the royalists abandoned the confrontation and withdrew in the direction of Marshfield.⁵⁰² Waller aimed to exploit the situation by despatching 400 horse to disorder the retreating enemy,⁵⁰³ but after heavy fighting his cavalry were in turn broken and pursued as they attempted to return to the safety of Lansdown. This unexpected reversal prompted the impetuous Cornish foot to call for an all out attack; Hopton, perhaps against his better judgement, succumbed and ordered the hill to be stormed.⁵⁰⁴

While the battle of Lansdown turned out to be one of the great royalist achievements of the civil war, it was not, as some historians have claimed, a royalist victory.⁵⁰⁵ It was only the raw courage and unquenchable spirit of the Cornish foot that saved Hopton from a crushing defeat. As the royalists attempted to ascend the steep slope of Lansdown Hill, Maurice's cavalry were subjected to a withering fire, and 'so discomfited that of 2000 there did not stand above 600.'⁵⁰⁶ Despite the faltering royalist horse, Sir Bevil Grenville, colonel of the Cornish foot, 'gained with much gallantry the brow of the hill...receiving three charges of horse two of which he stood, but in the third fell with many of his men.'⁵⁰⁷ Clarendon admitted that 'if the Cornish foot had not stood very firm when the horse was shaken, it would have proved a sad day.'⁵⁰⁸ After something like nine hours of fighting, darkness found both armies completely spent. Waller withdrew a short distance to a low stonewall, while Hopton, bereft of his cavalry, stood on the precipice of the hill. As at Edgehill eight months before, king and parliament had fought to an exhausted standstill, and just as at Edgehill, 'each side pretending to the honour of a victory.'⁵⁰⁹

During the night Waller and Heslerig withdrew to Bath in order to replenish their forces, 'well knowing [they] might easily recover the hill, and so fall upon the enemy again to prosecute [their] victory.'⁵¹⁰ Hopton, 'possessed of the field, and of the dead,'⁵¹¹ appeared the victor. As at Stratton in May, the royalists had stormed a seemingly impenetrable position. It was without question an incredible achievement,

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.* p. 94.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.* p. 53.

⁵⁰³ BLTT, E 60 [12], *A True Relation*, p. 3.

⁵⁰⁴ Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile*, p. 95.

⁵⁰⁵ See for example, A. H. Burne, *Battlefields of England* (Barnsley, 2005), pp. 367-368; Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i., p. 172.

⁵⁰⁶ Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile*, p. 54.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p. 95.

⁵⁰⁸ W. D. Macray (ed.), *The History of the Rebellion by Edward Earl of Clarendon* (Oxford, 1888), vol. iii, p. 82n.

⁵⁰⁹ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 285.

⁵¹⁰ BLTT, E 60[12], *A True Relation*, p. 4.

⁵¹¹ Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile*, p. 55.

but success had been bought at a heavy price. The death of Sir Bevil Genville followed by the temporary blinding and incapacitation of Hopton were crippling blows, both in terms fighting efficiency and morale. With the air of a defeated army the dispirited royalists retreated to Marshfield. The local populace, sensing that the pendulum had swung in favour of parliament, swiftly abandoned the provision of supplies and intelligence.⁵¹²

It may have been at this juncture that the governor of Bristol, Colonel Nathaniel Fiennes, was persuaded to spare Waller the 1200 men referred to earlier.⁵¹³ On the afternoon of 7 July, perhaps encouraged by news of Hopton's incapacitation, Waller marched towards Marshfield. The royalists, however, had already set out for Oxford by way of Chippenham, and though Sir William skirmished with their rearguard, the cavaliers entered Devizes on the evening of 9 July.⁵¹⁴ A hastily convened Council of War decided that the cavalry, commanded by the marquis of Hertford and Prince Maurice, should ride for Oxford to request reinforcements while Hopton remained with the infantry and cannon to defend the town.⁵¹⁵ Though Waller bombarded Devizes for two days, the resolution of the Cornish foot, allied to his own shortage of infantry, meant that he was unable to breach the barricaded streets.⁵¹⁶ Finally, having weakened the outer defences, Sir William's plans to storm the town on the evening of 13 July were interrupted by the approach of Lord Wilmot with reinforcements from Oxford.

The sudden appearance of the royalist relief column provided Waller with an unexpected advantage. As the entire parliamentary army moved onto Roundway Down to intercept the Oxford cavaliers, Hopton correctly concluded that Sir William must have sighted the hoped for reinforcements. However, the majority of Hopton's fellow officers believed Waller's withdrawal to be nothing more than a trick, intended to entice the well-entrenched royalists to abandon their defences. Hopton, still weak from his injuries, was persuaded to delay any attempt to follow the enemy, leaving the fortunate Waller to face the new threat unhindered.⁵¹⁷ Parliamentary sources number Lord Wilmot's force at approximately 2,500 horse, almost certainly an exaggeration designed to excuse the inauspicious outcome of the battle.⁵¹⁸ It is more likely that the

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁵¹³ BLTT, E 64[12], *A Relation by Nathaniel Fiennes*, p. 5.

⁵¹⁴ BLTT, E 60[12], *A True Relation*, p. 6.

⁵¹⁵ Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile*, p. 56; Clarendon claimed that such was the trust between royalists that those left behind in Devizes 'relied upon succour in time, and expected it accordingly, and without any other impatience than by giving accounts to Oxford of the truth of their condition.' Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 83n.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

⁵¹⁷ Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile*, p. 57. Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 92.

⁵¹⁸ BLTT, E 61[1], *The Kingdom's Weekly Intelligencer*, 11 - 18 July 1643, p.207; Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 285.

cavalry were evenly matched, perhaps around 2,000 on each side. The difference lay in infantry: while Waller commanded around 1,800,⁵¹⁹ Hopton's formidable Cornish foot remained in Devizes. As the two armies deployed for battle upon Roundway Down it must have been obvious to Sir William that he enjoyed a distinct numerical superiority.

At about 3 o'clock Lord Wilmot gave up on Hopton and charged Sir Arthur Haslerig's wing of parliamentary horse.⁵²⁰ One royalist officer described how Haslerig's troopers, breaking and disordered, caused the rest of Waller's horse to retreat,⁵²¹ and a roundhead eyewitness stated that 'at the very first charge all our horse run away and left our foot.'⁵²² Other parliamentary sources claimed that Waller's reserve of horse provided sterner resistance before it too was routed.⁵²³ While Wilmot's cavalry chased their opponents from the field, news reached Hopton that Waller's horse had fled but that the enemy foot stood firm.⁵²⁴ As Wilmot rallied his cavalry and returned to deal with Waller's isolated and abandoned infantry, Hopton's men finally marched out of Devizes towards the field of battle. The parliamentarians defended themselves bravely for over an hour, but pressed on all sides by the Cornishmen and Wilmot's horse, they were finally broken and fled.⁵²⁵ A. H. Burne described Roundway Down as the most sweeping victory the royalists ever won.⁵²⁶ Though Waller and some of his cavalry escaped to Bristol, for all practical purposes his army had been annihilated.⁵²⁷ 'Such,' wrote Waller, 'was my dismal defeat at Roundway Down.'⁵²⁸

The reasons for this 'dismal defeat' lay in the truly remarkable cooperation of royalist commanders, which had enabled Lord Wilmot to rescue Hopton when all appeared lost. Less than 72 hours after Maurice and Hertford set out for Oxford, Wilmot returned at the head of two thousand hastily assembled reinforcements. It was a stunning example of combined operations, executed with such speed that it thwarted Waller's plans to storm Devizes. But why was it, Waller complained of Essex, 'that he lying with his whole army within ten miles of Oxford, should suffer the chief strength of that place to march thirty miles to destroy him'.⁵²⁹ To his credit Waller had performed extremely well throughout the campaign, blunting the royalists at Lansdown,

⁵¹⁹ Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile*, p. 98.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*

⁵²² HMC, *Portland Mss*, vol. iii, p. 113; This, perhaps surprisingly, is contested by Clarendon, who stated that Haslerig's men 'stood well, and longer than expected, [but] could not bear the shock.' Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 84n.

⁵²³ BLTT, E 61[6], *A True Relation of the Late Fight Between Sir William Waller's Forces and Those Sent From Oxford*, p. 4.

⁵²⁴ Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile*, p. 57.

⁵²⁵ BLTT, E 61[6], *A True Relation of the Late Fight*, p. 4.

⁵²⁶ Burne, *Battlefields of England*, p. 378.

⁵²⁷ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 174.

⁵²⁸ Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 95.

⁵²⁹ M. Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire* (London, 2008), p. 288.

and, with great determination and energy, pursuing his adversaries to Devizes. It was, in fact, Waller's great misfortune to be pitted against an amazingly efficient enemy. In early June Hopton's union with Maurice and Hertford had put the royalists on the offensive, and in July, when Hopton faced defeat at Devizes, the timely arrival of Lord Wilmot's reinforcements had proved decisive. What needs to be recognised therefore is the sheer potency of royalist cooperation. Throughout the western campaign dynamic collaboration had sustained the king's forces, ultimately transforming a potential disaster at Devizes⁵³⁰ into a crushing victory on Roundway Down. Royalist cooperation contrasted markedly with the failure of parliamentary commanders to rescue the Fairfaxes before Adwalton Moor. The royalist triumph at Roundway Down and the parliamentary disaster at Adwalton Moor demonstrate that military success was heavily dependent on the willingness and ability of commanders to cooperate effectively in rapidly developing and often critical situations.

The third catastrophe to strike parliament during the summer of 1643 occurred less than two week after Roundway Down with the surrender of Bristol on 26 July. The loss of the kingdom's second port and Parliament's most important western garrison sent shock waves through parliament. The background to this latest disaster – yet another example of royalist cooperation and parliamentary disunity - concerns the crucial passage of the queen and her second great supply convoy. Henrietta Maria had parted company with the earl of Newcastle at Pontefract on 16 June, and following a two-week stay at Newark, rendezvoused with Prince Rupert at Stratford upon Avon on 11 July. On 13 July, the day Wilmot's cavalry destroyed Waller at Roundway Down, Charles and his queen were re-united close to the battlefield of Edgehill in Warwickshire.⁵³¹ The queen was escorted by 3,000 foot, 30 companies of horse and dragoons, six pieces of cannon, two mortars, and 150 wagons of baggage.⁵³² These were substantial additions to the king's Oxford army, considerably enhancing his capacity for offensive action.⁵³³

The Venetian Ambassador claimed that despite orders to do so, three parliamentary commanders 'with sufficient forces' had done nothing to intercept the queen's march from Pontefract to Newark. The suspicions of loyalty thus aroused prompted parliament to order the arrest of Captain John Hotham and to appoint Sir John Meldrum, 'a Scot of good capacity,' to command all forces then at Nottingham.⁵³⁴

⁵³⁰ Clarendon stated that, 'it was evident that if the Devizes was not instantly relieved that gallant party must be lost.' Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 84n.

⁵³¹ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, pp. 274-275.

⁵³² Henrietta Maria to King Charles, 27 June 1643, Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 274.

⁵³³ A. B. Hinds (ed.) *Calendar of State Papers Venetian (CSPV)* (London, 1925), 1642-1643, p. 292.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid*; Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 160.

However, this still left an opportunity to confront the queen once she departed Newark for Oxford, a journey that in theory at least ought to bring her within the orbit of Essex's forces. Unfortunately for parliament Henrietta Maria recommenced her progress on 3 July, just as the Lord General vacated his quarters at Thame (to the east of Oxford) for a new position many miles to the north-east at Great Brickhill on the Buckinghamshire-Bedfordshire border.⁵³⁵

On the face of it Essex's withdrawal appeared to greatly facilitate the queen's progress. It allowed Rupert to march in force to Stratford upon Avon on 11 July, and, on the same day, it freed Lord Wilmot to take virtually all the cavalry that remained in Oxford to the rescue of Sir Ralph Hopton at Devizes. As far as Essex was concerned the movements of Henrietta Maria lay well beyond his reach.⁵³⁶ Essex freely admitted that his own cavalry, in great want of supplies and recruits, were largely unable to prevent the royalist horse ranging at will. In addition, a great increase of sickness in the army meant that any design against Oxford had become totally impracticable.⁵³⁷ As long as he remained at Thame his disintegrating army would only become more vulnerable to an increasingly powerful and confident enemy. Vernon Snow must have been close to the truth when he bluntly concluded that Essex removed his army because it 'was too weak to fight.'⁵³⁸

It would appear that yet another failure of parliamentary cooperation had resulted in the queen's uncontested march to Oxford. But it is much more likely that this crucial royalist success was due to a carefully planned and efficiently executed combined operation. Initially, the earl of Newcastle provided the queen with a huge escort from York to Pontefract, and even for the march to Newark, while Newcastle was engaged in the west riding, she was still accompanied by upwards of 4,000 men.⁵³⁹ From Newark the queen admitted in a letter to her husband that her own forces would be sufficient to deal with local parliamentarians if Charles could prevent Essex intervening.⁵⁴⁰ Add to this Rupert's considerable assistance from Stratford to Oxford, and it becomes clear that royalist commanders once again acted in concert, and to great effect.⁵⁴¹ Coming so soon after the resounding victories at Adwalton Moor and

⁵³⁵ Essex left Thame on 4 July. V. F. Snow, *Essex the Rebel* (University of Nebraska, 1970), p. 371.

⁵³⁶ Essex to the Speaker, Great Brickhill, 9 July 1643, Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, pp. 290-291.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

⁵³⁸ Snow, *Essex the Rebel*, p. 371.

⁵³⁹ Cromwell estimated the queen's escort to consist of 1,200 horse and 3,000 foot. HMC, *Seventh Report*, Appendix, pp. 551-552.

⁵⁴⁰ Henrietta Maria to King Charles, 27 June 1643, Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 274.

⁵⁴¹ As if to emphasise parliament's military impotence, the queen's final escort from Edgehill to Oxford, in which the king accompanied her, was intentionally reduced to peacetime proportions. J. Adamson,

Roundway Down, the arrival in Oxford on 14 July of this huge convoy and substantial reinforcements enabled Rupert to launch an offensive that would bring the enemy to the very brink of defeat.

On 15 July the Prince left Oxford to join forces with Hopton's western army, resulting in a combined force of 20,000 men with which to attack Bristol.⁵⁴² Sir William Waller, following his defeat at Roundway Down, had insisted that he did not intend to be besieged with his remaining cavalry, and that he would retreat if the enemy advanced towards the town.⁵⁴³ The governor of Bristol, Colonel Nathaniel Fiennes, was adamant that as a result of Roundway Down it 'was the general apprehension' that neither Bristol nor its castle was in anyway tenable.⁵⁴⁴ Fiennes declared that 'without a miracle, it was impossible the town should be maintained against' an enemy numbering fifteen regiments of foot and twelve regiments of horse 'for one week.'⁵⁴⁵ But Despite these misgivings the governor made every effort to strengthen Bristol's defences, 'though it be one of the hardest towns in England to be fortified.'⁵⁴⁶ He had at his disposal 300 horse, 1500 foot, and 100 guns to hold a circuit of defences over three miles long.⁵⁴⁷

When it became clear that Rupert was advancing towards Bristol, Fiennes supported Waller's decision to leave because he had undertaken to raise new forces at Gloucester or Exeter, 'and that he would not be long ere he returned to my relief.'⁵⁴⁸ Given Sir William's determination to avoid confinement, and his alleged promise to organise a relief force, it is hardly surprising that Fiennes and Waller appeared to be of one mind. In the event, however, while Rupert approached Bristol at the head of the Oxford army, Sir William passed quickly through Gloucester, Evesham and thence to London.⁵⁴⁹ Waller probably said he would to return to Fiennes assistance if he was able to organise sufficient reinforcements quickly enough. We must assume that his subsequent arrival in the capital indicated that he was unable to do so, and that given his

'King Charles I Wins the English Civil War', in A. Roberts (ed.), *What Might Have Been* (London, 2004), p. 41.

⁵⁴² Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 284.

⁵⁴³ BLTT, E. 64[12], *A Relation by Nathaniel Fiennes*, p. 12.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4; Recent research by Ronald Hutton and Wylie Reeves – Bristol was 'exceptionally difficult to defend' – supports Fiennes' testimony. R. Hutton and W. Reeves, 'Sieges and Fortifications', in J. Kenyon and J. Ohlmeyer (eds.), *The Civil Wars: A Military History of England Scotland & Ireland 1638-1660*, (Oxford, 1998), p. 218.

⁵⁴⁷ P. Young and R. Holmes, *The English Civil War: A Military History of Three Civil Wars 1642-1651* (London, 1974), pp. 139-141.

⁵⁴⁸ BLTT, E. 64[12], *A Relation by Nathaniel Fiennes*, p. 12.

⁵⁴⁹ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 137.

stated intention to avoid entrapment by siege, saw no alternative but to leave the defence of Bristol in the governor's hands.⁵⁵⁰

The circumstances in which Fiennes eventually surrendered the town indicate what might have been achieved if Waller had managed to raise a relief force. On 26 July Rupert ordered a simultaneous assault by all six of his besieging brigades.⁵⁵¹ The fighting, bloody and fierce, lasted from dawn till dusk. At length, having been continually repelled by the determination of the defenders, the royalists forced a breach in the defences. The hesitancy of a troop of parliamentary cavalry allowed the cavaliers to exploit their hard gained advantage, and shortly afterwards Fiennes agreed terms.⁵⁵² It had been a close run thing, 'for when five out of the six royalist brigades were held up [Rupert] prosecuted his one success with relentless vigour.'⁵⁵³

Given the severity of the fighting, and the admirable resolution of the outnumbered parliamentary garrison, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that Waller's presence might well have tipped the balance. Sir William was by now an experienced and able commander, and despite his defeat at Roundway Down, had enjoyed some success against his royalist opponents.⁵⁵⁴ The unfortunate Fiennes, who 'was not a soldier by profession,'⁵⁵⁵ was court-martialled on a charge of premature surrender and sentenced to death. Essex, with some justification, later overturned the verdict and issued a pardon.⁵⁵⁶ Two years later, in September 1645, Rupert himself proved similarly incapable of defending Bristol against Sir Thomas Fairfax's New Model Army.⁵⁵⁷ The very fact that a commander of Rupert's stature surrendered the town demonstrates that Fiennes had acted with great resolution, and that he might have succeeded had Waller managed to return.

The critical point is that Bristol was lost to a further example of royalist collaboration, this time between Rupert and Hopton, leaving the parliamentary cause on the verge of collapse. Adwalton Moor, Roundway Down, and now Bristol demonstrated the effectiveness of royalist cooperation, and provided the king's forces

⁵⁵⁰ Adair acknowledges Waller's resolution to form a relief army, but does not mention his failure to return. Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 96.

⁵⁵¹ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, pp. 137-139.

⁵⁵² Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 284; Hutton and Reeves have argued that once Rupert breached the perimeter defences 'Bristol's surrender was inevitable.' Hutton & Reeves, 'Sieges & Fortifications,' in Kenyon & Ohlmeyer, *The Civil Wars*, p. 218.

⁵⁵³ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 141.

⁵⁵⁴ Waller was described by D'Ewes as 'a man of extraordinary valour and integrity.' J. H. Hexter, *The Reign of King Pym* (Harvard, 1941), p. 120.

⁵⁵⁵ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 179.

⁵⁵⁶ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 141; B. Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs* (Oxford, 1853), vol. i, p. 207.

⁵⁵⁷ Frank Kitson observed that Rupert 'like Fiennes before him, was not strong enough to man the lengthy outer perimeter properly' F. Kitson, *Prince Rupert: Portrait of a Soldier* (London, 1994), pp. 257-262.

with a decisive advantage over their parliamentary opponents. It was this vital factor that proved to be the key to military success during the summer of 1643, a principal reason for parliament's catastrophic downfall. Nehemiah Wallington, a London puritan artisan, clung to the belief that parliament's defeats were for the best, as the godly would now have to place their trust in God himself. But the surrender of Bristol was truly shocking, the 'great loss so discontented me that I could not settle about anything, nay, I could neither write, read, nor pray'.⁵⁵⁸ Clarendon's observation - that Bristol 'struck [parliament] to the heart, and came upon them as a sentence of death' - conveyed the full magnitude of the disaster.⁵⁵⁹

State of Emergency

Parliament reacted to these devastating blows by constructing, in corresponding stages, an escalating state of emergency. As the following analysis will demonstrate, each crippling defeat was met with an appropriate military, political, or religious response, revealing a cause in crisis and a war effort on the brink of total defeat.

On 5 July, five days after Adwalton Moor, news of the disastrous situation in Yorkshire was officially broken to a shocked parliament.⁵⁶⁰ According to Sir Simonds D'Ewes an attempt was made to suppress the report. 'Some knowing it to contain ill news would not have it read', but D'Ewes and others called out "Read it. Read it".⁵⁶¹ Thomas Stockdale's graphic account of the battle and its devastating repercussions vividly conveyed the scale of the catastrophe:

Our loss of prisoners taken by the enemy was great, but the number is not equal to the fear and distraction it has begotten in the country...the country is wasted and exhausted and tired out with the weight of the troubles continually falling upon this part of Yorkshire, the soldiers want pay, and, which is worse, arms and powder and other ammunition, and are overcharged with the most potent strength that opposeth the parliament; insomuch as the soldiers disband and desert the service, and the country overawed cannot longer assist the army; and if speedy supply be not sent with some considerable succour of men, the Lord General will be constrained to accept of some dishonourable conditions from the enemy.⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁸ P. S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (London, 1985), pp. 169-170.

⁵⁵⁹ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 135; John Adamson concluded that 'Charles's apparently inexorable juggernaut' would never 'recover the momentum it had attained in those victorious weeks that had culminated in the fall of Bristol'. Adamson, 'King Charles I Wins the English Civil War', p. 46.

⁵⁶⁰ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 121; *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 155.

⁵⁶¹ British Library (BL), Harley MS, 165 (D'Ewes diary, History of Parliament Trust transcription), fol. 107b.

⁵⁶² HMC, *Portland Mss*, vol. i, p. 718.

Stockdale's alarming report resulted in an immediate order to send commissioners 'into Scotland, *by this day seventh night, or sooner* if they can be ready,'⁵⁶³ so as 'to bring them in *with all speed*'⁵⁶⁴ [author's emphasis]. The sheer haste with which parliament sought Scottish military assistance indicates the enormity of Adwalton Moor and the implications of the defeat for the wider war effort. The destruction of Lord Fairfax's northern army provided the king with the first strategic breakthrough of the war. Nothing of substance now remained to prevent the earl of Newcastle marching south through Lincolnshire into the heart of parliament's Eastern Association, thereby posing a direct threat to the capital itself. There is no doubt, as Peter Newman has explained, that parliament greatly feared Newcastle's 'popish army'. In the panic that followed Adwalton Moor this large, formidable, and religiously dangerous force appeared to herald the destruction of the entire cause.⁵⁶⁵ The only viable solution was a military alliance with Scotland.

When parliament received news of Waller's destruction at Roundway Down it seemed certain that two defeats of such magnitude could only be attributed to the anger of a higher authority. On 19 July 'out of the deep sense of God's heavy wrath now upon this kingdom, manifested by the late discomfiture of the forces, both in the north and west' parliament ordered a day 'of public and extraordinary humiliation by prayer and fasting' so that every soul may 'cry mightily to God for Christ his sake, that he will be pleased to turn from the fierceness of his wrath and heal the land.'⁵⁶⁶ And six days later, on 25 July, the publication of 'A Memento to the Londoners' warned the capital's inhabitants that 'Never were a people in such necessity as you are in. The king's forces are grown strong and powerful, and will in short time, if you prevent it not, be as able to execute their malice upon you as they are willing.' Urging the citizens to rise up - 'immediately for the wars' - the Memento concluded with a chilling warning: 'Be courageous, and God will bless you, lie still, and perish.'⁵⁶⁷ Under the direction of the capital's 'radical lord mayor and MP Isaac Pennington', 'A Memento to the Londoners' formed part of a City initiative to organise a general rising of the people.⁵⁶⁸ As we shall

⁵⁶³ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 122.

⁵⁶⁴ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 155. The request for Scottish military assistance was also reported in the weekly news books, BLTT, E. 59[12], *Parliament Scout*, 29 June - 6 July 1643, pp. 14-15.

⁵⁶⁵ Peter Newman has argued that the fear aroused by Newcastle's army was, in fact, much greater than the threat it actually posed. Newman described the king's northern army as one that 'seemed to promise much but performed little'. But in the shocked aftermath of Adwalton Moor only the Scots appeared capable of saving parliament. P. R. Newman, *The Old Service: Royalist regimental colonels and the Civil War 1642-46* (Manchester, 1993), pp. 262 & 264.

⁵⁶⁶ BLTT, 245:669. f. 7[30], *Order of Parliament*, 19 July 1643.

⁵⁶⁷ BLTT, 245:699. f. 8[16], *A Memento to the Londoners*, 25 July 1643.

⁵⁶⁸ R. Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 457.

presently see, this campaign to establish an independent London army reflected the growing power and influence of the City's militant activists. These exhortations to spiritual and physical action provide compelling evidence of parliament's escalating emergency, revealing a city in moral and mortal danger, teetering on the precipice of utter destruction.

Accordingly, on 25 July, the Commons authorised the rapid recruitment of a new force of 7,000 cavalry to be commanded by the earl of Manchester.⁵⁶⁹ The ordinance establishing Manchester's 'flying army' emphasised the threat posed by the king's victorious armies and how this new detachment of mounted men was urgently required for:

The preservation, safety, and peace of the kingdom, to resist the insolences and outrages committed by the soldiers of the king's army...that Popish army...which consisting for the most part in horse, do range and wander up and down the countries, and not only plunder, embezzle, and take away the goods and estates of the well-affected, but abuse their persons, and very often times destroy and kill them.⁵⁷⁰

The very fact that parliament was compelled to raise such a contingent, intended for rapid deployment to the scene of greatest danger, emphasises the scale of the military crisis. The creation of Manchester's 'flying army' was a candid admission that the war effort had failed. Until the Scots could be brought into the conflict parliament faced nothing less than a fight for survival.

When Bristol surrendered to Prince Rupert on 26 July a mood of deep despondency swept the capital, raising fears that the victorious royalists would soon march against London itself. Even the parliamentary press found it impossible to conceal the gravity of the disaster. One newsbook declared that 'The malignants do upon the surrender of Bristol, so dishearten people, as if the parliament and kingdom was lost,' and that many citizens were in such fear 'of the intended approaching of the cavaliers that they were about to ship there goods for Holland.'⁵⁷¹ And another despaired that Bristol 'strikes us dead' and 'we are afraid our scout will next week bring you news either of the loss of Gloucester or Exeter or both.'⁵⁷² On 27 July the Commons ordered a committee of six members 'to nominate a council of war; and to

⁵⁶⁹ C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642-1660* (London, 1911), vol. i, pp. 215-219.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁵⁷¹ BLTT, E. 64[10], *Kingdom's Weekly Intelligencer*, 1 - 8 August 1643, pp. 220-221.

⁵⁷² BLTT, E. 63[13], *Parliament Scout*, 27 July - 3 August 1643, p. 45 & 46.

prepare instructions for that council'⁵⁷³ It was proposed 'that matters may go in a more secret and expeditious way than formerly.'⁵⁷⁴ Announced in the Commons on 2 August, the council was directed 'to take the whole state of the war into consideration...to propound to the Houses, the Lord General, the governors of towns and forts, and other commanders in chief...to have monies advanced to them for intelligence...and to make a protestation...not to disclose any of their counsels.'⁵⁷⁵ The emphasis on intelligence, secrecy, and the direction of strategy by a small and carefully selected 'war cabinet' is particularly revealing. But more important is the council's composition, which 'included reliable junto men like Pym, Sir John Clotworthy, Colonel Alexander Popham and Sir William Waller' and 'not extremists like Henry Marten, John Blakiston, and William Strode'.⁵⁷⁶ The council of war concentrated power in the hands of trusted parliamentarians, broadly equating to Hexter's celebrated middle group, steering a line independent of the peace and war parties but working with them when the situation demanded.⁵⁷⁷ This is an important point for this thesis. As we shall see below, drawing a clear line between Pym and the extremists in parliament and the City of London provides a key to the dramatic events in the House of Commons during the first week of August 1643. The secrecy and carefully selected membership of the council of war reflected the gravity of the situation. Parliament's reactions to Adwalton Moor, Roundway Down and Bristol reveal a war effort in meltdown and London, the political centre of the cause, reduced to a state of emergency.⁵⁷⁸

Political Crisis

During the first week of August 1643 parliament's military collapse sparked a political crisis of such magnitude that it almost resulted in a negotiated surrender. Had it not been for a dramatic twice taken vote in the House of Commons on Monday 7 August, the civil war would almost certainly have come to an abrupt conclusion in the late summer of 1643. The following analysis will show how historians have tended to underestimate the importance of this tumultuous week, not only in terms of its immediate significance in determining the fate of the parliamentary cause, but also as a fundamental event in the history of the civil war. It is no exaggeration to claim that

⁵⁷³ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 183.

⁵⁷⁴ BLTT, E 64[10], *Kingdom's Weekly Intelligencer*, 1 - 8 August 1643, p. 221.

⁵⁷⁵ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, pp. 191-192; BLTT, E. 249[31], *A Perfect Diurnall*, 6, 31 July - 7 August 1643, p. 45.

⁵⁷⁶ I. Gentles, 'Parliamentary Politics and the Politics of the Street: The London Peace Campaigns of 1642-3', *Parliamentary History*, vol. 26, pt. 2 (2007), p. 157.

⁵⁷⁷ J. H. Hexter, *The Reign of King Pym* (Cambridge, 1941), pp. 31-47.

⁵⁷⁸ 'During the first weeks of August', John Adamson has commented, 'Parliament's ability to defend itself plumbed the lowest point it was ever to reach in the course of the Civil War'. Adamson, 'King Charles I Wins the English Civil War', p. 47.

this pivotal moment brought the civil war to a crossroads: would parliament capitulate in the wake of a series of catastrophic military defeats, or continue the fight in defence of the principles for which it had taken up arms?

To contemporary opinion the circumstances in which the crisis played out appeared to herald the end of the conflict. Parliament divided into two almost equal but diametrically opposed camps. On one hand those whose only concern was an immediate peace before the king's armies delivered the *coup de grace*, and on the other, those who were convinced that the political and religious future of the country was at stake, and that capitulation amounted to a cowardly dereliction of the achievements of the Long Parliament. It was an issue of fundamental importance, a struggle to decide the future relationship between monarch and parliament. And yet the significance of this pivotal confrontation has been largely buried beneath the subsequent history of the civil war, particularly the events that ultimately decided the outcome of the conflict. However, the significance of this crisis is that it *did not* end the civil war, despite the real possibility that this dramatic week would end in parliamentary surrender.

Here, then, is the crisis that historians have generally underestimated. A battle of political wills to decide whether the war would continue or whether parliament would submit. The importance of this tumultuous week can hardly be overstated. It was make or break for parliament. Although Charles I stood on the verge of victory, he planned to avert the need for further military action by persuading parliament to surrender. Remarkably, as the following analysis will demonstrate, this is what almost took place in the House of Commons on 7 August 1643. It was without question a day of seminal importance, for it determined that parliament would fight on and the civil war would continue.

i) *The King's Declaration*

Parliament's military disintegration was transformed into a political crisis by the shrewd and carefully planned intervention of the king. On 30 July, four days after the fall of Bristol, Charles issued a declaration in which he attempted to exploit parliament's difficulties by turning the Houses against themselves.⁵⁷⁹ The king and his advisers, of whom Edward Hyde earl of Clarendon was paramount, were fully aware that parliament teetered on the brink of collapse. By isolating the rebellion's ringleaders, and offering forgiveness to all who would abandon parliament and return to their natural allegiance,

⁵⁷⁹ Bodleian Library, Wing/C2226, *His Majesties Declaration To all His Loving Subjects. After His Victories over The Lord Fairfax in the North, and Sir William Waller in the West, and, The Taking of Bristol by His Majesties Forces* (Oxford, 30 July 1643).

the royal declaration represented a premeditated attempt to undermine what remained of parliamentary resistance.⁵⁸⁰

The declaration's most imposing physical feature was the title page, consisting of a boldly printed list of the king's victories over 'the Lord Fairfax in the north, Sir William Waller in the west, and, the taking of Bristol by His Majesties forces'.⁵⁸¹ It was a proclamation of military prowess, intended to demonstrate that the king was in the ascendant and poised for final victory.⁵⁸² The declaration re-emphasised the mystery of royal power and its command over the temporal affairs of man, a vindication of the king and a condemnation of a rebellion that had challenged his authority and his right.

The declaration's most striking intellectual feature was an absolute insistence that only God's blessing could account for the king's remarkable victories:

Almighty God ... to whose power alone we must attribute the goodness of our present condition ... God hath wonderfully manifested his care of us and his defence of his and our most just cause ... God hath vouchsafed us so many victories and successes, and hath rendered the power of those who seek to destroy us less formidable than it hath been.⁵⁸³

Divine intervention had demonstrated the justice of the king's cause and the dishonour and malice of the rebellion. Indeed, the Lord's endorsement of the royal cause had revealed to the nation the manner in which the leaders of the rebellion had misled their gullible adherents, and how the king's victories had exposed the rebels as enemies not only of the king but also of the Almighty himself:

God ... hath so far touched the hearts of our people, that their eyes are at last opened to see how miserably they have been seduced, and to abhor those persons whose malice and subtlety have seduced them to dishonour Him, to rebel against Us, and to bring so much misery and calamity upon their native country.⁵⁸⁴

The declaration relentlessly pursued the theme of divine agency by reminding the kingdom of the prosperous peace so recently enjoyed, when allegiance to the king was

⁵⁸⁰ Richard Cust's observation – that the generosity of the declaration was intended to split the parliamentary movement apart – is undoubtedly correct. Particularly when one considers that the author was almost certainly Edward Hyde, the most able of the king's political strategists. R. Cust, *Charles I A Political Life* (London, 2005), p. 379.

⁵⁸¹ *His Majesties Declaration*, the victories are proclaimed on the title page and repeated on page 1.

⁵⁸² On 7 August 1643 the Venetian ambassador reported that Charles was disinclined to entertain French offers of an alliance because of his 'present advantage'. *CSPV*, 1643-1647, p. 5.

⁵⁸³ *His Majesties Declaration*, pp. 2 & 3.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

rewarded with a happiness bestowed by God.⁵⁸⁵ Disobedient subjects should now remember their duty and:

consider their interests, and no longer suffer themselves to be misled ... by the malice of these state impostors, who under pretence of reformation would introduce whatsoever is monstrous and unnatural both in religion and policy.⁵⁸⁶

And finally, having emphatically established the justice of the royal cause, and the blessings bestowed upon him by God, the king magnanimously declared that:

all those who since these bloody distractions out of conscience have returned from their evil ways to Us, have found that it was not so easy for them to repent, as Us to forgive ... [and those who] shall redeem their past crimes by their present service ... shall have cause to magnify our mercy⁵⁸⁷

Despite God's self evident anger towards the rebels, Charles was prepared to offer a generous forgiveness to all who would admit their error and submit to royal obedience.⁵⁸⁸ Here was a way out for those who now regretted their support for a rebellion that had clearly attracted the wrath of God. The royal declaration aimed to end the civil war by precipitating wholesale defections in both the House of Lords and the House of Commons. It was a carefully planned strategy, designed to avert the need for further military action by inciting a parliamentary revolt, instigated by those who were now convinced that the war could not be won - only lost.

The royal declaration was undoubtedly a powerful appeal, aimed at the very heart of seventeenth-century belief in the intervention of God. The king's victories provided unequivocal evidence that the Almighty had rejected parliament's rebellion as a malevolent attempt to overturn the natural order of God, king, and man. This, as the declaration made clear, was a harmonious and divinely ordained relationship, delivering an abundance of peace and prosperity, and when abandoned, death, destruction and misery.⁵⁸⁹ God, therefore, had delivered his verdict: the king had been vindicated and parliament exposed as a malicious agent of the devil. It was now incumbent upon those who had strayed from the path of righteousness to repent their crimes and submit to the king's gracious forgiveness before it was too late. This was the royal ultimatum

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁸⁸ The Venetian ambassador reported that the king 'detests the victories themselves, as they are always hurtful to his subjects, and consequently to himself, and he will gladly embrace them if they will recognise their fault and return to their natural duty'. *CSPV*, 1643-1647, p.7.

⁵⁸⁹ The reaction of Sir Simonds D'Ewes – 'a higher providence hath been justly irritated ... for God is a God of peace, and a God of unity' – was typical of those MPs the royal declaration was intended to influence. Hexter, *King Pym*, p. 130n.

received by the Lords and Commons at the beginning of August 1643⁵⁹⁰, a proclamation that was to set in chain a series of events that would decide the future of the parliamentary cause.

ii) *The Lord's Peace Proposals*

According to the Venetian Ambassador, the House of Lords took heart from the declaration and resolved to 'consider a composition', which 'his Majesty might be expected to accept.'⁵⁹¹ On 2 August, the day the declaration first appeared in print, the Lords appointed a committee of six peers to 'consider some propositions fit to be presented to the king, for settling the present distractions'.⁵⁹² Clarendon stated that:

In this reformation of understanding, the Lords in their House debated nothing but expedients for peace: there were not of that body above five at the most who had any inclination to continue the war.⁵⁹³

A majority of peers were convinced that parliament was being punished for breaking off the Oxford Treaty in April 1643.⁵⁹⁴ They were determined to resuscitate the peace process by formulating a set of proposals commensurate with those demanded by the king on 12 April.⁵⁹⁵ This, the Lords anticipated, would satisfy Charles in all essentials and bring the civil war to a rapid conclusion. It was a policy of total desperation. By granting just about everything the king had demanded at Oxford, the Lords intended to end the war in political surrender.⁵⁹⁶ A comparison of the Lords' propositions with those demanded by Charles in April 1643 reveals the lengths to which the committee were prepared to go. At Oxford Charles had submitted three principal conditions, terms that the Lords would now attempt to meet, and their opponents in the Commons would attempt to overthrow. It was these fundamental clauses that would decide whether the war would end in a rapid peace or continue unabated.

Charles' first demand had been the immediate return of his revenues, magazines, ships and forts. This, as far as the king was concerned, was paramount, for it restored

⁵⁹⁰ According to the royalist press the declaration 'came out in print' on Wednesday 2 August 1643. BLTT, E. 65[13], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 31, 30 July – 5 August 1643, p. 415.

⁵⁹¹ CSPV, 1643-1647, p. 7.

⁵⁹² *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 163.

⁵⁹³ Clarendon stated that 'In this reformation of understanding, the Lords in their House debated nothing but expedients for peace: there were not of that body above five at the most who had any inclination to continue the war'. Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 135.

⁵⁹⁴ HMC, *Fifth Report*, p. 98.

⁵⁹⁵ The king's final terms, subsequently rejected, were set out in full in a message to parliament dated 12 April 1643. Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 259.

⁵⁹⁶ David Underdown has argued that the policy of the Peace Party was to 'Negotiate, negotiate, even in conditions of military weakness in which the results would be virtual surrender'. D. Underdown, *Pride's Purge* (Oxford, 1971), p. 60.

complete control of the country's military infrastructure, a prerogative, he maintained, which had been violently taken from him. Charles' second condition had demanded that all members of both Houses expelled from parliament since 1 January 1641 for supporting the king's cause should be readmitted with the same rights of 'sitting and voting' as they had previously enjoyed. And the king's third proposition demanded that parliament adjourn to a location at least twenty miles from London, so that 'His Majesty and both Houses may be secured from such tumultuous assemblies' which had previously 'awed the members of the same, and occasioned two several complaints from the Lords House'. Charles was adamant that this would guarantee his personal security, and that of a fully restored parliament, from intimidation or even worse. Once these terms were granted, 'His Majesty will most cheerfully and readily consent, that both armies be immediately disbanded, and give a present meeting to both his Houses of Parliament'.⁵⁹⁷ As Austin Woolrych has observed, 'he might have well have openly demanded parliament's surrender'.⁵⁹⁸

In reply the Lords declared that they were now ready to restore the king's revenues, together with his navy, forts and magazines, 'in a trust and confidence that they shall be disposed and employed for the defence and security of your royal person and of your people'. And as for the 're-admittance of our members such as have been put out merely for adhering unto your Majesty', the Lords would 'endeavour to give your Majesty all due satisfaction'.⁵⁹⁹ The only caveat was a Protestation issued on 4 May 1641, which included a specific obligation to maintain and defend the protestant religion, the person and estate of the king, and the powers and privileges of parliament.⁶⁰⁰ In other words the Lords were offering a fully restored parliament in exchange for a commitment to respect the privileges of parliament. As for the king's third demand, a majority of the committee had agreed to adjourn parliament to a location at least twenty miles from the capital, but were dissuaded from doing so by Lord Say.⁶⁰¹ Nonetheless, they were desperate to assure Charles that his safety was sacrosanct, and although they could not agree to relocate parliament, they begged the king to believe their pledges of sincerity. 'We do now most humbly address ourselves unto your Majesty, beseeching you graciously to accept what we have here represented'. This, they insisted, was the mark of their fidelity. Granting the king's first two propositions constituted proof positive of a genuine wish to come to terms, so that Charles would 'add [his] endeavour' to the earnest desire for peace that these

⁵⁹⁷ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 259.

⁵⁹⁸ A. Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution* (Oxford, 2002), p. 257.

⁵⁹⁹ HMC, *Fifth Report*, p. 99.

⁶⁰⁰ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, pp. 179-180.

⁶⁰¹ BLTT, E. 65[26], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 32, 6 – 12 August 1643, pp. 428-429.

concessions had demonstrated.⁶⁰² It was a desperate entreaty, the work of truly wretched supplicants.

The anxiousness of the Lords to accommodate the king was driven by two separate but closely related imperatives: first, an immediate cessation of arms and disbandment of forces; and second, a general amnesty indemnifying all who had supported or taken part in the rebellion.⁶⁰³ The royalist press saw only too clearly the Lords' real purpose: 'more security unto themselves' and a free pardon for the instigators of the war.⁶⁰⁴ Members of the upper chamber were desperate to avoid being swept away in the kind of blind-panic capitulation that would have followed the triumphant appearance on Hounslow Heath of Charles's victorious army.⁶⁰⁵ They were determined to salvage what terms they could while they were still in a position to do so.

On Friday 4 August the committee's propositions were presented to the House of Lords, where, 'being read and debated were agreed to'.⁶⁰⁶ A conference with the House of Commons was then requested for the following morning, to obtain, without further delay, the concurrence of the lower chamber in sending them to the king.⁶⁰⁷ However, opposition to the proposals was already beginning to mount. According to Sir Simonds D'Ewes several 'violent spirits' attempted to refuse the conference, but 'divers others' ensured that it would go ahead as desired.⁶⁰⁸ Battle lines were being drawn, even before the contents of the propositions were disclosed. The Lords were absolutely committed to a resumption of the Oxford Treaty – all that mattered now was the quest for peace and a rapid termination of the war.

iii) *Saturday 5 August 1643*

Saturday 5 August marked the beginning of a titanic struggle in the House of Commons between those who wished to kill the peace propositions at birth (the 'violent party' as Clarendon described them⁶⁰⁹), and those who were determined to send them to the king. The royalist press summed up the mood of the occasion, reporting that 'the discomforts which have late been growing between the remaining parties in the two Houses [have become] a civil war amongst themselves'.⁶¹⁰ At first the conflict raged over whether the House should even consider the propositions, and then subsequently over whether they

⁶⁰² HMC, *Fifth Report*, p. 99.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁶⁰⁴ BLTT, E. 65[26], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 32, 6 – 12 August 1643, p. 428.

⁶⁰⁵ Adamson, 'King Charles I Wins the English Civil War', p. 48.

⁶⁰⁶ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 171.

⁶⁰⁷ BLTT, E. 249[31], *A Perfect Diurnall*, 6, 31 July – 7 August 1643, p. 48; Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 136.

⁶⁰⁸ BL, Harley MS, 165 (D'Ewes diary, History of Parliament Trust transcription), fol. 135b.

⁶⁰⁹ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 136.

⁶¹⁰ BLTT, E. 65 [26], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 32, 6 – 12 August 1643, p. 431.

should be debated immediately or carried forward to the following week. It was an extraordinary day of high drama and fierce debate, the beginning of a neglected parliamentary battle to decide the future of the civil war.

Since the propositions amounted to virtual surrender, their presentation to the conference had to be carefully staged. An ingenious preamble portrayed the initiation of peace talks as a means of bolstering the war effort. The 'reasonableness and justice' of the Lords' proposals would, if rejected by Charles, serve only to strengthen parliament's cause by encouraging the kingdom 'to preserve themselves in their just rights.'⁶¹¹ Parliament, the preamble argued, would claim the moral high ground as a seeker of conciliation, while the king would be exposed as a war monger interested only in conquest. Rather ominously the propositions were received in silence. John Pym, on his return to the Commons, reported 'that there was nothing more said, but that the matter of the conference was delivered in writing, which was presented and read; and were propositions to be sent to his Majesty'.⁶¹² As we shall see, the cold indifference of the conference was but a diplomatic calm before a political storm.

When, according to Clarendon, 'this conference was reported in the House of Commons, it begat a wonderful long and a hot debate, which lasted till 10 o'clock that night.' The violent party 'inveighed furiously against the design itself, of sending to the king at all, and therefore would not have the particular propositions so much as considered'.⁶¹³ The opposition argued forcefully that parliament had received little encouragement from the former treaty at Oxford, and were highly unlikely to do so now, considering the king's recent military successes; that the Houses had despatched commissioners to Scotland to negotiate an alliance, and that entering upon separate talks with the king would dissuade that nation from providing military assistance; and that a peace initiative would discourage the citizens of London enlisting in a new army to be formed under Sir William Waller, and that the counties adjacent to the capital would be similarly discouraged from enlisting in Essex's army.⁶¹⁴ It was stressed that these objections were not, of course, born of an antipathy to peace, merely to avert a great mistake. For to offer such terms while Essex's forces remained incapacitated, and Waller's new London army had yet to be recruited, 'would be an action neither of

⁶¹¹ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 171.

⁶¹² *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 196.

⁶¹³ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 136; A parliamentary source stated that 'after the conference the Commons had a very large and serious debate about it'. BLTT, E. 249[31], *A Perfect Diurnall*, 6, 31 July – 7 August 1643, p. 48.

⁶¹⁴ BLTT, E. 249 [31], *A Perfect Diurnall*, 6, 31 July – 7 August 1643, p. 48; Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, pp. 136-137; War party MPs Henry Marten and William Strode led the debate to reject the proposals outright. K. Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot, 1997), p. 317.

wisdom nor safety.' Parliament, it was argued, had to negotiate from a position of strength, 'to present propositions before they be in a posture to defend themselves' would, should the propositions be denied, expose them to defeat. Proposals, it was declared, would eventually be sent to the king, 'but not at this time, nor these propositions so sent down.'⁶¹⁵

But despite these reasons, 'and the passion in the delivery, the terror of the king's successes suggested answers enough'.⁶¹⁶ The proponents of peace replied with equal vigour, arguing that parliament was now being punished for breaking off the Oxford Treaty, and that if they failed to take advantage of this present opportunity they would fare much worse in the future. There was no certainty of assistance from Scotland, and even if it were forthcoming there was no guarantee that it would arrive in time 'to preserve them from the ruin at hand'. And as for the recruitment of parliament's armies, it was clear that 'the most substantial and rich men desired peace, by their refusal to supply money for the carrying on of the war'. On top of which, the sending of these propositions would either secure a peace, in which case no more armies would be required, or, if refused, 'would raise more men and money than all their ordinances'.⁶¹⁷ D'Ewes stated that after three hours of debate 'Mr Pym at last rose up', and 'moved with much violence' that the House should desire a conference with the Lords, 'and that we should give them reasons why we could not consent to these propositions'. But as no man 'seconded Mr Pym in his motion' it was the arguments for peace that prevailed.⁶¹⁸ At the conclusion of the debate the Commons resolved by 94 votes to 65 to take the proposals into 'further consideration'.⁶¹⁹ The first hurdle had been overcome: the House had rejected the objections of the 'violent party' and elected to debate the propositions themselves.

As it was now late in the day it was proposed that the debate should be adjourned until Monday morning. But according to D'Ewes the 'violent spirits', who were determined to defeat the propositions without further delay, devised a cunning plan to out manoeuvre their opponents. They immediately instigated a bogus debate concerning the defence of parliament during the forthcoming treaty. Many of those who supported peace believed the propositions to have been set-aside until Monday, and

⁶¹⁵ BLTT, E. 64[10], *Kingdom's Weekly Intelligencer*, 1 – 8 August 1643, pp. 224-225.

⁶¹⁶ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 137.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁸ BL, Harley MS, 165 (D'Ewes diary, History of Parliament Trust transcription), fol. 141a -141b.

⁶¹⁹ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 196; Gardiner emphasised the importance of the occasion by drawing attention to the fact that 'members who usually abstained from attendance on the debates flocked to Westminster on hearing that negotiations for peace were to be discussed. At a division taken two days before only 52 members had been present. No less than 163 took part in the first division on the 5th.' Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 184.

thirty or forty of their number promptly departed. At this point D'Ewes claimed that the opposition declared their intention to resume the debate on the propositions, 'presuming very strongly that they could cast out them out of the House that very evening'. The Commons divided again, and to the dismay of D'Ewes and many others, the opposition prevailed by 70 votes to 68 to continue the debate.⁶²⁰ There are two pertinent facts about this particular vote, the relevance of which will become apparent in due course. First, the narrow majority of only two was not contested and was allowed to stand without any comment or protest. And secondly, the division had been proposed by the 'violent spirits' and carried by them. Despite a narrow defeat the proponents of peace were compelled to continue the debate with reduced numbers.

But with remarkable energy they persuaded the House gave its consent to the proposition to restore the king's revenue in full, and after becoming embroiled in a fierce debate over the proposal to surrender control of the navy, forts, magazines and towns, which 'grew so great ... and the day so far spent', successfully carried a motion adjourning the House 'till Monday morning to consult further thereof'.⁶²¹ A royalist source claimed that it had been the hope of the 'malignant party' that 'such men as durst declare themselves to be well affected would be wearied with their long debates', but the well affected 'sat it out, and carried it for the propositions'.⁶²² With great tenacity the proponents of peace had stood their ground, demonstrating an unbreakable determination to bring the civil war to a rapid close. The 'violent party' had been well and truly thwarted, unable to quench the raging thirst for peace. It now seemed certain that on Monday the propositions would be carried by the House and delivered to the king.⁶²³ Clarendon claimed that 'without doubt, if they had then sent [the propositions], a firm peace had immediately ensued'. It was a momentous moment, the war hung precariously in the balance. Would the Commons adopt the propositions and surrender, or would they reject this abject capitulation and fight on?

News that the House had voted to debate the Lords' propositions swept through the City.⁶²⁴ Isaac Pennington, London's puritan lord mayor, convened an emergency meeting of the Common Council, 'which was for the vigorous prosecution of the war, and declining all thoughts of accommodation'.⁶²⁵ According to Sir Simonds D'Ewes,

⁶²⁰ BL, Harley MS, 165 (D'Ewes diary, History of Parliament Trust transcription), fol. 142b.

⁶²¹ BLTT, E. 249 [31], *A Perfect Diurnall*, 6, 31 July – 7 August 1643, p.48; Gentles, 'Parliamentary Politics and the Politics of the Street: The London Peace Campaigns of 1642-3', *Parliamentary History*, vol. 26, pt. 2 (2007), p. 153.

⁶²² BLTT, E. 65 [26], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 32, 6 – 12 August 1643, p. 431.

⁶²³ Gentles, 'Parliamentary Politics and the Politics of the Street', p. 153.

⁶²⁴ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 185.

⁶²⁵ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 138.

Pennington hatched a plot to arrest, if necessary, the leading members of the peace party in the Lords and Commons:

It was thereupon agreed also by some of those seditious persons that if the propositions of peace went forward that day in the House of Commons, they should by violence seize upon the persons of Algenon, earl of Northumberland, and of Henry, earl of Holland, in the peers house and upon the persons of Mr Denzil Holles, Mr William Pierrepont, Sir William Lewis, Sir John Evelyn of Wiltshire, Mr Grimston, and Mr Maynard, being members of the House of Commons.⁶²⁶

However, this draconian action was to be held in reserve. First of all an attempt would be made to defeat the propositions by mob intimidation.⁶²⁷ 'They had no other way', reported the royalist press, 'to effect their business than to ... bring down their City club-men to awe the members of both Houses, and repeal those votes'.⁶²⁸ Capitalising upon fears that Charles was about to conclude a ceasefire with the Catholic rebels in Ireland, Pennington and the Common Council raised the terror of a papist invasion as the most effective means of mobilising the mob.⁶²⁹

iv) *Sunday 6 August 1643*

The next day, Sunday 6 August, printed bills were scattered through the streets of London. Attached to church doors, fixed upon gates and posts, and left in most public places, they called on:

All such as desire there may be a general raising of the people against those Irish rebels, and blood thirsty papists now in arms, (fully purposing to destroy us, our religion, laws and liberties) are desired to meet at Westminster Hall, tomorrow morning by nine of the clock, being the seventh day of this instant August, to move the Parliament that this may be put into speedy execution. Twenty thousand Irish rebels are appointed to come over against us.⁶³⁰

Meanwhile 'seditious preachers filled all the pulpits with alarms of ruin and destruction to the City if a peace were now offered to the king'. They called on the multitude to 'rise as one man, and to come to the House of Commons next morning, for that twenty thousand Irish rebels were landed'.⁶³¹ At the same time the Common Council drew up a petition to be presented to the House of Commons before the resumption of the debate

⁶²⁶ BL, Harley MS, 165 (D'Ewes diary, History of Parliament Trust transcription), fol. 145b.

⁶²⁷ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 185.

⁶²⁸ BLTT, E. 65 [26], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 32, 6 – 12 August 1643, p. 431.

⁶²⁹ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, pp. 125 & 185.

⁶³⁰ BLTT, E. 65 [26], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 32, 6 – 12 August 1643, pp. 431-432.

⁶³¹ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 138.

the following morning. The petition expressed the Council's fears that 'if yielded unto' these propositions 'would be destructive to our religion, laws and liberties...and the brotherly assistance from Scotland, as well as the raising and maintaining of forces ourselves.' The City implored the lower House 'to persist in your former resolutions, whereupon the people have so much depended, and wherein you have so deeply engaged yourselves, *though you should perish in the work* (author's emphasis). A draught ordinance empowering parliament to impress men was annexed to the petition, implying that further financial assistance was dependent upon its 'speedy passing', for 'our and your defence'.⁶³²

Clearly Pennington and the Common Council intended to synchronise the presentation of the petition with the arrival of the London mob and the resumption of the debate. This is how desperate the City militants had become. They were prepared to scaremonger the masses with rumours of a papist landing in order to overwhelm Westminster with a hostile crowd. And if that didn't work they were even prepared to arrest leading members of the peace party in both Lords and Commons. These hard-core opponents of peace were absolutely convinced that only intimidation and the threat of violence could prevent the passage of the propositions. According to D'Ewes 'divers members' of the Commons and some of the Lords met to discuss whether it would be safe to attend parliament the next day. And although most resolved to be present, D'Ewes reported that 'some few did abstain from the House of Commons in respect of the danger than was threatened'.⁶³³ It seems that the only explanation for the City's dark Machiavellian schemes is that the peace proposals were judged to be a capitulation and their acceptance by the king a foregone conclusion. The extraordinary lengths to which Pennington and the Common Council were prepared to go shows just how much was at stake.

v) *Monday 7 August 1643*

Monday 7 August 1643 ranks as one of the most significant days in English history. With the civil war at a crossroads parliament prepared to debate a series of peace proposals that would either end the war in surrender or signal a fight to the finish. Sir Simonds D'Ewes wrote in his diary that this:

was one of the saddest days that happened since the beginning of this parliament, in which all the privileges thereof were shaken at the very root and such a conspiracy, as I said openly this day in the house, had been made by

⁶³² Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 356.

⁶³³ BL, Harley MS, 165 (D'Ewes diary, History of Parliament Trust transcription), fol. 146a.

certain seditious and schismatical persons in the City of London as no former time could parallel.⁶³⁴

The fate of the parliamentary cause would be decided in a cauldron of baying crowds, heated debate, and political brinkmanship, '*as no former time could parallel*' (author's italics). During the morning a crowd of 'more than 5,000' of the capital's 'lower inhabitants' descended on Westminster.⁶³⁵ 'The rabble came in such multitudes and with so great clamour'⁶³⁶ that the 'Lords were in danger of suffering from the barbarity of this mob, which was summoned for nothing else than to inveigh against the proper inclination to render to the king the obedience due to him, and bring peace to the kingdom'.⁶³⁷ As peers ran the gauntlet of angry demonstrators in Old Palace Yard they were assailed with a succession of threatening cries. Some called for 'no peace', while others reminded them of their 'great promises at Guild Hall, at the entrance into this war, that you would live and die with us'. There were even accusations that they would 'do the commonwealth less hurt by being at Oxford', whereas 'here you destroy millions by giving away at a clap religion, liberty and future safety'.⁶³⁸ And at the door they were harangued by more demonstrators, 'behaving themselves imperiously', who threatened that they would return 'next day with double the number' if their Lordships 'had not a good answer'.⁶³⁹ D'Ewes claimed that John Pym and other 'violent spirits' secretly welcomed the arrival of the 'seditious multitude'.⁶⁴⁰ But as Robert Brenner has argued, the capital's militants 'lacked the support of either Pym or the official City government', and so imposed their will by the 'mass mobilization of the London citizenry' and the 'forging of an alliance with parliament's war party wing'.⁶⁴¹ While Pym did not condone the methods of the extremists, it is important to recognise that he was forced to manage a volatile situation without making it worse.

When it was discovered that the mob had been raised by 'printed papers spread abroad in the city', inviting people to come down to parliament 'in an unlawful manner', the Lords demanded a conference with the Commons to complain about this 'great breach of privilege of parliament'. They declared their intention to adjourn until the following morning, or longer if the unruly crowds were not dispersed, and demanded that the Commons joined with them 'to find out who printed and dispersed the papers, and who were the authors of them, that they may be brought to condign

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.* fol. 145a.

⁶³⁵ CSPV, 1643-1647, p. 8.

⁶³⁶ BLTT, E. 65[26], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 32, 6 – 12 August 1643, p. 432.

⁶³⁷ CSPV, 1643-1647, p. 8.

⁶³⁸ BLTT, E. 65 [11], *Kingdom's Weekly Intelligencer*, 30, 8 – 15 August 1643, p. 228.

⁶³⁹ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 139.

⁶⁴⁰ BL, Harley MS, 165 (D'Ewes diary, History of Parliament Trust transcription), fol. 146a.

⁶⁴¹ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 428.

punishment'.⁶⁴² Shaken and incensed, the Lords had been subjected to a hail of abuse from a disorderly and intimidating crowd. Parliamentary procedure had been subverted in a truly terrifying manner. In fear they abandoned Westminster to escape the wrath of the mob. According to D'Ewes the 'insolent violence' suffered by the Lords on their departure was even worse than the affronts offered earlier.⁶⁴³

John Pym reported the bitter complaints of the peers, that the Commons, despite the 'great cries' and 'tumults' taking place outside, had done little or nothing to disperse the crowds. The Lords indignantly reminded the lower chamber of a former resolution by which they would adjourn their House if 'such tumults' were 'not prevented'. They now 'desired' the Commons to 'join in suppressing these tumults'; otherwise they would 'adjourn their House to a further time'.⁶⁴⁴ It is important to recognise that the conference amounted to a direct accusation against the lower chamber. The Lords were outraged by the inertia of the Commons, despite a previous order to take action against mobs and unruly assemblies.⁶⁴⁵ Clearly the peers would not have adjourned unless they believed their safety to be at risk. As far as they were concerned parliament was under siege, assailed by something akin to a riot. It was, as we have seen, a carefully orchestrated show of force, designed to destroy the peace initiative by intimidating members to vote against the propositions.

Meanwhile 'divers Aldermen and Common Council' assembled at the head of the baying crowd in Old Palace Yard.⁶⁴⁶ Their petition, which demanded a total rejection of the Lords' propositions and the enactment of a City sponsored ordinance raising a huge army,⁶⁴⁷ was presented to the Commons 'with such further insinuations of the temper of the city as were fit for the purpose'.⁶⁴⁸ In this highly charged atmosphere the petition was accepted with the 'hearty thanks' of the House, and an order issued to the parliamentary committee liaising with the London Militia Committee to prepare the City's ordinance for presentation to the Commons. In addition, the committee was instructed to 'receive from the City such propositions as shall be offered

⁶⁴² *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 172.

⁶⁴³ BL, Harley MS, 165 (D'Ewes diary, History of Parliament Trust transcription), fol. 146a.

⁶⁴⁴ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 197.

⁶⁴⁵ The mass demonstrations of 7 August 1643 were an increasing feature of popular politics in the early 1640s. Hostile crowds opposed to Archbishop Laud had besieged Lambeth Palace in May 1640, and on 3 May 1641 more than ten thousand demonstrators occupied Palace Yard, intimidating peers in their coaches and demanding Strafford's attainder. In late 1641 early 1642 Westminster experienced further serious outbreaks of disorder, characterised by huge crowds and increasing levels of violence and intimidation. It was this spiralling volatility that persuaded the king in January 1642 to abandon the capital after the failed attempt to arrest the five members. S. Porter, 'Introduction', in S. Porter (ed.), *London and the Civil War* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 3; Lindley, *Popular Politics*, pp. 4, 21, 92.

⁶⁴⁶ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 197.

⁶⁴⁷ 'The draft ordinance envisaged the establishment of a committee to raise 30,000 foot and 10,000 horse by requiring all men either to serve in person or give financial aid'. Lindley, *Popular Politics*, p. 318.

⁶⁴⁸ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 139.

unto them for the safety of the city', strongly suggesting that the Commons felt obliged to act upon further initiatives from the Lord Mayor and Common Council.⁶⁴⁹ Clarendon was adamant that the intimidation of the mob persuaded the Commons to welcome the City's petition, many of its members either 'withdrawing for fear' or 'others by fear converted'.⁶⁵⁰

Clearly the Commons felt compelled to deal with the City's delegation in a fulsome and accommodating manner. And the decision to go further than the immediate demands of the petition, and to declare a readiness to act upon further directives from the City, is surely revealing. It will be argued here that this apparent camaraderie and sense of common purpose disguised a darker and much more disturbing reality. With parliament's armies in disarray and the prospect of a royalist victory all but certain, the Lord Mayor's petition constituted a thinly veiled threat to take control of the war effort unless parliament rejected the Lords' propositions. Only a week earlier on 29 July (three days after the fall of Bristol) the Commons had been forced to accept that a new independent army, to be raised and maintained by the City under the direction of the Lord Mayor and Common Council, should be commanded by Sir William Waller, and that the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs should take control of the Tower of London.⁶⁵¹ The City had originally petitioned the Commons on 18 July (three days after Waller's annihilation at Roundway Down) for an ordinance placing all forces raised in the capital 'under the sole command of the committee for the militia', followed two days later a further petition, presented by 'divers inhabitants', nominating a committee of parliament to arm, finance and appoint officers for the new army.⁶⁵² The petition pleaded with parliament to 'encourage the whole nation as one man' to 'preserve yourselves and them before the season be over, (which passes swiftly) and it be too late'.⁶⁵³ The petition named '13 radical war-party MPs – men such as Isaac Pennington, Henry Martin, William Strode and John Blakiston – to comprise the committee'.⁶⁵⁴ 'In flagrant violation of the privileges of the Commons', wrote Jack Hexter, 'the petitioners had hand-picked the committee of the House that they would accept'.⁶⁵⁵ 'When laid before parliament', the Venetian ambassador reported, 'the suggestion was not approved as they saw clearly that the city aims at usurping the chief power over

⁶⁴⁹ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 197.

⁶⁵⁰ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 139.

⁶⁵¹ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 187.

⁶⁵² *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, pp. 171 & 175-176; BLTT, E. 61[22], *Kingdom's Weekly Intelligencer*, 18 – 25 July 1643, p. 209; CSPV, 1642-1643, p. 301.

⁶⁵³ BLTT, 669, f. 8[15], *The humble Petition of thousands of the well affected Inhabitants of ... London* (20 July 1643).

⁶⁵⁴ Gentles, 'Parliamentary Politics and the Politics of the Street', p. 150.

⁶⁵⁵ Hexter, *King Pym*, p. 123.

them'.⁶⁵⁶ But the Commons were in no position to object, 'so they mildly rebuked the petitioners for their breach of privilege' and then 'complied with the ultimatum and appointed the desired committee'.⁶⁵⁷ As Ian Roy has pointed out, military control of the capital was effectively transferred from the earl of Essex to Lord Mayor Pennington and the Common Council.⁶⁵⁸

In the context of these threatening developments the real purpose of the City's petition suddenly becomes clear: suppress the peace propositions or face further action from Lord Mayor and Common Council. The City, as we have seen, were assembling an independent army by means of a 'general rising', and had just taken possession of the Tower of London, the country's foremost arsenal and fortress. And, according to Sir Simonds D'Ewes, rumours were circulating the capital that unless the propositions were defeated leading members of the peace party would be arrested. According to Keith Lindley 'the summer months of 1643 marked the high point of militant influence on parliament and city government'.⁶⁵⁹ It is not difficult to see why. With the king on the verge of victory, the capital's radicals were determined to take control of the war before parliament caved in.

It was in this maelstrom of political tension that Pym returned from the conference, reporting the Lords' demands that the Commons should join with them in suppressing the tumults.⁶⁶⁰ This created an awkward and potentially dangerous situation, further complicated by the presence of Lord Mayor Pennington. The City's petition had been presented to parliament by an alderman named Atkins,⁶⁶¹ enabling Pennington, for the first time since he became mayor in August 1642, to take his seat in the Commons to vote against the propositions.⁶⁶² A political and religious zealot, with a propensity for militant action and intimidation, Pennington had been elected to both the Short and Long Parliaments. He had gained political ascendancy 'through his self-appointed role of intermediary between the City and the Commons, and through his influence and prestige among puritan clergy and parliamentary puritan citizens'.⁶⁶³ From 1640 onwards he pursued a radical agenda 'through the organisation of circulating

⁶⁵⁶ CSPV, 1642-1643, p. 301.

⁶⁵⁷ Hexter, *King Pym*, p. 123; The Commons declared the petition 'irregular, and contrary to the proceedings and privileges of Parliament, yet, notwithstanding, considering the great and invincible necessity the kingdom was in at this time wherein safety was to be preferred before privilege of Parliament, they took no further notice of it'. *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, pp. 175-176.

⁶⁵⁸ I. Roy, 'This Proud Unthankful City': A Cavalier View of London and the Civil War, in S. Porter (ed.), *London and the Civil War* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 164.

⁶⁵⁹ Lindley, *Popular Politics*, p. 304.

⁶⁶⁰ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 197.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶² Lindley, *Popular Politics*, p. 318.

⁶⁶³ V. Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford, 1961), p. 237.

petitions and popular demonstrations'.⁶⁶⁴ In December 1640, backed by a thousand citizens, he presented the Root and Branch petition to the Long Parliament.⁶⁶⁵ Shortly afterwards, in February 1641, he appeared to withhold City loan money in order to pressure parliament into action against Strafford, but was opposed (it should be noted) by Pym who moved that the Londoners might be compelled to lend money. The confrontation between Pennington and the parliamentary moderates 'provoked the bitterest conflict'.⁶⁶⁶ In November 1641 he was suspected of 'orchestrating mass demonstrations' at Westminster 'to intimidate MPs during the debate on the grand remonstrance',⁶⁶⁷ and in January 1642 he probably provided refuge for the Five Members at his London house.⁶⁶⁸ As we saw in chapter two, in May 1643 a City loan of forty thousand pounds was offered to parliament on condition that the Lords' passed a bill taxing the estates of the 'ill-affected'.⁶⁶⁹ And in July 1643, at the height of parliament's military collapse, Pennington was associated with the City's 'general rising'; a spontaneous mobilization of the 'well affected' intended to provide the capital with an independent army of 10,000 volunteers.⁶⁷⁰ During the decisive days of late December 1641 and early January 1642 the king accused Pennington of bringing down the mobs and condemned him as a traitor who would never be pardoned.⁶⁷¹ As Michael Braddick pointedly observed, 'London's allegiance was not certain'.⁶⁷²

By August 1643 the capital's Lord Mayor had established a reputation for coercion and intimidation, a man committed to achieving his objectives by almost any means. On the morning of 7 August, sat in the House of Commons, he had a City mob at his beck and call, effectively blocking all movement in and out of Old Palace Yard. The Lords' demand to suppress the tumults therefore meant a direct confrontation with Pennington and the unruly crowds surrounding parliament. According to D'Ewes some members 'would have pretended' that the mob 'was no tumult', which so enraged D'Ewes that he rose to his feet declaring:

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 210. For additional references to Pennington's career as an MP, Alderman, and Lord Mayor, see also pp. 176-184, 198-206, 210-216, 218-221, 260-265.

⁶⁶⁵ Roy, 'This Proud and Unthankful City', p. 154.

⁶⁶⁶ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 332-335.

⁶⁶⁷ Keith Lindley, 'Pennington, Isaac (c1584 - 1661)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

⁶⁶⁸ Roy, 'This Proud and Unthankful City', p. 154.

⁶⁶⁹ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 32.

⁶⁷⁰ BLTT, E. 59[15], *Instructions and Propositions*, 7 July 1643; BLTT, E. 60[9], *Mercurius Civicus*, 7, 6 - 13 July 1643, p. 55; Lindley, *Popular Politics*, p. 314-315.

⁶⁷¹ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 111; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 369-370.

⁶⁷² Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire*, p. 292.

That if this were not a dangerous tumult and which was more an unlawful conspiracy, I knew not was, for here were all the particulars incident to it which might make it of dangerous consequence.⁶⁷³

D'Ewes diary claimed that the mob had been summoned by a seditious meeting, that the 'privilege of parliament hath been absolutely broken and violated', and that some Lords were even now 'in danger of their lives' as they passed through Old Palace Yard to their coaches.⁶⁷⁴ He accused Pennington, 'justly suspected to be a raiser and contriver of all this plot and tumult', to be an 'arch-hypocrite' in falsely alleging that he had done all in his power to prevent these disturbances, when 'those which came down this Monday morning did easily evince with what sincerity he had sent forth those commands.'⁶⁷⁵ 'Divers of us', declared D'Ewes, 'did not believe it'.⁶⁷⁶

D'Ewes stated that those 'truly religious, honest, moderate men' who wished to condemn the mob believed that they would be outvoted by the increase in opposition members attending the House.⁶⁷⁷ However, this version of events is not entirely supported by the *Journal of the House of Commons*, which states that the Lord Mayor was requested 'to take some course to prevent all tumults'.⁶⁷⁸ Pennington did not volunteer to take action until asked to do so, and although he issued a declaration prohibiting unlawful assemblies and printed papers - 'upon pain of incurring the utmost penalty of the law'⁶⁷⁹ - it is significant that the Commons as a body failed to censure the mob or order its dispersal. It is difficult to believe, despite the possibility that some members tacitly approved of the crowd, that the House was not overawed by the gathering in Old Palace Yard. The Lords had been compelled to abandon their sitting and flee for their coaches. It is hardly credible that some of those who now appeared ready to obstruct a denunciation of the mob did not do so out of fear for their own safety. Although the Lords had escaped, these men remained in the chamber, and the vote to decide the fate of the propositions had yet to be taken. As long as the mob filled Old Palace Yard, members would have been acutely aware of the possible consequences of their actions. The result was that the Commons failed to join with the Lords in either rebuking or suppressing the mob. Given the flight of the peers, it seems highly unlikely that Pennington and the tumultuous assembly did not overawe at least a portion of the lower chamber.

⁶⁷³ BL, Harley MS, 165 (D'Ewes diary, History of Parliament Trust transcription), fol. 147a.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.* fol. 145b.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.* fol. 147a.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.* fol. 147b.

⁶⁷⁸ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 197.

⁶⁷⁹ BLTT, E. 65[4], *Mercurius Civicus*, 11, 3 – 11 August, 1643, p. 86.

When the Commons finally resumed the debate on the peace proposals further evidence of malpractice began to emerge. According to D'Ewes the 'violent spirits' now felt confident of victory, and 'contrary to all order' and 'usual proceedings', they pressed to take a vote on rejecting the propositions. This in direct contravention of Saturday's decision to debate the propositions themselves, and indeed as D'Ewes pointed out, despite the fact that part of propositions had already been 'allowed of and agreed unto'. Parliamentary procedure was summarily overturned and the previous vote of the House disregarded.⁶⁸⁰ We must ask why the 'violent spirits' were allowed to get away with this, and why were they able to subvert normal procedure so easily? Pym argued fervently against the propositions, complaining that the Lords had not made their true meaning clear. But once again parliamentary procedure was overturned. Pym, according to D'Ewes, spoke against individual clauses before the House had taken them into consideration. Pym's arguments, D'Ewes claimed, might have had some force had it not been within the power of the House to alter and amend the propositions. D'Ewes stated that he would not pass them as they currently stood, but 'doubtless we may easily make them such as we would have them'. D'Ewes argued that the propositions should be properly debated 'whether we reject them or retain them'.⁶⁸¹ Again we must ask why this eminently reasonable request was not taken up, and why a House that protected its privileges with such jealousy, and proceeded by well-established rules and regulations, was so ready to overturn all customary convention?

Clearly it was a matter of extreme importance to avoid further consideration of the propositions, and to proceed as quickly as possible to a vote on their rejection. The 'violent spirits' were now confident of achieving their aims. They were encouraged by the non-appearance of some members of the peace party, and bolstered by additional numbers recruited to vote against the propositions. And then there was the mob in Old Palace Yard, and the rumours of arrests if the peace proposals were carried. This was a heady cocktail of fear, intimidation, and a cataclysmic contest of political wills. It is the contention of the present writer that Pym was clearly intent upon defeating the propositions, but was prepared to overturn Saturday's vote and proceed, with others, to debate their rejection, because he feared that the City's threats would come to fruition if they were carried. Isaac Pennington, the figurehead of this menace, had taken his seat in the Commons, a persistent reminder of what might lay ahead. And outside in Old Palace Yard a mob of '5 or 6000 of the usual hacksters', who were 'always ready for such

⁶⁸⁰ BL, Harley MS, 165 (D'Ewes diary, History of Parliament Trust transcription), fol. 147b.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.* fol. 148a.

purposes at a minutes warning',⁶⁸² had already compelled the Lords to abandon their sitting. As we have seen, the City had already established a committee of hand-picked war party MPs led by Pennington to oversee a 'general rising' and an independent army, so the infrastructure was in place to take control of the entire war effort. The royalist press claimed that the new committee would quickly supplant Pym's Committee of Public Safety, 'which howsoever it may please the Houses (which peradventure dare not but give way to these vast desires)'.⁶⁸³

Eventually the House came to vote, and it was decided by a narrow majority of 81 votes to 79 to send the propositions to the king. Sensationally, 'the House being not satisfied with the report of the tellers', a second ballot was ordered.⁶⁸⁴ D'Ewes put the discrepancy down to the age of the tellers for the Noes, Sir Robert Barrington (58), and Sir Robert Harley (64), who missed 'nine of their own number', so that in fact they were 88 in total. This irregularity, D'Ewes informs us, was spotted by one of those voting against the propositions, who lodged an objection when the ballot was declared.⁶⁸⁵ After 'much debate' the House again divided and this time the propositions were defeated by 88 votes to 81.⁶⁸⁶ D'Ewes appeared to accept the teller's mistake as a genuine error, and did not challenge the imposition of a second ballot or the validity of the final result.⁶⁸⁷ However, two aspects of this drama are somewhat suspicious and require further comment. First, D'Ewes was not in the chamber when the votes for the Noes were counted, and second, the objection to the first vote was raised by one of those opposing the propositions.

It will be recalled that no protest was raised on Saturday evening when opponents of the propositions prevailed by a majority of only two votes in a similarly close ballot.⁶⁸⁸ But when the vote went against the 'violent spirits' on Monday afternoon a teller's error was claimed and a second vote taken. This alleged irregularity is, I believe, not quite what it seems. When the House divided the Yeas, of which D'Ewes was one, left the chamber while the Noes remained in their seats. D'Ewes was therefore not present when the votes for the opposition were counted and the omission of no fewer than nine of their number supposedly took place. What is absolutely certain is that by the time the second ballot was taken the Noes totalled 88. It should be remembered that the chamber of the Commons could be extremely busy, members constantly coming and going. D'Ewes himself recounts occasions on which he left the

⁶⁸² BLTT, E. 65[26], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 32, 6 – 12 August 1643, p. 434.

⁶⁸³ BLTT, E. 64[11], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 30, 23 – 29 July 1643, p. 396.

⁶⁸⁴ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 197.

⁶⁸⁵ BL, Harley MS, 165 (D'Ewes diary, History of Parliament Trust transcription), fol. 148a-148b.

⁶⁸⁶ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 197.

⁶⁸⁷ BL, Harley MS, 165 (D'Ewes diary, History of Parliament Trust transcription), fol. 148b.

⁶⁸⁸ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 196.

House and returned later to find a debate in progress or some other business in hand.⁶⁸⁹ This movement of people could have easily disguised the addition of nine extra members between the first disputed vote and the point at which the second ballot was taken.

I believe it significant that D'Ewes was not present to witness the work of the 'aged' and allegedly incompetent tellers, and that their mistake was only pointed out after the vote had been declared and by one of those on the defeated side. D'Ewes states that the error would have remained unnoticed if this unnamed member had not also counted those opposed to the propositions. This, together with the fact that no complaint was made on Saturday evening over a similar two-vote majority (which on that occasion favoured the 'violent party'), casts a cloud of deep suspicion over the whole affair. Clearly this is a controversial interpretation of a crucial event, but therein lays the strength of the claim. It was precisely because this was such a critical vote that some members, either in fear of Pennington's rumoured threats, or in absolute determination to prevent a political capitulation, or perhaps both, acted outside the accepted norms of parliamentary procedure and ensured that the propositions were defeated. In light of the suspicious circumstances highlighted above, I believe there is no other explanation for the truly extraordinary decision to retake a vote that would decide the future of the civil war. It should not be forgotten that this was a debate that had begun in the Lords the previous Friday, had raged for two full days in the Commons, brought a hostile mob to Old Palace Yard, and led to the abandonment of the upper chamber. It was an astonishing sequence of events, notable even in a period of the nation's history as turbulent as the civil war. It is in such desperate circumstances that the means will often justify the ends.

A downcast D'Ewes tried to explain how, 'without any new reasons at all', the 'Commons should be so much altered in two days', when on Saturday there had been such a clear majority in favour of the propositions. D'Ewes noted that some members were frightened off, some, such as Sir Christopher Yelverton, Sir William Waller, Mr John Glyn, and Mr Jephson reversed their votes, possibly for the same reason, and some, such as Mr John Moore and others, who were absent on Saturday, took their seats on Monday. D'Ewes bemoaned the fact that 'no means was left unassayed to procure suffrages'.⁶⁹⁰ The Venetian Ambassador was rather more forthright, 'the disposition of many of the chamber being overawed' they 'complied with the demand' of the City.⁶⁹¹

⁶⁸⁹ See for example BL, Harley MS, 165 (D'Ewes diary, History of Parliament Trust transcription), fol. 147a.

⁶⁹⁰ BL, Harley MS, 165 (D'Ewes diary, History of Parliament Trust transcription), fol. 148b.

⁶⁹¹ CSPV, 1643-1647, p. 8.

The royalist press reported that members of the peace party in both Lords and Commons fled by boat to Kingston to seek the protection of Essex and what remained of his army.⁶⁹² And the earl of Holland claimed that the only reason for his subsequent defection to Oxford was 'the tumultuous coming down of certain mean persons to the two Houses of Parliament' threatening 'violence to his person'.⁶⁹³ Almost as soon as the propositions had been defeated the Commons ordered the Committee of the Tower to 'take care to put my Lord Mayor and Sheriffs into possession of the Tower'.⁶⁹⁴ As Robert Brenner has argued, 'in this situation of unsurpassed military emergency, the London citizenry as a whole was more prepared than at any other time during the Civil War years to follow the radicals' political leadership'.⁶⁹⁵

Conclusion

An interesting and revealing aspect of these turbulent debates concerns the mathematics of the various Commons votes. Although more members participated in the second ballot on 7 August (169 as opposed to 160 in the first) the number in favour of the propositions remained constant at 81. Between the two divisions nine extra votes appeared for the opposition. The number of members voting for peace in Monday's divisions (81) was thirteen fewer than the first ballot on Saturday (94), confirming that some members had either failed to attend or changed their vote. In addition the House was larger by ten (169) for the second ballot on Monday than the first division on Saturday (159), again confirming that extra opponents of peace had been drafted in. The result was that the 94 members who voted for the propositions in Saturday's first ballot was, in fact, greater by six than the 88 members who successfully voted against the propositions in Monday's second ballot. If those who had voted for peace on Saturday had voted the same way on Monday the propositions would have been carried - even allowing for the extra members recruited to vote against peace in the second ballot. The only explanation for this remarkable transformation - as the combined testimonies of Sir Simonds D'Ewes, the Venetian Ambassador, Clarendon, the earl of Holland, and the royalist press demonstrate - is that the peace proposals were defeated by intimidation, and not by the arguments deployed in Saturday's and Monday's debates.

Historians have traditionally characterised the days preceding the Commons vote of 7 August as a 'tug-of-war' between the peace party (led by the earl of

⁶⁹² BLTT, E. 65[26], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 32, 6 – 12 August 1643, p. 432.

⁶⁹³ C. R. Kyle and J. Peacey, "'Under cover of so much coming and going": Public Access to Parliament and the Political Process in Early Modern England', in C. R. Kyle and J. Peacey (eds.), *Parliament at Work* (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 20.

⁶⁹⁴ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 197.

⁶⁹⁵ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 459.

Northumberland in the Lords and Denzil Holles in the Commons) and the war party (led by viscount Saye and Sele in the Lords and John Pym in the Commons) for the loyalty of the earl of Essex and his army.⁶⁹⁶ However, this interpretation completely misses the point. Gardiner has shown that the peace party resolved to persevere with the propositions even when it became clear that Essex would not support them.⁶⁹⁷ The real battle was not between the peace party and the war party for the backing of Essex, but, as this study has demonstrated, between groupings in the Commons and the City of London for control of the war effort. David Scott's argument, endorsed by Ian Gentles, that the defeat of the propositions shows that the Saye-Pym group controlled the capital is therefore thrown into doubt.⁶⁹⁸ While Scott is surely correct in asserting that Pennington and the City militants were 'not the mere instruments of the Saye-Pym alliance', he has nevertheless failed to recognise just how much power these Godly citizens wielded over parliament.⁶⁹⁹ The reluctance of the Commons to condemn or suppress the tumults in Old Palace Yard, and the suspicious decision to quash the first ballot on 7 August, strongly suggest that Pennington and his henchmen actually held the reins of power. It was the Lord Mayor – not the Saye-Pym group – who dominated the capital during these tumultuous days.⁷⁰⁰ This thesis has shown in the formation of parliament's council of war on 2 August 1643 that Pym and his fellow members on the council held a moderate position roughly equating to Hexter's 'middle group', while Pennington, one of 13 war party members forced on the House of Commons as a committee to oversee the City's independent army, led a distinct group of extremists that did not include Pym or Saye. It was Pennington, not Pym, who lay behind the carefully orchestrated campaigns of intimidation that 'underlined the power of mass action to influence the course of high politics'.⁷⁰¹ This, then, is the crisis that historians have missed, the real battle for the fate of the civil war and the parliamentary movement. On Monday 7 August 1643 mob rule and parliamentary malpractice saw off the peace propositions. The prospect of a negotiated surrender was finally overthrown

⁶⁹⁶ As the following references demonstrate, the struggle for the support of Essex has formed the focus of historiographical attention in the period immediately prior to 4 - 7 August: Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, pp. 183-184; Hexter, *King Pym*, pp. 143-145; Snow, *Essex the Rebel*, pp. 376-379; D. Scott, *Politics and War in the Three Stuart Kingdoms 1637-1649* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 62-65; I. Gentles, *The English Revolution and the Wars in the Three Kingdoms* (Harlow, 2007), pp. 184-185.

⁶⁹⁷ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 184.

⁶⁹⁸ Scott, *Politics and War*, p. 64; Gentles, *English Revolution*, p. 185.

⁶⁹⁹ Scott, *Politics and War*, p. 46.

⁷⁰⁰ Ian Gentles has drawn attention to D'Ewes' bitter complaint that while no action was taken against the mob on 7 August, large demonstrations of women calling for peace on the 8th and 9th were brutally dispersed by cavalry armed with swords and foot guards who opened fire with live rounds. Gentles, 'Parliamentary Politics and the Politics of the Street', p. 156.

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

and the threat of a political take-over was averted. Ostensibly at least, the war effort would continue with parliament and not the City of London in control.

Chapter Four

WHY PARLIAMENT FAILED

What, precisely, caused the parliamentary war effort to fail so spectacularly during the summer of 1643 has never been fully examined or adequately explained. Why did parliament experience these disasters and what part did the royalists play in this series of victories? Chapter four will attempt to fill this historiographical void by investigating parliament's military demise. The first two chapters of this thesis have suggested four potential reasons: first, the military capabilities of parliament's commanders; second, the inability or unwillingness of parliament's commanders to co-operate effectively; third, parliament's defensive approach to war; and fourth, the inadequacy of parliament's financial strategy. By subjecting each of these factors to detailed scrutiny, we will attempt to establish whether any or all of these reasons, either in combination or in isolation, can account for the onset of parliament's 1643 crisis.

Historiography

First it is necessary to review the way in which historians have understood the *causes* of parliament's 1643 crisis. (It will be recalled that the historiography of its *impact* is examined separately in the introduction to this thesis). However, one thing should be made clear from the outset: the causes of the 1643 crisis have not attracted a consistent or instantly recognisable historiography. Relevant material has to be extracted from the work of historians largely concerned with other aspects of the civil war. Nevertheless, the paucity of direct historiography does not preclude a reasonably detailed analysis, even though the historiography itself has to be consciously linked with the crisis.

S. R. Gardiner's *History of the Great Civil War* almost hit the nail on the head more than a century ago. Writing in 1904 Gardiner perceptively argued that the military situation in July 1643 demonstrated that:

Unity of command and unity of plan were the indispensable conditions of success. If the mutual distrust which had kept back the commanders in the Northern Midlands from hurrying to the succour of the Fairfaxes in Yorkshire was to be repeated in the south, a more crushing blow than that of Adwalton Moor would not be long postponed.⁷⁰²

⁷⁰² S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War* (London, 1904), vol. i, p. 182.

As we have already seen, Gardiner's focus on 'unity of command' finds a ready resonance in this thesis. It is perhaps remarkable that Gardiner's insight has not been developed by succeeding generations of historians, and that these early thoughts on the matter have remained largely unexploited. This may be the result of modern trends in historiography and a sense that things have moved on since Gardiner's day. However, it has been the experience of the present writer that Gardiner's work remains an indispensable tool for any understanding of the civil war.

The publication in 1902 of C. H. Firth's 1901 Ford lectures as *Cromwell's Army* provided a considered assessment of parliament's military failings.⁷⁰³ Firth contended that during the early civil war the desultory leadership of the earl of Essex, and the markedly inferior quality of his soldiers, negated parliament's initial advantage in resources, equipment and numbers. Furthermore, Firth maintained that as a consequence of parliament's defective organisation and administration, the material superiority of 1642 was not recovered during the campaigning seasons of 1643 and 1644. This, Firth argued, presented the king with an opportunity he was unable to exploit because royalist organisation was even worse than that of the parliament.⁷⁰⁴ Although the 1643 crisis is not directly addressed, Firth appears to suggest that while the quality of the king's commanders and soldiers drove parliament to breaking point, organisational factors prevented the translation of discrete royalist victories into a strategically decisive blow. In addition Firth hinted that the resources available to parliament declined appreciably in 1643 and 1644, significantly retarding the effectiveness of the war effort. It is an observation that appears to support the picture of parliament's financial and administrative weaknesses presented in chapter two. On balance, however, it seems fairly clear that Firth believed the inferiority of Essex and his soldiers to be the major cause of parliament's military shortcomings in 1643 and 1644.

In contrast to Firth's emphasis on commanders, armies, and logistics, J. H. Hexter concerned himself with the political mechanics of parliament's early war effort. Hexter claimed that in 1642 and 1643 parliament's military effectiveness was compromised by a disproportionately high representation of 'pacific peers' on what amounted to Westminster's war cabinet.⁷⁰⁵ Though the Committee of Safety was the closest parliament came during Pym's lifetime to a centralised executive, Hexter argued that its work was dominated by a preponderance of lords more inclined to a negotiated

⁷⁰³ Ivan Roots, 'Firth, Sir Charles Harding (1857-1936)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). *Cromwell's Army* has been reprinted on several occasions, the most recent in 1992 with an introduction by John Adair.

⁷⁰⁴ C. H. Firth, *Cromwell's Army* (London, 1902), p. 30.

⁷⁰⁵ J. H. Hexter, *The Reign of King Pym* (Cambridge, 1941), pp. 58-59.

settlement than a military victory. Hexter's view - that the influence of peace lords retarded the Committee's usefulness - was supported by the subsequent research of Lotte Glow.⁷⁰⁶ Glow described a number of factors, of which the peace lords were but one, that markedly diminished the Committee's capacity for successful action. Glow argued that the sheer volume of the Committee's work, allied to the urgency with which it had to be dealt, placed a heavy administrative burden upon the shoulders of inexperienced men. The almost constant need for innovation and improvisation, Glow concluded, together with the domination of the peace lords, resulted in the gradual failure of this necessary experiment in executive government. Hexter and Glow's analysis correlates very closely with the notion of administrative conservatism explored in chapter two. There seems to be a strong consensus that parliament's defensive attitude to civil war in 1642 and 1643 constituted a major failing.

Hexter and Glow's findings indirectly support Conrad Russell's view that victory ultimately depended upon financial organisation and resources. Russell argued that while John Pym's most significant contribution to parliament's war effort was the creation of a financial and administrative system,⁷⁰⁷ Pym's innovations could only take effect over the longer term, helping to explain parliament's acute difficulties in the summer of 1643. Indeed, parliament's administrative and financial apparatus remained incomplete during the period of crisis. It was only the prospect of imminent military defeat that finally overthrew the conservatives in the Lords and Commons and enabled Pym to complete a system of ordinances, committees and treasuries. Financial organisation and the related problems of disbursement were the key issues; for as Russell himself observed, 'an army with no ammunition could not fight; an army with no food usually would not fight.'⁷⁰⁸ He might have added that an army without pay was likely to desert. Nevertheless, the point is that raising and distributing resources was of paramount importance; and in the summer of 1643 parliament had yet to fully impose the structures that would eventually support victory. Thus Russell's view of administrative immaturity and ineffectiveness compliments Hexter and Glow's identification of political reluctance and conservatism, adding further weight to the argument presented in chapter two.

Though largely concerned with political events after 1643, David Underdown's *Pride's Purge* briefly alludes to Firth's argument concerning incompetent commanders and soldiers.⁷⁰⁹ In describing the political agenda of the militant wing of the war party,

⁷⁰⁶ L. Glow, 'The Committee of Safety,' *English Historical Review*, vol. 80, 1965, pp. 289-313.

⁷⁰⁷ C. Russell, *The Crisis of Parliaments* (Oxford, 1971), p. 350.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁹ D. Underdown, *Pride's Purge* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 60-62.

Underdown spotlighted the ineffectual leadership of parliament's armies in 1642 and 1643. The programme of the extremists, that military victory was a non-negotiable prerequisite of any settlement, is here frustrated by the lukewarm commitment of parliament's generals. The reluctance of the aristocratic leadership to pursue a forceful campaign against a determined king had resulted in military failure. It will be recalled from chapter one that the theory of parliamentary military inferiority was largely rejected in favour of a new argument highlighting the non-cooperation of parliamentary commanders and the effective cooperation of royalist commanders. However, Underdown's identification of pacific military and political elements supports Hexter's conclusion that during the early part of the war the peace party tended to dominate.⁷¹⁰

In describing the early evolution of what may be termed the parliamentary war machine, John Morrill placed a particular emphasis on the importance of military organisation.⁷¹¹ Morrill argued that the structure devised by parliament in 1642 became obsolete once the battle of Edgehill and the confrontation at Turnham Green failed to produce a decisive result. As it became increasingly clear that the war would drag on into 1643, nothing was done to reorganise the basic military structure devised in 1642. This, argued Morrill, left parliament with a system that could not cope with the increasing demands and complexities of civil war in 1643 and 1644. Initially parliament's forces were divided into two independent parts. The Houses retained direct control of the local militias, charging them with the defence and pacification of their local areas, while a volunteer army under the command of the earl of Essex was raised to confront the king. Morrill argued that this was perfectly rational in the context of a single campaign in 1642, but wholly inadequate thereafter. Additional volunteer forces raised in other parts of the country were also placed under the earl's command. Thus Essex exercised theoretical control of all volunteer forces, regardless of geography. Morrill argued that this resulted in a division of military authority between parliament and the Lord General, and that ultimate responsibility for strategy was never made completely clear. During 1643 parliament's armies were therefore too independent of each other, while the focus of power in the person of the Lord General created disagreements with his regional commanders and the parliamentary committees running the war effort. Morrill concluded that a 'much more flexible system could have been devised. To attempt to adapt the 1642 model to a totally different situation was foolish.'⁷¹² Morrill's emphasis on the independence of parliament's armies and the

⁷¹⁰ Hexter, *King Pym*, p. 58.

⁷¹¹ J. S. Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces* (London, 1976), pp. 53-60.

⁷¹² Stanley Carpenter broadly corroborates Morrill's view that parliament's armies were too independent of each other, arguing that parliament's financial advantage (control of London and the economic wealth

confused division of military authority underpins the argument deployed in chapter one concerning a lack of cooperation amongst commanders as the principal cause of parliament's military failings. Morrill's penetrating analysis provides a degree of support for the whole issue of parliamentary non-cooperation and royalist cooperation.

Morrill subsequently turned his attention to John Pym, the most 'visible' figure in the House of Commons during the first three years of the Long Parliament.⁷¹³ However Morrill argued that visibility was not synonymous with leadership, and that Pym emerges as an administrator and a manager rather than as a leader or an enactor of legislation. Pym devoted his energies to the co-ordination of the parliamentary defence programme, creating and resourcing the principal field army under the earl of Essex and establishing the parliamentary executive based on the Committee of Safety. 'He did not discover at this time,' Morrill concluded, 'a preoccupation with legislation or even with finance.'⁷¹⁴ How then does Morrill's analysis affect our understanding of parliament's war effort during 1642-1643? All we know of Pym indicates that he favoured military victory as a means of imposing a satisfactory settlement on the crown. But in the interests of parliamentary unity he had to take account of the peace party, principally the conservative peers discussed above by Hexter and Glow. It may have been this particular consideration that directed his activities towards managing the war effort rather than leading it and potentially dividing it. If so, it is possible to speculate that parliament might have avoided crisis altogether in the summer of 1643 had Pym ignored the question of unity and opted instead for a more vigorous leadership role prioritising military victory. However, it is plausible that management, rather than outright leadership, enabled Pym to retain the commitment of both Houses to armed opposition. Nevertheless, the need to accommodate reluctant Lords points once again to the retarding effects of administrative conservatism outlined in chapter two.

Mark Kishlansky, in analysing the rise of the new model army, explored at some length this idea that the early parliamentary war effort was undermined by a simultaneous but contradictory pursuit of both political consensus and military force.⁷¹⁵ Parliament, Kishlansky observed, continued to operate in its accustomed fashion: 'reasoned debate and unanimous resolution' characterised 'the proceedings of an

of the City and south-eastern counties) was undercut by a concentration of decision-making in regional commander's hands, thereby preventing a cohesive coordinated strategy employing all the various parliamentary forces. S. D. M. Carpenter, *Military Leadership in the British Civil Wars* (Abingdon, 2005), p. 65.

⁷¹³ J. S. Morrill, 'The unweariableness of Mr Pym: influence and eloquence in the Long Parliament', in S. D. Amussen and M. A. Kishlanski (eds.), *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 1995).

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁷¹⁵ M. A. Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army* (Cambridge, 1979).

institution designed to do the king's business.⁷¹⁶ As there were no formal leaders and the principal administrators had joined Charles, the Houses lacked both executive and administrative capacities. In addition parliament exhibited an instinctive opposition to military and political innovation. The result, argued Kishlansky, was 'a cautious and conciliatory' approach to war. Charles, on the other hand, enjoyed the strategic superiority of a clearly defined purpose: the suppression of a rebellion and the reoccupation of his capital.⁷¹⁷ Kishlansky's conclusion strengthens the portrait developed in chapter two of an aggressive, vigorous, and motivated monarch pitched against a desultory and ineffective parliament.

Peter Newman took the view that royalist commanders proved to be generally more effective than their parliamentary counterparts. However, it was the king's inability to capitalise on his military successes in mid-1643 that saved the hard pressed roundheads from defeat.⁷¹⁸ As the war progressed, the superior quality of royalist commanders compensated for a gradual decline in the number soldiers available to the king.⁷¹⁹ Newman observed that from 1644 onwards, royalist colonels found increasing difficulty in financing the regiments under their command, leading to a reduction in the size of Charles' armies.⁷²⁰ But in the short term – 1642 to 1643 – the king successfully financed his war effort through the private, though ultimately finite, wealth of many of his leading supporters. However, the inability of individual royalist colonels to continue to find money stood in stark contrast to parliament's long-term access to the financial markets of the City of London. Nevertheless, Newman's belief in the superiority of royalist commanders, plus the relative health of the king's finances in 1643 provides, once again, a picture of relative royalist strength and parliamentary weakness during the early part of the civil war.

Martyn Bennett continued the theme of initial royalist supremacy by reiterating Newman's conclusion that parliament had only been saved from defeat in the summer of 1643 by the king's failure to exploit his military successes.⁷²¹ But what is interesting about Bennett's account is its extreme brevity. Admittedly, the historiography so far discussed has not dealt extensively with the causes of parliament's crisis. Indeed, it has rarely, if at all, thought fit to apply the label 'crisis'. But it has at least addresses the broad question of parliament's 1643 problems in a reasonable if ultimately unsatisfactory way. Bennett, however, makes clear his intention to discuss the civil war

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷¹⁸ P. R. Newman, *Atlas of the English Civil War* (London, 1985), p. 12.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁷²¹ M. Bennett, *The Civil Wars in Britain and Ireland 1638-1651* (Oxford, 1997), p. 165.

in terms of a 'Three Kingdoms' approach, integrating the near simultaneous and overlapping conflicts in Scotland and Ireland into an all-embracing archipelagic narrative.⁷²² Could it be that the inclusiveness of the 'New British History' inadvertently obscures the significance of parliament's inherently English 1643 crisis, thereby explaining Bennett's somewhat superficial treatment? Such a suggestion is not intended to challenge Bennett's expertise or to question the validity of a three kingdoms analysis; indeed, S. R. Gardiner expertly pioneered the concept as long ago as the 1880s.⁷²³ It is merely an attempt to understand what appears to be a dearth of references to the causes of crisis in the historiography of the 1990s.⁷²⁴

In 2004 David Scott alluded to such concerns by admitting that a multiple kingdoms framework 'may not be able to answer all the questions we have traditionally asked of the period'.⁷²⁵ While warmly endorsing a move away from nation centred histories, Scott nevertheless acknowledged the almost inevitable Anglocentrism of an integrated approach.⁷²⁶ Recognising English centrality may explain why Scott had marginally more to say about parliament's difficulties. He reiterated Russell's point concerning the inadequacy of the financial programme in 1642-1643, but attributed its shortcomings to the failure of the supply system, rather than, as Russell argued, the ineffectiveness of parliament's fiscal innovations. Scott specifically blamed poor disbursement for Essex's frequent shortages of men and money, a problem, as we have seen, that similarly affected the armies of Fairfax and Waller.⁷²⁷ Scott's emphasis on inadequate distribution points towards an inefficient system of supply rather than pronounced difficulties in raising money. In chapter two we saw how in May 1643 the speaker of the House of Commons was forced to admit that revenue was quickly consumed locally, leaving little for the support of parliament's various field armies.

In 2007 Ian Gentles provided some very welcome - if somewhat belated - light on the historiographical horizon. Gentles revealingly justified his latest study of the civil war on the grounds that it 'attempted to weave together the twin narratives of politics and war, which are so often treated separately'.⁷²⁸ While readily accepting the validity of a three kingdoms perspective, Gentles appears to imply a mild dissatisfaction with the New British orthodoxy, perhaps, as Gentles suggests, requiring some kind of

⁷²² *Ibid.*, pp. x-xiii.

⁷²³ J. Adamson (ed.), *The English Civil War: Problems in Focus* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 5-7.

⁷²⁴ For example, Peter Edwards' examination of Logistics and Supply (discussed below) is the only essay in a late 1990s edited collection that made any reference to the causes of parliament's 1643 crisis. P. Edwards, 'Logistics and Supply', in J. Kenyon & J. Ohlmeyer (eds.), *The Civil Wars A Military History of England Scotland and Ireland 1638-1660* (Oxford, 1998).

⁷²⁵ D. Scott, *Politics and War in the Three Stuart Kingdoms 1637-1649* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. xi.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. xi-xii.

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁷²⁸ I. Gentles, *The English Revolution and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms 1638-1652* (2007), p.4.

correction or modification. Gentles' conscious interaction of politics and war - the '*political* crisis that gripped the capital in the wake of parliament's multiple *military* defeats in the spring and summer of 1643' - allows the freedom to comment specifically on the causes of the 1643 crisis.⁷²⁹ By the end of July parliament had been shaken to its very core, but why, Gentles asked, had the king done so well? Charles benefited from the generosity of his wealthy supporters, who not only placed large sums of money at his disposal, but also raised large numbers of men. In the north-east the royalists out-recruited parliament by at least five to one, while across the country they possessed better and more numerous cavalry. And in Rupert, Wilmot and Goring the king was blessed with better and more effective commanders.⁷³⁰ While Gentles' emphasis on royalist military superiority supports the conclusions of Peter Newman, it does not take into consideration the issue of cooperation amongst commanders, which was strongly flagged up in chapters one and three.

In 2008 Gavin Robinson's detailed study of parliamentary horse supply provided an important insight into the military reverses of 1643.⁷³¹ Significantly, Robinson's research highlighted a rapid deterioration in the parliamentary war effort after a relatively well managed and resourced beginning. 'The overall impression of the first half of 1643 is of disorder and crisis, which contrasts sharply with the situation before Edgehill, when the cause was united and supplies were plentiful.'⁷³² Robinson revealed that 'Essex's army was better supplied and financed in 1642 than it was in 1643' and that 'more horses were bought for cash before Edgehill than in the whole of 1643.'⁷³³ Parliament's initial method of supply, a voluntary system of donations known as the Propositions, provided Essex with a well equipped army for the Edgehill campaign, but proved much less successful thereafter.⁷³⁴ Robinson's findings tend to echo those of John Morrill (discussed above), that parliamentary organisation, satisfactory in 1642, became totally inadequate in 1643. This disintegration of efficiency appeared to mirror the course of the war itself: centrally well supported in anticipation of a short campaign in 1642, but over stretched and inadequately resourced when fighting unexpectedly continued and intensified. Robinson's analysis sheds important new light on the condition of the parliamentary cause during the first half of 1643, revealing a war effort struggling to meet the demands of a rapidly expanding conflict.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁷³¹ G. Robinson, 'Horse Supply and the Development of the New Model Army, 1642-1646' in *War in History*, 2008, 15, 2, pp. 121-140.

⁷³² *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*

Finally, also in 2008, Michael Braddick became the first historian to suggest the factors that would ultimately bring about parliament's military collapse. Braddick's observations, which offer a rare insight, are such a departure from previous historiographical comment that they are quoted in full:

Behind the noise of the day-to-day news it was possible to perceive larger trends and deeper problems – the reluctance of armies to move, the difficulty of securing an effective strategic control of particular commanders, the problems of co-ordinating effort, and of supplying the armies. At various points, both sides experienced these handicaps, but they seemed more urgent for the parliamentarians by the spring of 1643.⁷³⁵

Although Braddick addresses the military situation in spring 1643, rather than the high summer of July and August, he nevertheless pinpoints a combination of factors that would later result in a disastrous lack of parliamentary cooperation. Here at last is a tentative recognition of the deep-seated causes of parliament's military disintegration and descent into political crisis.

Despite a general - though not total - tendency on the part of historians to sidestep a specific and detailed examination of the causes of parliament's crisis, this survey has nevertheless provided an unmistakeable picture of royalist ascendancy during the first half of 1643. Firth, Newman and Gentles have emphasised the military superiority of the king's commanders, while Hexter, Glow, Underdown, Morrill and Kishlansky have described the detrimental effects of parliament's cautious and peace orientated approach to war. To varying degrees, Russell, Newman, Scott and Gentles have outlined a potentially significant royalist advantage in terms of financial provision, while Morrill and Robinson have identified the inadequacy and deterioration of parliament's military organisation in 1643. And finally Gardiner and Braddick have highlighted command and organisational deficiencies, which appeared to affect the parliamentarians to a greater degree than their royalist opponents. The historiography – patchy at best – has thrown up four potential causes of parliament's 1643 crisis: first, royalist military supremacy; second, parliament's defensive approach to war; third, financial inadequacy; and fourth, defective organisation. These findings will be further evaluated below, but first we need to examine the causes of crisis presented in chapters one and two of this study.

⁷³⁵ M. Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire* (London, 2008), p. 267.

Thesis Findings

The first two chapters of this thesis have provided four potential causes of parliament's crisis. Chapter one set out to investigate the quality of parliament's principal commanders, but soon became involved in an examination of poor parliamentary cooperation and excellent royalist collaboration. Chapter two began with the defensive nature of parliament's approach to civil war, and continued with an exploration of parliament's inadequate financial system. These four factors – commanders, cooperation, defensive approach, and financial weakness - will now be evaluated in greater depth, beginning with the effectiveness of parliament's generals and soldiers.

As we have seen, the earl of Essex bore the onerous responsibility of bringing the king's army to battle. His strategy was governed to a large extent by the need to preserve an army in being, so as to sustain the political cause that depended upon it. Outright military defeat would almost certainly result in capitulation. A failure to recognise the political component of the Lord General's remit has resulted in an unduly hostile historiography. Essex has been castigated as an incompetent and ineffective commander.⁷³⁶ Yet the evidence strongly suggests that Essex proved equal to his commission. He almost carried the day at Edgehill in October 1642, despite the fact that his cavalry were no match for the cavaliers, and successfully defended the capital at Turnham Green in November.⁷³⁷ In April 1643, due to a chronic shortage of pay, he was denied an opportunity to besiege Oxford before the queen's first supply convoy tipped the balance of power in favour of the royalists.⁷³⁸ Though he was ultimately unable to deliver the knockout blow his critics demanded, he maintained an army in being and skilfully denied the enemy an opportunity to secure victory. Clearly he was not a dashing Rupert, but he was careful and methodical, and had he been able to follow the capture of Reading with a siege of Oxford the war might have taken a different course. It is difficult, in these circumstances, to justify accusations of incompetence or inferiority.

The Fairfaxes, once in arms, proved to be resourceful and tenacious leaders. When the earl of Newcastle invaded Yorkshire in December 1642, fellow parliamentary forces based in the county abandoned them.⁷³⁹ Undaunted the Fairfaxes carried the fight to the enemy, confounding royalist expectations of a swift and decisive victory. In January 1643 Sir Thomas Fairfax captured Leeds in a ferocious assault. And

⁷³⁶ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 134; J. Kenyon, *The Civil Wars of England* (London, 1988), p. 33; A. Woolrych, *Battles of the English Civil War* (London, 1991), p. 13.

⁷³⁷ J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1721), vol. v, pp. 39 & 59-60; B. Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs* (Oxford, 1853), p. 193.

⁷³⁸ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 18; Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, pp. 91 & 131.

⁷³⁹ R. Bell (ed.), *The Fairfax Correspondence* (London, 1849), vol. i, pp. 25-30.

despite the destructive hostility of the Hothams, the arrival of the queen, and the defection of Sir Hugh Cholmley, the Fairfaxes remained steadfast and resolute opponents. Though Newcastle's numerical superiority confined them to their west riding heartland, Sir Thomas astounded the enemy once again by storming Wakefield in May 1643.⁷⁴⁰ With the royalists in disarray, the Fairfaxes may well have thrown Newcastle out of the county had Cromwell's 6,000 reinforcements arrived in early June.⁷⁴¹ Despite a ferocious rear-guard action they were finally overwhelmed at Adwalton Moor on 30 June 1643. Nevertheless, Clarendon was forced to concede that:

It must be confessed, the enemy in those parts, with whom the earl of Newcastle was to contend, in courage, vigilance, and insuperable industry, was not inferior to any who disquieted his majesty in any part of his dominions ... the Lord Fairfax and his son with incredible activity reducing towns when they had an army, and when they were defeated in the field out of small towns recovering new armies.⁷⁴²

It seems fair to conclude that Sir Thomas in particular proved to be at least the equal of Newcastle and his fellow royalist commanders. An inspiring and dashing leader, he would prove his worth as general of parliament's war-winning New Model Army.

Sir William Waller's quality is a little more difficult to determine. By the close of 1642 'William the Conqueror' had won a string of minor victories against lightly defended royalist garrisons. His success created an impression of dynamism and efficiency and he was publicly lauded by a grateful parliament.⁷⁴³ However Waller's appointment as major general of the Western Association in February 1643 proved a much sterner challenge. Prince Maurice inflicted a comprehensive defeat at Ripple Field in April 1643, although in fairness Waller was severely handicapped by a shortage of foot and cannon.⁷⁴⁴ And despite repeated warnings from exasperated parliamentarians, a strategic miscalculation allowed the uncontested union of two potent royalist armies at Chard in early June.⁷⁴⁵ Nevertheless, after a fierce confrontation with Hopton and Maurice at Lansdown on 5 July, Waller was on the verge of defeating Hopton at Devizes when reinforcements under Lord Wilmot annihilated his army on Roundway

⁷⁴⁰ Thomas Lord Fairfax, 'A Short Memorial of the Northern Actions During the War There, From the Year 1642 Till 1644', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. iii, (1884), pp. 212-213. J. Binns, *Yorkshire in the Civil Wars* (Pickering, 2004), p. 67.

⁷⁴¹ British Library Thomas Tracts (BLTT), E. 55[14], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 23, 4 – 10 June 1643, p. 296.

⁷⁴² W. D. Macray (ed.), *The History of the Rebellion by Edward Earl of Clarendon* (Oxford, 1888), vol. iii, p. 101n.

⁷⁴³ J. Adair, *Roundhead General* (London, 1969), pp. 50-53; *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. ii, p. 929.

⁷⁴⁴ P. Young and R. Holmes, *The English Civil War A Military History of Three Civil Wars 1642-1651* (London, 1974), pp. 120-123; BLTT, E. 99[22], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 15, 9 – 15 April 1643, p. 188-189.

⁷⁴⁵ Historic Manuscripts Commission (HMC), *Portland Mss*, vol. i, pp. 709-712; Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 72.

Down eight days later. Sir William excelled in defensive situations like Lansdown or attacks on enemy strongholds, but in open battles, like Ripple Field and Roundway Down, he was less effective. It is fair to say that royalist commanders enjoyed a slight advantage over Waller, although it is equally evident that the western campaign, like that in Yorkshire, could easily have had a different outcome.

Parliament's rank and file soldiers presented a number of problems. In September 1642 it was reported that Essex's men considered themselves traitors and that Essex himself had to plead for money to prevent wholesale desertion.⁷⁴⁶ Rupert mauled his cavalry at Powick Bridge and he was forced to spend four weeks at Worcester training his ill-disciplined force for battle.⁷⁴⁷ In early November 1642, as the king marched towards the capital, Essex appealed for a search of London and the county of Essex for the numerous soldiers who had deserted his army since Edgehill.⁷⁴⁸ And in June 1643 the Lord General's disintegrating forces were described as sickly and undisciplined, while Essex himself complained of the looseness and inconsistency of his soldiers.⁷⁴⁹ The Fairfaxes were slightly more fortunate, successfully recruiting an enthusiastic and highly motivated army. Fuelled by fear of a Catholic invasion, many Yorkshire puritans flocked eagerly to parliament's banner.⁷⁵⁰ But by May 1643, as Newcastle's numerical might began to tell and supplies dried up, even the Fairfaxes faced mutinous troops and the threat of desertion.⁷⁵¹ Waller's soldiers quickly gained a reputation for poor discipline and unruly behaviour. In December 1642, despite Waller's best efforts, they sacked Winchester and plundered Chichester cathedral.⁷⁵² And in May 1643 a mutiny at Gloucester immobilised the army for a whole week, sabotaging last minute attempts to prevent the union of Hopton's forces with those of Maurice and Hertford.⁷⁵³ The inconsistency of parliament's rank and file lends some weight to the argument that parliament's commanders did not suffer in comparison with their royalist counterparts.

It is perhaps surprising, given the magnitude of parliament's military demise during the summer of 1643, that the quality of her commanders and soldiers should

⁷⁴⁶ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic (CSPD)*, 1641-1643, p. 390; BLTT, 669. f. 5 [77], *A letter from Robert Earl of Essex*, 15 September 1642.

⁷⁴⁷ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, pp. 69-71; Firth (ed.), C. H. Firth (ed.), *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow* (Oxford, 1894), p. 41; W. B. Devereux (ed.), *Lives and Letters of the Devereux Earls of Essex 1540-1646* (London, 1853), vol. ii, p. 352.

⁷⁴⁸ V. F. Snow, *Essex the Rebel* (University of Nebraska, 1970), p.340.

⁷⁴⁹ A. B. Hinds (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Venetian (CSPV)* (London, 1925), 1642-1643, p. 283; Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 154n.

⁷⁵⁰ A. Hopper, 'Black Tom': *Sir Thomas Fairfax and the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 135-137.

⁷⁵¹ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, pp. 66-67.

⁷⁵² HMC, *Portland Mss*, vol. i, pp. 84-85; Adair, *Roundhead General*, pp. 50-53.

⁷⁵³ HMC, *Portland Mss*, vol. i, p.712; Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 72.

present such a mixed picture. One might have expected that failure on such a scale would be clearly attributable to inferior forces and leaders. Yet this does not appear to be the case. The evidence presented in chapter one shows that the disintegration of Essex's forces stemmed from disease, desertion, and a lack of pay and supplies; that the Fairfaxes were too heavily outnumbered to sustain, without substantial reinforcements, continued opposition to the earl of Newcastle; and that Waller's strategic miscalculation, despite similar difficulties over pay and supplies, placed the western campaign in jeopardy. This is not to ignore the fact the Adwalton Moor and Roundway Down were crushing royalist victories, merely to emphasise that battles were heavily influenced by a whole host of factors. Taken overall, it seems reasonable to suggest that royalist commanders failed to demonstrate a consistent martial superiority, and that the often-conjectured pre New Model Army inferiority of parliament's commanders does not appear to explain the 1643 crisis.

The second category of thesis evidence concerns the vitally important but historiographically neglected question of military co-operation. During 1643 parliament's commanders displayed a catastrophic inability to collaborate effectively. It was a deficiency that stood in marked contrast to the ready willingness of royalist commanders to mount extremely successful combined operations, often at short notice and in pressing circumstances. This striking discrepancy in military efficiency brought parliament to its knees and the king to the verge of total victory.

Parliament's crisis began with the destruction of Lord Fairfax's northern army at the battle of Adwalton Moor on 30 June 1643. From the very outset Fairfax's campaign against the earl of Newcastle's numerically superior forces had been undermined by a chronic lack of cooperation. The earl had invaded Yorkshire on 1 December 1642⁷⁵⁴ at the behest of the counties beleaguered royalists, an act of cooperation that stood in marked contrast to the conduct of Yorkshire's parliamentarian commanders. On Newcastle's arrival 800 soldiers raised in North Yorkshire and Cleveland returned to their homes, while Sir Hugh Cholmley with 700 men, and Colonel Boynton with 800 more, returned to Scarborough and Hull respectively despite orders to reinforce Lord Fairfax. Requests to Sir John Gell in Derbyshire and Sir Anthony Irby in Lincolnshire similarly failed to produce any assistance.⁷⁵⁵ And when the Fairfaxes attempted to recruit the poor and religiously radical, the governor of Hull, Sir John Hotham, and his son, Captain John Hotham, ceased all cooperation and began secret negotiations with

⁷⁵⁴ C. R. Markham, *Life of the Great Lord Fairfax* (London, 1870), pp. 71-72.

⁷⁵⁵ Bell (ed.), *Fairfax Correspondence*, vol. i, pp. 25-30.

the enemy.⁷⁵⁶ Then, in March 1643, the queen persuaded Sir Hugh Cholmley, the governor of Scarborough Castle, to defect to the king.⁷⁵⁷ But even worse was to follow. In late May the failure of 6,000 reinforcements to march to the Fairfaxes' rescue, as Newcastle had rescued the royalists, led to disaster at Adwalton Moor.⁷⁵⁸ Although heavily outnumbered the resilient Fairfaxes almost pulled off a sensational victory,⁷⁵⁹ and had they been reinforced, might well have avoided disaster or even triumphed. However, this latest and most critical parliamentary failure to cooperate with the Fairfaxes resulted in a crushing defeat, which left the north of England in Newcastle's hands and cleared the way for a royalist advance on London. The shock waves of Adwalton Moor initiated parliament's crisis and created an urgent need for Scottish military assistance.⁷⁶⁰

The campaign that led to parliament's second disaster of the summer – the annihilation of Sir William Waller's western army at the battle of Roundway Down – commenced with yet another example of parliamentary non-cooperation. On 15 May 1643 forty wagonloads of vital arms and ammunition, despatched from York by the queen, reached the royalist capital of Oxford unopposed,⁷⁶¹ despite orders to 'Lord Gray, Colonel Cromwell, and other forces in the north' to prevent its passage.⁷⁶² The safe arrival of the convoy replenished the king's principal field army, and permitted a large force of cavalry under Prince Maurice and the marquis of Hertford to reinforce Sir Ralph Hopton's Cornish army, enabling the royalists to take the offensive against Waller.⁷⁶³ But on 5 July he halted Hopton's advance in a fierce battle at Lansdown outside Bath, and pursued the enemy to Devizes where he laid siege to the town. On 13 July, with Waller poised to complete a remarkable victory, Lord Wilmot arrived from Oxford with more royalist reinforcements, and although outnumbered, destroyed Waller's entire army on Roundway Down.⁷⁶⁴ At this critical point in the western campaign Wilmot's stunning triumph had turned the tide and averted a royalist catastrophe. Cooperation on a truly remarkable scale had saved the king's cause in the west, in stark contrast to Yorkshire where the failure of parliament to reinforce the

⁷⁵⁶ A. J. Hopper, 'Fitted for Desperation,' *History*, vol. 86 (April, 2001), p. 141.

⁷⁵⁷ BLTT, E. 59[9], *A true and exact relation of all the proceedings of Sir Hugh Cholmley's revolt* (London, 7 April 1643), p. 5.

⁷⁵⁸ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 159.

⁷⁵⁹ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 279.

⁷⁶⁰ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 122; *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 155.

⁷⁶¹ Young and Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 122.

⁷⁶² *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 43.

⁷⁶³ Young and Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 122.

⁷⁶⁴ C. E. H. Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile: Hopton's narrative of his campaigns in the West 1642-1644* (Somerset Record Society, 1902), 18, pp. 51-58 & 91-98; BLTT, E 61[6], *A True Relation of the Late Fight Between Sir William Waller's Forces and Those Sent from Oxford; Adair, Roundhead General*, pp. 70-97.

Fairfaxes had resulted in disaster. As the summer of 1643 progressed it was becoming increasingly clear that military success depended upon effective cooperation between commanders.

The third catastrophe to rock parliament during the summer of 1643 occurred less than two weeks after Roundway Down with the loss of Bristol. The capture of the kingdom's second port and parliament's most important western garrison began, once again, with a further example of parliamentary non-cooperation, and a breathtaking example of royalist cooperation. On 13 July, despite orders to intervene, three parliamentary commanders 'with sufficient forces' failed to prevent the second of the queen's supply convoys reaching the king.⁷⁶⁵ Consisting of 3,000 foot, 30 companies of horse and dragoons, six pieces of cannon, two mortars, and 150 wagons,⁷⁶⁶ these substantial additions to the Oxford army enabled Prince Rupert to quickly reinforce Hopton's western army. On 26 July, after a day of bloody fighting, the combined forces of Rupert and Hopton breached Bristol's defences and forced the garrison to surrender.⁷⁶⁷ The royalist press reported that the loss of Bristol 'doth more astonish them than all the rest of their misfortunes in the North and West'.⁷⁶⁸

Here then, in the campaigns that led to disaster at Adwalton Moor, Roundway Down, and Bristol, we find a convincing explanation for parliament's descent into crisis. A fatal lack of cooperation, resulting in an inability to mount even the most rudimentary combined operations, exacerbated by the exemplary willingness of royalist commanders to collaborate with loyal and obedient efficiency. While cooperation and strategic movement rejuvenated the king's war in the first half of 1643, disunity and insularity undermined parliament. The contrast could hardly have been greater. The result was a series of crushing defeats that brought parliament to the brink of political catastrophe.

The third area of thesis evidence concerns parliament's defensive attitude to war. This apparent predisposition was rooted in, and sprang from, parliament's normal role as an advisory and legislative adjunct to royal government. The partnership of monarch and parliament, well established by the seventeenth century, supported an ideological framework of collaboration and mutual dependence. The principles of reasoned debate and the search for consensus guided parliamentary procedure. In passing laws and taxes, and in offering advice to the king, the Houses sought to speak with a single unified voice. Factions were considered disruptive and unwelcome,

⁷⁶⁵ CSPV, 1642-1643, p. 292.

⁷⁶⁶ Henrietta Maria to King Charles, 27 June 1643, Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 274.

⁷⁶⁷ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 284; Young and Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 141.

⁷⁶⁸ BLTT, E. 65[26], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 32, 6 – 12 August 1643, p. 427..

disputes handled in an air of cooperation and conciliation. It was in the light of these entrenched philosophies that parliament entered into civil war.⁷⁶⁹ Yet the prospect of military action did not alter parliament's conception of its role as the king's great council. The Houses continued to act in an advisory capacity, tempering the means by which a resort to arms would ultimately be made. On 22 September 1642 Lords and Commons instructed Essex to present a petition to Charles, requesting the king's safe withdrawal before the two great armies met in combat. The importance of this reverential etiquette may be judged by the fact that it was not until 18 October that Essex finally reported the failure of two protracted attempts to present the petition. Although in a condition of civil war, the Houses instinctively adhered to traditional and familiar parliamentary functions.⁷⁷⁰

Nowhere is parliament's consensual approach to war better illustrated than in the aftermath of Edgehill (23 October 1642). As Charles marched towards London the House of Lords proposed an immediate reopening of negotiations. But instead of rejecting such a move in favour of renewed military activity parliament accommodated both positions in a single policy. On 2 November Pym announced that the Committee of Safety would issue an address aimed at paving the way for a resumption of talks, while at the same time ensuring that the preparation of armed forces would be stepped up.⁷⁷¹ Although this had the undoubted advantage of preserving parliamentary unity at a time when the faint hearted were likely to jump ship, it also meant that the proponents of peace carried equal weight with those who believed firmly in military victory. Nonetheless, the pursuit of a dual policy meant that within hours of the final collapse of the Oxford Treaty in mid April 1643 Essex was marching towards the king at the head a newly recruited army.⁷⁷² Though it is debateable whether Essex could have launched an offensive any earlier, the fact that the Oxford negotiations continued for more than two months suggests a strong parliamentary consensus for diplomacy. It was not until June 1643 that parliament showed any inclination to abandon its innate reticence. The discovery of Edmund Waller's plot to betray London to the king finally heralded a fresh and much tougher approach. Two ordinances, a national covenant to reveal further royalist conspiracies and an enactment to regulate the press, attempted to create a new and more forceful regime of war management.⁷⁷³ That the introduction of stricter

⁷⁶⁹ D. L. Smith, *The Stuart Parliaments 1603-1689* (London, 1999), pp. 4-8; M. A. Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 11.

⁷⁷⁰ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. ii, p. 778; Snow, *Essex the Rebel*, pp. 331-333.

⁷⁷¹ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 53; *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. v, pp. 424 & 430-431.

⁷⁷² Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 265.

⁷⁷³ C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642-1660* (London, 1911), vol. i, pp. 175 & 184-186.

controls should emerge only as the result of a highly dangerous enemy intrigue highlights the reactive and defensive nature of the early war effort.

Parliament's traditional function as the king's great council and forum for reasoned debate acted, therefore, as a check to those members who wished to prosecute a vigorous war. This stood in marked contrast to Charles' determination to settle his rebellious parliament by force. Before the Oxford Treaty began on 1 February 1643, the king rejected a general disbandment of armies, confirming for many parliamentarians a strong royalist preference for military victory. Unlike parliament, Charles had a clearly defined strategic goal: the reoccupation of his capital and the suppression of a rebellion.⁷⁷⁴ The crown's willingness to deal with opposition by force had been clearly demonstrated in 1639 and 1640. Charles twice mobilised armies to counter Scottish disobedience without the financial support of parliamentary taxes. He relied in part, as he would in 1642, upon the private wealth of councillors and courtiers. The humiliating failure of the Bishops' Wars did not, however, dissuade the king from waging a further war without parliamentary consent or supply, this time against parliament itself.⁷⁷⁵

But where did the king's determination to suppress parliament's rebellion come from, what was the basis upon which Charles pursued his war aims with such apparent conviction, and how did he rationalise his actions in terms of his position as monarch? Richard Cust has written a highly perceptive biography of Charles I, demonstrating a remarkable understanding of the king's character and motives. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his analysis of Charles' attitude towards disobedience in general and parliament's rebellion in particular:

For reasons which often seem to have had to do with a particular sense of personal injury and a near paranoia about the ultimate objectives of his opponents, he was much keener to punish than to settle. He was not insincere in his desire to promote peace and unity; but it had to be on his own terms, which generally went so far beyond anything his opponents were likely to agree to that they had little choice except but to struggle on until one side emerged as the victor.⁷⁷⁶

Cust's portrait is instantly recognisable and certainly accords with the image of the king presented in this thesis. But it is possible to go further, to strike at the very heart of Charles the man and Charles the monarch. Cust himself hints at these deeper motives, commenting that the king's conscience 'persuaded him not to give ground to those he

⁷⁷⁴ Kishlansky, *New Model Army*, p. 6.

⁷⁷⁵ M. C. Fissel, *Bishops' Wars* (Cambridge, 1994), pp 8-10.

⁷⁷⁶ R. Cust, *Charles I A Political Life* (Harlow, 2005), pp. 469-470.

perceived to be his, and God's, enemies'.⁷⁷ In all probability, as Cust suggests, Charles would have preferred a negotiated settlement, but his position as king, his coronation oath, demanded that parliament's rebellion be put down. His position as God's representative in the secular affairs of men justified his actions, no matter how heavy handed, insensitive, belligerent, or aggressive. In his view any gamble or policy was warranted if it upheld the majesty of kingship and defended royal authority against attack. Charles saw himself as the custodian of a cherished responsibility, passed by divine right from one monarch to the next. He ruled by the Grace of God, and any attempt to challenge the king was, in his view, a blasphemy, an offence against the Almighty. Charles shouldered a responsibility that transcended the temporal realm; his ultimate duty was to an intangible semi-divine status that many believed he embodied. This was a sincerely held and deeply motivating conviction, one, it seems, that guided Charles throughout his life. It is a philosophy that explains the king's absolute determination to defeat parliament by force, revealing a man preoccupied with the crushing weight of secular and divine obligation.

In conclusion it seems fairly clear that parliament's defensive attitude undermined the war effort. The desire to maintain unity stifled a vigorous campaign and resulted in a strategy that embraced hostilities only in so far as they were likely to induce the crown to negotiate. It is an approach that appears to be the inevitable consequence of parliament's accustomed role in government. Parliament was in every sense a junior and intermittent player in national politics, only entering the political realm when the king chose to summon it, effectively taking the role of servant to the king's master. It was an unequal yet well-proscribed arrangement. But even within this disadvantageous relationship parliament exhibited a clearly defined attitude to the way in which it conducted its affairs. This, as we have seen, tended to result in an overly defensive attitude to war. When hostilities commenced parliament was compelled to step out of the king's shadow and establish itself as an alternative government. Yet the role to which it was accustomed was hardly an appropriate way to prepare for such a transformation. It is little wonder that parliament generally erred on the side of caution, matching the king where necessary and attempting to avert defeat at all costs. Parliament's defensive approach, therefore, undoubtedly played a part in the decline that led to crisis, but it emerges as a condition in which a crisis could take place, rather than the cause of the crisis itself.

The final area covered by this thesis concerns parliament's financial strategy. Initially parliament planned to manage the war on a voluntary basis. Anticipating a

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 468.

short campaign followed by a swift resolution, the army raised by the earl of Essex consisted of volunteer soldiers supplied and maintained by voluntary contributions. The principle was established in the Propositions of 9 June 1642, which appealed to the well affected for donations of plate, money and horses.⁷⁷⁸ Contributions were to be repaid in full, including an adjustment of interest in the case of cash payments. All succeeding enactments up to the introduction of the Weekly Assessment in February 1643 attempted to do no more than increase the efficiency of the voluntary system. Parliament finally grasped the nettle of systematic taxation in February 1643 when the army's treasurer, Sir Gilbert Gerard, announced that money to pay the troops had finally run out.⁷⁷⁹ Although peace negotiations had commenced in Oxford, the very real possibility that the talks would fail persuaded parliament that it had little choice but to make financial provision for an escalation of fighting. The Weekly Assessment (24 February 1643), established in every county and city in England and Wales, together with the Sequestration ordinance (27 March 1643), signalled a recognition that the war was entering a new stage and that the voluntary system was now inadequate.⁷⁸⁰ Yet the introduction of systematic taxation did not solve parliament's financial problems. In April the Commons admitted its capacity to harvest revenue remained insufficient: Lord Fairfax's request for assistance was dismissed out of hand, while an ordinance (25 April 1643) appealed for horses, men, and money to be *lent* to Sir William Waller. Following the successful siege of Reading parliament's parlous finances prevented Essex's army continuing its advance upon Oxford – a huge blow to parliament's military strategy. County contributions, it appeared, barely covered basic county expenditure, leaving no surplus to support the principal field armies.⁷⁸¹ In shires closest to the capital parliament attempted to remedy the shortfall by increasing the efficiency of the Weekly Assessment (3 May 1643).⁷⁸² It was, it seemed, one thing to introduce a universal system of taxation and quite another to gather the anticipated yield. These exactions, as Clarendon made abundantly clear, were unprecedented in scale and proved extremely difficult to enforce.⁷⁸³

And yet the Weekly Assessment and Sequestration ordinances stopped short of the full range of revenue raising powers proposed by Pym. In April 1643 an attempt to introduce an excise tax on consumer products had been firmly rebuffed.⁷⁸⁴ At a time when the Houses were actively engaged in the Oxford Treaty, the imposition of an even

⁷⁷⁸ Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, pp. 6-9.

⁷⁷⁹ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 91.

⁷⁸⁰ Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, pp. 85-100 & 106-117.

⁷⁸¹ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 18; Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, p. 135.

⁷⁸² Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, pp. 139-140.

⁷⁸³ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. ii, p. 501.

⁷⁸⁴ Hexter, *King Pym*, p. 27.

greater financial burden was seen as both unnecessary and highly unpopular. As long as the prospect of a negotiated settlement appeared alive, and the military situation remained in a state of balance, more draconian legislation had little chance of support. Pym's frustration was, however, shared by the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Common Council of London. In exchange for a loan of forty thousand pounds the City Fathers required the Lords to finally pass the ordinance to assess a twentieth part of the estates of those who had yet to fully contribute.⁷⁸⁵ The protracted passage of this contentious enactment illustrated two fundamental characteristics of the early war effort. First, it was symptomatic of a growing danger that threatened the unity of parliament and its principal allies. The apparent unwillingness of the Lords to prosecute hostilities in accordance with the wishes of the Commons provoked tension between the Houses and resulted in a serious threat to the City Authority's continued support. Second, and just as important, it was clear that until parliament faced almost certain defeat even the Commons would not sanction further innovations in financial legislation. Though the voluntary system of 1642 had given way to an unprecedented regime of taxation in 1643, it did not amount to the comprehensive programme Pym believed to be essential.

It seems fairly clear that parliament's revenue-raising programme failed to meet the demands placed upon it. The critical point appears to have been reached in February 1643 when money provided by voluntary subscription finally ran out. However the imposition of unprecedented levels of taxation was both contentious and extremely difficult to enforce. The result was that as 1643 progressed parliament's armies suffered from serious underfunding. While the Houses could barely keep Essex's army in the field, Fairfax's northern army and Waller's western army were gradually starved of resources. Financial deterioration clearly impaired the effectiveness of the early war effort, preventing, for example, a major offensive against Oxford in April 1643. But it does not, in itself, appear to explain the sudden collapse of parliament's armies in the summer of 1643. Although the effects were clearly debilitating, financial inadequacy appears to constitute a rapidly increasing danger rather than a decisive blow resulting in crisis.

Comparative Analysis

Thus far historiography and thesis arguments for parliament's military failure have been considered separately. But in order to take the discussion further, it is necessary to bring these hitherto independent lines of analysis together. As we have seen, the evidence assembled in this study strongly suggests the issue of co-operation as the decisive

⁷⁸⁵ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p.32; Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, p.145.

factor, supported to varying degrees by parliament's financial programme and defensive approach. In addition the thesis has argued that the often-supposed inferiority of parliament's commanders is not sufficiently supported by available evidence. By comparing these findings with the historiography discussed above, we apply the test of professional historical judgement: confirming, modifying, or rejecting the thesis hypothesis as appropriate. We will begin by reviewing those arguments in which thesis and historiography appear to concur, before going on to consider those in which thesis and historiography appear to conflict.

The first area in which historiography and thesis are in agreement concerns parliament's defensive attitude to war. This is most clearly delineated in the work of Mark Kishlansky and David Underdown, but finds significant, if less overt, expression in the research of John Morrill. The collective weight of these distinct but not unconnected lines of investigation provides a compelling picture of a defensive and reactive parliament. Mark Kishlansky argues that parliamentarian reticence sprang from the political situation in which the conflict was born.⁷⁸⁶ The resort to arms was intended to be a forceful demonstration of intent, a resolute willingness to *defend* the hard won reforms of the Long Parliament, and to *deter* the king from future aggression. Those who supported war sought only to *preserve* what had been achieved; there was never an intention to crush the monarchy, either militarily or politically. Strategy was underpinned by the rationale that parliament fought for the king. Charles was to be rescued from disaffected councillors, responsible for alienating the monarch from his parliament and his people. But as long as parliament claimed to act on behalf of the crown, Kishlansky argued, an offensive war was impossible. Innovations in both military and political affairs were opposed, and careful deliberation, often supported by precedent, preceded each painstaking decision. While parliament's traditional reliance upon consensus and unanimous resolution preserved a degree of unity in unprecedented circumstances, it nevertheless resulted in a desultory pursuit of the war. Parliament's innate moderation and defensiveness, Kishlansky concluded, allied to a deeply entrenched attachment to well accustomed but inappropriate methods of operation, succeeded only in plunging the institution into one crisis after another.

Significantly, Kishlansky's diagnosis is firmly endorsed by David Underdown's celebrated exposition of Pride's Purge. Though primarily concerned with later revolutionary politics, Underdown nevertheless provides an important survey of parliamentarian war aims in 1642 and 1643. Like Kishlansky, Underdown describes a defensive outlook, designed to counter the king's malignant councillors and to impose a

⁷⁸⁶ Kishlansky, *New Model Army*, pp. 4-6 & 273.

strict and enforceable constraint upon the royal prerogative. Parliament's leaders, in common with the vast majority of their gentry supporters, favoured a moderate reform of both church and state. As far as these men were concerned the war was fought for limited goals, and was not intended to alter the fundamentals of either government or society.⁷⁸⁷ However, this conservative coalition was divided between those who supported a determined use of military force and those who favoured negotiation at any price. The peace party, Underdown continued, trusted in conciliation as the most likely means of safeguarding the reforms of 1641. They did not endorse the view of more tough-minded members that a vigorous pursuit of military action would establish a strong bargaining position. Fighting, as far as it was necessary, could not be permitted to hinder the possibility of peace through negotiation. The peace party believed implicitly in the king's benevolence: that an accommodation would win royal acceptance of parliament's position without the need for a bitter and destructive war.⁷⁸⁸ It was against this half-hearted approach, Underdown concluded, that the revolutionary minority in the Commons would later act, ridding parliament of the aristocratic commanders who had presided over two years of military failure. Godly Reformation demanded the complete overhaul of church and state, nothing less than the king's unconditional surrender and the imposition of a dictated settlement was acceptable. Underdown throws parliament's defensive outlook into much sharper focus. The contrast between parliament's revolutionary minority and the hesitancy of the early war effort adds considerably to the argument for parliamentary defensiveness.⁷⁸⁹

Both Kishlansky and Underdown find indirect corroboration in John Morrill's penetrating assessment of John Pym's wartime parliamentary career.⁷⁹⁰ As we have seen, Morrill contends that Pym's national standing was far greater than his prominence at Westminster. Though he was the most 'visible' of members in the House of Commons, this did not equate to, or was indicative of, parliamentary leadership.⁷⁹¹ His principal role was administrative: co-ordinating the work of the Houses and the Committee of Safety. The emergence of Pym as a manager, rather than as an instigator of legislation, has important consequences for this study. He would, of course, have been acutely aware of the war's ever-increasing material and financial demands. But if Pym's influence were essentially administrative, as Morrill suggests, then his ability to meet those demands would have been severely limited. John Adamson has highlighted

⁷⁸⁷ D. Underdown, *Pride's Purge* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 7-9 & 23.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

⁷⁹⁰ Morrill, 'The unweariableness of Mr Pym'.

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

an important example of Pym's circumscribed powers.⁷⁹² In March 1643, following the publication of a royal proclamation declaring parliament's association of Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and Kent to be 'An act of High Treason, and an Endeavour to take away Our Life from Us'.⁷⁹³ Pym was appointed to a committee to prepare a declaration vindicating parliament.⁷⁹⁴ However, Pym's defence, which stated that the king had fallen under the influence of evil counsels because he was no longer of sound mind, and that sovereignty therefore resided with the Houses and not the person of the monarch, was too strong for Pym's fellow committee members and that part of the text was completely deleted.⁷⁹⁵ Although the amended declaration was overtaken by events and never published, the episode nevertheless indicates the overriding caution of parliament's attitude to the king and to the war in general. Thus Morrill's analysis of Pym fits the hypothesis of a defensive parliament. Those who supported a more aggressive war, such as Pym, were frustrated by a tradition of reverence and a culture of circumspection. Until the military situation reached crisis point more radical measures, such as Pym's trenchant vindication of county associations, would simply have to wait.

The notion of a defensive parliament is therefore well established in the historiography, confirming the picture of a reluctant and anxious parliament presented in chapter two of this thesis. There seems little doubt that this reticent approach contributed to the 1643 crisis - the product of a pronounced division between members prioritising caution and a corresponding group favouring much stronger action. Perhaps the labels 'peace party' and 'war party' require a degree of modification as each of these opposing factions acknowledged the necessary co-existence of negotiation and fighting. The difference, it would appear, was one of emphasis. The negotiators reluctantly accepted the inevitability of a brief resort to arms, but only in so far as the shock and horror of an unnatural civil war renewed and revitalised the search for peace. By contrast, their parliamentary opponents believed vigorous military action to be the only means of bringing Charles to a viable and lasting settlement. In the case of the latter it was not necessary for armed force to result in outright victory or the surrender of the king's forces. Its principal purpose was to persuade the enemy that a civil war was unwinnable, and that the only realistic course of action was to return to the table. As long as a complete royalist triumph in the field appeared unlikely, parliament's consummate ability to accommodate these seemingly incompatible agendas kept the fragile coalition together.

⁷⁹² J. S. A. Adamson, 'Pym as Draftsman: An Unpublished Declaration of March 1643', *Parliamentary History*, vol. 6, pt. 1 (1987), pp. 133-140.

⁷⁹³ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. v, pp. 630-631.

⁷⁹⁴ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. ii, p. 986.

⁷⁹⁵ Adamson, 'Pym as Draftsman', p. 135.

A careful and defensive approach therefore predominated because it guaranteed unity and accorded with parliamentary custom - but had resulted in an ineffective war effort. A political culture in which military victory was subordinate to the requirements of a negotiated settlement may have discouraged parliament's commanders from co-operating as readily as royalist commanders. The widely held expectation that the war would end in some kind of agreement created a situation in which military vigour was held in check by political caution. The historiography of Kishlansky, Underdown, and Morrill finds a resonance in the evidence presented in this thesis: namely parliament's protracted attempts to present the king with a petition before the battle of Edgehill, Pym's declaration that the preparation of armed forces would take place alongside a determined search for peace, and parliament's refusal to enact those unprecedented and unpalatable financial measures required for victory. It wasn't until the discovery of the Waller plot that the Commons attempted to impose a state of emergency through censorship and a covenant to reveal plots. In addition parliamentary caution was exacerbated by the determined and relentless attitude of the king. Charles knew what he had to do and how he had to do it. His war aims were fixed and provided a clear focus for unrelenting action. The crown's strategic objective to end the civil war in military victory afforded a distinct advantage over comparatively hesitant opponents. Perhaps the thesis view that parliament's defensive approach was merely a condition in which a crisis could take place is in need of some modification. The historiography presented above makes a very strong case for the damaging effects of parliament's inherent circumspection.

The second area in which existing historiography and thesis appear to be in agreement concerns parliament's financial strategy. It will be recalled from chapter two that in 1642 parliament planned to pay for its military campaign on the basis of voluntary contributions. When, against expectations, the war dragged on into 1643 a chronic shortage of revenue forced the introduction of systematic taxation. Though the weekly assessment and sequestration ordinances (February 1643) failed to produce anything like the amounts required, members of parliament remained firmly opposed (April 1643) to the introduction of further unprecedented exactions. It was clear, despite a crippling shortage of money to pay the troops, that parliament would not risk the good will of its supporters as long as the current financial system managed to avert military defeat. The programme of voluntary donations had proved adequate for a single field army engaged in a relatively brief campaign. But these arrangements fell well short in 1643 when the war began to expand and intensify. Although the imposition of compulsory exactions and financial punishments had appeared frighteningly radical, the

reality was that demand continued to outstrip supply. As arrears of pay led to widespread desertion and even mutiny, the war effort stumbled towards disaster.

The review presented in this thesis of parliament's revenue raising performance during 1642 and 1643 is precisely mirrored by Gavin Robinson's revealing exposition of parliamentary horse supply over the same period.⁷⁹⁶ Robinson argued that while the supply of horses remained sufficient to equip Essex's army in 1642 it proved totally inadequate in 1643. As the war developed into a national conflict parliament faced rapidly escalating costs, but Robinson argued that the creation of regional forces effectively relegated horse supply as a priority for spending. Robinson revealed that 'more horses were bought for cash before Edgehill than in the whole of 1643' and that parliament 'was better supplied and financed in 1642 than in 1643'.⁷⁹⁷ The voluntary system of donations had provided Essex with a large and well-equipped army, and if the king 'had been defeated as quickly as he had been in the Bishops' Wars',⁷⁹⁸ it would have been viewed as a successful expedient. However, in 1643 parliament needed to raise even greater sums of money, without alienating those who were by and large sympathetic to the cause. This, Robinson concluded, proved remarkably difficult to achieve. Authority could not be imposed centrally; to succeed parliament required the co-operation of local property owners. But as provincial authorities and communities lost enthusiasm for the war, so the yield of the voluntary and then the compulsory systems declined.⁷⁹⁹ 'The overall impression of the first half of 1643 is one of disorder and crisis, which contrasts sharply with the situation before Edgehill, when the cause was united and supplies were plentiful.'⁸⁰⁰ Robinson's unequivocal portrait of relative stability in 1642 followed by 'disorder and crisis' in 1643 parallels exactly the development of parliament's financial programme outlined in chapter two.

Robinson's invaluable analysis of horse supply provides an important and particularly pertinent insight. It informs and confirms the wider management of parliament's early war effort. The abiding impression of February to June 1643, firmly reinforced by Robinson, is one of insurmountable difficulty in financing a conflict that had got horribly out of control. It was becoming increasingly clear that revenue was insufficient to meet the demands of an ever-expanding war effort. Though the principal of systematic taxation had been embraced in the Weekly Assessment, and that of financial punishment in the Sequestration Ordinance, the Houses would not support further extraordinary measures such as Pym's Excise Tax. Despite the desperate

⁷⁹⁶ Robinson, 'Horse Supply', pp. 126, 129, 136 & 140.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.129.

shortage of ready money the majority of members advocated an overhaul of existing revenue raising methods rather than the introduction of a draconian levy on consumer products. The consequences of this half way house policy impacted directly upon parliament's capacity to finance the war. In April the Lords announced that 'in the general combustion of the kingdom' the Weekly Assessment barely met the operational needs of the counties in which it was levied. In addition the City was so hard pressed that 'it can hardly support the Lord General's army, unto which a great arrears remains unpaid, both for pay and supplies of the magazine.'⁸⁰¹ These difficulties may in part be explained by David Scott's argument that a general inadequacy in the system of disbursement, rather than the legislation itself, resulted in damaging shortages of revenue and resources.⁸⁰² Yet whatever the precise truth, the inability of the financial system to fund parliament's principal field armies clearly imperilled the success of the war effort.⁸⁰³

Following the capture of Reading on 26 April Essex informed parliament that he could not advance on Oxford, the royalist capital, until his troops were paid.⁸⁰⁴ By mid May the position had become so desperate that the Lord General returned to Westminster in order to plead for money and provisions. Without prompt supply there was no possibility of capitalising upon the capture of Reading.⁸⁰⁵ In order to bring the conflict to a resolution Essex had to engage the king as quickly as possible, before critical supplies from the north reinforced the royal army. But as long as the Lord General's soldiers remained unpaid and poorly supplied parliament's principal military objective had no hope of realisation. In Yorkshire the situation was even worse. On 23 May both Lord Fairfax and Thomas Stockdale complained to the Commons that unless the crippling shortage of pay, supplies and reinforcements was quickly redressed, what remained of their increasingly mutinous army would soon be overwhelmed, leaving little alternative but to accept 'dishonourable' conditions of surrender. Stockdale warned that a severe lack of cavalry prevented any exploitation of Sir Thomas Fairfax's stunning capture of Wakefield: a chance 'to utterly rent the enemies in this country, or shut them up in holes,' would be lost unless reinforcements were quickly received. An immediate failure to act, Stockdale continued, would only permit a royalist recovery, and then 'we shall be in danger to perish, if the enemy draws his whole force upon

⁸⁰¹ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 18.

⁸⁰² Scott, *Politics and War in the Three Stuart Kingdoms*, pp. 62-63.

⁸⁰³ Only a sixth of the Weekly Assessment was actually collected in 1643 and 1644, the bulk of which was consumed by the county in which it was raised, leaving little or nothing for the Treasurers at War in London. It was not until 1645 that it began to operate more efficiently. Edwards, 'Logistics and Supply', p. 265.

⁸⁰⁴ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 118.

⁸⁰⁵ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 43.

us.⁸⁰⁶ And in the west a chronic dearth of revenue produced similarly disastrous consequences. At the end of May, while Waller belatedly strove to prevent the conjunction of Hopton's western royalists with forces under the command of Prince Maurice and the marquis of Herford, a mutiny broke out amongst his troops at Gloucester. Lack of pay meant that Sir William's existing regiments could not be replenished or new ones recruited. The mutiny immobilized Waller's army for a whole week, during which time his royalist adversaries joined forces at Chard in Somerset.⁸⁰⁷ The breakdown of military authority at Gloucester denied Sir William a final opportunity to prevent this critical union, placing parliament's western campaign firmly on the defensive and providing the royalists with a huge advantage. Across all theatres of combat parliament's inability to resource its armies severely retarded operations and prevented the exploitation of crucial military successes.

While parliament struggled to cope with the financial and logistical demands of an escalating conflict, the king's armies were effectively handed the initiative. The argument that monetary deficiency played a key role in the summer 1643 crisis is supported by evidence concerning royalist funding and supply over the same period. It is often argued that if the king were to win the civil war he would have to do so before parliament's access to the financial markets of London proved decisive. Such an assertion assumes economic parity or even royalist advantage in the early stages of the conflict. Remarkably, perhaps, this does indeed appear to have been the case. At the outset Charles relied to a large extent upon the generosity of his wealthiest supporters. The earl of Newcastle claimed to have spent over £900,000 in the king's cause, while many other peers and members of the gentry personally financed the regiments they raised and commanded.⁸⁰⁸ According to Michael Braddick, 'sixty-seven men paid £70,000 between them for baronetcies', while 'the marquess of Worcester paid £318,000 in one go,' and 'the earl of Pembroke was said eventually to have spent £1,000,000 in the royal service.'⁸⁰⁹ Research shows that in 1643 royalist administration operated with increasing efficiency, and that shortages of arms, men and money were largely overcome.⁸¹⁰ This confirms Ian Gentles argument that royalist military superiority was partly based on access to more money and more soldiers.⁸¹¹ Initially, therefore, the king competed with parliament on at least equal terms, and may well have enjoyed a greater and more ready access to revenue and resources. But as the conflict

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. vi, p.67.

⁸⁰⁷ HMC, *Portland Mss.*, vol. i, p. 712.

⁸⁰⁸ Edwards, 'Logistics and Supply', pp. 263-264.

⁸⁰⁹ Braddick, *God's Fury. England's Fire*, p. 285.

⁸¹⁰ Edwards, 'Logistics and Supply', p. 269.

⁸¹¹ Gentles, *The English Revolution*, p.184.

progressed into 1644 and 1645, so the inability of individual royalist colonels to produce yet more money led to a reduction in the number of soldiers in the king's armies. As 'certain royalist regiments more or less melted away', the reliance on personal wealth, which had hitherto proved so advantageous, became an increasingly difficult handicap to overcome.⁸¹² Parliament suffered from both its own financial inefficiency and from the substantial wealth of the king's principal supporters, a situation that was not overcome until much later in the war. The weight of historiographical opinion, therefore, strongly suggests that financial issues played a much more significant role in parliament's demise than the thesis evidence would allow. Royalist solvency served to exacerbate the effects of parliament's monetary difficulties, seriously impairing the early war effort, and providing the king with both the flexibility and freedom to exploit a rapidly developing situation.

Historiography and thesis therefore agree that parliament's defensive approach to war and inadequate financial strategy account in no small measure for parliament's military demise. However there are two further arguments advanced in this thesis for parliamentary failure that clearly conflict with the historiography: the quality of parliament's commanders and the question of cooperation. We will begin with the quality of parliament's commanders.

The historiography tends to support the popular belief of dynamic and effective royalist armies pitted against less able parliamentary opponents. This is not to say that historians endorse the romantic image of dashing cavaliers running rings around inept roundheads, merely that the notion of royalist military superiority - at least in the early stages of the civil war - is fairly well established. Certainly C. H. Firth had little hesitation in declaring that parliament's initial advantage in numbers and equipment was lost through the fault of the earl of Essex and the inferior quality of his soldiers. The failure of Essex, Firth continued, was compounded by a serious deficiency in parliamentary organisation. The result was that in 1643 and 1644 parliament never regained the superiority of resources it had enjoyed at the beginning of the war; a superiority Essex and his army had helped to squander.⁸¹³ While Firth appears only too willing to castigate parliament's early war effort, Peter Newman takes a much more circumspect approach. Though Newman believes that royalist field commanders were generally better than their parliamentary opponents, he nevertheless offers a more sober and even-handed analysis. Newman acknowledges that the earl of Essex has been under-rated by historians, and that, on balance, Sir Thomas Fairfax was probably a

⁸¹² Newman, *Atlas of the English Civil War*, p. 13.

⁸¹³ Firth, *Cromwell's Army*, p. 30.

better army commander than Prince Rupert. Newcastle, more of a poet than a soldier, at least chose his advisers reasonably astutely, while Sir Ralph Hopton, Waller's opponent in the west, was, in Newman's view, the king's best general. Newman's belief in a discernable royalist advantage in field officers is supported by the fact that the majority of commanders who had gained military experience in Europe before the civil war elected to serve the king.⁸¹⁴ Thus both Firth and Newman, admittedly to differing degrees, endorse a general royalist superiority in officers and soldiers.

Despite Firth's confident assertion of parliamentary inferiority, it is Newman's more measured assessment that accords with the less clear-cut picture provided by this thesis. The early campaigns of the earl of Essex, Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, and Sir William Waller (presented in chapter one) do not support the hypothesis of a universal royalist superiority. True, there are occasions when a royalist advantage can be demonstrated, but the overall impression is that instances of this kind do not in themselves account for the disintegration of the parliamentary war effort. The abilities of Essex, Fairfax, and Waller were as often as not compromised by factors over which they had little or no control. The question of commanders is simply not straightforward enough to be reduced to a general assertion of royalist ascendancy. As we have seen in chapter one, the suggestion that the collapse of parliament's forces in the summer of 1643 must be attributable to the failings or inferiority of its military leaders is not entirely convincing. Though the historiographical notion of cavalier superiority in 1642 and 1643 may at first glance appear compelling, the reality is a good deal more complex.

For example, this study has been at considerable pains to reiterate the point that parliament's Lord General, the earl of Essex, operated under the combined weight of political responsibility and military leadership. This has to be understood before his actions in 1642-1643 can be properly appreciated. The parliamentary cause depended fundamentally upon the earl and his army. If Essex was defeated and his forces destroyed, if the principal parliamentary army ceased to exist, then meaningful resistance would quickly collapse. Once the fighting began political opposition to the king was entirely dependent upon the fate of the war effort. Throughout the 1642-1643 campaigns - the battle of Edgehill, the confrontation at Turnham Green, the siege of Reading, and the enforced march towards Oxford - Essex prioritised the preservation of his army.⁸¹⁵ This created an impression of a negative and reactive commander, laying the earl open to accusations of incompetence on one hand and a reluctance to face the

⁸¹⁴ Newman, *Atlas of the English Civil War*, pp. 10-12; For a similar conclusion see R. B. Manning, *An Apprenticeship in Arms: The Origins of the British Army 1585-1702* (Oxford, 2006), p. 161.

⁸¹⁵ This point is argued in detail in the first section of chapter one.

king on the other. But what Essex's accusers failed to recognise was the raw and undisciplined condition of the parliamentary army that fought at Edgehill;⁸¹⁶ the shell-shocked remnant, albeit reinforced, that barred the road to the capital at Turnham Green;⁸¹⁷ the disease, desertion, and want of regular pay that debilitated the army during the siege of Reading;⁸¹⁸ the catastrophic lack of pay that prevented an immediate attack upon Oxford; and the rapidly shrinking and destitute force that finally marched, under political pressure, towards the royalist capital in June 1643.⁸¹⁹ Essex had little control over circumstances that completely undermined his capacity to fight an offensive war. But what should not be forgotten is that it was the Lord General's resolute leadership of his infantry that almost won the day at Edgehill. Once on the battlefield Essex proved himself a most courageous and capable commander. In addition he consistently placed the parliamentary cause ahead of his own interests. No matter how difficult or demoralising the war became, the Lord General never wavered in his loyalty or commitment to the Houses. Thus, as Newman suggested, Essex has indeed been underrated. When one considers the manner in which he strove to carry the war to the king, while simultaneously shouldering a political responsibility that depended upon the success or otherwise of his army, it is at once apparent that a condemnatory judgement is not appropriate.

There can be little doubt that as military leaders Ferdinando Lord Fairfax and his son Sir Thomas Fairfax compared very favourably with their royalist counterparts. Once in arms the Fairfaxes proved resourceful and tenacious opponents.⁸²⁰ Even before the earl of Newcastle invaded Yorkshire in December 1642, the Fairfaxes had demonstrated their mettle. In October they successfully repulsed an attack upon Bradford and drove the shattered royalists to take refuge in York.⁸²¹ And despite the fact that Newcastle's intervention forced them on to the defensive, they lost little time in striking back. Following a hasty retreat to Selby, Sir Thomas stormed Leeds in January 1643 with a small but ideologically committed army recruited in the west riding cloth towns.⁸²² Even the arrival of the queen and her reinforcements - which led to collusion between Newcastle and the disaffected Hothams, the defection of Sir Hugh Cholmley, and a further withdrawal to Leeds - couldn't prevent Sir Thomas Fairfax's staggering capture

⁸¹⁶ Devereux, *Lives & Letters of the Earls of Essex*, vol. ii, p. 352.

⁸¹⁷ Snow, *Essex the Rebel*, p. 340.

⁸¹⁸ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 53.

⁸¹⁹ *CSPV*, 1642-1643, p. 283; Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 53.

⁸²⁰ Commenting on the selection of Sir Thomas Fairfax as commander of the New Model Army in 1645, Andrew Hopper observed, 'Against all odds, the Fairfaxes' leadership played an important part in defeating the northern royalists. Ferdinando's generalship had produced more success with drastically fewer resources than Essex, Manchester and Waller'. Hopper, *'Black Tom'*, p. 59.

⁸²¹ Fairfax, 'Northern Actions', pp. 207-208.

⁸²² *Ibid.* pp. 209-210.

of Wakefield in May 1643.⁸²³ With the royalists in disarray, Oliver Cromwell's 6,000 reinforcements might well have destroyed Newcastle's army and secured the county for parliament. As it was Cromwell and his fellow officers failed to intervene, leaving the vulnerable and isolated Fairfaxes to face the inevitability of a further royalist offensive.⁸²⁴ Time and again Ferdinando and the dynamic Sir Thomas defied a numerically superior enemy, and at Adwalton Moor in June 1643 almost achieved a sensational victory. Had they enjoyed the luxury of an equally large army it is difficult to see how Newcastle and his commanders could have defeated them. The very fact that the Fairfaxes continually confounded their royalist opponents demonstrated a remarkable ability. It is true that an initial reluctance to take up arms alienated the Hothams and placed their political judgement in some considerable doubt.⁸²⁵ But as commanders of armed men the Fairfaxes more than matched their royalist counterparts, both before and after Newcastle's arrival in the county. Tenacious and unrelenting, they maintained an armed resistance in testing and deteriorating circumstances. There is no evidence here of parliamentary military inferiority.

The question of Sir William Waller is perhaps less clear. While the evidence of 1642-1643 demonstrates an energetic and sincere commitment to the parliamentary cause, his record as a commander reveals a contradictory mixture of genuine ability and serious errors of judgement. By the close of 1642 a string of successes against lightly defended royalist garrisons had earned 'William the Conqueror' a glowing reputation. This tended to overshadow the fact that at Edgehill Waller's regiment of horse had been ignominiously swept away along with the rest of the parliamentary cavalry. Nevertheless Waller's victories projected an image of military effectiveness at a time when the wider war effort was beginning to falter.⁸²⁶ Consequently, in February 1643, he was appointed sergeant major general of the newly formed Western Association. He immediately vindicated his commission by destroying a force of newly levied cavaliers threatening Gloucester.⁸²⁷ However Waller's success provoked a formidable royalist response in the form of the king's nephew, Prince Maurice. Two months later Waller was soundly defeated by Maurice at Ripple Field, a setback partly explained by the fact that it was his first experience of command in a traditional battlefield situation. Nevertheless the comprehensive nature of the defeat put his previous victories into

⁸²³ Binns, *Yorkshire in the Civil Wars*, p. 67; BLTT, E. 106[2], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 22, 28 May – 3 June 1643, pp. 283-284.

⁸²⁴ D. Johnson, *Adwalton Moor 1643: The Battle That Changed A War 1643* (Pickering, 2003), p. 33.

⁸²⁵ BLTT, E. 119[24], *Special Passages*, 27 September – 4 October 1642, p. 62.

⁸²⁶ Adair, *Roundhead General*, pp. 47-54.

⁸²⁷ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, pp. 4-5.

perspective, and it would not be long before he faced an even sterner test.⁸²⁸ When, on 16 May, Sir Ralph Hopton defeated parliament's Devonshire forces at Stratton, Charles attempted to exploit Hopton's success by despatching reinforcements under Maurice and Hertford into the West Country. However, a serious error of strategic judgement, allied to a weeklong mutiny at Gloucester, allowed Maurice and Hertford to complete an unopposed rendezvous with Hopton in early June. Disastrously Waller's miscalculations permitted the concentration of two formidable royalist forces.⁸²⁹ And despite Waller's subsequent success against Hopton at Lansdown, a crushing defeat at Roundway Down cast further doubts upon his early reputation. However, it should be emphasised that Waller's major shortcomings appear to be those of strategic judgement rather than military ability.

The case studies of Essex, Fairfax and Waller demonstrate that roundhead and cavalier commanders were too closely matched to support a clear-cut argument for royalist superiority. As we have seen, Essex proved a worthy opponent, the Fairfaxes had the edge over Newcastle, and Waller almost inflicted a decisive defeat on Hopton at Devizes in July 1643. Overall, the relatively even quality of rival commanders tended to cancel each other out, failing to provide a decisive advantage for either side. Perhaps surprisingly the generally held assumption of royalist martial superiority is not satisfactorily demonstrated, and rather fails to provide a convincing explanation for parliament's military collapse in the summer of 1643.

The second area in which historiography and thesis appear to diverge concerns the issue of co-operation. The reluctance or inability of parliament's commanders to work together as effectively as their royalist counterparts has emerged as the principal finding of chapters one and three. It seems clear that a lack of collaboration played a fundamental part in the demise of the parliamentary war effort during the summer of 1643. Yet this conclusion, with the possible exception of Gardiner and Braddick, does not feature as a coherent or consistent theme of the historiography. Precisely why poor co-operation has been largely overlooked as an explanation for parliamentary failure is not entirely obvious. To help understand this discrepancy we need to return to the historiography and to the work of John Morrill in particular.

Morrill has argued that parliamentary difficulty in 1643 and 1644 stemmed from a failure to reorganise the two-tier military structure that had been devised in the summer of 1642.⁸³⁰ Initially the trained bands remained under the control of their respective Lords Lieutenant, and were expected to pacify the locality in which they

⁸²⁸ Young & Holmes, *English Civil War*, pp. 121-122.

⁸²⁹ Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 72.

⁸³⁰ Morrill, *Revolt of the Provinces*, pp. 55 & 60.

were raised. Simultaneously the recruitment of a volunteer field army - intended to confront and defeat the king in battle – was placed under the command of the earl of Essex. This, Morrill contended, was eminently sensible as long as the war was ‘short-lived and decisive’, but patently unworkable once the conflict expanded in 1643 and became more complex. Although in theory the Lord General’s authority encompassed all parliamentary field armies, in reality provincial forces ‘were left too independent of each other’ to be militarily effective. In addition the right of the Houses to consult with the Lord General over questions of strategy meant that ultimate responsibility for the war effort remained unclear. The outcome was a curious contradiction. Outwardly the direction of military operations appeared to rest wholly with the Lord General, but in practice provincial forces proved to be far too autonomous. Added to which parliament itself retained the power to intervene in military affairs.

Morrill’s analysis strongly suggests organisational deficiency as the root cause of parliamentary ineffectiveness. The original military structure divided authority between the Lords Lieutenant, responsible for the trained bands, and the Lord General, commander of the volunteer field army. When the battle of Edgehill failed to provide a decisive outcome, the shortcomings of the 1642 system became apparent. In 1643 this structure was simply extended to take account of the new situation. Associations of counties were created within the existing framework, inheriting something of the independence that had previously separated the trained bands from the volunteer field army. This binary arrangement blurred political and military functions and diluted the real authority of the Lord General. The result was a structure that reinforced county priorities and militated against a co-ordinated military strategy. The crux of Morrill’s argument is that the reorganisation of late 1642 and early 1643 (the association of county forces) amounted to no more than an adaptation of the old system. It did not constitute the radical rethink required by a new and unanticipated situation. Parliament’s ineffective war effort and subsequent crisis were therefore a direct consequence of this failure to reorganise. Morrill’s organisational explanation hints at the thesis emphasis upon poor parliamentary co-operation but does not take the argument any further. To understand this we need to consider two separate but related issues. First, John Morrill’s contention that parliament failed to reorganise, and second, the effectiveness of the Lord General’s authority.

Despite Morrill’s criticisms it is possible to view parliament’s post Edgehill legislation as a genuine reorganisation, conscious of the need for flexibility, and more *than a simple adaptation of the existing structure*. It has been argued that the formation of three regional associations in December 1642 was in fact a major strategic initiative,

specifically intended to overcome the inherent localism of the county-based Lords Lieutenant and trained bands.⁸³¹ Parliament sought the formation of larger regional armies operating under a more flexible system of command. The major general of the Midland Association (eight counties covering a vast area) was authorised 'to lead and carry the said forces to such places as he shall think fit.'⁸³² There was no geographical limit to the major general's area of responsibility, or any constraint placed upon his power to direct the amalgamated county forces. This was possibly because the Midland Association stood in the front line, with Newcastle's large and threatening army to the north, and the king's Oxford army, led by Prince Rupert, to the west. However, the Eastern Association (five counties covering an equally large area) was not accorded the same degree of unrestricted freedom, a decision which may have reflected the association's relative safety from royalist activity. Though the new major general was explicitly required to remain within the association's boundaries, it remained incumbent upon him to lead his forces to the defence of any part of the association. This stipulation was included in the ordinance because previous commissions did not authorise county commanders to operate beyond their county boundaries.⁸³³ The insistence upon cross county flexibility also underpinned the association of Staffordshire and Warwickshire. But in this case, possibly because of the association's small size and proximity to enemy forces, the major general was required to command in 'parts adjacent' as well as within the association itself.⁸³⁴

It seems fairly clear that the problem of localism was one reason for the establishment of the new associations, although this study has argued that they were principally intended as a defensive barrier protecting the capital from royalist forces in the north and Thames Valley. Combining county forces into regional armies, each answerable to a single overall commander, appeared a sensible and logical reaction to the demands of the post Edgehill military situation. Associations were planned to operate across, and to draw their manpower from, whole swathes of neighbouring counties; thereby addressing the need for both flexibility and greater strength. To override (on such a huge scale) deeply entrenched county priorities surely constitutes, despite John Morrill's reservations, a rational and ambitious reorganisation of parliamentary resources. However, where Morrill is undoubtedly correct - and this brings us to our second point concerning the effectiveness of the Lord General's authority - is the question of ultimate responsibility for military affairs. Parliament's

⁸³¹ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i., p. 77; P. R. Newman, *Companion to the English Civil Wars* (Oxford, 1990), p. 91.

⁸³² Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i., pp. 49-51.

⁸³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

⁸³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-55.

practice of consulting with the Lord General over matters of strategy, Morrill argued, ensured that the issue of supreme power was never adequately clarified.⁸³⁵ A striking example of this dangerous ambiguity can be found in two of the three ordinances establishing the first regional associations.

Although the earl of Essex was empowered to *commission* an association's major general, it is clear from the ordinance to associate the eastern counties, and the ordinance to associate Staffordshire and Warwickshire, that the original *selection* of a major general rested with parliament. Thus it was the combined authority of the Lord General and the Houses of Parliament that enabled a major general to assume overall control and direction of an association's forces. This concentration of responsibility in the person of a single major general might well have worked had it not been for the additional stipulation that an association's county commanders (Lords Lieutenant, Deputy Lieutenants, Colonels and Captains) had to 'observe from time to time, such other directions and commands, as they shall receive from both Houses of Parliament, or from the earl of Essex Lord General.'⁸³⁶ Under these regulations county commanders could be subjected to orders of equal authority from three separate sources: the association's major general, the earl of Essex, and the Houses of Parliament. This, in effect, meant that both parliament and the Lord General reserved the right to undercut a major general's authority by means of direct commands to subordinate county officers. At best such complexity must have given rise to a fair degree of uncertainty, and at worse a plausible excuse to disregard controversial or unwelcome orders. More to the point, it may help to explain the damaging failure of parliamentary co-operation at two critical moments during May 1643.

First, on 12 May, Essex complained to the House of Lords that orders to intercept the queen's supply convoy had been neglected by Lord Gray, Colonel Cromwell and other forces in the north, resulting in the safe arrival in Oxford of forty wagon loads of crucial supplies and munitions.⁸³⁷ This, as we saw in chapter one, transformed the balance of power in the Thames Valley, prompting a jubilant Charles to write to parliament proclaiming that God clearly favoured the royal cause.⁸³⁸ And second, on 27 May, an urgent Commons request that the Lord General recommend the immediate dispatch of reinforcements to Lord Fairfax in Yorkshire once again came to nothing. While 6,000 parliamentary troops assembled at Nottingham, their various commanders (including Oliver Cromwell and the disaffected Captain Hotham)

⁸³⁵ Morrill, *Revolt of the Provinces*, p. 55.

⁸³⁶ Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, pp. 51-52 & 53-55.

⁸³⁷ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi., p. 43.

⁸³⁸ *CSPV*, 1642-1643, p.279.

concluded that an invasion of Yorkshire was no longer warranted.⁸³⁹ The failure to support Lord Fairfax, despite the commands of parliament and the earl of Essex, led directly to the battle of Adwalton Moor and the destruction of Fairfax's northern army.⁸⁴⁰ These examples demonstrate that neither the authority of the Houses nor the orders of the Lord General were sufficient to enforce strategy when subordinate commanders, for whatever reason, took a different view. Ambiguity over ultimate responsibility for military affairs crippled parliament's ability to impose authority and, consequently, to co-ordinate forces effectively. While, on the one hand, Essex failed to control forces theoretically under his command, the king, on the other, experienced little difficulty combining separate field armies in pursuit of strategic objectives. 'Military affairs', Michael Braddick has observed, 'were handled by Charles personally, with a council of war' in which 'there was a clearer executive authority.'⁸⁴¹ Parliament's unsuccessful attempts to impose military policy provide a clear and telling contrast with the effectiveness of the royalist chain of command, centred, as it was, upon the absolute authority of the king.

Parliamentarian confusion over final responsibility for military affairs resulted in a catastrophic inability to enforce strategic authority. The breakdown in military discipline materialised as a damaging unwillingness amongst parliament's commanders to obey orders and cooperate effectively. It is possible - probable even - that this weakness in the chain of command was a direct consequence of the very nature of parliament's authority. The power wielded by the Houses was not perceived to carry the same weight as that invested in the person of the king. Parliament did not constitute an independent source of political authority that could equal or rival that of the monarch. Parliament's mandate derived from its partnership with the crown; divested of royal sanction by civil war parliament was effectively stripped of its former power. Parliament's commanders, therefore, may not have felt obliged to obey the orders of the Houses, or the earl of Essex, as they would have obeyed, without question, the commands of their king. This diminution of political power crippled parliament's ability to dictate military strategy and to mount crucially important combined operations. As we saw in chapter three, the consequences of this strategic impotence almost cost parliament the civil war.

⁸³⁹ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 106.

⁸⁴⁰ Bell (ed.), *Fairfax Correspondence*, vol. i, pp. 46-47.

⁸⁴¹ Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire*, p. 284.

Conclusion

The issue of cooperation provides a convincing explanation for parliament's military disintegration. While financial strategy and defensive approach to war undoubtedly created an unstable environment, it was not sufficient to tip the war effort into crisis. In addition the suggested inferiority of parliament's principal commanders has been rejected by this thesis. Non-cooperation, alongside effective and efficient royalist collaboration, has emerged as the principal cause of the 1643 crisis. A deadly cocktail of parliamentary reluctance and insubordination - allied to a collective royalist dynamism - provided the king with a string of crucial victories and a war-winning opportunity. In the first half of 1643 Charles out-manoeuvred his opponents, concentrated forces quickly, and brought parliament to the brink of catastrophe. These findings represent a new interpretation of the military course of events in 1643 and a new understanding of the causes of parliament's summer crisis.

But what was it about the respective war efforts that resulted in such a lack of parliamentary cooperation and such a plethora of royalist collaboration? Unquestionably the king, as reigning monarch, provided a clear apex to the pyramid of royalist authority. Historians have not been slow to emphasise the potential of this advantage, but it does not account for the chronic inability of parliamentary commanders to cooperate effectively. So where, precisely, are the roots of parliamentary disunity to be found? As we have seen, John Morrill highlighted a profound confusion in parliament's command structure, which appeared, at times, to empower the Houses, the Lord General, and even some subordinate regional commanders in equal measure. Yet even this uncertainty would not produce the scale of non-cooperation witnessed in the first half of 1643.

There has to be another explanation, one that accounts for the unwillingness of parliament's commanders to unite against the king. One possibility concerns the state of the war in 1643. Many were reluctant to push themselves further into a conflict that might yet be resolved by negotiation, or by other commanders fighting in different parts of the country. It would appear that some senior parliamentary officers were content to exercise no more than the specific remit of their original commission, a reluctance to march beyond their areas of responsibility and to engage in unwelcome confrontations with the king's armies. This, of course, goes back to the old problem of localism and provincialism that many historians have previously highlighted, and may account for the reticence of parliamentary commanders to respond to orders from the centre. But beyond this organisational reluctance there is, perhaps, one further factor to be considered.

Many parliamentarians were acutely aware that armed opposition to the king constituted an act of treason punishable by death. As some historians have pointed out, parliament hoped that a determined show of force would be sufficient to persuade the king to come to terms. Yet when the war began it seems that a reluctance to do more than the absolute minimum undermined the war effort and handed the royalists a clear advantage. We have already seen that in March 1643 parliament failed to refute a royal proclamation declaring the association of neighbouring counties to be an act of high treason.⁸⁴² The king made specific reference to 'Commanders or Officers now in Rebellion against Us', stating that it was the duty of 'all His loving Subjects' to apprehend such persons and hand them over.⁸⁴³ The fact that this royal proclamation remained unanswered may have created an air of uneasiness among parliament's provincial commanders, perhaps explaining the reluctance of regional armies to cooperate together against, for example, the queen's vitally important supply convoys. It was as if the king's influence over parliament's officers was as great as that of the earl of Essex or of parliament itself. The failure of Edgehill to end the war left many parliamentarians rather unwilling to take part in further fighting. An escalating and uncontrollable conflict would demand more of men whose support was perhaps conditional at best. The civil war was not for the faint hearted. But it was probably easier to be faint hearted many miles from Westminster and the Houses of Parliament than it was to commit an 'Act of High Treason' against the reigning monarch.

⁸⁴² Adamson, 'Pym as Draftsman', pp. 133-140.

⁸⁴³ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. v, pp. 630-631.

Chapter Five

REACTIONS TO CRISIS *AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 1643*

It is a contention of this thesis that the significance of parliament's 1643 crisis is not fully represented in the historiography of the civil war. In order to develop this argument further it is appropriate to examine both parliamentary and royalist reactions to the events of summer 1643. The manner in which parliament, on the one hand, and the king, on the other, responded to parliament's military collapse provides important contemporary evidence of how serious the crisis was perceived to be, and how close it came to ending the conflict in 1643. The following analysis will show how the Houses attempted to extricate themselves from disaster, enacting a series of ordinances aimed at reorganising the war effort, and forging a vitally important military alliance with the Scots. But to stave off defeat long enough for these initiatives to come to fruition, parliament was forced to march its one remaining army deep into enemy territory to raise the siege of Gloucester. As we shall see, failure to rescue the stricken city, and to bring the relieving army back to the capital, would have left parliament at the mercy of the king.

Emergency Ordinances

Parliament's immediate response to crisis took the form of a frantic legislative programme, designed to re-impose shattered political unity, rebuild armies, and reassure desperately needed Scottish allies. As we have seen in chapter three, the seeming inevitability of a royalist victory in the summer of 1643 persuaded the House of Lords to draw up peace propositions amounting to surrender. But on 7 August, menaced by the threat of a City backed political coup, the Commons threw out the proposals in a dramatic knife-edge ballot that had to be taken twice. Having rejected any immediate or foreseeable recourse to negotiations, parliamentary survival now depended on a vigorous prosecution of the conflict. The Venetian ambassador reported that 'All ways to peace being abandoned ... [parliament] are plunging headlong into war'.⁸⁴⁴ The defeat of the Lord's propositions effectively silenced the peace lobby at Westminster, and opened the way for those who were convinced that Charles could only be brought to an acceptable settlement by force of arms.

⁸⁴⁴ A. B. Hinds (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Venetian (CSPV)* (London, 1925), 1643-1647, p. 13.

Parliament justified the rejection of peace talks on the basis of the military situation. 'We could not in this time of imminent and pressing danger,' a Commons statement declared, 'divert our thoughts or time from those necessary provisions as are to be made for the safety of the kingdoms.'⁸⁴⁵ By focussing on the threat posed by the king's victories, parliament attempted to divert attention away from the failed peace proposals and the simmering anger and frustration of the Lords. In any case the Commons declaration was hardly an understatement: the dangers facing the Houses were indeed imminent and pressing. The pro-royalist Venetian ambassador summed up the seriousness of parliament's military weakness:

Of the three armies kept up by the rebels two have been completely routed, while the third, under the Earl of Essex, is so reduced and disheartened that instead of besieging His Majesty in Oxford, as it was charged to do, it has thought it safer to retire within a short distance of London.⁸⁴⁶

On the back of these catastrophes the ambassador described the capital as a 'confused, divided and wretched city.'⁸⁴⁷ And a Scottish observer, the Presbyterian minister Robert Baillie, reported the 'horrible fears and confusion in the city; the king everywhere victorious.'⁸⁴⁸

Even the parliamentary press made little attempt to disguise the scale of the disaster. By 10 August it was reported that Essex had retreated to Kingston, his army estimated to consist of less than four thousand horse and foot. About half were sick with camp fever, deterring desperately needed recruits from enlisting. In the north Newcastle occupied most of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, and although parliament held on to Hull and Boston, Cromwell, with nine hundred infantry and six hundred cavalry, had retreated to Stamford and Peterborough. And in the west, following the surrender of Bristol, it was believed that the enemy had already laid siege to Gloucester. Expectations for the defence of parliament's only remaining western garrison were not high, although the governor, Colonel Edward Massey, was known to be a valiant soldier.⁸⁴⁹ An alarmed Commons - perhaps more in hope than anything else - despatched an urgent plea to the governor and townsmen encouraging them 'to hold out defence of that place.'⁸⁵⁰ On all fronts the situation appeared critical. It Gloucester suffered the same fate as Bristol nothing of substance would stand between the king's

⁸⁴⁵ Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC), *Fifth Report*, p. 100.

⁸⁴⁶ CSPV, 1643-1647, p. 14.

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸⁴⁸ David Laing (ed.), *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie* (Edinburgh, 1841), vol. ii, p. 99.

⁸⁴⁹ BLTT, E 64 [13], *The Parliament Scout*, 3 - 10 August 1643, pp. 49, 52-54.

⁸⁵⁰ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 200.

western army and an advance towards the capital. And 'If Newcastle could break through Cromwell's scanty band of troopers, London and with it the whole parliamentary cause, would be gravely imperilled.'⁸⁵¹ It was absolutely imperative that the seemingly endless tide of bad news be brought to a halt. What remained of Parliament's weakening resolve might evaporate altogether under the impact of yet another major defeat.

The disastrous military situation strained parliament's morale to the limit. As the royalist threat grew so the risk of further disaffection and disunity grew. The defeat of the Lords' peace propositions raised the alarming possibility that the house of peers might abandon the cause altogether. It was clear from the propositions themselves⁸⁵² that the Lords supported peace at virtually any price, and that half of the Commons agreed. Acutely aware of the danger, Pym ordered an explanation to be presented to the Lords, justifying the rejection of the propositions and calling, almost pleading, for solidarity in this time of unprecedented crisis.⁸⁵³ But as far as the peace Lords were concerned Pym's diplomatic exhortations were irrelevant, the Commons' refusal to recommence negotiations with the king signalled the end of their lukewarm support for the war. Seven Lords quickly left the capital, five of whom made their way to the king at Oxford. On 28 August the Venetian Ambassador claimed that the defection of the peace Lords reduced the upper chamber to only six 'obstinate' peers.⁸⁵⁴ In addition a growing number of members were requesting leave to go abroad, effectively abandoning the cause and greatly disheartening those who remained loyal. Deserting parliament not only encouraged the enemy but also deterred overseas supporters who contributed arms and finance. It was a business, one news book complained, 'which ought to be looked into very narrowly.'⁸⁵⁵ These untimely defections sent out an unmistakable message, weakening the credibility of parliament and strongly vindicating the royalist cause.

However, as far as men like Pym were concerned the war effort could not survive without the continued adherence of the upper chamber. It remained absolutely essential that the time-honoured procedures of both Lords and Commons continued to project an image of legality at a time when the king openly challenged the legitimacy of

⁸⁵¹ S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War* (London, 1904), vol. i, p. 192.

⁸⁵² HMC, *Fifth Report*, pp. 98-99.

⁸⁵³ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 197.

⁸⁵⁴ CSPV, 1643-1647, p. 13; D. Scott, *Politics and War in the Three Stuart Kingdoms 1637-1649* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 65.

⁸⁵⁵ BLTT, E 64 [13], *The Parliament Scout*, 3 - 10 August 1643, p. 54.

parliament.⁸⁵⁶ If the handful of remaining Lords abandoned ship the entire war effort would be undermined, severely diminishing parliament's authority, and deepening the wider sense of crisis.⁸⁵⁷ Now that the Commons had committed itself to continuing the war, it was essential to preserve the remnants of political unity, and to retain the standing afforded by the adherence of the Lords. Thus on 10 August, only three days after the rejection of the peace propositions, the upper House was persuaded to approve a series of ordinances and orders rebuilding and reorganising parliament's demoralised war effort. Representing a significant advance in terms of recruitment, finance, and administration, parliament's new programme addressed the scale of the military emergency.

First, an ordinance to introduce conscription empowered the London militia committee, Deputy Lieutenants, and county committees to impress soldiers under the direction of the Houses and the Lord General.⁸⁵⁸ After a year of fighting, this radical and draconian measure marked a watershed in the political management of the war. Although an undeniable infringement of personal liberty, it was an inevitable consequence of parliament's unprecedented and unrelenting crisis. While it has been argued that conscription was principally intended to end Essex's 'dependence on the virtually moribund volunteer system,'⁸⁵⁹ a contemporary report suggests it might have been a direct response to the slow recruitment of Waller's new City army.⁸⁶⁰ The royalist press were predictably less charitable, claiming that men would not serve 'as volunteers in an army so disheartened, because always beaten'.⁸⁶¹ Whatever the precise truth, conscription demonstrated a toughening of parliament's approach to war. Essex and Waller had to be provided with new armies – and in the absence of willing volunteers there was simply no alternative. Pressing soldiers, as Gardiner euphemistically observed, marked 'the sense entertained by the Houses of the growing dangers of the situation.'⁸⁶²

Second, parliament introduced a package of measures intended to overhaul the military and administrative structure of the Eastern Association. Crucially, the association's six counties stood in the path 'of the specific threat posed by the advance

⁸⁵⁶ On 20 June 1643 Charles issued a proclamation 'warning all His Majesties good subjects no longer to be misled by the votes, orders, and pretended ordinances, of one or both Houses.' BLTT, 245: 669. f.7 [23], *A Proclamation Warning All His Majesties Good Subjects*, 20 June 1643.

⁸⁵⁷ On 23 September 1643 only nine peers were in attendance. *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 230.

⁸⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁸⁵⁹ C. Holmes, *The Eastern Association in the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 90.

⁸⁶⁰ BLTT, E 64 [13], *The Parliament Scout*, 3 - 10 August 1643, p. 50.

⁸⁶¹ BLTT, E , *Mercurius Aulicus*, 33, 13 - 19 August 1643, p. 443.

⁸⁶² Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 192.

of Newcastle's "Popish" army.⁸⁶³ Essex was requested to commission Manchester as Sergeant Major General, while the association's forces were to be increased to ten thousand foot and dragoons. In addition the Cambridge committee was reorganised so that it became, in effect, the administrative hub for all six counties.⁸⁶⁴ Manchester's appointment should have provided the association's army with a very powerful cavalry arm.⁸⁶⁵ Towards the end of July parliament had intended to place a 'flying army' of seven thousand newly raised horse under his command.⁸⁶⁶ However, large numbers of horses acquired in the capital and counties south of the Thames were diverted to Waller, while others reinforced Essex's army. The need to allocate resources in response to the military emergency meant that Manchester's flying army failed to materialise as planned. Nevertheless his allocation, although diminished, provided the association with a respectable body of cavalry.⁸⁶⁷

The reconstitution of the association's Cambridge committee aimed to provide a greater awareness of enemy activity and more efficient direction of its military forces. It was a direct response to 'the earl of Newcastle' who was 'marching towards, and ready to fall upon, the associated counties.'⁸⁶⁸ On 8 August the Houses had learned of the loss of Lincoln and the headlong retreat of parliament's remaining Lincolnshire forces to Boston.⁸⁶⁹ Centralising administration in Cambridge established a 'standing and constant' committee, empowered to direct the affairs of all six counties.⁸⁷⁰ It was specifically instructed:

To have a special care, that all the frontiers, and the Isle of Ely, be supplied with fitting forces, to resist all sudden surprises or invasions; and shall from time to time send out scouts to discover how and in what manner any enemy approaches near to the frontiers; that thereby they may have and give timely notice of any approaching danger.⁸⁷¹

Commissioners from each of the associations' constituent counties were required to attend the committee on a rotational basis until further notice. The association was, in effect, placed on 'red alert': Cambridge was now parliament's forward command post 'in these times of imminent danger.'⁸⁷²

⁸⁶³ Holmes, *Eastern Association* p. 89.

⁸⁶⁴ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi. pp. 174 & 176-177.

⁸⁶⁵ Holmes, *Eastern Association*, pp. 94-95.

⁸⁶⁶ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, pp. 149-150.

⁸⁶⁷ G. Robinson, 'Horse Supply and the Development of the New Model Army 1642-1646', in *War in History*, 2008, 15, 2, pp. 131-132.

⁸⁶⁸ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p.176.

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁸⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

⁸⁷² *Ibid.*, p.176.

Third, there was a determined effort to provide Sir William Waller with a re-equipped and refinanced army. On 7 August, before the resumption of the debate on the propositions, Essex had reluctantly commissioned Waller, 'subordinate to the Lord Mayor', to command the independent forces recruited by the City of London.⁸⁷³ The Venetian Ambassador reported that Sir William:

will be more acceptable to the parliamentarians than anyone else, as one of their own members and over whom they can claim greater powers in any differences which seem to be threatened, between the City and parliament.⁸⁷⁴

However, this appeared to some members of the Commons to place a restriction upon Waller's freedom of operation. It was feared that an independent army would become a defence force for the capital, whereas parliament needed campaigning armies to take the war to the king. And so, on the following day, Essex was requested to issue a further commission granting Waller command of a new army of ten regiments of foot and ten regiments of horse.⁸⁷⁵ Two days later, on 10 August, the Lords approved an ordinance for ten thousand pounds, raised in and within twenty miles of London, to be paid exclusively and without interruption to Waller.⁸⁷⁶ Following the defeat of the Lords' peace proposals Waller's supporters in the Commons held a much stronger position. Forcing Essex to issue a further commission enabled Waller's new army to supersede that of the City and to fight in any part of the kingdom. Sir William's establishment as an 'Independent General' was symptomatic of the new mood in the Commons.⁸⁷⁷ The evidence suggests that this earnestness to equip and finance a new army was intended to separate Waller from the growing influence of the City, and to make him more responsive to the commands of parliament. It seems clear that his second commission was an attempt to regain political control lost to the City in the days leading to the rejection of the peace propositions on 7 August.⁸⁷⁸

Parliament's determination to prosecute a vigorous war stood in marked contrast to the old policy of granting negotiations equal priority. The programme of ordinances and orders approved by the Lords on 10 August signalled a new approach and a new beginning. Parliament was now taking a much tougher military line. The emphasis had switched to raising new armies and strengthening the administrative infrastructure.

⁸⁷³ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 197; 'Essex objects to this choice, considering it a slight to himself'. *CSPV*, 1643-1647, p. 8.

⁸⁷⁴ *CSPV*, 1642-1643, p. 305.

⁸⁷⁵ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii., p. 198.

⁸⁷⁶ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 175.

⁸⁷⁷ J. Adair, *Roundhead General* (London, 1969), p. 103.

⁸⁷⁸ K. Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot, 1997), p. 319.

Negotiations, for the immediate future at least, were no longer part of the equation.⁸⁷⁹ Parliament's refusal to concur with the propositions meant that talks would only resume from a position of security. Through determined and unflinching military action the king had to be made to realise that he could not prevail. But the problem with parliament's new strategy, as Gardiner succinctly pointed out, was that 'the greater part of the three armies as yet existed only upon paper.'⁸⁸⁰ The enactments of 10 August were a bold statement of intent, but they could not come to fruition overnight. In the meantime parliament had to defend itself against a victorious enemy poised to strike the final blow. Just three days later on 13 August the Venetian ambassador reported that parliament's final hope rested with the Scots.⁸⁸¹

As we have seen in chapter three, the earl of Newcastle's victory at Adwalton Moor on 30 June left the Houses with no alternative but to pursue a Scottish alliance. Robert Baillie wrote that 'the report of Fairfax's defeat has been a spur at last to the parliament, much as it is thought against the stomachs of many'.⁸⁸² Hull - parliament's one remaining Yorkshire stronghold - was the only obstacle which could now prevent Newcastle marching south towards the capital. Scottish assistance was therefore imperative: both to re-establish a strong military presence in the north and to mount a direct challenge to the earl of Newcastle. But as July progressed the military situation deteriorated further, and by the first week of August the need for assistance was greater than ever. Parliament's commissioners finally arrived in Edinburgh on 7 August, the very day the propositions were defeated. Indeed, parliament's negotiations with the Scots were one of the principal reasons given by the Commons for the rejection of the peace proposals. As a result the commissioners' remit included an instruction assuring the Scots 'that no pacification or agreement for peace shall be concluded by the Houses of Parliament without sufficient caution and provision for the peace and safety of that Kingdom.' The Commons had explained to the Lords' that their peace propositions 'would alter those instructions and make them void in the most material parts ... And so debar us of their assistance.'⁸⁸³ It is difficult to imagine how parliament's representatives in Edinburgh could have continued with their work if the Lords' propositions had been accepted. The ground would have been cut from beneath them, and the likelihood of securing an alliance all but destroyed. Yet the evidence suggests that the Commons debate of 7 August and the closeness of the ensuing vote was, in

⁸⁷⁹ Pym, in his explanation to the Lords, argued that the king's military successes meant that an acceptable agreement would be impossible to obtain, on top of which parliament had received no satisfaction from the negotiations conducted at Oxford earlier in the year. HMC, *Fifth Report*, p.100.

⁸⁸⁰ Those commanded by Essex, Waller, and Manchester. Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 193.

⁸⁸¹ CSPV, 1643-1647, p.6.

⁸⁸² Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p.81.

⁸⁸³ HMC, *Fifth Report*, p. 99.

itself, sufficient warning to place the Scots on their guard. Robert Baillie was convinced that the peace initiative was the work of those peers who subsequently abandoned parliament once the proposals were defeated. 'Good for the parliament these had been gone before'. Nevertheless Baillie remained aware that the propositions had received strong support in the Commons, and that they had been defeated with the greatest difficulty.⁸⁸⁴

From both an English and Scottish perspective the Lords' propositions couldn't have come at a worse time. As far as the English were concerned it was only a month since the Houses had agreed to send commissioners to Edinburgh. Now parliament was discussing terms to be presented to the king. The English must have feared that their commitment to an alliance appeared unprincipled and opportunistic. After the near acceptance of the propositions, parliament had to convince the Scots that they remained serious about winning the war. From a Scottish point of view, the danger that parliament might conclude an English peace which excluded Scottish interests was particularly worrying. The Scots, as one historian has commented, 'did not wish to be caught unawares by a sudden rapprochement between their allies and their enemy, and they demanded the right to participate in any future negotiations.'⁸⁸⁵ Although the Scots realised only too well that the English call for assistance stemmed from military weakness, it was, nevertheless, an opportunity they were determined to exploit:

For the present the parliament side is running down the brae. They would never, in earnest, call for help, till they were irrecoverable; now when all is desperate, they cry aloud for our help.⁸⁸⁶

An alliance with parliament offered protection against future royalist reprisals. Scottish security depended upon a parliamentarian victory in England. And yet it seems that parliament did not realise just how anxious the Scots were to participate in the war. The Kirk in particular was determined to ensure that when the fighting was over Charles was in no position to repeat his Scottish campaigns of 1639 and 1640. On 26 July Robert Baillie explained:

We thought the necessity of putting our country in a posture of arms great, and our assisting of the parliament of England also necessary against that party, whom, we doubted not, intended our overthrow no less than theirs.⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁸⁴ Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 99.

⁸⁸⁵ L. Kaplan, 'Steps to War: the Scots and Parliament 1642-1643', *Journal of British Studies*, IX 2 (May, 1970), p. 67.

⁸⁸⁶ Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 83.

⁸⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 75.

The Bishops' Wars, as Baillie intimated, taught the Scots that an unrestrained English monarchy threatened the very survival of the Presbyterian Church.

It is significant, therefore, that the final terms of the Solemn League and Covenant should stipulate that 'no cessation, nor any pacification, or agreement for peace whatsoever shall be made by either kingdom, without the mutual advice and consent of each kingdom.'⁸⁸⁸ The clause strongly suggests that the Scots were well aware of events at Westminster during the first week of August, and were anxious to prevent a repeat of the peace propositions without their knowledge or approval. Indeed, as we have seen, the Commons made precisely this point in their explanation to the Lords. The English were as keen as the Scots to reaffirm their appetite for a vigorous war. Now that parliamentary commissioners had reached Edinburgh, independent negotiations in England placed Scottish military assistance in jeopardy. The Commons were acutely aware that any sign of weakening English resolve would have a detrimental impact north of the border. However, the situation at Westminster during the first week of August actually increased Scottish determination to enter the war, and, moreover, to secure a place at the negotiating table when fighting finally came to an end. Parliament's willingness to grant such concessions confirmed the desperation of the military situation. The unavoidable need for assistance meant that Scottish demands had to be met – whatever the cost.

Royalist Strategy

Parliament's 1643 crisis is one of the most neglected aspects of the English Civil War. That this should be the case is almost entirely due to the unexpected failure of royalist military strategy following the fall of Bristol. Because the decisions of Charles and his Council of War did not produce the rapid victory so widely expected, the real significance of parliament's crisis, readily apparent during the summer of 1643, quickly diminished and eventually faded. Parliament's surprising survival had the effect of recasting the crisis as a difficult period rather than a near terminal event. But as the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, the contemporary perception of parliament's crisis was far more evident than later historiography has generally allowed. There was a real understanding in mid-1643 that parliament's military collapse heralded the end of the civil war and that the king stood on the verge of total victory. It is, therefore, important to understand the development of royal strategy during August 1643. In failing to bring the civil war to an end, the deliberations of the king and his Council of

⁸⁸⁸ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 290.

War have inadvertently produced a historiography that underestimates the true significance of parliament's crisis.

We are fortunate that Clarendon's close proximity to the king and his advisers has provided an extensive account of the considerations that influenced royalist decision making during the critical days of early August 1643.⁸⁸⁹ The king, Clarendon records, was anxious to maintain momentum following the success of Bristol. However, matters were complicated by the fact that two separate royalist armies had participated in the capture of the town: Prince Rupert's Oxford army and Sir Ralph Hopton's army of the west. The first question was whether or not to unite these armies, and the second question was how best to deploy them. Surprisingly perhaps, a great many arguments were advanced against an amalgamation of forces, and because none of these appeared to the slightest detriment of the royalist war effort, a decision to divide the armies was resolved upon.⁸⁹⁰ Hopton, along with Maurice, was to return to Devonshire and Dorset to complete the conquest of the west, while Rupert's Oxford army was to remain with Charles. The remaining decision, therefore, was how best to deploy the Oxford army.

At a council of war convened on 3 August there were two rival views: an immediate advance on the capital, intended to exploit parliament's current disarray, or a temporary diversion to subdue Gloucester before proceeding to London.⁸⁹¹ 'Everyone agreed,' Clarendon recalled, 'that if Gloucester could be reduced quickly and with little loss of men it would be very important to the king's cause.'⁸⁹² Gloucester was parliament's one remaining garrison between Bristol and Lancashire. Its capture would secure the river Severn, open up Worcester and Shrewsbury to supply from Bristol, and increase customs revenue. In addition the entire area would fall under royalist control, permitting the uninterrupted collection of weekly contributions, and freeing Welsh forces to join the king's army. It was confidently expected that the surrender of the town 'would encourage London to accept the pointlessness of further resistance'.⁸⁹³ There was however one very serious and important caveat. None of these reasons was deemed sufficient to justify a time consuming siege, parliament could not be permitted to 'both recover the fear that was upon them ... and recruit their armies.'⁸⁹⁴ The enemy must not

⁸⁸⁹ W. D. Macray (ed.), *The History of the Rebellion by Edward Earl of Clarendon* (Oxford, 1888), vol. iii, pp. 126-132.

⁸⁹⁰ According to Clarendon five equally sound reasons persuaded the king to separate his forces. *Ibid.*, pp. 126-128.

⁸⁹¹ J. Adamson, 'King Charles I Wins the English Civil War', in A. Roberts (ed.), *What Might Have Been* (London, 2004), p. 45.

⁸⁹² Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 129.

⁸⁹³ Adamson, 'King Charles I Wins the English Civil War', p. 46.

⁸⁹⁴ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 130.

be let off the hook; a siege of Gloucester could only take place if it was clear that the town would fall swiftly.

It was at this juncture that Charles and his advisers received information that arguably turned the course of the war. Although accounts vary, the importance of the development is described in a letter addressed to Charles from his secretary at Oxford:

This gentleman, Captain Presland Molineux, hath this day been with the Lords here, and told them that he is an ancient and intimate acquaintance of Captain Massey, who is Governor of Gloucester, that he knows Massey's affections are to serve your Majesty ... Captain Molineux doubts not, but if he may be permitted to go to Massey, he shall persuade him to render himself and Gloucester into your Majesty's hands.⁸⁹⁵

Clarendon reported a broadly similar turn of events, differing only in detail. Apparently Massey had made it known that he would defend Gloucester if threatened by an army under Prince Rupert, but that he would willingly surrender the town if His Majesty would only appear in person before it. Massey was adamant that it would be contrary to 'his conscience to fight against the person of the king.'⁸⁹⁶ And so it seemed certain that the information provided by Captain Molineux at Oxford, broadly corroborated by Clarendon, meant that the king could look forward to a relatively quick and painless capture of Gloucester. Indeed Clarendon declared that 'this message turned the scale.' None of the king's advisers now objected to summoning the town because it would not delay or prevent any other course of action. Thus, declared Clarendon, Charles 'resolved for Gloucester, but not to be engaged in a siege.'⁸⁹⁷

However, what was confidently expected to be a mere formality quickly deteriorated into a tactical quagmire. Despite firm intentions to accept Gloucester's surrender with a minimum of fuss, two totally unanticipated developments threw the king's plans into turmoil. First, on 10 August, Charles' summons received a surprising rebuff. Two citizens, 'insolent and seditious,' declared that the mayor, the governor, and thirteen of the most substantial citizens, had resolved to 'keep the city according to the commands of his majesty signified by both Houses of Parliament.'⁸⁹⁸ This affront to royal dignity was considered so shocking that many felt the king honour bound to take

⁸⁹⁵ Secretary Nicholas to the king, Oxford, 8 August 1643, in Eliot Warburton (ed.), *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers* (London, 1849), vol. ii, p. 278.

⁸⁹⁶ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 131.

⁸⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.

⁸⁹⁸ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 133; Rushworth reported Charles' wonderment at the citizen's confidence, replying 'Waller is extinct and Essex cannot come.' J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1721), vol. v, p. 287.

the city by force.⁸⁹⁹ In the heat of the moment all former resolutions were discarded, and attention quickly turned to the practicalities of a siege.⁹⁰⁰ As the old walls were in poor condition and unlikely to withstand a bombardment, it was felt that the town would capitulate in less than ten days. In addition, it was anticipated that Gloucester's royalist faction would rise up and overthrow the rebels. Moreover, parliament did not possess an army capable of relieving the town, and even if they managed to raise one, it would have to fight at a considerable distance from London, while the king's forces would be easily supplied from the surrounding country.⁹⁰¹ But before a final decision had been taken, a second equally unexpected development forced the king's hand, committing the royalist to a course of action debated ever since.

When Charles was first informed of the capture of Bristol he despatched an urgent message to his northern commander the earl of Newcastle: if Hull proved too difficult to capture, Newcastle was to leave the port surrounded and proceed with the remainder of his forces into the Eastern Association. The king would then march at the head of his own army towards London, so as to threaten the capital from two different directions. But just as Charles arrived before Gloucester the messenger returned. It was impossible for Newcastle to comply with the king's orders because his army wasn't large enough to blockade Hull *and* advance south. On top of which his Yorkshire regiments and their officers utterly refused to leave the county until the port was taken.⁹⁰² Newcastle's apparent inability to comply with the king's demands, together with the Council of War's belief that Gloucester would fall in ten days, persuaded Charles to lay siege to the town.⁹⁰³ Perhaps mindful of the heated controversy that would soon follow, Clarendon pointedly declared that not one man in the council of war opposed the decision.⁹⁰⁴

Royalists across the country received news of Gloucester with a mixture of consternation, incredulity and despair. The queen was incensed. Her opinion, strongly endorsed at Oxford, supported an immediate advance upon London. A siege of Gloucester, she protested, merely imposed an unnecessary delay on what was expected to be a straightforward victory. In her anger she believed Charles had taken Rupert's

⁸⁹⁹ The royalist newsbook *Mercurius Aulicus* invited the world to judge 'whether these desperate rebels deserve any mercy.' BLTT, E. 65[26], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 30, 6 – 12 August 1643, p. 434.

⁹⁰⁰ Robert Baillie considered it 'a divine providence' that Charles had been compelled to besiege Gloucester. Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 100.

⁹⁰¹ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 133.

⁹⁰² According to Sir Philip Warwick Newcastle was averse to amalgamating his army with the king's because he did not wish to serve under Prince Rupert. Sir Philip Warwick, *Memoirs of the Reign of King Charles I* (London, 1701), p. 243.

⁹⁰³ 'It would have taken a much more confident commander than Charles to go against such clear professional advice.' R. Cust, *Charles I A Political Life* (Harlow, 2005), p. 380.

⁹⁰⁴ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, pp. 145 & 134.

advice in preference to her own.⁹⁰⁵ The Venetian ambassador, a close observer of all that transpired in the troubled capital, firmly echoed the queen's view:

But the event, which is the real test shows that the queen's advice, after the taking of Bristol, to move straight to attack this city, was the more advantageous, as the confusion among the people here was very great, nothing was provided, and this is subsequently being made good.⁹⁰⁶

Sir Philip Warwick, courtier and intimate of the king, likewise bemoaned Gloucester as 'that fatal resolution,'⁹⁰⁷ while the earl of Sunderland, in a letter to his wife, summed up the general sense of bewilderment:

The king's going to Gloucester is in the opinion of most very unadvised. I find the queen is unsatisfied with it; so is all the people of quality. I am unable to give you any account upon what grounds the king took his resolution.⁹⁰⁸

Sir Richard Bulstrode, a royalist army officer, believed that a march on London would 'in all probability' have 'made an end of the war', but the king 'trifled away time to no purpose in that unfortunate siege'.⁹⁰⁹ But perhaps the final verdict should rest with Clarendon, who was arguably better placed than any to appreciate all sides of the controversy:

And so the king was engaged before Gloucester, and thereby gave respite to the distracted spirits at London to breath and compose themselves, and ... to prepare for their preservation and accomplishing their own ends; which at that time seemed almost desperate and incurable.⁹¹⁰

The unanimity with which the queen, Clarendon, the Venetian ambassador, Sir Philip Warwick, the earl of Sunderland, and Sir Richard Bulstrode questioned the wisdom of the siege reinforces the seriousness of parliament's crisis. Charles and his advisers, it appeared, had thrown away a golden opportunity to win the war. It is implicit in the reactions of these leading royalists that Gloucester was considered a colossal error of judgement. Even the parliamentarian Bulstrode Whitlocke admitted 'that when the king went to Gloucester, if he had marched up to London, he had done his work.'⁹¹¹ Contemporaries could not understand why the king dallied at Gloucester when the

⁹⁰⁵ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i., 201.

⁹⁰⁶ CSPV, 1643-1647, p. 13.

⁹⁰⁷ Warwick, *Memoirs*, p. 261.

⁹⁰⁸ J. Washbourn, *Bibliotheca Gloucestrensis* (Gloucester, 1825), p. 1.

⁹⁰⁹ Sir Richard Bulstrode, *Memoirs and Reflections Upon The Reign And Government of Charles I and Charles II* (London, 1721), pp. 94-95.

⁹¹⁰ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 134.

⁹¹¹ B. Whitlocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs* (Oxford, 1853), p. 69.

obvious course of action was to march directly on London. Royalist disbelief demonstrated how fully parliament's crisis was understood; victory was at hand if only Charles would adopt the correct strategy.

The Struggle to Save the Cause

By the middle of August 1643 the civil war had reached a crucial stage. The king had swept all before him and his victorious armies, massing in the north and west, were poised to deliver the *coup de grace*. Parliament faced a moment of truth. Would the Houses cower behind the walls of the capital, waiting for the king's inevitable advance, or would they take the offensive, attempt to rescue Gloucester, and preserve a toehold in the west? The crisis had reached a climax; parliament had to act before it was too late. Remarkably, out of the gloom and despondency, came a ray of hope that signalled the start of a parliamentary fight back. 'United under a common sense of danger', a consensus quickly emerged that something quite extraordinary had to be done to save Gloucester.⁹¹² Governor Massey's defiance in the face of 'tremendous odds provided parliamentarians everywhere with a rallying point.'⁹¹³ Robert Baillie wrote that the unexpected courage of the besieged inhabitants served to embolden parliament.⁹¹⁴ The strategic advantages that had persuaded Charles to delay an advance upon the capital in favour of capturing Gloucester were equally apparent at Westminster. It would enable the king to exploit, completely unhindered, the human and material resources of the entire region. Charles would be free to assemble and provision a formidable army, including large numbers of previously untapped Welsh recruits. If Gloucester were lost the war, it seemed, would be as good as over.

The parliamentary press made little attempt to disguise the magnitude of the danger or the immediacy of the threat. One newsbook candidly reported:

our scout met with a royal scout who tells him that the king's forces so soon as they have taken Gloucester, intend to march in all haste for Windsor, and so to London.⁹¹⁵

Parliament had to prevent the royalists reaching the outskirts of the capital. It was feared that the appearance of the king at the head of a vast army would prove too much for most if not all of those still committed to the cause. Yet Massey's heroic stand galvanised parliament, providing an opportunity to save the stricken city and with it the

⁹¹² Washbourn, *Bibliotheca Gloucestrensis*, p. lxxv.

⁹¹³ V. F. Snow, *Essex the Rebel* (University of Nebraska, 1970), p. 387.

⁹¹⁴ Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 100.

⁹¹⁵ BLTT, E. 65[17], *The Parliament Scout*, 10 - 17 August 1643, p.58.

cause. It appears to us now that the prospect of imminent defeat enabled Pym to stage-manage a remarkable relief effort, skilfully persuading the City of London to abandon its animosity towards the earl of Essex and throw its weight behind a last-ditch attempt to rescue Gloucester. But the truth was entirely different. It was only at the eleventh hour, following ten days of hectic diplomacy, that the militia committee – hitherto determined to establish an independent force under Sir William Waller – finally agreed to reinforce the Lord General's shattered army. As we shall see, while hastily raised conscripts in the Home Counties were augmented by regiments of London's regular and auxiliary trained bands, what should have been Essex's new army was in fact anything but. The composition and chain of command of the relief force demonstrated very clearly that the City of London continued to dominate the parliamentary war effort, and that following its success in defeating the Lords' peace propositions at the beginning of August, it was not yet prepared to relinquish its hold on power.

It is important to detail the political struggle that resulted in a relief effort because only the most cataclysmic of circumstances could have enabled Pym, temporarily at least, to persuade the City to support an army commanded by the earl of Essex. It was clear that the City wished to place its resources at the disposal of Waller, and it was equally clear that Essex would not mobilise his desperately depleted forces unless supplied and recruited. But Pym, undeterred, must have detected signs that the deadlock was breakable, otherwise the negotiations that subsequently took place would have been dead in the water. Pym, it appears, began by sounding out the City of London. On 14 August - four days after the siege began - he impressed upon the lord mayor, court of aldermen, and committee for the militia the absolute need for Essex to set out for Gloucester as soon as possible.⁹¹⁶ It was imperative, Pym argued, that the City employed all means at its disposal to supply the Lord General and his army. However, the response of the City was scarcely what Pym must have hoped for. The following day, in a meeting that must have been as anxious as it was difficult, he explained to Essex that the City was prepared to offer 'the readiness of the citizens [of London] to remove all impediments, if they lie in their power.'⁹¹⁷ It was a disappointingly lukewarm pledge, clearly well short of what the situation demanded, and hardly likely to convince Essex that he was taken seriously by the City.

From this point onwards it becomes clear that parliament was prepared to concede anything the City demanded in return for money and soldiers. On 16 August, Pym headed a Commons delegation into London 'to stir up the City to use all

⁹¹⁶ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 204.

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

expedition in the providing and sending of monies to the army ... and to consider of the speedy recruiting of my Lord General's army.'⁹¹⁸ But once again Pym did not receive the response he was hoping for. Instead of a firm commitment to finance the relief of Gloucester the London authority raised concerns of its own, requesting, or even demanding, the power to enforce martial law within the City. Fear of a royalist rising was very real, and it seems that the City fathers were reluctant to venture their money and soldiers until granted the autonomy to deal with insurrections themselves. Within twenty-four hours parliament issued an ordinance enabling the London Militia Committee to disarm and detain any citizen who refused to take an oath to defend London against the king. In addition all 'tumults and unlawful assemblies' were to be suppressed and those responsible 'punished or executed' as the committee 'shall think fit'. And finally the committee was empowered to order, 'as occasion shall require,' the 'shutting up of all shops' so that 'all persons according to their power and vocation be and continue in a readiness and fitting posture for the defence of the said City and parts adjacent.'⁹¹⁹ In effect the City had demanded and received the right to police the capital independently of parliament, and to dispense justice as it thought fit. One shocked observer recorded that 'the city of London has already usurped practically absolute power'.⁹²⁰ But parliament was hardly in a position to object. The authority wielded by the City prompted the royalist press to observe that ordinances were now made by the '*Three Houses*: the House of Lords, the House of Commons, and the Common Council House of London'.⁹²¹ Although a lampoon, it nevertheless indicated the increasing power of the City and the increasing impotence of parliament.

Rebuffed once again by the City, parliament embarked on a new strategy aimed at applying pressure equally to the City and to the earl of Essex. By playing one off against the other, it seems parliament hoped to overcome the impasse and enable the relief of Gloucester to finally begin. On 18 August the Commons elected two committees: one to persuade the City to provide money, and a second to convince Essex that the needs of his army would be fully met.⁹²² The first committee, led by Pym and including gentlemen from Surrey, Sussex, Kent and Hampshire, headed for the City to press the matter of finance, while the second committee, led by Sir Henry Vane, remained at Westminster to enact measures to assist the Lord General's army. Orders were given to press two thousand men in London and a further two thousand in Kent,

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁹¹⁹ C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (eds.), *Acts & Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642-1660* (London, 1911), vol. i, pp. 249-251.

⁹²⁰ *CSPV*, 1643-1647, p. 13.

⁹²¹ BLTT, E. , *Mercurius Aulicus*, 34, 20 – 26 August 1643, p. 469.

⁹²² *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, pp. 209-210.

Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire. In addition Essex's trusted friend, Sir Philip Stapleton, was appointed to write to the Lord General requesting officers to collect the recruits.⁹²³ The purpose of this two pronged strategy - Pym's visit to the City and Vane's military preparations - became apparent the following day when parliament launched a concerted effort to break the deadlock between the London authority and Essex.

On 19 August the Houses appointed a committee of Lords and Commons to petition the Lord General. The committee - carefully briefed - carried the results of Pym's negotiations with the City and Vane's newly enacted legislation.⁹²⁴ Firstly Essex was to be informed that notice had been taken of his requirements and that consequently orders had been issued to press four thousand recruits. However, the urgency of the situation meant that the Lord General would have to mobilise his army before all of the recruits could be supplied. It had become apparent to the Houses, whenever they attempted to raise money, that 'nothing can induce those who are masters of it to a consent of parting with it (without which the army cannot march), as much as that the armies were in a marching posture.'⁹²⁵ Therefore Essex was to be asked to fix a date and location for a general rendezvous, to which the army could first march. Then, it was to be explained, if supplies of men and money were not forthcoming the blame would not lie with the Lord General. He would have done all in his power, and it would be clear that others were at fault. And to prove parliament's commitment, Essex was to be informed that a meeting with the London authority had already been arranged for later that evening at which the same committee of both Houses would press his demands.

The committee's carefully worded instructions revealed the depth of the City's animosity towards Essex. London's financiers were not prepared to back an army that remained idle in its quarters, complaining endlessly of a lack of money, men, and supplies. They wished to place their resources at Waller's disposal, a commander who had demonstrated an unwavering commitment to military victory.⁹²⁶ The City, even in the depths of crisis, demanded evidence that Essex would march before they parted with a penny of their money. This shows the scale of Pym's task, and how important it was to persuade the Lord General to make the first move. Essex however was prepared to respond, and readily agreed to begin his march for Gloucester as soon as possible. Pym - no doubt relieved - wasted little time in reporting the good news to the Commons:

⁹²³ *Ibid.*, p.210.

⁹²⁴ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p.192.

⁹²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁶ A letter written from London in the third week of July 1643 stated 'This town is all mad for raising a new army for Sir William Waller who, they say, the city will have [as] their general.' Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 98.

My Lord General ... is desirous to move this night or tomorrow, but hath pitched upon Tuesday next to march with his army; and the place of rendezvous to be on Hounslow Heath. He doth desire, according to the propositions of both Houses, that there may be a committee of both Houses there, to see in what condition the army is; and doth hope, against that day, care will be taken, recruits, clothes, and money, will be ready: and desires that the City may know of it: and that you will interpose so, that he may have as many additional forces as can be procured, especially horse. This answer was with much readiness.⁹²⁷

A critical obstacle had been overcome. If Essex had refused to march until recruits and supplies appeared, Pym would have had nothing to take to the City. Negotiations would have been deadlocked and any possibility of relieving Gloucester all but lost. Characteristically Essex had shown a readiness to answer the call. The committee of both Houses, headed by Pym, set out for the City later that same evening, armed – crucially – with the Lord General's agreement to muster his forces on Hounslow Heath.⁹²⁸

Two days later on 21 August Pym's strategy appeared to have scored a resounding success. The committee for the London militia declared that it had been '*moved*' by the committee of both Houses and by the earl of Essex 'to send forth some speedy aid,' and had therefore resolved, 'forthwith to send out a force, both of horse and foot, for the relief of the said city of Gloucester.' Regiments of the London trained bands plus auxiliary forces were therefore appointed to take part in the expedition. The militia committee it appeared had been won over, stating that 'the City of London, and parts adjacent, cannot be long in safety if that city be lost'.⁹²⁹ It seems that the arguments deployed by Pym in negotiation with Essex had been marshalled with equal skill in talks with the militia committee. If the Lord General was prepared to act selflessly in the name of parliament, but was callously deserted by the City, whose duty it was to provide both men and money, then people would draw their own conclusions. Pym skilfully exploited the bitter rivalry between Essex and the London authority, bringing together, albeit reluctantly, these erstwhile antagonists. But what appeared to be a stunning diplomatic success turned out to be another example of the City's growing dominance. As we shall now see, a detailed examination of the terms on which the militia committee agreed to support the relief effort reveals, once again, the extent to which the City of London was dictating events.

With time rapidly running out Pym was forced to capitulate, undercutting the authority of the Lord General and handing control of the City's reinforcements to the

⁹²⁷ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 212

⁹²⁸ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 192.

⁹²⁹ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, pp. 291-292.

London militia committee. On 23 August an ordinance for the relief of Gloucester made it clear that the capital's forces were to be commanded by officers appointed by the militia committee, and would return once the expedition had been completed. The London trained bands and auxiliary regiments were authorised to reinforce the Lord General's army for the sole purpose of relieving Gloucester. They would, in effect, form an independent contingent and would not become part of the army to which they were temporarily attached. Ostensibly commanded by Essex, the Londoners would remain under the direct control of the militia committee via their regimental officers.⁹³⁰ The conditions imposed by the City reveal the extent to which the relief of Gloucester has been misunderstood by historians. Hexter, for example, confidently stated that Pym and the middle group:

took the London militia away from Waller, the hero of the fiery ones, and sent it marching to the relief of Gloucester under the command of the Lord General, the earl of Essex⁹³¹

Hexter cultivates an image of an all-conquering Pym, bending the City to his will with consummate political skill. But as we have seen the reality of the situation was entirely different. The ordinance for the relief of Gloucester specified that the London forces were to be placed under the *direction* of the Lord General *with the consent of the militia committee*, and that they were 'straightly charged and required to be observant and obedient to the commands of the said committee'.⁹³² Rather than the unparalleled prowess of Hexter's 'King Pym', we are in fact presented with a City authority imposing the regulations by which London's Trained Bands may serve in parliament's army. Essex - in effect - was side-tracked, allowing the City to assume control of the capital's soldiers through the express commands of the militia committee. The Venetian ambassador vividly described the City's usurpation of power:

They have formed a council for the militia, composed of citizens with supreme authority to do what is considered necessary for self defence, while for the equipment of the army and its despatch they are raising money and men, punishing those who refuse obedience by way of court martial, even with death, an unprecedented and illegal course.⁹³³

The City had taken control of the relief effort.

⁹³⁰ Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, pp. 260-261.

⁹³¹ J. H. Hexter, *The Reign of King Pym* (Harvard, 1941), p. 147.

⁹³² Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, vol. i, pp. 260-261.

⁹³³ *CSPV*, 1643-1647, p. 13.

As promised, on 24 August, the earl of Essex mustered his forces, some 10,000 strong, on Hounslow Heath. With members of the Lords and Commons in attendance, the Lord General reviewed the conglomeration of veterans, willing volunteers, and reluctant conscripts that made up his new army. On 1 September at Brackley Heath in Northamptonshire, approximately half-way to Gloucester, he rendezvoused with the regular and auxiliary regiments of the London trained bands.⁹³⁴ Even with an army approaching 20,000 men, the odds against success must have seemed high. Such a perilous adventure would only have been undertaken in the most desperate of circumstances. The fact that both parliament and the City were prepared to risk so large a number of troops, many miles from safety in the heart of enemy territory, provides overwhelming evidence that the relief of Gloucester was a last throw of the dice. In order to rescue the town, and with it the cause, Essex had to:

march over a campania [open unenclosed terrain] near thirty miles in length, where half the king's body of horse would distress, if not destroy, his whole army, and through a country eaten bare, where he could find neither provision for man nor horse⁹³⁵

The enormity of the undertaking would have been obvious to all. Essex, by committing himself to so hazardous an expedition, clearly recognised that he was risking his life. Yet this was a chance to prove his critics and doubters wrong. In many ways Essex was the right man at the right time. Fuelled not only by a fervent desire to serve the cause, the Lord General also harboured a burning ambition to vindicate himself and to confound his detested enemies. In a dramatic letter to the Commons he declared:

I am tomorrow, God willing, beginning my march, and if the army be as willing to march as I shall be to lead them (and the town hold out until we can release them), I shall endeavour it, or perish in the act.⁹³⁶

The Relief of Gloucester and the Battle of Newbury

By any measure the relief of Gloucester was a remarkable achievement. Following twenty-six days of royalist assaults the situation in the besieged town was critical. Yet, quite miraculously, Essex arrived just in time.⁹³⁷ His army had skirmished daily with a

⁹³⁴ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 292.

⁹³⁵ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 170.

⁹³⁶ Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 105.

⁹³⁷ Michael Braddick has observed that 'Gloucester could probably have been stormed quite quickly, whereas a siege tied down a large number of troops and gave parliament time to levy a relieving force'. M. Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire* (London, 2008), p. 290. The king, in fact, elected to mount a siege following the unacceptably high number of royalist casualties in the capture of Bristol.

shadowing force of two thousand five hundred royalist horse commanded by Lord Wilmot, and on 4 September, at Stow on the Wold, Essex was confronted by Prince Rupert at the head of four thousand massed cavalry. But the Lord General repulsed the attacks, skilfully marshalling his troops in a slow and well-defended march. On 5 September Essex drew up his entire army on Prestbury Hills, overlooking Gloucester, only to discover that the king's forces, notified of his approach, had abandoned their trenches and raised the siege.⁹³⁸ It was a critical moment in the history of the civil war, raising parliamentary morale, and dealing a vital check to the seemingly inexorable progress of the royalist war effort.⁹³⁹ Clarendon confessed that the town's stubborn resistance 'gave a stop to the career of the king's good success,' describing the event as a pivotal moment, and ascribing to it 'the greatness to which they [parliament] afterwards aspired.'⁹⁴⁰ A contemporary parliamentary account declared that 'nothing but an extraordinary blessing of God' could explain such an astonishing reversal of fortune. Considering Essex faced a march of eighty miles, 'through counties already harried by the enemy,' which, it was asked, was more wonderful, 'that he undertook it, or that he did it.'⁹⁴¹ Another source reported that Gloucester's salvation prompted a great deal of discussion, that 'all men both friends and enemies agreed that Essex herein performed a very gallant soldier like action.'⁹⁴² Royalist forces besieging Gloucester thought it inconceivable that Essex could even attempt such a seemingly impossible task. They believed he might just be capable of threatening Oxford, and thereby draw the king's army away from Gloucester.⁹⁴³ Contemporaries, both parliamentary and royalist alike, were truly astounded. The totally unanticipated relief of the beleaguered town was seen as an extraordinary event. The king's march to victory had been halted: Essex, it appeared, had raised parliament from the dead.

The Lord General was quick to appreciate that his epic march would have been in vain if Gloucester had fallen. On 10 September he despatched a breathless report to the Speaker of the House of Commons describing the gallant resistance of Colonel Massey:

⁹³⁸ Whitlocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs*, pp. 68-69; Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, pp. 290-292.

⁹³⁹ One parliamentary broadsheet, quoting biblical texts, described the deliverance of Gloucester as the fulfilment of a divine prophecy. BLTT, E 250[9], *Good news from all quarters of the kingdom*, 12 September 1643, pp. 1-3.

⁹⁴⁰ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 171.

⁹⁴¹ BLTT, E. 70[10], *A true relation of the late expedition of his Excellency, Robert earl of Essex, for the relief of Gloucester* (London, 7 October 1643), p. 2.

⁹⁴² Whitlocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs*, p. 69.

⁹⁴³ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 170.

we came very seasonably, for the governor had not above two or three barrels of powder left; yet he had managed his business with so much judgement and courage, that the enemy not knowing of such want, had but small hope of obtaining their desires.⁹⁴⁴

Massey had defended Gloucester for almost a month against overwhelming odds, uncertain, it appears, whether or not relief was on the way. Another two or three days and he would, in all likelihood, have been compelled to surrender, leaving Essex adrift in enemy territory. The writer Robert Codrington, who accompanied Essex throughout the long and hazardous march, observed that:

The siege was most resolutely sustained by the valour, industry and dexterity of the heroic governor Colonel Massey, who contrived all the stratagems, and occasioned all the sallies for the ruin of the enemy, and the protection of the city.⁹⁴⁵

Clarendon joined the chorus of praise, commending the 'great courage and resolution' of the besieged and describing Massey as a 'vigilant commander.'⁹⁴⁶

As one might expect, Gloucester's epic rescue was gratefully received by parliament. On 16 September Colonel Massey was granted one thousand pounds, of which five hundred pounds were to be paid immediately, while Essex was ordered to 'prefer him some place of honour and profit.' And as a reward for their outstanding service, the garrison's officers and soldiers were to have their arrears made up without delay, plus the addition of a further one-month's pay. It was also ordered 'that public thanksgiving be given, on the next Lords day, in all the churches of London and Westminster.' And finally a letter was to be sent to Essex 'acknowledging the great service he has done in the conducting of his army in the difficult march to the relief of Gloucester.'⁹⁴⁷

Parliament had been unexpectedly reprieved, but as far as the royalists were concerned Gloucester amounted to no more than a stay of execution. Although Essex had succeeded in saving the stricken town, 'he could neither stay there, nor possibly retire to London, without being destroyed in the rear by the king's army.'⁹⁴⁸ In order to prolong the war until negotiations taking place in Edinburgh could bring Scottish

⁹⁴⁴ W. B. Devereux, *Lives and Letters of the Devereux Earls of Essex 1540-1646* (London, 1853), vol. ii, p. 379.

⁹⁴⁵ R. Codrington, *The life and death of the illustrious Robert Earl of Essex* (London, 1646), p. 30.

⁹⁴⁶ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 165.

⁹⁴⁷ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 218.

⁹⁴⁸ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 170.

soldiers to parliament's assistance, Essex had somehow to bring his weary and vulnerable army back to the capital. If the Lord General failed the war would be as good as over.

It is generally assumed, therefore, that Essex's sole objective was to slip away and march for home. However one source gives the impression that Essex sought an engagement - victory would clear his path - but the enemy 'fled before him and refused to stand to the hazard of a battle.'⁹⁴⁹ Realising that the king's principal intention was to cut off provisions, the Lord General was forced to turn and run before starvation took hold. With great skill Essex decoyed north towards Worcester before veering sharply south to capture a royalist supply train at Cirencester.⁹⁵⁰ On 19 September his army marched for Newbury, 'in great want of victuals, both for men and horse.'⁹⁵¹ But a fierce attack by Rupert's cavalry allowed the pursuing royalists to reach the town first, effectively blocking the road to London. The king, so it seemed, had now recovered the advantage lost at Gloucester. The army upon which parliament's survival depended was cornered. Tired after long and arduous marches, the troops were quartered in open fields, bereft of shelter and supplies. The royalists, meanwhile, refreshed themselves in and around Newbury, with the garrisons of Wallingford and Oxford at hand to supply whatever was required. Charles held all the aces, whereas Essex was trapped with nowhere to turn. There was no going back, the only option was to fight a way through or starve.⁹⁵²

The battle of Newbury was a long and bloody affair. From first light on 20 September fierce fighting continued unabated throughout the day. Alert and determined Essex took the initiative, capturing a hill, occupied by the enemy, which commanded the battlefield. To the north and south of this high ground the parliamentary army established their positions, resolutely holding their ground against wave after wave of royalist attacks. Even Prince Rupert's fearless horsemen could not penetrate the pikes of the London trained bands. Whenever the royalists threatened to break the hard pressed and often disordered parliamentary lines, their assaults were somehow repulsed and the danger averted. As darkness fell the fighting finally fizzled out, the royalists were spent and any hope of a decisive victory had evaporated. During the night, short of powder and dispirited, the king withdrew leaving Essex in possession of the field and

⁹⁴⁹ Codrington, *Life and death*, p. 30.

⁹⁵⁰ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 292.

⁹⁵¹ Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs*, p. 70.

⁹⁵² Macray (ed), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, pp. 173-174.

the road to London.⁹⁵³ Crucially, after a day of unrelenting fighting, he also remained in possession of the parliamentary cause.

At Newbury the royalists had confidently expected to rectify the frustration of Gloucester by inflicting a resounding defeat, thereby bringing the civil war to a resounding conclusion. Yet the unanticipated resilience, skill and bravery of parliament's army left the king's party with little alternative but to acknowledge the scale of Essex's achievement.

Without doubt, the action was performed by him with incomparable conduct and courage, in every part whereof very much was to be imputed to his own personal virtue, and it may well be reckoned amongst the most soldierly actions of this unhappy war.⁹⁵⁴

The very fact that the royalists pressed their attacks from dawn till dusk shows that Newbury was believed to be *the* battle that would finally decided the war. Contemporary opinion considered it significant that the king's army expended no less than eighty barrels of powder, fully 'twenty more than served their turn at Edgehill.'⁹⁵⁵ In 1643 Newbury was recognised as a landmark event. The royalists strained every sinew to deliver a knockout blow, one that would enable Charles to return to his capital in triumph. Even parliamentarians were surprised that Essex and his makeshift army had withstood the fierce onslaught:

In humane probability, the king's army was the more likely to have prevailed, their horse more and better than the parliaments, and their foot were as good, their advantages greater and their courage higher, and their confidence too much ... [but] God was pleased to raise the courage of the parliament's forces and to give them the success⁹⁵⁶

Robert Codrington, who witnessed the fighting first hand, was in no doubt where the battle was won and lost:

⁹⁵³ Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs*, p. 70; Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, pp. 174-175; Codrington, *Life and death*, pp. 32-33; Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, pp. 293-295. For fuller and more detailed accounts of Newbury see Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, pp. 210-218; Young & Holmes, *The English Civil War*, pp. 144-150; S. Reid, *All the King's Armies: A Military History of the English Civil War 1642-1651* (Staplehurst, 1998), pp. 61-65.

⁹⁵⁴ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 176.

⁹⁵⁵ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 295.

⁹⁵⁶ Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English affairs*, p. 71.

The Trained Bands of the City of London endured the chief heat of the day, and had the honour to win it, for being now upon the brow of the hill, they lay not only open to the horse, but the canon of the enemy, yet they stood undaunted⁹⁵⁷

And Codrington's heartfelt tribute to the earl of Essex conveyed a sense of what was at stake, how the fate of parliament had depended on the courage and leadership of the Lord General:

But above all, the renown and glory of this day is most justly due unto the resolution and conduct of our general, for before the battle was begun, he did ride from one regiment to another, and did inflame them with courage. I have heard that when in the heat and tempest of the fight some friends of his did advise him to leave off his white hat, because it rendered him an object too remarkable to the enemy: No replied the earl, 'It is not the hat, but the heart, the hat is nor capable either of fear or honour.'⁹⁵⁸

After a day of unrelenting carnage, the battle of Newbury failed to deliver the victory that would have ended the war in royalist triumph. The courage of the Lord General and his valiant army ensured that the war would continue, and that the cause for which parliament had taken up arms would remain alive.

Two days later on 22 September Essex reached Reading from where he wrote to the Commons.⁹⁵⁹ The Houses immediately despatched a committee to congratulate him upon his success and to ascertain what necessities were required to replenish the army. Simultaneously a second committee was ordered to acquaint the City with the good news and to negotiate further supplies of money and ammunition.⁹⁶⁰ The speed with which parliament acted suggests, perhaps, that a second engagement was anticipated. It may have been feared that the royalists would once again overtake Essex and force another battle, or pursue the Lord General to the gates and attempt to overawe the capital. Certainly, the fevered response of parliament appeared to indicate that the immediate danger had not yet passed.

In the event, however, Essex entered London on 25 September to a tumultuous welcome. Parliament's saviour was received as a conquering hero 'with all imaginable congratulation and triumph.'⁹⁶¹ The Venetian ambassador declared that Essex 'moves in a halo of glory here' and has 'vindicated himself with the citizens of London.'⁹⁶² The

⁹⁵⁷ Codrington, *Life and death*, p. 35.

⁹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

⁹⁵⁹ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 294; *House of Lords Journal*, vol. vi, p. 230.

⁹⁶⁰ Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs*, p. 70.

⁹⁶¹ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, pp. 190-191.

⁹⁶² *CSPV*, 1643-1647, p. 29.

following day, 26 September, the speaker, together with the House of Commons, visited the Lord General to congratulate him on his 'happy success and valour in the late business at Newbury.' In recognition of their deliverance 'under God,' a record of Essex's achievement was entered into the journal book of parliament, to the honour of his posterity. The Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London, resplendent in their scarlet gowns, complimented Essex 'as the protector and defender of their lives and fortunes, and of their wives and children.' And as the Lord General passed the trained bands he was cheered with 'loud acclamations of his praise.'⁹⁶³

Conclusion

The adulation accorded Essex by both parliament and the City of London emphasised, once again, the enormity of the crisis. Only salvation from impending catastrophe could account for official gratitude on this scale. The City, amongst the Lord General's bitterest critics, now paid fulsome tribute. Essex, in the words of his principal biographer, 'had saved not only the cities of Gloucester and London but the whole cause.'⁹⁶⁴ Parliament was imbued with fresh optimism: certain defeat had been averted and the prospect of Scottish military aid dispelled any thoughts of ignominious capitulation.⁹⁶⁵ Clarendon, predictably cynical, nevertheless captured something of the new parliamentary spirit:

The passion and animosity which differences of opinion had produced between any members was totally laid aside and forgotten, and no artifice omitted to make the world believe that they were a people newly incorporated, and so firmly united to one and the same end as their brethren the Scots; of whose concurrence and assistance they were now assured, and satisfied that it would come soon enough for their preservation⁹⁶⁶

Essex had won a valuable reprieve, enabling parliament to secure the services of twenty thousand armed Scots. As Sir Richard Bulstrode put it, 'the House of Commons were ready to truss up bag and baggage: but Essex's success at Gloucester changed the scene of public affairs'.⁹⁶⁷ In relieving Gloucester and blunting the royalists at Newbury, Essex re-established his military reputation and justified his appointment as Lord General. Newbury ensured that the war would continue and that Charles would be denied a victory that had seemed inevitable. 'The defeat of Essex in the summer of

⁹⁶³ Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs*, p.70.

⁹⁶⁴ Snow, *Essex the Rebel*, p. 394.

⁹⁶⁵ A letter written on 28 August confidently predicted that 'these good brethren of ours will take care of the north'. Cited in Hexter, *King Pym*, p. 150.

⁹⁶⁶ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 191.

⁹⁶⁷ Bulstrode, *Memoirs And Reflections*, p. 96.

1643,' it has justifiably been argued, 'might well have changed the whole course of our history.'⁹⁶⁸ An unprecedented crisis, universally expected to end in parliamentary disaster, had been miraculously overcome. A rejuvenated parliament now looked forward to a Godly invasion from north of the border.⁹⁶⁹

⁹⁶⁸ Young and Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 150.

⁹⁶⁹ The MP Walter Yonge wrote in his diary, 'The coming of the Scots will add strength and reputation to the cause both at home and abroad.' I. Gentles, *The English Revolution and the Wars in the Three Kingdoms 1638-1652* (Harlow, 2007), p. 207.

REPERCUSSIONS OF CRISIS

Chapter six will show how the precarious military situation south of the border drove the English parliament and their Scottish counterparts to enter into an alliance - the Solemn League and Covenant - and how this imperative compelled both sides to make significant and at times uncomfortable compromises. In addition it will be argued that the emergence of the Independent-Presbyterian split was a direct consequence of parliament's 1643 crisis, and that the Scottish alliance, together with the divisions between Independents and Presbyterians, played a fundamental part in shaping the subsequent course of the civil war. Finally, it will be shown that in 1644 the dramatic upturn in parliament's military fortunes was due to a transformation in cooperation between commanders and a corresponding failure of cooperation amongst royalist commanders.

The Solemn League and Covenant

The Solemn League and Covenant, described by one historian as 'parliament's single most important strategic measure of the whole war,'⁹⁷⁰ transformed a decidedly *English* conflict into something approaching a war of three kingdoms. But as the following analysis will demonstrate, the shared desperation of parliament and Scots to cement a military alliance was, from an English point of view, greatly diminished once the threat of imminent defeat receded. Until the collapse of the parliamentary war effort in the summer of 1643, an Anglo-Scottish agreement had been firmly resisted by the English. This, as we shall see, is a vitally important point, indicating that parliament's Scottish policy was driven by the military crisis in England and the need for armed assistance. A neglected correlation, linking the negotiation of the Solemn League and Covenant with the condition of the parliamentary war effort, provides significant supporting evidence. However, we need to begin by examining pre-crisis events in Scotland during the early summer of 1643. The perception of royalist policy north of the border explains Scottish eagerness to forge a military alliance well before the English parliament was prepared to endorse such a course of action.

On 6 June 1643 Scotland had been thrown into turmoil by the discovery of the so-called 'Antrim Plot': a royalist conspiracy consisting of a cease-fire with the

⁹⁷⁰ I. Gentles, *The English Revolution and the Wars in the Three Kingdoms 1638-1652* (Harlow, 2007), p. 205.

Catholic rebels in Ireland followed by an invasion of western and southern Scotland.⁹⁷¹ Even if, as Gardiner has suggested, the plot 'could be shown to be an intention rather than a definite scheme accepted by the king', Charles's apparent willingness to ally himself with papist in an attack on the Scottish mainland caused great alarm.⁹⁷² The Bishops' Wars of 1639 and 1640 taught the Scots that the king could not be trusted: the Antrim Plot confirmed suspicions that a royalist victory in England would result in further armed attempts to re-impose the detested Book of Common Prayer. Robert Baillie, a Church of Scotland minister, wrote that 'the plot of Antrim had wakened in all a great fear of our safety, and distrust of all the fair words that were or could be given us.'⁹⁷³ On 22 June the Scots convoked a Convention of Estates, a body less formal and powerful than a parliament, and therefore less likely to offend Scottish royalists and moderate covenanters,⁹⁷⁴ but nevertheless intended to consider the royalist threat to national security.⁹⁷⁵ It was assumed, as Robert Baillie observed, that the English parliament would fully comprehend the meaning of the Convention, and would quickly dispatch commissioners to Edinburgh. But as June dragged on into July no English representation appeared, an unaccountable neglect that left Scottish political and religious leaders greatly perplexed.⁹⁷⁶

When, on 14 July, a relieved Robert Baillie reported that John Corbett, a representative of parliament, 'is come at last with some word for us,' the waiting finally appeared to be over. Frustratingly for Baillie and his fellow countrymen, Corbett had no authority to negotiate, and, significantly, in terms of the argument pursued here, carried no request for military help. He explained that despite parliament's apprehension over the Antrim Plot, a royalist conspiracy against London and the need to constitute an Assembly of Divines, to which the Scots were invited, had caused the delay. However, he went on to announce that properly appointed commissioners would be sent to Edinburgh as quickly as possible.⁹⁷⁷ The Scots immediately complained to parliament 'that the convention of the estate of this kingdom has long expected committees ... with instructions and power ... that expectation being hitherto disappointed.'⁹⁷⁸ The Scots would soon come to realise that parliament's belated interest was not motivated by a

⁹⁷¹ L. Kaplan, 'Steps to War: the Scots and Parliament 1642-1643', *Journal of British Studies*, IX 2 (May 1970), p. 57.

⁹⁷² R. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War* (London, 1904), vol. i, p. 177.

⁹⁷³ D. Lang (ed.), *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie* (Edinburgh, 1841), vol. ii, p. 80.

⁹⁷⁴ D. Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution 1637-1644* (Newton Abbot, 1973), p. 176.

⁹⁷⁵ Kaplan, 'Steps to War', p. 58.

⁹⁷⁶ Lang, (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 79.

⁹⁷⁷ Kaplan, 'Steps to War', p. 59; Lang (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 80; Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, pp. 177-178.

⁹⁷⁸ The complaint was issued on 17 July 1643 by the Convention of Estates as part of a series of instructions to be presented to the Houses of Parliament. T. Thompson and C. Innes (eds.), *The Acts of the Parliament of Scotland* (12 vols, 1814-1875), vol. vi, p. 15.

concern for Scottish security. Parliament's commissioners, to which Corbett referred, were intended for an altogether different purpose, one directly related to the military situation in England. On 30 June, eight days after the Convention convened, parliament's northern army, commanded by Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, had been all but destroyed by the earl of Newcastle's forces at the battle of Adwalton Moor.⁹⁷⁹ The catastrophe left most of northern England, save for the port of Hull, in royalist hands. Adwalton Moor transformed parliament's attitude to its northern neighbours,⁹⁸⁰ rendering 'an alliance with the Scots the only viable option to wrest control of the north from the king and to avert an outright royalist victory.'⁹⁸¹

On 5 July the terrible news was broken to a shocked parliament, resulting in an immediate request for Scottish military assistance.⁹⁸² Although both Houses agreed to name commissioners as quickly as possible, the process was disrupted by the refusal of two Lords, the earl of Rutland and Lord Grey of Warke, to accept nomination. Clarendon claimed that parliament's appeal for Scottish help 'was thought so desperate a cure' that 'the earl [of Rutland] upon indisposition of health procured a release' while Lord Grey 'so peremptorily refused to meddle in it that he was committed to the Tower.'⁹⁸³ This untimely disarray in the Upper House helps to explain Corbett's rather apologetic appearance in Edinburgh on 14 July. Despite these difficulties it is clear that parliament's desperation for Scottish aid derived solely from the military crisis in England. The royalist threat to Scotland, revealed in early June by the discovery of the Antrim Plot, had not prompted parliament to seek Scottish assistance. Even though the Scots signaled a state of national emergency by convening a Convention of Estates, it was not until the disaster of Adwalton Moor that parliament ordered the negotiation of a military alliance. A frustrated Robert Baillie complained that English 'slowness in all their affairs is marvelous.'⁹⁸⁴

⁹⁷⁹ In January 1643 a parliamentary agent in Edinburgh reported that the prospects for a military alliance with the Scots appeared good and that the 'coals now want only blowing from England and this Kingdom [Scotland] will soon be on fire.' What the agent did not realise was that parliament would only blow the Scottish coals when outright defeat was staring it in the face. S. D. M. Carpenter, *Military Leadership in the British Civil Wars* (Abingdon, 2005), p. 79.

⁹⁸⁰ Corbett's original instructions to attend the Convention of Estates were granted on 27 May 1643 as a result of the discovery of the Antrim Plot, a conspiracy held by one member of the Commons to confirm 'a fixed resolution in the Popish party utterly to extirpate the true Protestant religion in England, Scotland and Ireland.' Significantly, these instructions were amended *after* the battle of Adwalton Moor on 30 June 1643 to include reference to the future arrival in Edinburgh of properly constituted parliamentary commissioners. Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, pp. 177-178.

⁹⁸¹ D. Scott, 'The "Northern Gentlemen", the Parliamentary Independents, and Anglo-Scottish Relations in the Long Parliament', *History Journal*, 42, 2 (1999), p. 354.

⁹⁸² *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 155; *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 122.

⁹⁸³ W. D. Macray (ed.), *The History of the Rebellion by Edward Earl of Clarendon* (Oxford, 1888), vol. iii, p. 115; *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, pp. 128 & 136.

⁹⁸⁴ Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 81.

But from parliament's point of view the situation was entirely different. In 1641, during treaty negotiations in London following the Second Bishops' War, the Scots had demanded 'unity in religion and uniformity in church government between England and Scotland as a means to preserve peace.'⁹⁸⁵ Although a firm commitment to introduce Scottish Presbyterianism had been successfully avoided, parliament knew full well that a resumption of talks would inevitably result in further Scottish demands for unity and uniformity. Hence parliament's reluctance to request military assistance until defeat in the civil war appeared virtually certain. Only a crisis of unprecedented proportions could persuade a majority of Lords and Commons to concede the kind of unpalatable religious demands that had been opposed by both Charles and parliament in 1641.⁹⁸⁶ Clearly the military situation - and the military situation alone - determined parliament's attitude to Scotland.

Meanwhile the Scots observed parliament's deteriorating war effort with growing concern. In the exasperating absence of English commissioners they attempted to increase the diplomatic pressure for an alliance. On 17 July, four days after the complete annihilation of Sir William Waller's army at the battle of Roundway Down, the Convention of Estates declared the dangers facing their southern neighbours to be identical to those facing the Scots.⁹⁸⁷ This carefully calculated strategy, articulating the fate of both nations in terms of a common royalist enemy, assumed even greater importance after the devastating loss of Bristol to Prince Rupert on 26 July. In Edinburgh it was becoming increasingly clear that diplomatic overtures could not guarantee national security: it was time to make independent military preparations, before parliament was overwhelmed and defeated. Mobilization of forces was a necessary defensive measure, but it was also intended to emphasize Scottish impatience to enter the civil war on parliament's side. On 28 July, the Convention of Estates ordered the raising of six thousand infantry and two hundred cavalry.⁹⁸⁸

Yet six days later, on 3 August, Robert Baillie was still reporting the great distress of his countrymen over the continued absence of the English Commissioners, 'of whose coming' he complained 'we were well near out of hope.' It was widely believed in Edinburgh that pro-royalist members of the House of Lords had prevented the issuing of commissions, while others suspected that parliament's neglect was

⁹⁸⁵ Stevenson, *Scottish Revolution*, pp. 220-221.

⁹⁸⁶ David Scott has shown that significant support for a Scottish alliance came from northern members of parliament whose estates had been seized by the earl of Newcastle, a situation that would have been inconceivable were it not for Adwalton Moor: Scott, 'Northern Gentlemen', pp. 347-348 & 354.

⁹⁸⁷ Kaplan, 'Steps to War', p. 59

⁹⁸⁸ *Parliament of Scotland*, vol. vi, pp. 19-20 cited in Kaplan, 'Steps to War', pp. 59-60; E. Furgol, 'The Civil Wars in Scotland', in J Kenyon and J Ohlmeyer (eds.), *The Civil Wars: A Military History of England Scotland and Ireland 1638-1660* (Oxford, 1998), p. 50.

intended to obviate the need for an alliance by compelling the Scots to take unilateral action.⁹⁸⁹ The Scots were clearly beside themselves with anxiety, unable to comprehend parliament's failure to hasten representation to the Convention of Estates. As news of each royalist victory spread north across the border, the civil war appeared to be spiraling out of control, imperiling parliament and endangering Scottish security. Robert Baillie's agitated concern is, therefore, an important point of evidence for this study. It confirms that the critical nature of parliament's military collapse was fully recognized in Scotland, and that it constituted a source of rapidly increasing national apprehension. One correspondent revealingly explained to the Scots that 'if [the English] could do the business by themselves they would save you a labour and themselves much money and credit'.⁹⁹⁰

On 7 August, to palpable Scottish relief, parliamentary commissioners finally landed at Leith. Their intention was to secure a minimum of 10,000 Scottish infantry and 1,000 cavalry to fight in England.⁹⁹¹ Robert Baillie recalled how the Scots 'were exhorted to be more grave than ordinary', so that all might be achieved 'with much more awe and gravity than usual'.⁹⁹² They explained to their English guests that 'they well understood how much the fate of Scotland was involved in what should befall the parliament in England ... if the king prevailed by force.'⁹⁹³ On 17 August, after less than ten days of bargaining, the Convention of Estates ratified an Anglo-Scottish alliance: the Solemn League and Covenant.⁹⁹⁴ It was observed that this was a remarkably short time given the fact that the respective parties entered the talks with different objectives.⁹⁹⁵ One contemporary believed that the agreement was nothing short of miraculous given the fractious history of Anglo-Scottish relations over the past three hundred years.⁹⁹⁶

The English, as was to be expected, stressed military assistance, but the Scots, as a price for co-operation, pursued national interests through a religious and political agenda. These considerations were reflected in the title of the alliance, *Covenant* representing Scottish religious aspirations and *League* denoting parliament's military

⁹⁸⁹ Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, pp. 85-86.

⁹⁹⁰ Kaplan, 'Steps to War', p. 61.

⁹⁹¹ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 141.

⁹⁹² Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 88.

⁹⁹³ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 201.

⁹⁹⁴ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 231; The Covenant 'called for the suppression of episcopacy, Catholicism and royalists as well as the preservation of both kingdom's political liberties.' Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 79.

⁹⁹⁵ 'Wise observers wondered to see a matter of that importance carried through upon so little deliberation or debate.' G. Burnet, *The memoirs of the lives and actions of James and William, Dukes of Hamilton and Castleherald* (London, 1677), p. 239.

⁹⁹⁶ E. Vallance, "An Holy and Sacramentall Paction", *Federal Theology and the Solemn League and Covenant in England*, *English Historical Review*, vol. 116, 465 (February, 2001), p. 67.

priorities.⁹⁹⁷ According to Robert Baillie, a private letter from the English divines to their Scottish counterparts, expressing the urgency of the situation, was:

so lamentable, that it drew tears from many. Above all, diligence was urged; for the report was going already of the loss of Bristol, from which they feared his Majesty might march to London, and carry it.⁹⁹⁸

It is little wonder that the respective negotiators worked at such a prodigious rate. The fact that an agreement had been reached in only ten days demonstrates the overwhelming need, recognized by both parliament and the Scots, for an immediate military alliance. The threat of a royalist victory was driving the political agenda on both sides of the border.

On 18 August, the day after the Solemn League and Covenant was agreed in Edinburgh, the Scots made ready for war. Although the treaty had yet to be approved by the English parliament, the Convention of Estates placed all able-bodied men on forty-eight-hour standby.⁹⁹⁹ Three days later a party of Scottish Commissioners boarded ship for Westminster, among them Robert Baillie, who feared that the king would get to London before they did.¹⁰⁰⁰ On 22 August the Scots stepped up their preparations by nominating commanders for the new army and selecting Alexander Leslie, earl of Leven, to serve as Lord General.¹⁰⁰¹ These plans culminated on 26 August when the Convention of Estates made a commitment to send 18,000 infantry and 2,100 cavalry to parliament's assistance. This was a hugely significant and potentially decisive addition of manpower. As an indication of Scottish alarm the message could not be clearer.¹⁰⁰² This new army of the Covenant was twice as strong as the force parliament originally requested, 'making it the largest army, at least on paper, then in parliamentary service.'¹⁰⁰³

The urgency of Scottish military preparations suggests that unilateral action was under active consideration. Parliament's precarious military situation threatened defeat within weeks or even days, and following the loss of Bristol a royalist advance on

⁹⁹⁷ Gentles, *The English Revolution*, p. 206; 'the English pressed chiefly a Civil League, and the Scots a Religious one,' Burnet, *Memoires of Hamilton and Castleherald*, p. 237.

⁹⁹⁸ Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 89.

⁹⁹⁹ 'A proclamation proclaimed throughout the kingdom of Scotland, August 18 1643, for all persons from 16 to 60 years old to appear in arms' J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1721), vol. v, pp. 387-504.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 98.

¹⁰⁰¹ Furgol, 'The Civil Wars in Scotland,' p. 50.

¹⁰⁰² 'Within ten days ... the solemn league and covenant had been agreed, and within twenty days the treaty for sending an army to England had also been completed.' Stevenson, *Scottish Revolution*, p. 287.

¹⁰⁰³ A I Macinnes, 'The Scottish Moment 1638-45', in J Adamson (ed.), *The English Civil War* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 138-140.

London was widely expected and greatly feared.¹⁰⁰⁴ The Scottish call to arms, therefore, provided the capability to secure the border at extremely short notice and to advance rapidly in to the southern kingdom in the event of further disasters. It is important to note that the measures taken between 18 and 26 August - effectively placing the Scottish nation on a war footing - occurred well before the Solemn League and Covenant was agreed at Westminster. These independent preparations indicate an expectation of imminent parliamentary surrender or defeat, an eventuality that would, of course, have left the Scots isolated and vulnerable. Scottish determination to establish an autonomous military capability independent of the embryonic Anglo-Scottish alliance provides a telling commentary on the dangerous state of the civil war. In particular it underlines how little confidence the northern partners in the Solemn League and Covenant had in their southern counterparts to withstand the king's victorious armies and stave off military defeat.¹⁰⁰⁵

While the Scots prepared for the worst, events in England confirmed that parliament's desperation for an alliance was driven solely by the military situation. On 26 August, with 'horrible fears and confusion in the City; the king everywhere victorious,'¹⁰⁰⁶ a copy of the Solemn League and Covenant reached Westminster.¹⁰⁰⁷ Importantly for this study, Clarendon emphasized the fact that the treaty had been hurried to the capital 'with all possible expedition ... in the time of their great consternation, and *before the relief of Gloucester* [italics mine].'¹⁰⁰⁸ Twelve days later, on 7 September, as Scottish commissioners arrived in London to conclude an alliance, the Covenant, which had been amended by the Divines, was forwarded to the Lords.¹⁰⁰⁹ Although Essex had rescued Gloucester two days earlier on 5 September, the military outlook remained as bleak as ever. There can have been little expectation that the Lord General, isolated in enemy territory, could avoid destruction and bring his army back to the capital. On 10 September Essex had written to the Commons from Tewkesbury complaining:

mine own army is in such extreme necessity for want of pay, being now in an enemy's country, and at this time within four or five miles of the king's army,

¹⁰⁰⁴ As already noted, Robert Baillie, reporting the departure of Scottish Commissioners for London on 21 August 1643, commented that 'it was feared the king should get London before they could be there.' Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 98.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Robert Baillie complained that parliament 'would never in earnest call for our help till they were irrecoverable, now when all is desperate, they cry aloud for our help.' *Ibid.*, ii, p. 83.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 232.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 221.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 234.

where no provision can be had but for ready money, and so little hope have I of a supply from you.¹⁰¹⁰

And at approximately the same time a royalist reported that 'Essex is here in a strait and wishes himself at London again.'¹⁰¹¹ The sense of impending disaster was further increased by the revelation, long anticipated, that on 15 September the king had finally signed a one-year truce with the Irish rebels. Fear of a royalist led Catholic invasion greatly strengthened the impetus for an Anglo-Scottish alliance.¹⁰¹² In Edinburgh it confirmed suspicions, first aroused by the Antrim Plot, that Charles would collaborate with papists,¹⁰¹³ and at Westminster it created a majority in favour of the Covenant (as distinct from a simple military alliance).¹⁰¹⁴

But with Essex seemingly at the mercy of the king's army and the threat of an Irish landing looming ever larger, the Scots took matters into their own hands. On 16 September the six thousand infantry and two hundred cavalry authorized on 28 July mustered on Leith Links, and four days later, on 20 September, re-occupied the garrison town of Berwick-on-Tweed.¹⁰¹⁵ Seizing control of this strategically important fortress not only secured the eastern border but also provided a staging post for an invasion of England.¹⁰¹⁶ With all able-bodied men on forty-eight hour standby, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the demise of Essex's army would have triggered unilateral Scottish action. Although negotiations to secure a religious Covenant were nearing completion in London, an agreement would count for little in Edinburgh if parliament's last remaining army were destroyed. The Scots had demonstrated very clearly in 1639 and 1640 that they would not hesitate to confront the crown if their political and religious interests were threatened.

Finally on 25 September, as Essex entered the capital following the battle of Newbury, the Covenant was signed by the House of Commons and the Assembly of Divines.¹⁰¹⁷ The urgency of the negotiations, which had commenced in Edinburgh on 7

¹⁰¹⁰ W. B. Devereux (ed.), *Lives and Letters of the Devereux Earls of Essex 1540-1646* (London, 1853), p. 380.

¹⁰¹¹ C. V. Wedgwood, *The King's War 1641-1647* (London, 1958), p. 248.

¹⁰¹² D. Scott, *Politics and War in the Three Stuart Kingdoms 1637-1649* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 66.

¹⁰¹³ Kaplan, 'Steps to War', p. 67.

¹⁰¹⁴ Scott, *Politics and War*, p. 72; Robert Baillie observed that 'most of all the Irish Cessation made the minds of our people embrace that means of safety' Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journal of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 103.

¹⁰¹⁵ Furgol, 'The Civil Wars in Scotland', p. 50; Macinnes, 'The Scottish Moment', p. 139.

¹⁰¹⁶ Although parliamentary troops had taken control of Berwick in August 1643 the Scots demanded that their army be permitted to reoccupy the town. Desperate for Scottish assistance, the English commissioners in Edinburgh had little option but to agree, despite instructions that the garrisoning of Carlisle, Newcastle and Berwick had to be approved by the Houses. HMC, Portland Mss, vol. i, pp. 129 & 136-137 cited in Kaplan, 'Steps to War', pp. 66-67; *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 141.

¹⁰¹⁷ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, pp. 232-234; *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 254; Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, pp. 475 & 480.

August, had been driven by the precariousness of the military situation. As long as it seemed certain that parliament was heading towards disaster, the Scottish and English commissioners worked at a prodigious rate, overcoming, as we shall shortly see, fundamental differences. But once Essex saved the cause at Newbury on 20 September and brought his shattered army back to the capital parliament's attitude appeared to change. Robert Baillie, who observed the transformation with a mixture of frustration and resignation, commented:

We know the best of the English have very ill will to employ our aid, and the smallest hopes they got of subsisting by themselves [makes them less fond] of us. The march of Essex to Gloucester; his raising of that siege; his return to London, with some advantage at Newbury; Manchester's taking of Lynn; his clearing of Lincolnshire, with some prosperous skirmishes there; Newcastle's repulse from Hull, puts them in new thoughts'¹⁰¹⁸

Baillie's revealing comments highlight a striking and highly significant shift at Westminster. Essex's unexpected success explains why the military details of the Solemn League and Covenant – as distinct from the religious and financial terms agreed on 25 September – were not settled until 29 November.¹⁰¹⁹ Furthermore it was not until 19 January 1644 that the Scottish army finally crossed the Tweed into England, fully four months after Essex saved the cause at the battle of Newbury.¹⁰²⁰ It seems pretty clear that once the immediate danger of a royalist victory had receded, all sense of parliamentary panic melted away. The Scots were so alarmed that on 15 October they dispatched Sir Henry Vane, one of the English commissioners who had remained in Edinburgh, to Westminster to plead for official confirmation of the alliance and a supply of money to enable the assembled Scottish army to march.¹⁰²¹

The cooling of English enthusiasm for a Scottish alliance is a vitally important point for this thesis, presenting the historian with a revealing and neglected

¹⁰¹⁸ Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, pp. 103-104. In the autumn of 1643 parliament's fortunes began to improve. On 16 September the earl of Manchester captured Lynn, which had unexpectedly declared for the king, while on 11 October Oliver Cromwell and Sir Thomas Fairfax won a cavalry battle at Winceby in Lincolnshire. Also on 11 October the earl of Newcastle abandoned his month long siege of Hull following a fierce attack by garrison forces led by Ferdinando Lord Fairfax. Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, pp. 280-284; P. Young and R. Holmes, *The English Civil War: A Military History of Three Civil Wars 1642-1651* (London, 1974), pp. 151-158.

¹⁰¹⁹ Kaplan, 'Steps to War', p. 68; Robert Baillie complained that 'The English treaty ... came not to Leith before the 21st November' Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 127.

¹⁰²⁰ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 364; Furgol, 'Civil War in Scotland,' p.50.

¹⁰²¹ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 275; On 6 November the Venetian ambassador reported that 'One of the English commissioners has arrived from that country with news that they are ready, but they are amazed because for a long time they have received no news, not to speak of money, from the parliament here. A. B. Hinds (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Venetian (CSPV)* (London, 1925), 1643-1647, pp. 35-46.

correlation.¹⁰²² What emerges is a clear relationship between the negotiation of the Covenant and the corresponding condition of the parliamentary war effort. During the period of greatest peril both parliament and the Presbyterian Scots raced against time to secure a binding agreement. But following Essex's triumph at Newbury, the English, as Baillic complained, appeared markedly less inclined to rush into an alliance. As this study has shown, a military treaty with Scotland was definitely not a parliamentary priority before the battle of Adwalton Moor on 30 June 1643. And the imperative of such an agreement was greatly reduced once Essex returned to London on 25 September 1643. It was only during the intervening period of acute crisis, when parliament's military collapse appeared to herald total defeat, that the successful negotiation of an Anglo-Scottish alliance became a matter of life or death. This crucial relationship reinforces the argument that parliament's Scottish policy was a direct consequence of the calamitous military situation. As one Scottish historian succinctly put it, 'in 1643 the negotiations had been founded primarily on political pragmatism and military necessity'.¹⁰²³

Compromise and Agreement: the Military Imperative

The first section of this chapter highlighted a neglected correlation between the negotiation of the Solemn League and Covenant and the state of the parliamentary war effort. This section shows how the desperate need of both parliament and the Scots to negotiate a military treaty resulted in significant compromises on both sides.¹⁰²⁴ This is an important issue for this thesis, emphasising the seriousness of the royalist military threat in the summer of 1643 and the real depth of parliament's crisis.

Parliament was prepared to pay for a Scottish army and accept the imposition of Presbyterianism upon the English church because it did not believe it could survive the crisis without Scottish assistance.¹⁰²⁵ The Bishops' Wars of 1639 and 1640 had demonstrated the effectiveness of the Covenanter army, which had defeated ill-prepared English campaigns to overthrow the prayer book rebellion of 1638. In particular the Scottish victory at Newburn on 28 August 1640 had shown what a nationally conscripted standing army could achieve, especially one sustained by religious zeal and

¹⁰²² For example, none of the following secondary sources make any reference to this corollary aspect of the Solemn League and Covenant negotiations, Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, pp. 228-236; Wedgwood, *King's War*, pp. 256-258; A. Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 270-272; Scott, *Politics & War*, pp. 65-67.

¹⁰²³ Macinnes, 'The Scottish Moment', p. 139.

¹⁰²⁴ 'But for both covenanters and parliamentarians the need for an alliance was so urgent that they were willing to make concessions.' Stevenson, *Scottish Revolution*, p. 284.

¹⁰²⁵ 'Parliament's covenant with the Scottish Presbyterians would effect its salvation,' Gentles, *The English Revolution*, p. 207.

a centralized government.¹⁰²⁶ Many Englishmen applauded the Scots, a nation clearly delivered from Popish oppression by virtue of a National Covenant with God.¹⁰²⁷ Parliament was now threatened by precisely the same dangers that had confronted their northern neighbours in 1639 and 1640. Defeat in England would lead to the dissolution of the Westminster Assembly of Divines and an end to any hope of a non-Episcopalian reformation of the English church.

Parliament was therefore prepared to compromise a new religious settlement by accepting Scottish participation in it. Indeed parliament's commissioners emphasized that 'this so much desired reformation' would be 'utterly disappointed' by reason of the 'Papists ... and other malignant enemies' without 'the necessary supplies and aid now desired of our [Scottish] brethren'.¹⁰²⁸ Parliament's appeal for military aid was targeted at Scottish concerns for the future of Protestantism in all three kingdoms, particularly as the Scots had been advocating uniformity of religion for over a year.¹⁰²⁹ And in addition to religious concessions parliament was also prepared to pay the full asking price for Scottish military assistance, £30,000 per month plus £100,000 to be paid in advance.¹⁰³⁰ The English commissioners reassured the Scots that their army would be paid for out of the 'revenues of Papists, malignants and other delinquents'.¹⁰³¹ But the costs did not seem exorbitant; for as more than one historian has pointed out, twenty one thousand Scottish soldiers would soon purchase the survival of the beleaguered parliamentary cause.¹⁰³²

If parliament was desperate for Scottish assistance, then the Scots, it seems, were even more desperate to provide it. One neglected but highly significant aspect of the Solemn League and Covenant is the degree to which the Scots were prepared to compromise their religious agenda in order to secure a military alliance. On two critical occasions, one in Edinburgh during August and the other at Westminster in September, the Scots conceded points of principle in order to save the treaty. As we shall now see, these crisis points demonstrate the often-ignored fact that military intervention in the civil war was a greater priority for the Scots than exporting Scottish Presbyterianism to England.

The first point of conflict arose as a result of Scottish insistence that both nations adopt a vow for 'the preservation of the true Protestant reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, and the reformation of

¹⁰²⁶ Macinnes, 'The Scottish Moment', pp. 128, 131.

¹⁰²⁷ E. Vallance, "An Holy and Sacramentall Paction", p. 68.

¹⁰²⁸ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 142.

¹⁰²⁹ Kaplan, 'Steps to War', p. 63.

¹⁰³⁰ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 231.

¹⁰³¹ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 141.

¹⁰³² Kaplan, 'Steps to War', p. 68; Macinnes, 'The Scottish Moment', p. 140.

religion in the Church of England, according to the example of the best reformed churches.¹⁰³³ The Scots, Clarendon observed, 'doubted not' that the only suitable example of a reformed church 'would be their own Presbytery'.¹⁰³⁴ The English commissioners, led by Sir Henry Vane, 'one of the gravest and ablest of that nation',¹⁰³⁵ recognized that an agreement enshrining the perfection of the Scottish reformation was unlikely to find acceptance either in parliament or the Assembly of Divines. Therefore, in order to salvage the treaty he had been entrusted to negotiate, Vane proposed two amendments: first, to preserve 'the Church of Scotland in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government *according to the Word of God*', and second, 'the reformation of religion in the Church of England according to *the same Holy Word and* the example of the best reformed churches.'¹⁰³⁶

Clarendon believed that Vane intended to make the meaning of an agreement 'doubtful enough to bear many impressions',¹⁰³⁷ but Ian Gentles has argued that Vane's real purpose was to ensure that the Bible, rather than the Scottish version of reformed Protestantism, formed the basis of ecclesiastical reform in England.¹⁰³⁸ Edward Vallance has suggested that the clause was intended to 'ease the taking of the Covenant by Independents'.¹⁰³⁹ Interestingly Vane's amendments echo the parliamentary ordinance of 12 June 1643 by which the Westminster Assembly of Divines was established. The ordinance called for a 'more perfect reformation' in which the government of the English church would 'be most agreeable to Gods Holy Word ... and nearer in agreement with the Church of Scotland and other reformed churches abroad'.¹⁰⁴⁰ Vane, it appears, was attempting to tie the Scots to a text already agreed by parliament, one that would be readily endorsed by the newly convened Divines. These were the terms on which the Scots would have been invited to the Assembly had there been no need for a military alliance. The Divines, it seems, would have worked towards a new settlement with due reference to the Scottish church, but only as one consideration among many.¹⁰⁴¹

¹⁰³³ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 230.

¹⁰³⁴ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 202; Burnet, *Memoires of Hamilton & Castleherald*, p. 240.

¹⁰³⁵ Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 89.

¹⁰³⁶ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 230; Kaplan, 'Steps to War', p. 63.

¹⁰³⁷ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 221.

¹⁰³⁸ Gentles, *English Revolution*, p. 206; One near contemporary source claimed that Vane intended to protect parliament from 'the inroads of Scottish Presbytery,' and that 'in the contriving of that article' Vane and the Scots 'studied to outwit one another.' Burnet, *Memoires of Hamilton & Castleherald*, p. 240.

¹⁰³⁹ Vallance, "An Holy and Sacramentall Paction", pp. 55-56.

¹⁰⁴⁰ C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642-1660* (London, 1911), vol. i., pp. 180-184.

¹⁰⁴¹ Michael Braddick suggests that the religious imperative of the ordinance was to some extent compromised by the need to reach a nearer agreement with the Scottish church and reformed churches abroad. However it can equally be seen, as I have attempted to argue here, that the ordinance represented

Nevertheless, Vane's amendments were strongly opposed by the Scottish negotiators, and it appeared for a time that the talks might break down completely. Robert Baillie observed that the English commissioners, 'were more nor we could assent to for keeping a door open in England to Independency'.¹⁰⁴² As Edward Vallance has intimated above, Vane's intervention was seen by Baillie and others as a rather crude attempt to circumvent a Presbyterian settlement in England by permitting the inclusion of Independent congregations.¹⁰⁴³ With negotiations teetering on the brink of collapse, a secret meeting of prominent religious and secular leaders resolved to accept Vane's changes and proceed with the treaty. The Kirk and the Convention of Estates, once informed of the clandestine deliberations, quickly endorsed the decision and an agreement with the English commissioners soon followed.¹⁰⁴⁴ Scottish willingness to concede Vane's amendments, contrary to firmly expressed religious aspirations, is a matter of great significance for this study. The Scots, terrified by the magnitude of parliament's crisis and the prospect of a royalist victory, were forced to accept that even their most cherished ecclesiastical objectives could not stand in the way of a military alliance.

The second occasion on which Presbyterian principles were compromised occurred after the arrival of Scottish commissioners in London on 7 September. As noted above, a copy of the newly signed Solemn League and Covenant had reached Westminster on 26 August. Unexpectedly the agreement ran into a storm of opposition, both in the House of Commons and the Assembly of Divines. The English objected to the implication (resulting from Vane's first amendment) that the Church of Scotland, both in constitution and practice, was *according to the Word of God*. On 1 September, 'after a long, sad, and serious debate,' the Commons voted to amend the clause by adding 'so far as we do or shall in our consciences conceive the same to be according to the Word of God.'¹⁰⁴⁵ Or to put it another way, Englishmen would decide for themselves whether or not the ecclesiastical government of the Kirk provided the best model for reform. When the Scottish commissioners learned of parliament's unilateral alterations, the negotiations were once again thrown into crisis. 'This they [the Scots] took in evil part,' Robert Baillie reported, 'that any letter should be changed without our advice.' Total disaster was only averted when a committee drawn from both Houses and

parliament's original intentions and therefore formed the English negotiating position in Edinburgh. M. J. Braddick, 'History, liberty, reformation and the cause: Parliamentary military and ideological escalation in 1643' in M. J. Braddick and D. L. Smith (eds.), *The Experience of Revolution in Stuart Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 130.

¹⁰⁴² Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 90.

¹⁰⁴³ Vallance, "An Holy and Sacramentall Paction", pp. 55-56.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Kaplan, 'Steps to War', p. 65.

¹⁰⁴⁵ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 242.

the Assembly of Divines - 'the most able and best-affected men' - finally satisfied the Scots that 'all alterations' were 'for the better.'¹⁰⁴⁶ Nevertheless, this was the second occasion on which the Scots had accepted a formula of words that jeopardized Scottish Presbyterianism as the model for an English reformation.

Furthermore the final version of the Covenant, agreed in November 1643, completely omitted the disputed amendment, removing any suggestion that the Scottish church had been reformed in accordance with the Word of God. However Vane's second amendment (proposing reform of the English church according to *the same Holy Word* and the example of the best reformed churches) was retained, freeing the Assembly of Divines from any specific reference to the Church of Scotland.¹⁰⁴⁷ Once again the Scots appeared perfectly willing to accept these alterations, even though they undermined the Presbyterian Kirk as the basis for reform of the English Church.¹⁰⁴⁸ This provides clear proof that Scottish priorities focused very firmly upon entering the civil war while there was still a war to fight. Defeating the king was clearly more important than demanding parliament's wholesale adoption of unadulterated Scottish Presbyterianism. Religious conformity was important, but not as important as preventing a royalist victory in England.¹⁰⁴⁹ Scottish willingness to sacrifice the exemplar of Scottish Presbyterianism shines a new light on the severity of parliament's military demise. English preparedness to meet Scottish demands was mirrored by a Scottish preparedness to make uncomfortable compromises. There was simply no alternative. Belligerent intransigence would only result in disaster, both for the English parliament and the Scottish Kirk. The triumph of pragmatism and compromise over deeply cherished ideals is a vitally important point for this study, emphasizing the real danger of parliament's crisis and the shared Anglo-Scottish dread of a royalist victory.

Independents and Presbyterians

Another important but equally neglected repercussion of the 1643 crisis concerns the direct relationship between the collapse of the parliamentary war effort and the emergence of the Independent-Presbyterian split. The key to this pivotal development lay in the ecclesiastical impact of the Solemn League and Covenant. For some members of the Presbyterian Kirk the Covenant enshrined the idealism of a religious crusade,

¹⁰⁴⁶ Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 102.

¹⁰⁴⁷ BLTT, 245: 669.f.7[57], *A Solemn League and Covenant* (London, 16 November 1643); Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p.234.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Kaplan, 'Steps to War,' p. 64n.

¹⁰⁴⁹ It is significant that in the negotiations following the Second Bishops War, which resulted in the Treaty of London in August 1641, Scottish insistence on unity in religion and uniformity in church government were secondary to a lasting alliance with England – an approach the Scots were compelled to resurrect in 1643. Macinnes, 'The Scottish Moment', p. 135.

defending Scottish Presbyterianism against the papist onslaught of the English crown, and rescuing the prostrate English parliament from imminent destruction. It represented nothing less than 'an embodiment of fundamental Christian duties that could not be revoked by temporal authority'.¹⁰⁵⁰ 'Surely,' declared Robert Baillie:

it was a great act of faith in God, and huge courage and unheard of compassion, that moved our nation to hazard their own peace, and venture their lives and all, for to save a people irrecoverably ruined both in their own and in all the world's eyes¹⁰⁵¹

It was widely believed that a Covenant made with God could make amends for the sins of a nation and obtain deliverance from the Almighty's displeasure.¹⁰⁵² However, parliament and the Scots would soon discover that the Covenant amounted to a Pandora's Box of political and religious tensions, the repercussions of which would overshadow the war effort for the remainder of the conflict and beyond.

Despite the negotiation of the Solemn League and Covenant it seems that parliament was determined to impose its original intentions on the Assembly of Divines. On 12 October 1643, in a reiteration of the Assembly's establishing ordinance (12 June 1643), the Houses instructed the Divines to:

forthwith confer, and treat among themselves, of such discipline and government as may be most agreeable to God's Holy Word, and ... [to procure] a nearer agreement with the Church of Scotland and other reformed churches abroad.¹⁰⁵³

The Scots however were becoming increasingly insistent that 'the chief aim' of the Covenant should be 'the propagation of our church discipline to England and Ireland.'¹⁰⁵⁴ The result was that religion became 'a greater source of division in the parliamentary ranks than it had been before.'¹⁰⁵⁵ As David Scott has pointed out, it was 'the fear of spiritual bondage under Scottish-style Presbyterianism' that lay behind the emergence of the Independents 'as a vocal lobby in the Westminster Assembly and among the London godly.'¹⁰⁵⁶ Thus the religious implications of the Solemn League

¹⁰⁵⁰ Vallance, "An Holy and Sacramental Paction", p. 51.

¹⁰⁵¹ Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, pp. 99-100.

¹⁰⁵² Vallance, "An Holy and Sacramental Paction", p. 63.

¹⁰⁵³ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 254.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie* vol. ii, p. 103.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, p. 272.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Scott, *Politics and War*, p. 85.

and Covenant brought the issue of Presbyterians and Independents to the fore.¹⁰⁵⁷ And as the Covenant was a direct consequence of parliament's crisis, we are presented with a clear but historiographically unacknowledged link between the collapse of the war effort in the summer of 1643 and the factions that were to characterise the parliamentary cause.

During the final months of 1643, fearful that the Scots might impose Presbyterianism by force, some Independent sects opened secret negotiations with the king. It is possible they were prepared to accept a moderate Episcopal system in return for religious toleration. By December it seems that both the Committee of Safety and the Scottish commissioners knew of the negotiations but were reluctant to expose the guilty for fear of dividing parliament. Instructions may have been issued to the Presbyterians in the Assembly of Divines to accommodate the Independents as far as possible.¹⁰⁵⁸ Even parliamentarians who supported the Covenant were adamant that it was an agreement with God rather than the Scots, and that Scottish Presbyterianism would not necessarily form the model for reformation in England.¹⁰⁵⁹ Consequently, as Robert Baillie reported on 1 January 1644, the Scots were prepared to ease their insistence upon Presbyterianism until they were in a position to dictate events:

It was my advice ... to eschew a public rupture with the Independents, till we were more able for them. As yet a Presbytery to this people is conceived to be a strange monster.¹⁰⁶⁰

Baillie's patient strategy once again illustrates Scottish willingness to tolerate the religious scruples of the English; clearly nothing could be allowed to jeopardize the Covenanter's military objectives.¹⁰⁶¹ Pursuing a religious agenda too forcefully ran the risk of destabilizing parliament at a crucial juncture. For the moment the Scots were prepared to be patient, 'confident that Leven's army would defeat the king in such short order that parliament would be in no position to deny them anything.'¹⁰⁶² These developments demonstrate that as early as 1643 the issue of Independents and Presbyterians was a major consideration for both the Scots and parliament in their

¹⁰⁵⁷ In ecclesiastical terms Presbyterians rejected episcopacy in favour of an official church government based on a coercive enforcement of discipline. The Independents, on the other hand, embraced a number of sects united by a common hostility towards state-regulated worship, supporting instead a system of autonomous congregations or gatherings of believers in which the lay element prevailed. Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 263; P. R. Newman, *Companion to the English Civil Wars* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 78 & 121.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, pp. 264-267.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Vallance, "An Holy and Sacramentall Paction", p. 65.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 117.

¹⁰⁶¹ The Scottish army invaded England on 19 January 1644, several weeks after Baillie urged caution in dealing with the Independents.

¹⁰⁶² Scott, *Politics and War*, p. 66.

respective dealings with each other. Clearly this burgeoning ideological conflict was not a matter confined to the later years of the civil war; it was of growing concern from the moment parliament signed the Solemn League and Covenant. This is a point of considerable significance for this study. As far as I am aware this is the first time the 1643 crisis, the Scottish alliance, and the Independent-Presbyterian schism have been directly connected in this way. The collapse of the war effort can therefore be seen as a catalyst, sparking the political and religious divisions that were to characterise the parliamentary cause.

Austin Woolrych has drawn attention to the fact that during 1644 the Scottish commissioners to the Westminster Assembly of Divines were urging the establishment of a Presbyterian model of church government. Although a large majority of English divines were prepared to accept Presbyterianism in outline, a small group of Independents, known as the Dissenting Brethren, strongly opposed such a system.¹⁰⁶³ Towards the end of 1643 they published an *Apologeticall Narration*, a carefully constructed defence of their beliefs and concerns.¹⁰⁶⁴ They broadly argued that the need to move closer to the Presbyterian system meant that those who looked to the early churches of the Apostles were being subjected to a form of ecclesiastical government and discipline that appeared to be at odds with God's intentions. They were supported by 'Independent' MPs like Bulstrode Whitelocke, a Commons delegate to the Assembly, who in one debate vigorously disputed the assertion that the Church of Scotland was *According to the Word of God*.¹⁰⁶⁵ Robert Baillie prophetically warned of 'a very troublesome schism ... if we carry not the Independents with us'.¹⁰⁶⁶ This was borne out in parliament where the growing influence of lay Independents turned Scottish optimism to despair and distrust. A small minority of Independents in the Assembly of Divines could do little to turn the tide of Presbyterianism, but in the Commons the situation was different. On 13 September 1644 the lower House passed the Accommodation Order, a plea to the parliamentary committee liaising with the Scots:

to take into consideration the differences in the opinion of the members of the Assembly in point of church government ... to endeavour the finding out some

¹⁰⁶³ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, p. 297.

¹⁰⁶⁴ BLTT, E. 80[7], *An Apologeticall Narration, humbly submitted to the Honourable Houses of Parliament* (London, 1643). Michael Braddick has pointed out that Thomason acquired a copy of the *Apologeticall Narration* on 3 January 1644, again emphasising that this was a contentious issue well before the close of 1643. M. Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire* (London, 2008), p. 338.

¹⁰⁶⁵ R. Spalding (ed.), *The Diary of Bulstrode Whitelocke 1605-1675*, Records of Social and Economic History, New Series (Oxford, 1990), vol. xiii, p. 153.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 122.

way how far tender consciences, who cannot in all things submit to the common rule [of Presbyterianism] which shall be established, may be borne with.¹⁰⁶⁷

‘This’ Baillie complained of the Independents:

is the fruit of their disservice, to obtain really any act of parliament for their toleration, before we have gotten anything for Presbytery either in assembly or in parliament.¹⁰⁶⁸

The Scots, who had waited patiently to press their ecclesiastical claims, were angered by what they saw as a blatant breach of the Covenant’s commitment to religious uniformity. They believed Oliver Cromwell, ‘a known Independent or favourer of Sects’,¹⁰⁶⁹ was behind the Accommodation Order, and their sense of betrayal increased further when they discovered that Sir Henry Vane, whose amendments to the Covenant they had accepted in 1643, was another of the principal architects.¹⁰⁷⁰

As a result the Scots moved closer to the lay Presbyterians in parliament. They broadly endorsed the same religious objectives as well as sharing a growing antipathy towards Cromwell and the lay Independents. Fearing that a total defeat of the king might bring the detested Independents to power, the Scots gradually adopted the lay Presbyterians’ preference for a negotiated settlement. In fact the treaty of Uxbridge, convened in early 1645, was based on peace proposals initiated by the Scots in November of the previous year.¹⁰⁷¹ Such a development would have been inconceivable in 1643 when the Scots were desperate to crush Charles as quickly as possible.¹⁰⁷²

Conrad Russell’s view that the issue of Independents against Presbyterians did not become serious until after parliament had won the civil war (and that during the civil war opposing groups are better known as peace and war parties) fails to recognize the immediate impact of the Solemn League and Covenant in the Assembly of Divines and in parliament.¹⁰⁷³ According to Thomas Juxon, the parliamentarian activist and diarist, the struggle between Presbyterians and Independents dominated Westminster well before the royalists were finally defeated. In September 1645 Juxon reported that parliament would settle Presbyterianism on the church, but without coercive power, because ‘both parties are too considerable to be disobliged,’ while a month later he

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 626.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 230

¹⁰⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 229.

¹⁰⁷⁰ C. V. Wedgwood, *The King’s War 1641-1647* (London, 1958), pp. 367-368.

¹⁰⁷¹ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, p. 300.

¹⁰⁷² ‘In 1643 the Covenanters still regarded Charles as the greatest threat to their imperial church vision. Within little over a year, however, they would begin to perceive a threat to both crown and church from a new quarter, the English Independents.’ Scott, *Politics and War*, p. 66.

¹⁰⁷³ C. Russell, *The Crisis of Parliaments: English History 1509-1660* (Oxford, 1971), p. 350.

commented that the military successes of the New Model Army were regretted by the Presbyterians and celebrated by the Independents.¹⁰⁷⁴ And in 1646, with the war all but lost, Charles attempted to rescue his political future by exploiting these divisions to his advantage. In March he wrote to his close adviser George Lord Digby that he was 'endeavouring to get to London' where he aimed 'to draw either the Presbyterians or Independents to side with me, for extirpating the one or the other,' and that he was confident 'I shall really be king again.'¹⁰⁷⁵ The perceptions of both Thomas Juxon and Charles I demonstrate that by 1645 at the very latest parliamentary politics were defined by the Presbyterian-Independent schism.

The conflict between Independents and Presbyterians is, of course, one of the principal themes of the English Civil War. It is a subject of considerable complexity and undeniable importance, but it is one that can only be touched upon here. The critical point, in terms of this study, is the direct connection between parliament's military collapse in mid 1643 and the subsequent emergence of the Independent-Presbyterian divide. Under the terms of the Solemn League and Covenant the Church of England was broadly required to adopt a Presbyterian system bearing some resemblance to the Scottish model. It was in opposition to the threat of religious subjugation at the hands of the Scots that the Independents emerged, first as a dissenting minority in the Assembly of Divines and then, led by Cromwell and Vane, as an increasingly significant faction in parliament itself. Thus we can trace the beginning of an Independent-Presbyterian political realignment to the military disasters that overwhelmed parliament in the summer of 1643. It is an important yet seemingly neglected connection.

Scottish Intervention and the Turn of the Military Tide

The preceding chapters of this thesis have suggested that the collapse of the parliamentary war effort during the summer of 1643 was caused by a catastrophic lack of cooperation amongst military commanders. The following analysis will show that in 1644 it was the royalists who suffered from an inability to cooperate, and that it was the parliamentarians who at last benefited from effective combined operations. It was a remarkable transformation: strongly indicating that cooperation was the vital factor underpinning military success in both 1643 and 1644. It is an issue that has been largely overlooked by historians, but it is one that provides an important insight into the course of the civil war in 1643 and the first half of 1644.

¹⁰⁷⁴ K. Lindley and D. Scott (eds.), *The Journal of Thomas Juxon 1644-1647* (Camden Society, 5th series, vol. xiii, 1999), pp. 86 & 88-89.

¹⁰⁷⁵ R. Cust, *Charles I A Political Life* (Harlow, 2005), pp. 411-413.

To fully appreciate this critical point it is necessary to begin with the establishment of the Solemn League and Covenant as a working military alliance. The entry of the Covenanter army clearly necessitated some form of executive innovation to co-ordinate the greatly increased Anglo-Scottish forces now at parliament's disposal.¹⁰⁷⁶ The solution was the Committee of Both Kingdoms: a body composed of twenty-one Englishmen and four Scots, endowed with sweeping powers 'to order and direct whatsoever doth or may concern the managing of the war.'¹⁰⁷⁷ However, legislation to set up the new committee led to a bitter struggle between two opposing factions: one demanding that it should be restricted to an advisory role, and the other determined that it should assume direct control of military strategy. 'It is our intent', declared Essex's supporters in the Lords, 'to leave the active part to my Lord General' who 'must be trusted, and cannot be directed by those who are remote'. But more radical elements in the Commons, dissatisfied with the inefficiency of the old Committee of Safety and its close association with Essex, argued that 'without such a committee [of Both Kingdoms] the war will be carried on without the two Houses.' In other words, Essex would continue to exercise a perceived predilection for a negotiated settlement independent of the wishes of parliament.¹⁰⁷⁸

The issue therefore was whether or not Essex should be by-passed and the new committee granted complete autonomy to order and direct the war as it saw fit. 'Few pieces of legislation before the Self-Denying Ordinance', argues John Adamson, 'provoked fiercer divisions within, and between, the two Houses than this bill'.¹⁰⁷⁹ Eventually, on 16 February 1644, the Lords gave way¹⁰⁸⁰ leaving Thomas Juxon to observe that 'all things are to be agitated by this council.' Juxton rather ominously added that 'there wants nothing now but a dictator.'¹⁰⁸¹ Although the Committee of Both Kingdoms was initially established for only three months (finally re-appointed on 22 May 1644),¹⁰⁸² Juxon's remarks nevertheless indicate the scale of the political transformation at Westminster, and the remarkable powers now vested in this new

¹⁰⁷⁶ Scott, *Politics and War*, p. 70; Gentles, *English Revolution*, p. 209; Lindley and Scott (eds.), *Journal of Thomas Juxon*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁷⁷ C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642-1660* (London, 1911), vol. i, pp. 436-437; J. Adamson, 'The Triumph of Oligarchy: the Management of War and the Committee of Both Kingdoms 1644-1645' in C. R. Kyle and J. Peacey (eds.), *Parliament at Work* (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 101.

¹⁰⁷⁸ *Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. vi, p. 423.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Adamson, 'Triumph of Oligarchy,' p. 107.

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 400.

¹⁰⁸¹ Lindley and Scott (eds.), *Journal of Thomas Juxon*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁸² Baillie reported that Essex and his supporters plotted in to prevent the renewal of the committee, but when their plans were foiled they attempted to load the committee with their own members. Laing (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. ii, p. 187.

Anglo-Scottish committee of state.¹⁰⁸³ 'Here in embryo', argues Ian Gentles, 'were the future Independent and Presbyterian parties'.¹⁰⁸⁴ The political Independents, who wanted rid of Essex, would thus be associated with a military conclusion to the war, while the political Presbyterians, fearful of the Independents' desire to crush the king, would become synonymous with a negotiated settlement. The conflict over the establishment of the Committee of Both Kingdoms provides further evidence of the powerful legacy of the 1643 crisis. In contrast to the religious conflict generated by the Solemn League and Covenant, the Committee of Both Kingdoms resulted in a fierce battle for political control of the war effort. The religious and political strife generated by the Scottish alliance provides clear evidence that the repercussions of parliament's crisis were both fundamental and wide ranging.

On 19 January 1644, while the struggle to establish the Committee of Both Kingdoms was dividing Westminster, the army of the Covenant crossed the border into England.¹⁰⁸⁵ The advent of around 20,000 Scottish soldiers tipped the balance of power in northern England firmly in parliament's favour. By the standards of the English Civil War this was a huge army, substantially enhancing parliament's capacity to wage an offensive war. More to the point, it provided a gilt-edged opportunity to bring the conflict to a relatively swift conclusion. But the question now was whether the Anglo-Scottish armies could complete their task before the political and religious implications of the alliance proved to be an even greater danger than the king's forces.

It is important to detail the early impact of Scottish armed intervention because it underpins a central argument of this thesis that military success was dependant upon cooperation between commanders. At the end of January 1644, leaving a relatively small army to defend Yorkshire, the king's northern commander, the marquess of Newcastle, led such forces as he could muster into Northumberland to oppose the Scots.¹⁰⁸⁶ Newcastle's departure presented the Committee of Both Kingdoms with a golden opportunity to take full control of Yorkshire. On 5 March, Lord Fairfax and Sir Thomas Fairfax were ordered to unite their forces and march towards the Tees, thereby hindering the flow of Yorkshire reinforcements to Newcastle's army.¹⁰⁸⁷ The Fairfaxes, despite the committee's instructions, resolved instead to storm Selby, destroying on 11

¹⁰⁸³ For a detailed analysis of the battle to establish the Committee of Both Kingdoms, see Adamson, 'Triumph of Oligarchy,' pp. 102-110.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Gentles, *English Revolution*, p. 209.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 606.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Writing from York on 28 January 1644, Newcastle informed Rupert that he could scarcely raise five thousand foot and that his cavalry were poorly armed, while the Scots, who had already taken Morpeth, numbered fourteen thousand men. E. Warburton (ed.), *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers* (London, 1849), vol. ii, p. 368.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Rushworth, *Historic Collections*, vol. v, pp. 616-617.

April those forces Newcastle had left behind to protect the county. 'This good success,' reported Sir Thomas. 'put them in great distractions and fears at York.'¹⁰⁸⁸ Newcastle was left with little option but to abandon his campaign against the Scots and return to the king's northern capital before it fell to the enemy.¹⁰⁸⁹

By early June 1644 York was besieged by no fewer than three armies: the Scottish army of the Covenant, the earl of Manchester's Eastern Association forces, and Lord Fairfax's northern troops.¹⁰⁹⁰ On 14 June, under mounting pressure, Charles wrote a desperate and confused letter to Prince Rupert (then in Lancashire) ordering him, amongst other things, to relieve the stricken city. Disastrously for the royalist cause, the king's nephew took this famously ambiguous missive as an absolute command to raise the siege *and* to bring the combined rebel armies to battle.¹⁰⁹¹ Rupert's appearance before York on 1 July set in chain a sequence of controversial events that resulted in the catastrophe of Marston Moor. The material point, as far as this study is concerned, is that the combined operations of parliament's armies forced the royalists into a corner. At last parliament began to reap the rewards of military cooperation, and as the following will show, it was the royalists who now suffered the consequences of disunity.

Upon Rupert's approach the allied armies lifted the siege and began to withdraw, prompting a relieved Newcastle to invite the Prince into York to discuss strategy.¹⁰⁹² However, Rupert's lieutenant general, George Goring, appeared instead, ordering all the city forces to join the Prince on Marston Moor by 4 o'clock the following morning.¹⁰⁹³ This, as Peter Newman has observed, 'was an unfortunate situation from the point of view of military courtesy.' Newcastle's command was independent and not subordinate to that of the Prince, who, however, held a commission that was superior to Newcastle's. Rupert, 'in his disdain for etiquette had affronted the dignity of the marquess.'¹⁰⁹⁴ Lord Eythin, Newcastle's lieutenant general, took exception to the Prince's high-handed approach. Eythin had served under Rupert on the continent, and blamed his rashness for the defeat at Vlotho in 1638, in which the Prince

¹⁰⁸⁸ Thomas Lord Fairfax, 'A Short Memorial of the Northern Actions During the War There, From the Year 1642 till 1644', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. viii, (1884), p. 220.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Newcastle, by this time established at Durham, received news of the Selby disaster on 13 April; he entered York on 19 April pursued by the Scottish army. Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 620.

¹⁰⁹⁰ P. R. Newman, *Atlas of the English Civil War* (London, 1985), p. 53.

¹⁰⁹¹ Cust, *Charles I*, pp. 388-389.

¹⁰⁹² C. H. Firth (ed.), *Life of William Cavendish by Margaret Duchess of Newcastle* (London, 1906), p. 38.

¹⁰⁹³ Sir Hugh Cholmley, 'Memorials touching the Battle of York', *English Historical Review*, vol. v, no. XVII (1890), p. 347; Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 374.

¹⁰⁹⁴ P. R. Newman and P. R. Roberts, *Marston Moor 1644: The Battle of Five Armies* (Pickering, 2003), p. 30; Michael Braddick has pointed out that a similar situation arose between Rupert and the earl of Lindsey, Lord General of royalist forces, before the battle of Edgehill. M. Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire* (London, 2008), p. 284.

was captured.¹⁰⁹⁵ Although Newcastle ordered the implementation of Rupert's wishes, his troops could not be prevented from plundering the now abandoned allied siege trenches. Accordingly Newcastle visited Rupert at about 9 o'clock the following morning to explain the delay, assuring the Prince that Lord Eythin would bring up the garrison as quickly as possible. Rupert, somewhat frustrated by Newcastle's failure, announced his intention to fall upon the still disordered enemy with his own unreinforced army.¹⁰⁹⁶ But Newcastle urged the Prince to wait. Intelligence suggested that serious disagreements between the allied generals would shortly separate their combined armies. In addition, three thousand royalists under Colonel Clavering would arrive from the north in the next couple of days. Rupert replied that he had 'a letter from His Majesty with a positive and absolute command to fight the enemy,' leaving Newcastle with little option but to inform the Prince 'that he was ready and willing ... to obey his Highness ... [as] if His Majesty was there in person himself.'¹⁰⁹⁷

Although Newcastle had given his word, some of his close associates advised him not to engage in battle. The marquess was told that 'his dignity was compromised' and that 'he had ceased to control his own army.'¹⁰⁹⁸ But Newcastle was adamant, 'he would not shun to fight, for he had no other ambition but to live and die a loyal subject to His Majesty.'¹⁰⁹⁹ Despite Newcastle's protestations it was almost 4 o'clock in the afternoon before a disgruntled Eythin arrived with the York regiments, provoking a heated exchange with Rupert, who eventually decided that the day was too far gone to attempt an engagement. Newcastle had originally excused the non-appearance of the York infantry on the grounds that they had been plundering allied lines and could not be brought to order. But this hardly accounts for the delay of a further twelve hours before Eythin finally appeared.¹¹⁰⁰ There is some evidence to suggest that Eythin may have intended to sabotage Rupert's instructions by ordering that the garrison should not march until it was paid.¹¹⁰¹ Whatever the truth, it is clear that the inability of Newcastle and Eythin to cooperate with Rupert prevented the Prince taking the offensive on the morning of 2 July.¹¹⁰²

¹⁰⁹⁵ G. Trease, *Portrait of a Cavalier* (London, 1979), p. 133.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Cholmley, 'Memorials touching the battle of York,' p. 348.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Firth (ed.), *Life of William Cavendish*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Newman & Roberts, *Marston Moor 1644*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Firth (ed.), *Life of William Cavendish*, p.39.

¹¹⁰⁰ Stanley Carpenter has argued that Newcastle's 'reluctance to cooperate fully with Rupert and the inability to maintain discipline among his troops squandered a priceless opportunity to attack the enemy's weak rear in force and assault the allied foot strung out along a long and vulnerable line of march.' Carpenter, *Military leadership*, p. 95.

¹¹⁰¹ Cholmley, 'Memorials touching the battle of York,' p. 347.

¹¹⁰² Trease, *Portrait of a Cavalier*, p. 134; The historian and former general Frank Kitson argues persuasively that Rupert's reasons for seeking an immediate engagement with the enemy on 2 July were tactically superior to Newcastle's belief that battle should be delayed on account of reports that the allied

Meanwhile the allied generals, alarmed by Rupert's concentration of forces on Marston Moor, quickly abandoned their original plan to block the prince's southern escape route towards the king. The allied soldiers, strung out along the road to Tadcaster, were urgently recalled to face the massed ranks of royalists occupying the moor. By the time Eythin arrived with Newcastle's infantry the allied army was fully deployed, and any chance of exploiting the enemy's earlier disarray had long since disappeared. Rupert, as we have seen, gave orders to stand down, believing nothing could be achieved until the following morning. The allied generals thought otherwise. At seven o'clock in the evening they gave the order to advance. Although the battle of Marston Moor is remembered as a sweeping parliamentary victory, the outcome seemed far from certain for at least an hour. Indeed some allied generals fled the field believing all was lost.¹¹⁰³ Ultimately Oliver Cromwell and the Scottish general of horse, David Leslie, turned the tide and inflicted a crushing defeat.¹¹⁰⁴ In a famous letter written three days after the battle Cromwell declared that:

In this great victory given unto us, such as the like never was since this war began ... we never charged but we routed the enemy. God made them stubble to our swords.¹¹⁰⁵

Prince Rupert, who was not accustomed to defeat, is reported to have attributed the disaster to an altogether different kind of intervention:

I am sure, said he, my men fought well, and therefore know no reason of our rout, but this, because the devil did help his servants.¹¹⁰⁶

Later that night, as the scattered remnants of Rupert's army returned to York, a confrontation took place that proved to be as detrimental to the king's cause as the battle itself. In the bitter aftermath of defeat it was reported that 'warm words passed between Prince Rupert and the marquess of Newcastle,' each charging the other with the cause of the rout. Rupert declared 'that [Newcastle] made not good his promise in

generals were in disagreement and likely to go their separate ways. F. Kitson, *Prince Rupert: Portrait of a Soldier* (London, 1994), pp. 184-185.

¹¹⁰³ Stanley Carpenter has argued that had the second line of allied infantry, Sir James Lumsden's raw Scottish levies, broken the battle would have been lost. 'Thus a few Scots, exceedingly well commanded by a minor gentry laird, may well have preserved the English Revolution.' Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 97.

¹¹⁰⁴ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, pp. 632-637 provides a detailed contemporary account of the battle and the events leading to it.

¹¹⁰⁵ S. C. Lomas (ed.), *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell by Thomas Carlisle* (London, 1904), p. 176.

¹¹⁰⁶ BLTT, E 4[6], *A Continuation of True Intelligence 10 - 27 July 1644 by Simeon Ash, chaplain to the earl of Manchester*, p. 2.

his assistance,' but the marquess 'replied in such a manner as moved much passion.' Finally it was asserted that the two generals, upon whom the fate of the royalist north depended, 'parted in great discontent.'¹¹⁰⁷ These ill-tempered recriminations,¹¹⁰⁸ which curtailed any prospect of further cooperation between Rupert and Newcastle, were to cause irreparable long-term damage to the king's affairs.¹¹⁰⁹

The 'very next morning after the battle' a distraught Newcastle 'took a resolution to forsake the kingdom.'¹¹¹⁰ Making his way to Scarborough in the company of Lord Eythin and several other gentlemen, the marquess, 'being loath to have aspersions cast upon him,' set sail for Hamburg.¹¹¹¹ According to the Venetian Ambassador Newcastle was so angry that Rupert had ignored his advice and forced an unnecessary battle that he 'threw aside all interests and considerations.'¹¹¹² Newcastle's inconsolable rage was born of the fact that Marston Moor had resulted in the total destruction of his northern infantry regiments.¹¹¹³ The late arrival of these campaign-hardened veterans, ostensibly under Eythin's command, suggests that this was a battle Newcastle did not want to fight. Indeed, as far as the marquess and his senior commanders were concerned there was absolutely no need to fight. York had been relieved, the enemy had withdrawn, and the object of Rupert's heroic march into Yorkshire had been achieved. It seems clear that Newcastle deserted the cause because he held Rupert responsible for the annihilation of his infantry. The marquess had not received an order from Charles to place his forces under Rupert's command. He resented the princes' failure to recognize his absolute authority in the north and to consult with him accordingly.¹¹¹⁴ Clarendon was adamant that Rupert's unilateral decision to risk a 'sudden and unnecessary engagement,' in which all the forces raised by Newcastle were 'in a moment cast away and destroyed,' so consumed the marquess with despair that:

¹¹⁰⁷ BLTT, E 2[1], *A Continuation of True Intelligence 16 June - 10 July 1644* by Simeon Ash, chaplain to the earl of Manchester, p. 8.

¹¹⁰⁸ 'Rupert threw the blame on the sluggishness of Newcastle, and Newcastle threw the blame on the rashness of Rupert.' Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 382.

¹¹⁰⁹ This damaging inability to cooperate stands in marked contrast to the successful collaboration of royalist commanders during summer 1643.

¹¹¹⁰ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 637.

¹¹¹¹ Firth (ed.), *Life of William Cavendish*, p. 41.

¹¹¹² *CSPV*, 1643-1647, p. 123.

¹¹¹³ For a detailed examination of the almost systematic annihilation of Newcastle's infantry see Newman & Roberts, *Marston Moor 1644*, pp. 88-109; Clarendon wrote that most of Rupert's cavalry and infantry had either fled the field or retreated to York, 'the great execution having fallen upon the northern foot' Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, pp. 376-377.

¹¹¹⁴ This is strongly suggested by Sir Hugh Cholmley, the governor of Scarborough Castle, who conversed with the marquess and his entourage before they took ship for the continent. Cholmley, 'Memorials touching the battle of York,' pp. 349-350; Clarendon states that the principal cause of the defeat was Rupert's haste to precipitate a battle without 'consulting at all with the marquess of Newcastle and his officers' whose knowledge of the enemy greatly exceeded that of the prince. Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 379.

he could not compose himself to think of beginning the work again, and involving himself in the same undelightful condition of life, from which he might now be free.¹¹¹⁵

Newcastle, it appears, was in no mood to uphold a cause in which his authority so clearly counted for nothing. Rupert, in his arrogance, had overruled the marquess and his commanders with catastrophic consequences. There can be little doubt that Newcastle felt personally slighted and deeply angry. His emotional state of mind must have influenced his decision to leave England. But it is also possible that both Newcastle and Lord Eythin feared condemnation at the hands of a court marshal for failing to support Rupert at a critical moment.¹¹¹⁶ Whatever the precise truth, Marston Moor demonstrated the critical importance of effective collaboration. The allied generals had worked well together and shown great determination, while the inability of the king's commanders to synchronize troop concentrations had allowed a vital early advantage to slip through their fingers. The contrast with 1643 could hardly be greater.

If Newcastle's abandonment of the cause wasn't bad enough, even worse was to follow. Rupert gathered together what forces he could, about six thousand cavalry plus a smaller number of infantry, and headed for Shropshire intent upon recruiting his army.¹¹¹⁷ The sudden departure of both Newcastle and Rupert was a huge blow for the governor of York, Sir Thomas Glenham, and the garrison forces left under his command.¹¹¹⁸ Sir Henry Slingsby, a colonel in one of the city regiments, summed up the despair of the beleaguered city:

Thus we were left at York out of all hope of relief, the town much distracted, and everyone ready to abandon her ... many left us, not liking to abide another siege.¹¹¹⁹

On 4 July, two days after Marston Moor, the allied armies returned to their former positions encircling the city and renewed their attacks. Clarendon complained that the governor was left with no option but to deliver York on the best possible terms.¹¹²⁰

¹¹¹⁵ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 384.

¹¹¹⁶ Kitson, *Prince Rupert Portrait of a Soldier*, pp. 200-201.

¹¹¹⁷ Gardiner, *Great Civil War*, vol. i, p. 382; Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert*, vol. ii, p. 470; Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, p. 637.

¹¹¹⁸ The abandonment of York by Rupert and Newcastle after Marston Moor stands in marked contrast to the stout defence of Hull by Lord Fairfax following the battle of Adwalton Moor.

¹¹¹⁹ D. Parsons (ed.), *The Diary of Sir Henry Slingsby* (London, 1836), p. 86.

¹¹²⁰ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 377.

Articles for surrender were agreed on 15 July and the following day Sir Thomas Glenham's garrison forces marched out of the city.¹¹²¹

The loss of York, the king's northern capital, was an unmitigated disaster for the royalist cause. Clarendon declared 'that the like was never done or heard or read before.' It was inexplicable that Rupert, who 'had still a good army left,' and Newcastle, who possessed 'an absolute commission over the northern counties,' could agree 'in nothing else but in leaving that good city and the whole country as a prey to the enemy.'¹¹²² Sir Hugh Cholmley, the governor of Scarborough, felt certain that had Newcastle remained:

it would have given encouragement to the king's friends and party there, whereas upon his departure almost everyone quit the king's service and went to their homes.¹¹²³

But Clarendon reserved his bitterest censure for Rupert, whose desertion of the city was 'most inexcusable, because most prejudicial and most ruinous to the king's affairs in those parts.'¹¹²⁴ Clarendon's vehemence betrays the psychological damage inflicted by Marston Moor and the shameful abandonment of York by the king's two most successful generals. Philip Warwick vividly recalled the impact upon royalist morale:

After this day, we may say the king's whole party fell into convulsive fits, or made strong motions, which were but indicators of a dying body.¹¹²⁵

Clearly this was the most serious blow to the royalist war effort since the conflict began, brought about, as we have seen, by the disastrous failure of Newcastle, Eythin, and Rupert to cooperate effectively together. In a situation where the outnumbered royalists had to work together to have any chance of success, their inability to cooperate, both before and after Marston Moor, sacrificed what advantages they had and enabled the enemy to complete a spectacular success.

The desertion of York and the north of England was not an inevitable consequence of Marston Moor. As Jack Binns has pointed out, 'they were lost because Prince Rupert in effect abandoned the city and the north and Newcastle abandoned the war.'¹¹²⁶ The consequences, however, were immediately apparent. The Venetian ambassador wrote that the 'result is of unhappy augury for the king's interests, which

¹¹²¹ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. v, pp. 637-640.

¹¹²² Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, pp. 376-377.

¹¹²³ Cholmley, 'Memorials touching the battle of York,' p. 350.

¹¹²⁴ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 380.

¹¹²⁵ Warwick, *Memories of the Reign of King Charles I*, p. 287.

¹¹²⁶ J. Binns, *Yorkshire in the Civil Wars* (Pickering, 2004), pp. 92-93.

suffer a great disadvantage from such a loss.'¹¹²⁷ Conversely, the allied generals, who had entered York on 16 July, informed the Committee of Both Kingdoms that 'we conceive this county to be in such a condition as being well managed and provided for, the affairs of the kingdom may receive a great advantage thereby.'¹¹²⁸ In strategic terms the north of England was now lost with no prospect of immediate recovery.¹¹²⁹ It was a disaster made all the worse by the fact that the north was in every sense a royalist heartland, a region in which, for example, the king recruited more regimental colonels than any other. Peter Newman, the historian of the king's northern armies, has argued that:

To regard Yorkshire, the north-east and the north-west as a royalist stronghold from 1642 until 1644 is wholly justified ... It was an area in which parliament's friends were unable to mount an effective challenge until the Scottish invasion gave them the edge they needed. Four of the five counties came readily under Newcastle's authority – no other Grandee could have said so much – and in the fifth he established control by invitation and sheer weight of numbers ... That the counties concerned were therefore exceptional in the general Civil War experience of England and Wales goes without saying.¹¹³⁰

In 1642 and 1643 the counties of Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire provided Newcastle with between 15,000 and 20,000 men, a huge army in the context of the civil war, and comparable in size with the Scottish army of the Covenant. The abandonment of the north meant that these vast recruiting grounds would no longer be exploited, and as the war progressed into 1645 the king's armies became consequently weaker. This reduction in the availability of soldiers seriously undermined the royalist war effort. The conflict condensed into a smaller geographical area in which parliament enjoyed greater support and could more easily recruit men.

Marston Moor was not a decisive battle, it did not lead to the end of the war, but its repercussions were momentous, profoundly affecting the king's capacity to sustain an effective war effort.¹¹³¹ Despite royalist victories over Waller in June 1644 at Cropredy Bridge in Oxfordshire and against Essex at Lostwithiel in September 1644, David Scott has argued that 'in strategic terms' these successes 'failed to make up for

¹¹²⁷ CSPV, 1643-1647, p. 123.

¹¹²⁸ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic (CSPD)*, 1644, 18 July.

¹¹²⁹ Kitson, *Prince Rupert Portrait of a Soldier*, p. 206.

¹¹³⁰ P. R. Newman, *The Old Service: Royalist regimental colonels and the Civil War 1642-1646* (Manchester, 1993), p. 266

¹¹³¹ Stanley Carpenter has argued that 'In effect, the war ended in the north. A few royalist strongholds, such as Pontefract and Scarborough along with Newcastle and Carlisle, held out for some time, but the royalists never again mounted a major offensive or raised significant troops north of the River Trent. Marston Moor set in motion the eventual demise of royalist fortunes throughout the country.' Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, p. 101.

the loss of northern England.’¹¹³² Clarendon conceded as much, describing Marston Moor as ‘this fatal blow, which so much changed the king’s condition that till then was very hopeful.’¹¹³³ And Ian Gentles has declared that ‘more than anything’ ultimate victory in the civil war was ‘due to the Solemn League and Covenant that produced 21,500 able troops in 1644 to fight for parliament and sweep the king’s forces off the field at Marston Moor’.¹¹³⁴

Parliament was palpably incapable of achieving a success on the scale of Marston Moor until an alliance of three separate armies made it possible. Almost exactly one year earlier a dramatic failure of cooperation had led to catastrophe at Adwalton Moor, plunging the war effort into crisis. In 1644 the concentration of allied armies in northern England forced Charles and Prince Rupert to take drastic action. However, an acrimonious dispute between the king’s senior commanders resulted in defeat at Marston Moor and the loss York and the old royalist north. This critical failure in military cooperation stood in marked contrast to the steadfast collaboration of the allied commanders, which not only brought the king’s forces to battle on disadvantageous terms, but also saw the allies to victory when the tide of the battle appeared to be turning against them. Such a transformation in the fortunes of king and parliament is remarkable. In 1643 the cooperation of royalist commanders and the destructive disunity of parliament’s commanders almost brought the war to an end. A year later in 1644 the exact opposite led to calamity for the king and rejuvenated parliament’s flagging war effort. The evidence seems relatively clear, spotlighting cooperation as the key to military success in 1643 and 1644. It is an aspect of the civil war that has tended to evade historians, yet it is one that helps to explain the course of the conflict in a new and important way.

¹¹³² Scott, *Politics and War*, p. 75.

¹¹³³ Macray (ed.), *Clarendon*, vol. iii, p. 385.

¹¹³⁴ I. Gentles, ‘Parliamentary Politics and the Politics of the Street: The London Peace Campaigns of 1642-3’, *Parliamentary History*, vol. 26, pt. 2 (2007), p. 159.

CONCLUSION

It is surprising that an event which almost brought the English Civil War to an end has failed to attract an appropriate degree of recognition. Parliament's 1643 crisis is not a subject that brings to mind a series of well-known books or journal articles. It seems that parliament's military collapse has not been considered sufficiently important to justify examination in its own right. Not only are academic studies conspicuous by their absence, so are specific chapters in general histories of the civil war. And because the events of mid-1643 are not properly acknowledged, they have yet to find a clearly defined place in the chronology of the conflict. When mentioned at all, it is as a fleeting difficulty, one that could have become more serious, but was overtaken by subsequent developments. Even the relationship between the crisis itself and the events that sprang from it are not adequately expressed. What this thesis has attempted to show is that parliament's crisis was a fundamental and clearly defined phase of the civil war, resulting from specific and identifiable causes, and encompassing both the military and political conduct of the parliamentary war effort.

Parliament's crisis dominated the summer of 1643, and was confidently expected to result in a rapid royalist victory. The magnitude of the emergency threw the parliamentary movement into disarray. While the House of Lords attempted to orchestrate a negotiated surrender, militants in the City of London threatened to take control of the war effort. The very fact that parliament stood on the verge of collapse, and the king on the verge of victory, is never seized upon as a pivotal moment worthy of detailed investigation. Similarly, the repercussions of these momentous events are predominantly examined in their own right, devoid of any specific attempt to relate them to the conditions in which they were born. It is almost as if the crisis never existed, its constituent events reduced to discrete episodes, unrelated to any causal agency. It is this absence of coherence that has prevented the elucidation of the crisis as a turning point in the civil war.

Instead attention has focussed on those aspects of the conflict that appear to constitute the big questions. A never-ending amount of energy has been devoted to the causes of the civil war, and a similar amount of intellectual effort has analysed the emergence of the New Model Army and the politicisation of parliament's rank and file soldiers. This is not to say that these particular investigations have unduly monopolised the attention of historians, merely to point out that they are seen as fundamental and are therefore treated accordingly. This thesis has set out to demonstrate that parliament's 1643 crisis is similarly fundamental, and that it merits a higher profile and a much wider

recognition. Of course, the crisis was neither a cause of the civil war or a factor in its conclusion, but it was a crucial moment nonetheless.

The manner in which the civil war unfolded and finally reached a climax has militated against a clear recognition of the crisis. The triumph of the New Model Army has tended to relegate the early war years to something of a supporting role. It is here of course, in this subsidiary phase, that we find parliament's crisis, one of many twists and turns that predated the New Model Army and the defeat of the king. To an extent this is understandable. One would expect to focus on the causes of the civil war and the means by which it was won. However, this is a conflict that waged for four long years, one, moreover, that has been subjected to continual scrutiny ever since. It is surely remarkable that the 1643 crisis has not been singled out for particular attention. Maybe it is a point that requires some comment, although it is probably for others to take this particular aspect of the discussion further.

Clearly the justification for this study is the fact that parliament's near fatal collapse has never been properly scrutinised or evaluated. Evidence provided by the campaigns of 1643 strongly suggests that the issue of cooperation proved to be the key to military success. Parliament's disintegration was precipitated by an acute failure of collaboration amongst commanders, exacerbated by a corresponding readiness of royalist commanders to work effectively together. Three catastrophic defeats, emanating from the efficient mobilization of the king's armies, and the negligent insubordination of parliament's commanders, plunged the war effort into crisis.

The first of these disasters resulted from a disagreement amongst commanders which prevented six thousand reinforcements marching into Yorkshire. The consequent destruction of Lord Fairfax's northern army at the battle of Adwalton Moor on 30 June initiated parliament's crisis and necessitated the negotiation of the Solemn League and Covenant. The second catastrophe took place two weeks later at Roundway Down in Wiltshire when a remarkable relief operation enabled Lord Wilmot's cavalry to annihilate Sir William Waller's Western Association army. And the third calamity occurred on 26 July when two royalist armies combined to capture Bristol, the country's second port and parliament's most important western garrison.

The campaigns leading to Roundway Down and Bristol were made possible by further examples of parliamentarian non-cooperation and royalist collaboration: the unopposed passage of two vital royalist supply convoys from York to Oxford. In May the first of these shipments re-provisioned the king's main field army and permitted the substantial reinforcement of Sir Ralph Hopton's Cornish army. And the second, which arrived at Oxford in July, allowed Lord Wilmot to destroy Sir William Waller's army at

Roundway Down, and Prince Rupert to march the entire Oxford army to join Hopton in the capture of Bristol. In responding to the operational needs of the war effort, linking forces originally deployed in different parts of the country, these convoys typified the effectiveness of royalist cooperation. On each occasion, despite specific orders to the contrary, parliamentary commanders conspicuously failed to combine forces in opposition to these crucial supplies. It is no exaggeration to claim that the queen's convoys were a lifeblood - maintaining the king's campaigns at a critical period in the conflict, and leading to stunning successes at both Roundway Down and Bristol.

The emphasis placed by this thesis on the issue of military cooperation has thrown up a further and equally significant insight. In a traditional military analysis attention tends to centre on the battlefield itself, concentrating on those events which determine the outcome of a specific engagement. But in this analysis attention has shifted to the campaigns that preceded the battles. The search for answers has taken the thesis to areas normally viewed as background, essential to a large degree, but nevertheless subsidiary to the battle narrative and the quest for understanding. It is in the campaigns of 1643, rather than the battles themselves, that we discover the basis of parliamentary failure and royalist success. In the assembling and coordination of armed forces, in the direction of supplies from one theatre of combat to another, and in the willing subordination of the individual commander to the common good, we find the secrets of royalist triumph. And conversely, in the narrow provincialism of self-preservation, in the elevation of personal rivalry over common cause, and in the callous disregard of orders and commands, we find the reasons for parliamentary failure. Here the scope of military investigation is widened to incorporate a broader panorama. Analysis is redirected from the primary events of battlefield combat to the myriad complexity of logistics, discipline, and personal motives; characteristics typical of the amorphous and less tangible world of the supporting campaign. During the first half of 1643 Charles out-manoeuvred his opponents, concentrated forces effectively, and created the circumstances in which the summer victories were achieved. It is in the efficiency of royalist cooperation and the dysfunctional approach of their opponents that the seeds of parliament's military collapse are to be found.

Parliament's crisis reached a climax in the first week of August 1643 when the House of Lords drafted a series of peace proposals amounting to surrender. The ensuing battle between those determined to send the propositions to the king, and those equally determined to defeat them, has been characterised as a struggle between the peace and war parties. However, this thesis has proposed an alternative interpretation in which opposition to the peace proposals was directed by Lord Mayor Isaac Pennington and a

militant faction in the City of London. A campaign of intimidation and the threat of a political coup overturned a Commons majority favouring peace and imposed a second ballot rejecting the proposals. It was a decisive moment, a struggle for the future of the parliamentary war effort. Would the Commons vote to present the king with a negotiated surrender, or would coercion and the City's threatened take-over quash the propositions. Here, in the tumultuous days of early August 1643, the fate of parliament and the civil war was sealed: peace was discarded and mob rule prevailed.

The repercussions of parliament's unexpected survival had a fundamental impact on the subsequent course of the civil war. A Scottish alliance – the Solemn League and Covenant – represented parliament's principal reaction to the threat of defeat. However, historians have tended to neglect an important relationship between the negotiation of the treaty and the corresponding condition of the parliamentary war effort. As long as the king appeared to be heading for total victory, the English and the Scots worked feverishly to cement a binding agreement. But once Essex relieved Gloucester, survived the battle of Newbury, and returned to London, parliamentary enthusiasm began to wane. The correlation between the talks taking place in Edinburgh and the wider course of the war effort shows that parliament's Scottish policy was a direct consequence of its military collapse. Had there been no crisis there would not have been a Solemn League and Covenant.

The willingness of the English parliament to entertain the demands of the Scots, and the reciprocal willingness of the Scots to compromise those demands, reveals the seriousness of parliament's position. Fear of a royalist victory prompted both parties to sacrifice previously held positions in the quest for a military alliance. Parliament was forced to accept terms that in any other circumstances would have been rejected out of hand, while the Scots were prepared to dilute their insistence on the adoption of Presbyterianism in England. As far as both sides were concerned defeating the king was the primary objective. Nothing indicates the gravity of parliament's collapse as much as the shared anxiety of the English and the Scots to rush into an alliance.

Another overlooked aspect of parliament's crisis concerns the direct connection between the disintegration of the war effort in mid-1643 and the emergence of the Independent-Presbyterian split. The Solemn League and Covenant ensured that Scottish ecclesiastical ambitions would play a much more prominent part in English politics. It was the fear of religious extirpation at the hands of the Scots that brought the Independents to the fore, both as a dissenting voice in the Westminster Assembly of Divines and as an increasingly vocal lobby in parliament itself. The political and religious rivalries of the Independents and Presbyterians became a fundamental and

determining characteristic of the civil war and the events that led to the execution of the king. The significant point in terms of this study is that this key schism traces its ancestry to the military emergency that resulted in a Scottish alliance.

One final effect of the Solemn League and Covenant concerns the issue of military cooperation. The invasion of northern England by a Covenanter army in January 1644 resulted in three allied forces, of which the Scots were the largest, laying siege to York. The threat to the king's northern capital prompted Prince Rupert to march to its relief. But, as this thesis has emphasised, subsequent disagreements between the prince and William Cavendish earl of Newcastle led, in July 1644, to defeat at Marston Moor and the loss of York and the north. This catastrophic blow, from which the royalist war effort never recovered, marked a transformation in parliamentary cooperation and a disastrous failure of royalist cooperation. While three allied armies combined to attack York, quarrels amongst the king's commanders sabotaged any chance of defeating the enemy and rescuing the city. It was, as Clarendon stated, a 'fatal blow'.¹¹³⁵ The old royalist north, a vast reservoir of recruits and resources, would never be made good. However the critical point, as far as this study is concerned, is that the issue of cooperation is once again emphasised. Parliament's military disintegration in mid-1643 and the king's loss of the north one-year later in mid-1644 were based on a disastrous breakdown of operational collaboration.

This thesis has attempted to highlight an underrepresented period of the English Civil War. The 1643 crisis was a pivotal moment, bringing parliament to within a hair's breadth of surrender, and fundamentally shaping the remainder of the conflict. The sheer drama and epic significance of the emergency do not figure prominently in our current historiography. A general reader, academic even, familiar with traditional accounts of the civil war might be surprised by the claims of this thesis. But the evidence suggests that the 1643 crisis was indeed a turning point, one that has been obscured by the accumulated weight of subsequent events. This thesis has emphasised a strong contemporary consensus that parliament's military collapse signalled the end of the war. It is a conclusion borne out by the actions of the House of Lords: for how else can one account for a series of peace proposals amounting to capitulation. And the City of London's unprecedented threat to usurp control of the war effort provides an equally vivid demonstration of the critical nature of parliament's crisis.

It would appear that the subsequent course of the civil war has clouded the real significance of mid-1643. The military and political turmoil of July and August have

¹¹³⁵ W. D. Macray (ed.), *The History of the Rebellion by Edward Earl of Clarendon* (Oxford, 1888), vol. iii, p.385.

been displaced by the equally dramatic but ultimately decisive events that decided the conflict. This, to a certain degree, is as it should be. The military victories and political developments that brought the civil war to a conclusion quite rightly constitute a focus of attention. But this is not to say that other equally significant events, which inform that final victory, are not deserving of the same degree of recognition. Of course, it has to be acknowledged that parliament's 1643 crisis did not bring the civil war to an end. Nevertheless, the military and political ramifications of the emergency played a huge part in the subsequent development of the conflict. It is a legacy that would have been much more apparent to those who survived these tumultuous events than those who attempt to analyse them three and a half centuries later. This, perhaps, is the real problem. Like a long lost Atlantis, parliament's 1643 crisis has tended to slip beneath the waves of historical enquiry.

SIR SIMONDS D'EWES – CAN WE BELIEVE HIM?

This appendix is necessitated by an article published in 1995 in which John Morrill asked some very serious questions about the veracity of Sir Simonds D'Ewes' parliamentary diaries.¹¹³⁶ Although prompted by the publication of a section of the journal covering the period from 2 June to 17 September 1642,¹¹³⁷ Morrill's criticisms nevertheless apply equally to the later unpublished transcription of the diary used in this thesis. Morrill drew attention to a series of speeches D'Ewes claimed to have made in the House of Commons which no other diarist 'felt it worthwhile to record or even mention in passing'. Morrill admitted to 'a gnawing doubt' that the real purpose of D'Ewes journal was to create a series of 'contexts within which he could record the speeches he dearly wished he had had the courage, the self-confidence, the gumption to make'. As D'Ewes 'is almost never referred to by other diarists', Morrill asked if D'Ewes was 'the Walter Mitty of the Long Parliament'. Morrill therefore concluded by urging historians 'not to quote the journals at all', they are 'rarely the words of the speaker and to cite them as such is to mislead the reader'.¹¹³⁸

A spirited defence of the private parliamentary journal was provided by Maija Jansson of the Yale Centre for Parliamentary History, publishers of the work to which Morrill had taken exception.¹¹³⁹ 'The important point', Jansson argued, 'is when quoting a speech or anything else from D'Ewes journal the proper manuscript number be cited'. Moreover, 'one does not cite, for example, to John Pym's speech, but rather to the account of John Pym's speech in D'Ewes journal'. And in any case 'such sources' often consist of more than just speeches – 'commands from military generals, accounts of council and board meetings' – and that the 'responsibility for using these multifaceted sources has always rested with the historian'. Jansson maintained that quoting was important because in many instances these sources 'provide unique accounts of occurrences in particular days in history, and they express a mood and capture a contemporary vocabulary'. In urging historians not to quote the journals at all

¹¹³⁶ J. Morrill, 'Paying One's D'Ewes', *Parliamentary History*, vol. 14, pt. 2 (1995), pp. 179-186.

¹¹³⁷ V. F. Snow and A. S. Young (eds.), *The Private Journals of the Long Parliament, 2 June to 17 September 1642* (New Haven, 1992).

¹¹³⁸ Morrill, 'Paying One's D'Ewes', pp. 184-186.

¹¹³⁹ M. Jansson, 'Dues Paid', *Parliamentary History*, vol. 15, pt. 2 (1996), pp. 215-220.

Morrill is asking 'historians of Stuart England to abide by rules absent in the historical profession at large'.¹¹⁴⁰

Clearly this is a thorny problem. To what extent can the historian rely on surviving materials from the period under investigation? In this thesis anything taken from D'Ewes is attributed to the author in the text and not simply left as a footnote reference. In addition I have resisted the temptation to quote at length, and have confined myself, with one notable exception, to pertinent extracts concerning events described by other primary sources. In short I have tried to concentrate on D'Ewes references to actual events rather than his speechmaking. However, on one or two occasions I have quoted from speeches, but only where there is once again a direct reference to matters confirmed by other sources. It is inevitable that a work such as this, which relies exclusively on D'Ewes at a central moment, should have to quote in this way - regardless of Morrill's objections. As Maija Jansson stated in her reply, it has always been the duty of historians to use such materials responsibly and to make abundantly clear the manner in which they are being used.

¹¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 215, 217, 220.

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