

A good reputation, deep pockets, and the King's subject

The qualities prized by a Swedish consul in the eighteenth century

Martin Almbjör

Svante Norrhem's research career began with a doctoral thesis on seventeenth-century Swedish chancellery officials.¹ One of his findings was the importance of having a large social network for those who wanted a career in the royal bureaucracy.² The conclusion to be drawn from his results was that the Swedish state was used in self-promotion, that merit was of only relative importance to appointments, and that those with sufficient influence could control the key posts in the bureaucracy and the army by appointing people loyal to them. The results in other countries have been similar.³ This type of research tones down much of the contradiction that many historians see between the public good and self-interest in the broadest sense.⁴ The state administration evidently worked well, despite the social networks built into it, or perhaps because of them. Recent research has further argued for the significance of the interplay between private and public interests in the early modern period. Many now believe that the early modern state benefited from its reliance on private actors and entrepreneurs for its exercise of power, use of resources, and innovation, and recently Peter Haldén has argued for the centrality of family ties to the emergence of the premodern state around the world.⁵

One field that has made strides because of this development is the history of diplomacy, where the recent studies which have demonstrated

the importance of social networks and cultural practices in international relations are typically bracketed together as the new diplomatic history. Svante Norrhem too has been active in this field, not least in his and Peter Lindström's study of foreign diplomats active in Sweden and Denmark–Norway. Like the study of state formation, recent diplomatic research has shown that both self-interest and the public good governed the actions of early modern diplomats, as did their family ties, cultural preferences, and multiple loyalties.⁶

Consuls were a key group among early modern diplomats. They represented one or more countries in a particular port, and functioned as general factotums. A Swedish consul could be responsible for everything from trade to Swedish subjects' contacts with the local authorities, correspondence with the authorities in Stockholm, helping Swedish subjects in need, and acting as a notary, all while conducting trade himself.⁷ Although the post of consul had medieval origins, there was a surge in numbers in the eighteenth century, when European states, including in Scandinavia, established multiple new consulates across Europe and beyond.

In consular research as in administrative research, the interplay of private and public interests, of self-interest and public benefit, has been emphasized in the literature. In the early modern era, consuls were incorporated into the diplomatic and commercial structures of the state to a variety of ends, while the post of consul remained an attractive one.⁸ Those who applied for consulships helped drive the expansion in the number of consulates. In the case of the US, for example, Silvia Marzagalli has shown that spontaneous applications were the principal reason for the establishment of many of its consulates.⁹

However, when historians have tried to explain the expansion of the network of Swedish consulates, the role of private actors is barely mentioned. The notable exception is Gustaf Fryksén's study of Sweden's first consul in Algiers, Logie, which highlights the role of personal networks and private mediators for the Swedish consular service. Logie received much support from the Stockholm merchants and helped relatives and friends receive appointments to other consulates.¹⁰ Yet, the usual explanation is that the number of consulates grew to keep pace with the state's interest in protecting and promoting Swedish trade in

the Mediterranean. It was the state, and above all the Board of Trade and its mercantilist policy, which envisaged Sweden's consulates working together with trade protectionism, organised shipping convoys to the Mediterranean, peace treaties with the rulers of the Maghreb, and the existence of trading companies to make Sweden's foreign trade flourish.¹¹

However, the literature is alert to those who applied for consulships doing so to increase their credibility, their status, and their attractiveness as trading partners. It also acknowledges the importance of Stockholm's merchants in advising on such appointments and the opportunities it gave them to promote the people in their networks.¹² We also know that some consulates stayed in families for several generations, and there were often unclear boundaries between the consul's private and official business, as most were unpaid and had to work in trade to support themselves.¹³

Yet despite knowing all this, no one has thought to check whether the Swedish state's macroeconomic goals really were behind the expansion of the Swedish consular system, nor has anyone looked at what the individuals involved thought about self-interest. To the extent the relationship between self-interest and public benefit is addressed, it is a secondary concern, and sometimes even a menace. Leos Müller writes that 'The Board of Trade did not limit consuls' mercantile activities—in spite of the fact that they could become entangled in a conflict of interest between their roles as consuls and as merchants.'¹⁴ It would, thus, be useful to know how the authorities and others reasoned about the relationship between the consul's private business and his office. Not least, the findings of such a study would contribute to the ongoing international debate about how well consuls put the interests of their fellow subjects and the state ahead of their own.¹⁵

This essay thus sets out to show how Swedish consuls were rated by their contemporaries, using documents that contain such judgements, and especially those generated by appointments to consulships in Spain between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. I will consider which arguments were made, which qualities were regarded as valuable, what importance was accorded to the consul's personal finances, and whether they saw potential conflicts between self-interest and public benefit. I will show that the consuls' private business was

crucial in several ways, and was rarely described as a threat to their consular duties. On the contrary, it was seen as a prerequisite.

The merchants' trust

For a consul, having the right contacts or being well known was a key quality. The literature, as we have seen, has noted the Stockholm merchants' role, as they often decided whether someone should be appointed or not. They were always consulted by the authorities (the Chancellery Board and the Board of Trade) on appointments to consulships, and had to submit written opinions for or against the appointee, ranking the candidates if there was more than one, and sometimes advising against having a consulate. Once the merchants' opinions had been solicited, the two boards made their own assessments, which were submitted along with a recommendation to the King in Council, and the king appointed the consul. For the consulships in Spain, the two boards almost always followed the merchants' advice and even repeated their arguments when advising the King. Sometimes they disagreed however. For example, the merchants advised against appointing a consul in Malaga in the 1750s, while the boards thought it was needed for trade.¹⁶

Stockholm's merchants were thus important, and they had to be able to trust the candidates for consulships. The term trust features in almost every application I have studied. The merchants made much of it in their responses to the boards, and the boards did the same in their recommendations to the King in Council.¹⁷ Conversely, misconduct by a consul could lead to a lack of trust.¹⁸ The exact meaning of the term is not clear, but evidently there were ways a consular candidate could win the merchants' trust.

As the literature has found, this came down to contacts: the merchants had to know the candidate from before in a business context. Jakob Martin Bellman, for example, moved to Spain in 1732 and settled in El Puerto de Santa Maria where he set up a trading company. Later he moved to Malaga.¹⁹ Over the years he had done business with several merchants in Stockholm, who could thus speak on his behalf before he was appointed consul in Cadiz in 1744. He even travelled home to Stockholm to court the merchants.²⁰ Similarly, a British merchant called

George Wombwell, who was made the Swedish consul in Alicante in 1738, was the commercial agent for the Plomgren brothers, who were leading merchants in Stockholm; it was they, not Wombwell, who contacted the Swedish authorities when there were difficulties with his appointment.²¹

The importance of personal contacts was also shown by the fact that people without well-established connections to the merchants in Stockholm still drew attention to their Swedish contacts. Jean Josef de Brabander, who was a native of Bruges, applied without success to open a Swedish consulate in A Coruña in 1793. He elaborated on his work for the Gildemester trading company in Lisbon, where he had proved his competence to Swedish merchants such as Hasselgren in Amsterdam and Hasselgren & Björkman in Stockholm.²²

Relationships with foreign merchants could be important because the potential consuls could link Swedish merchants with leading foreign trading companies. This was evident in the appointment of Pierre Dochers as Swedish consul in the Canary Islands in 1734. In his case, Herman Berewout, a councillor in Amsterdam, had submitted Dochers's application to the Swedish envoy in The Hague, who in turn recommended Dochers to the boards in Stockholm. The merchants were hesitant because they did not know him personally, but on the other hand the Swedish consul in Amsterdam was prepared to vouch for him: Dochers was an experienced merchant and his promoters, the Berewout family, had an excellent reputation.²³ In 1774, when two men asked to be Swedish consul in Alicante, the boards preferred one because of his 'particularly widespread Credit and reputation even among foreign trading houses, including in particular the house of Horneca & Hope in Holland, which circumstance carries much weight for a Swedish Consul.'²⁴ On another occasion, the Stockholm merchants enjoyed the prospect of being associated with the Alicante trading company St Porte & Welch.²⁵ The appointment of a consul could thus be used to establish ties between the Crown, the Stockholm merchants, and foreign trading companies.

To an extent, the Swedish consular system thus formalized various types of merchant networks and commercial relations. In cases such as Dochers or St Porte & Welch, major foreign trading companies were brought into the ambit of the Swedish consular system. Since they were

always consulted, the Stockholm merchants could use their influence to ensure the people they thought desirable got the job. That merchants in other cities were not consulted about consular appointments was a source of irritation, but the procedure never changed.²⁶ On a couple of occasions, the merchants in Gothenburg weighed in about an appointment in Spain, but otherwise it was only the Stockholm merchants who had a say.²⁷

It should not be forgotten, as the literature shows, that certain practical problems were readily solved by the appointment of existing acquaintances, overcoming geographical distance, language issues, the need for competent commercial agents, and variations in social and legal context. This was especially the case where the Swedes were relatively new to the market, such as Spain.²⁸ For the Stockholm merchants, the advantage of appointing a man who was already there—and whom they had dealings with—was that they knew he could deal with local issues, and in the end that benefited all Swedish merchants engaged in foreign trade, not just those in Stockholm. Consuls, lastly, helped ships' captains buy supplies or arrange cargos for Swedish vessels: the correspondence between the consuls in Spain and Swedish merchants have numerous examples of the importance of such services.²⁹ It was another reason it was so important to have reliable people in place.

The authorities' trust

The fact the Stockholm merchants' opinion carried such weight probably had much to do with the Chancellery Board's and the Board of Trade's difficulties in assessing candidates. Would-be consuls had rarely interacted with the authorities back in Sweden as much as they had with Swedish merchants. (One rare exception was Hans Jakob Gahn, who before he was made consul in Cadiz had worked for the Chancellery Board and left with good testimonials.³⁰) A return trip to Spain took months, and even then it was uncertain whether someone sent to assess a candidate would obtain reliable information. For the boards, it was easier to shift much of the responsibility to the Stockholm merchants, even though they were against the merchants having the final say—after all, the consuls were public officials.³¹

Yet there were at least two ways the boards could have evaluated the consuls' competence. First, consuls reported regularly to the boards about trade, war, and other matters, so a prospective consul could improve his chances by making a show of his insight and knowledge.³² Bellman, as we know, had been careful to visit Stockholm to meet the boards and merchants. Once there, he petitioned the King in Council about Swedish trade opportunities in Cadiz, and especially wool. He later sent in a detailed report to the Board of Trade in which he set out the state of Swedish trade, how he would make it prosper, and his plans for the Cadiz consulate, which he saw as the focal point of a district to include Malaga, Seville, El Puerto de Santa Maria, Sanlucar de Barrameda, and Ayamonte.³³ Gahn was another example. Once he had been made interim consul in Cadiz in 1773, he diligently informed the boards about trade openings and sent in a lengthy report about trade in Cadiz.³⁴ Gahn was angling for the permanent post, so he had to get on the right side of the boards. As previous research has found, in their correspondence with their employers the consuls were at pains to present themselves as indispensable, knowledgeable, and skilled, but it must have been even more important when applying for the consulship.³⁵

Second, the boards could gather information from the Swedish embassy in Madrid, and, before it opened in 1743, the Swedish embassy in The Hague. They might not vouch for the candidate's qualities as a merchant, but at least the diplomats were there on the ground. It helped that diplomats were courted by people interested in becoming Swedish consuls, and in forwarding their application to the Swedish authorities they could comment on the candidates' qualifications for the job. Hopefuls had frequently had contact with the embassy, helping Swedish ships in ports where there was no Swedish consul. In such cases, the embassy staff could vouch for the applicants, as when Real the secretary of the mission wrote to say the Dutch consul Gaspar Vernet had assisted ships anchored in Alicante by advancing them cash and in one instance arranging a captain's funeral.³⁶

The embassy could even appoint deputy consuls or representatives with consular powers without asking Stockholm's permission. The consul Bellman and the envoy Fleming together signed on the Flemish Jean François van der Lepe as a Swedish agent in Madrid in the late 1740s.

They had decided he was needed to deal with issues that the status of the Swedish envoy prevented him from touching, such as 'lower courts and lower-ranking officials, with whom it is best a Minister does not confer or have acquaintance'.³⁷ Likewise, Ehrensvärd and Adlerberg, the heads of the Swedish legation, set up a network of authorized agents in northern Spain in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. At that time, one Bernardo González Álvarez, a Spanish official and lawyer, was also present in Madrid as a Swedish agent.³⁸

Yet though the Madrid embassy played its part in the expansion of the Swedish consular network in Spain, it was still the case that the embassy could not outvoice the Stockholm merchants if they did not agree about an appointment. An attempt to make Van der Lepe consul general failed, despite the secretary of mission listing all the good he had done by easing trade regulations for Swedish ships, facilitating the Swedish East India Company's business, handling the caper trade, brokering freight for Swedish ships, and more. Adlerberg also failed to get the boards to formalize his northern Spanish network.³⁹ In both cases, the Stockholm merchants put a stop to it.

Clients and family ties

Beyond their relationships with merchants and Swedish officials, a prospective consul's family connections could have an impact. When Gustaf Baumgardt in Alicante told the Swedish authorities of his decision to make Fredrik Christiernin his deputy, he referred to Christiernin's long experience from Cadiz and Alicante, but added that he was also the brother of the merchant Carl Olof Christiernin in Cadiz (who was Gahn's trading partner) and the ennobled war hero Harald af Christiernin.⁴⁰

The importance of family ties was seldom, if ever, underlined like this, but they nevertheless had an important part to play. Baumgardt, before he was consul in Alicante, had served under his stepbrother Arendt Dreijer during Dreijer's time as Swedish consul in Cadiz (1767–1773).⁴¹ Dreijer's successor, Hans Jakob Gahn, made his relative Carl Olof Christiernin his vice-consul and trading partner, and his brother Fredrik Christiernin also worked in Gahn's offices.⁴² There was even a consular dynasty, with a succession of members from the same family: Wilhlem Almgren in

Barcelona was succeeded by his trading partner and son-in-law Wilhelm Gabriel Westzynthius, who was succeeded by his son.⁴³ In all these cases, consulships were a way to corner leading positions in international trade for themselves and their relatives. It brought them the experience which made them suitable candidates.

Client–patron relations were never given as a reason, but certainly had an impact on who was chosen. It was in the nature of such relationships—or at least the attempts to engineer them—that there were only fleeting glimpses at the end of letters home to the Swedish authorities. Anders Arfvidsson in Malaga addressed Chancellor Von Höpken as his patron, and when Baumgardt in the autumn of 1776 left for Alicante to take up the consulship, he wrote to the Chancellor Ulrik Scheffer regretting he did not have time to visit Scheffer in person, but hoped he would remain ‘now and in the future in Your Excellency’s great protection’.⁴⁴

Cash and credit

A consul had to have money. Unsurprisingly enough—especially as the Crown expected the vast majority to support themselves without pay. Unlike Danish consuls, the Swedish authorities allowed few consuls to charge consular fees for Swedish ships that put in at their port.⁴⁵ There were a handful of exceptions: in Spain, for example, the consuls in Cadiz were paid a salary and could charge fees.⁴⁶ Sure enough, the first Swedish consular decree of 1793 stated that a sufficient fortune was one criterion for a successful candidate, as he should not run into financial difficulties or destroy confidence in Sweden’s trade by the ‘decay of his credit’ (understood here as both reputation in a broader sense and trust in a financial sense). If he filed for bankruptcy, he would immediately lose the consulship.⁴⁷ An example of how personal finances could foil someone’s ambitions was the former Swedish consul in Philadelphia, who hoped to take over the consulate in Cadiz in the early nineteenth century. No one questioned his ability, but he had no money to speak of and his credit was poor because of his messy personal finances.⁴⁸

There were two reasons the Swedish nation’s honour and credit were bound up with a consul’s personal finances. One was that by appointing a merchant as consul the Swedish state was associated with

his trading company. In exchange for higher status as the representative of the Swedish Crown, the consul assisted Swedish subjects who passed through his port, and by dint of his consulship could boost the status of his trading company and lead the way in Swedish trade. As the Board of Trade put it in 1771, it was useful for consuls to engage in trade, considering the 'enlargement and improvement of the kingdom's trade' by 'establishing reputable Swedish trading houses in the foremost foreign trading places'.⁴⁹ In the case of Cadiz, this connection was so strong that when Jakob Martin Bellman was made consul in 1744 his trading house was in effect authorized by the Crown, and the Board of Trade and Chancellery Board had to be notified of any future partnerships. He was expected to choose Swedish partners for preference.⁵⁰

To be sure, the consulate in Cadiz was a special case, because the majority of goods from the Spanish colonies were landed there. Of all the Swedish consuls in Spain, only the Cadiz consuls were instructed to avoid using the local courts for their private business, as their character 'so exposed might thereby suffer'.⁵¹ The idea of Sweden's association with specific trading companies did however surface when other consuls were appointed too. When Wilhelm Almgren asked to be made the Swedish consul in Barcelona, the boards and the Stockholm merchants said his appointment would be 'useful', because it would see the establishment of a Swedish trading company in the city.⁵²

The Swedish Crown associated itself with the consuls' private businesses in other ways: the consulate and the consul's trading company shared offices; and the consulates were incubators for future consuls.⁵³ Whether in the consuls' instructions or in discussions about candidates, there was an expectation that consuls would take on Swedish mentees who in future could take up the reins.⁵⁴ For example, in the early 1770s the Swedish envoy in Madrid was told to inquire about the willingness of several foreign prospective consuls to employ Swedish staff.⁵⁵

The second reason Sweden's honour and credit was tied to the consuls' personal finances was the costs of the consulship. Their work helping Swedish ships was a significant expense. Before a ship could dock, it had to be inspected by customs officers and officials from the local sanitary board, all of whom charged to do so. Then Spanish stevedores had to be paid to unload and load cargo and supplies. The consul might have

to pay for it all out of his own pocket. In the event of illness, piracy, or shipwreck there would be court costs, board and lodging for the crew, hospital fees, the purchase of new clothing and gear, and the cost of the crew's journey home. In extremis, the consul paid burial fees. Further, consuls had to pay the *aguinaldo*, New Year bonuses to local officials, including the governor, to ensure their continued cooperation in the coming year.⁵⁶ According to Catia Brilli, the New Year bonuses should be understood as an 'important guarantee and protection instrument' in case ship's captains became involved in trade disputes where the governor sat as judge.⁵⁷ Then there were the costs of correspondence, because the consuls were in frequent contact with the authorities back in Sweden, the embassies, other consuls, and the Spanish authorities, and had to forward letters to and from Sweden.⁵⁸

All the expenses were reimbursed and were a way for the consuls to make money: they simply passed on the charges to the shipping companies. In ports which saw many Swedish ships it was probably a significant source of income, especially when Swedish warships put in for provisions and repairs. In Spanish ports, the Swedish consuls were often also the only Swedish trading company. As an embassy secretary in Madrid said at one point, a consul could 'profit by Swedish trade'.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, personal wealth and good credit were necessary if the consuls were to carry out their duties.

Naturally, the Swedish authorities were aware of the risks of basing the exercise of public office on private wealth. In 1768, Friesendorff, an envoy extraordinary, complained that Selonf, the Swiss-born Swedish consul in Cartagena, 'by his behaviour and scant inclination to attend to the affairs of the Swedish nation, leaves little hope of him rendering the looked-for service and assistance', as he devoted his time to his own complicated business dealings.⁶⁰ In 1789, the Swedish Board of Trade said that foreigners were worse than Swedish-born consuls because they only sought to benefit themselves and not to promote Swedish trade, which they knew little about.⁶¹ In this, the Board of Trade's criticism was reserved for foreigners, not for self-interest as a driving force. Generally speaking, personal motives were seen as an opportunity rather than a risk.

The Swedish king's subject

Being a subject of the Swedish king, or not being a foreigner, was thus an important variable for potential consuls for several reasons. First, nationality was a priority on a general level. The Swedish king's subjects were preferred, not only because they would establish trading companies and help Swedish trade in foreign ports, but also because Swedes were trusted to do their best to support and promote other Swedes and the Swedish flag. This was formulated as early as 1719 by the Board of Trade, which wanted the King in Council to appoint only the king's own subjects as consuls, as they would be more honest and diligent, and in a different way than foreigners 'have close to their hearts what could be to the advancement of Swedish shipping'.⁶² Swedish subjects were also expected to have a grasp of the Swedish economy and be better placed to see how Swedish trade could be promoted. As the Board of Trade said in 1789, 'special knowledge of the state of Swedish trade, knowledge of the Swedish language, and a love of kingdom and fatherland' were among a Swedish consul's key qualities.⁶³

Second, a foreign subject who represented Sweden could well find himself having to defend Swedish interests at the expense of his own nation, or vice versa. When in 1792 the consul in Alicante, Baumgardt, wanted to appoint a Spaniard as the vice consul in Cartagena, the envoy Ehrensvärd protested that a Spaniard, on Spanish soil, would repeatedly face situations where 'in all court cases or trade interests, partly by his own inclination and partly by the laws of the land, he will always be forced to be partial, to the detriment of Swedish seafarers'.⁶⁴

Third, there was the hope that a Swedish-born consul would eventually return home, taking with him the wealth he had acquired abroad, to the benefit of Sweden. If for no other reason, it mattered because the consuls enriched themselves as commercial agents for Swedish merchants, and these profits were not to go to foreign trading companies.⁶⁵

Fourth, a consul represented the Swedish flag and the Swedish king. Although the official nature of the job was rarely mentioned, it could be decisive. Fredrik Brandenburg from Swedish Pomerania, who ran a trading company in Cadiz and was the commercial agent for several other Swedish trading companies, temporarily took over the management of

the Swedish consulate in 1766.⁶⁶ By all accounts, the Swedish authorities were satisfied with him, and when the permanent position became available he was a top candidate. However, by then it had come to the knowledge of the Swedish authorities that Brandenburg was already the Russian consul, and Russia was Sweden's arch-rival. It was impossible to be loyal to both crowns, the boards said, if only because the Russian consulship was better paid. Equally alarming, the Russian empress would have to approve the Swedish king's choice, as Brandenburg could not take on another consulship without imperial permission. And the Swedish consulate had an archive filled with documents about Swedish shipping and other business. As Russian consul, Brandenburg always had a Russian mentee with him, just as the Swedish consuls were expected to train up Swedes, and since the consulate and Brandenburg's trading company would share offices, the Russian junior would have access to its entire archive, including any sensitive information.⁶⁷

Yet even though Swedishness was accorded great importance, foreigners remained attractive throughout the eighteenth century. Swedes made up the majority of those who actually took up their consulship (10 out of 14), but count everyone who was appointed and for whatever reason never took office and everyone recommended by the boards, and foreigners were in a majority.⁶⁸ There was an even greater preponderance of foreigners among the Swedish deputy consuls, although there are no registers to confirm it. It was telling that Ehrensvärd as envoy did not have the support of the boards in his opposition to Baumgardt's appointment, despite the acknowledged dangers of appointing a Spaniard as Sweden's representative in Spain. Deputy consulships were difficult to fill and were paid by the consul, so he could choose as he wished.⁶⁹ Foreigners also continued to be appointed as Swedish consuls in other countries besides Spain. In 1789, 17 of all 48 Swedish consuls were foreigners.⁷⁰

Nor was it invariably a problem that prospective deputy consuls and authorized agents were already acting as consuls for other states. The network of consular-like agents in northern Spain included men who held several consulships, and in part had grown from an agreement between Sweden and Denmark–Norway in 1793 to use each other's diplomats and consuls.⁷¹ It is easy to imagine that in a Swedish perspective these multi-consuls brought certain advantages. They had experience of

consular work, they knew what the position entailed, they had established networks in their place of business, and they were familiar with local officials: that was at least how Baumgardt reasoned when he wanted to appoint deputy consuls for the islands of Ibiza and Mahon. Not only had he collaborated with them before, his candidates had served as consuls and deputy consuls for other states, had ‘good reputations’, and were ‘best able in foreign places to provide for the Swedes who arrive there’.⁷²

Self-interest for the public good

From how prospective consuls were evaluated, we can see their private fortunes and private networks were crucial to their appointment and later to their work. For a consul, private business and public office hung together and could not be separated. The Swedish Crown to an extent associated itself with the consul’s trading company, which with its newfound status was better positioned to expand its trading operations, and thus Swedish trade *per se*, in foreign markets. In the case of the Cadiz consulate, that association was notably strong. The close link between the consul’s private business and the public good especially distinguished the Swedish consular system from the French, where since 1681 consuls had been forbidden to engage in trade so they would concentrate on their consular work.⁷³

The Swedish authorities were aware of the risk that consuls might neglect their duties or sully their reputation—or Sweden’s—by their business activities. Presumably, it was why so much of the responsibility for assessing potential consuls was delegated to the Stockholm merchants, who, being expected to vouch for candidates, seem to have limited themselves to men they knew or wished to become acquainted with. It was the people in their own networks who benefited, but the merchants needed men on the ground they trusted if they were to pursue long-distance trade in the first place. The result was that some merchant networks were promoted more than others. The consuls’ own networks grew while they were in post, as their work brought them into contact with merchants across Sweden (contacts in Gothenburg were especially important in view of its significance for the country’s imports and exports). Nor should it be forgotten that the Board of Trade,

the Chancellery Board, and the Stockholm merchants occasionally used consular appointments to establish relations with foreign trading companies.

Where self-interest and public benefit collided was in the question of nationality. A Swedish-born consul could speak the language, knew about Sweden's economy, and so on; a foreign-born consul was thought more likely to neglect his office and fail to promote Swedish trade to focus on his own business. A Swedish subject could be expected to prioritize the public good. Self-interest per se was only dangerous when Swedishness, or at least loyalty to the Swedish king, could not steer it in a productive direction. The questions of loyalty and nationality could be awkward in other ways too. At the extreme, the Swedish king's sovereignty could be called into question, as when Brandenburg was not made the Swedish consul in Cadiz because his appointment by the king would be approved by the Russian empress. That was unthinkable.

Regardless of the hazards of appointing foreigners as Swedish consuls, though, it is obvious we should re-evaluate our view of the eighteenth-century Swedish consular system, its expansion, and its *modi operandi*. Private forces were important, fundamental even, to that expansion, because the Swedish Crown rarely paid salaries or allowed fees. The establishment of Swedish consulates around the Mediterranean, besides those in the Maghreb, was the tangible result not only of the government's mercantilism, but also of a process driven by merchants who were willing to be associated with the Swedish state for their own purposes. Perhaps especially the latter. Not only were private motives and private resources not a threat, but they were thought a prerequisite. The public good and self-interest in symbiosis, on paper at least.

Notes

- 1 This essay builds on research funded by the Swedish Research Council, project 2017-06321. I wish to thank Anna Nilsson Hammar and Christopher Pihl for the help with the essay; all remaining errors are my own.
- 2 Svante Norrhem, *Uppkomlingarna: Kanslitjänstemännen i 1600-talets Sverige och Europa* (Umeå 1993); for Swedish findings of a similar date, see Björn Asker, *Officerarna och det svenska samhället 1650–1700* (Uppsala 1983); Pär Frohnert, *Kronans skatter och bondens bröd: Den lokala förvaltningen och bönderna i Sverige 1719–1775* (Stockholm

- 1993), 88–90; Fabian Persson, *Servants of Fortune: The Swedish Court between 1598 and 1721* (Lund 1999).
- 3 For France, see, for example, Albert N. Hamscher, *The Parlement of Paris after the Fronde, 1653–1673* (Pittsburgh 1976); William Beik, *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-Century France: State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc* (Cambridge 1985); Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York 1986); William Beik, ‘The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration’, *Past & Present* 188/1 (2005), 195–224.
 - 4 See, for example, Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London 1974), 95–112; Jan Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe: Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as Fiscal-Military States, 1500–1600* (London 2002), ch. 3; Ingvar Elmroth, *Från Överklass till Medelklass: Studier i Den Sociala Dynamiken Inom Sveriges Adel 1600–1900* (Lund 2001).
 - 5 For a few examples, see Mats Hallenberg, *Statsmakt till Salu: Arrendesystemet och Privatiseringen av Skatteuppbörden i Det Svenska Riket 1618–1635* (Lund 2008); David Parrott, *The Business of War: Military Enterprise and Military Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge 2012); H. V. Bowen et al., ‘Forum: The Contractor State, c.1650–1815’, *International Journal of Maritime History* 25/1 (2013), 239–74; Rafael Torres Sánchez, *Military Entrepreneurs and the Spanish Contractor State in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford 2016); Peter Haldén, *Family Power: Kinship, War and Political Orders in Eurasia, 500–2018* (Cambridge 2020).
 - 6 John Watkins, ‘Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe’, *Journal of Medieval & Early Modern Studies* 38/1 (2008), 1–14; Daniel Riches, *Protestant Cosmopolitanism and Diplomatic Culture: Brandenburg–Swedish Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden 2013); Peter Lindström & Svante Norrhem, *Flattering Alliances: Scandinavia, Diplomacy and the Austrian–French Balance of Power, 1648–1740* (Lund 2013).
 - 7 Johan Axel Almquist, *Kommerskollegium och Riksens Ständers Manufakturkontor samt konsulsstaten 1651–1910: Administrativa och biografiska anteckningar* (Stockholm 1912); Leos Müller, *Consuls, Corsairs, and Commerce: The Swedish Consular Service and Long-Distance Shipping, 1720–1815* (Uppsala 2004).
 - 8 See, for example, Silvia Marzagalli & Jörg Ulbert (eds), ‘De l’*intérêt d’être consul en Méditerranée, XVIIe–XXe siècle*’, *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 98 (2019).
 - 9 Silvia Marzagalli, ‘De l’*intérêt d’être consul: Quelques observations à partir de l’expérience américaine en Méditerranée*’, *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 98 (2019), 95–111.
 - 10 Gustaf Fryksén, ‘Les Réseaux de La Diplomatie et Du Commerce: George Logie, Consul de Suède et al. Intermédiaire Marchand En Afrique Du Nord, v. 1726–1763’, in Mathieu Grenet et al. (eds), *De l’utilité commerciale des consuls: L’institution consulaire et les marchands dans le monde Méditerranéen (XVIIe–Xxe Siècle)* (Madrid 2017).
 - 11 Müller 2004, 2–3, 41 (quotes); see also Leos Müller, ‘The Swedish Consular Service in Southern Europe, 1720–1815’, *Scandinavian Journal of History* 31/2 (2006), 191–3; Aryo Makko & Leos Müller, ‘Svenska konsuler 1650–1985: I sjöfartens och statens tjänst’, in eid (eds.), *I främmande hamn: Den svenska och svensk-norska konsulstjänsten 1700–1985* (Malmö 2015), 28–31; Leos Müller, *Sveriges första globala århundrade: En 1700-talshistoria* (Stockholm 2018), 65; Martin Almbjör, ‘Au Carrefour Des Intérêts: Les maisons consulaires suédoises en Espagne au XVIIIe siècle’, in Mathieu

- Grenet (ed.), *La maison consulaire: Espaces, fonctions et usagers XVIIe–XXIe siècle* (Aix-en-Provence 2021), 79.
- 12 Almquist 1912, 136, 140; Müller 2004, 44, 80–2; Arnaud Bartolomei, 'De la utilidad comercial de los cónsules: Problemáticas y estado de la cuestión (Europa y el mundo mediterráneo, siglos XVII, XVIII y XIX)', in Marcella Agletti, Manuel Herrero Sánchez & Francisco Zamora Rodríguez (eds), *Los cónsules de extranjeros en la edad moderna y a principios de la edad contemporánea* (Aranjuez 2013), 257.
 - 13 Almquist 1912, 135; Sofia Gustafsson, 'Som spindeln i nätet: Johan Albert Kantzow och det lokala vicekonsulsnätverket i Portugal 1782–1808', in Makko & Müller 2015, 97, 102–104; Makko & Müller 2015, 30–1.
 - 14 Müller 2004, 83; see also Leos Müller & Jari Ojala, 'Consular Services of the Nordic Countries during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: Did They Really Work?', in Gordon Boyce & Richard Gorski (eds), *Resources and Infrastructures in the Maritime Economy, 1500–2000* (St. John's, Nfld, 2002), 25.
 - 15 Silvia Marzagalli & Jörg Ulbert, 'Introduction', *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 98 (2019), 9–10.
 - 16 Riksarkivet (Swedish National Archives), Stockholm (RA), Skrivelser till Kungl. Maj:t, 17b, Kanslikollegium & Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 18 Apr. 1757.
 - 17 See, for example, RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, B1a:159, Kommerskollegium till Brandenburg 15 Apr. 1766; RA, Kanslikollegium, B11:9, Kommerskollegium till Kanslikollegium, 29 June 1791; RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, E6aa:12, bilaga till Wombwells supplik till Kungl. Maj:t, 2 May 1738.
 - 18 RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, E6aa:80, Selonfs brev, Grosshandlarna till Kommerskollegium, inkommet 31 May 1770.
 - 19 Utrikesexpeditionen, Salvi Passus för Bellman, 24 Jan. 1732; Archivo Histórico Nacional (National History Archives of Spain), Madrid, Estado Exp 49, legajo 606.
 - 20 RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, B1a:115, Kanslikollegium & Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 17 Feb. 1744.
 - 21 RA, Skrivelser till Kungl. Maj:t, vol 28, Kanslikollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 18 May 1739.
 - 22 RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, E17g:1, Handlingar rörande Brabanders ansökan.
 - 23 RA, Kanslikollegium, C1:28, Kanslikollegium & Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 21 Oct. 1734.
 - 24 RA, Skrivelser till Kungl. Maj:t, vol 20b, Kanslikollegium & Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 18 Jan. 1774.
 - 25 RA, Hispanica, vol 18, Bilaga till Friesendorffs brev till Kanslikollegium, 5 May 1768.
 - 26 See, for example, RA, Frihetstidens utskottshandlingar, R3296, Mindre sekreta deputationens protokoll, 899–901.
 - 27 RA, Kanslikollegium, E11:13, Göteborgs grosshandlare till Kommerskollegium om konsulssysslan i Cadiz, inkommet 18 Apr. 1775; RA, Skrivelser till Kungl. Maj:t, 21b, Kanslikollegium & Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 9 Dec. 1782.
 - 28 Jari Ojala, 'Approaching Europe: The Merchant Networks between Finland and Europe during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *European Review of Economic History* 1/3 (1997), 336–7; Müller & Ojala 2002, 24; Müller 2004, 75–6, 80–2.

- 29 Leufsta Bruksarkiv (Lövestabruk Archive), Carlos och Claes Grills arkiv I:5, Hultstedt till Grill, 18 Jan. 1752; Åkers Styckebruk (Åkers Styckebruk Archive), Wahrendorffska arkivet, vol 248, Baumgardt till Wahrendorff, 14 Oct. & 11 Nov. 1786; see also Müller & Ojala 2002, 37.
- 30 RA, Skrivelser till Kungl. Maj:t, vol 20b, Kanslikollegium & Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 16 May 1775.
- 31 RA, Kanslikollegium, E11:8, Kommerskollegium till Kanslikollegium, 25 Nov. 1771.
- 32 For consular reports, see Müller 2004, 85–7.
- 33 RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, B1a:115, Kanslikollegium & Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 17 Feb. 1744.
- 34 See Gahn's letters in RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, E6aa:67; and reports on the state of trade Cadiz in RA, Hispanica, vol 53.
- 35 See, for example, Silvia Marzagalli & Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, "Par Les Nouvelles Les plus Fraîches et Les plus Certaines": La correspondance du consul suédois à Marseille à la fin du XVIIIe siècle comme instrument d'information et d'autopromotion', in Silvia Marzagalli, Christian Windler & Maria Ghazali (eds), *Les consuls en Méditerranée, agents d'information: XVIe–XXe Siècle* (Paris 2015), 219–38; Sylvain Lloret, 'Entre clientélisme, compétence et intérêt individuel: De l'avantage d'être agent général de France à Madrid (1702–1793)', *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 98 (2019), 47–8.
- 36 RA, Skrivelser till Kungl. Maj:t, vol 17a, Kanslikollegium & Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 22 Mar. 1749; see also Martin Almbjär & Francisco Cebreiro Ares, 'Swedish consuls in Galicia', forthcoming.
- 37 RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, E6aa:67, Bellman till Kommerskollegium, 4 Sept. 1753.
- 38 Almbjär & Cebreiro Ares forthcoming; for the agent in Madrid, see, for example, RA, Madridbeskickningens arkiv 1740–1932 del 1, A2:1, Ehrensvärd till Wetterström, 13 Mar. 1795.
- 39 For Van der Lepe, see RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, E6aa:67, Bellman till Kommerskollegium, 4 Sept. 1753 samt bifogat utlåtande från Stockholms grosshandlare; RA, Hispanica, vol 11, Leuhusen till Kanslikollegium, 24 Sept. 1753; for the north Spanish network, see RA, Hispanica, vol 43, Adlerberg till Kungl. Maj:t, 19 Oct. 1801; RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, B2a:58, Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 8 June 1802.
- 40 RA, Hispanica, Vol 52, Baumgardt till Kanslikollegium 30 Aug. 1800; Almquist, 485.
- 41 RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, B1d:1, Kanslikollegium & Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 15 May 1776.
- 42 RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, E6aa:67, Gahn till Kommerskollegium, 16 Nov. 1779.
- 43 Almquist 1912, 637.
- 44 RA, Hispanica, vol. 52, Arfvidsson till Kanslipresidenten, 13 June 1752; RA, Hispanica, vol. 52, Baumgardt till Kanslipresidenten, 20 Sept. 1776.
- 45 For the Danish consuls, see K. M. Widding, 'Den første organisation af Danmark-Norges konsulatvæsen (konsulinstruktionen af 1749)', *Historisk Tidsskrift (Denmark)* 8/5 (1914/1915), 392–5, 407.

- 46 Almquist 1912, 425; RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, B1a:116, Bellmans instruktion, 7 July 1744, §§ 4–9.
- 47 Kongl. Maj:ts Stadga angående Consuls-sysslor i allmänhet, 31 Jan. 1793, § 6.
- 48 RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, A1fa:44, 5 June 1801.
- 49 RA, Kanslikollegium, E11:8, Kommerskollegium till Kanslikollegium, 25 Nov. 1771.
- 50 Almbjär 2021, 82–3.
- 51 See, for example, RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, B1a:162, Dreijers instruktion, 27 Aug. 1767, § 13.
- 52 RA, Skrivelser till Kungl. Maj:t, 21b, Kanslikollegium & Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 9 Dec. 1782; see also RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, B1d:1, Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 17 Dec. 1776; for a more general argument, see RA, Kanslikollegium, E11:8, Kommerskollegium till Kanslikollegium, 25 Nov. 1771.
- 53 Almbjär 2021, 82–3.
- 54 See, for example, RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, B1a:146, instruktionerna för Marcarti och Selonf, 8 Nov. 1759, § 1; RA, Skrivelser till Kungl. Maj:t, 20b, Kanslikollegium & Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 4 May 1774; RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, B1a:73, Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 7 Nov. 1719.
- 55 RA, Hispanica, vol 20, Sparre till Kanslikollegium, 19 May 1774.
- 56 Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek, Handskriftssamlingen, W801, Bellman till Karl Öberg 12 April 1758; RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, E6aa:67, Gahn till Kommerskollegium 10 Jan. 1775 & 9 Jan. 1776; RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, E6aa:12, Baumgardt till Kommerskollegium 11 Feb. 1802.
- 57 Catia Brilli, *Genoese Trade and Migration in the Spanish Atlantic, 1700–1830* (New York 2016), 77.
- 58 See, for example, RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, E6aa:12, Baumgardt till Kommerskollegium, 11 Feb. 1802.
- 59 RA, Kanslikollegium, E11:4, Kommerskollegium till Kanslikollegium, 29 Apr. 1749.
- 60 RA, Hispanica, vol 18, Friesendorff till Kanslikollegium, 5 May 1768.
- 61 RA, Kanslikollegium, E11:9, Kommerskollegium till Kanslikollegium, 21 July 1789.
- 62 RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 7 Nov. 1719.
- 63 RA, Kanslikollegium, E11:9, Kommerskollegium till Kanslikollegium, 21 July 1789.
- 64 RA, Beskickningsarkiv Madrid 1740–1932, A2:1, Ehrensvärd till Baumgardt, 2 Nov. 1792.
- 65 RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, B1a:115, Kanslikollegium & Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 17 Feb. 1744; RA, Kanslikollegium, E11:9, Kommerskollegium till Kanslikollegium, 21 July 1789.
- 66 He was agent for Abraham Arfwedsson in Stockholm, among others. Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek, Handskriftssamlingen, Anders, Abraham and Jacob Arfwedssons arkiv, A8, 491–4; RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, B1a:159, Kommerskollegium till Brandenburg, 15 Apr. 1766.
- 67 RA, Kanslikollegium, C1:62, Kanslikollegium & Kommerskollegium till Kungl. Maj:t, 4 Aug. 1767.
- 68 See, for example, Almquist 1912, 422–7.
- 69 RA, Kanslikollegium, E11:9, Kommerskollegium till Kanslikollegium, 19 Aug. 1793.

- 70 Almquist 1912, 139.
- 71 Edvard Holm, *Danmark-Norges udenrigske historie under den franske revolution og Napoleons krige fra 1791 til 1807* (Copenhagen 1875), i. 85–6; Almbjär & Cebreiro Ares forthcoming.
- 72 RA, Kommerskollegium Huvudarkivet, E6aa:12, Baumgardt, 10 May 1777.
- 73 Jörg Ulbert, ‘A History of the French Consular Services’, in Jan Melissen & Ana Mar Fernández (eds), *Consular Affairs and Diplomacy* (Leiden 2011), 316; Anne Mézin, ‘La Fonction Consulaire Dans La France d’Ancien Régime: Origine, Principes, Prérogatives’, in Jörg Ulbert and Gérard Le Bouëdec (eds), *La Fonction Consulaire à l’époque Moderne: L’affirmation d’une Institution Économique et Politique (1500–1800)* (Rennes 2006), 42.