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Abstracts

EMILIO GIN, *Towards an Assertive Neutrality. Ferdinand IV, Acton and the Naval Convention with Russia, 1779-1789*

The history of the commercial treaty with Russia has been described many times. The narrative, however, has focused mainly on economic negotiations in the broader context of mutual economic relations. Furthermore, with few exceptions, the trade agreement and the special relationship established with St. Petersburg have been viewed as fortuitous or as the by-product of Marie Caroline's and Acton's adventurist and pro-British attitude. This article addresses the matter by reading the naval convention with Russia, signed in 1787, in the broader context of The Kingdom's history and of the international relations of the period. In this light, friendly relations with St. Petersburg appear as a coherent element of the effort to give the Kingdom the more flexible neutrality it needed in the Europe of the second half of the Eighteenth Century. In this regard, it should be stressed that Acton's naval plan, of which the naval agreement was an important element, was conceived to be a tool in the Kingdom's diplomacy without predetermining the actual choices that would be made during the French Revolution. More interestingly, as political considerations preceded any economic and commercial interests, the collaboration between Acton and the king in signing the treaty has turned out to be closer than generally suspected.

Keywords:

*John Edward Acton
Ferdinand IV King of Naples
Kingdom of Naples
Russian Empire*