

OUCH! WALPOLE



Vector illustration of airplanes with dotted lines in a repeating pattern against a dark blue background.

The scenes at airports over Thanksgiving were much more orderly than officialdom had forecast. It reminded me that on the eve of the 19th century, just before Britain became by far the strongest power in the world, informed opinion there had worried obsessively about its military unpreparedness. As Horace Walpole put it, “Everything’s at sea, except the fleet.” Let’s hope today’s bureaucrats, ever anxious to escape

blame if something goes wrong, will now make realistic forecasts for Christmas instead of packaging their worries as “everything’s up in the air, except the planes.”