



Universiteit
Leiden

The Netherlands

How 'new' is the new monarchy? Clashes between princes and nobility in Europe's Iron Century'

Friedeburg, Robert von

Citation

Friedeburg, R. von. (2012). How 'new' is the new monarchy? Clashes between princes and nobility in Europe's Iron Century'. *Leidschrift : Aan Het Hof*, 27(April), 17-30. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/73255>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/73255>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Leidschrift

Historisch Tijdschrift

Artikel/Article: *How 'new' is the new monarchy? Clashes between princes and nobility in Europe's Iron Century*

Auteur/Author: Robert von Friedeburg

Verschenen in/Appeared in: *Leidschrift*, 27.1 (Leiden 2012) 17-30

Titel uitgave: *Aan het hof. Rivaliteit, legitimiteit en successiestrijd aan de Euraziatische boven, 1250-1750*

© 2012 Stichting Leidschrift, Leiden, The Netherlands

ISSN 0923-9146

E-ISSN 2210-5298

Niets uit deze uitgave mag worden gereproduceerd en/of vermenigvuldigd zonder schriftelijke toestemming van de uitgever.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.

Leidschrift is een zelfstandig wetenschappelijk historisch tijdschrift, verbonden aan het Instituut voor geschiedenis van de Universiteit Leiden. *Leidschrift* verschijnt drie maal per jaar in de vorm van een themanummer en biedt hiermee al vijftientig jaar een podium voor levendige historiografische discussie.

Artikelen ouder dan 2 jaar zijn te downloaden van www.leidschrift.nl. Losse nummers kunnen per e-mail besteld worden. Het is ook mogelijk een jaarabonnement op *Leidschrift* te nemen. Zie www.leidschrift.nl voor meer informatie.

Leidschrift is an independent academic journal dealing with current historical debates and is linked to the Institute for History of Leiden University. *Leidschrift* appears tri-annually and each edition deals with a specific theme.

Articles older than two years can be downloaded from www.leidschrift.nl. Copies can be ordered by e-mail. It is also possible to order an yearly subscription. For more information visit www.leidschrift.nl.

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts*.

Secretariaat/ Secretariat:

Doelensteeg 16
2311 VL Leiden
The Netherlands
071-5277205
redactie@leidschrift.nl
www.leidschrift.nl

Comité van aanbeveling/ Board of recommendation:

Dr. J. Augusteijn
Prof. dr. W.P. Blockmans
Prof. dr. H.W. van den Doel
Prof. dr. L. de Lig
Prof. dr. L.A.C.J. Lucassen
Prof. dr. H. te Velde

How 'new' is the 'New Monarchy'? Clashes between princes and nobility in Europe's Iron Century*

Robert von Friedeburg

A veritable research tradition, ranging back right to contemporaries of seventeenth century events, has recognized a curious intensification of civil wars and internal conflicts in Europe's monarchies during the 1620s to 1650s. Among the most prominent are the 'Thirty Years' War raging within the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, entangled with the war between France and Spain between 1635 and 1659, the attempts at secession from the Catholic Monarchy in Madrid by Portugal, Naples and Catalonia (1640-1647), the French *Fronde* (1648-1652), and the British Wars of Religion, raging in Scotland, Ireland and England (from the rebellion in Ireland in late 1641 to the Civil Wars of 1642-1648 and the subsequent capture of Scotland by Cromwell and the War in Ireland). All these conflicts did not only deliver considerable bloodshed and misery, they seemed to be made of an uneasy mixture of dynastic rivalry, confessional hostility and unprecedented societal conflict between princes and their elites. Deploring the miseries of war, though in itself a Christian genre, became particularly topical. Still immediately prior to the outbreak of civil war in the British Isles, pamphlets in England deplored Germany's fate and begged readers to consider that whatever the conflicts within England or within the Stuart Dynastic agglomerate, civil war had to be avoided at all cost – to no avail.¹

* The following paper was commissioned by the *Leidschrift* foundation and has, given its scope and the number of pages, a fairly general character. Footnotes are kept to the minimum. However, readers are advised to consult R. von Friedeburg, *Europa in der frühen Neuzeit. Fischer Weltgeschichte, Neue Folge* (Frankfurt 2012); R. von Friedeburg ed., *Murder and Monarchy. Regicide in European History, 1300-1800* (Houndsmill 2004); R. von Friedeburg, 'Response to Introduction: 'Ideology', Factions and Foreign Politics in Early Modern Europe' in: G. Rommelse and D. Onnekink ed., *Ideology and Foreign Policy in Early Modern Europe (1650-1750)* (Aldershot 2011) 11-28; R. von Friedeburg, State Forms and State Systems in Modern Europe, in: European History Online (EGO), published by the Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz 2010-12-03. URL: <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/friedeburg-2010-en>. I also thank Professor Dick de Boer and his colleagues within the ESF financed research group on European Regions for comments and criticism on an evening

And once war seemed to have cooled down in Germany and the British Isles, the French Fronde seemed to throw France into chaos.

In the following section **I** a short historiographic survey will attempt to review how historians have attempted to make sense of this turmoil. It is only after briefly reviewing the significant findings of these generations of historians, but also of the problematic influence of sociology on later stages of research, that the usefulness (or lack thereof) of a new research initiative can be gauged, that on the 'New Monarchy'. This concept will be outlined in section **II**.

I

The period from the later 1650s up to the 1680s is often regarded as the heyday of theories of monarchical absolutism; of the reception of Hobbes, of the introduction of the personal rule of Louis XIV in France and of absolutism in Denmark, of the establishment of territorial princely monarchies in Germany and of the re-establishment of the Stuart monarchy under Charles II in England, Scotland and Ireland. It is difficult to dispute that in this period political mobilization against the crown for religious reasons was increasingly identified with 'phanaticism'. Writers who had – for whatever reasons – argued the feasibility of resistance against a legitimate prince were seen as being partly responsible for seducing hapless subjects into rebellions leading only to misery and bloodshed.² From the later seventeenth century, from Pufendorf to Bayle, the blame for the mid-seventeenth century bloodshed was increasingly less laid on unruly subjects or nobilities as such, but instead on the allegedly detrimental effects of

lecture I had the pleasure to give in Groningen and on which some of the arguments in this article are based.

¹ See for example R. Asch, *Thirty Years War* (New York 1997). For the reception of the bloodshed in Germany and the alleged lessons to preserve peace drawn from that see, for example, R. von Friedeburg, 'The Continental Counter-Reformation and the Plausibility of the Popish Plots, 1638-1642' in: G. Burgess and C. W. A. Prior ed., *England's Wars of Religion, Revisited* (Aldershot 2011) 49-74.

² A good example is given in C. Jackson, 'Buchanan in Hell' in: C. Erskine and R. Mason ed., *George Buchanan: Political Thought in Early Modern Britain and Europe* (Aldershot 2012). Though Buchanan was not at all a zealous Calvinist, his publications were, long after he died, seen in the context of illicit mobilization and inciting the people into sedition that led, eventually, to terrible disaster.

confessional propaganda of clergy inciting subjects and raising them against each other, and on authorities exploiting religious differences.³

Post World War II scholarship has undergone a whole range of transformation of arguments, each delivering important points of view that should not be ignored. A number of arguments formulated in relation to the 'Crisis of the Seventeenth Century' debate argued around the clash of courtiers with regional and local elites. These courtiers had received offices from their princes financed by rising taxes. And they clashed with country and local elites, who were troubled by these very taxes and war-related burdens.⁴ The Reformation and religious conflicts did play a role in this argument, but the major thrust was the accumulation of offices, linked to rights to resources, the profits of courtiers, and the revulsion of local taxpayers against these burdens. A good deal of French, German and English pamphlet propaganda undoubtedly pointed in this direction.

The intensification of social historical research in the wake of the expansion of Europe's university systems uncovered in more detail the social affiliation and political attitudes of Europe's wider elites. It appeared, in particular with respect to England, that there was hardly a clear cut country-court dichotomy that put a given gentry family – according to its income and resources – on either side of the court-country divide. Families tried to mobilize all sorts of sources of income; royal offices and commissions played an increasing and important part.⁵ Indeed, even some of the most outspoken critics of the duke of Buckingham and his friends had earlier been clients of Buckingham but had been simply disappointed in their quest for office and patronage. Richelieu and Mazarin in France, though attacked viciously from time to time for building their own clientage-networks, built them with the support and help of the French nobility, in the capital and the provinces.⁶ Though the rhetoric of corruption and of evil courtiers was real enough, it did not reflect a real

³ See for example the argument of P. Bayle in his article in the *Dictionnaire* on 'Macon', edited and commented in: S. Jenkinson, *Bayle. Political Writings* (Cambridge 2000) 172-180.

⁴ See H. T. Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* (New York 1999), summoning articles published between 1956 and 1967; G. Parker and L. M. Smith ed., *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* (London 1997).

⁵ See J. Morrill, *The Nature of the English Revolution* (London 1993).

⁶ See for example J. Collins, *Classes, Estates and Order in Early-Modern Brittany* (Cambridge 2003).

social division of clear cut social groups, some profiting from princely offices and the administration of taxes, others not. For these new kinds of income were pursued by most and eschewed by few.

Research has also pointed out the very real changes in the size and composition of armies, their huge increase in numbers – more than tenfold in the case of France between the 1490s and 1690s – and in the number of months these troops were held together, until eventually standing armies appeared. Also, the very real dynamic in the military competition among princes and dynasties has been recognized. It forced any dynasty that wanted to stay independent and play a role on the wider European stage to eventually mobilize substantial forces to take part in that competition. The history of Sweden and Denmark tells about the enormous consequences not least for smaller kingdoms in trying to raise these resources. But also for larger kingdoms and dynastic agglomerates, as for France and the Spanish Habsburgs, these challenges posed enormous problems. Nicholas Canny and others have stressed that the conquest of middle and southern America by the Catholic monarchy in Madrid and the enormous extra resources coming about for this monarchy have to be taken into account in explaining the substantial and momentous increase in the scale of warfare from the late fifteenth century onwards, since the consequences of this rapid change ‘spilled over’ to other monarchies. They had, in particular, consequences for the Valois who had – almost unwittingly – taken on the emerging new monarchy of Spain in Italy and then became involved in two centuries of warfare against it.⁷ The burdens associated with this clash did not only put considerable stress on both the Catholic monarchy in Madrid and the French monarchy. Towards the end of the ‘Thirty Years’ War both reckoned with rebellions breaking out in each other’s backyard – such as the Fronde and the break away or attempted break away of Portugal, Catalonia and Naples – and both Madrid and Paris hoped that such rebellions would weaken primarily the enemy, if one only held out that one more year or two. That is, already contemporary reflections on the dynamics of war and

⁷ G. Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road* (London 1976); G. Parker, *The Military Revolution. Military Innovation and the Rise of the West* (Cambridge 1988); A. Ayton and J. L. Prince ed., *The Medieval Military Revolution. State, Society and Military Change in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London 1998), with essays covering the more recent debate; R. Frost, *The Northern Wars* (London 2000); L. Bely, *La Société des Princes* (Paris 1999); N. Canny ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World* (Oxford 2011).

princely competition reckoned with the overspill of it on 'domestic' relations and even gambled on it.

These insights have stood the test of time, but some of the more theoretical reflections based on them have not. To my mind, one of the most important casualties of the increasing empirical research of the last fifty years is the attempt to link these changes with the making of the modern state. Sociologists from Max Weber to Charles Tilly shifted emphasis from issues of legitimacy in explaining the nature of public order in the Latin West and instead focused on the organization of power, in particular of power organized in bureaucracies with their own written rules and standards of procedure. The armies and administrations that did develop during the later Middle Ages and throughout the early modern period became examples of such bureaucracies, i.e. of 'early modern state building'. Thus, the clashes of the seventeenth century, their religious motivation notwithstanding, occurred in a process where the early modern state gradually overwhelmed local and regional elites to establish a monopoly of coercive power.⁸

The last fifty years have seen a gradual disintegration of this view on various counts,⁹ the most important being considerations on constitutional

⁸ The traditional theory of state-building was devised towards the later nineteenth century and the early twentieth century by the emerging discipline of sociology, primarily by Max Weber, but historians such as Otto Hintze and Gustav von Schmoller, also a major representative of the younger school of national economy, interested in economics and sociology, also had a large part in it. See on the problems associated with this: S. Breuer, 'Das Legitimitätskonzept Max Webers' in: D. Willoweit ed., *Die Begründung des Rechts als historisches Problem* (München 2000) 1-16; C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990* (Cambridge 1990). Also see footnote 15 further below. Outside Germany, the term 'state' came into use by historians much later. The empirically quite good *Cambridge Modern History: II Reformation* (1944), *III Wars of Religion* (1934), and *V Age of Louis XIV* (1934), mentions 'states' only as 'states-general', in France or the Netherlands. I suppose that the influence of 'state' as sociological concept first became relevant in Germany for specific, German reasons, and then only after World War II invaded other historiographies in the wake of the claim of sociology to be a master discipline. In England, the influence of Geoffrey Elton was considerable, and he clearly had continental roots.

⁹ For early criticism of the actual reach of absolutism within society, see the debates at the 1955 conference in Rome: C. Nolte, *Konferenzreport: 'The X Congresso*

and legal history, issues in financial history and considerations of the role of 'opinion' and legitimacy among elites.

One: Heterogeneity of provinces within any one monarchy and legal-political arrangements within them

The problem of the plurality of lands, customs, laws and societies within the dynastic agglomerate has been increasingly taken serious by researchers. Right until the end of the Napoleonic wars, regimes were hardly constructed or even understood as the legal person of a single 'state'. The Habsburg agglomerate in German, Italian and Spanish lands, the Valois takeover of Burgundy and Brittany and the Stuart rule in England, Scotland and Ireland are examples of the early modern dynastic agglomerate. A dynasty held lands, massively differing among each other in almost every respect, and held them according to very different legal relations depending on each individual province. Even insofar as *institutions* of public order operated across these different provinces – courts of law, tax-offices – they remained mainly responsible only within any single principality, kingdom or province, while the interaction of politics and elites among these composite units and the management of this interaction by the reigning dynasty appeared to be a major crux of early modern politics.¹⁰

Internazionale di Scienze Storiche, Rom'. Organized by the German Historical Institute, Rome, and others (Rome 2005).

¹⁰ Over the last twenty years, reflections on this fact have clearly increased: J. Elliot, 'A Europe of Composite Monarchies', *Past and Present* 137 (1992) 48-71; R. Bonney, *The European Dynastic States 1494-1660* (Oxford 1991) 524; J. Morrill, *Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown. Dynastic crises in Tudor and Stuart Britain 1504-1746* (Reading 2005) 11; L. Bely, *La société des princes* (Paris 1999). A prime example of empirical research informed by this assumption is J. Ohlmeyer, *Civil War and Restoration in the Three Stuart Kingdoms: The Career of Randal MacDonnell, Marquis of Antrim* (Dublin 1993). It needs to be said, however, that specifically leading in this field is perhaps Spanish historiography, see for example A. Alvarez-Ossorio et al. ed., *La Perida de Europa* (Madrid 2007); A. Alvarez-Ossorio et al. ed., *La Monarquía de las naciones* (Madrid 2004). With respect to the kingdom of France, where the various provinces were inalienable parts of that kingdom, rather than possessions of a given dynasty, the nature of government within them remained very varying and posed very different challenges to the crown.

Having said that, we must not ignore that on the periphery of Europe there existed ancient kingdoms since the high Middle Ages, such as Portugal, England, Scotland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, all with a continuous territorial landmass, reasonable continuous borders with neighboring kingdoms, hardly any or rather no major independent jurisdiction of either church or high nobility within these borders (the palatinate of Durham in England remained rather an exception within this kingdom), a rather small higher aristocracy and strong legal resources of the king to punish offenders with a rather centralized court system. These characteristics do not allow us to address the realm of England itself, or the kingdoms of Portugal or Denmark or Sweden, as dynastic agglomerates, though each of these kingdoms became part of a larger dynastic agglomerate for a longer or shorter period. The others – the new monarchy in Spain, the Valois and Bourbons in France, the Habsburgs in Germany, the Stuarts and the House of Hanover in Britain, the Vasa in Poland – did run highly heterogeneous lands and had to confront a whole political cosmos of dynasties of the higher aristocracy in these various lands.¹¹ Historians have thus shifted from addressing early modern kingdoms as composite states (Elliot) to composite monarchies (Bonney) to dynastic agglomerates (Morrill), each term emphasizing a bit more the sometimes haphazard manner of bringing lands together and the utter heterogeneity of law, culture and sociological makeup of the various parts.¹²

Second: Finance

Pace Charles Tilly, wars did not make states, let alone finance them.¹³ Wars cost money, indeed cost significantly more than monarchs could gather via demesne income or, where existing, reasonably regular taxes; what is more, once begun, wars enforced desperate politics of haphazard war financing. They forced monarchies into giving away resources – like selling or mortgaging offices, taxes, demesne lands – and getting into debt. Therefore,

¹¹ See, for instance, J. Spengler, *The Society of Princes* (Aldershot 2009).

¹² See note above; their insights now begin to inform the textbook level: for example, N. Henshall, *The Zenith of Absolute Monarchy and its Elites* (Cambridge 2010).

¹³ C. Tilly, 'War and State Making as Organized Crime' in: P. B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol ed., *Bringing the State Back* (Cambridge 1985) 169-191.

after the experience of about a 150-year period of desperate financial measures and the catastrophe of the Fronde in 1648-1653 as a direct result of Crown bankruptcy, in 1661, at the onset of Louis XIV's new war politics, his minister Colbert begged him not to engage in wars yet again. Did Colbert also ask Louis to remember the catastrophic consequences of the war against Spain (1635-1659), when bankruptcy in 1648 prompted a breakdown of royal power, the Fronde, a breakdown that Louis (born in 1638) experienced as a small boy? Or did he not dare mention this disaster? In any case, Louis, now 23, would not listen and, pursuing the glory of himself and his dynastic house rather than any strategy of state-building, went on his adopted course. That had little to do with state building, or with consolidating long-term finances to make oneself independent from elites, but with very traditional princely ideas of status and glory.¹⁴ Therefore, sociologists and historians increasingly begin to abandon Tilly in this respect.¹⁵ The assumption of the development of a bureaucratic coercive tax state during the sixteenth and seventeenth century has been gradually invalidated. The actual early modern innovation was public debt on a hitherto unknown scale. Whatever relevance taxes had gained by 1500 (as in France, England or Castile), the exploding costs of the European arms- and war race severely qualified their contribution to paying overall costs, hence the fact of exploding debt. Other innovations were the massive sale of offices and the farming of taxes.¹⁶ Rather than experiencing the

¹⁴ For Colbert's advice on war see H. Scott, 'The Fiscal-Military State and International Rivalry during the Long Eighteenth Century' in: C. Storrs ed., *The Fiscal-Military State in Eighteenth-century Europe* (Ashgate 2009) 23-53, in particular 23-25; P. Sonnino, 'Plusroyaliste que le pape. Louis XIV Religious Policy and his Guerre de Hollande', in: D. Onnekink ed., *War and Religion after Westphalia* (Farnham 2009) 17-24; for the issues of princely glory and prestige and the very important place of military victory for reputation at home see T. Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory* (London 2007).

¹⁵ On the problems of Tilly's thesis and the sociological background to its success see P. Gorski, 'How War did not make the State' in: P. S. Gorski, *The Protestant Ethic Revisited* (Philadelphia 2011).

¹⁶ R. Bonney ed., *Economic Systems and State Finance* (Oxford 1995), in particular W. M. Omrod, 'The West European Monarchies in the Later Middle Ages', 123-162, in particular 146-155; W. Schulze en Marjolein t' Hart, 'The Emergence and Consolidation of the Tax State' in: R. Bonney ed., *Economic Systems and State Finance* (Oxford 1995) 261-280 and 281-294 respectively establish, as do the chapters on Spain (G. Muto) and France (R. Bonney) the continued importance of demesne

emancipation of a bureaucratic state from its social and ecclesiastical elites, European monarchies became increasingly dependant on new power brokers and old and new elites to organize public debt, farm taxes and buy offices. While certain groups profited from these changes, others felt left behind. Debates and internal struggles ensued about this gradual reconfiguration of power, about access to offices and spoils, about the best course in costly foreign wars and about the legitimacy of the whole process.¹⁷

Third: 'Opinion'

Contemporaries knew that there were tight limits to what could be coerced, and they reflected on the consequences of this fact. For example, in theses defended under Hermann Conring at Helmstedt University during the 1640s to 1650s, a cautious reception of Machiavelli is very visible, and a major theme is the importance of 'opinion' among elites and subjects as a tangible, though difficult to measure, factor of power. Indeed, given the ongoing dependence on elites and subjects for rule, in particular for gathering resources to fight other princes, most princes made heavy use of pamphlets in order to influence opinion – for better or worse. It is clear that in particular the religious wars from the 1560s taught contemporary Europeans interested in politics that in several monarchies, certain issues of opinion had to be taken very seriously by any dynasty wishing to rule in the area, in particular religion. Whatever the dynastic legal title to rule by inheritance, monarchies had to submit in most cases to the confessional church and identity established in most countries during the later sixteenth

income, of the sale of offices, the farming of taxes and the overall establishment of a chronic and endemic state of indebtedness 'solved' with ad hoc and haphazard means. These problems occurred first for the main combatants, the Spanish Habsburgs and the Valois, but since the seventeenth century also for most other dynasties or republics with active foreign policy. S. Gunn, D. Grummitt and H. Cools concentrate on an earlier period, see their *War, State, and Society in England and the Netherlands, 1477-1559* (Oxford 2008).

¹⁷ See for instance R. Mandrou, *L'Europe absolutiste. Raison et raison d'État (1649–1775)* (Paris 1977); T. C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture. Old Regime Europe 1660-1789* (Oxford 2002); J. B. Collins, *Classes, Estate and Order in Early Modern Brittany* (Cambridge 1994).

century. The need for Henry of Navarre to convert to the faith of Rome, the failure of Catholic Christine and then Sigismund Vasa to establish themselves in Sweden, the problems of the Catholic match for Charles I, the ultimate failure of James II in England and Scotland all tell a similar story. Dynastic title ultimately had to bow to confessional identity. But also the collapse of the French monarchy in 1648-1652, the British wars of religion (1642-1648) and the upheaval in many parts of the agglomerates of the Spanish Habsburgs – Catalonia, Naples – clearly persuaded contemporary commentators to take ‘opinion’ among both elites and people very serious.¹⁸

None of this takes away the dense empirical evidence on at least two major structural changes in the outlook of European politics during the seventeenth century that have been admirably brought together in Heinz Schilling’s painstaking analysis of the relation of confessionalization and ‘reason of state’.¹⁹ Firstly, by the second half of the seventeenth century the role and function of the three Christian confessions in foreign politics had changed and shifted. Though religious issues did not entirely cease to play a role in foreign policy and the relations among princes,²⁰ the kind of dramatic religious confrontations as during the French Wars of Religion, the British Wars of Religion or, to a degree, the Dutch Revolt, did not return. Religion remained an issue that could be partly used for mobilization – as in the 1757-1759 period when Britain and Prussia appeared to be united as Protestant powers against a Catholic League of France and Austria (and Orthodox Russia) – but clearly the direct relative weight of religion had decreased. Instead, most of Europe’s dynastic agglomerates had acquired a public religion that bound the agglomerate not only together but was seen by many of its inhabitants as a factor of considerable identity. Secondly, the number of players on Europe’s political scene had been massively reduced. Even major towns such as Danzig or German or Italian towns with some

¹⁸ A current application at NWO by David Onnekink suggests to seek further clarification about the place of ideology and opinion in European foreign politics.

¹⁹ H. Schilling, *Konfessionalisierung und Staatsinteressen 1559-1660* (Paderborn 2007). With 673 pages, among them fifty three on used secondary literature, this book will for a long time be the standard to pull together the considerable amount of research done on this period and this problem. It will not be easily superseded for a long time.

²⁰ This topic is treated not least in D. Onnekink ed., in his *War and Religion*, but also in D. Onnekink and G. Rommelse ed., *Ideology and Foreign policy* (Ashgate 2011).

independence up to the later fifteenth century had lost the capacity to entertain their own European diplomatic relations, as had most leagues or other associations of merchants or towns. Only a minority of princes, those at the helm of the major dynastic houses, remained as real players on the European scene. Also, the dynastic agglomerates received fairly continuous shape, though of course some – the Catholic monarchy – lost most of their European holdings outside the Spanish peninsula during the Spanish Wars of Succession, and further wars of succession emphasize the vital importance of dynasties and dynastic problems for eighteenth century Europe. Researchers such as Christine Roll, though not doubting the territorial consolidation of most dynastic agglomerates and the reduction of the international players to the major princely dynasties, thus do not find the term 'state' really adequate for most eighteenth, let alone seventeenth century powers.²¹

II

At this point, the research project on the 'New Monarchy' and its critiques', pursued with a grant from NWO and in close cooperation with Lucien Bely (Paris), John Morrill (Cambridge), Robert Frost (Aberdeen), James Collins (Georgetown), and Bernardo Garcia and Antonio Alvarez Ossorio (Madrid), seeks to clarify a specific point, i.e. the actual meaning of 'reason of state' in several seventeenth century tracts and in political discourse. It is based on the findings of the last fifty years, and thus takes the language of 'state' and 'reason of state' not as a reflection of the – allegedly inevitable – rise of the modern state as institutional entity, but as part of a political rhetoric entertained against the background of specific problems of Europe's major dynastic houses that were experiencing the intensification of warfare since the 1490s. Under pressure of competition with neighboring princes for power, influence and prestige, dynasties were not only forced to mobilize unprecedented resources and contend with the vagaries of religious change, they also had to deal with the increasing role of 'opinion' among those to be mobilized for support. In this context, the project argues, the language of reason of state did not mirror or signal an objective development of 'state-building' (in terms of the coercive modern tax state as a legal person) but

²¹ C. Roll, *Auswärtige Politik und politisches Weltbild. Zar und Kaiser in der europäischen Politik des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Ms. (Konstanz 2003).

one of the manifold attempts of contemporaries to both grasp the changing European scene and carve out a place for themselves in it. Monarchies differed from their late medieval predecessors by almost inevitable participation in the early modern war- and arms race and the subsequent requirement of huge budgets to pay for war; by the emergence of new groups with a vested interest in the survival of the regime as debtors and officeholders; and by significantly increased rhetoric addressing an ill-defined public (not to be confused with a modern public sphere).²² The sources this project researches are analyses and polemics emerging in this new situation, in which the terminology of ‘reason of state’ is partly critically, partly affirmatively used.

One example is the treatise *L'Interest Des Princes et Estats De La Chrestiente* by the Duc de Rohan (1579-1638). In this treatise, the Catholic Monarchy is – rightly – addressed as the ‘New Monarchy’, for it only emerged since the later fifteenth century. Rohan sought to find for himself as Protestant *and* prince a place in the emerging new arrangement between crown and aristocratic elites in France. An earlier favorite to Henry IV and main royal client in Brittany, the Protestant nobility had found service to the crown under the erstwhile Protestant Henry IV specifically beneficial. Protection of their faith, access to offices and resources by the grace of the king and living up to the reputation they demanded for themselves as defenders of France could all well be combined. The tumultuous history after the assassination of Henry IV, in particular over the reconstitution of (Catholic) church property from Huguenots in various regions led to eventual civil war and to Rohan leading Huguenot forces until their decisive defeat in 1629. Henri was accused of lukewarmness from within the fractured Huguenot camp and could neither entirely appease Protestant zealots nor the Royal court. He could neither find suitable military command in Venice nor gain suzerainty over Cyprus. Looking out for a prestigious post adequate to his social standing and aspirations, he was finally recruited by the French Crown for its wars against the Habsburgs.²³

²² On the conference ‘The Transformation of Christian Europe: Princes, Dynastic Agglomerations and Fatherlands in Shaping European Society’, June 12-14 2008, and the conference ‘The New Monarchy’ 2011 (see www.erasmus.org). The term ‘new monarchy’ was suggested in particular in conversation with Professor Paul Rahe.

²³ A. Laugel, *Henry de Rohan : son rôle politique et militaire sous Louis XIII (1579-1638)* (Paris 1889); Alden Clarke, *Huguenot warrior: the life and times of Henri de Rohan, 1579-*

Rohan's career experienced in a nutshell the changing options of the French aristocracy from independent military leaders to government clients with access to significant financial resources. His leadership of the Protestant rebellion in 1627-1629 be seen against the background of his loss of his position as client in Brittany.²⁴ Whatever his motives, while he stated that *princes* are governed by their interests (and not those of the modern 'state') he did, as Friedrich Meinecke rightly emphasized 90 years ago, combine his analysis of the interest of princes with a modern historical account of the nature of their dynastic agglomerates and the political constraint necessarily arising from the need to maintain those agglomerates.

Conclusion

The analysis of treatises such as the one by Rohan seeks to understand both the factual legal construction of the dynastic agglomerate and the fact that dynasties had to secure compliance less by coercion but by persuasion, a persuasion based not least on their function as protectors of public order and property. This is the most important angle of this research project. The right to rule in early modern Europe remained in almost all cases (except, of course, republics) with dynasties who kept building their dynastic agglomerates by accumulating diverse lands. The House of Stuart eventually ruled Ireland, England and Scotland; the Madrid Habsburgs Castile, Aragon, the South- and Middle American areas, Milano, Naples and Sicily, and so forth. And in particular under the pressure of mobilization for war, the tensions between their dynastic aims and the interests of local and regional elites grew. Insofar, Trevor Roper had an important point. But at the same time, while around 1400 the average middling to great noblemen would mainly base his resources on fiefs and ecclesiastical benefices and offices, by the later seventeenth century princely offices in army and administration and financial investment in the fate of the ruling dynasty had become a major item in the resources of most elites. They had become entangled, for better or worse, with the fate of the ruling dynasty. The period characterized by this immense strife among princes and nobilities did thus not see 'state-

1638 (The Hague 1966); S. and P. Deyon, *Henri de Rohan : huguenot de plume et d'épée, 1579-1638* (Paris 2000).

²⁴ J. B. Collins, *Classes, Estates and Order in Early Modern Brittany* (Cambridge 1994) 183-184.

building' in a modern sense, but rather an increasing involvement at least of elites with the fate of the ruling dynasty. In England and Scotland, for example, while most offices did hardly carry significant resources and were not for sale (as in the Catholic Monarchy or France), the acquisition of church lands in both kingdoms linked a considerable minority of landowners to the preservation of reformation settlements, however uneasy achieved. At the same time, Latin Europe held on to a strict distinction between legitimate public rule and tyranny, and debate about this distinction became embroiled in the conflicts over the raising of unprecedented resources for the conflicts of the period. The 'New Monarchy' engaged in this debate and sought to influence society, or at least elites, about the legitimacy of its endeavors, but it also invited criticism against the dynamics of war and office on which it seemed to flower.