

## Securing power

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# Securing Power

WOLFGANG E.J. WEBER

## 1. Initial situation

From around 1560 onwards, political and confessional antagonisms in Europe intensified significantly.<sup>1</sup> The bloodiest military conflicts resulting from them were the Huguenot wars in France (1562–1598) and the war of secession in the Netherlands from 1568. The St Bartholomew's Day massacre of 18 August 1572, in which thousands of Huguenots died, and news of which spread quickly across the whole of Europe, made it plain to power elites that now even seemingly firmly established political orders and social positions were at risk. They came to a clear conclusion in light of these experiences. The overriding priority must now be to regain security and order.<sup>2</sup> It was above all from this perspective that the existing palette of political ideas was scrutinized and new ideas generated. The combination of the old and new, and their alignment with shifting empirical realities, gave rise to a newly practical orientation in political thought, and its increasing codification as a discipline. The response to these processes included the establishment of the discipline of political science ('*politica*'), chiefly at Protestant universities. This set in motion a disciplinary discourse through which it became increasingly clear how, in view of the prevailing circumstances, the terms 'politics' and 'state' should best be understood. What is more, the basic issues of how power or the state should be established, secured, and extended became clearly separated from one another. Their specific theoretical and practical requirements, and their specific dynamics, could now be determined more precisely.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an appropriate overview, cf. for example Pettigree A., *Europe in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: 2002) 131–226.

<sup>2</sup> See Zwierlein C., *Discorso und Lex. Die Entstehung neuer Denkrahmen im 16. Jahrhundert und die Wahrnehmung der französischen Religionskriege in Frankreich und Deutschland* (Goettingen: 2006). One of the first historians who developed this interpretation was Theodore K. Rabb in his famous work *The Struggle for Stability in Early Modern Europe* (New York: 1975).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. for all following basic facts and argumentation Weber W., *Prudentia gubernatoria. Studien zur Herrschaftslehre in der deutschen politischen Wissenschaft des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: 1992).

## 2. Authors, works, and the professionalization of politics

The range of materials found in court and scholars' libraries was already very diverse by 1590. The invention of printing and the development of the book market, and later humanism and the Reformation, caused an explosion of printed matter addressing various disciplines. However, political questions could not be answered by turning to a specific section in book lists or catalogues. They had instead to search among the fields of theology, philosophy, jurisprudence, and history. As a science in its own right and a separate sphere of practice, politics was only just beginning to attain a distinct identity.

The most important author driving this process of differentiation and increasing autonomy was Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), in his 'De principibus' or 'Il Principe', written in 1513 and first printed in 1531.<sup>4</sup> In a situation in which Italy was facing internal existential crises and external threats, politics was conceived for the first time as the science and art of successful decision-making and action by rulers – on an empirical foundation and under variable historical conditions. The aim was the establishment and development of a form of princely rule in Italy that might achieve order internally and that was capable of defending the state against external threats, as an interim solution until the re-establishment of stable republican conditions. So the previously common definition of the field of political thought and action, informed by the general norms of morality and Christianity, was abandoned, at least temporarily. It was not just the humanists – who took their lead from ancient ethics and Cicero in particular, and therefore practised politics as a subset of moral philosophy – who were alarmed by this. This step was particularly upsetting to those Christians, whose eager piety had intensified significantly as a result of Reformation and confessionalization, and for whom politics was of course understood in Christian terms.

Thus in 1557/59 Machiavelli's works were entered on the Index of the Church of Rome. And after the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre, which some attributed to the influence of Machiavellian theory, supporters of the Reformation also sharply rejected his writings.

As a result, the Machiavellian tradition entered the book collections of the power elites rather through refutations than through the works of the outlawed Florentine themselves. These were certainly known. Manuscripts were circu-

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<sup>4</sup> See Reinhard W., "Vom italienischen Humanismus bis zum Vorabend der Französischen Revolution", in *Geschichte der politischen Ideen. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt a.M.: 1996) 241–276; Baldini A.E. – Battista A.M., "Staatsräson, Tacitismus, Machiavellismus, Utopie", in Holzey H. *et al.* (eds), *Die Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts*, vol. I (Basel: 1998) 545–568; Lloyd H.A. *et al.* (eds), *European Political Thought 1450–1700* (New Haven, CT: 2007) 55–100.

lating at an early stage, and his works were reprinted in Italy despite the ban. Between 1553 and 1555, under the reign of Mary, the Lord Chancellor of England Stephen Gardiner (c. 1483–1555) composed a treatise largely copied from Machiavelli on the stabilization of the Catholic monarchy following the break with the papacy.<sup>5</sup> In Sweden, the “Principe” was translated in 1557 and read at least at the Court. A Latin edition appeared in Basel in 1560, albeit an expurgated one.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, it was critical responses to Machiavelli, which inevitably referred to his arguments and thus made people aware of them, that constituted the most important source of information. The most significant of these was the “Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner [...] contre Nicholas Machiavel Florentin” (1576; numerous further editions and translations) by the reformed jurist Innocent Gentillet (ca. 1540–1595).<sup>7</sup>

To these anti-Machiavellian writings must be added both the older and more recent theological writings of the Reformers and their supporters, as well as representatives of the Church of Rome, who discussed politics within this framework, and thus represented a normative Christian view of the subject. The number of writers and works which discussed politics as an aspect of law had also grown markedly since the reception of Roman law, the formulation of natural law in the famous school of Salamanca, and the laying of the foundations of public law, particularly in the Holy Roman Empire. Though the mirror for princes genre was particularly well represented in elite book collections, it was not only there that readers could find arguments that practical political insights and theories could be derived from history without offending against the norms of morality and Christianity. Such was also suggested by accounts such as the memoirs of the Burgundian-French diplomat and royal advisor Philippe de Commines (ca. 1447–1511), who had taken part in Charles VIII’s military expeditions to Italy between 1484 and 1498.<sup>8</sup>

This repertoire of writings and ideas underwent significant development around the 1580s and 1590s. The first edition of “Six livres de la République” by Jean Bodin (1529–1596) appeared as early as in 1576, and its further editions of 1583 and 1586 attracted attention across Europe. This work’s key concern was with ending the French wars of religion and preventing new

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<sup>5</sup> See Donaldson P.S., “Bishop Gardiner, Machiavellian”, *Historical Journal* 23 (1980) 1–16.

<sup>6</sup> Zwierlein C. – Mayer A. (eds), *Machiavellismus in Deutschland. Chiffre von Kontingenz, Herrschaft und Empirismus in der Neuzeit* (Munich: 2010) 1–178 (see the introduction, and contributions from Zwierlein, C.; Malandrino, C.; Bianchin, L.; Schito, R.; Scattola, M.; and Mulsow, M.).

<sup>7</sup> See Anglo S., *Machiavelli – The First Century: Studies in Enthusiasm, Hostility, and Irrelevance* (Oxford: 2005) 271–324.

<sup>8</sup> De Commines P., *Mémoires*, ed. J. Blanchard (Geneva: 2007), introduction to volume I.

conflicts of this kind. Representing the first scientific constitutional theory of early modern Europe, Bodin's *Republique* did not refrain from defining politics in normative terms, as is apparent in its view that the facilitation of true devotion to God and the establishment of law are the highest and truest goals of politics and the state. Nonetheless, it comes palpably close to modern political thought as founded by Machiavelli, for it defines the state in terms of power. It views sovereignty as the intrinsic and supreme quality of political power, and attempts to describe systematically all the key components and functions of state and power. It makes the manifestations of power and state dependent on their particular historical and empirical circumstances. It also puts forward a realistic view of human beings.<sup>9</sup>

Justus Lipsius (1547–1606), whose key work in this field was the *Politicorum sive civilis doctrina libri sex* (1589), walked even more unambiguously in Machiavelli's footsteps. Like Bodin, Lipsius was concerned with how to resolve civil wars and prevent them from occurring in future. But for Lipsius, the solution lay not, as with Bodin, in the development of state power structures and the law, but in increasing monarchical authority, utilizing the psychology of power as effectively as possible within the political process and militarism. He was thus from the outset closer to Machiavelli. Geared as he was towards practical political achievements, the former pupil of Jesuits and multiple convert was even prepared to refrain from upholding the usual moral, legal, and Christian norms in the political arena, to the extent that he explicitly declared certain types of political lie permissible. Lipsianism, more or less broadly accepted in all confessional camps, was to become one of the most significant schools of political thought in the period under consideration here.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, also in 1589, there appeared a treatise very close to the mirror for princes genres in the shape of Giovanni Botero's (1540–1617) *Della ragion di Stato*, which made covert use of Machiavelli's prescriptions for practical political success to bolster the papacy's offensive against heretics. Moreover, this text augmented the Florentine's approach. It developed the key concept of *raison d'état*, and brought the economy into the debate as the foundation of successful and stable political rule. And it declared growth a precondition for the preservation of power and the state in a system of increasing competition.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See Franklin J.H., *Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory* (Cambridge: 2009).

<sup>10</sup> See Tournoy G. (ed.), *Iustus Lipsius Europae lumen et columen: Proceedings of the International Colloquium, Leuven, 17 – 19 September 1997* (Leuven: 1999).

<sup>11</sup> See Baldini A.E. (ed.), *Botero e la 'Ragione di Stato'*. *Atti del Convegno 1990* (Florence: 1992).

Like Lipsius, Botero deployed historical and political statements by Tacitus to conceal his adoption of Machiavellian ideas. This approach was further developed, particularly in Italy and France, to the point where we may speak of Tacitism. The key authors, who made an impact across Europe, include Scipione Ammirato (1531–1601; *Discorsi [...] sopra Cornelio Tacito*, 1594) and Trajano Boccalini (1556–1613). Boccalini dressed up his texts (“Ragguagli di Parnaso”, 1612–1616; “Commentarii sopra Cornelio Tacito”, unpublished manuscripts) in literary and parodic garb, but their Machiavellian quality remained apparent. Arnold Clapmar (1574–1604), an Altdorf-based historian and political thinker, is also worthy of mention. In 1605, he published “De arcanis rerumpublicarum”, a synthesis that drew inspiration from the work of Lipsius, and was particularly successful in the German-speaking lands.<sup>12</sup>

Botero’s conception of *raison d’état*, which built in part on the preliminary work of Machiavelli’s contemporary Francesco Guicciardini (1483–1540), generated a specific school of political thought, which began to appear in elite book collections from around 1580. In his *L’Idea del libro de’ governi di Stato et di guerra* (1592f.), Girolamo Frachetta (1558–1620) brought Tacitus and the theory of *raison d’état* into close proximity. But at the same time he transformed *raison d’état* into a concept of elite political prudence, which he believed was already present in the work of Aristotle. In his *Considerazioni politiche e morali sopra cento oracoli d’illustri personaggi antichi* of 1621, Ludovico Zuccolo (1568–1630) postulated that the sole function of *raison d’état* was to guide the actions of those in power. It therefore had to be distinguished from genuine politics, whose goal was the common weal and, following Aristotle, was subject to ethics. *Raison d’état* was neither good nor bad, and as variable as the forms of power to which it related. There was therefore no reason to condemn it morally.

Aristotle’s works promised to provide a systematic scientific basis for all these contributions within the broad stream of Machiavelli’s approach. They seemed to generate links with Machiavelli not only through Aristotle’s theory of tyranny, but also to anticipate *raison d’état* through his concept of political prudence. Roman scholastics had already taken this as a starting point. And Protestant neo-Aristotelianism did so even more strikingly. It was informed by Melancthon’s insight that the Bible could offer nothing of relevance to politics, and that it was instead necessary to draw on the unadulterated Thomist Aristotle. But in Italy and France as well, the rediscovery, editing, and translation of the two Aristotelian political tracts and commentaries on them had already led to further developments in this vein. ‘*Opera systematica vel compendiosa*’ were now published in rapid succession and used as

<sup>12</sup> See Baldini A.E. – Battista A.M., *Staatsräson*.

the foundation for academic instruction. The *Doctrina politica* (1606) and *De republica* (1615; uncompleted) by the Helmstedt-based political scientist and doctor of medicine Henning Arnisaeus (ca. 1575–1636) and the *Systema disciplinae politicae* (1607) by reformed philosopher and theologian Bartholomäus Keckermann (1573–1609), proved ground-breaking. Keckermann took inspiration from the *Politica* (1603) by the reformed theologian and jurist Johannes Althusius (ca. 1563–1638), which was based on Aristotle but also generated new ideas.<sup>13</sup>

Also Aristotelian, but of the Thomist-scholastic variety, were the *Politico-rum libri decem* (1620 and 1628) by the Jesuit Adam Contzen (1577–1635), which provided ‘the quintessence’ of ‘what was taught from a strictly Catholic point of view in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century’.<sup>14</sup> Their premise, that politics and the state represented functional spheres subordinate to the Church (*‘res publica est in ecclesia’*), was shared almost without exception by the *‘opera politica christiana’* group. In contrast to Melancthon and the main stream of Italian, Spanish, and French Aristotelianism, this group worked on the assumption that the Bible or the writings produced by the Church did in fact offer a comprehensive, binding concept of politics and the state. Apart from Contzen’s voluminous tome, its key works were the *Politices christianae libri septem* (1596; eight editions by 1652) by the reformed theologian, jurist, and pastor Lambert Danaeu (1530–1595) and the *Biblische Policey* (1653; finally in 1701) by Lutheran jurist and high official Theodor (Dietrich) Reinking(k) (1590–1664). This group’s objectives and programme of action were in essence twofold. The first key aim was to stabilize a given confessional-political base defensively against its opponents’ attacks. Second, the arguments put forward by this group reveal an intention not only to ensure the long-term survival of its own solutions, but to ensure their precedence over alternatives. This impulse was least developed in the Lutheran sphere. Here, as a result, there developed an additional Christian-patriarchal theory of practical government (*‘Regimentslehre’*). This theory had an imperial focus and was therefore heavily imbued with notions of imperial law, at least in its German heartlands, and incorporated only a small number of elements concerned with techniques of power and *raison d’état*.

Neither the powerful nor the up-and-coming states involved directly in European power struggles could afford such quietist-conservative ideas and

<sup>13</sup> Dreitzel H., “Der Aristotelismus in der Politischen Philosophie Deutschlands im 17. Jahrhundert”, in Kessler E. et al. (eds), *Aristotelismus und Renaissance: in memoriam Charles B. Schmitt* (Wiesbaden: 1988) 163–192.

<sup>14</sup> Quotation from Stolleis M., *Geschichte des Öffentlichen Rechts* (Munich: 1988) i.93; see also Dreitzel H., “Politische Philosophie”, in Holzey H. et al. (eds), *Die Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Basel: 2001) iv.607–747, especially 673–726.

pursuits. As a result, the Dutch, French, English, and Spanish power élites tended to adopt and use the classics of Machiavelli-inspired modern politics and those works that developed it further. That the economy was increasingly important is evident in such works as the *Institutionum Politicarum libri duo* (1656; at least four editions by 1702) by the Leiden-based historian Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn (1612–1663).<sup>15</sup> It was of course impossible here to refer, at least openly, to Botero, the dedicated counter-reformer.

In line with this state of affairs, the main focus of interest increasingly shifted away from basic systematic and definitional problems to practical guides to decision-making and action for both the prince and his leading assistants. As a result, the political debate expanded to cover new issues, losing its normative quality as it concentrated more and more on specific empirical realities. This debate produced accounts of the profession of politician in general, and its special forms of the counsellor, minister, and diplomat, as well as general and specific explanations of the ‘true’ interest of states or particular states. The first group included such works as Frederic van Marselaer’s *Legatus* (1618) and Philippe de Béthune’s *Le Conseiller d’Estat* (1633, reprinted several times). Also worthy of mention are Henri de Rohan’s treatise *De l’intérêt des princes et des États de la chrétienté* (1643), and Pieter de la Court’s *Interest van Holland* (1662). In addition, countless specialized essays on all spheres of activity and problems of power and the state were incorporated into book collections, above all those on state finances, combating rebellion, and on war. Even after the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648), their common goal remained to provide rulers and the state with an ever-greater array of practical tools. In contrast, especially in his magnum opus *Leviathan* (1651), Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) aimed to provide politics with a new, systematic foundation in view of the new, fundamental challenges represented by the English civil war, which culminated in the king’s execution. The European reception of Hobbes’s system, however, occurred largely after 1660, and lies beyond our present concerns.

The introduction of ‘*politica*’ provided an opportunity to establish professional training for politicians.<sup>16</sup> Many sons of noble birth or from the higher echelons of the bourgeoisie took advantage of this situation. Many of them wrote relevant dissertations, which are still to be found in libraries in enormous numbers. Those graduates in ‘*politica*’ who went on to attain key positions in the cities and territories began to form a Europe-wide elite which shared basic ideas about politics and the discipline of political knowledge. They could not,

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<sup>15</sup> On Boxhorn and his work, see also the contribution of Jaap Nieuwstraten in this volume.

<sup>16</sup> Weber W.E.J., “Die Erfindung des Politikers. Bemerkungen zu einem gescheiterten Professionalisierungskonzept der deutschen Politikwissenschaft des ausgehenden 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts”, in Schorn-Schütte L. (ed.), *Aspekte der politischen Kommunikation im Europa des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: 2004) 347–370.

however, assert themselves against the jurists, as an already established elite that played a significant role even among the spiritual authorities. The majority of students of politics went on to complete a law degree, and began to deal with politics from the perspective of public law or constitutional law. But professionalism contradicted the aristocratic principle of acquiring general competencies in all class-appropriate fields, while not subjecting oneself to a complex special training on the bourgeois model. The study of professional politics would also have gone against the noble claim to be of the ruling class by definition, in other words by birth.

There was also a growing tension between academic-theoretical and practical political education. After 1660, this ultimately caused the real training in politics to migrate to the courts. The professionalization of politics – the academic production of the politician as an expert on all matters relating to power and public order, with whose help political and historical development might be guided into peaceful, crisis-free channels – thus remained incomplete.

What remained was the introduction of *politica* as a specific section in the libraries of scholarly nobles or rulers. The key work here, which successfully propagated the arrangement and classification of the *politica* across Europe, was the *Bibliographia politica* produced by Gabriel Naudé (1600–1653), librarian of Roman Cardinals and chief ministers of France Richelieu (1585–1642) and Jules Mazarin (1602–1661), first published in 1633.<sup>17</sup> Naudé developed the ‘*politica*’ on the Aristotelian model, as distinct from ethics and the economy. He identifies three groups of works or authors: first the ‘*opera classica*’ of universal political theory from antiquity to the present, including Bodin, Lipsius, and Keckermann; secondly, works of political utopia, insofar as they offer guides to current political practice; thirdly, works concerned with practical politics. It is this last class that is tackled in greatest depth. These deal first with the extraordinary actions which the ruler may have to take to preserve a polity (‘*negotia extraordinaria*’), taking special account of Machiavelli and his successors. Then writings on ‘*administratio rei publicae*’ in normal times (‘*tempora ordinaria*’) are listed, followed by those on war and peace, ceremony, population policy and taxation. Next come essays on the prince, on his leading helpers, and finally on general tools of political rule such as the psychology of power and the ‘*cognitio materiae rei publicae*’, as well as the genealogy of great families. The crucial importance of this third class of publication, which made Naudé’s bibliography something of a handbook of power, is evident in the edition of 1712. It is

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<sup>17</sup> See Chatelain J.-M. (ed.), *L’idée des bibliothèques à l’âge classique* (Paris: 2009); Weber W., *Prudentia gubernatoria* 52–56, 68.

seamlessly bound with Naudé's subsequent work on the 'Arcana status'. It is also remarkable that Latin, the lingua franca accessible only to the elites, was nevertheless used rather than the increasingly important vernaculars. Finally, the *Disputatio de natura ac optimis autoribus civilis prudentiae* by the Lutheran neo-Aristotelian and Helmstedt-based professor Hermann Conring (1606–1681), which made an impact far beyond the German-speaking lands, was also published in Latin; Conring built directly on the work of Naudé in this text.

### 3. Approaches and tools deployed to secure power and order

#### 3.1 Approaches

The first main problem which power elites observed with regard to securing order and their own position was subjects' increasing insubordination. Participants in political and intellectual debate therefore made a number of attempts to establish new loyalty. One significant approach entailed the renewal and strengthening of the maxim that true Christianity included obedience to the worldly authority.<sup>18</sup> Political obedience was identified as a key prerequisite for a favourable outcome in the hereafter. This approach, however, could never go very far because it led directly into existential questions regarding the nature of true Christianity or the true confession. The various religious elites did, however, successfully monopolize the provision of answers to such questions.

Declaring obedience to rulers a legal obligation, or propagating this enduring legal obligation anew, seemed a more promising approach. So political authors eagerly set about presenting the obedience of subjects as an unchanging principle provided for on every level of the law, from positive law through natural law to divine law. In addition, they tried to enhance the binding power of this principle by endowing it with more concrete and specific forms that addressed the conflicts of the day. And not least they attempted to cultivate or reintroduce rituals and ceremonies that expressed recognition of this principle. These naturally included oaths and public homage, above all on the occasion of a new ruler's accession to the throne.<sup>19</sup> The idea of politics and

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<sup>18</sup> A key source was Paul's letter to the Romans. See also Weber-Möckl A., "Das Recht des Königs, der über euch herrschen soll": Studien zu 1 Sam 8,11 ff. in der Literatur der frühen Neuzeit (Berlin: 1986).

<sup>19</sup> See Bertelli S., *The King's Body: Sacred Rituals of Power in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (University Park, PA: 2001) and Brodi P. (ed.), *Glaube und Eid. Treueformeln*,

the state as a legal complex, an idea whose roots lay in the Middle Ages, also offered opportunities to systematize and rationalize. With the help of this idea, the components, structure, and functioning of the political system could be understood more precisely. Furthermore, via Bodin, the idea of a clear hierarchy of competences and responsibilities and the idea of the law as the formalized orders of the ruler, their binding power strengthened through formalization, began to prevail. The systematic examination of the state and the political process facilitated their optimization and generated new arguments that could be used to increase obedience.

Above all, legal systematization reinforced the increasing distance between rulers and subjects, the process advanced by Machiavelli. The Aristotelian conception of the *'cives'*, who was obedient but also participated in political rule, did not fit within this perspective. It had therefore to be pushed into the background or re-interpreted. So in Bodin's work, the citizen appears as entirely in the possession of the state, and as a result simple citizens can easily be turned into subjects, albeit with variable rights and status.<sup>20</sup> The Christian notion of equality before God was of course also politically awkward. As a result, many schools of thought developed the traditional idea that rulers enjoyed special rights before God. However, efforts to make concrete use of this idea were hampered by the definitional claims of religious representatives, and rulers' lack of divinity, evident in some cases in un-Christian lifestyles that appeared anything but divinely ordained, along with their personal misfortunes. Emphasizing the divine favour bestowed on a given dynasty could compensate for this only partially.

So it seemed better to separate rulers and subjects even more profoundly, and to systematize how rulers viewed subjects and vice versa, with a view to achieving and reinforcing obedience. This gave rise, on the one hand, to the institutionalization and representative embellishment of corresponding hierarchical structures and procedures. For the first time, power and the state consistently appeared as systematically constructed hierarchies, tangible in constantly intensifying forms of representation. On the other hand, the relationship between the ruler or head of state and the subjects was reworked in light of the concepts of *'majestas'* and *'auctoritas'*, as expressed in both political-legal and practical-ceremonial forms. Lipsius in particular developed a comprehensive complex of political, power-centred psychology. It was above all this psychology of power that demanded a greater focus on anthropology

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*Glaubensbekenntnisse und Sozialdisziplinierung zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit* (Munich: 1993).

<sup>20</sup> Neschke-Hentschke A., "Frankreich im Zeitalter der Religionskriege: Jean Bodin", in Horn C. *et al.* (eds), *Politischer Aristotelismus: die Rezeption der aristotelischen 'Politik' von der Antike bis zum 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: 2008) 192–217.

and society. The result was an almost total convergence on the pessimistic and negative view of the human being, and an assessment of the common people in the tradition of Machiavelli as an unpredictable, rebellious mass ('*vulgus*') buffeted this way and that by rapidly shifting emotions. The real challenge was to create and maintain the ruler's authority in spite of such threats.

Both as a result of these developments and in continuation of older notions, however, important schools of thought returned to the idea that rulers must provide benefits for the people, or that the state ought to pursue such objectives. There was a broad spectrum of solutions: from the enforcement of the public peace, security, and order as a minimum objective, through ensuring happiness in this world through the provision of welfare, or upholding freedoms in the teleological Aristotelian sense, to the Christian state in which the worldly '*finis internus*' tends to coincide with the '*finis externus*' geared towards the hereafter.

It was not least these goals and expectations of the provision of benefits that refocused attention on the problem of power elites' qualifications. This was the second difficulty seen as responsible for the contemporary crisis.<sup>21</sup> It had long been commonplace to invoke the need for certain virtues. What was new was the identification of relevant practical abilities or the achievement of certain quasi-professional characteristics and capacities, which were to be acquired in part through the study of politics. The increasing distinction between functionally significant types of knowledge and other less significant kinds was important. The shift of focus away from normative knowledge to practical knowledge, and a sharper distinction between public knowledge and the secret knowledge of the ruler ('*arcana imperii*') are also worthy of mention here. But the differentiation of prudence from the overarching complex of wisdom was also significant, followed by the reworking of prudence as political prudence and, more or less, as politics itself.

Third, the power elites perceived the crisis as a product of power dynamics and competition for power. The concept of the ruler's or state's interest, mentioned above, was developed further. A formal theory of power emerged for the first time. Its key maxim was the insight that '*potentia est certissima auctoritas ratio*'. The decisive feature of the state was now quite simply power. In terms originally used by Cicero, power was defined as '*facultas ad sua conservanda, aliena obtinenda, idonearum rerum*', in other words the ability to deploy appropriate means to retain one's own possessions and acquire those of others. Such means were identified as organizational and political-strategic competence, the availability and targeted use of finances and military resources, treaties to ensure security from external threats, and finally the good favour

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Weber W., *Prudentia gubernatoria* 173–194.

of fate.<sup>22</sup> Reflection on all these aspects from the perspective of public order transformed the concept of political power into that of state authority. At a time of crisis in which the fervour of the *'vulgus'* and the ambitions of internal and external rivals had destroyed the public order and constantly threatened to destroy again that which had been laboriously preserved, political domination and power appeared more than useful. As the institutionalized form of state authority, they seemed indispensable.

So it was down to the ruler and other authorities to consider constantly how their state power could be consolidated and expanded, and to act accordingly: *'hinc ad Principem [...] pertinet, de stabilienda firmandaque & augenda potentia semper cogitare idque agere, ut nulla dies sit, qua non adjiciatur virium Reipublicae'*.<sup>23</sup> In an environment of ever more intense competition, securing power and the state was no longer possible unless the powers of the state grew accordingly.

### 3.2. Tools

As noted above, a substantial portion of political theory continued to adopt the perspective of the actor, so central to the mirror-for-princes tradition and thus also to Machiavelli. The point of departure continued to be the ruler. Improvement of the personal qualifications, motivation, and practices of the sovereign was therefore considered an important means of securing power. The prescriptions and attributes that we encounter initially seem familiar. The prince ought to bring along with him a specific catalogue of virtues or, now, capabilities. These qualities were to be emphasized to him as clearly as possible, or inculcated in him through tailored education and advice.<sup>24</sup> The key aspects were enforcing self-discipline and emotional control; imparting a genuinely political awareness and assessment of all phenomena; education in political astuteness and practice in astute princely conduct; and ultimately the inculcation of a resilient sense of motivation, of responsibility, commitment, and a capacity to cope with suffering if necessary.

In the case of hereditary monarchies, one of the most important means of increasing motivation was the appeal to dynastic responsibility and loyalty: it was not just a matter of one's own fate and personal reputation, but that of the entire dynasty, stretching far back into the past and extending into the future. Politically astute conduct consisted crucially in the art of concealing

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<sup>22</sup> Weber W., *Prudentia gubernatoria* 331–335.

<sup>23</sup> Contzen, *Politicorum Libri* 623.

<sup>24</sup> See Weber W., *Prudentia gubernatoria* 194–198.

one's own true emotions and interests and adapting oneself to the expectations of one's addressees, so that their feelings and needs might be recognized and used to further one's own ends. Chiefly through Lipsianism, the range of dissimulation permissible in this context was expanded to include half-truths and lies.<sup>25</sup> By calculating the probable perceptions of others and likely chains of events, reactions, and contemporary needs, it was possible to formulate appropriate behavioural strategies. With respect to a country's leading figures, and thus the most dangerous internal rivals, it was particularly important to factor in their view of status and need to be honoured. This made it all the more crucial for the sovereign to find ways to assert his own superior authority and majesty. One important way was to acquire the authority to define honours himself, and to allocate these in an appropriately prudential manner.

Something that concerned both leading and insignificant subjects equally, and which therefore required constant attention, was law and justice. Political theory around 1600 was however a far cry from the older, undifferentiated, normative appeal to law and justice. Instead, the historically variable ideas of the law held by various groups of subjects began to be taken into account, and rulers were advised to manipulate them in such a way as to achieve their political goals. So publicly punishing wrongdoers, whether noble or otherwise, was advisable only in exceptional cases, when one wished to make a political example. In order to cultivate an image of peacefulness and leniency, the ruler should grant pardons in person, in as public a way as possible. In the case of cruel punishments, on the other hand, he should remain in the background. It might be politically useful or even necessary to overlook certain crimes or misdemeanours rather than systematically punish them.

Access to the ruler and his contact with his subjects also required politically astute regulation. It was as important to avoid too much ease of access, as it was to avoid excessive distance. The same thing applied to the language, style of speech, posture, gestures, and clothing of the ruler. '*Gravitas*' had to be combined with tactical familiarity. It was especially important to avoid anything that might make the ruler seem ridiculous. But long-lasting physical infirmities and periods of illness or frailty were also politically risky and must be glossed over as effectively as possible. This discussion included even the ruler's voice, which could be neither too high nor too low. An earnest, solemn, manly pitch was preferable. It went without saying that serious damage could be done to one's reputation by drunkenness, whoring, etc., should the always talkative servants get wind of it or should it perhaps even be immediately apparent to one's subjects. But the authors of the new writings no longer held

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<sup>25</sup> See Oestreich G., *Antiker Geist und moderner Staat bei Justus Lipsius (1547–1606)* (Goettingen: 1989) 143–147.

to the older idea that exemplary, blameless conduct automatically leads to equally blameless conduct on the part of subjects. The traditional, naive doctrine of exemplary behaviour had been shelved.

The second most important – and eventually most important – means of securing power was the sovereign's use of a loyal, motivated, qualified and capable secondary elite, active within the framework of relevant offices and bodies. Here again, the debates carried on between 1580/90 and 1660 produced an especially large number of relevant ideas; the status and functions of these indispensable components of the political system were thought through in detail for the first time. Political thinkers engaged in fundamental reflection on the development of relevant offices and bodies, in other words the operational units of the state. A second key focus was the division of roles and how to ensure that these roles were performed as effectively as possible by the office-holders and members of the various bodies. They brought out more clearly than before that the growing complexity of power required a variety of bodies and offices that must be placed on a permanent footing. Alongside the supreme or state council, there had to be also at least a war council, often linked with the financial council or treasury, a Church council, and a judicial council or supreme court. Among the most important bodies were the authorities for building, the teaching and censoring authority, and the various offices of the highest, middle, and lowest level of the administration. The development of a state institutional structure covering everything imaginable, and at least the beginnings of a discussion of the division of authority, working methods, coordination, financing, and so on, are often impressive. But they cannot disguise the fact that the perspective of the actor, rather than the institution, continued to predominate; in other words the roles of the various council members and functionaries stood centre stage.

The functionaries positioned closest to the ruler, in other words the advisors and (high-level) ministers, received particularly in-depth treatment.<sup>26</sup> These roles were now largely confined to laymen; with a few exceptions, clerics were debarred, as the need was for loyalty exclusively to the sovereign and state, and genuine political qualifications. The main expectation of such men now was that they should provide good advice that would help stabilize the power system. Their qualifications were derived from this expectation. As with the ruler, these qualifications now developed from a general ideal of virtue and wisdom into a sophisticated array of skills needed to oil the wheels of the state and power system. Basic qualifications such as enthusiasm for work, an ability to cope with stress, as well as such things as discretion and loyalty, were among the obvious requirements. It was also crucial to be quick on the

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<sup>26</sup> Weber W., *Prudentia gubernatoria* 199–223.

uptake, have the ability to solve problems, a sense of reality, the capacity for strategic thinking, be decisive, and so on.

The high official had to place his abilities unconditionally in the service of the sovereign and, if necessary, critically evaluate the sovereign's ideas in order to achieve the objectively best solutions with respect to power and the state. We also see some evidence of the aspiration to promote this best solution even in opposition to the ruler in extreme cases, should he fail to uphold the true interests of the state or *raison d'état*. This trend, which pointed the way to the future, was based on the one hand on patriotism, professional political competence, and a sense of the will of the majority, and on the other on the emergence of weak, unqualified, or even state-endangering rulers.<sup>27</sup>

Increasing attention was paid how to organize the help and advice of the '*consilarii*' and '*ministri*' in practical terms. A distinction was made between the behavioural requirements of these functionaries and the sovereign before, during, and after advisory sessions, in other words the meetings of the various councils. The need for '*libertas consiliandi*' was taken very seriously: only votes undertaken exclusively with reference to the matter at hand could serve the true interests of power and the state. It was therefore vital that the councils could develop and present their advice independently, free of sanction, and in the absence of all corruption. In order to scrutinize and ensure these conditions, the key imperative was to factor in officials' ineradicable ambitions to make money and enhance their status or reputation. They must first of all be paid sufficiently high wages on a regular basis, and advisors' and ministers' surviving dependents must be reliably provided for. Second, there must be a status hierarchy of offices and salaries and promotion on merit. Finally, the allocation of honours and favours must be carefully calculated. Self-evidently, only persons of good reputation and standing should be appointed as officials, in order to avoid damaging the sovereign's reputation.

All these considerations and suggestions applied in the same way to other officials as well. Recruitment had to be on the basis of performance. The sale of offices was thus uniformly rejected. The appointment of individuals related to one another or involved in relationships of patronage or clientage was also sharply rejected. Such relationships interfered with staff members' exclusive concern with the sovereign and thus his claim to their absolute loyalty.

For most authors, the ineradicable and universal susceptibility to corruption, especially of those staff close to the royal coffers, also required the dual occupation of particularly sensitive posts and the introduction of com-

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<sup>27</sup> See Weber W., "Erfindung des Politikers" 364–367.

plex inspection procedures. The keeping of comprehensive written records and the practice of countersigning were particularly important requirements. Whether terms of office ought to be limited or unlimited was another issue discussed in depth. Long or even unlimited terms of office would provide an opportunity to gain experience and work more effectively as a result; this was countered by identifying the problems inherent to the quiet accumulation of power at the expense of the sovereign, up to and including the indispensability of officials and susceptibility to corruption, which was thought to increase over time. Finally, considerable attention was paid to the question of installing and utilizing a secret or state security service, in other words the appointment and deployment of ‘*secreti exploratores*’.<sup>28</sup>

Scouts were particularly vital in the armed forces, a complex that was also discussed in depth. *Arma et milites* were among the most indispensable of *vires vel res potentiae*. All those schools of thought rooted in the Aristotelian view of politics, or for whom this perspective was the key point of reference, left military matters out of their accounts, as lying outside the field of political theory. But it was a key issue for those currents inspired by Machiavelli and Lipsius.

Here, as we might expect, internal and external wars come together. For as contemporary experience showed, rebels in one’s own country always find external supporters and foreign aggressors can always count on support within the country they are attacking. Most authors were convinced that a standing army, ready to be deployed at all times, was vital in both cases. The members of this army had to be of the right physical and mental disposition. This did not mean, as the older literature would have it, recruiting the wildest and strongest young men. At least since Lipsius, the emphasis was instead on military discipline – to be achieved on the ancient Roman model through exercises and other forms of training – possessed by resilient men from one’s own country of roughly average physical size and strength.<sup>29</sup> As with the civilian staff, the military hierarchy, which had now been thought out in equally great detail, entailed specific roles and hence expectations of how these roles were to be carried out. Many authors integrated formal instruction for officers into their observations or at least referred to relevant specialist literature. The idea of establishing a standing army to secure power and the state tallied with the progressive enforcement of the state monopoly on violence, in other words the gradual disarming of subjects and the prohibition on the use of violence. In this way the duel also became problematic, particularly because

<sup>28</sup> See for instance Keckermann B., *Systema disciplinae politicae* (Hanau: 1608) 167–170.

<sup>29</sup> See Lipsius J., *De militia Romana libri quinque* (Antwerp: 1595–6); Reinhard W., “Humanismus und Militarismus. Antikerezeption und Kriegshandwerk in der oranischen Heeresreform”, in Reinhard (ed.), *Ausgewählte Abhandlungen* (Berlin: 1997) 179–192.

it was by no means merely a battle between two opponents; instead, it often took the form of a collective conflict between groups of varying size. Only a few authors still endorsed proposals to establish a (supplementary) militia system, which was after all originally advocated by Machiavelli himself. On the other hand, because fortune in war remained an uncertain business even with the best political-military organization and strategy, all authors rejected the waging of offensive wars geared towards the acquisition of power through force of arms and restricted themselves in principle to advocating defensive wars. This assessment underlines the character of the era: the key aim was to secure power and the state, even if, secondarily, the intensifying rivalry between different powers seemed to suggest that one ought to make the most of any opportunity to expand, including through military means if ultimately necessary.

It therefore seemed all the more important to secure power and the state through peaceful means, in other words diplomacy. Here again, an extremely broad debate unfolded.<sup>30</sup> This debate too was carried on chiefly from the perspective of the actors, in other words it dealt with the qualifications and functional requirements of diplomats, with constant reference to the relevant specialist literature. The right of legation is usually considered first, in other words the question of who has the right to send diplomats in the first place and how this dispatch is to be organized legally and formally. This discussion contributed notably to resolving the question of which ruler may be considered sovereign. Next, as usual, the focus shifted to the general and specific abilities of diplomatic staff. The authors in the field already made a distinction between permanent representatives and temporary legates as well as between various ranks. Once the complex of rank and office had become crucially important as contacts with other states developed, most authors tended to permit only members of the nobility as diplomats, at least for the highest-level posts. Diplomats were also often distinguished by cosmopolitanism, communicative skills, and conversational ability, extending from the mastery of necessary foreign languages to an appropriate style of speech and the possession of knowledge appropriate to a given conversation. The need also for sobriety or the ability to hold one's drink, discipline, alertness, and so on, sometimes made it very difficult to find candidates among the nobility. This is one reason why it was vital to send additional diplomatic personnel along with the legate and ambassador and demand written reports. The fact of the nobility's international interconnections meanwhile was viewed with ambivalence. On the one hand, this internationalism provided the sovereign

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<sup>30</sup> See Weber W., *Prudentia gubernatoria* 235–238, and Kugeler, Heidrun, *Le parfait ambassadeur. The Theory and practice of Diplomacy in the Century following the Peace of Westphalia* (D. phil. Oxford 2006).

with ample opportunity to find points of contact and interlocutors within a given field – who seemed useful in advancing one’s own interests – in other states. On the other hand, these interconnections also meant conflicts of loyalty, which it was crucial to overcome, particularly if one wished to stabilize power and the state in an age of crisis.

In general terms as well, realigning established ties of kinship and patronage or clientage could help secure power and the state as our thinkers and actors intended. In both France and the Netherlands, it was after all via these relations that the various parties developed, a process that ultimately resulted in armed conflict. Contemporary authors could however not yet imagine abolishing these structures in their entirety. At most, then, the aim could only be to saturate the entire country with the sovereign’s patronage and clientage. Yet a strategy such as this would, it was thought, also encounter insurmountable obstacles, and no author was prepared to explicitly recommend it.<sup>31</sup>

This brings us to the sphere of material and procedural means of securing power. We have already mentioned the oath and the law as universal instruments of obligation. The court was regarded as another key element and was widely discussed. The demand for the foundation of an explicit capital was often linked with the establishment of the court as a permanent institution in a fixed geographical location. It was thought best for the capital and court to be located in the middle of the country. They should be given impressive architectural form and fit easily into transport networks in order to ensure the rapid communication of such crucial political importance and easy transportation.

Within the court, the two spheres of the power centre and royal household were to be kept strictly separate. The household must exercise no influence on the political elite. The court must include, on the one hand, key political staff, and on the other individuals who help enhance the ruler’s reputation. Cultural activities intended to enhance reputation and relieve the psychological burdens of power must not, however, be mixed with the business of government. In case of financial difficulties, the maintenance of power must take priority. Sometimes court life might also serve to test out the conduct and thus aptitude of individuals designated for key posts within the power system. Overall, however, it was a perspective critical of the court that dominated, presumably in large part because those authors and actors in the ruler’s service inevitably saw the courtiers as competitors when it came to the allocation of state revenues.<sup>32</sup>

Political reflection concerned itself with this aspect of state finances ever more thoroughly and persistently. The crucial importance of the financial and

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<sup>31</sup> A key tract on this topic was Boecler J.H., *Clients* (Strasbourg: 1659).

<sup>32</sup> See Weber W., *Prudentia gubernatoria* 253–256.

economic dimension had already penetrated deep into our authors' awareness, thanks not least to Botero's contribution, anchored in the Italian experience of rapid development, and to experiences in the other European growth region of the era, the Netherlands, highlighted by Boxhorn, among others. Rather than a topos secondary to the pursuit of divine favour as a means of securing power, '*pecunia nervus rerum*' became ever more a subject of discussion. '*Potentiae rei publicae instrumenta sunt: opes, arma, consilia, foedera & felicitas*'. Or even more clearly: '*Opes firmant potentiam. Sunt nervus imperii*'. A state's strength was seen as crucially determined by its economic or financial power.<sup>33</sup> Without sufficient funds, it was impossible to procure a sufficient number of soldiers and weapons, or employ advisors and officials, to secure allies or make it through periods of crisis. There was therefore a need to discuss the procurement and administration as well as the spending of the necessary funds.

Our authors were largely as one in regarding the power system's traditional sources of funding – the royal demesne and the regalian rights – as insufficient. Selling off other royal rights on a temporary or permanent basis could bring in only meagre funds. The potential revenue from indirect taxes, in other words excise in its various forms, was also seen as limited. But most authors were still notably reluctant to draw the inevitable conclusion that regular, permanent taxes were necessary. After all, from medieval times, the power elites had seen that tax rises and the introduction of new taxes regularly lead to indignation, protests, and even rebellion on the part of the paying subjects. Our authors therefore proposed that taxes be levied in a politically and tactically prudent way, and in the mildest form possible.

This meant making use of good opportunities such as natural disasters to raise taxes or introduce new ones and giving the new taxes immediately plausible, or in any case innocuous, names. It also seemed advisable to take the tactical approach of allowing some time to elapse between the announcement and actual introduction of the tax. When the time came, however, the authorities had to act with haste and vigour. It might be useful to involve trustworthy and popular subjects in the collection process. Overall, however, our authors preferred collection by officials, rejecting the tax leasing common at the time, particularly in France. Only the most loyal, discreet, and often personally frugal officials, and in any case only those not entangled in problematical webs of relations, should be entrusted with administration of revenue. Bookkeeping and custodianship of funds must be kept separate. Both must be subject to strict checks on a regular basis by means of unannounced inspections. Dis-

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<sup>33</sup> See Weber W., *Prudentia gubernatoria* 256–269; Stolleis M., *Pecunia nervus rerum. Zur Staatsfinanzierung der frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: 1983).

tribution of funds must be monitored with regard to their necessity, objective desirability, and recipients. State finance ought to be treated in principle as *arcanum imperii*. But it occasionally made sense to reveal publicly the heavy financial burden shouldered by the sovereign, how carefully he managed the state finances, and how hard he tried to protect his subjects or ensure that the needy among them received their fare share. Finally, our authors were striking in their insistence on harsh, exemplary punishments for corruption and refusal to pay taxes and confirmation of the individual tax rate and correct administration of tax through a personal oath.

To assess correctly how much tax the people were able to pay required obtaining and evaluating the relevant information. Numerous authors therefore called for the introduction of a kind of census on the ancient Roman model, whether real or merely supposed.<sup>34</sup> But it was not just data on people's income and assets that needed to be collected, but also on their way of life. This provided a good indication of the actual funds available to a given individual. In this way, the intended census, to be repeated regularly, might regularly double up as a means of moral censorship, one that also helped monitor indulgence in luxuries. None of our authors, however, was really inclined to saddle the power system and thus himself as well with a powerful censor. So reflections on how censorship might be put into practice were limited largely to the notion of a tax census. Our authors were keen to establish a set of national statistics and were already beginning to envisage a central statistical authority.

Public discipline (*'disciplina publica'*) was thus indispensable to the stability of the state and to achieving and maintaining a high rate of economic growth and the concomitant tax revenues. Achieving this discipline was viewed first and foremost as a task for the church. The church ought to carry out its procedures of discipline, control, and sanction on behalf of the state and to the benefit of power and the state, which meant a supervisory role and involvement in decision-making on the part of the ruler. But education and training were also significant. People's passions, fears, and dreams must be domesticated in order to produce peaceful, predictable, productive subjects. Trouble-making superstition, rapturous enthusiasm, and obsession with novelty must be combated. The church should instead inculcate modest expectations, contentment, enthusiasm for one's work and humble obedience. Its ability to hold out the prospect of punishment in the beyond for this-worldly lapses and derelictions of duty seemed especially important here.

The demand that the ruler should support all educational endeavours directed *ad usum reipublicae* marks the first beginnings of the nationalization of the education system. This demand could already refer to the development of

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<sup>34</sup> This was the case especially in the tradition of Lipsius.

the economically important subjects ('*realia*') in schools. But it was directed mainly at the universities. Specifically, it referred to those academic disciplines important to the education of officials, in other words law and political science together with associated subjects. Most authors were aware that these disciplines contributed directly to the cultivation of loyalty among young aristocratic students and their political socialization. But the next step, the introduction of a kind of civic political education for all, remained beyond their conceptual horizon.

From a concern with improving the quality of the population and efforts to this end, most authors then turned to the issue of quantity. Adopting an almost modern, system-based perspective, they attempted to develop ways of stimulating population growth. Among the most widely discussed prescriptions was the use of financial means and public praise to promote marriage, cohabitation, and child-rearing among decent and productive couples. The fields of action considered here were above all agriculture, where additional measures were taken to aid peasants by creating new farmsteads, tax relief for those developing new land and so on, and the world of the artisan. Various other means were deployed to make country life more attractive, in order to discourage people from leaving and promote desired immigration. In this context, our authors mention successful efforts to combat criminality and other measures to bring about public peace and order, and, for the cities, the construction of parks, establishment of theatres, and arranging of games and festivals.<sup>35</sup>

Following this excursus into the foundations of power and the state, most authors turned to the question of how to deal successfully with the specific challenges of power and the state. One of the first issues considered related to changes of ruler. For wherever a political system's identity and ability to function is concentrated on the person of the ruler, the death of the ruler is tantamount to a system crisis, as our authors clearly recognised.<sup>36</sup>

Naturally, one of the best ways of preventing this is to ensure that a suitably qualified, capable, and motivated heir to the throne is available. So the education of princes is of crucial importance. But even the most able heir will cause problems if there are doubts as to his legitimacy. So legal and religious constructions such as primogeniture, that ultimately leave decisions on succession to God, were indispensable. In addition, the future ruler was to be acknowledged by his predecessor, usually his father, while he was still alive. The remaining members of the dynasty, members of the secondary power elite, and other leading figures must also express their public approval. Win-

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<sup>35</sup> See especially Keckermann B., *Systema* 170–394.

<sup>36</sup> Weber W., *Prudentia gubernatoria* 314–320.

ning them over involved at least provisional confirmation of their positions, privileges, and rights.

Much the same applied to the remaining subjects, to whom the new sovereign was to be introduced, and for whom he was rendered acceptable, by riding through the country, granting pardons upon the assumption of power, or through gestures of generosity. As a rule the accession of a new ruler must also be handled gingerly. The replacement of advisors and ministers could occur only gradually, as could the personnel changes sometimes necessary in the fields of law-making, administration of justice, and tax policy. In any case, should the new ruler's abilities seem limited by physical or mental infirmities, the advisors and ministers had to play an expanded role in steering the ship of state. However, visible or even demonstrative changes upon the new ruler's assumption of power were required if the preceding monarch's reign had been beset by misfortune or problems or had simply gone badly, or if he had made himself hated. Then the key thing was to emphasise the new start, which included making much of the fact that the new ruler was young, as he usually was, a fact that always excited people's sympathies.

All schools of thought were also concerned with the ever more clearly perceived complex of '*mutationes imperii vel reipublicae*', changes in the power system and the state.<sup>37</sup> No author believed it possible to prevent such change entirely. To slow it down as long as possible or at least to be able to guide it required one first to analyze its causes and the forms it may take. The next step was to produce a sound diagnosis of where in the process of change one stood, in order to develop and deploy appropriate remedies or ways of influencing events.

The old view that nothing can be done against loss of power or state transformation willed or imposed by God, in the form for example of the absorption of one's home territory into a larger political system, now faded to the status of a topos. Instead, the main focus shifted to the *causae humanae*. These causes were usually ascribed to the various groups of actors, so that a distinction could be made between those brought about by the sovereign, the secondary power elite, the country's leading figures, and the broad mass of subjects. At this point, the discussion of the *arcana imperii* and of *raison d'état* identified a broad range of misjudgements and incorrect conduct, particularly those of the *summi imperantes* and of the *potentes inferiores*, to which appropriate

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<sup>37</sup> This was an important topic in Aristotle's political works, as well as in Machiavellian and reason-of-state authors. For a commentary on Aristotle's ideas see Gueinz C. (Praeses) and Paschasius T. (Resp.), *Analysis Libri V. Politicorum Aristotelis de Conservatione & Mutatione Rerum-Publicarum* (Halle: 1645), and more generally Wehner P.M., *Metamorphosis Rerum Publicarum. Von Veränderung/ Uebergang/ Verwandlung vnd Perioden der Regimenten/ vnd deren Ursachen* (Gießen: 1610).

remedies were proposed. Our authors generally set about investigating the various forms of change through a comparative historical and empirical approach. It was already taken for granted that one must distinguish between creeping change and sudden, obvious crises.

Other than the change of ruler, the phase of apparent security in the middle of a sovereign's reign, and the period of exhaustion towards its end when he had reached an advanced age, were regarded as recurrent moments of danger for the power system. Ensuring awareness of these dangers involved more than constantly advising the sovereign and warning him of the need to be always alert, which were necessary in any case. Our authors instead proposed deliberately placing a younger team of advisors and ministers alongside the exhausted or old ruler and gradually involving the intended successor in the business of government.

As one might expect, however, civil war was regarded as the most important contemporary challenge to the power system and state. Reflections on politics thus generated a wide-ranging debate on the subject, to which specialist treatises also contributed.<sup>38</sup> With respect to the various manifestations of civil war, a basic distinction was made between the rebellion of a group of major figures, and protests by individuals, mostly young men, drawn from the broad mass of the populace, as well as local and regional uprisings and internal wars that crossed social and territorial boundaries. These uprisings might set out to achieve a change of ruler or a fundamental change in the political system. Their causes must always be sought primarily in the failures of the sovereign. The first problem consistently identified by our authors is the failure to recognize or combat growing dissatisfaction and ultimately hatred or contempt for the sovereign. These developments undermine the power system's authority, which represents its most essential foundation, and from a certain point can no longer be reversed even through force of arms. They arise because the sovereign, or his most senior aides with his connivance, no longer take sufficient account of the expectations and ambitions of the groups of subjects concerned or of the subjects as a whole.

Particularly important here was the pursuit of freedom and adherence to traditional rights, which the badly advised or despotically inclined ruler countered with *nimia oppressio*, increasingly oppressive control and regulation. That this mania for regulation was largely identical with the intensifying forms of power and the state generated by the need for stability, was evidently not always recognized. It was almost as damaging to make the subjects,

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<sup>38</sup> Among the systematic '*opera politica*' we discuss here, Lipsius and Boxhorn are especially important; an early tract responding to the experience of the Peasants' War was Braun K... *De seditionibus libri sex* (Mainz: 1550). See Weber W., *Prudentia gubernatoria* 321–331.

especially leading subjects, feel that they were held in contempt rather than treating them with respect and honour as they expected. Hunger and poverty, or fear of poverty, were always liable to cause rebellion as well. Finally, the insecurity and instability brought about by abrupt changes of policy or the too rapid introduction of innovations was identified as a key cause of unrest in general. Then there were ineradicable defects on the part of the rebels. These included general rebelliousness and an inability to obey, which were often seen as determined by climate or national character. Other factors were an obsession with conspiracies and a stubborn refusal to submit to the necessary *disciplina publica*. As we might expect, the debate on civil war on the basis of religious fanaticism had a special status. Here the focus was on how to deal with the preachers involved.

The most important means of combating civil war was to prevent it from happening or gaining momentum in the first place. This required relevant knowledge and the use of special practices, whose efficacy was partly dependent on their being kept secret. But the stabilization of power and the state very generally are also important in this context. In other words, prevention of the seemingly ever-present threat of civil war was a major reason for augmenting the powers of the state, blurring once again the previously developed distinction between rule in normal times (*'gubernatio ordinaria'*) and in times of emergency (*'gubernatio extraordinaria'*). As discussed above, the employment of informers (*'secreti informatores'*), who provided the power elite with information on the people's mood, could be justified with reference to the constant risk of rebellion.

Should the first indications and underlying causes of rebellion and civil war have gone unrecognized, the power elite might still influence its formative phase. Infiltration, the creation of divisions and subversion might help counter the typical formation of various groupings, secret gatherings, inflammatory speeches, and the development of plans for rebellion, with internal rivalries, lack of information, and the febrile atmosphere offering useful points of departure. There was a wide range of options: from the deliberate spreading of rumours and denunciation of ringleaders to the bribing or winning over of ringleaders or groups of participants by means of *occulta praemia*, and from the banishing of individuals or a number of key actors to distant parts of the country or sending them into exile, to the secret murder of key figures. Depending on the situation, however, the authorities might also feel the need to overlook the entire affair without a word.

Dealing with a rebellion or civil war that had already broken out was highly problematic. The basic response had to be a carefully calibrated combination of the effective use of force and a willingness to compromise or show leniency, whether real or merely apparent. In any case, such situations call for the personal involvement of the ruler, as supreme commander and ultimate authority

and as beneficent father of the nation. Even at this stage in the uprising, those involved could sometimes be won over to the authorities' side or removed from the centre of action. Generally, though, one had to reckon with an unpredictable and inexorable process of radicalization. This made decisive, bloody suppression and an entirely new beginning seem the only effective course of action. Again, whether such measures succeeded depended crucially on the neighbouring states and power systems. In a region such as Europe, in which ambitious dynasties and states were crowded together in such profusion, one could always find supporters abroad. In other words, the key task was to attain and preserve internal unity ('*concordia*', '*unitas civitatis*'), without which it was impossible to ensure the '*auctoritas*' of the ruler and '*potentia*' of the state over the long term.

Compared with the fundamental risks posed by civil war, the more gradual challenges seemed far easier to deal with, at least if they were identified correctly and in good time: economic decline, demographic stagnation or decline, disruption to the development of society and its productive potential as a result of key productive elements dying off or moving away, decline of the education system, and very generally moral degeneracy or decline of the *disciplina publica*. The steps that might be taken to counter these developments had already been discussed in reflections on the stabilization of power and the state as a constant task and could be referred to there.

#### 4. Conclusion and future prospects

The debates in political theory to which the conditions and causes outlined above gave rise around 1580/90 in Europe decisively increased elite awareness of contemporary events in politics and the power system. At the same time, these debates put the power elites in a position to reflect in a more informed way on their interest in securing their own positions and the social order that guaranteed these positions, and to pursue that interest more effectively. The diagnoses and prescriptions concerning power and politics that these debates produced were not only side-effects of the phase of European state formation that occurred in this era, but also influenced it markedly. However, contemporary culture carried a powerful religious or confessional charge, as a result of which the range of options put forward to secure power and stabilize the state initially encouraged military solutions to political and confessional conflicts. This development reached its peak, of course, with the Thirty Years' War and the English Civil War. But the ending of the Thirty Years' War through the Peace of Westphalia, the consolidation of England, and the subsequent spread of peace to certain regions of Europe may also be put down to the achieve-

ments of the new political thought, built on a solid scientific foundation. This applies with particular force to the rise of the French monarchy. After 1660, however, this discourse, formerly a Europe-wide phenomenon, became more differentiated, precisely because it turned with ever-greater precision to the specific prerequisites for and ways of achieving state formation. Treatises now definitively oriented towards the French model, which seemed particularly successful, were still being read all over Europe until around 1700. Subsequently, however, discussions composed in the various national languages and geared towards national issues began to dominate the field.<sup>39</sup> At the same time and in connection with this, the debate on the *arcana imperii* and *raison d'état*, which had formerly been carried on in public by the power elites, receded into the background. Those that used them were now familiar with the basic techniques of securing power and stabilizing the state. Opening them up to the political debate being carried on by the upwardly mobile middle classes would have been counterproductive.

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<sup>39</sup> For an impressive example of how political perception and decision-making on top of the state were scientifically developed and nationalised see Boxhorn, M.Z., *Arcana Imperii Detecta: Or Diverse Select Cases in Government* (London: 1701).