

The Concepts of Universal Monarchy & Balance of Power in the first Half of the Seventeenth Century – a Case Study

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The struggle for political hegemony in early modern Europe was not solely pursued by military means. The many layered antagonistic claims – often motivated by religious and political ambitions, within Europe and beyond its borders – lead to a variety of theories which aimed to foster claims for political influence and hegemony. Universal monarchy and balance of power are the two main concepts which can be discerned as the principal strategies employed in the strife, if not for Empire, at least for hegemony. The study of religion and Empire is closely related to the claims to universal monarchy, as it was this concept which not only claimed legitimate dominion over the world, but in doing so, commanding the role of purveyor of order and peace. Catholicism was used to re-enforce the claim to empire. However, during the process of state building in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, universal monarchy was increasingly challenged and eventually superseded by the alternative idea of a balance of power, as a means of organising the emerging European state system.¹ Indeed, among most political thinkers of the seventeenth century the idea of universal monarchy had lost its constructive political value and was mostly used polemically.² Theories which attempted to found interstate relations and peace in Europe upon the concepts of universal monarchy or the universal supremacy of the Catholic Church played a minor part in international political thought. Instead the idea of a balance of power as the best means to organise the European state system gained traction among political thinkers in this period.³

The aim of this essay is to contrast these two concepts in way of a brief case study by looking at Tommaso Campanella's *A Discourse Touching the Spanish Monarchy: Laying Down Directions and Practices Whereby the King of Spain May Attain to an Universal Monarchy* first composed in

¹ Hume famously argued that already the ancient Greeks organised their inter-state relations by using a balance of power by all but its name. D. Hume, “Of the balance of power”, in D. Hume, *Political Essays*, ed. by K. Haakonssen (Cambridge 1994), p. 154. See also J. Robertson, “Universal Monarchy and the Liberties of Europe: David Hume's Critique of an English Whig Doctrine” in *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, ed. by T. Phillipson/Q. Skinner (Cambridge 1993), p. 349-373.

² See A. Strohmeier, “Ideas of Peace in Early Modern Models of International Order: Universal Monarchy and Balance of Power in Comparison” in J. Dülffer/R. Frank (eds.), *Peace, War and Gender from Antiquity to the Present. Cross-cultural perspectives* (Essen 2009), p. 65-80. The classical study on the concept of universal monarchy is still F. Bosbach, *Monarchia Universalis. Ein politischer Leitbegriff der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen 1988). In contrast to Strohmeier's assertion Bosbach shows how the use of universal monarchy was still present up to the age of Louis XIV in political pamphlets. His study is, however, less concerned with the history of political thought. See Bosbach, p. 13.

³ See B. Arcidiacono, *Cinq Types de Paix. Une Histoire des Plans de Pacification perpétuelle* (Paris 2011), p. 75-112 and the brief overview in M. van Gelderen, “Universal Monarchy, the Rights of War and Peace and the Balance of Power: Europe's Quest for Civil Order” in *Reflections on Europe: Defining a Political Order in Time and Space* ed. by H.-Å. Persson/B. Stråth (Brussels 2007), p. 49–71.

Latin around 1600 and published in English in 1654. Campanella's (1568-1639) is one of the most accomplished and far reaching accounts of universal monarchy in the early seventeenth century.⁴ He draws as much on Botero's reason of state arguments, as on Dante and the idea of a Catholic universal Church. I will contrast Campanella's proposal with the *Grand Design* by the Duke of Sully (1559-1641). What Sully puts forward in his *Memoirs* is a plan for how best to conduct French foreign policies with the aim of forming an alliance against the Habsburgs.⁵ Dynastic and confessional allegiances remained to play their part in the ensuing European state system, as can be seen in Sully's proposal. However, the Westphalian settlement of 1648 was multi-polar and power relations were increasingly complex. This was reflected in Samuel Pufendorf's work and a brief outlook at Pufendorf will highlight how political thought developed further in the attempt to understand and organise the increasingly complex European state system.

I Universal Monarchy - Campanella's international thought

The relationship between papacy and empire was the central subject of political debate in the later Middle Ages and Dante succinctly summarised the debate in the three books of his *Monarchy*. Dante is a staunch advocate of universal monarchy, and argued that "it was by right, and not by usurping, that the Roman people took on the office of the monarch (which is called empire) over all man".⁶ In the third book he discussed the well-trodden question of the relationship between the papacy and the emperor and firmly sided with the imperial camp: "the (...) imperial authority derives directly from (...) God. (...) the authority of the church is not the cause of imperial authority".⁷ Campanella refers repeatedly to Dante and his views on imperial power. In contrast to Dante, Campanella suggested that the King of Spain ought to make use of the Catholic faith so that "the Kingdom of Spain may be the more firmly incorporated into the Church, by having both Cardinals, and Popes themselves always true to their [Spain's] Faction".⁸ The Catholic Church is

⁴ But see also P. de Sandoval, *La vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos Quinto Max. Fortissimo. Rey de Espana, y de las Indias, Islas, y Tierrafirme del mar Oceano* (Valladolid 1604). For further references of Spanish writings vindicating Spanish claims to world hegemony see X. Gil, "Spain and Portugal", in *European Political Thought 1450-1700. Religion, Law and Philosophy*, ed. by H. A. Lloyd, G. Burgess, S. Hodson (New Haven 2007), p. 442.

⁵ See E. Thuau, *Raison d'Etat et pensée politique à l'époque de Richelieu* (Paris 2000), p. 287: "Henri IV semble avoir un instant envisagé de faire valoir ses droits sur le trône impérial [i.e. of the German Holy Roman Empire]. Ce projet, Sully en nie l'existence (...). Or Sully avait été en 1600 partisan de la candidature royal. Mais l'opinion n'était pas favorable et il semble avoir voulu dans ces *Mémoires* effacer ce souvenir". See also G. Zeller, "Les rois de France candidats à l'Empire" in *Revue historique* 173 (1934), p. 237-311 and p. 457-534.

⁶ Dante, *Monarchy*, ed. by P. Shaw (Cambridge 1996), p. 33.

⁷ Dante, *Monarchy*, p. 86f.

⁸ T. Campanella, *A Discourse Touching the Spanish Monarchy: Laying Down Directions and Practices Whereby the King of Spain May Attain to an Universal Monarchy* (London 1658), p. 42. On Campanella see also J. M. Headleys, "Tommaso Campanella and the End of the Renaissance" in *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 20 (1990), p. 157-174; A. Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the political Imagination* (New Haven 1990), p. 37-63 and B. G. Lüsse, *Formen der humanistischen Utopie* (Paderborn 1998), p. 95-119.

thus to be used in support of Spanish universal monarchy. Indeed, according to Campanella, “it is not sufficient that we have the Clergy on our side; but we are further to labour that at length we may get a *Spaniard* to be elected *Pope*, or rather, one of the house of *Austria*”.⁹

Campanella's aspirations do not end there. Just as Alexander the Great or Julius Cesar had used legislation on religious matters for their own political ends, the Spanish King should also “make a Law, to be observed by all Christians; (...) that whensoever any People or Country shall forsake the *Roman Religion*, all Princes shall be bound, upon pain of forfeiting their Estates, to root out, and extirpate the same”.¹⁰ Dynastic and religious politics should go hand in hand in order to achieve the ambitious objective of universal monarchy. All means necessary ought to be employed in this endeavour. Thus ultimately the Spanish King would also be in a position to defend and promote the Catholic faith. Campanella leaves no doubt that for him, Catholicism and universality are aspects of the same enterprise. Therefore, the Spanish Monarch must promote the Catholic faith within Europe against the heretical Protestants, at the frontiers of Europe against the infidel Turks¹¹ and beyond the frontiers of the known world towards the New World.¹² Catholicism simultaneously reinforces the Spanish claim to universal monarchy and, if the Spanish were to succeed in attaining this claim, it would profit. The Spanish King would not only rule over the world, but he would also be “dignified with the Title of the Catholick or Universal King”, which according to Campanella shows “plainly, that this is the will of the Holy Spirit”.¹³ Interestingly Campanella avoided discussion of the fact that the Spanish monarchy was a composite monarchy, thus suggesting uniformity where it could only be identified in the plurality of a composite structure.¹⁴

⁹ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 25. In his concept of universal monarchy Dante had separated imperial and church authority as these were in his view the main reasons for the antagonistic factions within Italy at the time of his writing. In this respect Campanella pursued a different strategy and emphasised the importance of the Catholic Church for the Spanish project of universal monarchy. In any case it should be noted that “the universal Empire had never been anything but a dream; the universal Church had to admit that the defense of the individual state took precedence over the liberties of the Church or the claims of the Christian commonwealth”. J. R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton 1970), p. 57.

¹⁰ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 46.

¹¹ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 22: “He [the King of Spain] is the Chief *Defender of Christian Religion*, (...); calling together also the Christian Princes, to consult about the recovery of those Countreys they have lost, and are at this day in the hands of *Hereticks*, and *Turks*”.

¹² T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 27: “the *Indians* had violated the *Law of Nature*, the King of *Spain* invading them upon the Interest of the *Christian Religion*, (whose Handmaid the *Law of Nature* is) their Country is his lawful possession”.

¹³ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 25. Despite Campanella’s emphasis on strengthening the power of the Spanish king, his main concern might have been the Catholic Church and its spiritual world dominance. Since the Spanish Monarchy was the leading Catholic power of Campanella’s time, he might have wanted to position the Spanish monarchy as the political and military instrument for the Catholic Church’s dominance.

¹⁴ See J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469-1716* (London 1976), p. 167f.; H. Kamen, *Spain’s Road to Empire. The Making of a World Power 1492-1763* (London 2003), p. 153f.; X. Gil, “The Good Law of a Vassal: Fidelity, Obedience and Obligation in Habsburg Spain” in *Revista Internacional de los Estudios Vascos* 5 (2009), p. 92 and more generally J. H. Elliott, “A Europe of Composite Monarchies” in J. H. Elliott, *Spain, Europe & the Wider World 1500-1800* (New Haven 2009), p. 3-24.

The rise of Spain also inherently explains her decline, as the wheel of fortune is unreliable and subject to constant change. “There was an Occasion (...) offered to *Charles* the V. who (...) might have been able to have made himself Lord of the whole Earth”¹⁵, but he failed to seize the chance *fortuna* offered. This is a familiar argument in Machiavelli's *Principe*.¹⁶ According to Campanella, this failure occurred, fundamentally, because the Spanish rulers neglected to take possession of their conquests in the way Machiavelli had called for in chapter three of his *Principe*.¹⁷ The fundamental strategic mistake of the Spanish monarchy was her misguided policy and constant conflict in the Low Countries, which was the principle reason for the decline of Spain.¹⁸

Although Charles V and Philip II failed to achieve universal monarchy, the Spanish dominions, certainly provided formidable foundations for universal monarchy. This was the gist of Campanella's writing, in his claim that “the Universal Monarchy of the world (...) is at length come down to the Spaniard”.¹⁹ Given this brief sketch of Campanella's vision for Spanish monarchy, his model could hardly claim to be an acceptable attempt to pacify warring Europe.²⁰ Universal monarchy had to be achieved against the resistance and claims of other powers both within and outside of Europe. The time had clearly passed for the assertion that peace could be achieved through universal monarchy.²¹ Already by the beginning of the seventeenth century, with the remarkable exception of Campanella, the concept of universal monarchy had lost any positive connotations for leading political thinkers, especially with regards to its ability to provide a stable,

¹⁵ See T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 81f.

¹⁶ N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. by Q. Skinner/R. Price (Cambridge 2008), p. 85: “fortune is the arbiter of half of our actions”. And a little further, towards the end of this chapter Machiavelli states p. 87: “I conclude (...) that since circumstances vary and men when acting lack flexibility, they are successful if their methods match the circumstances and unsuccessful if they do not”. See also P. Schröder, *Niccolò Machiavelli* (Frankfurt 2004), p. 107-120. Despite the fact that Campanella mentioned Machiavelli only once and in the most negative terms, it is clear that he was influenced by Machiavelli. There can be no doubt that even whole chapters in his writing on universal monarchy are inspired by Machiavelli. See notably chapter XVII “Of the Peoples Love and Hate” as well as his discussion on fortune and prudence in chapters VI and VII.

¹⁷ N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 8: “considerable problems arise if territories are annexed in a country that differs in language, customs and institutions, and great luck [bisogna avere gran fortuna] and great ability are needed to hold them”. Machiavelli is, obviously, not criticising Charles V here, but he singles out the French king Louis XII as a negative example of a ruler who did not understand to hold his conquests. See P. Schröder, “Die Kunst der Staatserhaltung” in *Machiavelli: Der Fürst*, ed. by O. Höffe (Berlin 2012), p. 19-31. But see also Anthony Pagden, who argued that “the *De Moanrchia hispanica* was clearly not (...) a ‘Machiavellian’ strategy for extending the power of the papacy and the Spanish Monarchy”. A. Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination*, p. 62.

¹⁸ This is repeatedly claimed by Campanella. See T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 174 and p. 186.

¹⁹ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, preface.

²⁰ See also B. Arcidiacono, *Cinq Types de Paix*, p. 30f.

²¹ To the best of my knowledge, a study is still lacking, which situates and analyses Campanella's ideas about universal monarchy in the context of the seventeenth-century or indeed the ensuing debates during the Thirty Years War. See, however, the brief account in B. Arcidiacono, “*Contra Pluralitatem Principatum: Trois Critiques du Système dit Westphalien (formulées avant la Paix de Westphalie)*” in *The Roots of International Law*, ed. by P.-M. Dupuy/V. Chetail (Leiden 2014), p. 470-473.

peaceful political order.²²

II Balance of power – Sully’s challenge of Spanish universal monarchy

Let us turn to Sully and the *Grand Design*²³ in order to compare his argument with that of Campanella. The *Grand Design* is known as the plan of the French King Henry IV, though it is only through the writings of the Duke of Sully that we know about this scheme.²⁴ The driving force behind it, as Sully stated himself, was “the Hatred against *Spain*, (...) which is the great and common Motive by which these Powers [i.e. the monarchies of France, England, Denmark and Sweden] are animated. (...), it only remains to examine, by what Means the House of *Austria* [i.e. Habsburg] may be reduced to the sole Monarchy of *Spain*; and the Monarchy of *Spain* to Spain only. These Means consist either in Address or Force”.²⁵ From the textual evidence of the *Memoirs* the key motive for Sully's plan was to secure French power, which in turn would bring about security and peace in Europe. Therefore, the interpretation that he tried to create some kind of European federation, inspired by a “European conscience”²⁶, needs to be questioned. These plans for a powerful alliance, which would allow the French to match the superior military might of the Spanish monarchy, depended, according to Sully, largely on the English crown.

Campanella on the other hand believed that the largest threat to the Spanish claim to universal monarchy would come from France and Henry IV. For Campanella there could be no doubt “that there is no Christian Kingdome, that is more able to oppose, and put a stop to the growing of the *Spanish Monarchy*, then *France*”.²⁷ It was for this reason that Campanella argued that an alliance between the French and the English needed to be avoided at all costs. Indeed, using Henry IV's conversion to Catholicism²⁸, Campanella is able to use religious politics to further his goals of Spanish dominance, suggesting that the Pope should be persuaded to “interdict the King of *France* the contracting of any League, or Friendship, either with the Queen of England, or with any other

²² F. Bosbach, *Monarchia Universalis*, p. 87.

²³ I will quote from *The Memoirs of the Duke of Sully during his Residence at the English Court; to which he was sent Ambassador from Henry IV of France, upon the Accession of King James the First. Containing An Account of his Negotiations (...) Also A Relation of the Political Scheme, commonly called the Great Design of Henry IV (...)* (Dublin 1751); cited in the following as: Sully, *Memoirs*.

²⁴ M. Ritter “Die Memoiren Sullys und der grosse Plan Heinrichs IV.” in *Abhandlungen der Historischen Klasse der Königlichen Bayrischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 11* (1870), p. 1-53 and A. V. Hartmann, *Rêveurs de Paix? Friedenspläne bei Crucé, Richelieu und Sully* (Hamburg 1995).

²⁵ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 182.

²⁶ K. Malettke, “Europabewußtsein und Europäische Friedenspläne im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert” in *Francia 21* (1994), p. 92.

²⁷ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 144. On the conflict between France and Spain see also R. Lesaffer, “Between Faith and Empire: The Justification of the Spanish intervention in the French Wars of Religion in the 1590s” in this volume.

²⁸ Campanella urges the Spanish king to “perswade the Pope, that the King of France hath a purpose of Assisting the Hereticks”. T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 151.

Hereticks”.²⁹ Sully's plans for a French alliance with England were thus, unsurprisingly, perceived by the Habsburg camp as the most dangerous threat to their political ambitions and claims.

It is in this context that James I's succession to the English throne was of the utmost importance, as “the Death of Elizabeth (...) gave so violent a Shock to Henry's grand Design, as had like to have made him abandon all Hopes of its Success. He nevertheless attempted to remedy the fatal Effects apprehended from it, by endeavouring to inspire her successor, King James, with all her Sentiments in regard to it. And for this Purpose he resolved to send me Ambassador to the English Court”.³⁰

Sully relates in great detail the precautions taken in deciding how to proceed so as not to raise the suspicions of the newly crowned English King. He stresses that “the principal Object of these Instructions [given to Sully by Henry IV for his ambassadorship to England] had always been a close Alliance between France and England, against Spain”.³¹ Again, the contrast with Campanella is illuminating here. The latter was writing at a time when Elizabeth was still alive and the succession of James to the English throne was still only an event to be anticipated upon the Queen's death. Campanella argues that the Spanish should endeavour to sow discord between the English and Scots, as well as among the English nobility and between the parliament and the court. He claims that “the time now draweth on, that after the death of the said Queen *Elizabeth*, who is now very old, the Kingdom of *England* must fall into the hand of their Ancient and continual Rivals, the Scots”.³² The Spanish monarch should promise the different interested parties in England “(no one of them knowing anything what is said to the other) all the possible aids that can be from Spain, for the restoring of them to their Inheritances, Legally descending down to them from their Ancestours; and undertake to effect this for them, if not as to the whole Kingdome, yet at least to some part of it”.³³ Campanella stresses over and over again, that the aim ought to be “that the seeds of a continual War betwixt England and Scotland will be sown; in so much that neither Kingdome shall have any leisure to work any disturbance to the *Spanish Affaires*”.³⁴ In order to achieve Spanish aims, Campanella suggests thwarting French and English plans against Spain. He urges the Spanish king to “send privately to King *James* of *Scotland*, and promise him, that He [the Spanish king] will

²⁹ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 151.

³⁰ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 74. See notably G. E. Aylmer, *The Struggle for the Constitution 1603-1689* (London 1963), p. 11: “The most important fact about the succession of King James I on the death of Queen Elizabeth in the spring of 1603 is that it was peaceful”.

³¹ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 87. On Henry IV see notably M. M. L. Saint-René Taillandier, *Henri IV avant la messe* (Paris 1934) and M. M. L. Saint-René Taillandier, *Le cœur du roi. Henri IV après la messe* (Paris 1934). A new comparative study on Henry IV and Elizabeth is still a desideratum – E. Paraque is preparing a PhD thesis on *The Rhetoric of Monarchy: A Comparison of France and England (1567-1603)*. But see also J. B. Black, *Elizabeth and Henry IV* (Oxford 1914).

³² T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 158.

³³ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 159.

³⁴ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 160.

assist him to the utmost of his Power in his getting possession of the Kingdome of England, upon this condition; viz, that he shall either restore there again the Catholick Religion³⁵; (...) or at least, that he shall not annoy, or in anyway disturbe the said Spanish Fleet”.³⁶ The competitive courting of the English as part of the struggle for hegemony between the French and Habsburgs can be seen in Campanella, advocating the Spanish interest, as much as in Sully, advocating the French interest. False promises played as large a role in these endeavours as straightforward bribery did.

Sully's frustration with France's inability to make headway in forming an alliance with the English against the Habsburgs under the reign of King James repeatedly comes to the fore in his *Memoirs*. Sully relates, for instance, how he had to find his way through the labyrinth of competing interests pursued by the various factions at the English court, which “was full of Suspicion, Mistrust, Jealousy, secret and even public Discontent”.³⁷ He does not shy away from employing contemporary French prejudices against the English: “It is certain the *English* hate us; and this Hatred is so general and inveterate, that one would almost be tempted to number it among their natural Dispositions. It is undoubtedly an Effect of their Arrogance and Pride; for no Nation in Europe is more haughty and disdainful, nor more conceited in an Opinion of its superior Excellence”.³⁸ According to Sully, in light of such English stubbornness, it is in the French interest to achieve a position of independent power and thus avoid the necessity of relying on an ally who “if we examine what they call Maxims of State, we shall discover in them only the Laws of Pride itself, adopted by Arrogance and Indolence”.³⁹ To be absolutely clear, what he advocates in his *Memoirs* most prominently is not a proposal for some kind of a European federation, but a policy which is informed by France's self-interest.⁴⁰ When his ideas are contrasted with those of Campanella, this becomes even more evident.

The *Grand Design* was part of the diplomatic and political struggle for influence and power. England seemed to be in an advantageous position, because she had not yet committed herself formally to an alliance in the struggle between the Habsburg branches of Austria and Spain on the one hand and France, some German estates (such as the Prince Elector of the Palatinate), and the Low Countries on the other. As dynastic alliances still formed an essential part of European interstate policy, Sully considers the various marriage projects.⁴¹ He also makes clear how

³⁵ On the religious conflicts in England see G. E. Aylmer, *The Struggle for the Constitution*, p. 40-48.

³⁶ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 159.

³⁷ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 110.

³⁸ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 107.

³⁹ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 108.

⁴⁰ See also H. Carré, *Sully. Sa vie et son oeuvre 1559-1641* (Paris 1932).

⁴¹ Cf. Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 121. Campanella also stresses the importance of dynastic politics. T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 139. For the importance of marriage and dynastic politics in interstate relations see R. Bonney, *The European Dynastic States 1494-1660* (Oxford 1991), p. 79-301; W. Doyle, *The Old European Order 1660-1800*

Barnevelt, one of the leaders of the Dutch revolt against the Spanish,⁴² tried to push him and Henry IV into a formal alliance.

The Spanish were also lobbying strongly for the English to either join an alliance with them or, at the very least, grant assurances of their neutrality, as well as the Northern powers and several German princes were also seeking English assistance. Sully summarised this situation in unambiguous terms: “Upon the whole; it appeared as though all the Princes of *Europe* considered the gaining of *England* in their Interest, as of the utmost Consequence”.⁴³ This suggests that Sully's concerns, as expressed in his writing, were influenced by contemporary diplomatic and political manoeuvring and various endeavours to form alliances in interstate politics. The broad underlying principle of the *Grand Design* was the assumption that “peace is the great and common Interest in *Europe*. Its petty Princes ought to be continually employed in preserving it between the greater Powers (...) and the greater Powers should force the lesser into it, if necessary, by assisting the weak and oppressed”.⁴⁴ The implication of such a claim was that the Habsburgs threatened peace in Europe and were oppressing the smaller states. In order to counter this aggressive Habsburg attitude and their alleged claim to universal monarchy, a balance of power had to be established in Europe, which would guarantee the peace and security of all European states.

Sully's employment of the idea of an equilibrium or balance of power is original in many ways – though he could have found this idea in Mornay's *Discours au Roy Henry III sur les moyens de diminuer l'Espagnol*.⁴⁵ As far as I can see Sully's contribution to the development of the idea of a balance of power in Europe has not been noted by those who studied its history.⁴⁶ He uses the balance of power as a decisive tool to achieve a new, peaceful European order, which at the same time would strengthen the French position: “The Steps taken by the House of *Austria* to arrive at

(Oxford 1992), p. 73-80; H. Weber, “Die Bedeutung der Dynastien für die europäische Geschichte in der frühen Neuzeit” in *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte* 44 (1981), p. 5-32 and J. Kunisch/H. Neuhaus (eds.), *Der dynastische Fürstenstaat. Zur Bedeutung der Sukzessionsordnungen für die Entstehung des frühmodernen Staates* (Berlin 1982).

⁴² See J. L. Motley, *The Life and Death of John of Barnevelt, Advocate of Holland: with a View of the primary Causes and Movements of the Thirty Years' War* (London 1874).

⁴³ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 116.

⁴⁴ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 109f.

⁴⁵ A systematic comparison between Mornay and Sully is still lacking. According to Mornay, the question of whether there is peace or war among the Christian states depends on the two great powers of France and Spain. If the equilibrium is unsettled to France's disadvantage, she will no longer be in a position to defend her legitimate interests. Mornay uses the word “balance” here (p. 271) to describe the desirable political equilibrium. At the same time weakening the Habsburgs was also intended to reestablish the imperial dignity of the French crown. P. de Mornay, “Discours au Roy Henry III sur les moyens de diminuer l'Espagnol” in *Memoires de Messire Philippes de Mornay* (Paris 1624), p. 275: “Ce seroit un preparatif pour remettre un jour l'Empire en la Maison de France”.

⁴⁶ See notably M. Sheehan, *The Balance of Power. History & Theory* (London/New York 1996) and M. Wright (ed.), *Theory and Practice of the Balance of Power 1486-1914* (London 1974). Both mention briefly only the younger brother of Sully, Philippe de Béthune. Nor is the balance of power analysed in any detail in the few and already mentioned existing studies on Sully.

Universal Monarchy, which evidently appears from the whole Conduct of *Charles Quint* and his Son”, Sully asserts, “have rendered this Severity as just as it is necessary”.⁴⁷ Political pamphleteers increasingly employed the idea of a balance of power to rhetorical ends, especially when it could be connected to the looming threat of a universal monarchy.⁴⁸

The balance of power was thus intended to provide peace and security while at the same time advancing France's position of power and influence within this system.⁴⁹ Quite clearly France's self-styled image as defender of a European equilibrium was much more acceptable to the other European powers than French pretensions to hegemony would have been.⁵⁰ But given the power of France, the image of balance meant that France was seen to be the counterweight to the Habsburgs on the other side of the scale. This aspect was emphasised by the English historian William Camden, who asserts in his *History of (...) Elizabeth* that it was England which could tip the balance on either side, depending on which side of the scales she put her weight: “Thus sate she [Queen Elizabeth] as an heroical Princess and Umpire betwixt the *Spaniards*, the *French* and the *Estates*; so as she might well have used that Saying of her Father, *Cui adhaero, praest*, that is, *The Party to which I adhere getteth the upper hand*. And true it was which one hath written, that France and Spain are as it were the Scales in the Balance of Europe, and England the Tongue or the Holder of the Balance”.⁵¹

When Sully relates the negotiations he held with King James in London during his ambassadorship he writes that “the King of *England* (...) described the present political Affairs of Europe: In which, he said, it was necessary to preserve an Equilibrium between three of its Powers. (...) of these three Powers [the Habsburgs, Bourbons and Stuarts], the House of *Austria* in *Spain*, from the Spirit of Dominion with which she was possessed, was the only one who sought to make the Balance incline in her favour”.⁵² The *Grand Design* is thus presented by Sully as part of Henry IV's foreign policy. In this respect, Sully's advice and the *Grand Design* amounted to what was, above all, a piece of

⁴⁷ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 45.

⁴⁸ E. Kaeber, *Die Idee des europäischen Gleichgewichts* is still invaluable, but unfortunately he does not consider Sully's *Grand Design* in his study. See his dismissive remarks on p. 30 of his study. (The *Grand Design* is later mentioned in a different context p. 150).

⁴⁹ Rohan and Béthune also made similar points. On these thinkers see the discussion in P. Schröder, “Überlegungen zum Problem der Staatsräson im Anschluss an Machiavelli” in *Staatsräson. Steht die Macht über dem Recht?*, ed. by R. Voigt (Baden-Baden 2012), p. 92-99.

⁵⁰ Interesting, though beyond the scope of this essay, is the shift of argument among the great European powers. English semi-official writers styled Great Britain in the eighteenth century as defender of the balance of power, whereas French and Habsburg polemicists accused Britain of ambitions towards universal monarchy. A good overview of these changes can be found in E. Kaeber, *Die Idee des europäischen Gleichgewichts*, p. 124-137 and M. Sheehan, *The Balance of Power*, p. 97-120. One of the early English sources mentioning England as defender of the balance of power is W. Camden, *The History of the most renowned and victorious Princess Elizabeth late Queen of England* (London 4th edition: 1688), p. 223 quoted below.

⁵¹ W. Camden, *The History of the most renowned and victorious Princess Elizabeth*, p. 223.

⁵² Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 148.

propaganda aimed against the dominance of the House of Habsburg. The belief that, following the *Grand Design*, “a universal Cry from all Parts of Christendom would have been raised against the House of *Austria*” is reiterated repeatedly.⁵³ The Habsburg dynasty is thus presented as the only obstacle to European peace and security, because its aspirations to universal monarchy undermines the equilibrium of the European state system.

Not surprisingly Campanella – writing in the interest of Spanish universal monarchy – perceived the French as the main threat to peace and stability in Europe. He maintained “that He [the Spanish King] hath no body to stand to fear of, but only the King of *France*, and the King of *England*; which two Princes, by reason of being of different Religions, can never agree together”.⁵⁴ Campanella's assertion that the different religious confessions of the two crowns would rule out any potential alliance between them was a serious miscalculation.⁵⁵ Their political interests were plainly not determined by religious allegiance alone. Interestingly, in a rare example, Campanella also employs the concept of the balance of power when he considers the French challenge to the Spanish position in Italy. Campanella holds that the French “cannot overcome them [the Spanish]: for, in this case, the very Princes, and States of Italy, who have to this day alwaies held with the *French*, would go over to the *Spaniard*: for it is their Design, to keep the balance alwaies so even betwixt these two Nations, as that neither of them may preponderate, and bear down the Scales, and so make a Prey of the Other”.⁵⁶ The balance of power is, for him, a political tool employed by the Italians.

Sully is forced to argue for his proposal from a much weaker position and accordingly “the Purport of the Design may be perceived (...) to divide *Europe* equally among a certain Number of Powers, in such a Manner, that none of them might have Cause, either of Envy or Fear, from the Possessions or Power of others. The Number of them was reduced to Fifteen; and they were of three Kinds: viz. six great hereditary Monarchies; five elective Monarchies; and four sovereign Republicks”.⁵⁷ The consistency of his appeals for his plan on the basis of equality, balancing of power and a disinterested French politics indicate that he had to argue much more carefully than Campanella, who unabashedly argued for the Spanish crown's dominion over the world. But Sully was far less neutral in his design than he presents himself to his readers. His proposal to counterbalance Habsburg power in Europe and beyond appears to be based on the resulting balance taking the form

⁵³ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 68.

⁵⁴ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 119.

⁵⁵ This might be explained by the fact that for the Habsburg's alliances were determined by religious confession. Campanella stresses that “we are to understand, that the house of *Austria* is in league with none, save only Catholick Princes”. T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 139.

⁵⁶ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 119.

⁵⁷ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 52.

of a simple bipolar construction. It seemed “difficult for French writers to move beyond a simple bipolar image of the balance. Since France clearly was one of the two 'poles', she could seek support to balance Spain or Austria, but was unconvincing when she aspired to any more subtle balance role”.⁵⁸ However, the *Grand Design* tried to address exactly this difficulty. It played an essential part in the propaganda efforts to convince the European Protestant powers of France's genuine interest in the balance and of her disinterest in a hegemonic position of power. Part of what the *Grand Design* had to achieve was thus to demonstrate that France had no such ambitions and did not harbour self-interested desires for a powerful position. As Sully repeatedly claimed: “Among all these different Dismemberings, we may observe, that *France* reserved nothing for itself but the Glory of distributing them with Equity. Henry had declared this to be his Intention long before”.⁵⁹ To what extent this strategy would be able to convince those invited to join the alliance is difficult to assess. However, it is more likely that it displayed “Sully's scarcely disguised intention of confirming the primacy of France”.⁶⁰ Sully tries hard to counteract such an impression by stressing the fact “that though *England*, and the *United Provinces*, should use their utmost Efforts of which they are capable against the House of *Austria*, unless they were assisted even by the whole Force of the *French* Monarchy, on whom the chief Management of such a War must fall for many Reasons; the House of *Austria* by uniting the Forces of its two Branches, would with ease (...) sustain itself against them”.⁶¹ When Sully deals with Europe as a whole in order to discuss how to arrange a new order in view of the existing different Christian confessions, his proposals remain fairly general and superficial. His leading conviction is, however, that Europe should not be divided by confessional differences, but by the political interests of the Habsburgs and her allies on the one hand, and the counterweight formed around France and her allies on the other. He makes this explicit in a later part of the *Memoirs*, where he again presents the *Grand Design* in some detail: “Europe”, he asserts here, “is divided into two Factions, which are not so justly distinguished by their different Religions, because the Catholicks and Protestants are confounded together in almost all Places, as they are by their Political Interests”.⁶² Sully's statements on the subject in the *Memoirs* are contradictory. The argument presented here serves to suggest that Calvinists and Lutherans are indeed to be seen on an equal footing with the Catholics.⁶³

From here, Sully quickly moves on to present an outline of his envisaged plan. Despite the fact that

⁵⁸ M. Sheehan, *The Balance of Power*, p. 39.

⁵⁹ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 50.

⁶⁰ F. H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace. Theory and Practice in the History of Relations between States* (Cambridge 1963), p. 28.

⁶¹ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 32.

⁶² Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 178.

⁶³ Note that the issue of religion was perceived as particularly problematic and divisive by Sully, as is evident from other remarks in his *Memoirs*. See, for instance, Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 26

Russia, the Armenians and the Greeks are “ranked (...) among the Christian Powers”⁶⁴, he excludes them from any further consideration. Interestingly, he does so on the grounds that the cultural and religious differences between them and the European states are too great to consider them as potential elements of his proposed European federation. For him these countries “belong to *Asia* at least as much as to *Europe*. We indeed may almost consider them as a barbarous Country, and place them in the same Class with *Turkey*”.⁶⁵ This exclusion was fairly conventional in the early seventeenth century. Given the centuries long struggle between the Habsburg's and the Ottomans, it is hardly surprising that Campanella had also argued against “the *Turk* [who] endeavours to make himself Lord of the whole World (...). He will also at this time already be called, *The Universal Lord*; as the King of *Spain* is called, *The Catholick King*: so that these two Princes seem now to strive, which of them shall attain to the Universal Monarchy of the Whole World”.⁶⁶ Campanella was much more concerned about the Ottoman Empire than Sully, because it posed a real threat to Spanish claims for universal monarchy: “seeing that (...) the *Turk* stretcheth forth his hand against All Men (...); all whom yet he is frequently wont to delude by his Cessations from Armes, and Truces, (for He keeps his faith with none of them:) it would be a businisse worth our serious consideration, how this Practise of his might be turned against Himself”.⁶⁷ Campanella argued from a geopolitical perspective that the King of Spain should endeavour to form alliances among the powers of the middle east against their “common enemies, the Turk's country”.⁶⁸ Again the struggle for empire and religion go hand in hand in this argument, culminating in the claim that Jerusalem should be recovered, “which should be reserved for the King of Spain”.⁶⁹ This military crusade was supported by an intellectual offensive, and Campanella advocated that “the King should erect certain Schools in all the Principal Cities, wherein the *Arabick* Tongue should be taught; that so by this meanes there may be such among his subjects as shall be able to dispute with the *Turks*, *Moors*, and *Persians*, who by the use of that Tongue spread their *Mahumetanisme*, as We do *Christianity*, by the Latine Tongue”.⁷⁰ Whereas Campanella stressed the conflict with the Turks, Sully was keen to concentrate on the heartland of Europe and the rearrangements he considers necessary for

⁶⁴ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 40.

⁶⁵ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 40. This point is almost expressis verbis reiterated in Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 179.

⁶⁶ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 197.

⁶⁷ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 204. Cf. C. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire* (Houndmills 2002), p. 71: “In 1606 peace negotiations began (...) between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires (...). When Habsburg negotiators travelled to Istanbul in 1608 to ratify the text [of the peace treaty], they rejected it since the clause on the equality of the Emperors had been dropped”. See also W. Schulze, *Reich und Türkengefahr im späten 16. Jahrhundert. Studien zu den politischen und gesellschaftlichen Auswirkungen einer äußeren Bedrohung* (Munich 1978) and D. Vaughan, *Europe and the Turks. A Pattern of Alliances, 1350-1700* (Liverpool 1954).

⁶⁸ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 205.

⁶⁹ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 205.

⁷⁰ T. Campanella, *A Discourse*, p. 182.

establishing a new lasting order.⁷¹

The *Grand Design* was, therefore, much less aggressive than Campanella's vision of Spanish universal monarchy, and one of its key aspects consisted in the project to create a “general Council, representing all the States of Europe”.⁷² This general council is envisaged as a representative body of all European states. It should have the competence to moderate and, if necessary, arbitrate conflicts within the state system. However, the originality of this project, with an arbiter formed on a representative basis, should not be over-emphasised, as it was in many ways simply a reformulation of contemporary ideas about the institution of arbitration.⁷³ Nevertheless, Sully claims that its “Establishment (...) was certainly the happiest Invention that could have been conceived”.⁷⁴ In order to establish this type of representative body of European states, sweeping changes of territorial possessions were envisaged, with the establishment of the council signifying only the ultimate step and conclusion of these radical alterations of the European map. Sully was aware that “to divest the House of *Austria* of the Empire; and all its Possessions in *Germany, Italy* and all the *Low Countries*; in a Word, to reduce it to the sole Kingdom of *Spain*”⁷⁵ posed a fundamental challenge. It was not conceivable that the Habsburg monarchy could be persuaded to such revolutionary and disadvantageous measures, even if Sully emphasised that the aim was an equilibrium of the European powers, and that therefore the Habsburg branches should remain “nevertheless (...) equally powerful with the other Sovereignities of *Europe*”.⁷⁶ Sully had no doubt himself that such a dramatic change could only be achieved by war.

War thus represented not the *ultima ratio* but the necessary means to break Habsburg hegemony. Sully is clear from the outset of his *Memoirs* that conquest is a perfectly acceptable way to acquire rights of dominion in the international sphere.⁷⁷ But his assessment of war is at times contradictory, as he also asserts that he is “from repeated Experience, convinced, that the Happiness of Mankind can never arise from War”.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the changes he considered necessary for the establishment of the representative body of the European states were a preliminary step which

⁷¹ This was a rather typical attitude among European political writers. See E. Kaeber, *Die Idee des europäischen Gleichgewichts*, p. 78.

⁷² Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 53.

⁷³ See, for instance, the ideas about arbitration developed by Bodin: J. Bodin, *Les Six Livres de la République* (Paris 1583), p. 799: “Qui est le plus baut poinct d'honneur qu'un Prince peut gainer, à sçavoir d'estre esleu arbitre de paix entre les autres”. Regarding Sully, K. Malettke, *Frankreich, Deutschland und Europa im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert. Beiträge zum Einfluß französischer politischer Theorie, Verfassung und Außenpolitik in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Marburg 1994), p. 273f. stresses Sully's innovative idea of the federal character of the council and its underlying idea of a system of collective security. With a slightly more cautious judgement regarding such a system, see also A. V. Hartmann, *Rêveurs de paix?*, p. 90f.

⁷⁴ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 53.

⁷⁵ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 44.

⁷⁶ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 44.

⁷⁷ Cf., for instance, Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 9.

⁷⁸ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 16.

posed the greatest obstacle to the realisation of the *Grand Design*. Given that at the time of this work Europe had already been at war for almost two decades, the prospect of using war to reorganise the European state system at the end of the current war may have been seen as much more acceptable, as it meant that a new war need not be launched to achieve the goals of the *Grand Design*. War aims, after all, could be formulated in the context of the ongoing war. The constitution of the Holy Roman Empire, with its contradictory division of sovereign rights and obligations, meant that France would find allies in Germany against the Habsburgs. With the Emperor's edict of restitution of 1629⁷⁹ and again, after the Swedish intervention, with the Peace of Prague of 1635, the Habsburgs had managed to impose their claims on the German estates.⁸⁰ Sully suggested, therefore, that “*France* would (...) endeavour to gain the neighbouring Princes and States to join with them in their Design; especially the Princes of *Germany*, who were most immediately and dangerously menaced with being subjected to the Tyranny of the House of Austria”.⁸¹ In the context of the period 1629-1635, Sully's suggestion can thus be read as an almost immediate reaction to the unfolding scenes of the theatre of the Thirty Years War. These far reaching war aims could become more acceptable for the other states at war with the Habsburgs, as the underlying aim was re-formulated as the establishment of the balance of power, at the price of Habsburg territories and to the benefit of the smaller states.

Both, Sully and Campanella argued that the balance of power and universal monarchy respectively were the best means to avoid conflict and to achieve peace in Europe. However, not surprisingly, both men foremost pursued the interest of their king. Both concepts were used to advance the interest of France and Spain respectively, and both concepts aimed to make these interests more palatable to the other European powers within the state system. Not only were the interests of France and Spain pitched against each other, but so were also the theoretical arguments which underscored them.⁸² However, the concept of *interest* itself was increasingly analysed by political thinkers. This facilitated a more sophisticated and critical analysis of interstate relations.

III Conclusion and outlook: thinking the European state system

⁷⁹ The text of the edict can be found in P. H. Wilson, *The Thirty Years War. A Sourcebook* (Houndmills 2010), p. 114-117. See also M. R. Forster, “The Edict of Restitution (1629) and the Failure of Catholic Restoration” in O. Asbach/P. Schröder (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Thirty Years War* (Farnham 2014), p. 205-215.

⁸⁰ See A. Wandruszka, *Reichspatriotismus und Reichspolitik zur Zeit des Prager Friedens von 1635* (Köln 1955) and M. Espenhorst, “The Peace of Prague – A Failed Settlement?” in O. Asbach/P. Schröder (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Thirty Years War* (Farnham 2014), p. 285-295.

⁸¹ Sully, *Memoirs*, p. 32.

⁸² As a consequence of this juxtaposition, the moment France gained power and influence to the detriment of Habsburg Spain, Louis XIV was now accused of pursuing universal monarchy. The struggle for empire is thus reflected in the – changing – references to balance of power politics and universal monarchy.

Writing after the Peace of Westphalia Samuel Pufendorf is the one who deserves recognition for advancing the reflection on the theoretical tools of international political thought. Pufendorf argued that to conceive of the various competing interests of states within a system of states allowed to consider these interests in a different framework.⁸³ For him the strict notion of absolute sovereignty was applicable neither to the Holy Roman Empire nor to interstate relations. On the former, he famously concluded that “the best account we can possibly give of the Present State of Germany, is to say, That it comes very near a System of States, in which one Prince or General of the League excells the rest of the Confederation”.⁸⁴ What he effectively argued for was a system-based concept of sovereignty which would allow states to enter into agreements without giving up their sovereignty entirely. A “system results when several neighbouring states are so connected by perpetual alliance that they renounce the intention of exercising some portions of their sovereign power, above all those which concern external defence, except with the consent of all, but apart from this the liberty and independence of the individual states remain intact”.⁸⁵ The state is meant to understand and pursue the long term interest. Pufendorf distinguishes between the office and the person holding the office, which means that “a certain Method of governing” is prescribed to the person of the ruler.⁸⁶ Pufendorf thus reformulates the concept of interest, which in his account becomes less subjective, because it needs to be perceived within the framework of a system of states. In his criticism of the balance of power doctrine the Abbé Saint Pierre developed this argument further. We can, therefore, discern an important shift in the way interstate relations are discussed in the middle of the seventeenth century. The concepts of universal monarchy and balance of power were not sufficiently able to reflect the increasing complexities of European interstate relations.

⁸³ This in turn allowed natural law to be meaningful for regulating interstate relations in this specific context. But this is not the place to pursue this question further. Meinecke and Dufour over-emphasise the importance of interest for Pufendorf’s international thought. See F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson* (Munich 1960), p. 264-286 and A. Dufour, “Pufendorfs föderalistisches Denken und die Staatsräsonlehre” in *Samuel von Pufendorf und die europäische Frühaufklärung*, ed. by F. Palladini/G. Hartung (Berlin 1996), p. 122. More nuanced is the argument by D. Boucher, *Political Theories of International Relations* (Oxford 1998), p. 246: “It is certainly the case that in trying to accommodate self-interest with the universal standards of conduct expressed in the Natural Law, the ethical constraint often appears to be extremely weak, and even subordinate to the Reason of State”.

⁸⁴ S. Pufendorf, *The Present State of Germany*, ed. by M. J. Seidler, (Indianapolis 2007), p. 178. See also P. Schröder, “The Constitution of the Holy Roman Empire after 1648: Samuel Pufendorf’s Assessment in his *Monzambano*” in *Historical Journal* 42 (1999), p. 961-983 and M. Seidler, “Monstrous’ Pufendorf: Sovereignty and System in the *Dissertations*” in *Monarchism and Absolutism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by C. Cuttita/G. Burgess (London 2011), p. 159-175.

⁸⁵ S. Pufendorf, *On the Duty of Man and Citizen*, ed. by J. Tully (Cambridge 1991), (II-8-15) p. 145. On the innovative and modern character of Pufendorf’s position, even in relation to discussions about the European Union and human rights see D. Boucher, “Resurrecting Pufendorf and capturing the Westphalian moment”, p. 572-577 and more generally W. Maihofer, “Schlußwort: Was uns Pufendorf noch Heute zu sagen hat” in *Samuel Pufendorf und seine Wirkungen bis auf die heutige Zeit*, ed. by B. Geyer/H. Goerlich (Baden-Baden 1996), p. 223-282.

⁸⁶ S. Pufendorf, *Of the Law of Nature and Nations*, transl. and ed. by B. Kennet (London 1717), (VII-VI-9) p. 695.