

Politics and Culture in Europe, 1650–1750



Ideology and Foreign Policy in Early Modern Europe (1650–1750)

Edited by
David Onnekink and Gijs Rommelse

Ideology and Foreign Policy in Early Modern Europe (1650–1750)

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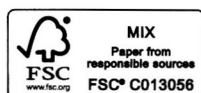
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IDEOLOGY AND FOREIGN POLICY
IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE
(1650–1750)

POLITICS AND CULTURE IN EUROPE, 1650–1750

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Focusing on the years between the end of the Thirty Years' War and the end of the War of the Austrian Succession, this series seeks to broaden scholarly knowledge of this crucial period that witnessed the solidification of Europe into centralized nation states and created a recognizably modern political map. Bridging the gap between the early modern period of the Reformation and the eighteenth century of colonial expansion and industrial revolution, these years provide a fascinating era of study in which nationalism, political dogma, economic advantage, scientific development, cultural interests and strategic concerns began to compete with religion as the driving force of European relations and national foreign policies.

The period under investigation, the second half of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth, corresponds with the decline of Spanish power and the rise of French hegemony that was only to be finally broken following the defeat of Napoleon in 1815. This shifting political power base presented opportunities and dangers for many countries, resulting in numerous alliances between formerly hostile nations attempting to consolidate or increase their international influence, or restrain that of a rival. These contests of power were closely bound up with political, cultural and economic issues: particularly the strains of state building, trade competition, religious tension and toleration, accommodating flows of migrants and refugees, the birth pangs of rival absolutist and representative systems of government, radical structures of credit, and new ways in which wider publics interacted with authority.

Despite this being a formative period in the formation of the European landscape, there has been relatively little research on it compared to the earlier Reformation, and the later revolutionary eras. By providing a forum that encourages scholars to engage with the forces that were shaping the continent – either in a particular country, or taking a trans-national or comparative approach – it is hoped a greater understanding of this pivotal era will be forthcoming.

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Introduction

David Onnekink and Gijs Rommelse

The particulars of the Spanish Partition Treaties caused an uproar in the House of Commons when they became public in 1700.¹ First of all, the actual conclusion of the treaties was disputed. Negotiated in secret by confidants of Louis XIV and William III, Parliament and even some of the Cabinet ministers were kept in the dark about the proceedings. The subsequent impeachment procedures against those ministers responsible for the conclusion of the treaties signified a parliamentary encroachment upon the royal prerogative. No longer could kings conduct foreign policy without paying any heed to the views of the political nation.² Second, the debates over the treaties were partly the result of partisan animosity. The crumbling Whig junto still clinging to power after the Peace of Ryswick (1697) had finally collapsed and its members were now hounded by the Tories. Criticizing past foreign policy became a Tory tactic to demonize the Whig party.³ The dispute over the treaties illustrates how foreign policy had now also become subject to the rage of party. Third, such partisan views on foreign policy had developed within the context of new views and theories on foreign policy. Charles Davenant, for example, argued that the treaties would empower France and therefore disturb the balance of power in Europe.⁴

The domestic struggle over the Partition Treaties could be explained as a highly ideologically charged debate over foreign policy incited by partisan rage. Alternatively, it could be argued that the utilization of partisan language was a strategy to oust and discredit opponents in a cynical struggle for power, rather than a reflection of any sincere belief in guiding principles for foreign policy. Likewise, the nature of the balance of power is anything but clear. Did the late

¹ Chester Kirby, 'The four lords and the Partition Treaty', *American Historical Review*, 52/3 (1947): pp. 477–90.

² The French ambassador Tallard was astounded about these proceedings, 'car comme le droit incontestes jusqu'à present aux Rois d'Angleterre est celuy de faire des traittes et des alliances tout ce que peut faire le parlement, c'est de ne point ayder'. Tallard to Louis, 14 June 1699, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, Cahiers Politiques Angleterre 186, fol. 135r/v.

³ See, for instance, the comment of the Brandenburg envoy, Frederick Bonnet, 1/12 April 1701, British Library, London, Additional MSS 30000E, fol. 121v.

⁴ Charles Davenant, 'An essay upon the balance of power', *The political and commercial works of that celebrated writer Charles D'Avenant*, ed. Charles Whitworth (5 vols, London, 1771), vol. 3.

seventeenth century witness the emergence of a balance between European states, based on rational calculation of power and interest, or were ideas about general peace, collective security, liberty and religion still influential? Or, indeed, was the balance of power itself a theory or the result of some political ideology? These are the sorts of themes that this volume aspires to deal with.

Evan Luard, in his study on early modern international relations, described the period of religious warfare (1559–1648) as an ‘ideological age’.⁵ Likewise, the revolutionary era of the late eighteenth century, the nationalist nineteenth century and indeed the total wars of the twentieth century have been regarded as ideological in nature. This leaves the period spanning the century after the Peace of Westphalia (1648), as one often described as cynical in nature, sandwiched between ideological ages.

Most historians acknowledge that the Peace of Westphalia and the Peace of the Pyrenees (1659) changed the international ‘system’.⁶ The bipolar Habsburg-Valois/Bourbon system evolved into a multipolar system dominated by the ‘pentarchy’, which materialized in the early eighteenth century.⁷ The Peace of Westphalia also heralded the dawn of a ‘modern’ system of international relations in which the sovereign state was the main actor.⁸ This period between roughly 1650 and 1750 is generally seen as one in which international relations, warfare and foreign policy seemed to be guided by interests of state, cynical and rational calculation. Apparently an international system evolved which was based on sovereignty, a dismissal of religion as a principle in foreign policy and an aggressive pursuit of dynastic and national interests. The Anglo-Dutch wars seemed to illustrate rational and cynical calculation and the emergence of mercantilism as a means to increase power. Interconfessional alliances, such as during the Nine Years War (1688–97), seemed to underline the fact that the era of religious conflict had passed.

Early modern historians have paid little attention to international relations theory, but arguably the underlying assumption of many works has been realist in nature. This is evident in the wave of publications by a generation of revisionist historians who worked in the 1970s and discarded old-fashioned notions of foreign

⁵ Evan Luard, *The balance of power. The system of international relations, 1648–1815* (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1992).

⁶ On the problem related to the term ‘system’ (which implies a mechanical rather than a sociopolitical understanding of international relations) see, for instance, Jeremy Black, *European international relations 1648–1815* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), introduction.

⁷ Heinz Duchhardt, *Balance of Power und Pentarchie. Internationale Beziehungen 1700–1785* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1997), pp. 7ff.

⁸ Konrad Repgen, ‘Der Westfälische Friede und die Ursprünge des europäischen Gleichwichts’, in Konrad Repgen, *Von der Reformation zur Gegenwart. Beiträge zu Grundfragen der neuzeitlichen Geschichte* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1988); Heinz Duchhardt (ed.), *Westfälische Friede. Diplomatie, politische Zäsur, kulturelles Umfeld, Rezeptionsgeschichte* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998).

policy.⁹ Their nuanced and erudite studies, based on a thoroughly empirical approach and on massive primary research, replaced the often nationalist studies of the past. Although not insensitive to the influence of political ideology and religion, it seems fair to say that revisionist studies were heavily influenced by realist presuppositions. In the economic sphere, much was made of the aggressive pursuit of national interest by means of mercantilism. Whereas French Colbertism led to protectionism, Anglo-Dutch relations were also marked by economic warfare in the pursuit of what Charles Wilson described as ‘profit and power’.¹⁰ International relations were dominated by the theme that realists hold as an axiom: the quest for power, whether military or economic. Foreign policy was presented as a cynical game for power, in which morality or religion, let alone ideology, played no role of importance.

The persistent dominance of realism is now slowly being eroded by, for instance, the impact of the Cultural Turn upon what has been described as the New Diplomatic History. The cultural agency of diplomats has attracted particular attention.¹¹ In international relations theory the dominant view of realism is now increasingly challenged by alternative interpretation models, most notably constructivism, idealism and post-structuralism. Whereas realism emphasizes the anarchism, materialism and power-political nature of international relations, constructivism rather argues that most aspects of international relations are subject to social and intellectual construction. According to the ‘founder’ of constructivism, Alexander Wendt, ‘the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and [...] the identities and interests of

⁹ E.g. Ragnhild Hatton (ed.), *Louis XIV and Europe* (London: Norton, 1976); John Rule (ed.), *Louis XIV and the craft of kingship* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1970); Geoffrey Symcox, *Victor Amadeus II. Absolutism in the Savoyard state, 1675–1730* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983); Paul Sonnino, *Louis XIV and the origins of the Dutch War* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); John Wolf, *Louis XIV* (New York: Norton, 1968); Herbert Rowen, *John de Witt. Grand pensionary of Holland, 1625–1672* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Johan Aalbers, ‘Holland’s financial problems (1713–1733) and the wars against Louis XIV’, in Alistair Duke and Coen Tamse (eds), *Britain and the Netherlands VI. War and society* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), pp. 79–93; Martinus Franken, ‘The general tendencies and structural aspects of foreign policy and diplomacy of the Dutch Republic in the latter half of the seventeenth century’, *Acta Historiae Neerlandica*, 3 (The Hague/Leiden, 1968): pp. 1–42.

¹⁰ Charles Wilson, *Profit and power. A study of England and the Dutch wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

¹¹ E.g. Marika Keblusek, Hans Cools and Badeloch Noldus (eds), *Your humble servant. Agents in early modern Europe* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren 2006); John Watkins, ‘Towards a new diplomatic history of medieval and early modern Europe’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 38/1 (2008), pp. 1–14.

purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature'.¹² Related to constructivism but more concerned with the importance of identities and discourses is post-structuralism. According to Lene Hansen, 'foreign policy decision-makers are situated within a larger political and public sphere, [...] their representations as a consequence draw upon and are formed by the representations articulated by a larger number of individuals, institutions, and media outlets'.¹³ Post-structuralists ride the wave of the 'Linguistic Turn', which has now finally infiltrated the study of international relations.¹⁴ It is difficult to disagree with Ken Booth's statement that 'it is vital that students of IR give language more attention than hitherto, as words shape as well as reflect reality'.¹⁵ Hence whereas realists take concepts like 'state', 'security' and 'power' for granted, post-structuralists would argue that they are indeed concepts, constructs, and therefore liable to interpretation. Idealism challenges the realist cynical preconception and argues for the power of ideas and morality in international relations. In his study on the relationship between ideas and international relations, Daniel Philpott emphasizes the importance of ideas for the development of international relations.¹⁶

Arguably, many of these developments following the Cultural and Linguistic Turns as well as alternative IR-theories converge on specific aspects of international relations, as social and political constructions are made through the media of the image and the word. The power of language is one of the central themes in a number of chapters in this volume. Whether these theoretical developments in International Relations Theory are applicable to the early modern situation remains to be seen, but they certainly provide openings for rethinking it.

Such theoretical developments thus provide incentives as well as instruments to rethink the role of ideology in the early modern age. The editors of this volume take a phenomenological approach to the concept of 'ideology'; no attempt has been made to provide a definition that would do full justice to ideology in the early modern age. Ideology is normally associated with the period after the French Revolution and regarded as a 'modern' concept. Some historians may therefore argue that studying ideology in an early modern context would in fact be anachronistic. Others, however, have recently become more comfortable with applying the term to the early modern age, in particular in relation to foreign policy. Rory McEntegart, for instance, investigated the ideological contents of the foreign policy of Henry VIII, whilst David Armitage tracked the *Ideological origins of*

¹² Alexander Wendt, *Social theory of international politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 1.

¹³ Lene Hansen, *Security as practice. Discourse analysis and the Bosnian War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 7.

¹⁴ Duncan Bell, 'The Cambridge School and world politics: critical theory, history and conceptual change', www.theglobalsite.ac.uk/press/103bell.pdf, pp. 2–22.

¹⁵ Cited in Duncan Bell, 'The Cambridge School'.

¹⁶ Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in sovereignty. How ideas shaped modern international relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

the British Empire.¹⁷ In particular, Steven Pincus, starting with *Protestantism and patriotism. Ideology and the making of English foreign policy 1650–1668* and his recent *1688. The first modern revolution*, consistently pleaded for understanding international relations within an ideological framework.¹⁸ Most of these historians tend not to clearly define the term ‘ideology’, but two authoritative sources seem to provide ample scope for this by defining ideology loosely. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, an ideology is ‘a systematic scheme of ideas, usually relating to politics or society, or to the conduct of a class or group, and regarded as justifying actions’ whereas the *Encyclopedia Britannica* describes it as ‘a system of ideas that aspires both to explain the world and to change it’.

International relations and foreign policy during the early modern age have been somewhat neglected fields over the past two decades or so. Recently a number of studies have been published in which religious and ideological factors have been taken into account.¹⁹ However, there are few or no studies that study international relations comparatively, and with a clear focus on the role of ideology. The problem this volume will focus on is how ideology could play a role in international relations in a period usually associated with a process of ‘de-ideologisation’ of the international system during a transformative stage in European interstate relations. The contention of the editors of this volume is that political and economic ideology ‘emerged’ in foreign policy in the century following the Peace of Westphalia. A number of preconditions for this contention can be identified.

First of all, the post-1648 period was transformative because new theories on political economy were entertained, most notably mercantilism. Moreover, the active meddling of the state with the economy, the willingness of a government even to go to war for economic reasons (arguably based on an economic ideology) was something new as from the 1650s, most notably in the Anglo-Dutch wars. Rulers, politicians and officials came to understand that commerce, shipping and manufacture could be made to serve the state’s political, diplomatic and military capacities. Economic wealth, after all, created the tax base from which governments tapped the resources required to build and maintain armies, navies and bureaucracies. The idea that economic expansion contained the key to the

¹⁷ Rory McEntegart, ‘Towards an ideological foreign policy: Henry VIII and Lutheran Germany, 1531–1547’, in Susan Doran and Glenn Richardson (eds), *Tudor England and its neighbours* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006); David Armitage, *The ideological origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁸ Steven Pincus, *Protestantism and patriotism. Ideology and the making of English foreign policy 1650–1668* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Steven Pincus, *1688. The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

¹⁹ Such as Tony Claydon *Europe and the making of England, 1660–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Pincus, *Protestantism and patriotism* and Andrew Thompson, *Britain, Hanover and the Protestant interest, 1688–1756* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006).