A Dysfunctional Empire? The European context to Don García de Silva y Figueroa's embassy to Shah Abbas

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The fall of the strategic fortress and island of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf to a joint Anglo-Persian assault in 1622 was, for many observers, highly symptomatic of the decline of the Catholic Monarchy overseas, unable to defend one of the older and most prized fortified possessions of the Portuguese *Estado da Índia* against a long-predicted attack. It was, in some ways, also illustrative of the loss of strength and reputation suffered by the multi-national Monarchy under the reign of Philip III of Castile, II of Portugal (1598-1621), and in particular of the failure of the Portuguese and Castilians to realize the benefits of the Union of Spanish Crowns inaugurated in 1580 when Philip II had become king of Portugal, in what had proved to be an ephemeral moment of triumph. Coming also at the beginning of the reign of the young Philip IV, the fall of Hormuz could also be interpreted as a posthumous indictment of the hesitant policies of the Duke of Lerma, all-powerful minister of Philip III, at a time when the new *valido*, Don Gaspar de Guzmán, Count-Duke of Olivares, embarked upon a policy of energetic reform and forceful restoration of the Monarchy's international reputation. Tragically, all he achieved was to plunge Spain into an even more disastrous European war, one which made any controlled reform of the *Estado da Índia*, and of Spain itself, even more difficult.

If the transition between the two reigns can be interpreted as a missed opportunity to implement much-needed reform on account of the urgent pressures caused by a long war which wiser counsels would have avoided, and which eventually led to the secession of Portugal, the earlier period can be analysed as the wasted opportunity to address the Monarchy's structural problems and foreign-policy challenges in unprecedented conditions of relative peace. In effect, the peace treaty with England in 1604 and the twelve-year truce reached with the Dutch Republic soon after, in 1609, offered a rare opportunity for an overstretched multi-national Monarchy to restore its finances and consider its long-term imperial needs. And yet the impression that most

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commentators had at the end of the reign of Philip III was that things had gone from bad to worse, and that an unfavourable peace had instead strengthened the Monarchy's enemies, especially in the Portuguese Indies – so much so that it might be better to consider an all-out war again. Why had this happened? The complex diplomacy conducted by the Council of State of the Monarchy with Shah Abbas of Persia from 1601, culminating in the high-profile but remarkably sterile embassy by Don García de Silva y Figueroa between 1614 and 1619, offers an interesting but often neglected case study of a dysfunctional empire as it began to visibly decline.[1]

The idea of an anti-Ottoman alliance with Persia was very old, harking back to the Timurid and Turkmen dynasties of the fifteenth century, and before that (at a time when the Mamluks were the key enemy) to late medieval crusading diplomacy with the Mongol successor states.[2] Even before acquiring Portugal, Philip II was considering sending a joint embassy with his cousin emperor Maximilan II to agree an anti-Ottoman alliance with Shah Tahmasp, and in December 1566 he commissioned a report from Alonso de Tovar, his agent in Lisbon, concerning the navigation to Hormuz. However it was king Sebastian who finally sent an envoy in 1572, Miguel Abreu de Lima, who also carried letters from Philip II announcing the victory of Lepanto. He was poorly received in Persia, and it was only during the reign of Shah Abbas (1587-1629) that the Persians seized the initiative. In the summer of 1601, his envoy Husain Ali Beg, who had travelled to Europe with the English adventurer Anthony Sherley, entered Valladolid, offering an alliance to Philip III, and soon the Council of State was discussing whom to send as return ambassador. Sherley and Husein Ali Beg had previously been at the courts of Emperor Rudolf II and pope Clement VIII, so there was a triple diplomatic exchange at that point. Although Rome persisted with its Persian policy, sending the Carmelites as missionaries, the papacy lacked an army, which is what mattered to Shah Abbas. After some delays, Luís Pereira de Lacerda, an experienced *fidalgo*, was finally dispatched in 1603, reaching Persia in 1604 in the company of a number of Augustinian friars who joined him in Goa.[3] One of these friars was Belchior dos Anjos, a man who over the years would play an important role as informer to the court and as critic of succes-

1 For a detailed account of the embassy see Luis Gil Fernández, *El Imperio luso-español y la Persia Safávida* (2 vols., Madrid, 2006-2009). See also Rubén González Cuerva, "El Turco en las puertas: la política oriental de Felipe III", in José Martínez Millán & María Antonietta Visceglia (eds.), *La Monarquía de Felipe III* (4 vols., Madrid, 2007-2008), vol. IV, pp. 1447-1479.

2 In Castile the embassy of Ruy González de Clavijo to Timur's court (1403-6) provided an important precedent.

3 For details of this embassy see Roberto Gulbenkian, *L'Ambassade en Perse de Luis Pereira de Lacerda et des pères portugais de l'ordre de Saint-Agustin, Belchior dos Anjos et Guilherme de Santo Agostinho 1604-1605* (Lisbon, 1972). The involvement of the Augustinians was sponsored by the Archbishop of Goa Aleixo de Meneses, who in 1602 had used the new diplomatic context to establish a Christian mission in Isfahan, introducing Jerónimo da Cruz and António de Gouvea to Persia. Philip III was sceptical of their missionary prospects but hoped to use the friars as informers.

sive envoys. Leaving aside the Augustinian's accusation of lack of enthusiasm for the task, Lacerda's embassy was coloured by the recent Persian conquest of Lar and almost immediate seizure of the island of Bahrein, which belonged to the king of Hormuz, himself a vassal of Portugal. Shah Abbas, through the governor of Shiraz and Lar, the able Aliverdi Khan, now posed an immediate threat to Hormuz. Lacerda's embassy was also weakened by the modesty of the present sent from Spain and Goa. Unsurprisingly, unable to obtain the restitution of Bahrein, the Portuguese envoy was keen to return to India.[4]

Worse was to come soon, as Shah Abbas learnt that in November 1606 Emperor Rudolf II had finally made peace with the Ottomans, after a long war of attrition in Hungary. The Persian ruler was sorely disappointed with his potential allies, because (as he complained) he regularly fought in person in his western frontiers of Armenia and Azerbaijan. It was now the turn of the Emperor's Spanish relative, Philip III, to respond to the demands of practical military commitment from an increasingly suspicious Shah, who was only one step away from attacking Hormuz. The Persian ruler, however, remained keen to continue the diplomacy, offering to include a commercial monopoly of Persian silk that would damage the Ottomans.[5] Although this policy produced a few important embassies departing from Persia, including one in early 1608 by Robert Sherley (Anthony's brother, and a faithful servant to Shah Abbas) and another a year later by Dengiz Beg (who was accompanied by the Augustinian friar António de Gouveia, future 'bishop of Cyrene' in charge of the Eastern Christians), none was as potentially important as the one sent as a response from Spain by Philip III in 1614, led by Don García de Silva y Figueroa. This was, finally, a high-profile, lay ambassador with political authority, a huge retinue and a worthy present, as repeatedly requested by the Shah. Unfortunately, the Castilian would not be more successful than his Portuguese predecessors. One problem was that he could not offer much in terms of a military offensive in the Eastern Mediterranean (Shah Abbas expected a full-scale attack on Cyprus), whilst the commercial benefits of the silk contract under discussion remained unclear. The second problem was that Don García was appointed very slowly and took years to reach his destination: by the time he got there, looking very old, the English traders had also arrived, and many of his instructions seemed dated.

The most obvious question is why the loss of Hormuz was not prevented, when the possibility of an attack had long been foretold. Beyond the various recriminations

4 According to the Augustinian, Lacerda was too quick to request permission to leave, and Philip III was not pleased by his behaviour, but his situation was not different from Don García's many years later (who, incidentally, would also be criticized by the same Belchior dos Anjos for not trying hard enough): it was hard to ask Shah Abbas to continue fighting the Turks *and* to return Bahrein without at the same time offering a firm military commitment from Spain.

5 This idea, like others, was generated by Anthony Sherley, who had settled in Spain as a kind of free-lance *arbitrista* for the oriental policies of Philip III.

that ensued, was the loss inevitable? Similarly, it is puzzling that after a number treatises had been discussed with Shah Abbas over many years and through various embassies, sometimes in great detail, nothing positive had come of it. Is it perhaps the case that there never was a solid basis for an agreement?

Turning, however, to the European context of the embassy, what seems most decisive is the Monarchy's inability to effectively respond to the challenge posed by the activities of the Dutch and English East India Companies in this same period. In large part, it can be argued that these competitors presented an intractable challenge, given their naval and financial superiority. To what extent can this be attributed to the competitive advantages of their novel form of commercial organisation? I would suggest that these structural differences notwithstanding, policy failures, beginning with the slow and indecisive nature of the political response in Spain, should not be overlooked. Both Portuguese and Castilian commentators often denounced the recurrent problems in the *Estado da Índia* – some even spoke of decline – and suggested remedies, and yet the overwhelming impression one gets is that very few substantial reforms got implemented (which is not to say that there were no changes), whilst each new defeat came as a shock. The extent to which the Monarchy could have deployed its limited resources more effectively in Portuguese Asia – which includes the extent to which it set the right priorities in terms of foreign policy – is crucial to assessing what the perceived competitive advantage of the Dutch and English Companies consisted of.

From this perspective, one particular issue deserves closer scrutiny than it has usually received: why were the Monarchy's efforts to combine the resources of Portugal and Castile in Asia so ineffective? After 1580, the same king had at its disposal the means to coordinate the separate overseas empires of the Portuguese and Castilians. Portugal dominated the African route around the Cape and pursued commercial interests all the way to Macao in China, whilst the Indies of the Crown of Castile traded across the Pacific, from Peru and Mexico to the Philippines, which had been recently colonized. Hence the two empires met in East Asia, from Japan to the Moluccas. Since in the southern islands Portuguese power had been receding in the face of the advance of assertive Muslim dynasties in Ternate, Sumatra and Java, putting the strategic Portuguese enclave of Malacca under pressure, Castilian help from New Spain would appear to be providential.[6] And yet the mutual jealousy and continuous conflict between the two Spanish nations (here using 'Spain' in the multi-national, pan-Hispanic sense that prevailed in that period) often took precedence over any effective cooperation within this first truly global empire. As we

[6] The extent of Portuguese difficulties in the Spice Islands is emphasized in Manuel Lobato, "The Moluccan Archipelago and Eastern Indonesia in the second half of the 16th century in the light of Portuguese and Spanish accounts", in Francis Dutra & João Camilo dos Santos (eds.), *The Portuguese and the Pacific* (Santa Barbara, 1995), pp. 38-63.

shall see, this problem is far from peripheral to understanding the sad fate of Don García's long and accident-prone embassy to Shah Abbas: one could argue that Portuguese sabotage, combined with unrealistic assumptions, ensured that the embassy failed to advance the interests of the Monarchy and its peoples, and handed the English traders, the common enemy, an unexpected triumph.

The nature of the Union of Crowns and its internal tensions

The incorporation of Portugal by Philip II of Castile into his vast domains despite the existence of a rival candidate, the Prior of Crato Dom António, was both a plausible succession by right, and an act of force backed by an army of 40,000 led by the Duke of Alba. The agreement of the elites of the country to the new situation was carefully negotiated by Philip II's Portuguese servant Cristóbal de Moura, and the conditions were enshrined in the acts of the crucial *Cortes* of Tomar of 1581, which cleverly took as a template a previous document of 1499 (a time when it had seemed likely that a Portuguese prince would succeed the Catholic kings to the throne of Castile). These statutes guaranteed that Portugal would be ruled by its laws and through its own institutions. In effect, Philip and his successors would consider themselves kings of Portugal separately from their other titles in Spain and elsewhere, and they would rule Portugal through Portuguese naturals. Their overseas empire too would remain a distinct concern of the Portuguese, not to be merged with the Indies of Castile, and would be ruled from Lisbon by the king himself, or by a viceroy assisted by a Council.[7] The formula of separate jurisdictions, which alone made the Union acceptable to the Portuguese, was far from original to the new situation. In fact, it was most characteristic of the multi-national Monarchy as a whole, which in Europe should be seen as a dynastic conglomerate rather than an empire.[8] The model in fact had been created in the Crown of Aragon (itself a dynastic conglomerate) during the Middle Ages, and throughout the sixteenth century, following the Union of the Crowns of Castile and Aragon and the acquisition of further territories in Italy and Northern Europe, developed into a regular system of viceroyalties or governorships reporting to the court, which was increasingly fixed at the heart of Castile for practical reasons rather than legal ones. Hence the Habsburg (originally Burgundian) inheritance in Flanders, or the territories conquered in Italy (albeit on the basis of some legal rights), were ruled by very similar principles of local auton-

[7] This was the Council of State in Portugal, not to be confused with the Council of Portugal at the court, or with the general Council of State for the whole Monarchy, also at the court. One of the most successful innovations of the Habsburgs was also to create a Treasury Council (*Conselho de Fazenda)* modelled on the Castilian precedent.

[8] That is, the king of Castile had no jurisdiction as such over non-Castilian territories, although some hardliners with an imperialist vision claimed a right of conquest, for example in Portugal itself.

omy to those that applied to Catalonia or Portugal in the Iberian Peninsula.[9] What was new to the accession of Portugal was not that foreigners were excluded from royal office, but that the kingdom had its own separate colonial and trading empire to exploit and to protect. Moreover, the role of Castile as the leading kingdom of the Monarchy was by 1580 very clear, especially after Philip II built there his magnificent monastery-palace of *El Escorial* (by contrast to his father Charles V, who still had an itinerant court). It was also well known that the increasingly permanent physical distance of the king was resented in the non-Castilian territories of the Monarchy, most obviously in Flanders, were it had helped provoke a major rebellion that in 1580 continued unabated. Hence the *Cortes* of Tomar were conducted under the shadow of a very real fear of Castilianization that meant that some its provisions (including the exclusive use of the Portuguese language) were particularly clear, more so than those that applied to the territories of the Crown of Aragon also in Spain. While the fears and tensions were very similar, and the institutional arrangements often comparable, the Portuguese were able to set up specific legal hurdles to protect their national interests in what in effect was an uneasy compromise.[10]

Three particular arrangements are worthy of note. First, as I have mentioned, the *Estado da Índia* was to be ruled without any interference from the Council of the Indies of Castile, and it is interesting that whilst Portuguese traders were allowed to operate in the Spanish Indies (and Portuguese New Christians in particular developed a global commercial network), they would retain exclusive control of their Asian trade. In effect, a Portuguese sphere of influence in the Spice Islands, China and Japan was being protected from the old Castilian claims to re-interpret the line agreed at the treaty of Tordesillas so as to give them access to those territories, a claim made dangerous by their recent settlement of the Philippines.[11] Second, if the

9 Some historians, taking the lead from some contemporary Portuguese representations, such as the triumphal arches for the royal visit of 1619 publicised by João Baptista Lavanha, talk about a *dual* Crown, Portuguese and Castilian. Strictly speaking this is inaccurate, it was a multiple Crown. For a classic analysis of the Spanish Monarchy as a 'composite' entity see John Elliott, "A Europe of composite monarchies", *Past & Present*, 137 (1992), pp. 48-71.

10 For an account of Tomar and its aftermath see the doctoral dissertation by Fernando Bouza Álvarez, *Portugal en al Monarquía Hispánica (1580-1640): Felipe II, las cortes de Tomar y la génesis del Portugal Católico* (2 vols., Madrid, 1987). Of particular importance for the negotiations was Cristóbal de Moura's early discovery in October 1578 of an old 'contract' of 1499 between king Manuel and the Portuguese Cortes, by which Manuel's son prince Miguel would inherit the kingdom as well as Aragon and Castile. Although the eventual death of the child frustrated that first Union of Crowns, many of the dispositions of that agreement, all directed at ensuring full Portuguese control of their own affairs, including those of their overseas trading empire then still centred upon Africa, became the model for the accession of Philip II. It was the contractual nature of such legal privileges in the mind of the Portuguese (as the Cortes of 1619 would emphatically remind Philip III) which weakened subsequent attempts by the Crown to treat the statute of Tomar as a mere royal grace that may be revoked at any time, in turn pushing the hardline Castilianizers towards the thesis of a simple 'right of conquest'.

11 See Francisco Paulo Mendes da Luz, *O Conselho da Índia: Contributo ao estudo da história da administração e do comércio do ultramar português nos princípios do século XVII* (Lisbon, 1952), pp. 160-170 for the continuing debates under Philip III about the location of the line agreed at Tordesillas (1494), and the validity of the subsequent sale of any remaining Castilian rights to king John III by Charles V in the treaty of Saragossa (1529).

king was unable to rule directly from Lisbon and moved back to Castile, as he indeed did after 1583, he would leave a viceroy of the royal blood or, that failing, a native Portuguese (an aristocratic *junta* of Portuguese governors was also considered a safe alternative). What was to be avoided at all costs was a member of that Castilian courtier aristocracy with vast estates which de facto had emerged as the ruling elite of the Monarchy, and which often could be found acting as alter egos of the king in territories such as Aragon or Naples (despite regular but usually ineffective protests in these territories). Finally, when the king was away from the kingdom he would consult all decisions with a Council of Portugal that would follow the court, also exclusively made of Portuguese naturals. This solution to the problem of royal absenteeism was in fact identical to the one adopted for other territories, and there were Councils of Aragon, Italy and Flanders entirely separate from the Royal Council of Castile.

Judging the Union from the perspective of the eventual rebellion of Portugal in 1640, and especially in the light of the lasting consequences of its remarkable success (made possible by the inability of the Monarchy to simultaneously fight two fronts in the peninsula), it is a temptation to interpret the tensions that emerged after 1580 as simply revealing that the experiment itself was contra natura and bound to fail.[12] There certainly was a long-lasting tradition of mutual antipathy between Castilians and Portuguese which the dynastic unification did very little to dissolve, but of course the same can be said about Castilian relations with other Spanish nations like the Catalans, who had also rebelled in 1640. It is therefore equally important to retrieve the reasons why the incorporation of Portugal into a larger *Hispania* was for much of the sixteenth century understood by many to be a desirable, and even somewhat natural, outcome. Whilst seen from England or France the power of the Monarchy was essentially the power of 'Spain' (and increasingly also the Castilian language was known as 'Spanish', and Philip II 'king of Spain'), an older conception persisted by which Spain continued to be the Roman territory of *Hispania*, encompassing the whole peninsula without constituting a single nation (what some modern authors anachronistically refer to as 'Iberia'). In this respect, it was only after 1580 that Philip II and his descendants truly became kings of Spain, or, in the plural form, 'rey de las Españas', a title Philip eagerly adopted following the lead of humanist scholars. Well before 1580 many humanist writers and antiquarians, Catalans like Joan Margarit (an adviser of the Aragonese Trastamaras), or Portuguese

12 For Portuguese attitudes towards the Union see António de Oliveira, *Poder e oposição política no período filipino, 1580-1640* (Lisbon, 1991), and more recently Pedro Cardim, "Los Portugueses frente a la Monarquía Hispánica", in A. Álvarez Ossorio & B. García (eds.), *La Monarquía de las naciones* (Madrid, 2004), pp. 355-384.

like Damião de Góis (at the service of the Avis), no less than Castilians such as Ambrosio de Morales, had been cultivating that classical notion of *Hispania*, which was also personified in an emblem taken from a coin issued by emperor Galba. The point of debate was not whether *Hispania* included Portugal or the Aragonese kingdoms – it was perfectly obvious that it did – but rather the relative glory of ancient and modern *Lusitania* or *Tarraconense* as distinct from the Castilian heritage emphasized by Morales, whose antiquarian synthesis immediately came to dominate the field.[13] Within Spain, a variety of patriotisms competed for distinction without excluding a common horizon. For much of the sixteenth century the idea that Spain should be unified under *Christian* monarchical rule – sharing the myth of reconquest and crusade – was seen as perfectly compatible with the persistence of the different kingdoms and nations that composed it (the word 'nation' usually referring to an ethnic or linguistic group rather than a single unity of political sovereignty). The Union of Crowns, the fact that Philip II found himself a plausible heir to Portugal when King Sebastian died, was not purely accidental but rather the result of a long-standing policy of dynastic marriages and alliances that went back many decades and had important medieval precedents. However, it was also true that the notion of a unified Spain could most easily be appropriated by the unquestionably dominant partner in all those dynastic marriages, and that from as early as the twelfth century the kings of Castile had aspired to become 'emperors of Spain', subjecting all other rulers, Christian allies no less than Muslim enemies, to some form of subordination. Whilst the Union of Crowns of 1580, much like the Union of Castile and Aragon inaugurated by the Catholic kings in 1469, was undertaken in a spirit of legal equality (and one could argue that it was Ferdinand of Aragon, rather than Isabel of Castile, who most actively developed the pan-Hispanic idea), the gravitation of the court towards Castile soon demonstrated that the political dynamic would gradually lead to the assimilation of the many Christian kingdoms of Spain to the leadership, interests and language of Castile.[14] Going beyond the politically neutral Roman *Hispania*, the historical precedent of an all-Spanish Christian Visigothic kingdom previous to the Muslim conquest soon became the fundamental myth that made it possible to undercut, at least symbolically, the independent sovereignties

[13] For the humanist tradition of the *Hispania Illustrata* in Portugal consider in particular the example of André de Resende's *Antiquitatibus Lusitaniae*, published with the scholia by Diogo Mendes de Vasconcelos (Évora, 1593) and with dedications to both the last Portuguese king Henry of Bragança (dated 1580), and to Philip II as *Hispaniarum Rege*. For a discussion of Ambrosio de Morales, an Andalusian humanist at the service of Philip II whose *Corónica general de España* (Alcalá, 1574) suggested a powerful patriotic agenda with a Castilian emphasis, see Richard Kagan, *Clio and the Crown: The Politics of history in medieval and early modern Spain* (Baltimore, 2009), pp. 109-114.

[14] This was precisely the fear expressed in Portugal in 1579. Philip II sought to re-assure his future subjects by asking Cristóbal de Moura to tell them that they would be treated like the kingdoms of the Crown of Aragon, remaining separate and with all their privileges despite sharing a common lord. The Portuguese had good reasons to remain sceptical, as in Aragon and Catalonia tensions were mounting.

that had emerged during the centuries of "re-conquest" (the work by Ambrosio de Morales is an example of this).[15] The incorporation of Portugal therefore fulfilled an old dream of some, whilst exacerbating the fears of many others.

The very use of the concept of Spain was for these reasons ambiguous and, as a matter of fact, itself the location of a subtle political debate. To what extent should the common geographical and historical space called Spain also become a political unity, and what would that mean for its various nations? Precisely because he was writing under the independent Avis dynasty, the defence offered by the Portuguese humanist Damião de Góis of the honour of the whole peninsula in his *Hispania* (Louvain, 1542), against the negative image offered by the northern cosmographers Sebastian Münster and M. Vilanovanus (who paradoxically happened to be the Spaniard Miguel Servet writing in anonymity!) was, on the whole, politically unproblematic. Similarly, Camões in his *Lusíadas* had no hesitation to present Portugal as the crown of *nobre Espanha*. However, under the anxious dynamics created by the actual dynastic union any assertions or omissions became highly charged, and, for example, it might have caused offence had the Jesuit Juan de Mariana failed to include an account of Portuguese conquests in his epoch-making *Historia general de España* (1601), the first genuine attempt to combine the histories of all the medieval kingdoms of Spain into a single comprehensive narrative (and hence one which attached special meaning to the incorporation of Portugal to the Monarchy).[16] The book was an enormous success, but immediately there were some critics, demonstrating that keeping the balance between the various patriotic sensibilities was not easy.

During the reign of Philip III this subtle tension only grew. By 1609 Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola, himself an Aragonese patriot, clearly entered polemical waters when he presented his *Conquista de las Islas Molucas* – that is, the recovery of Ternate in 1606 by a combined effort of Portuguese and Castilians led by the Governor of the Philippines Pedro de Acuña – as the joint success of the 'Spanish' working together overseas, that is, as a model of what the Union of Crowns should be about.[17] The *Conquista* is carefully constructed so that the Spanish nation emerges as

[15] On the debates about the Visigothic myth of origins against Roman and pre-Roman native themes see Pablo Fernández-Albadalejo, "Entre "godos" y "montañeses": Avatares de una primera identidad española", in Alain Taillon (ed.), *Le sentiment national dans l'Europe méridionale aux XVI^e^ et XVII^e^ siècles* (Madrid, 2007), pp. 125-154.

[16] The first edition, in Latin, was in 1592. The vernacular text followed the second expanded edition of 1595. Richard Kagan, "Nación y patria en la historiografía de la época austríaca", in Taillon (ed.), *Le sentiment national*, pp. 205-225, offers a useful account of how historians in this period such as Mariana or Garibay constructed the idea of Spain by combining in different proportions the various traditions of the peninsula, so that the patriotism of each kingdom was not opposed to, but rather complemented, a wider identification with Spain.

[17] On Argensola and the *Conquista* see John Villiers, ""A truthful pen and an impartial spirit":

a synthesis of Portuguese and Castilian efforts. Constructive collaboration, which in effect meant the legitimacy of Castilian help to defend distant islands that in the 1570s the Governors of Goa had virtually condemned to 'olvido o desprecio', was made possible by the fact that the Monarch had inherited the various claims and counter-claims to those Spice Islands, rendering superfluous the polemic concerning their exact geographical position in relation to the line agreed at Tordesillas.[18] Interestingly, the polemical edge of the *Conquista* had different aspects. Seen from the Portuguese perspective, there was long-standing resentment of the pretensions of the Spanish in Manila to take over the control of the Moluccas, on the grounds that the Portuguese were unable to defend them either against local Muslim powers or against the Dutch (and Argensola claimed that the statutes of Tomar made provision for that kind of assistance). However, within the court the work had an additional meaning, as Argensola, whose patron was the President of the Council of the Indies the Count of Lemos (1603-1610), was also objecting to the ideology of extreme Castilian nationalism represented by his rival Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, best known for his great apologetic synthesis about the conquest of America, *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos* (1601-1615), but in fact also responsible during the previous reign for a fierce attack upon Aragonese particularism, and many other works of official historiography which constituted a wide-ranging apology of the policies of Philip II.[19] Pan-Hispanism could be, in some pens, an open ideology

Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola and the *Conquista de las Islas Malucas*", in Daniel Carey (ed.), *Asian Travel in the Renaissance* (Oxford, 2004), 449-73; also Joan-Pau Rubiés, "The Spanish contribution to the ethnology of Asia in the sixteenth ad seventeenth centuries", in Carey (ed.), *Asian Travel*, pp. 432-434.

18 Even Charles V's sale of his rights to the king of Portugal had been set aside by the most ambitious in Castile, on the grounds that the Portuguese were conquered subjects, or that Philip III could as king of Portugal sell back those rights to himself as king of Castile! Argensola is very far from any of this. In this I depart from historian Rafael Valladares, who in his meritorious *Castilla y Portugal en Asia (1580-1640): Declive imperial y adaptación* (Louvain, 2001), reads the *Conquista* as primarily seeking to support Castilian claims over Portuguese ones, interpreting the controversy surrounding Argensola's work as a reaction to its glorification of "la recuperación, con las armas de Castilla, de aquellas islas que se perdieron estando en la Corona de Portugal" (p. 23).

19 It is difficult to establish whether there was a consistent political vision behind the count of Lemos Pedro Fernández de Castro's patronage of the Aragonese Argensolas (Bartolomé and his brother Leonardo), and his commission of a historical work developing a pan-Hispanic theme, but in any case it seems clear that the Galician Lemos, who would distinguish himself as viceroy of Naples, represented a court faction attached to Lerma and his family which eventually lost out when, under the shadow of Baltasar de Zúñiga, Olivares emerged as new *valido*. The Argensolas themselves had risen at the service of Maximilan of Austria and of the former duke of Villahermosa Don Fernando de Aragón, disgraced for his involvement in the *alteraciones* of the Aragonese kingdom (1587-1591). Herrera clearly belonged to another group less keen on the idea of a multinational Spain, and totally failed to attract Lerma's support (Lerma and Lemos promoted Pedro de Valencia as chronicler of the Indies at his expense). Especially significant was Herrera's decision to claim the epic of the conquest of America for Castile alone, systematically substituting the work *españoles* found in many his sources for *castellanos*. In other contexts he was willing to speak about Spain more generally, but the point was not to credit other Spanish nations with the glory that he believed belonged to Castilians alone. His controversial attack on the constitutionalist claims of the Aragonese during the famous *alteraciones* of Ribagorça and Saragossa appeared in the first part of his *Historia general del Mundo* (Madrid, 1601), and was later developed in the third volume of the same work, his *Tratado, relación y discurso histórico de los movimientos de Aragón* (Madrid, 1612), both of which elicited contrary replies from Aragonese patriots, including the Argensolas and the Catalan Francisco Gilabert.

of Castilianization, in others, a defence of the prerogatives and honour of the Portuguese (or the Aragonese) in a common enterprise inspired by universalist ideals that should not be dominated by Castile alone.[20]

By the time of Don García de Silva y Figueroa's embassy the official discourse of Hispanic multi-nationalism remained largely intact, but at the court a powerful current of opinion seeking to overturn it was consolidating, and would make itself felt with particular force after the fall of the Lerma regime (which visibly declined in the summer of 1617, just as Don García, having clashed with the Portuguese viceroy Don Jerónimo de Azevedo in Goa, finally travelled to Hormuz).[21] It is not surprising that the he embassy itself both reflected this tension, and acted as one more catalyst of a hardening of antagonistic positions. A former *corregidor* from the town of Zafra in Extremadura, natural son of the Duke of Feria Don Gómez Suárez de Figueroa, and well connected at the court during Lerma's regime (his sponsor at the Council of State seems to have been Juan de Idiáquez, one of the most notable survivals from

20 Another angle of the problem was of course the Monarchy's need to respond to international criticism of its policies with alternative history writing. The annexation of Portugal is a case in point, with Philip II attempting to suppress the popular and lucid work by the independent Genoese historian Girolamo di Conestaggio, *Dell'unione del regno di Portogallo alla corona di Castiglia* (Genoa, 1585), which emphasized Philip II's Machiavellian politics over his legal rights. Antonio de Herrera was commissioned to write a reply, and he did so by cleverly taking all the facts from Conestaggio and changing the interpretation. For a brief discussion of Herrera's *Cinco libros de la historia de Portugal* (Madrid, 1591), see Kagan, *Clio and the Crown*, p. 136. Interestingly, Argensola's version of the Union was entirely positive towards Tomar (*Conquista*, p. 137) – yet again evidence that there was a moderate party that believed in a federal kind of pan-Hispanism not equivalent to Castilianization.

21 It is important to note however that critics of Lerma came from two sides. Some, like the Jesuit Mariana or the Franciscan Juan de Santa María, defended the idea of mixed government, which took the Crown of Aragon as a positive model, at the same time that they attacked the figure of the *privado* as a matter of principle (for the idea of mixed government see Joan-Pau Rubiés, "La idea del gobierno mixto y su significado en la crisis de la Monarquía Hispánica", *Historia Social*, 24 [1996], pp. 57-82. For Santa Maria's attack on the privado in his influential *República y Policía Christiana* of 1615, see Antonio Feros, *Kingship and Favoritism in the Spain of Philip III, 1598-1621* [Cambridge, 2000], pp. 236-238). But in retrospect one can see that these 'liberal' critics only offered a transition between two powerful *privanzas*, with the Duke of Uceda (Lerma's own son) and royal confessor Luis de Aliaga momentarily taking over (and yet still attracting a similar kind of criticism from Santa María). Olivares used these criticisms of corruption to destroy the Uceda faction, but the core constitutionalist views of the likes of Santa María were eventually sidelined.

the last years of Philip II), Don García clearly defended a vision of strong royal authority on the basis of a pan-Hispanic ideology.[22] Although in India he would be seen as a threat by Portuguese patriots, his connections at the court were broad and also encompassed some of the more liberal voices. For example, he was one of the patrons of the Christian humanist Pedro de Valencia, also from Zafra and a man noted for his intellectual rigour, heir to the intellectual tradition of biblical criticism represented by Benito Arias Montano (it was Don García who in 1607 introduced Pedro de Valencia to the Count of Lemos, who in turn had him appointed as Chronicler of the Indies over Antonio de Herrera).[23] It is perhaps symptomatic that Pedro de Valencia, writing to Philip III about the ills of Castile, denounced the corrupting influence of empire (in Europe and in the Indies), whilst unequivocally defending the idea of Spanish national unification: there should be no distinctions between Castilians, Aragonese and Portuguese, all should call themselves Spanish, share the same laws and speak the same language.[24] Don García may have shared similar views (rather than those of Aragonese patriots like Lemos's secretary Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola). He was also a friend of the fellow-*corregidor* and bibliophile Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, Count of Gondomar, himself a Galician patriot and key ambassador in England between 1613 and 1618, at the time Don García's own embassy to Shah Abbas. On the other hand, it was Don García who in 1599 had approved the *Décadas* by Antonio de Herrera for the Council of the Indies (before Lemos became its President) as a work worthy of "nuestra Castilla, a cuya nación tanto honor y alabanza se le sigue".[25]

22 There is evidence (unearthed by Luis Gil, in this volume) to suggest that in his life Don García pretended to be son of Don Lorenzo Suárez de Figueroa, third son of the second Count of Feria Don Lorenzo and of María de Toledo, probably in order to hide the fact that García was a natural son of the second brother of the Count, Gómez Suárez de Figueroa, the future Duke of Feria (upon the death of the eldest, Pedro Fernández de Córdoba). Don Gómez left Spain in 1554 with Philip II and married Jane Dormer in England, breaking his commitment to his brother's daughter Catalina. Don García's mother was María de Silva, from the town of Zafra.

23 In 1606 Pedro de Valencia dedicated to Don García his "Discurso en materia de guerra y estado" extracted from the works of Demosthenes.

24 The common language would of course be Castilian, which should simply become Spanish: "Discurso a Felipe III: Consideraciones de Pedro de Valencia, su cronista, sobre las enfermedades y salud del reino", Biblioteca Nacional de España, MS 7845, ff. 103-128. Valencia's reflection, inspired by his historical research (he was supposed to be writing a history of the reign of Philip III), shared with many *arbitristas* the ideal of the reign of the Catholic kings, with their crusading orientation. The problem was the entanglement with foreign territories, which prevented proper attention to the needs of Spain (a Spain dominated by Castile, its 'head and heart'). The text is noted by Gaspar Morocho Gayo in his "Introducción a una lectura de Pedro de Valencia", in Pedro de Valencia, *Obras Completas* (10 vols., León, 2006-2008), vol. V-1, pp. 58-59.

25 Herrera's involvement in a plot against Lerma in 1607 landed him in huge trouble (see Kagan, *Clio and the Crown*, pp. 192-197). We do not know whether Don García had a view about the bitter feud that ensued between Herrera and Valencia (others involved in the historiographical project, like the Count of Gondomar came to Herrera's rescue), but he had provided Lerma, through Lemos, with what he needed: a man other than Herrera to take the job of a general chronicler supervising all history writing in the kingdom.

The tension between pan-Hispanism and Castilianization is very apparent in the documents produced by Don García's embassy. The ambassador interpreted the Portuguese as sabotaging his embassy because of their anti-Castilian feelings, expressed from the very moment of his appointment. Interestingly, in his view the Portuguese rejection of Castile amounted to a rejection of Spain too: "not only do they dislike the Union with the Monarchy of Spain, but under no circumstance do they want to be named or perceived as Spaniards".[26] Even the testimony of Shah Abbas could be used to present the Portuguese resistance to use the higher title of 'king of Spain' as ridiculous.[27] Seen from this perspective, when the discalced Franciscan Hernando de Moraga (himself a native of New Spain), who in 1618 travelled through Isfahan on his way to Spain with letters from the Governor of the Philippines and witnessed the ambassador's reception, in his *Relación* for the king in early 1619 referred to some Portuguese gentlemen who betrayed Don García's trust as 'Spanish', it is likely that the choice of word was not casual: the term implied a criticism of Portuguese lack of solidarity, in the context of a denunciation of a betrayal of the ambassador's trust.[28] Don García's secretary Saulisante was particularly explicit about the importance of this national tension in his own account of the embassy, written for the Council of State upon his return in 1620: "the viceroy and the captains of Hormuz, as well as the other Portuguese hidalgos (but not the other people of India) have always shown a clear enemity, for no other reason, as they themselves declared, that it was not reasonable, and it was not fitting to the reputation of the Portuguese nation, that a Castilian ambassador should go to Persia. And they did not say this because they had a particular hatred towards this gentleman [the ambassador], but for a general hatred that they have to the Crown of Castile".[29] Beyond the

26 Don García de Silva y Figueroa, *Comentarios de la embajada que de parte del rey de España don Felipe III hizo al rey Xa Abas de Persia*, ed. Manuel Serrano y Sanz (2 vols., Madrid, 1903), vol. II, 124-5.

27 Figueroa, *Comentarios*, vol. II, p. 360.

28 "llegaron allí cuatro españoles y un fraile agustino, los tres portugueses", in Hernando de Moraga, *Relación breve de la embaxada y presente que la Magestad del Rey Don Felipe Tercero rey de las Españas, y emperador del Nuevo Mundo, hizo a Xa Abay rey de Persia clarísimo [...] Adicción a la Relación de las cosas del reyno de Persia* (s.l., 1619), f. 5r. One of these men, a Portuguese fidalgo, took with him Don García's letters for Spain, but then decided to return to Hormuz without returning the letters to the ambassador. Instead, according to Don García's secretary Saulisante who was sent to chase the letters, he sold them to the Captain of Hormuz, Don Luís da Gama, who was Don García's enemy and used to discredit him. See Appendix 1, "Relación de la Embaxada que hiço en Persia Don Garçía de Silva y Figueroa (1620) by his secretary Saulisante", edited by Joan-Pau Rubiés, *infra*, pp. 141-172.

29 "assí el virrey y capitanes de Ormuz, como los demás hidalgos portugueses (no lo siendo ansí toda la demás jente de la India), han siempre mostrado una enemistad clara, conçevida no más, como ellos deçían, porque *não era rração, nem comvin a reputação de nação portuguesa, que fora un embaxador castelchano a Persia*. Y esto no lo deçían por odio particular de este

psychological dimension, there also was jurisdictional aspect to the problem. The fact that the Monarchy's international diplomacy fell under the remit of the Council of State (which had appointed Don García) had deprived the Council of Portugal of its power over negotiations with Persia, even though the Portuguese continued to perceive the trade of Hormuz as entirely their own affair, that is, as an area where Castilians should have no say. It was particularly galling to have to offer financial support in Lisbon and Goa to a man sent by Madrid, and the ambassador saw very little of the money and goods that had been promised to him by the king.

Hence, at the turn of the seventeenth century the idea of Spain could express the simple recognition of a common geography and cultural heritage, or a long-standing project of political unification of the whole peninsula. That, in turn, could take a confederal form, based on keeping separate national traditions, or may express a desire for closer integration, which almost inevitably meant a process of identification of Spain with the laws, institutions and interests of Castile – a process most often led by the Monarchy's zealous ministers, who in this way were hoping to get things done more easily. Between 1580 and 1640 these two competing concepts were in tension, as far as Portugal was concerned (elsewhere in Spain the tension continues to cast its shadow to the present day). If the relatively recent rules of the *Cortes* of Tomar created specific restrictions, which in particular Philip II and his minister Cristóbal de Moura (influential until his death in 1613, that is, during much of Lerma's regime) felt obliged to honour, it is clear that a current of thought present at the court came to resent those restrictions, and offered ideological support for the progressive erosion of the constitutional pact of 1581.

The question whether Portugal had been conquered or inherited, and the contractual validity of the statute of Tomar, was the crucial Portuguese debate at the court between 1580 and 1640, with those defending the contractualist view increasingly in a minority. At the height of the debate (at the time of Olivares), the hardline Castilianizers argued that if Portugal had not been conquered, then it *should* be re-conquered.[30] There is in fact clear continuity in the project of closer pan-Hispanic integration based upon the supremacy of the royal will (a process that would allow the Monarchy to mobilize non-Castilian resources more easily) expressed by various writers during the reign of Philip III, which were also the two key decades of Hispano-Persian diplomacy: from the jurist Baltasar Álamos de Barrientos at the start of the reign, to the Count of Salinas, key member of the Council of Portugal at the height of Lerma's regime, to the count of Olivares after 1622, who to a very large

cavallero, sino general que tienen a esta Corona de Castilla" (Saulisante, *Relación de la embaxada que hiço en Persia Don Garçia de Silva y Figueroa* [1620], ed. Joan-Pau Rubiés, *infra*, p. 145).

30 See Fernando Bouza Álvarez, "1640 perante o Estatuto de Tomar: Memória e Juizo de Portugal dos Felipes", *Penélope. Fazer e Desfazer a História*, 9-10 (1993), pp. 17-27, p. 20.

extent inherited and implemented, with fatal consequences, the themes of that tradition.[31] In his *Discurso político* of 1598, written in prison and developing the ideas of former royal secretary Antonio Pérez, the translator of Tacitus Álamos de Barrientos was clear that the Portuguese resented their recent subjection to Castile, and in particular the distance of king and court, blaming their ill-fortune overseas to that subjection. It was important to note that unlike the Aragonese Crown, Portugal was a 'conquered kingdom' (not exactly the official position), and Castilian troops still manned a number of strategic fortresses. He concluded that "the Portuguese are enemies of the Castilians" and would seize any chance to change sovereign. As his main thesis was that the Monarchy could only rely on Castile and its *Indias Occidentales* (Flanders, Italy and the Crown of Aragon all presented equivalent problems of conditional loyalty), he thought that whilst in the short term the best policy was to visit those states, and in Portugal it may even be worth the while closing down the Castilian *presidios*, in the longer term the best policy would be to unify the elites and the laws, so that "Castile would remain Castile and Aragon and Portugal would become Castile".[32]

The case of the count of Salinas Diego de Silva y Mendoza (1564-1630), a talented poet and future Marquis of Alenquer, is perhaps even more significant. The second son of the Portuguese Ruy Gomes de Silva, one of Philip II's trusted servants, and of the princess of Éboli, he was a typical career courtier who emerged during the *valimiento* of the Duke of Lerma as a key member of the Council of Portugal (1605-1615), acting as treasury supervisor (*veedor de fazenda*) and, de facto, also as its President, with the crucial power to set the agenda, although this position was bitterly contested by rival aristocrats and not fully formalized.[33] The Portuguese always considered him a Castilian, as he was born and grew up in Castile (in 1601 Salinas moved to Portugal for a few years apparently for the sole purpose of being able to claim that he was a Portuguese natural), and they were especially reluctant to accept him as viceroy in Lisbon in 1617, sensing that his task was to reform the administra-

31 For the wider context of this political thinking see Pablo Fernández Albadalejo, *La Crisis de la Monarquía*, in *Historia de España*, ed. Josep Fontana & Rafael Valladares, Vol. IV (Barcelona & Madrid, 2009), chapter 1.

32 *Discurso político al rey Felipe III al comienzo de su reinado*, ed. Modesto Santos (Barcelona, 1990), pp. 106-107.

33 Salinas in effect replaced Juan de Borja, Lerma's ally, in that position (1599-1606). His status as the most senior member of the Council was resented by the Count of Vilanova, Manuel de Castelo Branco, who was disappointed in his expectation to succeed Borja. Vilanova created an alliance with Borja's son Carlos, Duke of Villahermosa and Count of Ficalho, who eventually took over the leadership fo the Council (1617-1621) when Salinas was sent to Lisbon as viceroy, during the closing years of Philip III (this was also the time of the tortuous decline of the Sandovals and the ascendacy of Baltasar de Zúñiga in the Council of State). The long feud between Salinas and his rivals created a great deal of dysfunctionality within the Council, and prompted calls for its reform or even suppression.

tion according to Madrid's priorities.[34] He was in effect Lerma's key man in the affairs of Portugal at the court during the period when the diplomacy with Shah Abbas was at its height. It is therefore highly significant that in a paper of 1612 written for Lerma he argued that the king ruled as an absolute sovereign in Portugal and therefore had no reason to seek any compromise with the kingdom's local powers, insinuating that the Portuguese elites were often corrupt and utterly divided (Salinas seemed to echo the doctrines of Jean Bodin, by which the supreme authority that made the laws could always change them, but his argument was in fact specific to the Portuguese constitution).[35] These were views quite different from those once expressed by Diego de Silva's father Ruy Gomes, the prince of Éboli, in relation to how best rule a multi-national Monarchy (Éboli had defended a policy of compromise with the local elites in the Netherlands against the Duke of Alba). Salinas was on the other hand setting the agenda pursued by Olivares ten years later: only a more absolutist principle of royal authority would be able to force all the kingdoms of the Monarchy to contribute to the needs of the State.[36]

Although it used to be thought that under Lerma's *valimiento* the desire for peace, mainly in order to restore the Monarchy's finances, had led to a return to a more traditional form of Government by aristocratic Councils, there is a growing consensus that in reality Lerma worked to circumvent those same institutions through the use of special *juntas* packed with his own men.[37] If he did not challenge directly the

[34] For details on his career see also Trevor J. Dadson, "The Duke of Lerma and the Count of Salinas: Politics and friendship in early seventeenth-century Spain", *European History Quarterly*, 25, 1 (1995), pp. 5-38.

[35] This document is analyzed by Claude Gaillard in his important monograph about the viceroyalty of Salinas, *Le Portugal sous Philippe III d'Espagne: L'action de Diego de Silva y Mendoza* (Grenoble, 1983), pp. 107-188. I have consulted the edition by E. Buceta, "Dictamen del Conde de Salinas en que se examinan las prerrogativas de la Corona y de las Cortes de Portugal", *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español*, 9 (1932), pp. 375-386.

[36] On Olivares and his ministry see J.H. Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares: The statesman in an age of decline* (New Haven & London, 1986). For his policies towards Portugal see also J.H. Elliott, "The Spanish Monarchy and the kingdom of Portugal, 1580-1640", in Mark Greengrass (ed.), *Conquest and Coalescence: The shaping of the state in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1991), pp. 48-67, as well as Bouza Álvarez, *Portugal en la Monarquia Hispánica*. More recently see the important work by Jean-Frédéric Schaub, *Le Portugal au temps du comte-duc d'Olivares (1621-1640)* (Madrid, 2001) which offers a glimpse of the most radical proposals received by Olivares on the eve of the rebellion, which requested not simply to modify some of the provisions of Tomar, but to totally dispense with them in order to fully incorporate Portugal into Castile (pp. 105-113). Olivares himself did not embrace these views, but they are symptomatic of the radicalization in the 1630s of the Castilianizing programme that had been expressed more timidly in previous decades.

[37] For this kind of revisionism see Feros, *Kingship*, pp. 69-70, noting that the new rulers "did indeed promote political theories and administrative programmes to enhance the king's power and centralize the decision-making process into the hands of Philip III, Lerma and Lerma's allies and creatures". For the effects of this policy of *juntas* on Portugal and its revenues see Feros, *Kingship*, pp. 160-162.

autonomy and traditions of other kingdoms, this was not for the lack of a current of opinion advocating such a policy amongst his closest collaborators, but rather because such a policy would incur such political costs that it seemed easier to concentrate on finding ways of maximizing the extraction of financial resources from the royal revenue that belonged to the king in each separate kingdom.[38] By contrast, Lerma derived his power, together with the means to enhance his personal wealth and that of his clients, from controlling access to the royal person. Therefore, rather than prompting the direct contact between the king and his subjects, he sought to isolate the king, both by restricting access within the court (his most dangerous political rivals were sent away to serve as viceroys and ambassadors), and by minimizing any journeys outside Castile, where the king would be expected to hold *Cortes*, a more complicated way of obtaining resources. It was typical of this policy that during his reign of over two decades the king only visited Portugal once, in 1619, that is towards the end of his reign and only after repeated delays (the huge expenses of such journeys in what in effect was an overly inflated court contributed a great deal to the consolidation of this problem).[39] The crown of Aragon suffered a similar pattern but with the opposite chronology, as the only royal visit was in 1599, at the start of the reign. Unlike his predecessors, Philip III never left the Spanish peninsula, so that the sense of alienation experienced in Italy or the loyal provinces of Flanders was even more acute. In practice this meant that the process of Castilianization proceeded through the stability of the court in Madrid (or Valladolid) rather than through the reform of the other kingdoms. The affairs of the non-Castilian territories, in the hands of viceroys with limited powers, suffered neglect and were dealt with slowly, through complex bureaucratic channels. Indeed, the court of Philip III became famous for how slowly and uncertainly all business proceeded. In this context of royal absenteeism and institutional corruption, policy towards Portugal and its empire lacked energy and determination, with the single exception of the special *juntas* created both in Madrid and Lisbon to extract more resources for the royal coffers, the one area where Lerma's regime was innovative and, if necessary, willing to openly challenge the agreements of Tomar by appointing Castilians. These *juntas* were in fact quite successful in their primary purpose of untapping hidden sources of revenue.[40] However, the combination of rapacity and neglect that characterized the

[38] It is symptomatic that many of those writers proposing a contractualist idea of monarchy, and in particular, the idea of mixed government, were often critics of the system of privanza in general, and of Lerma in particular. One should not confuse Lerma's obscene use of office to pursue his own family's fortunes with the defence of the interests of the aristocracy in general, let alone with a belief in the institutionalization of the political power of the aristocracy and the cities in order to moderate absolute monarchy (on this see also Feros, *Kingship*, pp. 125-126).

[39] For details of that visit see Pedro Cardim, "La jornada de Portugal y las Cortes de 1619", in Martínez Millán & Visceglia (eds.), *La Monarquía de Felipe III*, vol. IV, pp. 900-946.

[40] Antonio Feros, *Kingship*, pp. 160-162; Bernardo José García García, *La pax hispánica: Política exterior del duque de Lerma* (Louvain, 1996), pp. 246-247. Portugal was not alone in suffering that kind of selective attention: the kingdom Naples was subjected to substantial financial pres-

regime – rather than any royal weakness in the face of local autonomy – was fatal for the project of bringing together the various Spanish kingdoms in a peaceful and constructive manner. If ever there was a chance of doing that, it was dissipated between 1598 and 1621.

Whilst royal absenteeism de facto eroded the principle of constitutional equality by which the monarch ruled each of its kingdoms separately by its own laws, the practical problem of how to cater for Portugal's needs and interests remained, including the everyday business of organizing the fleets of the Indies and appointing viceroys, bishops, captains and many other officers, lay or religious (the latter were provided by the Crown through the principle of royal patronage of the Church). Two institutions bore the brunt of the political tension, the viceroys in Lisbon and the Council of Portugal at the court. Most crucial was the appointment of the viceroy, one area where the court in Madrid found itself struggling with the provisions of Tomar that the king's alter ego had to be of royal blood, or a Portuguese. If Philip II had been fortunate in being able to place his nephew Archduke Albert of Austria in Lisbon for many years, undertaking an important task of administrative reform that consolidated the viceregal system (1583-1593), his eventual marriage to Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia (despite having been a Cardinal and Archbishop of Toledo) following his transfer in 1595 to the Low Countries (where, as sovereign prince, he would play a crucial role in promoting the peace process with England and the Dutch rebels) left a political vacuum that Philip III and Lerma would struggle to fill in. It was of course out of the question to appoint the seventh Duke of Bragança Dom Teodósio, whose mother had held a rival claim to the succession of Portugal, or his brother Duarte for that matter, and instead the Braganças were encouraged to marry the daughters of Castilian grandees (on the other hand, towards the end of the reign they came to exert some influence in the Council of Portugal through their allies at the court).[41] Philip III and Lerma were lucky to be able to repeatedly request the services of an increasingly reluctant Cristóbal de Moura (made Marquis of Castel Rodrigo),

sure by the count of Lemos, in what appears to have been one of the most rational and successful reforms of the period (García García, *La pax hispánica*, pp. 249-260).

41 Lerma arranged that Teodósio would marry Ana de Velasco, daughter of the Constable of Castile, whilst his brother Duarte, who was an active courtier in Madrid, married the daughter of the Count of Oropesa. At the start of Philip IV's reign Duarte was not appointed viceroy of Portugal to succeed Alenquer as requested, but the Braganças had placed a member of the family, Don Francisco, as ecclesiastical representative in the Council of Portugal, and the secretary Francisco de Lucena (a crucial figure) was their creature, so that the 'Castilianizer' Marques of Alenquer considered that the Braganças had undue influence in the Council. Perhaps more important, Manuel de Moura, Cristóbal's heir as Marques of Castel Rodrigo, would soon become a dominant figure, and although a critic of Lerma, he became also a rival and enemy of Olivares. This in turn forced Olivares to (imprudently) seek to work with the Braganças, empowering them. On these factions see Fernando Bouza Álvarez, "A nobreza portuguesa e a corte de Madrid: Nobres e luta política no Portugal de Olivares", in his *Portugal no tempo dos Filipes: Politica, cultura, representações* (Lisbon, 2000), pp. 209-238.

architect of the agreements of Tomar and Philip II's most trusted minister in the closing years of his reign. Lerma was logically keen to keep this potential rival away from the court (Philip II had hoped that his son would retain Moura as his key adviser), and even refused his request to become President of the Council of Portugal, relying instead on Juan de Borja, Count of Ficalho, as a man he could trust to follow orders, and after he died, on the Count of Salinas.[42] On the other hand, Moura's prestige, experience and common sense could prove invaluable, and it is symptomatic of the difficulty of finding lay Portuguese of stature willing to respond to the priorities of the court that Moura was appointed viceroy for two full terms (1601-1603, 1608-1612) and that in the intermediate periods the court was forced to appoint bishops and archbishops in that key government position.[43] Moura's only true lay successor was the Count of Salinas, whose tenure (1617-1621) was bitterly contested, as he was rightly seen as an agent of Castilianization and unsympathetic to the spirit of Tomar. Paradoxically, it was under his regime, in 1619, that Philip III's only visit to Portugal finally took place, crystallizing the clash of political cultures that had been developing since 1583, when Philip II had left his new kingdom, never to return.[44]

The Monarchy's system of councils was particularly complex on relation to Portugal. The old Council of State remained in Lisbon with a local aristocratic membership in order to assist the viceroy in his decision making, but with the king usually absent, its political role was diminished. Instead, the king took his own parallel Council of Portugal to Madrid, where it operated in a similar fashion as the other territorial councils of the Monarchy. According to the statutes of Tomar, this Council of Portugal was meant to guarantee the interests of the kingdom at the court, as it would prevent foreigners from dispatching the relevant business, but in practice, as a small group of Portuguese nobles and bureaucrats became acclimatized at the court, it was increasingly seen as a tool for the subtle Castilianization of the decision-making process. Especially during Lerma's regime, the Council of Portugal became dominated by a few aristocratic clans remote from the kingdom and connected to the favourite by marriage or political alliance, accumulating lands and titles from different parts of the peninsula (men like the Count of Salinas Diego de Silva, or like Juan

42 As the Venetian ambassador Contarini noted in his description of Borja, "De éste se ha de presumir encaminará siempre lo que el duque de Lerma quisiere, y cuando no, se irá con la opinión de los muchos [...] no es difícil regalarle por la mujer e hijos, que son muchos, y es hombre que sabe hacer que no ve". Quoted in Santiago Luxán Meléndez, *La revolución de 1640 en Portugal, sus fundamentos sociales y sus carácteres nacionales: El Consejo de Portugal, 1580-1640* (Madrid, 1988), p. 186.

43 On Moura see Alfonso Danvila y Burguero, *Don Cristóbal de Moura, primer marqués de Castel Rodrigo, 1538-1613* (Madrid, 1900).

44 For the Cortes of 1619 see Gaillard, *Le Portugal sous Philippe III d'Espagne*. Philip III fell ill on his way back to Madrid, and died at the end of March 1621 without countersigning the acts agreed in the *Cortes* of Lisbon (and, some said, regretting his failures as king).

de Borja and his son Carlos de Borja, who were Dukes of Villahermosa as well as Counts of Ficalho). To make things worse, the Council of Portugal proved to be peculiarly dysfunctional during Lerma's regime, as it became deeply divided by aristocratic factions (the feud between the Count of Salinas and his many rivals for the politically crucial title of President of the Council was notorious and prompted Salinas's eventual dismissal). As a result the Council itself was continuously reformed, and there were even talks of suppressing it altogether.[45] By the time of Don García's embassy, one of the key arguments of this current of criticism was that its members had insufficient personal experience of the affairs of the *Estado da Índia*.

Whilst its personnel was divided and (at least in part) psychologically distant from Lisbon, the Council remained jealous of its prerogatives. Unsurprisingly, and like many other councils, it also saw its powers eroded by the creation of special *juntas* where Lerma (and later Olivares) could exercise more executive control. Of enormous importance was the *Junta de Hacienda de Portugal* created in 1602, in order to deal with the treasury aspects of the business, including the annual armadas to India, and which worked in tandem with a parallel *junta* in Lisbon (created in 1601) which allowed Castilian officers to control the business of the *Junta de Fazenda* of Portugal. The *Junta* at the court also incorporated Castilian officers (it was meant to function as a joint Castilian-Portuguese institution with superior jurisdiction), and therefore openly contradicted the terms of Tomar.[46] It was questioned not only in Portugal by the powerful *Câmara* of the city of Lisbon (the heart of opposition to the court in Portugal itself), but also by viceroy Moura, who was more aware of the pressures placed on the kingdom, and even from within the Council of Portugal (by *desembargador* Pero Barbosa), despite the fact that some of its members, notably its President Juan de Borja were incorporated into the same *Junta*. It is highly symptomatic of Lerma's priorities that this would be the one area where he dared to innovate so radically (he was more cautious about creating new taxes). The point of the *Junta* was, quite simply, to extract as much money as possible from existing Crown revenues in Portugal, to begin with by revaluing and renegotiating the various tax-farming contracts. If the aim was simply to get more money quickly, it worked (in 1600, a delighted Lerma had written to Borja that he was amazed that such a substantial resource had been 'forgotten'). The *Junta* helped the Monarchy reduce its dependence on Castilian resources, a pattern which had caused complaints in Castile (most Castilians thought that they alone bore the weight of imperial costs, often miscalculating the size of the economy of the other Spanish territories). The underlying principle defended by Lerma, the transferability of Crown resources, also meant that the Monarchy could use the money from the sale of trading contracts in its annual armadas to India for a variety of purposes other than investing everything in the urgent needs of the oriental empire. However, as Lerma's financial *juntas* eventually ran into trouble and his closest collaborators lost all credit and went to prison, the *Junta de Hacienda de Portugal* of the court was also suppressed, following Moura's advice after his return to the court in 1607 (Moura however accepted the need for Castilian representatives in the Council of *Fazenda* of Portugal, in order to ensure full information of what went on in the kingdom and a closer involvement of the court in the organization of the armadas of India).

The most interesting experiment of the reign was the creation of the Council of Indies of Portugal in 1604, which would be based in Lisbon and in many ways looked similar to its Castilian counterpart for the New World. To have a specialized body of this nature made eminent sense, as it would lighten the business that the viceroy conducted with the Council of State. However, it also added an additional layer to the tangled web of advice and counter-advice by various councils that conditioned the lengthy decision-making process between the king (or his *privado*) in Madrid, a viceroy in Lisbon, and another viceroy in Goa. The Council of Indies also clashed with the Council of *Fazenda* in Portugal, the body responsible for organizing the armadas and negotiating the contracts for trade with India and Brazil. Despite this

[45] On the Council of Portugal there is the excellent doctoral dissertation by Luxán Meléndez, *La revolución de 1640 en Portugal*. It is especially significant that after various reforms in 1602 and 1607, the Council was suspended between 1612 and 1614, and again in 1615 (Luxán Meléndez, *La revolución de 1640 en Portugal*, pp. 228-266). In effect, Lerma had by 1609 lost control of the feud between Salinas, Villahermosa and the count of Vilanova, and it was Moura who offered an alternative plan by which the great men would all be licensed, and the king would visit Portugal. However, it took years before all this was implemented. Although in late 1612 the Council was de facto closed and a *junta* to reform it had been created, Salinas countermanoeuvred by allying himself with Lerma's son Uceda and the confessor Aliaga, in what were the first signs of Lerma's political decline. It was at that point that Salinas also proposed an openly centralizing policy, against those who believed in respecting the spirit of Tomar. Unfortunately the royal visit was repeatedly postponed (although the money to fund it had been collected in Portugal), until well after the death of Moura in 1613, which deprived the moderate party of its most distinguished voice (in the Council however there remained Secretary Fernando de Matos, canon of Évora, who was Moura's man and also connected to the Braganças). In 1615 a renewed Council more "according to plan of the Cortes of Tomar" was finally placed under the charge of fray Aleixo de Meneses, former Archbishop of Goa and the most recent viceroy in Lisbon. However Lerma, who was particularly reluctant to meet the *Cortes*, continued to postpone any royal visit, whilst trying to get rid of Salinas by making him the next viceroy with the title of Marques of Alenquer.

[46] Santiago de Luxán Meléndez, "El control de la Hacienda Portuguesa desde el poder central: la Junta de Hacienda de Portugal, 1602-1608", *Revista da Faculdade de Letras: História*, s. 2, 9 (1992), pp. 119-135. Lerma of course ensured that the *Junta* included his closest associates, his *hechuras*, men of relatively modest origins like the minister of finance Alonso Ramírez de Prado (a *letrado* from Zafra, of New Christian origins) and secretary of state Pedro Franqueza (one of the few Catalans with influence at court). These men were showered with *mercedes* and soon became notoriously corrupt, becoming masters of manipulating accounts in order to hide huge debts. Their fall in 1606-1607 was a huge blow to Lerma's reputation, although he managed to shift all the blame towards his servants (Lerma took control of the incriminating evidence, and Pedro Franqueza for example was condemned to a life sentence without being allowed to defend himself).

handicap, it reached the height of its influence under the Presidency of Dom Francisco da Gama, Count of Vidigueira (1608-1614), who as former viceroy in Goa (1597-1600) could offer real expertise, and therefore some genuine leadership in the face of the many challenges presented by Dutch and English competition. As revealed by the clashes in 1613 concerning the pepper brought from India with Esteban de Faro, the President of the Council of *Fazenda* (and a man sent from Madrid), the Council of the Indies was more sensitive to the constraints of the situation in the *Estado da Índia* and offered some support to the viceroys.[47] It could also criticize the poor quality of the armadas organized by *Fazenda*, a criticism which the latter saw as an intromission. Unfortunately, the growth of an alternative ministry in Lisbon with a significant power of patronage (advising the provision of offices was a key power of the Council) was not appreciated by the viceroys either, and Cristóbal de Moura was one of the first to recommend the Council's suppression, as early as 1607. Its actual suppression only took place in 1614, after Moura's death, and it came as a shock considering how active the Council then was. All the business was transferred back to the secretaries of the Council of State in Lisbon, with the weak explanation that this would cut administrative waste. Of course, Vidigueira protested, but to no avail (two years later he was asked to join the Council of State instead). The suppression has been interpreted as part of a desire by the Archbishop of Braga Dom Aleixo de Meneses to concentrate all power when he himself became viceroy in Portugal (1614-1616) – it would take another man with direct experience of the East to dispossess a former viceroy of the *Estado da Índia*.[48] The suppression was not reversed however when Dom Aleixo was transferred to the Council of Portugal at the court at the end of 1616, and its permanent loss deprived the Monarchy of an expert body, independent from the viceroy in Lisbon, to advise about the Portuguese perspective on Hormuz and Persia at the time of Don García's embassy.

A final tension which directly affected the conduct of Don García's embassy was between the Council of Portugal and the Council of State at the court, a body dominated by Castilians that decided the foreign policy for the whole Monarchy. As we have seen, the embassy to Persia, whose antecedents went back to the arrival in Valladolid of Husein Ali Beg, an envoy from Persia, in 1601, fell under its remit (it was after all about a strategic alliance against the Ottomans which had implications for the Monarchy's Mediterranean policies). However, all previous men appointed as ambassadors to Shah Abbas had been Portuguese and sent through Lisbon, beginning with António de Escobar and his substitute Luís Pereira de Lacerda in 1601-1602, and later the Augustinian friars Belchior dos Anjos and António de Gouveia, who had come directly from the *Estado da Índia* (the costs of these embassies had

[47] This support was especially forthcoming when the viceroy in Goa was a relative of Vidigueira, as Rui Lourenço de Távora happened to be.

[48] For the Council's suppression Luz, *O Conselho da Índia*, pp. 185-192. This old monograph, the first attempt to chart the history of this Council, has not yet been superseded.

also been assigned to the kingdom of Portugal). The potential for rupture became clear in 1611, when the Council of State decided to send a high-profile embassy and suggested that two lay ambassadors accompany Gouveia back to Persia, one of which would be Castilian. Moura, viceroy in Lisbon, was against the idea of two ambassadors, a sure way of ensuring a fiasco, but he also noted that the single man should be Portuguese. The Council of Portugal at the court proposed three Portuguese names. However, that Council was so weakened by institutional instability and factional divisions that it failed to develop a consistent policy, whilst the Council of State sought to impose Don García de Silva y Figueroa (1550-1624), and this was the only name that survived after a delay of one year.[49] Typical of the relation between the two councils was the complaint that the Council of Portugal did not have a clear understanding of what obeying the royal will entailed – it meant *not* questioning decisions based on the recommendations of the Council of State (after they had been approved by the king). There was of course a need to coordinate the two Councils, as the correspondence of the next few years on the affairs of the Persian embassy suggests. If anything, the military threat to Hormuz was now in everybody's mind. The obvious solution, to create a small mixed *junta* in order to deal with the parallel Persian embassies of Don García and Robert Sherley, was finally proposed in October 1618 by Don Baltasar de Zúñiga (himself an immensely experienced ambassador, who upon his return to the court immediately came to dominate the Council of State). The *junta* soon came with a concrete plan for a commercial agreement with Shah Abbas. That this *junta* and its proposal had come so late, and, as it turned out, too late to alter the course of events, showcases the institutional inertia and lack of reflexes of the final years of Lerma's regime.

There is evidence that the various institutional tensions in the peninsula had a role in encouraging an atmosphere against Don García in Goa and Hormuz. Divisions of the Council of Portugal often obeyed complex motives, as aristocratic clans could clash over questions of precedence and personal gain rather than over policies according to a coherent political vision. Nevertheless, there was a general pattern by which the aristocracy stood between the privileges of the kingdom and the interests of the king, and the opposition to the Castilianization of Portugal's foreign policy represented by Don García was well represented within the Council of Portugal by the many enemies of the Council's strong man, Diego de Silva y Mendoza, Count of Salinas and future viceroy of Portugal. A letter of October 1615 written by Nuno

[49] For details see Gil, *El Imperio luso-español*, vol. II, pp. 195-214. Gil notes that at some point the Council of State relented, but that the Portuguese candidates were considered too expensive, so the decision was postponed. An undecisive discussion between the two Councils, with interventions from Moura and Gouveia, took place in the early months of 1612. Given that the eventual economic demands made by the successful Don García were also very high, one may suspect that this delay was simply a manoeuvre to divert the Council of Portugal. By the time the issue was decided again in the late 1612, only Don García was considered, and the Council of Portugal began to drag its feet about funding the embassy.

Álvares Pereira to (probably) Aleixo de Meneses, then viceroy of Portugal, was pretty clear:

> Don García the ambassador to Persia is here with a very good attitude [*bem disposto*], but it seems that because it [the embassy] is a thing of the Count of Salinas, he is badly treated and they give him a thousand poor excuses [*sinrazones*] in this land; for the time being they are exactly like the factions in Madrid, because the viceroy [Jerónimo de Azevedo] and the Archbishop [Cristóvão de Sá de Lisboa] take the side of Vidigueira [Francisco da Gama] and Fernão Matos [former secretary of the Council of Portugal], and it seems to me that I could say they do not even forgive your *illustrissima* [Dom Aleixo] and your things [...].[50]

Nuno Álvares Pereira had reached Goa in 1614 with the substantial fleet that also took Don García, and was on his way to become captain-general of the conquest of Ceylon.[51] His candid letter suggests that the opposition to Salinas, for many years Lerma's man in the Council of Portugal but always seen as a "Castilian" intruder in Portuguese affairs, had spread to the ambassador and his own obviously Castilian authority (by the summer of 1615 it was also suspected that Salinas would eventually replace Menezes as viceroy to Portugal, but Pereira might not yet have learnt this). The "patriotic" opposition was apparently led by Gama, who, as we have seen, had recently lost his influential role in the Council of the Indies in Portugal, when that Council was unexpectedly closed down.[52] He worked in tandem with the canon of Évora Fernando de Matos, until very recently ecclesiastical councillor and secretary of the Council of Portugal (in 1614 he had ceded his position to his nephew Francisco de Lucena, who became secretary of state); Matos had in the past opposed

50 See Gil, *El Imperio luso-español*, vol. II, p. 286, note 131. I suggest Aleixo de Meneses because the recipient was an ecclesiastical dignity who was in Portugal. Meneses became in fact President of the Council of Portugal in September 1615, but the news would not yet have reached Goa when the letter was written, so I believe it was written to him in his capacity as viceroy.

51 He had ben previously involved (in 1609, when Aleixo de Meneses was governor in Goa) in the conquest of the silver mines of Monomotapa in East Africa, although with the change of viceroy he quickly lost that job. He seems to have been a protegé of Meneses, and his father Pedralvares Pereira, who as secretary of the Council of Portugal had collaborated closely with Moura, in 1615 remained a councillor of State in the same Council, although his involvement in the financial debacle of the Lerma regime in 1607 with Pedro Franqueza and Ramírez de Prado had landed him in prison for some years.

52 In March 1614 Gama (with the viceroy in Lisbon bishop Pedro de Castro) had sent some instructions to Azevedo concerning Don García's embassy, for example asking him to supply the ambassador with two Augustinian friars as companions (which might also act as informers?). The simultaneous instructions coming from Madrid instead emphasized the viceroy's obligation to assist Don García economically and to dispatch him promptly (they were ignored). See *Documentos remettidos da Índia ou Livros das Monções*, ed. R.A Bulhão Pato & António da Silva Rego (7 vols., Lisbon, 1880-1975), vol. III, doc. 466 (pp. 132-133); compare to doc. 447 (p. 90), and elsewhere.

Salinas in the Council, acting as an ally of the former viceroy Cristóbal de Moura at the court.[53] Finally, we also learn that this factional resentment extended to Archbishop Meneses, who was therefore seen by some as too close a collaborator with the court. As we have seen, Meneses had been instrumental in taking the power over the affairs of India from Francisco da Gama, although his personal agenda was unlikely to have been to Castilianize the empire, but rather to strengthen his own powers as viceroy in Lisbon, by transferring the business back to his Council of State in Lisbon.[54]

We may reach as a first conclusion that, as far as the decision-making process in Portugal and Spain was concerned, the many clashes between a Castilianized court and a *regno* that felt neglected and marginalized, not least in relation of the crucial decisions affecting its empire, created the key tension underlying many of the problems of the embassy to Persia, and might have been more decisive than sheer problems of institutional complexity and physical distance.[55] Fear of Castilianization was not irrational, as some historians have asserted, but rather the axis of political tension in the face of imperial decline. There have been various historiographical revisionisms concerning what 'national' meant in the seventeenth century, when there existed no nation-state as we know it, but rather a composite monarchy of many kingdoms, and an aristocratic society dominated by networks of clientele, divided by factions, and where corruption was rife.[56] However, there can be no doubt that na-

53 Matos had joined the Council in 1602 as secretary of state and quickly became a key member. The Lucena-Matos were clients of the Braganças.

54 Therefore attitudes to don García were most negative in Portugal, with Don Francisco da Gama acting as leader, and most positive amongst the great aristocrats in the Council of State, the Mendozas (Dukes of Infantado) and Toledos (Dukes of Villafranca), as well as the Count of Salinas. Castel Rodrigo and his party presented a moderate opposition which expressed their own political vision half way between the rights of the Portuguese and the needs of the Monarchy.

55 This sense of neglect in relation to the defence of Portuguese trade in the Indies was clearly identified in a report written by court councillor Mendo da Mota at the start of Philip IV's reign. See British Library, MS Egerton 1133, ff. 268r-275r, containing a letter of May 4 (probably addressed to Olivares) where Mota claimed that the conservation of Portugal was threatened because the Union had not respected the kingdom's 'natural and essential principles of government', and a slightly earlier report to the same (ff. 272r-275r) arguing for the detrimental effects of collective government by great noblemen, and offering an assessement of the legitimate complaints of the Portuguese, which included the waste of Crown resources, which should have gone to maritime defence, by the previous administration, as well as some abuses of jurisdiction by Castilian soldiers in Lisbon. Mota, therefore, both advised a stronger monarchical power that would curtail aristocratic abuses (which he thought was in line with existing laws and privileges), and more investment in imperial defence.

56 Beyond the nation-state paradigm, the complex political culture of early-modern Spain is explored in Pablo Fernández-Albadalejo, *Fragmentos de Monarquía* (Madrid, 1992). Of particular relevance are the essays collected in Taillon (ed.), *Le sentiment national*. For Portugal, see also Fernando J. Bouza Álvarez, "La herencia Portuguesa de Baltasar Carlos de Austria: El *directorio* de Fray António Brandão para la educación del heredero de la monarquía católica",

tional identities were a crucial site of confrontation.[57] Of course aristocratic patriots (and there were popular as well as aristocratic brands of patriotism) were largely concerned with protecting their own pool of jobs, and the economic opportunities that those jobs entailed: from the variety of titles and other *mercedes* available at court (*encomiendas*, *ayudas de costa* and various other rents), to the expensive gifts and other forms of bribery that one could expect or even request when an officer in the local administrations, to the very commercial opportunities offered by the *Estado da Índia*, of which those enjoyed by the captain of Hormuz were amongst the most coveted, the whole system of service to the Crown was in effect a system of private benefit in the name of the common good.[58] And yet at the same time there was a real clash of collective visions, one which increasingly centred on the concept of Spain: was Portugal to be Spanish in its own terms, by perpetuating the multi-national character of the Union, or rather through its Castilianization, given the fixation of the court in Madrid and the superior demographic and military power of Castile? Or was it perhaps the case that the growing identification of the Spanish nation with the laws and language of Castile would lead to a break with those provinces that felt more

Cuadernos de Historia Moderna, 9 (1988), pp. 47-61, who speaks about 'sentimiento nacionalista' underlying the identity of Portugal as a separate kingdom under the same king. From a different perspectve Schaub, *Le Portugal*, emphasizes the need to question the nationalistic assumptions of much traditional historiography, following António Manuel Hespanha in his institutional analysis of the early-modern state. Much work has also gone towards analyzing the political identity of the Aragonese kingdoms, especially Catalonia. For a reasessment of a semi-republican vision in the concept of mixed government see J. P. Rubiés, "Reason of state and constitutional thought in the Crown of Aragon, 1580-1640", *The Historical Journal*, 38 (1995), pp. 1-28, and, from a perspective which argues for a sharp separation between early-modern patriotism and modern nationalism, Xavier Torres, "Un patriotisme sense nació: què va ser l'anomenada Guerra dels Segadors, 1640-1652/1659?", in Josep M. Fradera & Enric Ucelay-Da Cal (eds.), *Notícia Nova de Catalunya* (Barcelona, 2005), pp. 61-96.

57 As Alain Taillon notes (*Le Sentiment national*, p. xi), early-modern national identities were less exclusive than modern ones, in part because there was no *necessary* link between national community and political sovereignty. By contrast, the pursuit of an *exclusive* correlation between the two, with the idea of a national will legitimizing the absolute sovereignty of the state (often leading to increasing state control of cultural identities) characterizes the politics of post-1789 nation-states. At the turn of the seventeenth century it was perfectly possible for a gentleman like Don Francisco Gilabert, who was at the same time born in the Catalan-speaking part of Aragon and involved in the famous *alteraciones*, a baron in Catalonia, hence a member of its *Corts*, and a *gentilhombre de la boca del rey* at the court of Philip III, to emphatically espouse three different patriotisms, Catalan, Aragonese and Spanish (but not Castilian), even developing some republican themes, of particular importance for his *Discursos* on Catalonia. This does not mean that these national communities were artificial: they all made sense as institutional, legal and cultural spaces (including of course linguistic realities) that might, or might not, overlap, depending on specific elements.

58 The aristocratic elite were of course also best placed to alternate national identities and consider themselves, for example, both Spanish and Portuguese. For the common people, local identities and local languages were more decisive. Xavier Torres qualifies his argument in *Naciones sin nacionalismo. Cataluña en la monarquía hispánica* (Valencia, 2008).

distant from the court, and which could find inspiration in an alternative narrative of national glory?

The International context: the peace that failed

However important the tension between Madrid and Lisbon might have been in the unmaking of the embassy to Persia, the troubles experienced in the *Estado da Índia* during the reign of Philip III owed more to the crisis in the East than to changes in Spain. This crisis, in turn, resulted from a combination of internal structural weakness and the conflict with Dutch and English rivals. In that respect, the fall of Hormuz was highly symptomatic of the decline of the Portuguese imperial system, both as a symbol of such decline, and through an analysis of its causes.

In his now classic but also controversial analysis, Niels Steensgaard interpreted the fall of Hormuz in structural terms as a result of the superiority of the institutional innovations introduced by the English and Dutch East India Companies, rather than as a contingent outcome of poor decision-making. In particular, it was the commercial focus of the Companies that allowed them to seize the trade from the *Estado da Índia*, interpreted by Steensgaard as a 'redistributive institution' which adopted a more passive attitude towards the market. In this reading, the Portuguese and the Spanish were unable to succeed in Persia, despite devoting much attention and resources to the problem, because they failed to understand what the crucial issue was. If the commercial aim was to redirect trade towards Europe, one needed to abandon a system that prioritized exploiting the local customs duties in Hormuz, and instead adopt the Company model of commercializing the silk in Europe, which alone guaranteed the necessary concentration of resources and operations.[59] Unable to break their own mould, the Spanish and Portuguese would subsequently fail to create a lasting Company for the trade of India themselves.[60]

Steensgaard's interpretation can be and has been questioned on a number of grounds. The first, and most obvious criticism, is that the crisis in Persia does not demonstrate

59 Niels Steensgaard, *Carracks, Caravans and Companies: The structural crisis in the European-Asian trade in the Early 17th century* (Odense, 1973).

60 For the fortunes of this Company, created under Olivares' regime, see Anthony Disney, *Twilight of the pepper empire: Portuguese trade in Southwest India in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge MA, 1978). Also Valladares, *Castilla y Portugal*, pp. 47-49. Although only created in 1628, the Company, interestingly, had been decided upon by the Council of State as early as January 1623, after learning of the fall of Hormuz. The *letrado* Mendo da Mota, the member of the Council of Portugal (since 1612) who best undertood the trade with India, was put in charge of drafting the proposals. Alternative proposals had been made by Anthony Sherley before the fall of Hormuz, but some of his ideas implied relying on the Castilian route through the Pacific, which was highly problematic.

a structural superiority of a different commercial model, but rather the lack of political coherence and military discipline of the Portuguese, and in particular the decline of their naval power, both in quantity and quality. To these internal problems (which, arguably, owed a great deal to the long-term dynamics of the *Estado da Índia* and its system of annual armadas) we must add the hesitant and half-hearted policies of the court in Madrid, and the sabotage that they suffered in Portuguese India.[61] The second criticism would insist on some fundamental similarities between the Portuguese imperial system and those of the English and Dutch Companies – not that there were not important differences, but their nature might have been much subtler than what can be captured with a structural analysis, especially one that tends to interpret the Companies as simply more 'modern'. The crucial hypothesis that is worth reconsidering in the light of this debate, and in particular by reemphasizing the importance of contingent decision-making, is that the fall of Hormuz may not after all have been inevitable. Before we can return to this point, however, it seems clear that the pressure suffered by the Portuguese imperial system under the Union of Crowns was directly related to the emergence of the Dutch and English as a threat. In this respect, the European context of the embassy extends, well beyond Lisbon and Madrid, to England and the Dutch Provinces, where the Spanish Monarchy found its fiercest maritime enemies.

The international impact of the incorporation of Portugal into the first truly global empire was unexpectedly detrimental to the interests of the Monarchy, as throughout the 1580s it rallied its foreign enemies around the threat of a pan-Hispanic Catholic hegemony (albeit some of the enemies, France in particular, were themselves Catholic powers). In particular, the union of Hispanic crowns stimulated a sense of international Protestant solidarity which gave renewed opportunities to the rebel Dutch Provinces, which soon targeted Spanish and Portuguese trade overseas, in the West and East Indies. Some historians have argued that it was precisely the fear of a united Spain, with its two overseas empires combined, that provoked its Protestant enemies, the Dutch and the English, to seek to challenge directly the Catholic Mon-

[61] Among critics see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700: A political and economic history* (London, 1993), pp. 212-214 and 271-276. Also Sanjay Subrahmanyam & L. F. Thomaz, "Evolution of empire: The Portuguese in the Indian Ocean during the sixteenth century", in James D. Tracy (ed.), *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires: State power and world trade, 1350-1750* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 298-331, emphasizing the evolving nature of the Portuguese system and its relative profitability. Subrahmanyam in turn has been criticized for going too far in denying fundamental differences between the Anglo-Dutch and Portuguese models. For a more balanced position see Francisco Bethencourt, "Political configurations and local powers", in Francisco Bethencourt & Diogo Ramada Curto (eds.), *Portuguese Ocean Expansion, 1400-1800* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 197-254, especially 222 ff. In any case, it must be noted that although Steensgaard chose to adopt a structural interpretation, his analysis of the process leading to the fall of Hormuz was very detailed and well-informed, and remains one of the best accounts in any language, a fact that has been obscured by the polemic.

archy's imperial claims, which were largely based on a papal donation. More in particular, the trade embargoes decreed by Philip II in 1585 in order to damage the economy of the Dutch rebels and their English allies, who conducted an important trade in the Iberian Peninsula, stimulated their attempts to trade directly with the Portuguese Indies, leading to a widening of their war efforts in the name of newly-defined rights to trade. It is quite clear that Philip II's tactic of commercial embargoes, although it damaged its enemies, also backfired on various counts. However, it might be excessive to conclude that the Portuguese trade in the East was targeted *solely* because of the incorporation of Portugal.[62] Although the commercial war unleashed in the 1580's precipitated the risky ventures of Northern traders into the East Indies, the jealousy of rival nations for the commercial opportunities that the Castilians and the Portuguese were exploiting was also a powerful force. It is difficult to imagine that any independent Atlantic power would not have been tempted, sooner or later, to seek direct trade with the East, as indeed the English had been pursuing by exploring the possibility of alternative Northern passages even before they broke with Spain. Hence it was only a matter of time that the maritime powers of the North Atlantic, especially those who rejected papal authority, would seek to challenge the Portuguese claim to a monopoly of all navigation and commerce in the Indian Ocean, in the same way that they sought trade with the Americas. Nor is it likely that an independent Portugal without Castilian support could have resisted such pressure for very long.

Therefore, there was a powerful economic rationale for the assault on Portuguese Asia, especially as in the 1590's the Portuguese were increasingly unable to supply the European markets with all the pepper and other spices they wanted (in part this was due to the loss of many of their ships). It is also clear that the uncompromising attitude of both the Portuguese and the Castilians in Asia, unwilling to share the trade of Asia despite its huge potential for expansion, provoked a militarization of the commercial conflict on the part of both the Dutch and the English, with the result that the naval weakness of the Portuguese was revealed. It is worth noting that the English commanders who defeated the Portuguese fleets off Surat in 1612 and again in 1615 were not very keen on a naval conflict, and at that point simply sought to establish trade in Mughal India; similarly, in Persia the English were seeking trade rather than a confrontation with the Portuguese, and it was a combination of Portuguese enmity and Persian pressure that took them to attacking Hormuz. Therefore, it may be concluded that in the 1600s the Portuguese miscalculated their power, too

[62] Geoffrey Parker, "David or Goliath? Philip II and his world in the 1580s", in Richard Kagan & Geoffrey Parker (eds.), *Spain, Europe and the Atlantic World: Essays in honour of John H. Elliott* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 245-66, especially p. 265, suggests as much: "it therefore seems unlikely that, on commercial grounds, merchants from northern Europe would have chosen to make the heavy investment necessary for even modest success in intercontinental trade had they been able to secure the colonial produce they desired within the Iberian Peninsula – as they had done until the embargoes of 1585-86".

confident of their military capacity in Asia, or too reluctant to relinquish their reputation, and it was only at the start of a new reign in 1621, and especially after the fall of Hormuz, that some voices (including bishop António de Gouveia, councillor Mendo da Mota and viceroy Francisco da Gama) began to suggest that it might be more profitable to reach a compromise with former enemies than to risk losing what was left of the Portuguese trading system.[63] Unfortunately, once the monster had been unleashed it could not be controlled, and soon after its creation the Dutch East India Company had become less a tool of the States General than a private corporation lobbying for war, often acting in alliance with fundamentalist Calvinist divines and prince Maurice of Nassau, who had his own agenda. Hence, when in 1621 the twelve-year truce ended, the Dutch were eager to return to war against the Monarchy, especially on account of their potential for expansion in Asia.[64] The VOC had concluded that it was a commercial necessity to seek to eliminate European rivals from the Spice Islands, even the English, former Protestant allies. Unsurprisingly, when Portugal eventually claimed back its independence after 1640 the Dutch (now potential allies in Europe) continued to prey mercilessly upon its overseas trade and colonies, clearly showing that their overseas interests followed a logic quite independent of their original desire for independence from Spain, an independence which had in fact been largely achieved by 1609.

The two fundamental questions during the period when the Persian diplomatic contacts took place (1602-1619), encompassing the central years of the reign of Philip

63 The view that a compromise with either the Dutch or the English was necessary was first expressed in November 1621 in a fascinating discussion between António de Gouveia and Mendo da Mota recorded by the latter (British Library, MS Egerton 1133, ff. 258r-261r), who early in 1622 brought it to the attention of the ministers of state. Mota's opinion at the Council of State in January 1623 that an alliance with the English in Asia was necessary if one were to continue fighting both the Dutch and enemy local powers with any chance of success (British Library, MS Egerton 1131, f. 70r-v) is published in *Documentação Ultramarina Portuguesa*, ed. António da Silva Rego (5 vols., Lisbon, 1960-1975), vol. II, pp. 314-315. The policy had been agreed at the Council of Portugal a few days earlier (vol. II, pp. 386-387). It is symptomatic of the new atmosphere after the fall of Hormuz that Mota was supported by experienced members of the Council of State like Fernado Girón and Agustín Mexía: there simply was no money for a strictly military answer. Mota had emerged in 1622-1623 as one of leading voices for serious reform of Portuguese India at the court, at a time when the idea of a Portuguese Company of Trade (earlier proposed by the likes of Anthony Sherley and Duarte Gómez Solís) was being revived. Interestingly, viceroy Francisco da Gama, who in 1622 had left Portugal confident that he would turn the tide, soon made the idea his own. See António da Silva Rego, "O início do segundo governo do vice-rei da Índia D. Francisco da Gama, 1622-1623", *Memórias da Academia das Ciencias de Lisboa: Classe de Letras*, 19 (1978), pp. 323-346. Mendo da Mota was in fact critical of Francisco da Gama's evasive tactics when his large fleet was defeated by a combined Anglo-Dutch effort during the voyage to India in 1622 (weakening the Portuguese effort to recover Hormuz), and even requested his recall.

64 Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World, 1606-1661* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 74-81.

III, was why the Portuguese and Castilians together were so ineffective in their military and naval response to the Dutch and English assault in Asia, and especially why they failed to profit from the opportunities opened up by the peace treaties signed with James I and the Dutch Republic. In effect, Philip II had ended his reign bankrupt and with too many fronts open, although he sought to close one by signing the peace of Vervins with Henry IV of France (1598), which in turn weakened the Anglo-Dutch alliance that had confronted Spain since the 1580s. It was however clear that any opportunity to simply regain the Northern Netherlands was by then gone, as a powerful Dutch Republic of seven rebel provinces had consolidated. Given the costs of war, sooner of later some kind of peace agreement would become necessary, however temporary. The succession of James Stuart to England created an opportunity, as the new king, turning his back on the hard-line Protestant faction of the late years of Queen Elizabeth, was keen on reaching peace with Spain, and of course the Dutch would be more inclined to compromise without support from either France or England. Equally promising had been the establishment in 1598 of a semi-independent dynasty in the Southern Netherlands, led by Archduke Albert (nephew of Philip II, and married to his eldest daughter Isabel Clara Eugenia), who soon realised that there was little hope for a purely military solution to the religious split and political rebellion of the Low Countries. In fact, Philip II had agreed that Albert might negotiate a peace with the rebels, although the Dutch seemed less keen.[65] Although Albert was assisted by an able general, the Genoese Ambrosio Spínola, over the year he increasingly came to prioritize the needs of his subjects over the views of the Council of State in Spain. Those voices in Madrid arguing that a temporary respite was essential for the royal finances thus found a very favourable international situation, and despite his limited personal taste for conceding what de facto was a defeat of the uncompromising religious and dynastic principles inherited from his father, Philip III began his reign with a prospect of peace with both England and the Netherlands. However, the actual agreements took years to crystallize, especially in relation to the Netherlands, where the Spanish sought some last-minute military advantage in order to enforce better terms (requiring some additional financial efforts, albeit to very little effect).

With the peace with England of 1604 and the truce with the Dutch of 1609, the Duke of Lerma achieved his greatest foreign policy aims, establishing what historians have come to define as the *Pax Hispanica,* however reluctantly it had been embraced in many quarters.[66] For the first time in decades, the Monarchy was disengaged from

65 As noted by the ambassador of Rudolf II: *Diario de Hans Khevenhüller: embajador imperial en la corte de Felipe II*, ed. Sara Veronelli & Félix Labrador Arroyo (Madrid, 2001), pp. 448, 464-465. I am grateful to Mía Rodríguez Salgado for this observation.

66 The notion of a *Pax Hispánica* cannot be accepted without qualifications: it was, I must emphasize, a *relative* peace, which only applied opportunistically to some fronts (for example, there was military conflict over Mantua in Northern Italy in 1613-1615). The selective extension of 'guerra defensiva' overseas, for example to the conflict with the Araucanians in Chile, was

any major military conflicts in Europe, and could afford to pursue long-term policies. Very soon, however, the situation became complicated in Northern Italy, where those who resented Spanish dominion (and there were many) increasingly turned towards the Bourbons in France. It is possible that the many delays in reaching an agreement with the Dutch – more than a decade after the peace of Vervins with France – had jeopardized any opportunity to restore the Monarchy's finances. By 1609 Lerma's plans for restoring the Monarchy's public finances were coming to nothing, some of his key secretaries had been accused of corruption (Lerma in fact betrayed them to save his skin), and his own star at the court had started to wane.

Alas, the agreements of 1609 were also quite imperfect as far as Portugal's overseas trade was concerned, and it is clear that Portuguese interests were not prioritized in the negotiations. This was a time when the Dutch pressure was being felt quite dramatically across the East Indies: in the Spice Islands (where the Dutch had seized Ambon and other outposts, reviving Ternate's native resistance), the Coromandel coast in India (were the VOC had begun to trade in Masulipatnam and Pulicat) and even Japan (it was precisely in 1609 that the Dutch established themselves in Hirado). The Portuguese were most unwilling to concede that they would share the trade of India, and expected that the Dutch would be legally forced to abolish the VOC. However, although this had indeed been their starting position in 1606, for the Spanish negotiators it became unrealistic to insist on that blanket prohibition, given that the Portuguese only controlled a few outposts in these areas, and that the Dutch did not accept any of their imperial claims (it was during the negotiations that Hugo Grotius, writing on behalf of the VOC, developed his thesis of the freedom of the seas).[67] As had also been the case a few years earlier when negotiating with the English about colonies in North America, it was especially difficult to prevent other European nations from trading or establishing outposts in those areas where there

largely coincidental, as it responded to colonial rather than metropolitan initiatives (in this respect I would qualify the arguments offered by José Manuel Díaz Blanco, *Razón de Estado y Buen Gobierno. La Guerra defensiva y el imperialismo español en tiempos de Felipe III* (Seville, 2010). Nevertheless, not being at war against the French, the English and the Dutch did create a new momentum

67 The *Mare Liberum* (an extract from a larger work) was first published in Leiden in the spring of 1609, at the suggestion of the Zeeland chamber of the VOC, and as preparation for a truce that should not prevent the Dutch from trading in Asia – in effect it gave the VOC a charter for retaliation. The original work known as *De Iure Praedae*, written during 1604-1606 and also commissioned by the VOC, was a comprehensive defence of the seizure of a Portuguese carrack in the straits of Singapore in 1603, which unexpectedly led Grotius to a thorough revision of natural law and the *ius gentium*. It was much more extensive, but the truce negotiations made it convenient only to publish the one chapter that declared the VOC's right to trade in the East. It is significant how quickly the book was translated into English by Richard Hakluyt. See Hugo Grotius, *The Free Sea*, ed. David Armitage (Indianapolis, 2004). On Grotius and the VOC more generally, Martine van Ittersun, *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, natural rights theories and the rise of Dutch power in the East Indies, 1595-1615* (Leiden, 2006).

was no genuine Iberian dominion.[68] Interestingly, Grotius was to develop his thesis that the Dutch had the right to trade and make contracts with independent native princes on the basis of the natural law principles of Dominican theologians of Spanish nationality such as Francisco de Vitoria, who had rejected the validity of a papal donation of civil and political rights belonging to rational pagans.[69] Whilst Philip III was not prepared to give up his imperial titles in Asia as a matter of principle, and the Valladolid Professor Serafim de Freitas would eventually respond to Grotius with the uncompromising *De Iusto Imperio Lusitanorum Asiatico* (written in 1616, but not published until after the twelve-year truce ended), in order to make a truce possible the Portuguese were forced to restrict their explicit claims to those areas they actually controlled.[70] It did not help the Spanish position that, during the protracted negotiations, the priority of the Council of State in Madrid seems to have been to guarantee the religious rights of Catholics in the rebel provinces (the religious scruples of Philip III played an important role in this respect), whilst the VOC created a powerful lobby that hardened the Dutch position on trade, forcing Oldenbarnevelt to retract an initial promise to dissolve the VOC.[71] The eventual adoption of a limited twelve-year truce over a permanent peace reflected how far apart the two sides still were at the end of the negotiations: this was an agreement driven by sheer necessity, as all parties found it impossible to continue financing the war, but no compromise was reached on any questions of principle. The temporary nature of the agreement also facilitated that the question of the trade of the Indies would be fudged. In effect, peaceful commerce was agreed for the Dutch in the Spanish Peninsula, ending the embargoes that had been so detrimental to all parties, but the truce did not fully apply to Asian waters. Ambiguously, without mentioning the East In-

68 The English peace of 1604 provided many important precedents for the Dutch truce of 1609. Not least was the success of the English negotiator, Secretary of State Robert Cecil (1563-1612), in making sure that English trading prospects in the North Atlantic would not be damaged by Spanish claims to a colonial monopoly, resorting to ambiguity in order to avoid openly challenging Spanish honour (see Pauline Croft's entry on Robert Cecil in *Dictionary of National Biography*).

69 This was made possible because Vitoria and his many followers had developed their arguments in relation to defining the rights of American Indians, in what was in effect a dispute *within* the Crown of Castile about their own empire. In the context of intra-European disputes about trading rights the same arguments could mean something very different: the general natural law principles the Dominicans appealed to, their humanitarian radicalism, and their authority as scholastic theologians, made it possible for Grotius to easily demolish the traditional Portuguese titles to conquest, navigation and commerce in Asia.

70 Freitas in effect adapted Vitoria's natural law arguments to the Portuguese East by insisting on the universality of the right to preach, whilst circumscribing the right to trade to contracts between sovereign powers, and claiming for Portugal the navigation of the high sea route on the basis of custom and acquired rights. See C. H. Alexandrowicz, "Freitas versus Grotius", *British Yearbook of International Law*, 35 (1960), pp. 162-182, who notes how close Grotius and Freitas were on some basic points about native sovereignty – precisely Vitoria's principles.

71 Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford, 1995), p. 402.

dies, the treaty simply stated that Dutch trade with the dominions of the Catholic king overseas was prohibited, but that they freely could trade with other princes. This allowed the Dutch to interpret that they could trade with independent local powers in Asia, whilst the Portuguese held to their fatuous title of lordship over all trade, navigation and conquest in India.[72]

With this, the Spanish hoped to be able to expel the Dutch from the Asian waters they claimed as their own, but of course the Dutch could equally hope to pursue what they understood to be their right to trade with natives, by force of arms if necessary. The ambiguity of the treaty was seen as an unnecessary concession in Portugal, and the Council of Portugal at the court, which had not even been consulted during the negotiations, was outraged.[73] In effect the VOC, a Commercial Company less than a decade old, had been more successful than the whole kingdom of Portugal in ensuring that its interests were well defended in the negotiations. The Spanish had given up putting military and commercial pressure in Europe, where it hurt the Dutch and would encourage them to desire peace, whilst leaving the door open for continued conflict in Asia, where the enemy could do most damage to the Portuguese (but also to the Spanish in Manila). The only possible explanation is that the court in Madrid felt confident about the resilience of its vast network of forts in the *Estado da Índia*, and had not yet realised how dangerous Dutch ships could be in Asian waters, probably assuming that it was only a matter of time before a formidable fleet of galleons would be able to chase them away, the ill-fortune of some recent voyages notwithstanding.[74]

Unfortunately, the peace treaty was not followed up with a sustained naval effort equal to the task.[75] In the following twelve years, a combination of insufficient support from Portugal and military ineptitude in India would mean that the Portuguese lost out, rather than gain, from the non-extension of the truce overseas. In other words, the Portuguese desire to fight back with more vigour suffered from the illusion of a military capacity that was simply not there. Had Philip III agreed to freeze the positions in Asia in 1609 and allowed the VOC some free trade with native powers, as had been proposed, he would have saved a great deal of money, ships and men, as well as facilitate that the Portuguese maintain their superior commercial position, given the vastness of their existing network of private trade and its high capital value. The VOC in fact relied on seizing Portuguese prizes for its profitability during the early years, hence a real truce in the East might have put its commercial operations under financial pressure. Not least, peace in the Indies might have diminished the pressures that led to the resumption of open conflict after the truce expired in 1621. However, in 1609 very few people in Spain, least of all the Portuguese, were prepared to contemplate the idea that the Crown would give up its monopolistic claims to all the trade of Asia, however unrealistic this position may appear in retrospect.[76] The whole *Carreira* system of annual fleets carrying pepper and other luxury products to Europe was bound to its monopolistic assumptions. Interestingly the Dutch, however different their ideological justifications for monopolistic

[72] J. A. de Abreu y Bertodano, *Colección de tratados de paz, alianza, neutralidad [...] hechos por los pueblos, reyes y príncipes de España [...] Phelipe III*, 1 (Madrid, 1740), pp. 458-485. There was also a secret article in one of the working versions of the treaty which resolved any ambiguity by guaranteeing that the Dutch would be able to trade in the Indies without interference, but it is not clear that this was known or agreed to in Madrid. In the short term the Dutch ceased to attack the Portuguese positions, but only until the Portuguese, who found themselves losing ground, gave them an opportunity to resume the conflict, which was soon enough. Clashes mounted and by 1614 it was all over. In retrospect is seems obvious that in the negotiations of 1606-1609 the Spanish had placed excessive emphasis on religious principles, driven in part by the piety of Philip III and his confessors, as well as pressure from the pope. In October 1608, in the crucial phases of the negotiation, the Council of State was still insisting on freedom of worship for Catholics whilst the Archduke in the Netherlands pushed for a truce at any cost, leaving the needs of the Portuguese Indies abandoned. Victims of their uncompromising attitude, the Spanish fell into the trap of thinking in terms of a temporary truce rather than a permanent peace, hoping in this way to preserve their higher principles of sovereignty and religion, but also allowing the initiative on many points of detail to fall into the hands of international mediators such as Pierre Jeannin, the representative of Henry IV of France during the talks, whose long-term agenda was anti-Spanish, and who offered the Dutch all the short-term advantages, whilst forcing the hardliners in the Republic (such as the province of Zeeland) to reach an agreement. Philip III signed the peace dreaming of a time when he could resume war, whilst many at the court complained about the loss of reputation. For the Spanish perspective during the negotiations see Paul C. Allen, *Philip III and the Pax Hispanica, 1598-1621: The failure of Grand Strategy* (New Haven & London, 2000). Similarly, García García, *La Pax Hispánica*, pp. 63-71, shows the chasm between the uncompromising attitudes of many Spaniards on points of sovereignty and the financial weakness of Albert's position on the ground, setting the stage for ill-thought last-minute concessions. Jonathan Israel, by contrast, places the trade of the Indies at the forefront of the negotiations on both sides: *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 80-86.

[73] Valladares, *Castilla y Portugal*, p. 24.

[74] In effect the truce created a legal precedent that went against Portuguese interests in Asia without giving the Spanish much in exchange, other than the immediate ceasing of hostilities the Monarchy (but also the Republic) desperately needed, and the hope that all Dutch gains would eventually be reversed, that is, when the financial situation improved and war could be resumed. Of course this never happened: with the Dutch almost isolated and the relative military success of Spínola, in 1609 the Monarchy had the strongest position it would ever enjoy in the seventeneth century.

[75] Lerma in fact continued with secret negotiations to reach a more lasting peace agreement, but to no effect, as the hardliners were also seizing control on the Netherlands.

[76] Interestingly, in his report to Mendo da Mota in November 1621 concerning the reasons why the *Estado da India* was in crisis, bishop António de Gouveia made it clear that it was in part the fault of the Portuguese that they had not seized the chance for a permanent peace in 1609: "por que yo vi con mis propios ojos entrar en Lisboa una nave suia que llevava los capítulos de la tregua para la publicar a los suios en la India; no se dieron los portugueses por entendidos desso, y fueron continuando la guerra con tan malos suçcessos y con tan poca disciplina que están las fuerças del estado en la última miseria de total ruina". British Library, MS Egerton 1133, ff. 258r-261r.

practices, soon adopted a remarkably similar approach, even clashing with the English, their former allies. An armed monopoly based on a title of lordship over the high seas and an ideology of crusade and evangelisation was replaced in much of South-East Asia by a rival trading monopoly, equally armed and even more strictly enforced, built upon the right to reach exclusive agreements with independent native powers.[77]

Therefore, notwithstanding the peace of 1604 and the truce of 1609, the Portuguese determination to expel both the English and the Dutch from Asian trade led them to a continuous conflict which the English East India Company generally sought to avoid, and the VOC increasingly embraced with glee. This difference of approach between the two northern nations owed a great deal to the size of their respective operations. The Dutch invested more money and sent more ships to the East, and their experience in the islands East of Malacca, where the Portuguese were particularly weak, made them confident that they could benefit from seizing further prizes and enclaves from the Portuguese. The English by contrast sought to establish their trade whilst actively avoiding direct conflict with the Portuguese, and it was largely in reaction to Portuguese attacks that they scored their naval victories. It was also the case that their ruler James I took the peace of 1604 seriously and sought to strengthen it, and even after the fatal intervention of the Company in Hormuz, the English court was in deep negotiations with the Spanish for a dynastic match between the heir Charles and a Spanish Infanta (leaving aside for a moment the tragicomic unravelling of that particular plan).

Although by 1621 the Portuguese position seemed largely intact, in reality there existed very deep causes for concern, a situation which the fall of Hormuz soon confirmed. In effect the joint Hispanic Monarchy was losing the maritime war, notwithstanding some occasional victories, especially by the Castilians from Manila. The large offensives planned in India and the Spice Islands under Dom Jerónimo de Azevedo precisely at the time of Don García's embassies were particularly fruitless. It is important to emphasize that at this stage the superiority of the Dutch and English Companies was naval and military, rather than commercial.[78] This might seem

[77] This became especially clear after the resumption of the war in 1621, but already during the truce the Dutch had been negotiating with the English their right to monopolies (for example in the conferences of 1613 and 1615), with Hugo Grotius, former champion of the freedom of the seas, subtly shifting his position so that the freedom to trade and navigate could be circumscribed by contracts with native powers (leaving aside the fact that those contracts may de facto have been forced).

[78] Of particular importance has been the revisionist work of James C. Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580-1640* (Baltimore & London, 1993). For a similar treatment which seeks to take account of criticism of Boyajian's figures (which tend to inflate Portuguese trade) see Ernst van Veen, *Decay or Defeat? An inquiry into the Portuguese decline in Asia 1580-1645* (Leiden, 2000).

paradoxical, as some historians have traditionally emphasized the economic superiority of the joint-stock companies, supposedly more modern in their corporate organization than the 'feudal' system operated by the Portuguese, characterized by inefficient Crown involvement, massive tax evasion, and the growth of private trade. There can be no doubt that the Companies provided a new operational model in which the merchants themselves ran all the operations, using the authority of the state to make war and peace, but with a long-term commercial focus and discipline lacking in the Portuguese and Spanish systems. The Dutch offered the purest form of this model of full control by a Board of Directors, whilst in the British case there was some Crown involvement, exemplified by the dispatch of Sir Thomas Roe as ambassador to the court of Jahangir. However, despite the many flaws of the Portuguese system, of which perhaps the crucial one was the difficulty of imposing a consistent policy, the fact remains that the *Carreira* between Lisbon and Goa, combined with the licensed journeys or country trade, and the various customs revenues in a number of key locations, continued to generate huge profits. These were shared between the Crown, those officers who systematically cheated the very Crown they were supposed to represent (for example the captain of Hormuz), and many private investors, of which the New Christians formed the most important group. By contrast with this flourishing of capital gains, the Portuguese fleets were clearly insufficient to maintain the war effort, both in quantity and quality. Seen in this light, it was as a war machine that the VOC became most effective.[79]

Some of the structural problems of the *Estado da Índia* were well known to contemporaries. Viceroys regularly complained of lack of money, ships and men. Often the authorities in Goa found themselves unable to buy enough pepper simply because Lisbon had not sent enough silver, and they had to borrow locally instead. There were important reserves of private capital in Portuguese India which could be used to cover these gaps, but the Crown could not untap these financial resources (for example by selling offices) without perpetuating the system of corruption that ensured that private trade continued to undermine the king's own monopolies and customs revenues. There was also the problem of chronic underinvestment in the fleets, often because the Crown sougth to make a substantial gain from the trading contracts associated with each annual armada, a tendency which can be set in sharp contrast with the determination of the VOC to send larger fleets and to reinvest the proceeds of sales of spice to strengthen its military position and maximize its trading capacity. For example, before the truce negotiations Lerma's regime diverted the proceeds of the Portuguese contracts towards the wars in Flanders, weakening the fleets of India and in effect allowing the Dutch to consolidate their footholds in

[79] This constitutes an important correction of Steensgaard's structural analysis, which privileges the Company's relation to the markets, but can also serve as a corrective to those who will not accept the decisive nature of some substantial differences between the *Estado da Índia* and the northern Companies.

Asia.[80] The Portuguese also failed to maximize what superficially looked like a demographic advantage. Although Indo-Portuguese society as a whole was growing, this was in large part a cultural expansion, as Portuguese men married native women, becoming *casados*, and their descendants replicated the same pattern over many generations, keeping their patrilineal language, religion and social ethos, but not their European physical aspect. The Dutch often spoke contemptuously about their rivals in South-East Asia as 'Black Portuguese'.[81] By contrast very few women migrated to 'India' from Portugal, and many of the men sent as soldiers were very young (usually teenagers) and very poor. Living precariously, a huge proportion died during the journey or within months of arriving.

During the struggle against the Dutch in the first decades of the seventeenth century, none of these structural problems was more decisive than the Portuguese naval failings. After 1599, as private contractors suddenly assessed the risks of buying the pepper contracts as excessive, the Crown resumed full control for organizing the annual fleets, selling space to private investors trading with those other products that were not reserved to the Crown itself (or to a few well-placed aristocratic investors such as the Dukes of Braganza or the Counts of Vidigueira). From 1601 the Crown also forced the Portuguese New Christian community of merchants to buy the royal pepper brought from India at inflated prices, something they were willing to do because they still made substantial profits from their private business.[82] Had a larger portion of the proceeds from all these contracts been reinvested on a regular basis in larger fleets and better ships, the Portuguese would not have found themselves losing grounds to the Dutch and the English so quickly. Instead, a number of recurrent problems were not fully addressed. The first one was seaworthiness. Throughout the sixteenth century the Portuguese carracks had become massive, in order to maximize profitability. Such huge ships, often overloaded, were hard to manoeuvre and were no match when confronted with a swarm of smaller, lighter Dutch ships – despite being armed with many cannons and able to carry more troops, it was often difficult

[80] For example between 1600 and 1606, at a time when pepper revenues were high despite some loss of market share to northern competitors. Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade*, pp. 89-91.

[81] The proportions varied according to area, but even within the *casado* community of Goa the 'black' outnumbered the 'white', according to António Bocarro's figures of 1635. For the whole of the *Estado da Índia* Bocarro suggests a total of almost 5,000 white for some 7,500 black *casados*, but he probably underestimates the size of the native community of Indo-Portuguese, possibly because not all native converts were categorized in the same way. See Subrahmanyam, *Portuguese empire in Asia*, pp. 221-222.

[82] The New Christians were also subjected to the need to buy 'pardons' that protected them, albeit only temporarily, from the Inquisition. The cynical way Lerma's regime treated its merchant and capitalist class did not prevent the growth of private trade, but did little to generate a healthy working relationship between merchants and the state. In particular, the lack of correlation between commercial power and political power diminished the chances for long-term investment in the naval resources of the *Estado da Índia*.

to deploy them effectively.[83] In addition, a single shipwreck or a single capture by the enemy had a massive impact.[84] Hence, in the light of how real those dangers had become in the 1600s, it would have been sensible to spread the risk with a different type of fleet. In the face of losses of around 20% in the worst decades, men of experience such as Admiral João Pereira Corte-Real and the New Christian trader and reformer Duarte Gomes Solís became articulate advocates of just such a change, but their advice either went unheeded, or came too late.[85] The slowness of the Crown's reaction to the Dutch naval challenge (despite intermittent efforts to send large fleets of galleons) was compounded by repeated organisational failings. In particular, delays in the preparation of the fleets departing from Lisbon or back from Goa led to late voyages which resulted in sensational shipwrecks, or even the cancellation of some voyages. This administrative failing, linked to poor financial planning, is remarkable considering how well the monsoon season was understood, and the accumulated experience of generations of Portuguese pilots. It can be argued that a rapacious Crown starved its own armadas from the liquidity needed for proper planning, leading to last minute expedients that could only increase real costs. Reliance on the discretion of viceroys in Goa, whose personal level of competence varied enormously, and on a complex web of councils and *juntas* in Lisbon and in Madrid, where a few competent officers often found their executive capacity severely circumscribed by unrealistic demands and jurisdictional rivalries, could not deliver the professional focus and regular capitalization that a joint-stock Company like the

[83] Galleons represented a much better alternative than carracks for military encounters.

[84] Consider Bentley Duncan's highly influential figures given in his "Navigation between Portugal and Asia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries", in E. van Kley & C. K. Pullapily (eds.), *Asia and the West: Encounters and exchanges from the age of exploration* (Notre Dame IN, 1986), pp. 3-25. Whilst it is clear that the navigational weakness of the *carreira* developed throughout the sixteenth century, driven by the pressure to augment tonnage at the lowest cost, historians continue to argue about the relative impact of economic pressures and Dutch attacks, and more generally about the negative significance of the Union of Crowns. On this latter point see Paulo Guinote, Eduardo Frutuoso & António Lopes, *Naufrágios e outras perdas da Carreira da Índia, séculos XVI e XVII* (Lisbon, 1998). André Murteira offers an informed review of the debate in "O corso neerlandês contra a Carreira da Índia no primeiro quartel do século XVII", *Anais de História de Além-Mar*, 9 (2008), pp. 89-126.

[85] Juan Pereira Corte Real, *Discursos sobre la navegación de las naos de la India de Portugal* (Madrid, 1622). Duarte Gomes Solís, *Discursos sobre los comercios de las dos Indias* (Madrid, 1622). The publication of both works seems to belong to the same moment, an urgent re-assessment of the Portuguese empire (following the fall of Hormuz) by the more dynamic regime of the new *privado* Olivares, hence they were written in Castilian for circulation in Madrid. However, Duarte Gomes Solís had for many years been urging Lerma to launch a more decisive naval policy in Asia, for example in 1612, albeit with little success. Corte-Real's suggestion that three-deck ships should replace four-deck carracks was actually adopted, but there was a great deal of opposition in Lisbon, and eventually he himself complained that a more radical re-design of the ships was needed. See further Charles R. Boxer, "Admiral João Pereira Corte-Real and the construction of Portuguese East-Indiamen in the early seventeenth century", in *From Lisbon to Goa, 1500-1700: Studies in Portuguese maritime enterprise* (London, 1984), pp. 388-406; J. Calvet de Magalhães, "Duarte Gomes Solís", *Studia*, 19 (1966), pp. 119-171.

VOC was soon able to deploy. From 1600 to 1624, the contrast between the losses suffered by the *Carreira* and the VOC in the journey from Europe to Asia are staggering: 30 voyages out of 188 (16%) against 4 out of 266 (1.5%).[86]

Some important voices argued for a more dynamic naval policy, not only merchants like Gomes Solís, but also aristocrats like the Count of Gondomar, who as ambassador in England could well see that the Spanish were being left behind, and even priests and friars with experience overseas, like the rector of the Jesuit College in Manila Juan de Ribera. Thus Gondomar, who in his latter years became a fierce critic of Spanish policies, in 1626 concluded that the greatness and conservation of Spain consisted in increasing the number of ships and sailors, because "today the world has become smaller, and whoever controls the sea, also controls the land".[87] He might have been thinking of what happened in Hormuz, the news of which came just as Gondomar struggled to negotiate a dynastic alliance between Spain and Britain (a famous fiasco). Yet his perspective was also the view from the imperial periphery. Writing from the Philippines a few years earlier, in December 1618, the Jesuit Juan de Ribera had reached a similar conclusion.[88] Through an ingenious 'syllogism', he argued that since foreign nations, such as the Dutch and the English, would inevitably be drawn to the trade of the Spice Islands, the Spanish (naturally including the Portuguese) would only be able to keep the profitable trade if more regular reinforcement of ships were sent from Spain, as both Goa and Manila were exhausted from the efforts of the previous years. Ribera had in fact been a privileged witness of how in 1616 a large fleet of war galleons built by Juan de Silva in the Philippines at horrendous cost failed to rendez-vous with those sent from Goa by viceroy Azevedo, in what became one of the most significant wasted efforts of the truce period (at a time when the truce as such had totally broken down in Asia). Where Castilian hardliners such as Don García's secretary Saulisante saw dark Portuguese plots to avoid Castilian interference, Ribera perceived a more fundamental issue: the extent to which a united Spain was committed to fighting for its more distant colonies in Asia by supplying them properly. Given the economic crisis Spain itself was suffering, it was not by all means clear what the answer was. The proposal to simply abandon the Philippines, so distant and so expensive, was taken seriously.[89]

[86] Murteira, "O corso neerlandês", p. 114. The figures may be a little worse for the VOC as we do not have data of losses before 1602.

[87] *Relación de las cosas del Estado de Inglaterra*, quoted in Fernando Bartolomé Benito, *Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, conde de Gondomar. El Maquiavelo Español* (Gijón, 2005), p. 139. See also José García Oro, *Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, Conde de Gondomar y Embajador de España (1567–1627): Estudio Biográfico* (Santiago de Compostela, 1997).

[88] E. Blair & J. A. Robertson (eds.), *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898* (55 vols., Cleveland, 1903-1909), vol. 18, pp. 161-165.

[89] Hernando de los Ríos Coronel, procurator of the colony, wrote against the idea in his *Memorial y relación de lo que conviene remediar en las Filipinas* (Madrid, 1621). He was also one of those defending the integration of the Portuguese and Spanish commercial networks in East Asia.

Hence, the little that was done proved remarkably ineffective. At some points there was some bad luck with shipwrecks, for example when in 1608 a record twenty-one ships divided in two squadrons departed Lisbon to relieve both Goa and Malacca, yet half the fleet was lost, including one carrying the viceroy himself, the Count of Feira. However, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that there were also structural reasons why the Portuguese naval efforts, supported to some extent by the Castilians from the Philippines, proved so disappointing. The pattern of military confrontations seems clear enough. Looking at the English Company's activities in the Mughal ports of northwest India alone, in 1612-1613 Nuno da Cunha's four galleons were unable to prevent Thomas Best from trading in Surat, and in early 1615 viceroy Jerónimo de Azevedo personally led a substantial armada that accomplished nothing against Nicholas Downton's smaller fleet, an event which fatally weakened the naval reputation of the Portuguese (already dented by the clash of 1612) at the Mughal court. All could see how a substantial Portuguese fleet of six galleons supported with many auxiliary ships was tactically outmanoeuvred by only four English merchantmen. Having twice the number of men and guns counted for little if one could not deploy them effectively, and Downton, a talented naval commander, managed to prevent a close battle. In this occasion the Portuguese were overconfident and poorly coordinated, and when the viceroy eventually reached the already laden English ships in open seas, he had left behind his own fleet and did not dare attack alone (his prudent retreat was a huge blow to his military reputation, and Don García was particularly scathing). It was therefore not surprising that a few years later Shah Abbas counted on English sea power in order to dislodge the Portuguese from Hormuz – their reputation had been truly damaged. In late 1620 and early 1621 Rui Freire de Andrade's four galleons, sent from Lisbon in order to protect Hormuz, failed to expel an equal number of Company ships from Jask, and instead were subjected to appalling losses from English guns. Having thoroughly alienated the Persians with his destructive raids, the flawed Portuguese hero was now unable to protect Hormuz, and when a year later Shah Abbas finally launched his attack, no Portuguese galleons dared confront a larger English fleet at sea.[90] The Portuguese had lost their con-

[90] Rui Freire was caught trying to build a new fortress at the island of Qishm, the island that supplied Hormuz with water and victuals, according to a decision taken in Madrid, but against the advice of the Governor at Goa Fernão de Albuquerque. Luís de Brito, who had been left as commander of the fleet, dared do nothing against the English fleets, alleging lack of gunpowder, and his galleons were destroyed whilst moored in Hormuz without offering effective resistance. Brito, accused of cowardice, was later executed in Goa. For a summary account see Charles R. Boxer, "Anglo-Portuguese rivalry in the Persian Gulf, 1615-1635", in *Portuguese Conquest and Commerce in Southern Asia, 1500-1750* (Aldershot, 1985), I. The response in Madrid to the news can be followd in the documents at British Library, MS Egerton 1131, ff. 76r-152v.

fidence. What was demonstrated in all cases was the tactical superiority of armed merchantmen and their gunners over the larger Portuguese galleons, which were often built, armed and manned from India itself.

It is difficult to say what was most decisive in the defeats of the Azevedo years (1612-1617), whether the viceroy's sheer ineptitude, as ambassador Don García de Silva y Figueroa suggested, or the scale of his corruption, as some have alleged.[91] It was Azevedo who organized a special sale of offices that helped untap the resources of the wealthy *casado* community, but who arguably dilapidated them, as following the fracas of Surat, the fleet sent to reinforce the Governor of the Philippines Juan de Silva was destroyed by the Dutch in early 1616, and very few of the galleons planned afterwards were effectively built. Azevedo, a man whose whole career had developed in India rather than in Portugal, had previously been a successful commander in Sri Lanka (as captain-general he had completed the subjugation of the kingdom of Kotte), and the impression one gets is that the *Estado da Índia* was increasingly becoming truly Indo-Portuguese: often very dangerous against a number of local enemies thanks to its military advantage, and even contemplating territorial expansion, but rarely able to defeat rival Europeans with the same ships, guns and troops. It is in any case difficult to escape the conclusion that the wasted efforts of Azevedo's long vice-royalty set the stage for the subsequent loss of Hormuz and for the military inferiority experienced by the Portuguese when the truce with the Dutch expired. Able viceroys such as Azevedo's successor the Count of Redondo found the treasury depleted and the vast majority of the galleons on order not finished or not yet delivered. Most important, the pattern of lost naval encounters unequivocally suggests that the problem went well beyond the failings of an individual commander. It was the superior quality of their ships, guns and naval officers rather than the quantity of resources mobilized that made the Companies successful against the Portuguese.

Some historians have emphasized that in 1620, just before the resumption of war with the Dutch Republic, the Portuguese empire had only receded seriously in South East Asia, despite the foreboding of many observers, Portuguese and Castilian, who

[91] For a harsh judgment, Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade*, pp. 154-157, who emphasizes Azevedo's support for *casado* trading interests and his duplicity towards the authorities in Lisbon and Madrid; Anthony Disney, *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire* (2 vols., Cambridge, 2009), vol. II, p. 167, emphasizes his colonial condition. The Goa-based chronicler (and Couto's successor) António Bocarro, a New Christian *casado* who had been a soldier but also traded in India during the Azevedo years, offers a valuable near contemporary account (1635) which is moderately exculpatory: although he agreed than in Surat there had been lack of 'ordem e acordo', Bocarro felt that Azevedo's subsequent imprisonment in Lisbon was harsh, and he certainly justified Azevedo against Don García's demands, subtly questioning the ill-informed decisions taken at the court. See *Década 13 da História da Índia*, ed. Rodrigo José de Lima Felner (2 vols., Lisbon, 1876). Azevedo deserves a full monographic analysis.

feared that a similar fate awaited Hormuz.[92] However, by then experienced observers like António de Gouveia not only understood how precarious the Portuguese position had become, but did not hesitate to identify the underlying causes of such dramatic decline as a combination of incompetent and corrupt leadership in Goa (he was thinking of viceroys like Azevedo), financial mismanagement of the royal patrimony, leading to chronic underinvestment in the fleets prepared in Lisbon, and the naval power of European rivals, which experience showed to be superior to the Portuguese. As we have seen, Gouveia concluded that an accommodation was inevitable either with the Dutch (by extending the truce of 1609) or with the English.[93] It seems inescapable to conclude that Lerma's regime had wasted two crucial decades to address both the problems of the Monarchy's relationship to the kingdom of Portugal, and the defence of its oriental empire. However reluctant the peace process had been, the treaties of the 1600s offered a unique window of opportunity for reform without the immediate financial pressure of continuous warfare. This was well understood at the time, and the necessity for financial relief was in fact the key justification for accepting the loss of reputation implied by signing treaties with rebels and heretics. It is symptomatic that it was only after those treaties had been signed that the longstanding plan to expel all *moriscos* from Spain was implemented by Lerma and Philip III. The decision involved a triumph of reason of state, coloured by piety, over sheer economic calculations, as the *moriscos* above all else were seen to pose a threat to national security. Precisely for that reason, the implementation of the plan required a relatively peaceful international context. At the same time, the timing of the expulsion allowed Lerma to divert attention from the humiliation of the truce (as many hardliners interpreted it in Spain), restoring the image of the Monarchy as protector of the Church. It is perhaps the gravest indictment of Lerma's regime that this massive expulsion of crypto-Muslims, Spanish people who had been systematically marginalized, forcibly converted to Christianity, and then persecuted for their cultural practices, was the most memorable decision of the reign, and that the fragile peace that had been achieved so painfully was used for little else, when so much obviously needed doing. The *Estado da Índia* was only one of the victims of this political misjudgement. The combination of a widely shared lack of realism in assessing Portuguese naval capacity, insufficient investment in the armadas, and the government's inability to break through entrenched local interests in order to mobilize resources more effectively, meant that by the start of Philip IV's reign only one genuine option was possible for the authorities in Goa: to open talks with the English in order to reach a deal with the East India Company to share the trade of India.[94]

[92] According to Malyn Newitt, despite the failure to modernize, "in 1620 an optimistic survey of the overseas empire might have suggested that Portugal had weathered the worst of the storm" (*A history of Portuguese overseas expansion, 1400-1668* [Abingdon, 2005], p. 213). Newitt's focus on areas such as East Africa or Sri Lanka does encourage an image of continued Portuguese expansion, but there seem to be no solid grounds for serious revisionism.

[93] British Library, MS Egerton 1133, ff. 258r-261r (see notes 63 and 76 above).

[94] As we have seen, this alliance had become agreed policy in early 1623 after the shock of the

The Count of Linhares, an energetic viceroy, reached such an agreement in 1635. It came fifteen years too late to save Hormuz. In the intervening period, between the expiration of the truce and Linhares' pragmatic move, the renewed ascendancy of the hardliners at the Court, led by Olivares, helped to demonstrate that the obsession with reputation of the Spanish political elites may be ultimately suicidal.

Re-interpreting the Persian embassy: *quebrar a ponte*

A full history of the *Estado da Índia* during the Habsburg period in the light of the tension between Madrid and Lisbon remains to be written, but the Persian affair offers an excellent window into what went on during the second decade of the seventeenth century.[95] Above all else it showcases how the potential for cooperation between the two Spanish nations was not pursued with success largely on account of mutual suspicion and jealousy, leading to the creation of powerful negative stereotypes that led to a fair amount of obstructionism. A vast array of evidence also suggests that the tension within Spain was amplified overseas, with Goa and Manila acting as opposite poles for two contradictory imperial visions which, even in peaceful circumstances, the Monarchy would struggle to reconcile.

The report prepared by Saulisante, Don García's secretary, effectively summarized many of the criticisms that the ambassador expressed in his correspondence and *Comentarios*, and can serve as a thread for a number of themes that reveal the extent to which the system was perceived to be malfunctioning. It suggested, to begin with, the existence of wilful Portuguese sabotage of the embassy. Viceroy Azevedo's reported exclamation, "che quebrarían a ponte para que não pasase a Persia o embaxador castechano", graphically summarized the key idea (it is interesting to compare this to the very different tone of the letters Azevedo sent to Juan de Silva in 1615 when he agreed to send four galleons to assist the expedition against the Dutch).[96] Although there were many local villains, including the captain of Hormuz Luís da Gama, Saulisante's *relación* also expressed the conviction that the sabotage

fall of Hormuz (some even suggested incorporating the English into a Portuguese trading company), but the ludicrous collapse of the negotiations about the Hispano-British marriage made war in the short term inevitable.

95 For the broader story, Valladares, *Castilla y Portugal en Asia*, offers a starting point.

96 Saulisante, *Relación de la embaxada*, p. 146. Compare to: "Given that everything belongs to His Majesty, it is reasonable that we should help each other". Letter of 28 April 1615, published by Luz, *O Conselho da Índia*, pp. 579-581. This seems hypocritical, as in the same letter Azevedo, noting that Don García de Silva probably was a relative of Juan de Silva, hid his obstructionism of the ambassador. Interestingly, Azevedo had been given the chance to command over the Castilian fleet. The instructions sent from the Council of Portugal in Madrid in March 1615 had requested that the viceroy should personally command the expedition, or if he could not, send a captain who should obey Juan de Silva (the option chosen).

had its origins at the court, and although it gave no names, it did mention a *libelo infamatorio* written by a Venetian agent in Baghdad against the ambassador which had been distributed by the ambassador's enemies in Spain. This anti-Castilian attitude was a general one in the Portuguese nation, and allowed those who were often divided in factions to unite against the common threat. Even the religious, in particular the Augustinian friars, were accused of sharing that attitude, and both bishop António de Gouveia and Belchior dos Anjos, who had separately been involved in negotiations with Shah Abbas, were accused of imprudent behaviour (Gouveia, in particular, provoked a persecution of oriental Christians and had to flee Shah Abbas's court), as well as active collaboration with those seeking to sabotage the 'Castilian' embassy (for example, by intercepting the ambassador's letters). But not all criticism was individualized. In general, all missionaries were excessively involved in politics (it would be fair to note here that it was not always their fault, as both Shah Abbas and Philip III relied on them for diplomatic exchanges). Even the more saintly Carmelites such as Juan Tadeo, whom Don García learnt to appreciate despite having been sent by Rome rather than by the king, had made a mistake by assisting Robert Sherley, an English Catholic at the service of Shah Abbas. Under the guise of helping reach an agreement about a silk monopoly, Sherley (Saulisante argued) was secretly working as a spy of the English (remarkably, at the same time the poor man was being accused of unreliability by the English ambassador at the Mughal court Sir Thomas Roe, and the East India Company would eventually shun him no less than the court of Philip III).

The general criticism painted a very negative picture of Portuguese India, one that easily compared with those of foreign travellers such as Francesco Carletti, Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, François Pyrard de Laval or Pietro della Valle. The Portuguese were too given to trade and had lost all sense of military discipline or training (hence they lacked gunners). They had in fact been corrupted by the influence of the local climate, becoming weak and dissolute. They lived in terror of the pirates from Malabar. The captains of Hormuz cared little for keeping the fortress ready for battle, only bothering to survive the heat and conduct their lucrative private trade, whilst cheating the royal treasury from its customs (which they shared with the king of Hormuz and his relative the *guazil*). Not surprisingly, the fortress was undermanned and in an alarming state of disrepair, and a tempting target for a "barbarian" king like Shah Abbas. In part the problem was that royal officials, of which the disastrous Luís da Gama (who had provoked the Persian attack on Gombroon) became a paradigmatic example, were given their jobs without any real qualification, just because of who they were or what they paid (this was a common theme in *arbitrista* literature in Spain: the lack of professionality of the royal administration). They used their three year stints to enrich themselves without any commitment to long-term aims.[97]

97 These criticisms might have been unwelcome coming from a Castilian, but Portuguese critics

In this context, the Dutch and the English cast an ominous shadow, and during Don García's embassy the possibility that Shah Abbas would rely on the East Indian Company for an attack on Hormuz was in everybody's mind (leaving aside the fact that their presence was a direct challenge to Portuguese imperial claims to a trade monopoly in the Persian Gulf). Arguably, the whole tenor of the Hispano-Persian diplomacy of the first two decades of the seventeenth century was conditioned by the twin pressures of the Protestant trading nations in the sea, and of Shah Abbas (with the active assistance of his Governors in Shiraz) in the mainland, creating a fatal pincer movement. It was clear that Hormuz was under threat many years before it fell, from the moment Aliverdi Khan conquered Lar in 1602, and promptly seized the island of Bahrein and its pearl fisheries, which used to belong to the king of Hormuz. When in 1614 Aliverdi Khan's son Imam Quli Khan was provoked (largely through the indiscretion of Luís da Gama) to seize the Portuguese fortress of Gombroon in the mainland across Hormuz, the fate of the Portuguese seemed sealed. If the early attack on Bahrein had coincided with the first Persian embassies to Europe, initially through the agency of Augustinian friars, the fall of Gombroon coloured Don García's high profile return embassy. In effect, whilst the official talks were primarily about a military and commercial alliance against the Ottomans, the security of Hormuz was always part of the diplomatic horizon, and the elderly Castilian ambassador found himself having to defend the sovereignty of Philip III over positions that could not be recovered by force.[98] As the options of the Portuguese narrowed, the Council of State in Madrid seemed to believe that it was best to keep talking in order to avoid a catastrophe, although at the same time it felt unable to commit to any serious resumption of the war against the Ottomans, other than occasionally funding a corsair fleet in the Mediterranean. Arguably, to keep talking without ever giving Shah Abbas what he wanted would eventually become counter-productive. As no satisfactory agreement was ever forthcoming, the Persian ruler became contemptuous and cynical, as Don García quickly noted. There was a price to be paid for disappointing expectations!

often made very similar points. For example, in 1621 Rui Freire de Andrade wrote in despair to Spain concerning the lack of military spirit and unwillingness to offer support that he had found in Hormuz. Upon reading this councillor Mendo da Mota gave vent to his feelings about the terrible dangers facing Spain in a hurried note to Olivares (British Library, MS Egerton 1131, f.17; also *Documentação Ultramarina Portuguesa*, vol. II, pp. 274-276). A year later, upon learning of the fall of Hormuz, Mota declared "que no se perdió Ormuz por fuerça de los enemigos, mas por confusión, ignorancia y miedo de los que la defendían, y por haverse escusado de hirle a socorrer los que heran obligados a hazerlo" (*Documentação Ultramarina Portuguesa*, vol. II, p. 362).

98 Whether the king of Hormuz was a vassal of the king of Portugal, as claimed by Don García according to the Portuguese tradition, or a potential subject of Shah Abbas, as the latter desired, became the object of the most heated exchanges between the two.

Don García was undoubtedly slowed down by Portuguese obstructionism, but how decisive was this delay and sabotage in explaining his inability to prevent the eventual attack upon Hormuz? The ambassador was not far from the Council of State that had sent him in emphasizing the reputation of the Spanish Monarch, but as a result he also became an inflexible and uncharismatic figure, a diplomat quite unable to make friends (his frosty relationship with the somewhat pompous Roman traveler Pietro della Valle is highly symptomatic, as they shared religion, culture and class). The combination of an adverse geostrategic situation, especially after the arrival of the English, the lack of an effective long-term strategy at the Spanish court, the many agendas that clashed within the overlapping structures of the multi-national Monarchy, and Don García's shortcomings as a diplomat, all combined to precipitate the peculiar outcome that Hormuz would be attacked barely three years after Shah Abbas had received a most magnificent present from Philip III. There may be a strange parallel between this diplomatic fiasco in Persia and the collapse of a no less important agreement with James Stuart a few months later in Spain, when the British heir Charles was lured to fall in love with a Habsburg *infanta* and even traveled incognito to Madrid, only to be faced with the most extravagant demand that he convert to Catholicism.[99] It seems that during the *Pax Hispanica*, the Catholic Monarch was too arrogant to make friends with his potential allies, much as he had been too principled to reach a lasting peace with his enemies the Dutch.

More generally, the neglect of the affairs of Portugal and its empire by the otherwise rapacious regime of Lerma provided an important long-term context for Don García's diplomatic failure and the subsequent fall of Hormuz, notwithsanding the large amount of business than went through the myriad councils and *juntas* in Lisbon and at the court. What is most apparent when considering the Spanish background to Don García's protracted embassy was the lack of a clear vision and strategy in relation to Persia, especially as it became increasingly clear that the original idea of an active military alliance against the Ottomans had, for the Catholic Monarchy, lost any urgency. The Austrian peace of 1606 was a decisive turning point. Seeking to gain time, all the Council of State sought to do was to protect Hormuz with an agreement about the trade with silk. The scheme consisted of diverting all the silk trade that went to Europe towards the Cape route, so as to prevent the Ottomans

99 At the height of the negotiations about the marriage, on 29 April 1623, many voices at the Council of State even demanded that king James should write to the East India Company asking the English to help the Portuguese recover Hormuz (*Documentação Ultramarina Portuguesa*, vol. II, pp. 434-438). Buckingham had offered to send a much milder letter simply expressing dismay at what had happened, but this was seen as worse than nothing by Olivares. Gondomar, at the heart of the English diplomacy, agreed, but also reminded the other councillors that the English had been pushed to fight the Portuguese by the Portuguese themselves, and that the option of an alliance between the two nations in India had long been on the table. On the match see Glyn Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta: The cultural politics of the Spanish match* (New Haven, 2003).

from exploiting its circulation through Aleppo. This, however, was a poor substitute for Shah Abbas, who suddenly saw in the English the resource he needed to seize the island.[100] If locally, in Hormuz itself and in Goa, the various captains and *casado* settlers were mostly concerned with exploiting the lucrative opportunities for trade, relying on the Crown to defend their monopoly against European competitors, no dynamic answer came from Europe either. Especially under Lerma's regime the policies coming from the court were hesitant and slow, with the added complication of overlapping envoys undermining each other. It did not help that the psychological distance between Madrid and Lisbon remained huge, and that communications with Asia took at best five or six months, sometimes more than one year. Unsurprisingly, in the context of the royal visit and *Cortes* of 1619 (which took place at the same time that Don García completed his sterile Persian embassy), the longstanding Portuguese request that the Spanish court move to Lisbon in order to develop a more dynamic maritime policy to defend both the Atlantic and Asian empires fell on deaf ears. There was in any case a distinct lack of fluid institutional articulation between the separate bodies in charge of the *Estado da Índia*, from the court of Philip III, where the Councils of State and Portugal vied for control of the Persian policy, to the viceroy in Lisbon and his own competing network of Councils of State, *Fazenda* and (until 1614) India, with the additional complication of the mixed *juntas* set up by Lerma, to, finally, the viceroy in Goa, not to mention the Council of Indies of Castile, which was in charge of supporting the Philippines and the Moluccas through New Spain. The Monarchy lacked a truly federal Council of State representing all its territories, and when issues of general interest such as the truce with the Dutch were discussed, the Council of Portugal was completely marginalized. In this way the common interest was often reduced to the interests of the Crown as perceived by the Castilian courtiers who controlled the Council of State, whilst outside it, the influence of confessors and theologians with privileged access to the royal family also meant that religion had a disproportionate influence upon decision-making.

Despite the occasional contributions of some men of talent who acted as counsellors, viceroys or governors, in Madrid, Lisbon or Goa, what is most apparent over the less than two decades that went from the signing of a peace with the English in Europe to the collapse of Don García's Persian embassy in the face of English commercial penetration, is the lack of leadership provided by Philip III and his *validos* for the needs of their fragile and corrupt Asian empire. The *Estado da Índia* was being challenged by rivals who were able to rely on a revolutionary articulation of commercial interests with naval power. The key issue, one only fully understood when it was too late to do much about it, was how to mobilize resources in a more efficient

[100] In addition, Shah Abbas had come to rely on the expensive silk contracts that he sold to the Christian Armenian merchants of New Julfa in Isfahan. The commercial value of the Portuguese route remained to be seen, as Spain itself was a producer of silk, and the scheme was far from straightforwad, as it also required blocking the Red Sea.

manner against a much leaner imperial model that operated with little reference to aristocratic and religious interests. Stuck in the heart of Castile, the Monarchy failed to provide either the concentration of mind and political energy required to effectively fight back against the enemies of its Portuguese subjects, or a more modest assessment of what positions could be realistically maintained, and which trade and territory may have to be conceded to other Europeans. But this arrogance, the idea that no imperial claims could be given up if one were to prevent a fatal collapse of reputation, when not a betrayal of religious duty, was not a peculiarity of the Monarchy's dealings with its Portuguese interests overseas: in fact, it affected all aspects of its foreign policy, as the imminent conflict in Europe – the so called Thirty Years War – would soon demonstrate, with devastating consequences.