

Philip II's Quest

The Appointment of Governors-General during the Dutch Revolt (1559-1598)

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Recent historiographical studies have presented the Habsburg appointment of governors-general during the Dutch Revolt as the outcome of factional infighting at the Spanish Court. While this so-called 'faction model' has yielded new insights, it also raises a number of problems. Firstly, in the new model, the role of the dynasty is unduly relegated to the background – even though Philip II's appointment decisions were mainly driven by dynastic considerations. Secondly, the power struggle at the Spanish Court was not only a conflict between court factions, but also between noble houses vying for prestige and trying to secure positions for their offspring. Thirdly, there is an excessive focus on the Spanish Court, while the feuds between noble houses in the Low Countries also played a role in the interim appointments made during the Revolt. Finally, Philip II always looked for the most suitable candidate in terms of administration and warfare during the Dutch Revolt, in accordance with the constraints of the composite Spanish monarchy. Only the combination of these four (frequently contradictory) motives reveals how Philip II's appointment of governors can be seen as a quest for the right man or woman in the right place.

Early modern history was long viewed as a dynastic story featuring 'great men' and 'great women'.¹ This account has rightly been challenged: since the 1970s, under the influence of the social sciences, research has focused on early modern networks and power elites.² This also changed the perspective on the Spanish monarchy: it was no longer the dynasty but the internal faction struggle at the Spanish Court that was identified as underpinning power relationships in the Habsburg empire. In 1973, Paul David Lagomarsino explored the far-reaching influence of Spanish factions on Low Countries politics between 1559 and 1567 from this perspective; his views on factionalism have since been applied to nearly all crucial moments in the Dutch Revolt (here broadly defined as the widespread dissatisfaction manifesting itself from 1559 onwards and culminating in civil war in 1566). The change of focus from dynasty to faction struggle also heralded a new approach to the Habsburg appointment of governors in the sixteenth-

century Low Countries: increasingly, the appointment of a governor-general in Brussels was viewed as the outcome of a subtle power play between court factions in Madrid.³

These recent insights, however valuable and refreshing, raise a number of problems, which this article seeks to address. First, in the new ‘faction model’, the role of the dynasty as an explanatory factor is unjustly relegated to the background, even though contemporaries continued to call for a ‘prince of the blood’ to be appointed in Brussels in order to end the Revolt. Second, the power struggle at the Spanish Court was not merely a struggle between factions, but also (and mainly) one between noble families. A third problem is the overly narrow focus on the Spanish Court, while feuds between noble houses in the Low Countries also played a role, a factor neglected in most historiographical traditions. Finally, it should be investigated whether Philip II did not simply look for the most suitable candidate in the fluctuating circumstances of the enduring Dutch Revolt. Only a perspective that integrates these four (frequently contradictory) motives allows us to see Philip II’s appointment of governors in the Low Countries as a ‘quest’ for the right man/woman in the right place.

- 1 The author wishes to thank Sebastiaan Derks, Erik Swart and her colleagues in the Early Modern History Research Unit, k.u. Leuven, as well as the referees and editors of the *BMCN/Low Countries Historical Review* for their suggestions on earlier versions of this article. Abbreviations: Archivo de los Duques de Alba, Madrid (ADA); Algemeen Rijksarchief/Archives Générales du Royaume, Papiers de l’État et de l’Audience (AGR, PEA); Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), Secretaría de Estado (E), Secretarías Provinciales (SP), Contaduría Mayor de Cuentas (CMC); Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid (BNE); Biblioteca Francisco de Zabáburu, Madrid (BFZM); Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid (IVDJ), Koninklijke Bibliotheek België/Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, Brussels (KBR).
- 2 W. Reinhard (ed.), *Power Elites and State Building* (Oxford 1996); J. Martínez Millán (ed.), *Instituciones y Élités de Poder en la Monarquía Hispana durante el Siglo XVI* (Madrid 1992).
- 3 P.D. Lagomarsino, ‘Court Factions and Formulation of Spanish Policy towards the

Netherlands (1559-1567)’ (University of Cambridge PhD 1973); J. Martínez Millán and C.J. de Carlos Morales (eds.), *Felipe II (1527-1598): La configuración de la monarquía hispana* (Valladolid 1998); J.G.C. de Wolf, ‘Bureaucratie en politiek. De opvolging van de hertog van Alva in de landvoogdij over de Nederlanden’, in: P. Rietbergen (ed.), *Bureaucraten betrapt. Historische opstellen* (Amersfoort 2001) 82-108, 107; translated as ‘Burocracia y tiempo como actores en el proceso de decisión: La sucesión del Gran Duque de Alba en el gobierno de los Países Bajos’, *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna* 28 (2003) 99-124; J. Versele, ‘Los móviles de la elección de don Luis de Requeséns como gobernador general de los Países Bajos después de la retirada del Duque de Alba (1573)’, *Studia Historica* 28 (2006) 259-276; A. Weststeijn, ‘Antonio Pérez y la formación de la política española respecto a la rebelión de los Países Bajos, 1576-1579’, *Historia y Política* 19 (2008) 231-254; J.E. Hortal Muñoz, *El manejo de los asuntos de Flandes, 1585-1598* (CD-Rom; Universidad Autónoma de Madrid PhD 2006).

Philip II is often presented as the antithesis of his father. Whereas Charles V was a lenient and responsive sovereign, Philip was intractable and distant. Whereas the Emperor was always travelling or fighting on the battlefield, his son was viewed as a rigid ‘paper king’.⁴ This contrast has also been applied to the appointment decisions being made in the Low Countries: whereas Charles V always managed to appoint family members as regents, Philip II frequently failed to do so, which led to the Revolt against his authority. Nevertheless, the emperor had warned his son that ‘the inhabitants of those countries cannot not stand being ruled by foreigners, [...] meaning that one of our relatives should always be appointed’.⁵ The emperor had indeed posted his aunt and his sister there. Furthermore, his appointment decisions were equally driven by dynastic considerations in other parts of his composite state, except in Milan, Naples and the colonies.⁶ Philip II, on the other hand, seemed to be disregarding his father’s advice (and example) when he appointed three Spanish noblemen as governor of Brussels between 1567 and 1573, even though both moderate peace-makers and the loyal opposition had suggested that the appointment of the ‘prince of the blood’ might appease the Revolt.⁷ Once again, the King seemed to be confirming his reputation as an intractable sovereign. Nevertheless, dynastic motivations backed the nomination policy of Philip II, of which the chart of family relationships between the governors-general in the Low Countries (on the following page) furnishes further proof.

On his departure for Spain in 1559, Philip II clearly followed in his father’s footsteps when he appointed his half-sister Margaret of Parma and promised to send his firstborn son, Don Carlos – only fourteen at the time – to

4 R. García Cárcel, ‘Los contrastes de Carlos V y Felipe II en la política cultural’, in: *Dos monarcas y una historia en común: España y Flandes bajo los reinados de Carlos V y Felipe II* (Madrid 1999) 49-62; a more nuanced account: G. Janssens, ‘Van vader op zoon. Continuïteit in het beleid van Karel V en Filips II met betrekking tot de Nederlanden’, in: *Ibid.*, 89-102.

5 J.A. Fühner, *Die Kirchen- und die antireformatorische Religionspolitik Kaiser Karls V. in den siebzehn Provinzen der Niederlande 1515-1555* (Leiden, Boston 2004) 51, note 15, ‘Grand Political Testament’ of the 18th of January 1548: ‘[...] los de allí no pueden bien sufrir ser gobernados por estrangeros, ni tampoco entre los suyos de

la misma nación se podía hallar persona á este propósito, y ansí siempre proveido de alguno de nuestra sangre’.

6 Even if these dynastic appointments proved arduous and short-lived: H. Rabe and P. Marzahl, ‘Comme représentant nostre propre personne – Regentschaften und Regentschaftsordnungen Kaiser Karels V.’, in: H. Rabe (ed.), *Karl V. Politik und politisches System* (Konstanz 1996) 71-94.

7 J.J. Woltjer, ‘De vrede-makers’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 89 (1976) 229-321, 314; G. Janssens, *Brabant in het verweer. Loyale oppositie tegen Spanje’s bewind in de Nederlanden van Alva tot Farnese 1567-1578* (Kortrijk, Heule 1989) 199-203.

the Low Countries as soon as possible.⁸ Although Margaret was the emperor's illegitimate daughter, she was acknowledged as a member of the Habsburg dynasty, and Philip II even preferred her over other relatives.⁹ His sister Joanna had chosen a life of piety after the turmoil of her regency in Castile and Aragón.¹⁰ Philip's cousin Christina of Denmark, Dowager-Duchess of Lorraine was suspected of harbouring sympathies for the French King.¹¹ His cousin and brother-in-law Maximilian of Austria, finally, had Protestant leanings, despite his oath of allegiance to Catholicism. Moreover, since the Habsburg family treaty in 1551, Philip had become resentful of the fact that Maximilian (rather than he) would soon be crowned emperor.¹² Among the various dynastic candidates, finally, Margaret was the most eligible because she had been born and partly raised in the Low Countries and because she knew the 'languages of the country'.¹³

- 8 Commissioning letter for Margaret of Parma, 8/08/1559: AGR PEA 1221 fol. 78-81, and 85-86 (copy, French); AGR PEA 785 fol. 1-2v., 2v.-3 (copy, French) and 3-3v. (copy, Latin); cf. L.P. Gachard and J. Lefèvre (eds.), *Correspondance de Philippe II sur les affaires des Pays-Bas publiée d'après les originaux conservés dans les Archives royales de Simancas* (Brussels, Tongeren 1848-1936) (henceforth CPhl), II, 465-477. The complete set of instructions for the governor-general of the Low Countries included: 1. a commissioning letter, 2. a secret instruction, 3. a special or particular instruction. In this contribution and in the summary table on page 17, the date of 'the instructions' refers to the letter of commission (1). Cf. J. Van Gampelaere, 'De commissie- en instructiebrieven voor de landvoogden van de Nederlanden (1559-1576)' (unedited MA paper; Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2005).
- 9 J. de Jongh, *Margaretha van Oostenrijk, hertogin van Parma en Piacenza 1522-1586* (Amsterdam 1965); F. Rachfahl, *Margaretha von Parma. Statthalterin der Niederlande (1559-1567)* (München 1898); L.P. Gachard, *Marguerite d'Autriche, duchesse de Parme, régente et gouvernante des Pays-Bas* (Brussels 1867). In the context of the Italian principalities: A. Puaux, *Madama, fille de Charles Quint, régente des Pays-Bas* (Paris 1987); E. Giannetti (ed.), *Margarita d'Austria e l'Abruzzo* (Ortona 1983); R. Lefèvre, *Ricerche su 'Madama' Margharita d'Austria e l'Italia del '500* (Castelmadama 1980); S.A. van Lennep, *Les années italiennes de Marguerite d'Autriche, duchesse de Parme* (Genève 1952); G. Spada, *Margherita d'Austria, duchessa di Parma* (Parma 1893); S. Mantini (ed.), *Margherita d'Austria (1522-1586): Costruzioni politiche e diplomazia, tra corte Farnese e Monarchia spagnola* (Rome 2003).
- 10 J. Martínez Millán, 'Familia real y grupos políticos: La princesa Doña Juana de Austria (1535-1573)', in: Id., *La corte de Felipe II* (Madrid 1994) 73-106.
- 11 Christina of Denmark, Dowager-Duchess of Lorraine (1522-1590): daughter of Isabella, sister to Charles V and Christian II of Denmark. She had from 1558 onwards manifested willingness to assume the governorship of the Low Countries, cf. De Jonghe, *Madama*, 210.
- 12 L. GeEVERS, 'Family Matters: William of Orange and the Habsburgs after the Abdication of Charles V (1555-1567)', *Renaissance Quarterly* 63 (2010) 459-490.
- 13 K. Verhofstad, *De regering der Nederlanden in de jaren 1555-1559* (Nijmegen 1937) 190; De Jongh, *Margaretha*, 210; P. Sutter Fichtner, *Emperor Maximilian II* (New Haven, London 2001) 18-21 and 51.

At first sight, the subsequent appointment – in October 1567 – of the Castilian nobleman Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, third Duke of Alba, does not seem to fit this dynastic picture.¹⁴ Hence, the accidental nature of this appointment is often mentioned: Margaret had refused to continue as governor-general, if she had to relinquish her position as captain-general to Alba.¹⁵ After Philip II had accepted her resignation, Alba became governor almost by default.¹⁶ However, as is shown by files held at the *Instituto Valencia de Don Juan* in Madrid, this scenario had at least partly been prepared.¹⁷ Moreover, as Gustaaf Janssens points out, Alba's expedition should have paved the way for one of Philip II's own journeys¹⁸, which was later postponed and finally cancelled because of Don Carlos' odd behaviour. After several incidents, the crown prince was 'confined to his room under guard', and as a result he was no longer regarded as a possible governor. Don Carlos finally died in the summer of 1568; in the autumn of the same year, the queen Elisabeth of Valois also passed away.¹⁹ In less than four months, thus, Philip II found himself in a unenviable position of being a widower without a male heir. Meanwhile, the Austrian Habsburgers had been excluded from possible regencies in the Spanish monarchy: Maximilian had already been elected emperor in 1564,

14 Commissioning letter for Alba, 8/10/1567: AGR PEA 1221 fol. 158-159 (copy, French), cf. CPhill, II, 650-651. W. Maltby, *Alba: A Biography of Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, Third Duke of Alba 1507-1582* (Berkeley 1983); G. Janssens, *Don Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, derde hertog van Alva, en de Nederlanden* (Brussels 1993); H. Kamen, *The Duke of Alba* (London 2004); translated as *Alva. Een biografie* (Antwerp 2005), M. Fernández Álvarez, *El Duque de Hierro: Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, III. Duque de Alba* (Madrid 2007); G. Janssens, 'Het oordeel van tijdgenoten en historici over Alva's bestuur in de Nederlanden', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 54 (1976) 474-488; G. Janssens, 'Het politiek testament van de hertog van Alva: aanbevelingen voor don Luis de Requeséns over het te voeren beleid in de Nederlanden (Brussel, 2 december 1573)', *Bulletin de la Commission Royale d'Histoire* (henceforth BCRH) 175 (2009) 447-474.

15 First commissioning letter for Alba as captain-general, 1/12/1566: AGR PEA 1221 fol. 115r.-116v. and 117r.-120v.; cf. CPhill, II, 600-602; Second

commissioning letter as captain-general, 31/01/1567: AGR PEA 1221 fol. 121r.-123r., fol. 124r.-126v., fol. 131r.-133v., 134r.-139v. (copy, French); AGS SP 2529 fol. 1-4, cf. IVDJ Envío 6 carpeta 1 fol. 263-264 (preparatory note, Spanish); cf. CPhill, II, 619-622; *Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España* (henceforth CODICIN) 4 (Madrid 1844), 388-395. In addition, there is an *third commissioning letter as captain-general for Alba*, 21/04/1567, which was only drawn up in Spanish and which conferred special privileges for military justice on the Duke of Alba: BNE Ms. 781 fol. 118-118v. (copy, Spanish), cf. ADA Caja 135 n° 24 (copy, partially destroyed by fire) and AGS CMC 2a E 69 s.f. (copy).

16 Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (London 1977); Kamen, *Alva*, 124.

17 IVDJ, Envío 6, carpeta 1, fol. 253-254: *Memoria de los despachos necesarios al Duque para Flandes*.

18 Janssens, *Brabant in het verweer*, 132-134.

19 L.P. Gachard, *Don Carlos et Philippe II* (Brussels 1863) II, 143; G. Moreno Espinosa, *Don Carlos: El príncipe de la leyenda negra* (Madrid 2006) 131-133.

so Philip's sister María was needed by her husband's side. Their eldest sons, Rudolf and Ernest were being groomed for high office at the Madrid Court, but they were still too young.²⁰

At first, the painful problems with Don Carlos did not lead Philip II to abandon the possibility of a dynastic appointment. On the contrary, when cancelling his journey, he intended to send his half-brother Don Juan de Austria to the Low Countries.²¹ Don Juan had been conceived by the emperor in 1547, but only acknowledged as a member of the dynasty in 1559.²² As Alba had reservations about the possible appointment of Don Juan, Philip II engaged his half-brother in the war against the Moors (ending in victory at Granada) and subsequently in the war against the Ottoman Empire (ending in victory at Lepanto). When Alba asked to be replaced from 1568 onwards, all dynastic options had been exhausted. The King only remarried in 1570, to his niece Anna of Austria. She brought her younger brothers Albert and Wenceslaus to the Spanish Court, but her elder brothers Rudolf and Ernest still needed to remain there as long as their sister did not bear a son. Only after the long-awaited birth of the new crown prince, Don Fernando, 1571, then, both Archdukes could leave the court. Both Rudolf and Ernest were immediately given important roles in Austrian state politics. Hence, the new heir in 1571 did not immediately provide the Spanish King with more room for dynastic manoeuvring.²³

It was only in these circumstances, run out of dynastic options, that Philip II again appointed two Spanish noblemen to the governorship of the Low Countries. In 1571, he chose Juan de la Cerda, fourth Duke of Medinaceli. Between June 1572 and October 1573, this *Grande de España* stayed in the Low Countries. Due to opposition by Alba, he was never able to take up office

20 So this was not only because Maximilian favoured moderate politics in the Low Countries, as suggested by G. Parker, '1567: The End of the Dutch Revolt?', in: A. Crespo Solana and M. Herrero Sánchez (eds.), *España y las 17 provincias de los Países Bajos: Una revisión historiográfica (XVI-XVIII)* (Cordoba 2002) I, 269-290, 274; Sutter Fichtner, *Maximilian II*, 108; J. Patrouch, *Queen's Apprentice: Archduchess Elizabeth, Empress María, the Habsburgs, and the Holy Roman Empire 1554-1569* (Leiden, Boston 2010) 245-340.

21 Parker, '1567: The End of the Dutch Revolt?', 274-275; V. Soen, *Geen pardon zonder paus! Studie over*

de complementariteit van het koninklijk en pauselijk generaal pardon (1570-1574) en over inquisiteur-generaal Michael Baius (1560-1576) (Brussels 2007) 155.

22 B. Bennassar, *Don Juan de Austria: Un héroe para un imperio* (Madrid 2004); J.A. Vaca de Osma, *Don Juan de Austria* (Madrid 1999); F. Wauters, *L'audience de Don Juan d'Autriche: Essai sur le séjour dans les Flandres (1576-1578)* (Brussels 2000); L.P. Gachard, 'Don Juan d'Autriche: Études historiques', *BCRH II* 26/27 (1868-1869).

23 Sutter Fichtner, *Emperor Maximilian II*, 112-113 and 197-199.



Don Juan of Austria was a bastard son of Emperor Charles V, and as such half-brother of Philip II. He was governor-general of the Low Countries from November 1576 until his death on the first of October 1578.

Frans Hogenberg, Portrait of Don Juan of Austria (1547-1578), s.d.

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there, even if he received a kind of investiture on 13 September 1572.²⁴ Faced with this deadlock, Philip II decided to appoint his childhood friend don Luis de Requesens y Zúñiga (Lluís de Requeséns), Grand Commander of Castile in 1573.²⁵ Oddly enough, it has never been suggested that Requesens may primarily have been appointed to pave the way for Don Juan. Yet the King had also appointed both of them together in Granada and Lepanto. Following Requesens' unexpected and premature death on 5 March 1576, Philip II immediately instructed Don Juan to leave from Italy for the Low Countries, but his halfbrother preferred to first pass by the royal Court.²⁶ Meanwhile, the Brussels Council of State acted as interim governor until the arrival of the new governor at the start of November 1576.²⁷

- 24 Commissioning letter and 'provisional' instructional letters for Medinaceli are dated by De Wolf on 25/09/1571 (De Wolf, 'Burocracia', 108), based on a French copy of the commissioning letter in Archivo de los Duques de Medinaceli, Sección Archivo Histórico, caja 8, doc. 5 (copy, French). *Preparatory documents for the official instructions of Medinaceli*, 11/1571: AGS E 533 s.f. De Wolf also gives November as the date for the official instructions, yet without reference to source material. G. Janssens, 'Juan de la Cerda, hertog van Medina-Celi', *Spiegel Historiael* 9 (1974) 222-227; 'Documentos relativos al nombramiento de gobernador y capitán de los Países Bajos de D. Juan de la Cerda, duque de Medinaceli, desde 1571 a 1573', CODICIN 36 (Madrid 1860); Janssens, *Brabant in het verweer*, 179.
- 25 Commissioning letter for Requesens, 19/10/1573: AGR PEA 1221 fol. 164r.-166v. and 167r.-170r. (copy, French), cf. CPhill, II, 709-711; Requesens was the first governor which had to pledge an oath on his instructions, effectuated on 29 November 1573: AGS PEA 1221 fol. 198r.; fol. 162r.-v. en 170r.-v. J.M. March, *La embajada de D. Luis de Requesens en Roma por Felipe II cerca de Pío IV y Pío V: 1563-1569* (Madrid 1950); J.M. March, *El Comendador Mayor de Castilla Don Luis de Requesens en el Gobierno de Milán (1571-1573)* (Madrid 1946², 1943³); A. Borràs y Feliu, *Luis de Requesens y Zúñiga. Cataluña y Lepanto. Nuevos documentos* (Barcelona 1971); A.W. Lovett, 'A New Governor for the Netherlands: The Appointment of Don Luis de Requesens, Comendador Mayor de Castilla', *European Studies Review* 1 (1971) 89-103, H. de Schepper, 'Un Catalán en Flandes: Don Lluís de Requeséns y Zúñiga, 1573-1576', *Pedralbes* 18 (1998) 157-167.
- 26 AGS E 568 fol. 125-127: *Lo que se platico en Consejo destado miercoles 28 de março 1576, sobre como quedaria lo de Italia si el Sr. Don Juan fuesse a Flandes*. J.I. Tellechea Idígoras, 'Don Juan de Austria y la "Trampa" de Flandes. Cartas a Felipe II tras su llegada al nuevo destino (1576)', *Cuadernos de Investigación Histórica* 21 (2004) 201-249. Other candidates included Margaret of Parma, Emmanuel-Philibert of Savoye, Ernest of Austria and even the seventeen-year-old Albert of Austria: AGS E 568 fol. 13 (summary), fol. 14 (complete), fol. 15 (copy): *Copia de villete de Hoppero a su Magestad de primero de abril 1576*, cf. CPhill, IV, 25-27. Commissioning letter for Don Juan, 01/09/1576: AGS E 2914 (original, French, reproduced on page 26), AGS E 2915 (duplicate for the Low Countries), AGS E 2913 (s.f., duplicate); cf. AGR PEA 1222 4-5 (copy, French), 7-9 (copy, French), 10-11 (copy, French); KBR Ms. 17361-421 fol. 283-284 holds an undated copy of an *Instruction secreta que el Rey Don Philippe II dio al Sr. Don Juan de Austria quando iba a gobernar a Flandes*, which the King is assumed to have written himself.
- 27 Commissioning letter for the Council of State, 3/04/1576: AGS PEA 1221 fol. 219, 220, 221 and 220 (copy, French).



Alexander Farnese was the son of Margaret of Parma and Ottavio Farnese. He was governor-general of the Low Countries from October 1578 until his death in December 1592.

Frans Hogenberg, Portrait of Alexander Farnese (1543-1592), s.d.

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Some time before his death on the first of October 1578, Don Juan nominated his friend and right-hand-man, Alexander Farnese, Prince of Parma and son of Margaret, as his successor. The King soon endorsed this possible transfer of power with official instructions.²⁸ Despite initial legal and political problems, Farnese remained governor and captain-general until his death on 3 December 1592. In fact, he should by then already have been relieved from his duties by the Count of Fuentes, Pedro Enríquez de Acevedo²⁹, but the latter considered it inappropriate to do so on Farnese's deathbed. In line with royal instructions, Fuentes then appointed Count Peter-Ernest of Mansfelt as interim governor mid-December 1592.³⁰ In his final years, however, Philip II resolutely favoured dynastic appointments: after Farnese's death, he chose his nephew Ernest of Austria, who had been promised to his eldest daughter Isabella. As a result, a minor dynastic lineage in the Low Countries

28 *Provisional commissioning letter for Farnese, in the case of Don Juan's death* (of which actual happening Philip II was unaware), 13/10/1578: AGR PEA 1222 fol. 43 (original, kept without seal), *Official commissioning letter for Farnese*, 13/10/1578: AGR PEA 1222 fol. 44-46, which is in fact a copy of the former, where the clause 'par provision' had disappeared. Preparation delegation of power by Don Juan to Farnese, 28/09/1578: AGR PEA 1222 fol. 28 and 30 (minutes, French), and Delegation of power by Don Juan to Farnese, 29/09/1578: AGR PEA 1222 fol. 29 (copy, French). L. Van der Essen, *Alexandre Farnèse: Prince de Parme, Gouverneur Général des Pays-Bas (1545-1592)*, 5 volumes (Brussels 1932-1937) I, 57-58 mentions that these instructions arrive on the 22th of November 1578; A. Pietromarchi, *Alessandro Farnese: L'eroe italiano delle Fiandre* (Rome 1998; French translation, Brussels 2002); J.C. Losada, *Los generales de Flandes, Alejandro Farnesio y Ambrosio Spínola: Dos militares al servicio del imperio español* (Madrid 2007); H. Cools, S. Derks and K. De Jonghe (eds.), *Alessandro Farnese and the Low Countries* (Turnhout; forthcoming).

29 P. Van Isacker, 'Pedro Enríquez de Azevedo, graaf van Fuentes en de Nederlanden, 1592-1596', *Annales de la société d'Emulation de Bruges* 60 (1910) 205-236; L. Van der Essen, 'Correspondance de Cosimo Masi, secrétaire d'Alexandre Farnèse, concernant le gouvernement de Mansfeld, de Fuentes et de l'Archiduc Ernest aux Pays-Bas, 1593-1594', *BIHR* 27 (1952) 357-390.

30 *Commissioning letter for Mansfelt (ad interim)*, 06/02/1593: AGR PEA 1222 fol. 154-155 and 156-158 (copy, French); AGR PEA 786 fol. 55-57 (copy, French); AGS 602 fol. 30 (French, without date); K. de Jonge and J.-L. Mousset (eds.), *Un prince de la Renaissance: Pierre-Ernest de Mansfeld (1517-1604)*, 2 volumes (Luxembourg 2007); G. Janssens, 'Le comte Pierre-Ernest de Mansfeld, loyal serviteur de Charles-Quint et de Philippe II et la guerre aux Pays-Bas: Une esquisse biographique', *Hémecht* 56 (2004) 379-388; R. Matagne, 'Le Comte Pierre-Ernest de Mansfeld, gouverneur et capitaine general du duché de Luxembourg et du Comté de Chiny', *Hildaguia* 3 (1955) 721-736; J. Massarette, *Vie martiale et fastueuse de Pierre-Ernest de Mansfeld* (Paris 1930).



▲ Ernest of Austria was the son of Maximilian II and brother-in-law of Philip II. He was governor-general of the Low Countries from January 1594 until his death in February 1595.

Frans Hogenberg, Portrait of Ernest of Austria (1553-1595), s.d.

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with some degrees of independence became a new and distinct possibility.³¹ After Ernest's premature death in February 1595, the King immediately announced that Ernest's brother Albert, by now Cardinal and Archbishop of Toledo, would assume the governorship.³² In the meantime, the Count of Fuentes, another Spanish nobleman, was made interim governor until the Joyous Entry of Albert in February 1596.³³ Appointing Albert was a tough decision for the aging King, as the Austrian archduke had been his confidential adviser (*privado*) since 1593.³⁴ Soon arrangements were made for the marriage of Albert and Isabella and gradually the legal and political preparations for an Act of Cession were made. By this decision, the Archdukes received in 1598 the Low Countries as a dowry, albeit under conditions.³⁵

As the above suggests, analysis of the appointments made by Philip II between his departure for his native country in 1559 and his death in 1598 challenges the supposed contrast between father and son with regard to appointment decisions (see also the summary schedule below on page 17). Half of the ten governors who took up office – i.e. excluding Medinaceli – were of 'royal blood'. This included two bastard children of the emperor (Margaret and Don Juan), one grandson of the emperor (Farnese) and two of the King's

31 Commissioning letter for Ernest of Austria, 23/11/1593: AGR PEA 1221 fol. 204-206 (copy, French), AGR PEA 786 94-96 (copy, French), AGR PEA 1221 fol. 211-214 (Spanish translation with corrections), AGR PEA 1223 fol. 44-46 (copy, Spanish). P. Viti Mariani, *L'archiduca Ernesto d'Austria e la Santa Sede 1577-1594* (Rome 1898); A. Doutrepoint, 'L'archiduc Ernest d'Autriche, gouverneur-général des Pays-Bas (1594-1595)', in: *Miscellanea historica in honorem Leonis Van der Essen* (Brussels 1947) II, 621-642; J.E. Hortal Muñoz, 'La Casa del archiduque Ernesto durante su gobierno en los Países Bajos (1593-1595)', in: A. Álvarez-Ossorio Alvariño and B.J. García García (eds.), *La Monarquía de las Naciones: Patria, nación y naturaleza en la Monarquía de España* (Madrid 2004) 193-213.

32 J. Roco Campofrío, *España en Flandes, trece años de gobierno del archiduque Alberto (1595-1608)* (Madrid 1973); W. Thomas and L. Duerloo (eds.), *Albert and Isabella*, 2 volumes (Turnhout 1998).

33 Delegation of power by Ernest of Austria to Fuentes, 19/02/1595: AGR PEA 1222 fol. 2 (French, copy), read out on 21/02/1595. *Commission de Gouverneur*

General des Pais Bas pour le Comte de Fuentes jusqu'à ce que l'archiduc Albert arrivera auxdicts Païs Bas, 02/05/1595: AGR PEA 1619 s.f.; AGR 1222 fol. 13, 14, 17, 20-21 (copies, French), AGR PEA 195 fol. 448. J.E. Hortal Muñoz, 'La visión de un ministro "castellanista" sobre la situación de los Países Bajos al final del siglo XVI: Los "advertimientos" de Estebán de Ibarra', *BCRH* 174 (2008) 89-166.

34 Commissioning letter for Albert of Austria, 02/08/1595: AGR PEA 1223 fol. 35-36, 37-39, 41-43 (copies, French), AGR PEA 786 fol. 118-121. On 13/09/1598, Andreas of Austria took the function as interim governor, while Albert travelled the next day to Spain for his marriage with Isabella. He was unaware that Philip II had died the day before.

35 A. Esteban Estríngana, 'Felipe III y los estados de Flandes: De la cesión a la reversión territorial de las provincias leales (1598-1623)', in: J. Martínez Millán and M.A. Visceglia (eds.), *La Corte de Felipe III y el gobierno de la Monarquía Católica (1598-1621): Actas del Congreso Internacional*, II. Los Reinos (Madrid 2007) 423-501.

Austrian nephews (Ernest and Albert). Together, they governed for about three quarters of a 39-year period. Of the remaining five non-dynastical governors, three were interim governors until the arrival of a 'prince of the blood' (the Council of State, Mansfelt and Fuentes), one was appointed in view of the King's journey and arrival (Alba) and one presumably as a stand-in for his half-brother (Requesens). In recent historiography, the role played by dynastic considerations in Philip II's appointments in the Low Countries has therefore been underestimated. In this sense, the Act of Cession in 1598, by which Philip II presented, under certain conditions, the Low Countries to his daughter Isabella and her husband Albert, can be seen as the logical culmination of a long-standing dynastic policy.

The governor's dynastic blood ties, however, did not mean that they were or became mere puppets in the hands of the King, often quite the reverse. Margaret was as protective of the interests of the Farnese family as her husband.³⁶ Her son Farnese hoped that his son Ranuccio would succeed him and therefore brought him to the Low Countries in 1591 to groom him for this succession. Don Juan de Austria also had ambitions of his own, which received papal support: he hoped to storm England and marry Mary Stuart. His independent plans were thwarted by intrigues, however, which resulted in the murder of his secretary Escovedo.³⁷ Finally, while the archdukes Ernest and Albert had been raised at the Spanish Court, they maintained close ties with the imperial entourage. Rudolf II attached strong conditions to Ernest's governorship: thus, the King was expected to pay for Ernest's Court and contribute to the Turkish war.³⁸ And in 1602, Albert in vain tried to be crowned King of the Romans.³⁹

36 Cf. S. Derks, 'Madama's Minister: Tomás de Armenteros at the Court of Margarita of Austria', in: M. Ebben, R. Fagel and R. Vermeir (eds.), *Agentes y Identidades en movimiento. España y los Países Bajos, siglos XVI-XVIII* (Cordoba; forthcoming).

37 P.O. De Törne, *Don Juan d'Autriche et les projets de conquête de l'Angleterre: Étude historique sur dix années du seizième siècle (1568-1578)*, 2 volumes (Helsingfors 1915); Vaca de Osma, *Don Juan de Austria*, 321-322.

38 AGR PEA 1399/6 s.f.: *Verbal du besoigné à la Diète Imperiale de Regensbourg en l'an 1594*.

39 T. DaCosta Kaufmann, 'Archduke Albrecht as an Austrian Habsburg and Prince of the Empire', in: *Albert and Isabella* (Turnhout 1998) I, 15-25.

Governorships from 1559 until 1598

	Instructions	Start	End
Margaret of Parma	08/08/1559	08/08/1559	08/10/1567
Alba	08/10/1567	08/10/1567	28/11/1573
[Medinaceli]	[25/09/1571]	[13/09/1572]	[6/10/1573]
Requesens	19/10/1573	29/11/1573	05/03/1576
Council of State	03/04/1576	06/03/1576	03/11/1576
Don Juan	01/09/1576	03/11/1576	01/10/1578
Farnese	13/10/1578	01/10/1578	03/12/1592
	01/02/1580		
	20/11/1581		
[Margaret of Parma]	[06/03/1580]	[26/07/1580]	[08/1582]
Mansfelt	06/02/1593	12/12/1592	19/01/1594
Ernest of Austria	23/11/1593	20/01/1594	20/02/1595
Fuentes	02/05/1595	21/02/1595	10/02/1596
Albert of Austria	02/08/1595	11/02/1596	13/09/1598

Due to the logics and logistics of the Habsburg Empire, the dates of the commissioning letters hardly ever coincide with the actual start or end of the governorship in the Low Countries. Sometimes appointments were planned ahead; as often the governorship was endorsed post factum with official commissioning letters.

Spanish noble families

Although dynastic considerations clearly played an important role, the appointment of governors is now generally viewed within the context of the rivalry between factions and cliques at the Spanish Court.⁴⁰ On one side of this power struggle was the Alba clan (the *albistas*), which later developed into a Castilian party (the *castellanistas*) around 1576-1577. These ‘hawks’ shared a strongly centralised monarchical conception of the state and the religious beliefs taught at the University of Salamanca. On the other side of the rivalry, there was the clan headed by Ruy Gómez, Prince of Eboli (the *ebolistas*), which later developed into a papal party (the *papistas*), temporarily led by Secretary of State Antonio Pérez between 1576 and 1579. In contrast to the *albistas*, these ‘doves’ respected local sensitivities in a composite state and shared the spirituality advocated by the University of Alcalá and later by the Jesuits.

40 On the importance of court factions: D. Potter, ‘Politics and Faction at the Court of Francis I: The Duchesse D’Etampes, Montmorency and the Dauphin Henri’, *French History* 21 (2007) 127-146. These court factions are to be distinguished

from factionalism during revolts: J. Haemers, ‘Factionalism and State Power during the Flemish Revolt (1477-1492)’, *Journal of Social History* 42 (2009) 1009-1039.



This engraving illustrates how Requesens enters Brussels in November 1573, while Alba leaves. This is in fact an imaginary scene as Alba remained in the Netherlands until December, in order to facilitate the transition.

Frans Hogenberg, Requesens takes over from Alba, 1573.

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Collections of the Central University Library (©Bruno Vandermeulen).

Habsburg politics in the Low Countries have also been interpreted in terms of this struggle between court factions, initially by Paul David Lagomarsino and more recently by José Eloy Hortal Muñoz.⁴¹ Against this background, Alba's appointment in the Low Countries marked the ascent of the *albistas* and the painful defeat of the *ebolistas*. In the end, Alba's appointment proved to be a Pyrrhic victory, because it placed him outside the court, thus weakening the position of his own faction. This strong antagonism between both court factions certainly played an important role: indeed, Philip II himself aimed to end the hostility between Alba and Eboli and tried to bring about a reconciliation between both before Alba's departure.⁴²

In the initial 'faction model', the appointment of Medinaceli and (above all) Requesens was viewed as indicative of the *ebolistas'* gradual return to ascendancy, which enabled them to pursue a more moderate policy in the Low Countries, as evidenced by pardons and peace negotiations. Joop de Wolf argues that in appointing Medinaceli, Philip II sought to advance a 'prominent member of another court faction' than Alba's. Julie Versele, on the other hand, interpreted the appointment of Requesens as a strategic way out of the faction struggles: Philip II chose the Aragonese nobleman precisely because he was *not* involved in the Madrilene (and therefore primarily Castilian) faction struggle.⁴³

Nevertheless, this interpretation falls short if it is primarily based on the political views in war and peace. Medinaceli and Requesens were not unequivocally committed to reconciliation. Thus, Medinaceli initially contributed to the repression of Alba and only started distancing himself from these tactics after half a year. Requesens may have supported a general pardon, but he had considerable reservations about possible peace negotiations. Liesbeth Geever's has already pointed out that political views in war and peace or ideological opinions on state building did not coincide with particular factions, but with day-to-day and case-to-case coalitions.⁴⁴

41 Lagomarsino, *Court Factions*, and Hortal Muñoz, *El manejo*, *passim*.

42 J.M. Boyden, *The Courtier and the King: Ruy Gómez de Silva, Philip II and the Court of Spain* (Berkeley 1995) 13.

43 De Wolf, 'Burocracia', 106-107; Versele, 'Los móviles', 259-260.

44 Soen, *Geen pardon zonder paus*; L. Geever's, *Gevalen vazallen. De integratie van Oranje, Egmont en Horn in de Spaans-Habsburgse monarchie (1559-1567)* (Amsterdam 2008) 13-18; cf. V. Soen, 'Zwagers aan het Spaanse hof, vredesgezanten in de Nederlandse Opstand. Jan van Noircarmes (†1585) en Karel van Tisnacq jr. (†1597)', *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Zuid-Nederlandse Maatschappij* 62 (2009) 189-207.



▲ Margaret of Austria was a bastard daughter of Emperor Charles V, and as such half-sister of Philip II. She was governor-general of the Low Countries from August 1559 until October 1567. She was invited again for the governorship in 1580, but due to conflicts with her son Alexander Farnese, then governor-general, she never took up office.

Frans Hogenberg, Portrait of Margaret of Austria (1522-1586), s.d.

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Collections of the Central University Library (©Bruno Vandermeulen).

Nor did differences in religiosity, which are deemed central to the Spanish faction struggle, play a role in the appointment of Brussels governors. Alba had been raised in a Dominican spirituality and had very little sympathy for the Jesuits.⁴⁵ Margaret of Parma, Requesens, Don Juan and Farnese, in contrast, were strongly influenced by them and supported the order in the Low Countries. The appointment of Ernest and Albert, finally, contributed to a Tridentine *pietas austriaca*.⁴⁶ In any case, only staunch Catholics were eligible for appointment.

The faction model is even more problematic in accounting for the appointment of members of the Habsburg dynasty. Nevertheless, Margaret of Parma, and particularly Don Juan and Farnese are counted among the *papistas*, because of their stay at Alcalá, their support for the pope and their sympathy for the Jesuit order.⁴⁷ The fact that Don Juan initially got on well with the secretary of state Antonio Pérez, leader of the *papistas*, but not with Alba, appeared to confirm that image. Recently, Arthur Weststeijn also related the appointment of Don Juan to the rise of Pérez and his *papistas*.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, this interpretation is open to challenge. Indeed, it is hard to relegate members of a dynasty to a background role within a faction, as they possessed greater material, cultural and symbolic capital than the noble or bureaucratic councillors. Sebastiaan Derks and María Rodríguez-Salgado illustrated this point by analyzing the roles of Margaret of Parma and Alexander Farnese respectively: it is argued that they acted as Italian princes, pursuing their own dynastic interests, which were at odds not only with the Spanish faction struggles, but also with Habsburg interests.⁴⁹ Finally, also Hortal Muñoz observed that in the 1590s it was no longer the factional strife, but the *dinasticismo* that played a pivotal role in policies towards the Low Countries.⁵⁰

Furthermore, the faction model also fails to consider the politics of the Spanish noble families, i.e. the intrinsic ambitions of the high aristocracy.⁵¹ Indeed, through their appointment in the Low Countries, both Alba and Requesens mainly sought to safeguard their noble houses. Thus, Alba managed to arrange for his son and successor, Don Fadrique to assist him in

45 H. Callewier, 'Anti-jezuïtisme in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (1542-1773)', *Trajecta* 16 (2007) 30-50, 34.

46 L. Duerloo, 'Pietas Albertina. Dynastieke vroomheid en het herstel van het vorstelijke gezag', *BMGN* 112 (1997) 1-18.

47 J.E. Hortal Muñoz, 'Alessandro Farnese y la corte de Felipe II: Luchas y Facciones cortesanas en Madrid y Bruselas entre 1585 y 1592', in: *Alessandro Farnese and the Low Countries* (forthcoming)

48 Weststeijn, 'Antonio Pérez'.

49 Derks, 'Madama's Minister'; M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado, 'Almost a Royal Eagle: Alexander Farnese and the Spanish Monarchy', in: *Alessandro Farnese and the Low Countries* (forthcoming).

50 Hortal Muñoz, *Manejo*, 188-195.

51 D. García Hernán, *La aristocracia en la encrucijada: La alta nobleza y la monarquía de Felipe II* (Cordoba 2000) 8.

the Low Countries, although this *enfant terrible* had previously been convicted and banished.⁵² The Duke even granted powers to his son Fadrique which he acknowledged to be incompatible with the instructions given to him and he continued doing so despite the presence of that other *Grande de España* Medinaceli.⁵³ Moreover, he intended his heir to reunite both branches of the family, and to this end a (secret) marriage agreement was signed in Brussels in 1571. The importance of the Álvarez de Toledo clan was underscored by the 1595 appointment of the Count of Fuentes, a son of Alba's sister.⁵⁴ Requesens was equally keen to ensure the continuity of his family. A.W. Lovett has argued that Requesens accepted the Dutch governorship because of his precarious financial situation and the many debts he had inherited, a claim that Rob Hendriks later documented on the basis of accounts in the family archives *Arxiu del Palau*.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, in accepting the governorship, Requesens mainly hoped to get his son's derailed marriage negotiations back on track. The King promised to intervene and did so successfully.⁵⁶ Soon after, however, the house of Requesens was hit by misfortune: Requesens senior died in Brussels in March 1576, his only son a year later.

Dutch noble families

Whereas scholarship has thus overemphasized the faction struggle in Spain, the power struggles between noble families in the Low Countries have received little or no attention. Yet Charles V had warned his son that a governor should not be found *entre los suyos de la misma naçion*, a statement which referred to the feuds among the high nobility in the Low Countries.⁵⁷ When Maximilian of Austria's regency was disputed, for instance, his powers in Flanders were assumed by a council of representatives from the county's nobility and

52 'Documentos (nuevos) sobre las causas que dieron motivo á la prision de D. Fadrique, hijo del Duque de Alba, y tambien á la del mismo Duque', CODICIN 8 (Madrid 1846) 483-529; Kamen, *Alva*, 108-109; De Wolf, 'Burocracia', 103-104.

53 De Wolf, 'Burocracia', 103-104; Janssens, 'Juan de la Cerda', 224.

54 In marrying the dowager Juana de Acevedo, he took her family name: Van Isacker, 'Pedro Enriquez de Azevedo'; R. Fagel, 'Fuentes de Valdepero, Pedro Enriquez de Toledo, de Acevedo, graaf van', website *The Dutch Revolt*: <http://dutchrevolt.leidenuniv.nl>.

55 R. Hendriks, 'El patrimonio de don Luis de Requesens y Zuñiga (1528-1576): 'Fue don Luis de Requesens y Zuñiga (1528-1576) pobre o rico?', *Pedralbes* 14 (1994) 81-92; C. Solans Roda, 'L'enderroc del Palau dels Requesens', *L'espai, revista de recerca i divulgació (Molins de Rei)* 2 (1999) 45-55.

56 BFZM, Altamira 100, doc. 87.

57 Cf. note 5.

towns.⁵⁸ Subsequently, native noblemen were occasionally appointed interim governors of the Low Countries, while also serving as governor in other parts of the composite state.⁵⁹ Upon Philip II's departure in 1559, the Dutch high aristocracy hoped it would be possible to adjust the King's increasingly autocratic policy. What they resented was not so much the appointment of Margaret as governor as the favouritism shown to Antoine Perrenot, later Cardinal Granvelle. The famous trio Egmond, Hornes and Orange therefore requested the reform of the Collateral Councils working 'alongside the Governor' in Brussels, which would enable *their* Council of State to take precedence over the Secret Council and the Council of Finance. In the so-called 'letters from Segovia' (dated October 1565), however, Philip II radically opposed these plans.⁶⁰

Due to the impact of these letters as a catalyst of the Dutch Revolt, it is often neglected that on at least one occasion the King allowed the Council of State to assume the governorship. This happened after the death of Requesens, although it was a temporary situation pending the arrival of Don Juan. In fact, Requesens himself had appointed Count Charles of Berlaymont (matters of state) and Count Peter-Ernest of Mansfelt (matters of war) as his successors.⁶¹ No later than 9 March 1576, the Council of State declared Requesens' unsigned will invalid.⁶² A royal commissioning letter dated 3 April clarified matters: the Council of State was allowed to temporarily assume the powers of lieutenant, governor-general and captain-general, under the same conditions as Requesens and for as long as it pleased the King.⁶³ Even though one of the former aristocracy's demands was thus met, the governorship of the (much reduced) Council of State yielded little success. The members of the Council were obliged to pass important decisions to their successor. Faced with mutiny and an empty treasury, they wished to be relieved of their duties as soon as

58 H. Cools, *Mannen met macht. Edellieden en de Moderne Staat in de Bourgondisch-Habsburgse landen (1475-1530)* (Turnhout 2001) 119-112; L. Sicking and J. Haemers, 'De Vlaamse opstand van Filips van Kleef en de Nederlandse Opstand van Willem van Oranje: een vergelijking', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 119 (2006) 328-347.

59 Cools, *Mannen met macht*, 252.

60 Geevers, *Gevalen vazallen*, 140.

61 Berlaymont thought he was supposed to carry out the 'superintendance des affaires' in consultation with the Council of State: Berlaymont to Granvelle, 5/03/1576: IVDJ envío 68 doc. 22 (original), after which Granvelle to Philip II, 11/04/1576: AGS E 928 fol. 213 (original); Berlaymont to Alba, 1/04/1576: ADA caja 46 no. 54 (original, French).

62 Janssens, *Brabant*, 270-271; Baelde, *De collaterale raden*, 206 (but dates this to 5 March).

63 *Commissioning letter for the Council of State*, 3/04/1576: AGR PEA 1222 fol. 219-222.

possible.⁶⁴ On 4 September 1576, the members of the Council of State were imprisoned, and their mandate was terminated on the arrival of Don Juan.⁶⁵

The struggle for the governorship during the Dutch Revolt was also driven by the long-standing resentment between the House of Nassau and the House of Croÿ. Despite William of Orange-Nassau's hostility towards Philip II, his leadership of the revolt earned him a wide range of new positions and governorships. It was therefore no coincidence that Philip of Croÿ, third Duke of Aarschot, who challenged Orange, positioned himself on the side of the loyalists. Aarschot felt disadvantaged by Requesens' will and managed to gain the support of the entire Council of State in having the document declared invalid.⁶⁶ In 1577, the Duke also joined the initiative of approaching Mathias of Austria, brother of Emperor Rudolf II, about the governorship of the Low Countries on behalf of the States-General. Thus, Aarschot chose to rally with someone who was at the same time *de sangre real*, a peace-broker, and higher in rank and as such able to deal with Orange, who was gaining ever larger support among the followers of the States-General.⁶⁷ Shortly afterwards, he was briefly imprisoned in the Calvinist Republic of Ghent, presumably with the knowledge of Orange. Meanwhile, the Prince assumed the post of *ruwaerd* of Brabant, thus monopolising access to Mathias of Austria, who was appointed as governor-general by the States-General.⁶⁸ Even after this painful event, Aarschot did not relinquish the struggle for the governorship. After Ernest's death, he refused to acknowledge Fuentes: he considered the appointment procedure invalid and felt that, as the most senior aristocrat, he was entitled to claim the title of governor-general. Family members and loyal advisers prevented him from storming Brussels.⁶⁹

Finally, Count Peter-Ernest of Mansfelt was the only 'native' nobleman to assume the governorship during the Dutch Revolt, albeit in an interim capacity. As a general of Charles V, he had distinguished himself in the battles for Tunis, Saint-Quentin and Gravelines. Margaret of Parma conferred

64 Janssens, *Brabant in het verweer*, 284-286; *Justification du Saisissement & sequestration d'aucuns Srs. du Conseil d'Etat & aultres au pays baz*, Brussels, 1576, AGS E 568 fol. 105; G. Griffiths, *William, Lord of Hèze and the Revolt of the Netherlands* (Los Angeles 1954) 27-31.

65 After the imprisonment of the Council of State, the councillor Gerónimo de Roda, who managed to escape, proclaimed himself as the only legitimate authority acting for the King: Janssens, *Brabant in het verweer*, 292-297; Baelde, *De collaterale raden*, 207; E. Rooms, 'Een nieuwe visie op de gebeurtenissen die geleid hebben tot

de Spaanse Furie te Antwerpen 4 november 1576', *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis* (1971) 31-56; J. Versele, 'Gerónimo de Roda', *Nouvelle Biographie Nationale* VII (2003) 119-121.

66 Zie ook Janssens, *Brabant in het verweer*, 267.

67 H. Louthan, *The Quest for Compromise: Peacemakers in Counter-Reformation Vienna* (Cambridge 1997) 143.

68 S. Bussels, 'Hoe de hoogste machthebber in de Nederlanden een stroman wordt. De Brusselse intocht van aartshertog Matthias in 1578', *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis* 85 (2002) 151-168.

69 Van Isacker, 'Pedro Enríquez de Azevedo', 229.

honourable duties on him, while Alba preferred to keep him as far as possible from the court. Requesens, finally, appointed him to the one but highest post in the army.⁷⁰ During Farnese's French campaigns, Mansfelt had already served as acting governor in Brussels. Just like Alba and Requesens, he tried to advance his son as possible governor.⁷¹ It was not by accident that the Croÿ family systematically tried to undermine Mansfelt's governorship. In a symbolic move, Mansfelt moved into the prestigious *Hôtel de Nassau*, although he had always invested into his own palace in the Wollestraat. This enabled him to position himself in the long-standing feud between the houses of Croÿ and Nassau, and it underscored again the noble strife in the Low Countries.

Revolt

Finally, the question may be raised whether Philip II was not simply looking for the most suitable candidate for quelling the Dutch Revolt. This meant that candidates needed to be excellent administrators, diplomats and army commanders.⁷² Members of the Habsburgs dynasty, raised at court and given a role at court, in politics and the army, were obviously more likely to possess the requisite skills. Margaret of Parma had lived at several courts in the Low Countries and Italy. Don Juan was heralded for the victory of Lepanto, which he won with the help of Farnese. Ernest and Albert both had excellent track records as administrators prior to their appointment in Brussels, the former as Governor of Carinthia and Styria, the latter as Viceroy of Portugal. Hence, it was primarily in the case of noblemen that military and administrative experience played a decisive role, whereas members of the dynasty were considered to have the necessary experience. Vindicating his father's death in a battle on Djerba, Alba had fought heterodoxy throughout his life, from Algiers over Metz to the Low Countries. Medinaceli had been Viceroy of Sicily for four years and Regent of Navarra for six years; Requesens had been ambassador to the Holy See and Viceroy of Milan. Their naval experience – an important asset in the battle against Holland and Zeeland – may have played a role in this. Upon his arrival, Fuentes had been made captain-general of the royal troops, a position he could later return to. In contrast, familiarity with or sympathy for the Low Countries was not a decisive factor. The Alba clan, for instance, were more familiar with the Mediterranean basin than with the Burgundy

70 Pedro Alberto de Launay, *Catalogue des noms, surnoms et titres des Grands Maîtres et Capitaines Généraux de l'Artillerie des armes de Pays Bas*: BNE Ms. 3313 (olim K 106).

71 Hortal Muñoz, *El manejo*, 143.

72 L. Cruz, 'Reworking the Grand Narrative: A Review of Recent Books on the Dutch Revolt', *BMGN/LCHR* 125:1 (2010) 29-38.

inheritance. Neither Medinaceli nor Fuentes had previously visited the Low Countries. Only Requesens (and his family) was somewhat more familiar with the Seventeen Provinces.⁷³

In fact, the Revolt reinforced the traditional call for a 'prince of the blood', particularly during and after the turmoil of Alba's governorship. In this sense, each new governor was welcomed as a peacemaker, and it was these expectations that the Archdukes Albert and Isabella finally managed to meet. In appointing Mathias of Austria in 1577, the States-General fulfilled themselves their demand for a member of the dynasty to be appointed. Nevertheless, in the previous year, Philip II had already viewed the appointment of Don Juan as a panacea that would allow his hereditary countries to return 'to the same form as under the emperor', their common father.⁷⁴ Even after Don Juan's renewed offensive, Philip II still wanted to send Margaret of Parma as a dynastic negotiator, possibly assisted by Granvelle.⁷⁵ This happened already before the important Treaty of Arras in 1579, by which the King officially promised henceforth to appoint a 'prince or princess of his blood', 'with the qualities required in such an eminent position', a promise moreover that he needed to fulfil within six months.⁷⁶ He immediately chose Margaret as governor 'as she knew French and Dutch' but wanted Farnese to stay on as captain-general of the troops. Mother and son, however, failed to agree on an 'honourable' division of authorities. By August 1582, Farnese received the definitive permission to assume full governorship, based on earlier sent commissioning letters. Still, only on 25 July 1583 Philip II signed

73 Requesens was heir to Mencía de Mendoza, wife of Henry of Nassau. As a *felipista*, his father had supported Philip the Handsome's struggle for the crown of Castile and in 1543 he was one of the councillors who sought to preserve the Low Countries for the Spanish Crown. As ambassador to the Holy See, he had negotiated – together with Margaret – on the complex issue of the reform of the Dutch bishops.

74 AGR PEA 1222 fol. 13-16, copy (French): *Instruction for Don Juan regarding the pacification of the Low Countries*, 30/10/1576: 'en la mesme forme et maniere comme au temps de feu de tres heureuse memoire l'Empereur Charles'.

75 AGS E 574 fol. 3: Don Juan to Philip II, 30/11/1577; AGS E 576 fol. 15: Don Juan to Philip II, 9/01/1578; A. Repetto Álvarez, 'Acerca de un posible segundo gobierno de Margareta de Parma y el cardenal Granvela en los estados de Flandes', *Hispania* 32 (1972) 379-475. Jean de Noircarmes was sent in her place: V. Soen, 'De vreemde wendingen van de vredesmissie van Jan van Noircarmes, baron van Selles (1577-1580). Een vredesgezant worstelt met de Pacificatie van Gent', *BCRH* 171 (2005) 135-192.

76 Treaty of Arras, 17/05/1579: D. Clauzel, F. Gistelincq and C. Leduc (eds.), *Arras et la diplomatie européenne: XVe-XVIe siècles* (Arras 1999) 371-379, 375: 'Prince ou Princesse de son sang, ayant les parts & qualitéz requies à charge si principale'.

Margaret's permission to leave the Netherlands.⁷⁷ As mentioned above, the King kept his word in accordance with the Treaty of Arras: afterwards only Habsburgers were permanently appointed; while others only acted as interim governors, and this policy was clearly maintained. The escalation of the Revolt under Alba, Medinaceli and Requesens probably convinced Philip of the need for a governor of royal descent. However, in passing the Act of Abjuration in 1581, the United Provinces chose for a break with the Habsburg dynasty.

The radicalisation of the Revolt transformed the governorship from a highly prestigious position into a political snakepit. One governor after another tendered his resignation. Alba, for instance, requested to be relieved from his duties, *este oficio negro* (literally, this black office) until 1571, even though he later clung to his position when Medinaceli arrived.⁷⁸ Requesens had refused from the start, and later tried to leave the Low Countries as quickly as possible, 'to find peace' and 'to see Spain once again'.⁷⁹ After pleading in vain for a year, he sent his secretary to the King to request his resignation.⁸⁰ In July 1577, Don Juan sent his secretary with the same request. Still, only two permanently appointed governors (Margaret and Alba), were actually relieved from their duties. All the other governors died in office; in three cases (Requesens, Don Juan and Ernest) this happened less than two years after their arrival. Governors were therefore not appointed in immediate response to events during the Revolt, but according to the requirements of the composite monarchy.

Conclusion

Recent studies on factionalism at the Spanish Court have yielded important insights into the functioning of early modern bureaucracy and decision-making. Nevertheless, the present contribution has illustrated that factionalism was less influential in the appointment of governors during the

77 *New commissioning letter for Farnese*, for a period of 6 months as governor-general, as result of the Treaty of Mons (follow-up of the Treaty of Arras), 1/02/1580: AGR PEA 1222 fol. 48-60 and 74. *New commissioning for Farnese as governor-general*, 20/12/1581: AGR PEA 1222 fol. 61v.-64. In fact, only in August 1582 was there absolute certainty about this settlement, yet Margaret of Parma had to stay in the Netherlands. She was relieved from this obligation by the letter of 25th of July 1583, which reached on 14 September 1583 in the Low Countries. H. de Schepper, 'Le voyage difficile de

Marguerite de Parme en Franche-Comté et en Flandre 1580-1583', in: *Margherita d'Austria*, 127-140.

78 De Wolf, 'Burocracia', 104.

79 Requesens to Hopperus, 12/1574: BFZM Altamira cpt. 102 doc. 41 (copy).

80 *Instrucion de lo que vos Domingo de Çavala mi secretario aveys de hazer en este jornada de la corte [...] 27/5/1575*: IVDJ Envío 68 doc. 238; A. Cajal Valero, *Domingo de Zavala, la Guerra y la Hacienda (1535-1614)* (Basau 2006) 102-121 en 223.

Dutch Revolt than is assumed in this faction model. Habsburg appointment decisions continued to be in line with the underlying mechanisms of the dynasty and the realm. Hence, this article supports the more international perspective on the Revolt that has recently emerged.⁸¹ Moreover, the Revolt encouraged Philip II to favour dynastic appointments, leading him to approve and implement a clause to that effect in the Treaty of Arras. At the same time, a number of (interim) appointments reflected the politics of the noble families in Spain and in Low Countries, an aspect neglected in just about every historiographical account of the Revolt, even though it was endemic in the Spanish-Habsburg monarchy, until well into the seventeenth century. The search for a suitable governor, however, remained a quest for Philip II: in the absence of the King, no appointment ever lived up to expectations. Not only were good governors hard to find, but Charles V already knew that the Low Countries became defiant in the King's long-term absence, showing 'contempt and dissatisfaction to any possible governor'.⁸² ◀

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81 J. Pollmann, 'Internationalisering en de Nederlandse Opstand', *BMGN/LCHR* 124:4 (2009) 515-535.

82 Cited in Fühner, *Die Kirchen- und die antireformatorische Religionspolitik Kaiser Karls V.*, 49, note 7: 'mesprisement et mescontentement d'estre gouvernez par quy que ce soit'.