

Reason of State, *Stände*, and Estates in German and English Exchanges over the Crisis in the Palatinate, 1618–24

MARK A. HUTCHINSON , *University of Gloucestershire*

When, in 1619, Frederick V of the Palatinate accepted the crown of Bohemia, he justified his action, which challenged the authority of Emperor Ferdinand II and precipitated the Thirty Years' War, by the need to uphold the public order, rights, and responsibilities connected to the estates of the empire. English engagements with the German vocabulary of estates drew upon the concept of reason of state—those amoral political calculations needed to maintain a group's estate, or standing. The article examines the significance of these differences in a vocabulary of estates and state.

INTRODUCTION

ON FERDINAND II'S ELECTION in 1619 as the new Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick V, the Calvinist prince-elect of the Palatinate, accepted the crown of Bohemia in opposition to Ferdinand, thus precipitating the Thirty Years' War. In justifying his actions, Frederick and his associates consistently invoked the German political vocabulary of *die Stände*, or "the estates." In accepting the crown, Frederick saw himself as upholding the natural and Christian order of the territorial estates of Bohemia—namely, the *Landstände* of the lords, the knights, and the burghers—and their rights and privileges. In Frederick's mind, each territorial ruler, or *Obrigkeit* (higher authority), was responsible for maintaining such a political order. After all, the decision of the estates to reject Ferdinand's kingship, and to elect Frederick in his stead, arose from the revocation of the Letter of Majesty,

Research and writing were supported by the project Rethinking Civil Society: History, Theory, Critique (RL-2016-044 Leverhulme Trust Leadership Award) and a mid-career fellowship at the University of Göttingen Institute for Advanced Study. I thank Martin van Gelderen, Tim Stanton, who leads the Leverhulme project, Nicole Reinhardt, Hiram Morgan, Stuart Carroll, Nathaniel Boyd, Ronald Asch, and Christian Kühner, as well as the two reviewers for the journal, for their comments and advice on the subject at hand.

Renaissance Quarterly 77 (2024): 215–57 © The Author(s), 2024. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Renaissance Society of America.
doi: 10.1017/rqx.2022.438

which had provided for parity and freedom of worship for the kingdom's Protestant majority—the Letter of Majesty having been established in consultation with the three territorial estates of the kingdom of Bohemia. Frederick's actions also followed his perception of his own role as one of the empire's seven prince-electors (those who elected a new emperor). The prince-electors were the most important of the three imperial estates, or *Reichsstände*, whose membership consisted of each of the empire's *Obrigkeiten*. In meeting in the *Reichstag*,¹ the imperial estates upheld the empire's fixed constitutions, legal codes, and public order.

What drew views of the *Landstände* and *Reichsstände* together was a broader understanding of estates, which saw each other as corporate bodies. The *Landstände*, or territorial estates, were formed from the different orders of a given territory within the empire, such as the nobility, clergy, towns, and sometimes the peasantry, which had the right to representation within a given *Landtag*. The *Reichsstände* were formed from the ruling territorial authorities of the empire, which consisted of the prince-electors, the princes (namely, the different dukes and counts), and the imperial cities. The first two colleges, those of the prince-electors and princes, were divided into an ecclesiastical and a secular bench. Nevertheless, a common idea of *estate* was in play in each case, with both systems of estates denoting a fixed hierarchy. Each estate maintained the bonds of Christian and civil association between its members, underpinning trust, unity, and peace.

In the different statements produced by Frederick and his associates, who sought to justify their opposition to the emperor, a Christian and Aristotelian conception of political community ran throughout: each estate embodied a shared capacity to rule and be ruled. While Frederick and his associates understood a notion of *Stände*, or estates, as representing corporate bodies in a fixed political order, a different reading of *estate* could also be invoked, which concerned the *Stand* (namely, the standing or political strength) of a particular group. For example, a reason of state analysis, which concerned the necessity of maintaining a prince's political position (or *Stand*), was discussed in princely advice manuals within the empire.² In justifying his opposition to the emperor, the position taken by Frederick and his associates spoke only of upholding the different corporate orders of estates and the legal and constitutional order of Bohemia and the empire. In doing so, a consideration of the political calculations that might be necessary to maintain the estate, or *Stand*, of a person or group was addressed with circumspection and tentativeness.

¹ The assembly of the imperial estates.

² Von Friedeburg, 2016, 23–24, 36–39, and 313–22.

In England, the same circumspection was not present during encounters with those justificatory and defensive statements issued by Frederick and his associates. The Palatinate's appeal to the vocabulary of *die Stände*, or "estates," when translated or read in English, was couched as a reason of state analysis. Frederick V, through his marriage to Elisabeth Stuart, the only daughter of James I/VI, was James's son-in-law, a fact that gave rise to intense English interest in the affairs of the empire. Between 1618 and 1621, the deployment and rendering of the German vocabulary of estates in English discussions placed more weight upon a consideration of the present estate, or condition, in which Frederick and other political groups found themselves. Of course, there was a clear parallel between an assembly of estates in Parliament and an assembly of estates at an Imperial Diet. Nevertheless, emphasis was placed upon the problem of distrust and the political calculations that might be necessary for the contingent standing, or estate, of a group or individual to be maintained. In English, a concern with the corporate order of estates, and the bonds of association and trust, tended to be effaced to differing degrees.

In turn, by 1621, when the merits of reason of state became the subject of debate in pamphlet exchanges within the empire, the application of reason of state not only concerned those necessary political calculations aimed at maintaining or enlarging a prince's or group's present estate. Reason of state was also presented as a subversion of the principal function of the *Stände*. In the different German pamphlets engaged with the consequences of Frederick's decision to oppose the emperor, an accusation took shape, which suggested that amoral political calculation had sown distrust and undermined the corporate bonds of association. These exchanges represented a different genre of pamphlet literature from the preceding constitutionalist and defensive statements. Instead of addressing the legal and constitutional rectitude of Frederick's actions, pamphlets focused on polemical attacks aimed at blackening the names of their opponents. The meaning of these exchanges was, nevertheless, shaped by the preceding genre, which had addressed the legal and constitutional rectitude of Frederick's actions. In observing reason of state in operation, the role of the different *Stände* in maintaining peace and unity, it was suggested, had been set aside. Such accusations were leveled at all protagonists involved.

In examining the German exchanges regarding Frederick V's actions, and those moments of English engagement with these exchanges, the present article draws attention to a difference in sensibility between German and English discussions. Specifically, I seek to illustrate how exchanges in a German context were more attuned to the conflict between two readings of an idea of estate, of that dissonance between an idea of Christian and civil association and those amoral political calculations aimed at maintaining a prince's estate, or standing. In contrast, English interlocutors were less self-conscious in applying political

calculation when considering the need to maintain the estate of Frederick or his associates, which was not thought to sit so heavily out of kilter with a more principled discussion over the rights and responsibilities of the different estates involved.

Much has been written concerning the dissonance between an emerging European account of the state and the structure of the empire.³ An idea of the state, defined by sovereign (absolute) authority that must be held by either the prince, the aristocracy, or the people, was not easily applicable to the empire. The multiplicity of political bodies made any attempt to locate the position of ultimate sovereign authority fraught with irresolution. This article draws attention to a different dimension of such dissonance that can be found in varying sensibilities between German and English readings of a vocabulary of estates. In the 1920s, the German historian Friedrich Meinecke spoke of a duality in a modern account of the state, which pulled between *Kratos* and *Ethos*, between the amoral necessities of power and the ethical and moral qualities embodied by the state.⁴ Meinecke also famously commented on how the ethical and Christian values of early modern government made difficult the application of reason of state and its amoral political calculations in German political parlance.⁵ Such duality, this article suggests, emerges in the conflict between two potential readings of estate: one that speaks of corporate bodies, or estates, in a fixed order, and one that speaks of political conditions and the need to maintain a ruler's or group's contingent estate, standing, or position.

Furthermore, as Robert von Friedeburg observed more recently, a language of *der Staat* did not take shape in German-language exchanges until the 1650s, when it was applied in opposition to those self-interested political calculations aimed only at maintaining a prince's estate, or *Stand*, which reflected a disregard for the wider public order represented by the territorial estates, or *Stände*. As a result, *der Staat* came to denote the public good of a particular territory within the empire as embodied by its territorial estates (*die Landstände*).⁶ *Der Staat* was not applied to the wider political body of the empire as represented by the collection of its territorial rulers—namely, the *Reichsstände*. In contrast, a particular English concern with the contingent nature of the political authority,

³ For questions concerning the status of the Holy Roman Empire as a modern state, see P. H. Wilson, 2006, esp. 566 for the problem of Aristotle. Also see Schilling; Reinhard.

⁴ Meinecke, 5–20.

⁵ Meinecke, 2–5, 31–36, 62, 147–82. For current reflections on Meinecke, see Von Friedeburg, 2016, 8–41. Also see Van Gelderen, 2003, 79–81, who notes Meinecke's historical awareness of the ethically rich European conceptions of the political community. Questions over Meinecke's philosophical assumptions have been raised by Stolleis, 134–64.

⁶ Von Friedeburg, 2016, 208–11 and 211–36, discusses the scholarly application of reason of state in a German environment.

or estate, of the ruler folded into a discussion of the state and the maintenance of its sovereignty.⁷ The following sections of this article examine the differences in sensibility and understanding underlying the differences in the vocabulary of estates, or *Stände*, at the opening of the Thirty Years' War. As the examples set out in the article underline, in German exchanges there was a more pronounced awareness of the conflict between two readings of estates.

CONFESSIONAL DIVISION AND THE *REICHSSTÄNDE*

The problem of confessional disunity and distrust was often mediated through the invocation of the vocabulary of the *Reichsstände*. After all, religious peace in the empire had been established through an agreement between Protestant and Catholic members of the imperial estates in Augsburg in 1555. While Augsburg officially accepted Lutheranism and Roman Catholicism, the Calvinism of the Palatinate and the Margravate of Brandenburg was tacitly accepted. By 1618, however, the different agreements that Augsburg had set in motion had become deeply unstable, and events in Bohemia were thought emblematic of the potential instability that could engulf the empire.

A reflection upon this growing discord can be found in the 1618 *Discursus Politicus* by one Johannes Staricius, who sets out both the role of the *Reichsstände* and their relationship to the estates of their own territories.⁸ The *Discursus* sought to call the ruling estates of the empire back to both their natural and ordained duty to rule, which was regarded as the surest foundation for peace, or *Friede*, within the empire. In doing so, each territorial authority, as a member of one of the imperial estates, had a responsibility to uphold the order of estates in its own territory—a position that would be echoed in a wider set of exchanges over Frederick's support for the Bohemian cause.

The *Discursus* begins with an Aristotelian account of the different estates in civil society as mediated through the example of classical Rome.⁹ In the opening page, Staricius speaks of the empire's territorial authorities and their responsibilities in relation to the estates of their own territories. For Staricius, perfection in the political community arises only when each estate fulfills its natural function. The ruling members of the empire, through birth, are possessed of the natural capacities to rule. As an example, Staricius puts forth

⁷ Skinner, 1989, discusses a shifting early modern vocabulary of the state.

⁸ Weeks places Staricius within the context of the non-confessional natural spiritualism of the RudolFINE period. Also see Conze, 207–14.

⁹ For the Aristotelian and Ciceronian conceptions of *Stand* see Oexle, 162–63 (“Die Körpermetapher”), 163–66 (“Auffassungen über Arbeit, Armut und Besitz als Grundlage dichotomer Ständegliederungen”), and 166–69 (“Der römische Ordo-Begriff”).

the Roman patrician Menenius Agrippa, who, in 494 BCE, wrote an *Apologo* to avoid the revolt of the Plebians. Raising such an example alludes to the danger of discord in the lower estates of the political community. The political community is a natural body, and when the different parts of the body work in concert, the *Corpus Reipublica* takes form.¹⁰ The implication here is that if the ruling estates fail to maintain a peaceful and just order, the lower estates of their territories cannot be expected to remain obedient.

The specific threat that Staricius identifies arose from the formation of the Protestant Union and the Catholic League, which now had the potential of involving the emperor in a protracted religious war, drawing Staricius's attention to the empire's equally important Christian foundations. On its second page, the *Discursus* speaks of the "high and holy order of government," alluding to the Golden Bull of 1356, which allowed a return to peace.¹¹ As the preamble of the bull sets out, the primary function of the prince-electors is to guard the constitutions and order of a divinely instituted earthly empire. They are described as candlesticks, delivering the empire from Christian darkness by forming the seven principal pillars that uphold the political community.¹² Echoing the position first set out in Augustine's *City of God*, the natural order of estates was understood as a reflection of the divine order of creation—a position inflected through the work of Luther and Melanchthon.¹³ As in Augustine's thought, accepting and maintaining the ordained hierarchy of estates underwrote a Christian peace, or *Friede*.¹⁴

For Staricius, the fundamental problem was confessional, in that the formation of different religious leagues and unions had pitted the members of the different imperial estates against one another, drawing them from their primary responsibilities of upholding the public order of the empire and of their own territories.¹⁵ As the *Discursus* observes, the religious peace instituted at Augsburg in 1555 had attempted to resolve such divisions. Recognizing the rights of both the Protestant and Catholic members of the imperial estates to govern their territories in line with their own credal positions should have allowed the unity of the *Reichsstände* to be preserved.¹⁶ Despite such an

¹⁰ Staricius, fol. 1^v.

¹¹ Staricius, fol. 2^r: "ein höchliches und heiliges Regiment."

¹² The opening preamble: see *Bulla aurea*.

¹³ Schorn-Schütte.

¹⁴ Oexle, 178–82 ("Die Entstehung umfassender christlicher ordo-Lehren: Augustinus und Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita") and 200–07 ("Zwischen Reformation und Revolution" [16–18, Jahrhundert]). Also see Schorn-Schütte.

¹⁵ Staricius, fols. 2^v–3^v.

¹⁶ Staricius, fol. 2^v.

agreement, however, the different political or confessional unions continued to pull “the *Corpus Imperii* into as many as five parties.”¹⁷ But the solution remained unchanged. The members of the different *Reichsstände* had to recognize the Christian order of estates, which the Peace of Augsburg had sought to preserve. In part, this meant recognizing the “godly ordained higher authority of the Emperor,” which held the structure of the political community together.¹⁸ But this also meant recognizing the bonds of Christian association the *Reichsstände* maintained through their corporate and collective identity. The *Discursus* consistently associates the corporate vocabulary of estates with that of trust: peace rests upon the assurance that the members of each imperial estate will act, in conscience, before God, and in “the name of Christ as the prince of peace.”¹⁹ As the opening of the *Discursus* sets out, the formation of separate federations, outside the system of estates, arose from “disunity and mistrust.”²⁰

In this respect, Staricius’s commentary echoes two strains of German thought. As the work of Horst Dreitzel has noted, such a Christian and Aristotelian conception of estates can be found throughout the political thinking of the empire.²¹ In particular, in German Monarchomach writing the corporate bonds of Christian and civil association remained a locus of authority. But Staricius combined such ideas with an account of the public order of the empire, as noted in the work of Von Friedeburg, among others, which insisted upon subjection and obedience to higher authorities.²²

In the English context, the question of confessional division and its regulation outside the empire turned on a different reading of *estate*. This is exemplified in the writing of Thomas Scott, a godly Protestant English MP committed to the European Protestant cause. Scott railed against James I/VI’s lukewarm support for the Palatine cause when open war began to break out in 1619.²³ Of course, Scott adhered to Aristotle’s account of the best form

¹⁷ Staricius, fol. 3^v: “durch die vorstehende *Uniones* albereit das einige *Corpus Imperij* in fünf Partheyen zertheilet.”

¹⁸ Staricius, fol. 11^v: “daß man die Käys. Maj. als die höchste Obrigkeit / gebürlichen *respectire*.”

¹⁹ Staricius, fol. 12^v: “im Namen Jesu Christi des einigen Friedfürsten / und unsers heylands beschliesse.”

²⁰ Staricius, fol. 1^v: “Wenn die Stände und Underthanen so weit in Uneinigkeit oder mißtrawen gerathen / daß sie sich trennen / unnd gegen einander in verbindnüß oder vereinigung begeben.”

²¹ Dreitzel, 2002; Dreitzel, 1992, 16–57. Also see Van Gelderen, 2003, 86–87; Van Gelderen, 2002.

²² Von Friedeburg, 2016, 168–207.

²³ Peltonen, 229–71.

of government or state, in which all three estates—the people, the aristocracy, and the prince—had a share in the ruling of society. Scott considered England to be a mixed state, consisting of the prince, the Lords, and the Commons, each of which had a share of sovereign authority.²⁴ Thus, he was quite capable of thinking in terms of a fixed order of estates, denoting the strictures of God's creation.

The important point, though, is that, in contrast to Staricius and a wider strain of German thought, Scott understood the maintenance of the order of estates in a different way. His actions were predicated upon building a godly Protestant order, which remained unrealized, and his account of a mixed state or polity was based on an assessment of how political authority was distributed, or how the various groups that held authority stood relative to one another. In speaking of "the State of England," Scott expressed concern that Catholic European powers sought to weaken the Protestant English state. He feared that Catholics, as a group or "estate" within England, might be emboldened, arguing that godly Protestants needed to strengthen their "estate."²⁵ Scott made use of a linguistic interplay in English. On the one hand, he spoke of the need to consider the country's present political conditions—namely, the state of the country. But in addressing the current state of the country—namely, the Catholic threat—Scott, on the other hand, was able to slide into a consideration of the steps that might be necessary to strengthen the standing and position of the ruler and that of England's godly Protestants—their state, or estate.²⁶ His understanding of the empire followed suit: he advocated for military action in order to strengthen the estate of the Protestant princes, thus overturning the present state of the empire and, by implication, Catholic Habsburg authority.²⁷ His understanding of confessional division was not mediated by the associational aspects of a corporate notion of estates but, rather, was shaped by the need to diminish or expunge the condition, standing, or estate of those who opposed or threatened his vision of a godly polity in England or an international Protestant order. He defined political stability according to the balance between the relative estate, or condition, of different groups and the authority and strength of state institutions.

²⁴ Peltonen, 269–70.

²⁵ Scott, 1620b, fol. 5^v; Scott, 1620a.

²⁶ Skinner, 2002.

²⁷ Scott spoke of Frederick acting "for the recovering of his Estates and dignities, and the re-establishment of a firme peace in the Empire" and of those acting until "the Palatinate hath bene reduced unto the more then miserable estate": Scott 1624b, 46 and 50. Scott, 1624a, fol. 2^r, speaks of how the Roman Catholic Church took "notice of the state and order of the Empire."

THE BOHEMIAN *APOLOGIES*, *LANDSTÄNDE*, AND AN
ENGLISH TRANSLATION

While the *Discursus* addressed the function of the *Reichsstände*, the Protestant estates of Bohemia invoked the vocabulary of the *Landstände*. On 23 May 1618, the Count of Thurn and others threw the king's regents, Bořita of Martinice and Slavata of Chlum, from a window of the castle of Prague—an action commonly known as the Defenestration of Prague. These actions were taken in protest against Ferdinand, as designated king of Bohemia, who was thought to have violated the Letter of Majesty. As was tradition, Ferdinand, being the successor to King Matthias, became the designated successor to Matthias as the reigning Holy Roman Emperor. Furthermore, Ferdinand was intent on a policy of re-Catholicization. In wresting authority from the aging Matthias, he sought to prevent the construction of Protestant churches, while refusing to hear or countenance any protests. In response, the representatives of the Protestant estates of Bohemia took action, which resulted in the emergence of an *Apologia* in 1618, followed by a second in 1619. No doubt the intent was to elicit the support of the German Protestant princes. Both Frederick V of the Palatinate (a Calvinist) and Johann Georg, Duke of Saxony (a Lutheran) had been in intermittent discussions with the Protestant estates.²⁸ At a later point, the right of the territorial estates to elect their king would justify their rejection of Ferdinand and election of Frederick V of the Palatinate in his stead.

In justifying the Defenestration and the wider opposition to Ferdinand, the defensive and regulatory functions of the *Landstände* and the *Landtag* (or parliament) were addressed, which paralleled aspects of the regulatory function of the *Reichsstände* as set out in the *Discursus*. The first *Apologia* presented a specific list of grievances concerning the attack on the privileges and customs of the kingdom, which had allowed the Bohemian confession to worship freely. The estates supported a biconfessional system of parallel rights and privileges, which were enshrined by the Letter of Majesty. In setting out these grievances, the *Apologia* identified a concerted attempt to subvert the established order of the three estates: the lords, the knights, and the burghers. The *Apologia* spoke of the Jesuits, who sought to re-Catholicize Bohemia by bringing the kingdom into full obedience to the Counter-Reformation Church. In doing so, the Jesuits sought to impose the foreign authority of the papacy under the designated kingship of Ferdinand of Styria.²⁹ A hint of Luther's re-rendering of a theory of estates emerged, in which the higher earthly authority asserted

²⁸ Asch, 1997, 61.

²⁹ *Apologia: Oder Entschuldigungsschrifft*, 3, explained how the “Jesuitischen Sect [Jesuitical sect]” sought to bring all under “dem Römischen Stuel / als frembder Obrigkeit [the Roman chair, as a foreign/alien higher authority].”

by the papacy was thought disruptive to the cohesiveness of the political community, because it drew the estates away from their primary responsibilities—namely, maintaining and serving their specific political community.³⁰

However, the critique belabored the function of the territorial estates in maintaining peace within the kingdom—again echoing something of the *Discursus* and its account of the *Reichsstände*. Confessional division was underplayed: the *Apologia* gave examples of agreements made between the *Stände sub una* (referring to those who wished to receive communion in one kind) and the *Stände utraque* (referring to the Bohemian confession, who wished to receive communion in both kinds). According to this conceptualization, what set the Bohemian confession apart was a matter of religious worship, as opposed to doctrine, although the Bohemian confession had been shaped by Lutheran and Calvinist clergymen from the wider empire.³¹ More importantly, the system of territorial estates, the *Apologia* explains, had allowed the political community to remain unified, upholding peace. Emphasis was placed on the union between the confessions, each of which “should serve God freely” without interference.³² Peace and common unity had emerged because the estates, acting in concert, had recognized the freedom of their members to serve and worship God.

The *Apologia*'s description of the estates' liberties and rights reflected something of the vocabulary of the *alte teutsche Freiheit* (old German freedom). In German political thought, rights and liberties were not determined by membership of a territory or the wider empire but, rather, by membership of a specific corporate body, or estate.³³ Reflecting the primary function of the three estates, an estate's role was not only to express grievances but to maintain unity and concord, each stratum in civil society possessing a strictly corporate political personality. Each estate stood before God as a collective unit, not as a group of individuals. The actions of the Jesuits were understood within such a reading of a system of estates as seeking to break the corporate order.³⁴ Adherents to the Bohemian confession had been accused of heresy. The Jesuits had excluded Protestant representatives of the estates from participating

³⁰ Schorn-Schütte.

³¹ Asch, 1997, 49.

³² Alongside the *Apologia* see the printed text of the *MayestätBrieff*, fol. 3^r, which spoke of how King Rudolf sought “Einigkeit [unity]” and the “erhaltung deß gemeinen guten Friedes [preservation of the common good peace]”; on fol. 6^r, the 1609 articles refer to “Die Vereinigung / so zwischen denen *sub una* und *sub utraque* [The union thus between those of the *sub una* and *sub utraque*].” The same language is repeated in the first *Apologia*, 34, which states that no higher authority, “Obrigkeit,” should prevent the estates from freely serving God, “frey dienen mögen unnd sollen.”

³³ See G. Schmidt, 2006, esp. 187; and P. H. Wilson, 2004, 36.

³⁴ See Moeller, 41–58.

in discussions in the king's council, which regulated the agreements put in place by the Letter of Majesty—these arrangements had in fact been made by the assembly of the three estates at the *Landtag*. Furthermore, the Jesuits had sought to dislodge Emperor Matthias as king. As the higher authority of the kingdom, Matthias had upheld the role of the estates in maintaining concord among their members and, thus, the unity of the political body.³⁵ As the second, longer *Apologia* elaborated, the Bohemian estates had sought to preserve the *Ordnung* (order in the kingdom and the kingdom's ordinances) and had thus been obedient to the king, their protector.³⁶

An English reading of the position set out by the Bohemian estates captured part of the appeal to the language of the *Stände*. Depending upon the context, however, a different reading was also set out—one that focused more on the state, or contingent strength, of the two confessional groups: the *Stände sub una* (traditional Catholics) and the *Stände utraque* (the Bohemian confession). An English translation of the first *Apologia* emerged in 1619, published as *News from Bohemia: An Apologie*. No doubt Frederick V's marriage to Elisabeth Stuart, the daughter of James I/VI, and England's ostensible support for the European Protestant cause meant there was an English audience ready to hear about developments in Bohemia. The ambiguity surrounding the Bohemian estates in the English context may have arisen in part because the English translator, one William Philip, appears to have worked primarily from a Latin edition of the *Apologia*, as opposed to the German edition.³⁷ The Latin text rendered the German *Stand* as “status,” which denoted the

³⁵ The first *Apologia*, 5, describes the Jesuits labeling those of the Bohemian confession heretics, “Ketzer,” speaking of how the Jesuits had brought the estates into disunity, “Uneinigheit.” The Jesuits are consistently labeled enemies of the peace, “allgemeines Friedesfeindt.” The text speaks of secular higher authorities being directed to uproot the Protestant estates, going on to speak of how “Uns vereingte Ständte [We the united estates],” through the Jesuits, had been brought to hate one another, “einander verhaßt.”

³⁶ *Die Andere und grosse Apologia*, 29: “Ihre Kay. May. . . . mit den Ständen des Königreichs Beheimb / verpflichtet sein . . . die Stände dabey zuschützen un[d] zu beschirmen, aller gestalt und massen / wie Articul in der LandsOrnung von beschutzung der Ordnung und Recht [Your imperial majesty . . . with the estates of the kingdom of Bohemia are duty bound . . . thereby to protect and shield the estates, of all shapes and sizes, as the articles in the territorial ordinances by the protection of order and law],” and going on to explain “wie solches alles in guter und friedlicher Ordnung bestehen möchten [how such things should exist in good and peaceful order].” *Ordnungen* is repeatedly emphasized throughout the text.

³⁷ The title of the English edition (*An Apologie*) reads, “Translated out of Dutch into Latine, and thence into English, by Will. Philip.” “Dutch” is taken to be a rendering of *Deutsch*.

legal standing of a particular corporate body or estate.³⁸ In this instance, the English translator did capture the tone of the original German edition when referencing the constitutional order and authority of the three estates. The Latin text spoke of “tres status Sub Utraque,” which the German cast as “allen drei Stände” and the English cast as “the three estates of the reformed religion.”³⁹ The English translator recognized a system of legally established estates as represented in the *Landtag*, and he rendered *Landtag* as “parliament.”

When the English translator, however, encountered the relationship of one religious or political grouping to another, he spoke of “state,” not “estate.” On the title page of the German text, but not the Latin version, specific reference was made to the agreement between the estates *utraque* and *sub una*, which underlie the Letter of Majesty. Here, the English introduced a more severe confessional division, writing of the agreement made between members of the Reformed Church and the Papists. In English parlance, a sense of religious unity was replaced by a vocabulary denoting direct religious opposition, and the agreement became one between “the States of the Reformed Religion and the Papists.” Furthermore, when “status” referred to the imposition of “foreign authority” (“peregrinae potestatis”) in the opening page of the *Apologia*, the English translator spoke of “the States” being brought “into yoke and subjection of forraigne power,” while the German consistently spoke of “die Stände.” In discussing the usurpation of authority over the estates by the Jesuits, who now occupied the chancery in Bohemia (“universum rege[m] & administrationem regni in Status usurpaverit”), the English spoke of the usurpation of “the whole government and administration in this Kingdom, *over the States*” (my emphasis), which remained “über die Stände” in the German text.⁴⁰

In these instances, the English translator seems to have been less fixed in his understanding of status, applying two different renderings according to context. A distinction was drawn between an idea of *estates*, which denoted the different layers of the political community, each having an assigned role in the political order as expressed in the *Landtag*, and an idea of *state*, which denoted the condition and political strength or standing of the different groups involved.⁴¹ Understood within a wider English context, the flexibility in the translator’s reading may reflect the fact that an English account of a corporate and legal system of estates was less clearly defined.

³⁸ For the Latin text, see *Apologia Ordinum inclyti Regni Bohemie*, which would appear to have been printed in the Hague—*status* is used in most cases when referring to *die Stände*.

³⁹ *Newes from Bohemia*, fol. 6^v.

⁴⁰ *Apologia Ordinum inclyti*, 1; *Newes from Bohemia*, fol. 2^v.

⁴¹ Lewis and Short give such a definition of *status*. Mohnhaupt, 837–40, discusses how *status* was applied with reference to the natural condition of the political community.

Of course, in both the English and Bohemian cases, the root source of a language of estates was the traditional division in medieval society between the three estates of the clergy, the nobility, and the people—namely, between those who prayed, fought, and worked.⁴² In the Bohemian case, an idea of three estates had been transcribed slightly differently to denote the corporate interests of three distinct propertied groups: the lords (temporal), the knights, and the burghers of the cities. But as Michael Mendle has noted, in the English case, the retranscription of an idea of three estates in the English political vernacular was less fixed in its meaning. In Elizabethan England, the three estates within parliament could be seen as consisting of the prince, the Lords, and the Commons, the prince becoming an estate within parliament.⁴³ In line with Thomas Scott, an Aristotelian conception of three estates encompassed the three forms of government, which reflected the distribution of political authority within society between the one, the few, and the many. A Protestant reluctance to see the clergy as a separate estate reinforced a desire to efface the medieval account of estates, involving the Lords spiritual, the Lords temporal, and the Commons.⁴⁴ Under James I/VI, though, the king's own sensitivity concerning a Presbyterian challenge to episcopacy—and, thus, to hierarchical authority—meant the reestablishment of a more traditional denotation of the Lords spiritual as a distinct estate; the idea that the prince was an estate within parliament became controversial.⁴⁵ In sum, there was an acknowledged difficulty in settling on a precise constitutional definition of *estate* within English discussions.

Moreover, gradations within English society did not fit as neatly onto the legal corporate orders of estates as they did in Bohemia: the *Landtag* consisted of the nobility, the knights, and the burghers. In English, references to estates or states expressed a series of additional political and social gradations.⁴⁶ For instance, different writers spoke of “the State of the common people” and “the State of Citizens” in reference to corporate towns and their increased prosperity. There was also discussion of the “State of the nobility,” the “State of Knights,” “the State of Gentlemen,” and “the State,” or condition, of the common lawyers and the civil lawyers.⁴⁷ The different estates, which assembled in the English parliament, did not directly coalesce with a description of the different states, or degrees, of people as it did in the German or Bohemian case. In Bohemia, the lords, the knights, and the burghers all formed distinct

⁴² Mendle, 22.

⁴³ Mendle, 51–62.

⁴⁴ Mendle, 3.

⁴⁵ Mendle, 97–113.

⁴⁶ Wrightson. Also see Koselleck, Spree, and Steinmetz, 14–58.

⁴⁷ The ambiguity in such vocabulary is illustrated in T. Wilson.

estates, both socially and politically, in the *Landtag*. In contrast, there was more fluidity in the social makeup of English parliamentary estates. Members of the lesser nobility were members of the Commons, alongside the citizens of corporate towns and other gentlemen. In these terms, the finer-grained English distinctions concerning the gradations, conditions, or states of differing social groups were all contained within a broad political or constitutional estate. In other words, many different states or groups within society were represented by the estate of the Commons. Perhaps reflecting the social diversity of the estate of the Commons, which encompassed the states, or degrees, of multiple social groups, the English translator differentiated between the states, or standings, of different confessional groups in Bohemia, which cut across the territorial estates of the kingdom of Bohemia.

DIFFERENT READINGS OF *ESTATE* AND FREDERICK'S OPPOSITION TO THE EMPEROR

The case made by the Bohemian estates resonated with Frederick V's own view of the empire—in terms of both the threat posed to Protestantism by the Habsburg emperors and the potential threat they posed to the empire's existing public order. Ferdinand's crowning as king of Bohemia, in 1617, had made him the designated successor to the Holy Roman Emperor, and with the death of Emperor Matthias in March 1619, the question of electing a new emperor—a position that was technically open to any candidate—arose. The forthcoming election day—at Frankfurt, in August—provided Frederick with an official platform to scrutinize Ferdinand's candidature and even to propose an alternative candidate.⁴⁸ On the day of the election, the prince-electors would gather to elect a new emperor. Frederick would suggest Maximilian, Duke of Bavaria; Maximilian, however, refused, and no alternative candidate was proposed. Nevertheless, Frederick, as head of the Protestant Union, sought to elicit the support of the other two secular electors, the Lutheran Johann Georg, Duke of Saxony, and the Calvinist Johann Sigismund, Margrave of Brandenburg, in opposing the election of another Habsburg. Frederick also sought the support of the three Catholic ecclesiastical electors—in particular, that of the elector of Mainz, without whose support nothing could happen. As arch-chancellor of the empire, the elector of Mainz was in charge of the election-day proceedings.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Pursell, 1–10, gives a full account of Frederick's fixation with the constitutional rectitude of his actions. Also see Asch, 2020, 302–06. For Asch, the weakening of Spanish Habsburg authority led to a collapse in universal peace in Europe.

⁴⁹ Pursell, 66–67.

Frederick did not attend the election day himself but, instead, sent representatives who had been briefed by him and his privy council about what positions to take in discussions with the other electors and their representatives. Frederick's absence was the result of threats to the Upper Palatinate, which bordered Bohemia. The first section of the instructions emphasized Frederick's responsibilities as a higher Christian authority in his own territory, which called for his presence elsewhere. But the rest of the instructions addressed his responsibilities to the wider empire as a Christian prince-electoral—responsibilities shared by the other prince-electors.⁵⁰ In addressing his position as a prince-electoral, the interconnection between the different types of estate came into play: the prince-electors, it was argued, should guard the rights of the Bohemian territorial estates and the wider condition of the empire. In particular, echoes emerged of German Protestant Monarchomach writing, as exemplified in the work of Johannes Althusius, which identifies the prince-electors as akin to the *ephoroi* of Sparta in their relationship to the emperor.⁵¹ Considering that the instructions had been drafted, in part, by one of Frederick's key councillors, Ludwig Camerarius, who was the grandson of the German classical scholar Joachim Camerarius, a deep awareness of German Protestant scholarly culture was no doubt present.⁵²

The content of the instructions was secret, which suggests a context in which reason of state calculations might come into play—namely, a consideration of the factional alliances and the contingent standing, political condition, or estate of the different groups involved. Nevertheless, the reading of *die Stände* as corporate bodies in a fixed political order, which had run throughout the published defense of the actions of the Bohemian estates, remained central in Frederick's campaign to persuade his fellow prince-electors. The instructions spoke of how the position of the Protestant estates in Bohemia needed to be heard, because of the level of discord, adding that, ideally, this should happen before the election, so the present condition of “full mistrust” could be resolved. More importantly, the instructions argued that the prince-electors were in a position to resolve the situation and to act as mediators, and that a non-Habsburg candidate should be elected emperor. Here, the threat of Habsburg succession was presented as a threat to the function of the *Reichsstände* more generally: Habsburg succession, it was argued, would erode

⁵⁰ BHStA, Kasten schwarz 12460, 413/2, “Instructions,” July 1619, fol. 1^v: Frederick speaks of his responsibilities “als eine Christliche Obrigkeit [as a Christian higher authority].” On fol. 5^r, Frederick speaks of the responsibilities of a “Christlichen Churfürst [Christian prince-electoral].”

⁵¹ Dreitzel, 2002; Dreitzel, 1992, 17–32; Van Gelderen, 2002 and 2003.

⁵² Schubert.

the elective nature of the office by allowing the Habsburgs to claim a hereditary right, thus sidelining the position and authority of the prince-electors' imperial estate.⁵³

Building upon this observation, the instructions emphasized that the different layers of the imperial estates had important associational functions, which would come under threat if the Habsburgs remained in power. They spoke of how it was at the gathering of the *Reichstag* that the earlier grievances of the Protestant imperial estates had been brought, which had restored trust. Trust was also restored when the prince-electors engaged in dialogue with one another.⁵⁴ Such was the importance of trust, which arose from a shared capacity to rule, that Frederick even raised the question of whether the Aulic Council should have equal jurisdiction with the *Reichskammergericht*.⁵⁵ The membership of the *Reichskammergericht* was drawn from the members of the different *Reichsstände*, and its role was to judge whether peace or the agreed legal orders of the empire had been broken, while the membership of the Aulic Council, the *Reichshofrat*, was appointed by the emperor.⁵⁶ Only in resolving who held ultimate jurisdiction in resolving disputes would the "old German trust" be restored.⁵⁷

The threat to the Bohemian estates thus became emblematic of the wider threat facing the empire, and in emphasizing the different associational layers held in place by the imperial estates, aspects of the thought of Althusius were

⁵³ BHStA, Kasten schwarz 12460, 413/2, "Instructions," fol. 3^v: "daß die *audientz* nicht bis nach der wahl verschoben werde [that the audience will not be postponed until after the election]." "Instructions," fol. 5^r, speaks of the need for the prince-electors to mediate; fol. 6^r addresses the present condition, "da sich alles in vollen mistrauen und Kriegs Verfaßung befindet [there everything is situated in full mistrust and the legal constitution/condition of war]." "Instructions," fol. 6^{r-v}, speaks of the need of "the free vote," which had to be more than "eine bloss *nomination* [a mere nomination]" because of Habsburg pretensions toward hereditary "*succession* in Reich."

⁵⁴ "Instructions," fol. 6^v, speaks of "der Churfürstlich *Libertet* der freien wahl [the electoral liberty of free choice]," then moving on to address the issue of trust in relation to the position and function of the *Reichsstände*; fol. 7^r speaks of "zu einem besern vertragen [to a better trust]."

⁵⁵ The *Reichskammergericht* was the imperial chamber court. The assessors of the court were nominated by the imperial estates.

⁵⁶ "Instructions," fol. 7^v. The Aulic Council consisted of the emperor's nominees, which had been established by the Habsburgs in order to displace the *Reichskammergericht* as the highest law court of the empire.

⁵⁷ "Instructions," fol. 7^v, spoke of how the "alte Teütsche vertragen" would be "stabilirt." "Instructions," fol. 8^r, spoke of the responsibilities to bring the empire "zu fried und güten Vertragen," and fol. 9^v, the "widbringung frieden und güte vertragen."

evoked once again. As Martin van Gelderen and Horst Dreitzel have noted, Althusius defined political community by layers of association, each association wielding its own power of government and bringing into force the bonds of Christian civil society. In fact, for Althusius, the divine purpose of humanity was defined not by individuality but by bonds of association.⁵⁸

Even though Frederick's analysis would be rejected by the other prince-electors, the arguments set out by Saxony and Brandenburg mirrored aspects of Frederick's own thinking.⁵⁹ Brandenburg was concerned that such action, and the support given to the Bohemian uprising, could be too easily interpreted as breaking the present legal order of the empire. Drawing on the importance of civil peace, Brandenburg quoted from Cicero's *Pro Milone* that "amid arms, the laws are silent."⁶⁰ In setting out a more direct commentary on the precarious balance of power within the empire, Saxony echoed the Palatinate's comments on the shared responsibilities of the prince-electors to engage in civil dialogue and avoid moving into the legal "constitution of war."⁶¹ Outside the electoral college, Frederick's cousin, the Catholic Duke of Bavaria, who would both head the Catholic League and campaign to be awarded Frederick's electorship, spoke in the same terms. It was on the grounds of confessional impartiality that Frederick had suggested Maximilian of Bavaria as an alternative candidate for emperor, and in rebuffing Frederick's suggestions, Maximilian simply spoke of his particular responsibilities to build unity between the Catholic estates and the other estates of the empire, a unity that Frederick's position threatened.⁶² A sense of irenicism and of the responsibilities to *Patria* ran throughout.⁶³

⁵⁸ See Dreitzel, 2002; Dreitzel, 1992, 17–32; Van Gelderen, 2002 and 2003.

⁵⁹ G. Schmidt, 1999, 150–209, observes how the nobility avoided direct assertions of authority, which might reveal the limitations of their independent political authority.

⁶⁰ BHStA, Kasten schwarz 3730, fol. 40^r, May 1619, from the Margrave of Brandenburg: "inter arma silent leges," from Cicero's oration *Pro Milone*, in which Cicero referenced the danger of mob violence.

⁶¹ BHStA, Kasten schwarz 3730, fol. 53^v, June 1619 letter from Saxony: "wir . . . den Kriegs verfassungen fast . . . umgehen [we almost avoid the legal condition/constitution of war]." *Kriegsverfassung* was part of the imperial constitution, concerning mobilization in defense of the *Reich*. P. H. Wilson, 2010, 17.

⁶² BHStA, Kasten schwarz 3730, fol. 11^v, March 1619 letter from Maximilian of Bavaria, in which he spoke of "die Catholischen Stende [the Catholic estates]," and how "dardruch mit den andern Stenden des Reichs . . . bestendiger ruhe, fridt, und einigkeit zur erhaltung [thereby [to act] for the conservation of constant calm, peace and unity with the other estates of the empire]."

⁶³ A. Schmidt discusses how irenicism left theological discussion and entered civil discourse. For *Patria*, see Von Friedeburg, 2005.

Frederick, however, remained fixated. The election of Ferdinand as emperor was unanimous (by tradition, the vote had to be unified). But Ferdinand's accession to the imperial crown, alongside the rejection of the representatives of the Bohemian estates, led the Bohemian estates to elect a new king. The crown was offered to Frederick, and he accepted. In justifying his decision, Frederick's attack sharpened. In *Warum Wir die Kron Böhmeim / und der incorporirten Länder Regierung auff Uns genommen* (Why we accepted the crown of Bohemia and the government of the incorporated lands, 1619), Frederick returned to the cause of Bohemia and its wider implications for the empire and the functions of the different *Stände*. The text spoke of the breaking of the natural bonds of civil society, and of the violence and inhuman barbarism that had led to the spilling of innocent Christian blood. Alluding to the actions of the Jesuits, the text connected such disorder to Jesuit attempts to misguide the ordained higher authorities of the empire, who were duty bound to maintain the order of the Bohemian estates and the common good of the political community.⁶⁴ The text also connected Christian inhumanity and the collapse of peace to the disruption of the bonds of association and trust in "human society," which the estates had upheld through compacts and agreements.⁶⁵ In fact, the weakening of the kingdom of Bohemia represented a weakening of the bulwark of Christendom against its hereditary enemy: the Turk.⁶⁶ In acting to elect a new higher authority, therefore, the estates had followed both God and natural law, fulfilling their corporate responsibilities to uphold a just and Christian order of government.⁶⁷ As Frederick argued, he acted because of his fidelity to the holy empire.⁶⁸

Alongside these German exchanges, a parallel English rendering and understanding of *estate* once again took shape. While in the case of the English translation of the Bohemian *Apologia*, an idea of a particular system of *Stände* (as represented in a *Landtag*) was rendered in some form, individuals

⁶⁴ *Unser Friderichs von Gottes Gnaden Königs in Böhmeim*, 4, speaks of how in the kingdom and in the empire "höchstgefährliche Lehr und *Opinion*, eingeführt . . . unterm Schein der Heiligkeit [highly dangerous teaching and opinion brought in . . . under the appearance of holiness]."

⁶⁵ *Unser Friderichs*, 3, speaks of the "unmenschlichen Barbarischen Excessen [inhuman barbaric excesses]"; on 5, Frederick looks to ensure that "die ruhige Beywohnung Menschliche *Societet* nicht gar auffgehoben [the quiet fellowship of human society was not extinguished]."

⁶⁶ *Unser Friderichs*, 6: "Vormauer der Christenheit [bulwark of Christendom]."

⁶⁷ *Unser Friderichs*, 9, speaks of "ihre rechtmessige von Gott und der Natur zugelassene *Defension* . . . zu solchem End eine gemeyne *Confoederation* . . . aufgerichtet [their rightful defence allowed by God and nature . . . [and] for such an end [they] founded a common confederation]."

⁶⁸ *Unser Friderichs*, 13, and comments throughout.

who were involved in England's diplomatic network and were concerned with the wider European consequences of Frederick's actions in 1619 applied further the different English understanding of *Stände* that had also taken initial shape in the English translation of the *Apologia*. Because the situation could easily be read with reference to the contingent standing, estate, or condition of Frederick's authority, in English diplomatic correspondence the chances of Frederick maintaining his present estate were addressed, ignoring the more principled reading of the associational function of the *Stände* as expressed by Frederick and his associates. In short, English diplomats, in their own secret negotiations and in their advice given to the Palatinate, more fully embraced a reason of state reading, which the Palatinate was reluctant to follow even in secret.

In early 1619, a report on the advice given to Baron von Dohna, who was one of Frederick's representatives in England, recounted in English how James had stressed the need to take into account the "present estate" within Germany.⁶⁹ English advice to the "Prince Pallatine" was that he should consider how he was "beseged on all sides by ecclesiastical Princes" who hated not only his religion but also "his greatness."⁷⁰ For James, reason of state was an important calculation, and caution was needed in Frederick's support of the Bohemian estates and in his opposition to Ferdinand. In line with a Machiavellian train of political writing, stability did not arise from fulfilling ethical and moral obligations, which membership in a particular estate allowed one to do, but from considering the estate, or standing, of different groups within that community.⁷¹ As James stressed, it was doubtful that Frederick could avail himself of "the strength and forces" he needed to "secure his state at the present."⁷²

In a letter from Sir Isaac Wake, James's representative in Savoy, the political calculation and caution expressed by the Duke of Saxony was cast fully within a vocabulary of reason of state. It was found that "the Duke of Saxony is resolved to concurre with the Ecclesiastical Electors in favor of Ferdinand . . . considering that his greatnes was raysed by the howse of Austria, and the *conservation of his estate* [my emphasis] doth depend upon their protection."⁷³ Reference was made to the Habsburg's decision to allow Saxony possession of the Margravate of Lusatia, thus ensuring the elector's support in containing the uprising of the

⁶⁹ Gardiner, 32: Sir Robert Naunton to Sir Dudley Carlton, January 1619.

⁷⁰ Gardiner, 33.

⁷¹ Gardiner, 33: "The fier is so neare his house, that reason of state will inforce him to stand upon his guard for feare of being surprisid."

⁷² Gardiner, 33.

⁷³ Gardiner, 110: Sir Isaac Wake to the Marquis of Buckingham, June 1619.

Bohemian estates.⁷⁴ And James's ambassador to Venice, Sir Henry Wotton, even cast the situation now faced by James, in which the actions of his son-in-law threatened to draw the king into a full European war, as a question concerning "the advancement of conscience as of state."⁷⁵ The implication was that principled support of the Protestant cause did not necessarily coalesce with the advancement of the state and the security of the king's position, or of the position of the empire's Protestant princes.

In fact, in Dohna's own report back to Frederick concerning his discussions with James, a mutual disregard emerged regarding the different readings of *estate*. Dohna acknowledged that the condition, "Zustand," of the *Reich* had been discussed, as well as the actions of the various *Stände* involved in the Bohemian cause. The linguistic wordplay in English between political condition, or estate, and the actions necessary for the maintenance of the different estates of the empire disappeared. Dohna simply reported that James did not want to hear of war.⁷⁶ And in the French correspondence with England, set out by Frederick and his supporters, the same reason of state analysis was ignored. In invoking a vocabulary of *états* in French, Frederick and the Protestant Union maintained their emphasis on the corporate order of the empire and its bonds of trust. *États* was used consistently in place of *Stände*. While Frederick did speak of *état* with reference to the present political conditions in the empire, this did not fold into a consideration of the current *Stand*, or standing, of the *états* or his own position as a ruler.⁷⁷

As Quentin Skinner notes, reason of state drew, in part, on a linguistic turn. In Latin, French, Italian, and English, discussions of the state, status, or the estate of the prince easily folded into a need to maintain the prince's estate

⁷⁴ Asch, 1997, 62.

⁷⁵ Gardiner, 50: Sir Henry Wotton to James I, March 1619. Wotton wrote how each side sought an excuse to act, blurring the different factors involved, "betweene which ceremonious respects the substantiall are drowned both politique and spirituall, I meane, as I know youre Majestie doth, as well the advancement of conscience as of state."

⁷⁶ Gardiner, 34, gives Dohna's account of his mission in an extended note.

⁷⁷ Gardiner, 115: the princes of the Protestant Union to James I, June 1619. Reference in French was made to the condition or estate in which Protestants found themselves, "cest *estat* [my emphasis] si perilleux [this particularly perilous estate]." Nevertheless, when the notion of the estates of both Bohemia and the empire were referenced, the French text drew no connection between estate or condition and the maintenance of the estates' position. Instead, the arming of the Catholic party was understood with respect to the function of the imperial estates, which should have maintained trust between the confessional parties involved; see Gardiner, 116, "Dailleurs Vostre Majesté ne peult ignorer la grande meffiance [the great distrust] et mesintelligence qui s'est glissé entre les Estats des deux religions en l'Empire."

and, thus, the state.⁷⁸ In addition, J. G. A. Pocock has observed the manner in which considerations of a group's temporal estate or standing drew on assessments of the contingent and unstable conditions of the world. In a political community, which was thought to be at a distance from the original perfection of God's creation, thinking about the present estate and distribution of political authority could help stabilize the state in a world governed by temporal political conditions. Only in a community that remained close to God did the Christian and ethical basis of association, as embodied by estates and office-holding, remain more assured.⁷⁹ Not only did the idea of an eternal order remain in close proximity to a German perception of *Reich* (empire), but the linguistic interplay between German references to the political conditions found in the *Reich*, such as *Zustand* or *Verfassung*,⁸⁰ did not easily fold into a discussion of *die Stände* as did an English discussion, which could speak of the contingent condition of a group's estate or state and, thus, the need to maintain their state or estate. In Skinner's "From the State of the Prince to the Person of the State," no German-language examples are given.

Here, the linguistic flexibility of English reinforced an easy shift toward an account of the contingent state of the different groups involved in the emerging conflict within the empire. When an English translation of Frederick's printed justification of his acceptance of the crown of Saint Wenceslas was produced, in 1620, a reason of state argument emerged that was absent in the German original. The German text consistently spoke of the present condition, or *Zustand*, of the kingdom. But in consistently translating *Zustand* as "estate," the English spoke of the "the miserable and most perilous estate," and of "the tempestuous and lamentable estate of present affaires," creating a linguistic connection that was absent in the original pamphlet.⁸¹ The actions of the estates became assessments of their political estate or condition. In these terms, the change of government instituted by a new election ("Verenderung des Regiments und einer newen Wahl geschritten") became "a new Election,

⁷⁸ Skinner, 2002.

⁷⁹ Pocock, 83–113; Viroli, 178–200.

⁸⁰ In this context, *Verfassung* can be defined as the estate, condition, or present constitution of a kingdom or political body.

⁸¹ *A Declaration of the Causes, for the which, Wee Frederick, by the grace of God King of Bohemia*. In speaking of the actions of the estates in offering Frederick the crown, the German text, 3, refers to "gefährlichen zustandt" in the kingdom, which the English text translates, 1, as "most perilous estate." The English text, 6, speaks of "thunderings, and threatenings amongst the Estates," while the German text, 5, speaks of the actions "mit angestifte[n] dräwunge[n] unter de[n] Ständen." Read in its entirety, the English text introduces a resonance between the actions of the estates and the estate of the kingdom, which remains absent in the German.

for reducing the Estate, to a better order and government.”⁸² And while the German described the need to stabilize the freedom held by the estates, to provide “mehrere *Stabilirung* ihrer *Libertet*,” the English described how “the said Estates” had been led to attempt “this mutation, for the re-establishment of their *libertie*.” The English spoke more of a change in the form and balance of authority within the constitution.⁸³

THE IMPERIAL BAN, PAMPHLET TRANSLATIONS, AND THE QUESTION OF SOVEREIGNTY

By 1621, the question of sovereignty, in some form, arose in a more direct fashion. Alongside the invasion by imperial forces of Bohemia and Frederick's hereditary lands in the Upper and Lower Palatinate, Ferdinand placed Frederick under an imperial ban, stripping him of all his princely dignities, including his electorship. In conjunction with the question of Bohemia, the emperor's authority to act in issuing the imperial ban became another focal point of the Palatinate's objections. The publication, in 1576, of Jean Bodin's *Six livres de la République*, which was circulated throughout Europe, disrupted an earlier Aristotelian view of the political community, with German thinkers making use of the 1591 Latin edition *De republica libri sex*. Bodin defined sovereignty as an absolute, perpetual, and indivisible power. In doing so, he challenged Aristotle's view that the best form of government was a mixed polity, in which each estate in society—the prince, the aristocracy, and the *demos*, or people—had a share in the ruling of the political community. The contention that sovereign authority, by its nature, must rest with a particular estate, preferably with the prince or monarch, did not accord with the concept of a mixed polity.⁸⁴

These observations underpinned another step in a particular reading of *estate* that was more difficult to apply in a German context. In discussing the need to maintain the position, or state, of the prince—namely, his sovereign authority—a distinction emerged between the sovereignty of the state and the different estates of the political community, which had passed sovereign authority to the state. In his *De republica libri sex*, Bodin describes the Holy Roman Empire as a pure aristocracy, because, in his analysis, sovereign authority lies with the ruling nobility of

⁸² *Unser Friderichs*, 9; *A Declaration*, 12. There is no direct equivalent to the English translator's decision to introduce “for reducing the Estate.”

⁸³ *A Declaration*, 16, speaks of “mutation,” which resonates with an idea of mutation of state or estate, referring more to the change in conditions and distribution of political authority and power, while *Unser Friderichs*, 11, simply mentions the change in government—“Verenderung / mit der Regierung.”

⁸⁴ Franklin.

the empire—namely, the prince-electors.⁸⁵ By the 1640s, attempts among the *Reichspubliczisten* to categorize the nature of the German state through the lens of sovereignty remained fraught with irresolution. Strict adherence to the Aristotelian notions of monarchy or aristocracy made it impossible to comprehend the complexities of a distribution of authority in which neither the emperor nor the *Reichsstände* had a claim to full and unlimited sovereign authority.⁸⁶

These difficulties arose in part because the empire remained deeply feudal: each prince owed loyalty to the emperor while having a certain autonomy in his own territory. An idea of legal relations, conceived in terms of an individual's direct subjection to the sovereignty of the state, denoted by a ruling person or group of persons, remained inapplicable.⁸⁷ The nuances in a German understanding of political higher authorities, or *Obrigkeiten*, compounded such dissonance. In denoting the responsibilities to rule, each of the *Landstände* and *Reichsstände* could be regarded in some form as a higher authority, because each possessed the collective responsibility to regulate the affairs of the members of the said estate or corporate body. In responding, then, to Bodin's paradigmatic move, in which sovereignty, or ultimate authority, had become a defining mark of a unitary political community, German thinkers would turn to the idea of the public order of the empire, because of the difficulties in locating sovereignty with a specific group or person.⁸⁸ It is also the case that something of an earlier Aristotelian account, which defined citizenship and the political community in terms of a wider collective capacity to rule and be ruled, endured through a conception of *Obrigkeit* and *Stände*.⁸⁹

As Von Friedeburg notes, one response saw public law emancipated as a distinct genre of writing in the work of individuals such as Melchior Goldast.⁹⁰ In open repudiation of Bodin's position, the public law of the empire was identified as the source of ultimate authority. Strikingly, the Palatinate's own objections to the emperor's actions drew on an aspect of this vein of writing, associating the public law of the empire with natural justice and the position of the imperial estates. In a German-language treatise issued in 1621, *Hernach im Heil: Reich wider Churfürstl; Pfaltz publicirte Achtserklärung* (Hereafter the explanation of the act against the electorate of the Palatinate published in the Holy [Roman] Empire), which objected to the imperial ban, the

⁸⁵ Schröder, 962–63.

⁸⁶ Schröder, 962–64.

⁸⁷ Von Friedeburg, 2013, 293–94. Also see Hoke.

⁸⁸ Von Friedeburg, 2013.

⁸⁹ For the problem of *Obrigkeit* and its translation see Sellin, 393–408.

⁹⁰ Von Friedeburg, 2013, 296.

emperor's authority was conceptualized within such a framework. The repudiation of the emperor's actions ran along two lines. About halfway through the pamphlet, the specific point of Bohemia was raised. Since Bohemia was a kingdom and did not sit under the direct authority of the emperor, Frederick's actions in no way reflected an attack on or repudiation of the emperor's majesty or higher authority. In fact, Ferdinand's assertions that he had a hereditary right to the kingdom meant that Frederick and the emperor were involved in a private dispute.⁹¹

In addition, the issue of Bohemia involved the wider question of impartiality, which was raised in the opening pages of the pamphlet. The simple fact that it was Ferdinand who was in direct dispute with Frederick meant that the emperor had stepped outside the boundaries of his judicial office in directly issuing the imperial ban. In an echo of the 1619 election-day instructions, it was argued that such a case really should have been heard before the *Reichskammergericht*.⁹² Using a plethora of historical examples of constitutional resolutions, the importance of the *Wahlkapitulation* (a formal election agreement made by emperors) of 1519 was emphasized. The emperor could not act against another member of the empire without first consulting with the prince-electors. The treatise also dwelled on the fact that, prior to the *Wahlkapitulation*, when an emperor had been in dispute with another territorial ruler within the empire, the matter had been first brought before the *Reichsstände*. The emperors did not act for their "private use" but for "the good of the *Reich*"; thus, matters had always been brought before the "orderly gathering of the estates."⁹³ This process was required because declaring war on a member of the empire meant breaking the peace. Echoing the tone of Staricius, Althusius, and others, the very point of the *Reichsstände* was in their collective responsibility to rule and resolve disputes, activities in which the "imperial estates come together" and consult with one another. Without the imperial estates, it was warned that "war can be awakened."⁹⁴

Furthermore, in the opening pages of the protest, these objections to the action taken by the emperor against Frederick were grounded in an appeal to natural law as the foundation of the public law of the empire. Here a series of

⁹¹ *Kurze Darthung*, 9–10.

⁹² *Kurze Darthung*, 4.

⁹³ *Kurze Darthung*, 5: "Die sachen nit ihr . . . Privat-Nutzen / sondern des H. Reichs wolffarth . . . Sondern haben das Werck uff Ordentliche *Coventus* vor die Ständt gebracht."

⁹⁴ *Kurze Darthung*, 7: "Das die Reichständt zusammen kom[m]en / und in angebenen Friedbrucks sachen berathschlagen / handeln un[d] endlich schliesse[n] solle[n] [That the imperial estates come together and should advise, act and finally conclude on specific matters of breaches of the peace]." The text continues by emphasizing the need for the advice of the prince-electors; otherwise, a general "Krieg erweckt worden kan."

references were made to Bodin's *De republica libri sex*—for example, book 4, chapter 6, “Whether the king should render justice to his subjects in person.” In Bodin's own analysis, two threads were present. One concerned an idea of the state and the need to maintain the sovereign authority of the ruler. The other concerned the strictures of divine and natural law, which, Bodin argued, governed the prince's actions. In a European reading of Bodin outside the empire, it was the question of state and sovereignty that was drawn out.⁹⁵ In Bodin's view, the prince should ensure the administration of justice through officials and the law courts: legal disputes always involve animosity between parties, and if the prince were directly involved, he would be the subject of such animosity. By keeping a distance, the prince's mystique and sovereign authority would be preserved. The German text, however, only drew on Bodin's comments concerning the need for natural justice or law as the foundation of civil law, underlining the importance of maintaining impartiality and avoiding self-interest. In other words, Ferdinand's personal interest in the case rendered the administration of justice questionable, and, by implication, natural justice in the empire and the preservation of its public order were grounded in the collective impartial authority of the *Reichsstände*.⁹⁶ Bodin was read though the frame of public law, *Obrigkeit*, and *Stände*, not that of sovereignty and state.

In 1621, a French edition of the treatise was issued, probably by Frederick's circle, entitled *Brief recueil des raisons: Qui rendent la Declaration du Ban, faire contre le Roy de Boheme*; in it, the question of sovereignty or absolute authority was raised. Alongside a less detailed account of the nature of judicial authority in the empire, compared to the German edition, the French edition cast the question in terms of where absolute authority lay, emphasizing more the empire's constitutional framework as opposed to the corporate and associational identity of the *Reichsstände*: “such an absolute power of the Emperour, was never at any time heard of, nor knowne among, not unto the true & good Almaines or Germanes, as being directly contrary to their liberties. . . [the]

⁹⁵ Salmon.

⁹⁶ *Kurze Darthung*, 3: “Bodin de Republ. lib 4. cap. 6 . . . fol. mihi. 724 Ubi scribit: *Si contra naturam est, ut eundem Judicem & Accusatorem feramus; Rex autem in omnibus publicis judiciis Accusator sit; quanto id verius est in crimine Perduellionis, quo reus Principis vitam aut famam violasse dicitur* [Where he writes: *If it is contrary to nature that we should endure the same person as judge and prosecutor. However, let the king be prosecutor in every public trial; at any time it is even more true in a charge of treason where the culprit is said to have violated the life or reputation of the prince*].” The point being made is that, in the case of the Palatinate, the emperor is acting as both judge and prosecutor, while the case being brought against Frederick concerned a private dispute and not treason. On 7, the requirements of natural and civil law are underlined: “die Natürliche / oder Weltliche Gesetz.”

golden Bull, and fundamentall constitution of the empire.”⁹⁷ No direct reference was made to Bodin, but in publicizing the Palatinate’s case beyond the empire, a new European framework, which defined the form of the political community in terms of the location of absolute power, was tentatively invoked. Additionally, it was the French text that then formed the basis of a separate English translation, in which the muted reference to absolute authority in the French edition was reread in terms of the English vocabulary of the state.

The French edition consistently spoke of “Estats” (*états*), which maintained something of the German reference to the ruling estates, or *Reichsstände*.⁹⁸ For the English translator, however, the question of absolute power or sovereignty and its distribution among the *Reichsstände* suggested a further step in that other reading of *estate*—namely, the estate, or standing, of a ruler and the balance of political authority. Such a rereading was no doubt compounded by the fact that *états* in English could be read as “states” or “estates.”⁹⁹ The English translator chose to speak of the states, addressing how it was established by the constitutions of the empire “that his Majestie [the emperor] shall not permit, that from henceforth, any of the states of the Empire, elector, Prince, or other, shall be put into the Imperiall Ban, without cause” and “that the Emperor shall not forcibly assaile the Electors, Princes, and other States of the Empire.”¹⁰⁰ Reference to the imperial estates, which denoted the fixed, corporate order of the ruling authorities within the empire, became references to the states of the empire, which was suggestive of more fully independent or sovereign political entities. It was further explained that “no manner of respect [was] had of any of the States and Countries that were neutrall” when the lands of the Palatinate had been invaded.¹⁰¹ There was even a reference to “the State of the affaires” with respect to Bohemia, which

⁹⁷ *Brief recueil des raisons*, 4: “Et a esté une puissance tant absolue de l’Emperur de tout temps incognue, aux vrays & bons Allemans ou Germains, comme directement contraire à leur liberté.” The English is taken from the contemporaneous English translation of the French: *A Briefe Description of the reasons that make the Declaration of the Ban*, 2. The publication of the French pamphlet “à la Hague,” where Frederick and his court were in exile, suggests it was produced by Frederick’s circle.

⁹⁸ *Brief recueil des raisons*, 6, quoting from the imperial capitulations: “Que L’Empereur n’attaquera pas à force les Electeurs, Princes et autres Estats de l’Empires [That the emperor will not attack by force the prince-electors, princes and other estates of the empire]”; and on 8, referring to the solemn oath taken by the emperor: “Que Sa Majesté ne permettra . . . aucun des Estats de L’Empire . . . fait mis au Ban de l’Empire, sans cause [That his majesty will not permit any of the imperial estates to be placed under the imperial ban without cause].”

⁹⁹ Collins, ix–xxvi, sets out the shift taking place in the vocabulary of *état* in France.

¹⁰⁰ *A Briefe Description of the reasons*, 7, 4. Here, the oath taken by the emperor and the *Wahlkapitulation* were referenced.

¹⁰¹ *A Briefe Description of the reasons*, 4.

hinted at a reason of state sensibility and the interplay between the need to maintain the present state or condition, and the need to maintain the institutions of the state.¹⁰² In this way, an idea of a confederation of states took shape, which ignored the bonds of association and trust and the collective capacity to rule entailed by the idea of *die Stände*. Instead, the order of the empire became more about the balance of authority and power between semi-independent states.¹⁰³

The same disjuncture in terminology reappeared in the translation of the emperor's own justification for his actions: the English translators' rereading of references to the *Reichsstände* brought the question of sovereignty or the distribution of political authority once again to the fore. In 1623 the prince-electorship was officially passed to the Duke of Bavaria. In the printed justification for such action, *Der Röm: Keys: auch zu Hungarn / Böhheym . . . Proposition auff dem Churfürsten Tag zu Regensburg* (The [Holy] Roman Emperor: also of Hungary and Bohemia . . . Proposition at the meeting of prince-electors at Regensburg, 1623), the notions of *Stände* and *Obrigkeit* were turned against the Palatinate. Following Frederick's earlier position, the emperor spoke of the actions taken against his imperial authority as the "ordained higher political authority," which had led to mistrust. Effectively, Frederick was accused of seeking to disrupt the bonds of unity maintained by the imperial estates by drawing the subjects of the emperor into "foreign alliances," while Maximilian of Bavaria had in fact acted to "rescue the obedient estates" without regard for his personal position or standing.¹⁰⁴ The English translation left out discussions of God's order and political obedience, no doubt because they jarred with English support for the Palatine cause. But not only were references to the *Stände* read as references to "states"; any reference to a particular political body or entity was described using the terminology of "states," thus reclassifying all of the maneuvers made by the political actors

¹⁰² *A Briefe Description of the reasons*, 12. In the French edition, 14, "l'estat des affaires."

¹⁰³ A certain ambiguity, though, remains present here. In the case of the Netherlands, references to a system of states could be a reference to a system of estates. In Dutch and English parlance, the provincial states of the Netherlands sent representatives to the States General (not the Estates General). See Van Gelderen, 1992, 23–24. In the case of the Netherlands, however, on the question of the levying of tax, the consent of the different provincial states-assemblies was required, with Flanders, Brabant, Holland, and Zeeland later acquiring control of revenue and expenditure. In contrast to the German case, a Dutch vocabulary of states was shaped by the fact that the Dutch provinces could be seen as near-distinct loci of sovereignty.

¹⁰⁴ *Der Röm: Keys*, fol. 2^r, speaks of Frederick being involved in "allerhand fremde Händel" and of subjects being drawn to act "wider ihrer ordenlichen Obrigkeit . . . und noch grösser Mißtrawn allenthalben entsprungen"; fols. 6^v–7^r speak of Maximilian, to whom the emperor passed the electoral jurisdiction, acting for the "Rettung anderer gehorsamen Ständ."

involved as concerning the balance and distribution of political force and power.¹⁰⁵ Among different references, in the *Propositions of his Imperial Maiestie in the Diet of Regensburg* (1623) the translator spoke of the associations with “foreign States” and the “proceedings of the said States” of the empire.¹⁰⁶

GERMAN AND ENGLISH READINGS OF REASON OF STATE

When a reason of state analysis was applied openly in the German-language exchanges over the rectitude of Frederick V's actions, a particular shape and intent was given to its application. It became an accusation aimed at all parties involved, arguing that those working from a reason of state position were subverting the principal function of the different estates, or *Stände*, within the empire. A series of pamphlets outlined how calculated moves aimed at, say, enlarging the prince's position, or *Stand*, entailed the subversion of the different layers of estates. These moves disregarded the public order and the corporate bonds of association and trust. This polemical genre of writing took shape against the background of strained exchanges over the public order of estates and the constitutional and ethical rectitude of the different actions taken in opposition to the emperor. As Von Friedeburg has noted, a similar position, opposing reason of state, would take shape in the context of disputes between vassals and territorial rulers through the Thirty Years' War.¹⁰⁷

Such accusations were, in the first instance, made against the Palatinate in the anonymously produced *Allergeheimbste Instruction*, published in 1620. In what were presented as true copies of Frederick's correspondence, the offer of the Crown by the estates of Bohemia was discussed in the manner of a Machiavellian politician. Frederick was advised that it would “cost him no effort” to take the crown—only “deviousness and agility.”¹⁰⁸ An account was given of the Dutch Revolt, which spoke of how the fight “between freedom and lordship” had collapsed Habsburg authority there.¹⁰⁹ In Bohemia and the empire, the

¹⁰⁵ The German text, fol. 8^r, referred to “die Staaden in Holland,” which the English *The Acts of the Diet of Regenspurg*, 8, read as “the States of Holland.” The German text, fol. 8^r, referred to the “Stände” of the “Wesphalischen Creyß,” which the English, 8, read as “the States of the lower Westphalia Circle.”

¹⁰⁶ The above German text, fol. 2^r, referred to “Deputations Täge,” which became “assemblies of the Princes and States of the Empire” in the English translation, while the German reference, on fol. 2^r, to “fremde Händel eingemicht” became in the English text, 2, “with forem States.”

¹⁰⁷ Von Friedeburg, 2016, 237–312.

¹⁰⁸ *Allergeheimbste Instruction*, fol. 2^v: “dann es E. Churf. D. keine Mühe gekostet / zu dieser Cron zu kommen / durch der ihrigen List und Behendigkeit / ist es zu gangen.”

¹⁰⁹ *Allergeheimbste Instruction*, fol. 5^v: “Streit zwischen der Freyheit und der Herrschafft.”

disposition of the different estates was similar, a circumstance Frederick was advised to exploit. The “princes of the empire were divided,” while in the different territories of the empire “the commons hated the higher authorities.” In Bohemia, the three *Landstände*—the lords, the knights, and the burghers—were also in “disunity and misunderstanding.”¹¹⁰ What the pamphlet made clear was that Frederick’s actions were predicated on maintaining and exploiting divisions and disorder between and within the different estates, which would allow him to enlarge his position and political standing, disregarding the true bonds of association. The rhetorical point was that a reason of state approach had informed Frederick’s appeal to the constitutions of the empire and the rights and liberties of the different estates, drawing the *Stände* away from their proper function.

As Noel Malcolm notes, the *Allergeheimste Instruction*, or *Secretissima instructio*, was mimicked in two subsequent pamphlets—a second *Secretissima instructio*, in 1622, and an *Altera secretissima instructio*, in 1626—thereby establishing something of a minigenre.¹¹¹ For Malcolm, Thomas Hobbes’s decision to translate the 1626 Latin text into English in manuscript form is particularly noteworthy. Hobbes’s association with Lord Cavendish, who supported the Palatine cause, reflects the continued English engagement with and interest in applying a reason of state reading to the situation in the empire; and, as Malcolm comments, the third text in the genre was more developed than the first two in its application of a reason of state analysis.¹¹² While the pamphlet continued the attempt to show the Palatinate in a bad light, suggesting its dealings were fraudulent and underhanded, it also purported to be genuine. The reason of state analysis made perfect sense in its reflections on the situation that Frederick and his associates confronted.

Contextually, however, the genre of accusatory pamphlets played out differently in the German- and English-language contexts. Hobbes, as Malcolm notes, found enough resonance in the analysis of factional divisions and competing claims to authority within the empire, which led him to translate the text. Such engagement by Hobbes places an English reading of events within the vein of a developing critique of a state of nature, of a self-interested humanity, and of the need to secure state authority as a focal point for stability in a fractured and disordered political community.¹¹³ Of course, the need to

¹¹⁰ *Allergeheimste Instruction*, fol. 11^v: “das zwischen den Fürsten sich uneinigheit erhebt . . . die Obrigekeit bey der Gemein verhaßt”; fol. 16^f: “In Beheim hat es dreyerley Ständ / von Herren / die Ritterschafft / und die Städt / under denen gibts viel uneinigheit unnd mißverstand.”

¹¹¹ Malcolm, 30–45.

¹¹² Malcolm, 45–49, 74–75, 82.

¹¹³ Malcolm, 105–14.

maintain a fixed public order of estates was common to both English and German interventions. But in the English context, considerations of how to maintain such an order drew more fluidly upon an account of the politically contingent estate of the particular parties involved. As a case in point, Thomas Scott, in a series of pamphlets, not only applied the wider accusatory framework as a means of condemning and exposing England's opponents, turning an accusation of fraud and an anti-reason of state critique against them, but also set out such accusations as a way of making the case that England, the Palatinate, and its associates must adopt a countervailing reason of state response if they were to be victorious.¹¹⁴

Writing in frustration with James I/VI's lukewarm support for the Palatinate, Scott aimed his accusations at both the papacy and the Catholic Habsburgs in *Briefve Information of the Affaires of the Palatinate* (1624) and *Aphorismes of State: Or Certain secrete articles for the re-edifying of the Romish Church* (1624). He spoke of a political world defined by confessional distrust and the ungodly, which left an international Protestant cause with no choice but to respond in the same terms, applying a reason of state reading to their own situation. Facing Catholic powers who were strengthening their "State," the "wisdom of our State [of England] in seeking peace" needed to be reassessed.¹¹⁵ Scott argued for godly action based upon the necessary political and martial calculations that would strengthen the estate of England and that of the Palatinate. His response was not simply to accuse his confessional opponents of underhand dealing but also to advocate for a response in kind.¹¹⁶

In a German-speaking context, the accusatory intent of the publications took on a different weight. While an English reading may have focused more on the genuine applicability of a reason of state analysis as a countervailing response, this was not the case in those publications aimed against the Palatinate. What resonated most directly among Frederick's opponents was the suggested subversion of the estates' function. In undermining the role of the *Stände* in regulating political affairs and maintaining the established political order, reason of state calculations were seen as the principal source of political disorder and the threat of civil war.

Following the 1620 *Allergeheimste Instruction*, the 1621 *Fürstl: Anhaltische geheime Cantzley* (Princely Anhalt secret chancery) repeated such accusations,

¹¹⁴ Malcolm, 33, 61–62.

¹¹⁵ Scott, 1620a, fol. 5^v: "it is well observed by the wisdom of our State, that, the King of England, who otherwise is one of the most acco[m]plisht Princes that ever raign'd, extremely hunts after peace, and so affects the true name of Peacemaker, as that for it he will doe or suffer any thing . . . [thus] the necessity of the state [is] so exhausted."

¹¹⁶ Anglo, 324–73, identifies the pattern of accusing confessional opponents of taking a Machiavellian position.

but in more precise terms. The pamphlet was produced by the Bavarians and sought to justify their support of the emperor and the actions of the Catholic League. The League was headed by the Duke of Bavaria, who had agreed to support the emperor on the condition that he receive not only a large portion of Frederick's hereditary lands, which bordered Bavaria, but also Frederick's electoral jurisdiction. The pamphlet was based on earlier correspondence, from 1617 to 1619, between Frederick and the prince of Anhalt, a close associate of Frederick and governor of the Upper Palatinate, in which they had discussed the Bohemian cause. In fact, much of the correspondence, which naturally acknowledged some form of political calculation, consistently searched for principled justifications by looking either to the rights of the Bohemian estates or to God's providential will in the political opportunities that might be identified.¹¹⁷ These letters had been taken at the Battle of White Mountain, when Frederick's baggage train had been captured by imperial forces.

Wilhelm Jocher von Egersperg, one of Maximilian's key councillors, compiled the correspondence for publication, and during the process stripped the letters of any of their principled justifications or assertions.¹¹⁸ The actions of Frederick and his associates were thus presented as bald political calculation, aimed at building political factions and amassing power. These political calculations were argued to be emblematic of attempts to subvert the function of the *Stände*, and the *Reichsstände* in particular. For Von Egersperg, such political calculation had been hidden behind the pretense of defending German liberty, religion, and privileges—a pretense Frederick and his associates had maintained by remaining peaceful and calm (“Ruhe und friedlichem Standt gelieben”) until the Catholic estates acted (“biß die Catholischen Ständt angefangen”).¹¹⁹ Under the guise of upholding the corporate and collective identity of the imperial estates, the Palatinate had waited to take political action so they could present their actions as simply defensive, “in terminis defensionis.”¹²⁰ Behind the scenes, however, the Palatinate had engaged in political alliances, sowing division and seeking to amass the political force to unseat the emperor, which would constitute an attack on the empire's ordained higher authority (“Gott fürgesetzte Obrigkeit”).¹²¹ It was thus the Catholic estates who were

¹¹⁷ Ritter provides an account of the letter exchanges that took place.

¹¹⁸ See Albrecht.

¹¹⁹ Von Egersperg, “Trewherzige warnung,” 16–17, lists the grounds the Palatinate and others would like to be believed as their motivation.

¹²⁰ Von Egersperg, 24, is an account of the negotiations by Frederick within the *Reich* and externally, prior to 1619.

¹²¹ Von Egersperg, 11.

the obedient estates of the empire (“die gehorsame Catholische Ständ deß Reichs”), because they continued to fulfill their corporate responsibilities in maintaining the political order.¹²² More specifically, it was not the Habsburgs who wished forcefully to re-Catholicize the empire; it was the Palatinate that wished to convert the empire to Calvinism.¹²³

These specific interventions drew upon a wider European position against reason of state principles, reshaped to fit the German experience. In *Höll Teuffelische geheime Cantzeley* (1622), reputedly by one Dionysius Klein, the specter of war was identified not only as unchristian but as the primary danger to civil association and trust, a position that the language of estates held in place. As the pamphlet explained, “war made humanity barbaric”; and, as Cicero noted, war was “the greatest enemy of human nature”—hence the peace, or *Friede*, that the empire needed to maintain.¹²⁴ These comments drew upon what Sydney Anglo has identified as an anti-Machiavellian position: the suggestion of a Machiavellian analysis had become shorthand for the subversion of a Christian and moral political order by the mid-sixteenth century.¹²⁵ Strikingly, the 1580 German translation of the French *Antimachiavellus*, by the Huguenot Innocent Gentillet, was republished in 1624. As Anglo has noted, it was Gentillet’s reflections in the *Antimachiavellus* that provided one of the root sources of an anti-Machiavellian critique. In his writing, Gentillet had responded to what he took to be the horrifying Machiavellian calculations that led to the massacre of France’s Huguenots on Saint Bartholomew’s Day in Paris, supposedly on the advice of the Italian Queen Mother Catherine de’ Medici and her Italianate associates.¹²⁶

Following such a critique, a series of forewords to the 1624 German edition argued that the unethical and amoral political principles of reason of state could be seen in every part of Europe beyond the empire. The prefatory letter to the 1624 edition spoke of how “Plato, Xenophon, Aristoteles, Cicero, Seneca,” and others had shown how prosperity grew from “the common life of humanity,” of living in society with one another, arguing that the amoral political calculations put forward by Machiavelli destroyed the natural bonds of society by encouraging individuals to be “unscrupulous,” making them into “cruel monster[s] of

¹²² Von Egersperg, 28.

¹²³ Von Egersperg, 8–15, turns the language of *Unser Friderichs von Gottes Gnaden Königs in Böhemb* against the Palatinate.

¹²⁴ Klein, 4: “Der Krieg machet der Menschen Barbarisch . . . wie M.T. Cicero sagt / die Menschlichen Natur allergrösseste Feindin ist.”

¹²⁵ Anglo, 1–13.

¹²⁶ Anglo, 271–373, in particular 292–95, 320.

nature.”¹²⁷ In fact, in the prefatory material for both the 1580 and 1624 German editions, reason of state was rendered un-German and foreign, the “Teustchen” having observed its application in foreign lands.¹²⁸ The preface even referred to its casting as “Ragion distato, *Raison d’Estat*, Jus Sive Ratio Status,” with no German vernacular given.¹²⁹ Reason of state was a foreign “Policyordnung,” because it violated the moral and ethical responsibilities firmly rooted in a Christian account of rule and of *Obrigkeiten*.¹³⁰ Unlike Gentillet’s text, then, which saw this as an Italian disease that had come to infect France, the German text claimed the infection had spread to all of Europe, except to the empire.

As Von Friedeburg has pointed out, such an anti-reason of state analysis would rest below an application of the term *Staat*, when it eventually emerged in the German vernacular in Seckendorf’s *Teutscher Fürstenstaat* (1656). Through the Thirty Years’ War, an anti-reason of state critique gained further force. In short, it was argued that the efforts on the parts of different princes and territorial rulers within the empire to enlarge their own *Stand* or estate through war led to the wasting of the wider public order, as embodied by the different estates within their territories. Von Friedeburg observes that references to *Staat* were therefore applied as a way of denoting the entire public order, embodied by the different territorial estates.¹³¹ The prince, in this line of reasoning, should act on behalf of the *Staat*, as opposed to his own particular *Stand*. In effect, the perceived failure of the ruling imperial estates to fulfill their moral and ethical responsibilities, with respect to the territories they ruled, was followed by a transfer of those responsibilities to the estates of their territories.¹³² Thus, German references to *Staat*, which stood for the public and moral order denoted by those territorial estates, differed from a certain English or broader European idea of *state*, which spoke to sovereignty and the political calculations needed to maintain the prince’s contingent state or position.¹³³

The importance of those original responsibilities, as embodied by the *Reichsstände*, was underlined by the Palatinate’s extensive counter to the

¹²⁷ Gentillet, *Antimachiavellus*, fol. 3^r, “Dann es haben solche berühmpte Politische Scribenten bey sich selbstem weißlich ermessen / was grosse Fruchtbarkeit / dem allgemeinen Menschliche[n] leben zu wachsen kann.” Originally translated by Georg Nigrinus, a new prefacing letter was added by the printer of the 1624 edition, Johann Carolus.

¹²⁸ *Antimachiavellus*, fol. 14^r.

¹²⁹ *Antimachiavellus*, fol. 7^r: the prefacing letter to the “Graffen zu Solms” describes the lack of virtue and the poisonous nature of Machiavellian calculation.

¹³⁰ *Antimachiavellus*, letter to the reader, fol. 15^r.

¹³¹ Von Friedeburg, 2016, 212, 313–22.

¹³² Von Friedeburg, 2016, 240.

¹³³ Tuck, 279–345.

1621 Bavarian pamphlet, which inverted the analysis set out by the Bavarians. The question of sovereignty and reason of state remained inapplicable. In 1623, Ludwig Camerarius put together a long response, the *Bericht und Antwort uff die vornembste Capita, Päß und Puncten der Bayer-Anhaltischen geheimen Cantzeley* (Report and answer to the foremost chapters, passages, and points from the secret chancery/correspondence of the prince of Anhalt produced by the Bavarians), in which the Bavarian accusations were refuted by restating in stronger terms the duties, obligations, and rights entailed in a language of *Stände*. With respect to the *Reichsstände*, Frederick, as a prince-elector, was duty bound to act for the freedom of the estates, “seiner pflicht vor der Stände Freyheit.”¹³⁴ During the interregnum between the emperor’s death and the election of his successor, was it not the case that the prince-electors were responsible for discussing the matter and electing an emperor who would uphold the public order?¹³⁵ After all, the right of free election, “die Freye Wahl,” was the highest treasure of the empire, the “höchste Kleinot des Reichs.”¹³⁶ In refuting the accusations laid out in the “Bayerische Buch,” it was argued that Frederick had not occupied Bohemia, because he had been elected by “the [territorial] estates.”¹³⁷ There was also no evidence to suggest that the Protestant Union had planned an attack against the Catholic powers within the empire as early as 1610.¹³⁸

However, in countering the fundamental accusation—namely, that the Palatinate had sought to invert or collapse the public order and the function of the estates—no direct defense was given, possibly because every political action could be read differently according to the motivation assigned. Instead, a counter-description was given of the actions of the Catholic League and, in particular, of the Jesuits. Egersperg had argued that mistrust had engulfed the empire because no one could suffer the Calvinist spirit. But in reprising a thread of the Bohemian *Apologia*, Camerarius argued that such an accusation described not the actions of the Calvinists but those of the Jesuits, who had consistently advised the ruling members of the empire to overturn the established public order and subject the empire to their authority.¹³⁹ In the vein of the 1618 *Discursus*, Camerarius drew a distinction between the “old Catholics,” who continued to accept the ordained order embodied by the different layers of estates and the bonds of Christian association, and the “Jesuitical

¹³⁴ Camerarius, 16.

¹³⁵ Camerarius, 16.

¹³⁶ Camerarius, 16.

¹³⁷ Camerarius, 28–34.

¹³⁸ Camerarius, 2–9.

¹³⁹ Camerarius, 53–69.

Catholics,” who consistently sought to invert the order of the empire and break the estates.¹⁴⁰

From here, Camerarius tackled a revealing rhetorical question: what new constitutional order did a potential Calvinist government actually want to erect? Was it a monarchy, an aristocracy, a democracy, or an oligarchy?¹⁴¹ This formulation contained a hidden barb, considering that the Palatinate had consistently accused the Habsburgs of attempting to turn the empire into a monarchy. In answer, Camerarius dismissed the question’s terms. Echoing the *Discursus*, Althusius, and an Aristotelian account of estates, Camerarius argued that the question at stake was not about which estate should rule, as found in a Bodinian reading of monarchy or aristocracy in which sovereign authority was positioned fully with the prince or nobility. It was about upholding the public order of estates, as ultimately denoted by the *Reichsstände*, who maintained the bonds of association and governed one another. It was about preserving the “*Respublica Germanorum*.”¹⁴²

Camerarius’s decision to speak in this manner is suggestive of a broader point. Some three decades later, in 1648, such disorder would be resolved with the Peace of Westphalia. Westphalia is thought to have put in place a classic account of the European state, inaugurating an international system of sovereign states, each with sovereignty over its own territory. In doing so, the Peace of Westphalia broke the fraught international confessional and noble alliances that had wrought havoc in Europe by establishing the boundaries of the sovereign European state and ending Habsburg dominance in European politics.¹⁴³ But, as has been noted with respect to the empire, at the same time, Westphalia essentially reestablished much of the constitutional structure and confessional peace that was set out in Augsburg in 1555, the difference being that the tacit recognition of Calvinism was legally established alongside that of Lutheranism and Catholicism.¹⁴⁴

As Peter Schröder has commented, not all is as it seems. The German political theorist most associated with Westphalia, Samuel Pufendorf, described the empire as a confederation of states. In writing thus, Pufendorf did not simply co-opt an idea of the sovereign state into German parlance as a way of describing the empire’s distinct territorial authorities. Pufendorf sought to comprehend the complex political reality of the empire, describing it as an irregular political body. In doing so, he dispensed with the Bodinian insistence on classifying the empire according to the fixed forms of monarchy, aristocracy,

¹⁴⁰ Camerarius, 59.

¹⁴¹ Camerarius, 70.

¹⁴² Camerarius, 70.

¹⁴³ See, for example, Lesaffer. Also see P. H. Wilson, 2009, 751–58.

¹⁴⁴ G. Schmidt, 1993; Heckel.

or democracy, instead presenting the empire as “a composite and balanced system” of states. Pufendorf’s thought reflected the fact that the “corporate self-perception of almost all estates within the empire” had endured. This was despite the attempts by European powers, through the negotiations underlying Westphalia, to carve out sovereign German states opposed to Habsburg rule.¹⁴⁵ As Von Friedeburg has also noted, the ethical and moral sensibility in a German account of the public order of the territorial *Staat* runs into Pufendorf’s account of an international order.¹⁴⁶ This complicates further how we understand an international system of European states, which, in reality, cannot be reduced to an uncomplicated system of sovereign states. Instead, notions of association, trust, and international rights and responsibilities reemerge, jarring against the sense of license given to states in maintaining their sovereignty. The sensibilities found in the idea of the *Respublica Germanorum* would appear long-lasting.

Furthermore, something of Meinecke’s state and its duality emerges in the irresolution between the necessities of power and the state’s ethical and moral qualities, which appear to have different German and English inflections. As Michael Stolleis has observed, *Ratio Status* and Machiavelli would be applied in a German context by individuals such as Hermann Conring (1606–81). And as Von Friedeburg’s work once again indicates, *Ratio Status*, in its application, would be informed by the need to maintain a fixed public order of territorial estates, encompassed at a later point by a German idea of *Staat*.¹⁴⁷ In these instances, German discussions tended to speak of a state of necessity, of those specific moments of emergency when amoral political calculations might be required to preserve the fixed public order of a ruler’s particular territory within the *Reich*. In contrast, English discussions turned more to a state of nature, focusing on individuals and groups, driven by self-interest, who were positioned outside a fixed account of estates.¹⁴⁸ In English terms, disorder arose when different groups threatened to amass enough authority to override the community’s balance of interests.¹⁴⁹ As Richard Tuck observes, one resolution was to speak of the maintenance of the present form of the state and its sovereignty, as outlined by Hobbes’s *Leviathan*. In these terms, it was the establishment of sovereign authority that enforced institutional bonds, as opposed to those bonds arising naturally within civil society, as in a public order of *Landstände* and *Reichsstände*.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Schröder.

¹⁴⁶ Von Friedeburg, 2016, 327–42.

¹⁴⁷ Stolleis, 145–50; Von Friedeburg, 2016, 211–30.

¹⁴⁸ Von Friedeburg, 2002.

¹⁴⁹ Pocock, 361–442.

¹⁵⁰ Tuck, 279–345.

CONCLUSION

In positioning the statements and justifications set out by Frederick V, the Bohemian estates, the Bavarians, and Emperor Ferdinand II alongside English engagement with the disputes over the actions of Frederick and the emperor, variations in the relationship between two readings of *estate*, or *Stand*, emerge. Of course, in German-language princely advice manuals there was an awareness of the political calculations that might be necessary to maintain the estate, or *Stand*, of a prince or wider political grouping. In the exchanges over Bohemia and Frederick's justifications of his actions, however, such a reading of *estate* was not applied. Instead, emphasis was placed upon an account of *Obrigkeit* and the different vocabularies of *Stände*, which spoke of the Christian responsibilities of higher political authorities and of the natural and divine order of a political community, which consisted of different estates. With respect to the Bohemian cause, the bonds of Christian and civil association and the corporate identity of the *Landstände* maintained peace and unity. For the Palatinate, the Christian higher authority and, more specifically, the *Reichsstände* were bound to maintain this order and its bonds of Christian and civil association, which held the political community in peace and in unity. Ferdinand's monarchical presentations were thought to threaten this, but even the emperor and his supporters rebuffed the accusations of the Palatinate using dimensions of the same vocabulary, speaking of the hierarchical order of ordained higher authorities and of the responsibilities of the estates to maintain the natural and Christian order of the empire.

In English discussions, there was a certain fluidity in dealing with German vocabularies of *Stände*. In the case of the Bohemian *Apologia*, of course the legal order of the territorial estates was recognized and understood, but *Stände* was also read as "states" when denoting the distribution of political authority that cut across the system of estates. When Frederick's use of another language of estates was encountered—namely, his deployment of the vocabulary of the *Reichsstände*, and his position as a prince-electoral—the English weighting toward a different reading of *estate* increased. Frederick may have emphasized that his actions were in accord with constitutionalist and ethical rectitude, but those English interlocutors, when confronted with the wider political situation, read *estate* with reference to the current political conditions and the contingent nature of Frederick's position, or estate. Frederick's own actions in support of the Bohemian estates, and his actions as a prince-electoral were more fully rendered within the scope of a reason of state analysis. When the constitutionalist and legal arguments opposing the removal of Frederick's electoral jurisdiction were re-rendered in English, the question of sovereignty meant an English understanding departed further from a German emphasis on the public, legal, and associational order embodied by the *Reichsstände*. An English account

spoke of near-sovereign states acting in confederation, allowing political calculations involving the strength of each state to come into view.

Finally, the difference in weighting and sensibility between German and English readings of *estate* meant that when a reason of state analysis emerged in an accusatory genre of pamphlet literature, it was deployed and understood differently. In German-language pamphlet exchanges, both Bavaria and the Palatinate fashioned accusations, which they leveled at one another. Each suggested that their opponent had applied reason of state calculations, which involved the standing or political strength of the different parties involved. In both cases, the accusation formed a diagnosis of the fundamental problem facing the empire. Those who sought to enlarge the contingent *Stand*, or estate, of a particular party drew the estates of the empire away from their function in a fixed Christian order, in which the corporate identity of the imperial estates maintained the bonds of Christian and civil association. In contrast, the same accusation in English was not used to advocate a return to a corporate and associational reading of *estate* but, instead, to insist that England and the Palatinate's allies had no choice but to counter their opponents' application of reason of state with a consideration of the political calculations necessary to maintain their present estate. In this regard, there would appear to have been a greater sense of duality in the two readings of *estate* in German-language exchanges when set alongside the parallel English engagement with events in the empire. Such a duality in the way in which references to *estate* were understood is suggestive of the later duality in an account of an emerging idea of the state as set out by the German historian Friedrich Meinecke.

Mark A. Hutchinson is a Lecturer in History at the University of Gloucestershire. Mark has held a Government of Ireland Fellowship at University College Cork, a Junior and then Mid-Career Fellowship at the University of Göttingen Institute for Advanced Study, and a Research Fellowship in Politics as part of the University of York Leverhulme project Rethinking Civil Society: History, Theory, Critique. Mark's research explores how religious division reshaped key political vocabularies of liberty, civil society, and state from ca. 1550 to 1650. Mark's work makes use of comparative histories involving England, Ireland, and the Holy Roman Empire.

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