In two dusty volumes of several hundred manuscript pages each survives a voice more important than initial appearances might suggest: that of François le Bègue, a cleric and minor nobleman from seventeenth-century Lorraine, then an independent duchy squeezed between France and the Holy Roman Empire. From 1667 until he died at the very end of the century, le Bègue served as an administrator and diplomat for three successive dukes: Charles IV (r. 1624/5-1675), Charles V (r. 1675-1690), and Leopold I (r. 1690-1729). Those thirty-some-odd years of service counted among some of the most difficult in all of Lorraine's early modern history. In 1670, in order to secure his eastern frontiers before attacking the Dutch, French monarch Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715) ordered an invasion of his smaller neighbor. France not only occupied the duchy, but attempted to absorb it. The dukes fled to the Holy Roman Empire, and there established a court in exile. They did not return until a generation later, in 1698, as part of the provisions of the Treaty of Ryswick that ended the War of the League of Augsburg (1688-1697).

By that point, le Bègue felt weakened by age, illness, and what he called the disorders of his time. He sought to prepare his younger brother to succeed

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1 HA Lothringisches Hausarchiv K73 No 110 (henceforth referred to as Memoir I) and HA Lothringisches Hausarchiv K74 No 112 (henceforth referred to as Memoir II), Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives, henceforth referred to as HHSA), Vienna. Translations from these memoirs are those of the author. For a basic genealogical overview of the le Bègue family, see Dom Ambroise Pelletier, *Nobiliaire ou armorial général de la Lorraine et du Barrois*, I (Nancy: Chez Thomas,1758), 454-456. Survey histories of Lorraine have largely been the preserve of French regional historians; however, one has recently appeared in English: William Monter, *A Bewitched Duchy: Lorraine and its Dukes, 1477-1736* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2007).
him in ducal government. Based on documents le Bègue had collected, the two volumes, entitled collectively “A Memoir of the Principle Events in Lorraine’s Affairs Since 1668,” helped serve this purpose by providing an official account of the exiled court’s attempts to effect ducal restoration. Le Bègue filled his memoir with accounts of dozens of plans, schemes, and dreams of how to return home. Almost all of these failed, a record le Bègue admitted bluntly, telling his brother that even though the dukes “had omitted nothing in working to recover their state… there were times we no longer hoped to recover [Lorraine].” Throughout his text, le Bègue offers an eyewitness testimony of a critical period in Europe’s political development: the late-seventeenth century. This paper explores that testimony to better understand crucial aspects of that development.

Le Bègue’s experiences in exile might seem trivial. After all, he was a minor political figure on the European stage, serving the exiled ruler of a state that no longer exists. Scholars have long neglected such figures as le Bègue and the exiled dukes and places like the small state of Lorraine, focusing instead upon people and places that emerged as central components of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century European states system. Exploring when and how the modern nation-state arose played an important role in the establishment of the historical profession itself in the 1800s and remained central through the 1900s. These explorations tended to apply modern political definitions and understandings to the early modern era, an approach that remains influential. For one recent example, Brendan Simms in a survey of European politics from 1450 to the present argues that “the principal security issues faced by Europeans have remained remarkably constant over the centuries.” Such views have helped establish a powerful model of European political development in the 1600s and 1700s, one that stresses the economic and military capacities of a select number of great powers that laid the foundations for a system of sovereign states. In

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2 Le Bègue maintains an objective tone throughout much of his memoir, reflecting the document’s overall purpose as a public record. However, le Bègue preceded his year-by-year accounts of events with a statement directly addressed to his brother in which the old administrator offered a personal interpretation of the experience of exile. In addition, there are moments scattered through the text where le Bègue injected his own voice into an otherwise formal account.

3 Memoir I, folios 1vo-2, HHSA.


6 The arguments of such scholars as Leopold von Ranke, Max Weber, and Norbert Elias helped establish the foundations of what has been called the rise of great powers thesis. In addition to Simms, *Europe*, modern works include Michael Howard, *War in European
other words, Europe’s political history has long been interpreted along Whiggish lines and the present has been used as an implied norm by which to judge the success or failure of early modern developments. Such views have been used to justify the neglect of stories like le Bègue’s.

The last generation of study on early modern political culture has recognized the limitations of such traditional approaches. Whiggish teleologies have been questioned and revisionist scholars now emphasize the complexities of the European states system prior to the nineteenth century and have underlined the ambiguities in and multifaceted contemporary meanings of such concepts as state and sovereignty. Once, for instance, the 1648 Peace of Westphalia was regarded as the beginning of an international system defined along the lines of Jean Bodin’s 1576 definition of sovereignty that stressed a ruler’s power to make law. Today, some scholars have dismissed that argument as a “myth.”

Based on such revisionist interpretations, international relations expert Andreas Osiander has proposed a useful model for understanding the world in which le Bègue lived and worked. Osiander contends that the early modern states system was characterized by what he calls “the autonomy principle,” meaning that “whatever the historical particularities of their situation, any and all actors in the system were entitled to an autonomous existence, and that they alone were competent to define the extent of that autonomy.” Likewise, Lucien Bély, the French historian of politics and international relations under Louis XIV, has noted that the affirmation of other sovereigns played a key role in establishing sovereignty. Taken together, such revisionist approaches allow a more complete picture of the diversity of early modern political culture and the place that such figures like the exiled dukes of Lorraine could occupy within the contemporary states system.

Many traditional historians, focused as they were on tracing the origins of nineteenth- and twentieth-century nation-states, tended to overlook exiles, with the notable exception of the English Stuarts, post-1689. With the rise of

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10 See, among others, Edward Gregg, “Monarchs Without a Crown,” in *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of Ragnhild Hatton*,
revisionist scholarship, however, has come an appreciation of the fact that not only did exiles survive in the early modern political universe but, moreover, they could matter greatly. Philip Mansel and Torsten Riotte have recently pointed out that “every European country, with the exception of Switzerland, experienced a sovereign residing abroad during the early modern or modern period.” Thus, they note that “support… for exiled monarchs show[s] the many alternatives always existing to ‘successful’ supranational states.”

Seen in the light of revisionist interpretations, le Bègue’s memoir looks far from trivial. Indeed, it offers a significant perspective on the Grande Siècle. Le Bègue took as a given that the dukes he served belonged in the international system as autonomous actors, despite their then status as exiles. The plans, schemes, and dreams that filled the old administrator’s working days reveal crucial typical aspects of contemporary political culture. In order to earn the recognition of other rulers and so be seen as legitimate, exiled sovereigns had to conform to current conventions and, so, exiles embodied many of the central aspects and values of seventeenth-century politics. Though these traits were shared by all sovereign exiles, the story of Lorraine’s dukes and their followers offers a particularly illuminating case study. The dukes gained a place of refuge in the Imperial army and participated in almost all the major conflicts of the time, including the Dutch War, the War of the League of Augsburg, and the Habsburg-Ottoman Wars. For thirty years, they traveled far and wide across Europe: from Germany’s Rhineland to the plains of Hungary. Over the many pages of his memoir, le Bègue tells more than the history of a particular exiled small-state sovereign; he tells a history of Europe.

In order to best discuss some of the ways in which le Bègue’s memoir reveals central aspects of early modern political culture, this essay focuses upon a critical moment in the history of Lorraine’s exiled duke: the 1680s, with a particular emphasis on the early part of the decade. Besides a useful way to conform to the space restrictions of this article, focusing closely on short-term events provides crucial insight into the day-to-day experience of early modern politics. On this point, Lucien Bély has argued powerfully that while long-term structural factors should not be discounted, relations between states are too complex to study deeply over the longue durée. Bély notes that diplomacy was


created more out of reactions to immediate events than long-term considerations. The 1680s have long been seen as a pivotal period of transition in European politics when, it was popularly believed, the great powers of later periods began to emerge. It was also a crucial moment for le Bègue’s master at the time, duke Charles V, who, though always an exile, earned European-wide renown. Throughout his rise to prominence, the duke strove to return home. This effort required, as noted above, projecting an image of sovereign legitimacy. Political necessity demanded Charles typify the culture of his times.

To begin with, over the decade, Charles remained, as le Bègue recalled, “very wary and very protective about the grandeur of his status.” Le Bègue recounted numerous conflicts over the duke’s position. For example, at times over the 1680s, disputes erupted between the duke and certain Imperial electors over precedence within the Holy Roman Empire in general, and the Imperial army in particular, of which Charles had been granted overall command in the 1670s. Several electors claimed superiority to the duke, implicitly reducing him to the status of a German territorial prince and threatening his ability to lead Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I’s (r. 1658-1705) forces. In 1689, for one instance, duke Maximilian II Emanuel, elector of Bavaria (r. 1679-1726), demanded a share of the command over imperial forces mobilizing to confront Louis XIV. Le Bègue related that Charles resisted. The duke informed the emperor that the dukes of Lorraine long had the right to live in the Empire as equals with the electors and, moreover, he, Charles, “had over them the quality of sovereign....” Charles V could not win acceptance as an autonomous political actor without appearing or behaving as one. This fact was true for rulers across Europe and explains the seemingly endless battles over status and precedence that fill the annals of early modern politics. However, the need to protect and project an acceptable image of sovereign standing was even more pressing for exiled rulers, prevented as they were from actual governance.

The greatest threats to Charles’s status came from Louis XIV, who sought to consolidate France’s hold over Lorraine. As part of this effort, the French king

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12 Bély, 8.
14 Memoir I, folio 147vo, HHSA.
15 Memoir II, folios 61vo-62, HHSA.
16 For an example, see Toby Osborne, “The Surrogate War between the Savoys and the Medici: Sovereignty and Precedence in Early Modern Italy,” *The International History Review*, vol. 29, no. 1 (March 2007), 1-21.
17 For another seventeenth-century example of this issue, see Anna Keay, “The Shadow of a King? Aspects of the Exile of King Charles II,” in *Monarchy and Exile*, eds. Mansel and Riotte, 105-19.
attempted to weaken the duke's position in the international system. Louis's endeavors began even before the 1680s and placed Charles in a precarious position throughout the decade. During the last years of the Dutch War in the late-1670s, Charles had sent envoys to the ongoing peace congress at Nijmegen to lobby for his restoration. He demanded his diplomats be recognized as ambassadors, a right seen as characteristic of sovereignty. Louis XIV had not granted this status in the passports issued to Charles's ministers. In fact, the documents referred to the duke merely as “Prince Charles.” Le Bègue described this act as a “cruel injury; France wishing to take away his status as duke, just like it had taken away his duchies....” Though Charles had the support of the Holy Roman Emperor and the king of England, among other rulers, his status remained ambiguous through the peace negotiations because of French enmity. At the end, the treaty proposed two options at ducal restoration along rather severe lines that both entailed, among other provisions, a loss of territory to France. Charles refused to sign. Afterwards, he wrote the Pope about the matter, commenting bitterly that if he had agreed to the Nijmegen accords he “would have neither territory, nor state, but enclaves of land within the Kingdom of France.”

During the negotiations at Nijmegen and over the decade that followed, Charles relied on the protection and support of Emperor Leopold and key members of the Austrian branch of the House of Habsburg. Such support should not be considered self-evident as the House of Lorraine had long looked westward; junior branches of the ducal house, most famously the Guise, had risen to prominence in France and maintained their high standing even during the dukes’ exile. These junior branches of the ducal house would prove important connections for the exiled court. Charles had actually spent his adolescence in Paris before making a public protest against Louis XIV in the 1660s and, consequently, being banished from France. He made his way to Vienna and entered the imperial army. By 1680, Charles had not only inherited the ducal title, he had been named commander of the emperor’s armies and married the emperor’s half-sister, Eleanor of Austria, former Queen of Poland (1653-1697).

Following Charles’s refusal to sign the Nijmegen treaty, Emperor Leopold

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18 Osborne, 4.
19 Memoir I, folio 167vo, HHSA.
20 Ibid.
21 There are few modern editions of the treaty. For a contemporary copy, see A Collection of all the Acts, Memorials, and Letters that pass’d in the Negotiation of the Peace: With the Treaties Concluded at Nimeguen (London: H. Hills, 1679). Articles 12 to 22 specifically concerned Lorraine.
22 Quoted in Lipp, 85.
appointed the duke Governor of the Tyrol. The duke settled his court in the alpine city of Innsbruck, where it remained through the 1680s. Le Bègue recalled that, within a year, Charles “as well as the Queen, his wife, were sick of their stay in the Tyrol.” Moreover, le Bègue noted, “the pension that the Emperor gave them did not suffice for their upkeep.” Complaints about the Emperor’s financial support (or lack thereof) may reflect larger concerns about Leopold’s commitment to his brother-in-law’s restoration. Instructions issued in 1679 to the marquis de Vitry, French envoy to the imperial court stated that the Emperor was one of Charles’s main supporters. Instructions issued in 1681 to Vitry’s replacement, the marquis de Sebeville, however, noted that, while the Emperor might discuss the Lorraine issue, “the affairs of Hungary are much nearer to [his] heart than any others.”

Until her death in 1686, Charles’s most steadfast supporter was his mother-in-law, the dowager empress, Eleanor of Gonzaga (1630-1686). Charles’s willingness to perform services on her behalf indicated the closeness of their patronage relationship. Around September 1681, for example, le Bègue related that the duke and Queen Eleanor traveled surreptitiously to the Imperial-Italian frontier on the dowager empress’s request. There, on the pretext of escorting one of the Queen’s ladies-in-waiting to a convent, Charles planned to meet the duke of Mantua in order to convince the Italian ruler not to sell the fortress of Casale to France. When the Mantuan sovereign failed to appear, the effort proved fruitless. Despite this disappointing result, the dowager empress remained Charles’s strongest supporter at the imperial court. Her support was all the more necessary continuing that, as mentioned to French envoys, Charles was “little considered” by the Emperor’s ministers. In fact, female relations like the dowager empress played a central role in Charles’s attempts to effect restoration. His diplomats exploited the duke’s dynastic connection simultaneously along with more bureaucratic methods, a multifaceted approach typical of European political culture into the eighteenth century.

Finding support for Charles’s restoration naturally proved the central focus of the exiled court’s varied diplomatic efforts. Members of the junior branches of the House of Lorraine resident in France petitioned royal ministers

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24 Memoir II, folio 10, HHSA.
26 Ibid., 87-8.
27 Memoir II, folios 13vo-14, HHSA.
28 Sorel, 87.
on the duke's behalf. In early 1680, for example, Marie de Lorraine, duchess of Guise, (1615-1688) and Anne de Lorraine, princess of Lillebonne (1639-1720), attempted to use the occasion of negotiations over a prospective marriage between Charles de Lorraine, prince of Commercy (1661-1702) with one of the marquis of Louvois's (1641-1691) daughters to gain the French minister's support.\(^{30}\) For his part, throughout the early 1680s, Charles petitioned the Emperor's envoys to France and the Imperial Diet to speak in his favor.\(^{31}\) The duke also sent envoys to a number of imperial princes to gain their support.\(^{32}\) Charles hoped that these efforts would lead Louis XIV to enter into negotiations.

The challenge lay in finding terms of restoration acceptable to him and to Louis XIV. Scholars have come to appreciate that, by the 1680s, the Sun King sought not expansion, but rather secure frontiers and protection for the territorial gains France had made since 1648.\(^{33}\) These concerns explain bellicose French policies towards Lorraine. As regards Charles, the duke desired a settlement that, while assuaging Louis's concerns, would protect the duke's dignity as a sovereign. Again using dynastic and more bureaucratic channels, Charles extended at least two compromise offers regarding restoration to Louis XIV. In early 1679, after the Nijmegen negotiations ended, Charles sent the king a memoir proposing the return of Lorraine along with its strategically vital capital, Nancy, in exchange for which he would admit a French garrison in Nancy and would allow free passage through his lands for French troops.\(^{34}\) About a year later, on the occasion of the Commercy marriage project, Charles had it made known to Louvois that he was willing to sign the Nijmegen treaty as long as he could retain Nancy. Again, Nancy proved the sticking point. Le Bègue stated that the duke "was resolved not to sign any treaty at the price of losing his capital; there being no place outside of that city proper for the establishment of his court and where the Queen his wife could live with decency."\(^{35}\)

Charles's attempts failed. Louis XIV did not want to discuss any restoration. The Commercy marriage project ended when, after the two noble women advancing the scheme requested powers to negotiate for Charles, Louis

\(^{30}\) Memoir II, folios 1-1vo, HHSA.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., folios 6vo-7, HHSA.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., folio 13, HHSA.


\(^{34}\) Lipp, 86.

\(^{35}\) Memoir II, folio 1vo, HHSA.
asked that Louvois marry his daughter to another prince. Those petitioning for the duke's interests faced rebuff from their French counterparts. For the French, Charles's refusal to sign the Nijmegen treaty had ended the matter. In the Spring of 1680, according to le Bègue, the imperial envoy in Paris was told "that the state having been conquered step by step in the peace negotiations, [and] the refusal the duke made regarding accepting the King's offers and signing the peace, left His Majesty the just and peaceful possessor of that state." French envoys to the imperial court in 1679, 1681, and 1684, were all instructed to speak of Lorraine only in general terms and to emphasize the duke's decision not to accept the offered terms of restoration. At the same time, Louis sought to transform military occupation of Lorraine into permanent control through the controversial policy of reunions, by which French law courts interpreted the territorial allocations negotiated since 1648 in terms favoring the king. By September 1683, Louis claimed full legal possession of the duchy. Charles's situation looked bleak indeed.

And then, things began to change. That same year, 1683, the duke led the imperial forces that defended Vienna and that pushed the Ottomans out of Hungary in the following years. Not only did the victories establish Charles as a Christian hero, as importantly, they enabled the duke to display sovereign legitimacy through projecting central characteristics of contemporary political culture, which was highly aristocratic in nature. Nobles traditionally found their identity on the battlefield and military leadership helped establish claims of sovereignty through the seventeenth century. Above all, success in war helped create gloire, a multifaceted concept best understood in terms of reputation. Acquiring and maintaining gloire played a central role in the policies of early modern rulers. Louis himself argued that "[r]eputation is often more effective

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36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., folio 5vo, HHSA.
38 Sorel, 72, 87, 100.
39 Symcox, 181.
41 For surveys of the events of 1683 and afterwards, see Thomas M. Barker, Double Eagle and Crescent: Vienna's Second Turkish Siege and Its Historical Setting (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1967), and John Stoye, The Siege of Vienna, new ed. (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2000).
than the most powerful armies. All conquerors have gained more by reputation than by the sword."\textsuperscript{44} In the wake of Charles’s triumphs, Louis could no longer dismiss the duke, and French policy towards the exiled court changed.

Beginning in 1685 and continuing over the next three years, Louis proposed a variety of ways to settle the Lorraine issue, centering on an exchange of sovereignties along with a royal pension. In return for ceding Lorraine to France, Louis’s proposals included establishing Charles in the Spanish Netherlands, or Mantua, or Guelderland, or secularizing a number of bishoprics in the Empire so as to create a new duchy, potentially either one in Westphalia or Franconia. It was also suggested granting Charles rule over some part of the lands won from the Ottomans, such as Transylvania.\textsuperscript{45} Once again, dynastic and bureaucratic channels were employed: French ministers spoke with members of the junior branches of the House of Lorraine, and French envoys traveled to the imperial court and other potential supporters of Charles, including the Pope and the king of Spain, to talk about the matter. In all cases, Louis offered to finance any exchange. However, in order to “make known…that there was no other means of exiting the [Lorraine] affair, France reversed the order of all justices in [the duchy]…destroying in this way all the justices of Lorraine…so as to erase the name and idea [of Lorraine] in the centuries to come….” The king’s actions greatly impressed most observers who, according to le Bègue, felt that Charles had no options but to accept one of Louis’s offers.

The duke stood firm against all these plans. Le Bègue related that Charles decided “as much by principle of conscience as by reason of state that he would not listen to [Louis’s] offers, and he [Charles] responded to all those who spoke to him regarding [exchanges] that Lorraine was the only thing he wanted and he could not separate himself from [the duchy].” Charles died in 1690, still a duke in name only. However, by his constant refusals of Louis’s plans, he had preserved the House of Lorraine’s claim to their ancestral lands. Seven years later, exhausted by nine years of war, Louis surrendered Lorraine to Charles’s son, Leopold. Charles’s hopes realized, the exiles could return home.

Before departing for the long-dreamed-of homeland, le Bègue composed his memoir in an act both of memory and of reflection.\textsuperscript{48} The aged administrator understood that Charles’s actions during the 1680s had brought gloire to the House of Lorraine and protected the duke’s recognition as an autonomous actor in the political system with the consequent possibility of restoration. However, le

\textsuperscript{44} Quoted in Lynn, \textit{The French Wars}, 16.
\textsuperscript{45} Memoir II, folios 28-37\textsuperscript{vo}, HHSA.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., folio 31\textsuperscript{vo}, HHSA.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., folios 50\textsuperscript{vo}-51, HHSA.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., folios 324-324\textsuperscript{vo}, HHSA.
Bègue did not think uncritically about the period. For le Bègue, exile had meant a life lived in constant anxiety over what the future might hold. In introducing his account, he commented to his brother that “you will see here the great efforts of God’s providence; that men never grasp His disposition; that the great are as exposed to disgrace as the small; that sovereignties are subjected to vicissitudes, like those of our country, which was almost lost....” Le Bègue could not escape the thought that things might have turned out differently and, so, exile was to him an experience to be avoided in the future at almost all costs. He urged his brother to promote accommodation with Louis XIV, saying that “princes neighboring great kings are obliged always to take careful measures so as not to give any just cause for jealousy or discontentment.” In the years that came, le Bègue’s counsel would be followed. During the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713), French troops again entered Lorraine. Duke Leopold, in contrast to his predecessors, remained neutral and remained in his lands.

Le Bègue’s accounts and counsel still hold meaning today. Through his memoir, he offers a detailed perspective on the political culture that produced the princes and neighboring great kings that comprised much of his working world. What comes through in the text clearly is how much exiles like duke Charles and their followers mattered and how they were far from marginal figures, despite long-term scholarly neglect. Studying exiles like Charles and le Bègue brings us to the center of their political world in crucial ways. Though in an inherently weaker position, exiles had a place in the states system of the time. To protect that place meant appearing to others as legitimate autonomous political actors in that system. Therefore, to gain legitimacy, exiles had to embrace and embody contemporary political values and behaviors. The extraordinary experience of exile, in other words, helps illuminate what early moderns considered typical. Exploring that experience provides ultimately a means of seeing how early modern political culture functioned on its own terms in its own time.

49 Memoir I, folio 34, HHSA.
50 Ibid., folio 2, HHSA.
51 Ibid.