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FREDERICK I / III, THE *KRONTRAKTAT*, AND THE BRANDENBURG-PRUSSIAN REACTION TO THE ACCESSION OF PHILIP V OF SPAIN: A STRAIGHTFORWARD CASE?

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ABSTRACT

This article reassesses the Prussian response to the accession of Philip V of Spain in 1700 which has been traditionally portrayed as a straightforward consequence of the *Krontraktat* obligations to the Emperor. It demonstrates that Frederick I's policy was complex and shaped less by his predetermined commitments than by his pursuit of recognition for Prussia's newly created royal dignity. Between 1700 and 1702, Frederick manoeuvred diplomatically between multiple partners, leveraging troop commitments to secure symbolic recognition of his kingship. His tentative overtures to the Bourbon monarchs and his flirtation with neutrality demonstrate his tactical manoeuvring. Ultimately, he sided with the Habsburg claimant, Charles III, but only after extracting significant concessions that secured widespread recognition of his royal title.

KEYWORDS: Prussia; Philip V; Charles III; War of the Spanish Succession; Diplomacy; Royal Title.

FREDERICO I/III, EL *KRONTRAKTAT* Y LA REACCIÓN DE BRANDEBURGO-PRUSIA AL ASCENSO AL TRONO DE FELIPE V DE ESPAÑA: ¿UN CASO SENCILLO?

RESUMEN

Este artículo reevalúa la respuesta prusiana a la ascensión al trono de Felipe V de España en 1700, que tradicionalmente se ha descrito como una consecuencia directa de las obligaciones del *Krontraktat* con el emperador. Demuestra que la política de

Federico I era compleja y estaba menos determinada por sus compromisos preestablecidos que por su búsqueda del reconocimiento de la recién creada dignidad real de Prusia. Entre 1700 y 1702, Federico maniobró diplomáticamente entre múltiples socios, aprovechando los compromisos de tropas para asegurar el reconocimiento simbólico de su reinado. Sus tentativas de acercamientos a los monarcas borbónicos y su coqueteo con la neutralidad demuestran su maniobra táctica. Finalmente, se puso del lado del pretendiente de los Habsburgo, Carlos III, pero solo después de obtener importantes concesiones que le aseguraron el reconocimiento generalizado de su título real.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Prusia; Felipe V; Carlos III; Guerra de Sucesión Española; Diplomacia; Título real.

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FREDERICK I / III, THE *KRONTRAKTAT*, AND THE BRANDENBURG-PRUSSIAN REACTION TO THE ACCESSION OF PHILIP V OF SPAIN: A STRAIGHTFORWARD CASE?

At the commencement of the 18th century, two new kings assumed more or less contested royal titles, which they would spend the next decade and more securing and obtaining recognition of. On November 16th 1700, Philip, Duke of Anjou, was proclaimed as king of Spain and its empire by his grandfather, Louis XIV, in a ceremony at Versailles (EXTERNBRINK, 2021: 252-262). Three months later, on January 18th 1701, at a coronation ceremony in Königsberg, Elector Frederick III, Margrave of Brandenburg crowned himself as Frederick I, King in Prussia (BESSER, 1712). Although Philip V, the first Bourbon King of Spain, and Frederick I, the first King in Prussia, assumed their crowns under very different circumstances, the mutual recognition of their royal status by each other and by European princely society as a whole was closely interlinked.

The *Krontraktat* of November 16th 1700, the treaty under which Frederick III / I famously secured pre-emptive recognition from the Habsburg Emperor, Leopold I, for his impending Königsberg coronation, obliged the new Prussian king to provide 8,000 troops for the Habsburg claimant in the event of a disputed succession to the Spanish monarchy (GÖSE, 2012: 233-235). That these Prussian troops entered the field against the Bourbon powers in the War of the Spanish Succession has historically led many to view the Prussian king's approach to the succession of Philip V and the War of the Spanish Succession in general as a straightforward case. Victor Loewe, a historian well versed in Prussian archival sources, for example, surmised:

> "The Berlin government did not pursue an independent policy on the question of the Spanish succession and when the outbreak of the great war ultimately saw it on the side of France's enemies, [...] this was merely the consequence of the obligations that Elector Frederick had already undertaken years earlier towards Austria in the event of the death

of the Spanish king” (LOEWE, 1924: 143).

Further treaties concluded with the Grand Alliance between 1701 and 1709 obliged the King in Prussia to furnish further men for the Habsburg cause, and in 1709, 31,000 troops stood in allied service in exchange for a range of subsidies (BRAUBACH, 1923: 104-125). This has led some to designate Frederick as a “powerless, cheated vassal” (HINRICHS, 1968: 146). Such thoughts reach their apotheosis under Johann Gustav Droysen, who remarked that during the epoch of the simultaneous War of the Spanish Succession and Great Northern War, the Prussian king enacted “in the west, war without politics, in the east, politics without an army” (DROYSEN, 1872: 254). Though such forceful statements have been relativised by recent historiography (GÖSE, 2012; PLASSMANN, 2002; ROLL, 2002), the assumption that the 1700 *Krontraktat* transformed Frederick I into a subordinate vassal of the Grand Alliance has long stymied research into the Prussian reaction to Philip V’s accession to the Spanish throne.

In fact, the Prussian response to Philip V’s assumption of the Spanish crown was complex. It gradually evolved and was by no means wholly determined by the agreement with the Emperor of 1700. Indeed, the Prussian monarch's diplomatic dealings between the death of the Spanish king, Charles II, in November 1700, and Prussia's full accession to the Grand Alliance in December 1702, illustrate just how much diplomatic manoeuvring Frederick I undertook. Such actions also demonstrate the interrelation of Philip V’s succession with other Prussian interests, most notably the establishment of Prussian royal dignity. Significantly, this two-year period illustrates several dynamics that would characterise the remainder of Frederick I’s reign. The Prussian king’s primary objective was to gain widespread recognition of his new royal title in European princely society. He placed particular importance on attaining recognition from influential and prestigious potentates, such as the Emperor and the kings of France and England. Frederick sought not only to secure written acceptance of his new title, he also sought symbolic recognition through diplomatic ceremonial. The Prussian King used his troops as a bargaining tool with which to secure diplomatic and ceremonial concessions from as broad a spectrum of actors as possible. At the same time, Frederick I often exhibited a flexible interpretation of diplomatic treaties and a willingness to use partners’ failures to meet their obligations as a means to escape his

own. Likewise, Frederick I exploited a conceptual differentiation between his roles as Electoral Prince of the Holy Roman Empire and sovereign King in Prussia to his own advantage. Finally, the Prussian king exploited factors inherent to early modern warfare in order to strategically prevaricate, delaying or withholding the dispatch of his troops, in order to extract concessions from allies. This article will therefore examine in detail the two-year period between the signing of the *Krontraktat* of November 1700 and the Accession Treaty of December 1702 as representative of these broader themes which have been discussed elsewhere (MATTHEWS, 2024). It will thus assess how these elements intersected with the Prussian response to the accession of Philip V in the initial stages of the War of the Spanish Succession.

A brief initial warning is in order. Although this article is about the Prussian reaction to the accession of a new Spanish monarch, it may appear to focus predominantly on Frederick I's entanglements with the Emperor, the King of France, the King of England, and the Dutch Republic. This is largely unavoidable. Throughout this period, Frederick had limited contact with the Spanish court, and the extent to which Louis XIV's grandson exercised an independent policy towards Prussia is questionable, particularly in the initial years of his reign (WADDINGTON, 1888: 250). Frederick's approach to Philip V was thus primarily shaped by his interactions and allegiances with those other courts.

The Prussian crown project and the Spanish succession

Because the Prussian reaction to the accession of Philip V was so heavily influenced by Frederick III / I's own project to secure royal status, it is worth examining the factors that motivated this endeavour in order to discuss how the two intersected. The 1701 Königsberg coronation was prompted by structural factors inherent in European princely society around 1700, as well as the experiences of Frederick and his father as Electors of Brandenburg. In the early modern European society of princes, rank and relative status were objects of inherent value, and while there existed an approximate, though much-contested, hierarchy of princes before 1648, the decades thereafter saw the gradual transition to a bipartite international system (STOLLBERG-RILINGER, 2002; STOLLBERG-RILINGER, 1997). The concept of sovereignty increasingly came to predominate, and it was asserted there could be no precedence or

hierarchy amongst sovereign princes (WICQUEFORT, 1716: 225). According to this metric there instead existed a dichotomous order, composed of sovereigns on the one side, and subjects on the other (STOLLBERG-RILINGER, 2002; STOLLBERG-RILINGER, 1997). Stollberg-Rilinger has for example spoken about the gradual emergence of a "circle of Sovereigns" (STOLLBERG-RILINGER, 2002; STOLLBERG-RILINGER, 1997). The boundaries to this contested grouping remained porous and flexible, while some concepts of hierarchy persisted, yet the idea of sovereignty increasingly came to shape actors' positions in the international order. Sovereign status was not a mere legal concept, but rather a social status, tied to the dignity of the ruler. It represented the intersection of territorial sovereignty and royal dignity (KRISCHER, 2012: 213-218; KRISCHER, 2009: 12-14). Sovereign status was recognised in various ways, but increasingly important became a set of honours granted to a ruler's diplomats at foreign courts: the so called royal honours or *honores regii* (STOLLBERG-RILINGER, 2002).

The structural precarity of certain actors within this transitioning system led them to seek to obtain tracts of sovereign territory and unleashed a veritable "wave of regalisation", whereby rulers sought to attain royal titles (DUCHHARDT, 1983; FRIEDRICH, 2010: 4-6; MATTHEWS, 2024: 38-40; CLARK, 2007: 27). This was particularly prominent amongst the Electors of the Holy Roman Empire, as their status and the concept of "Electoral Pre-eminence" became increasingly challenged (GOTTHARD, 1999; RUFFERT, 2022: 137). The accession of the Elector of Saxony to the crown of Poland in 1697, the succession of the Elector of Hanover to the British crown in 1714, and the schemes of the Elector of Bavaria to secure the Spanish crown (or some part thereof) for his house, illustrate the pervasiveness of the structural pressures facing the imperial Electors (MATTHEWS, 2024: 38-40). They accordingly sought to acquire royal crowns to secure their appropriate place in European princely society.

Factors and experiences particular to Brandenburg-Prussia also made Frederick III intent on attaining a royal title. Unlike his counterpart electors, Frederick III possessed sovereign territory outside the Holy Roman Empire, with the territory of Ducal Prussia. Yet, despite this fact, the later decades of the seventeenth century were marked by numerous diplomatic setbacks whereby Brandenburg representatives were denied

sovereign ceremonial treatment (STOLLBERG-RILINGER, 1997: 159ff.; RUFFERT, 2022: 122, 172). Unwilling to grant the representatives of foreign rulers the *honores regii* when they were themselves denied them, Frederick William and his son, Frederick III, thus manoeuvred Brandenburg-Prussia into diplomatic isolation, with few high-ranking diplomats being dispatched to Berlin-Cölln (STOLLBERG-RILINGER, 1997: 167-168; JAGENBURG, 1936: 109-110). This process reached its culmination at the negotiations that led to the Peace of Ryswick of 1697, where Brandenburg representatives were refused crucial ceremonial honours and treated as the representatives of a subject (FREY, 1984: 189; GÖSE, 2012: 200-201). It thus became apparent, that if Frederick III was intent on obtaining elements of the *honores regii* and more or less equal treatment with other European sovereigns and kings, he could neither rely upon his status as imperial elector, nor as sovereign duke in Prussia.[1] Instead he would require a royal title, and as one Prussian minister observed, royal status would bring "real advantages", allowing ceremonial difficulties to be overcome and facilitating important diplomatic meetings on an equal footing.[2]

In the late 1690s, Frederick formed a body of advisors to discuss the possibility of acquiring a crown, as well as its inherent advantages and disadvantages (GÖSE, 2012: 218-221). To these ministers Frederick clearly articulated his thoughts on the matter, stating that "when I have everything that belongs to the royal dignity, even more than other kings, why should I not also seek to obtain the title of king?"[3] Frederick was, however, in a unique position in comparison with his international peers, for he was not seeking to attain an already existing kingdom through election or succession, nor was he seeking to claim the symbolic capital of a defunct kingdom (MATTHEWS, 2024: 39-40). Rather, Frederick sought to create a new royal title based on his existing domains (FRIEDRICH, 2010). On the question of upon which territory the royal title should be based Frederick opined: "it should be the Royal Dignity of Prussia, because I am sovereign there".[4] He continued: "If I assume the royal dignity over my Brandenburg lands, I am not a sovereign king but a vassal king [*Lehn König*], […] but if I assume the

[1] Frederick III, *Andtwohrt auf denen Puncten oder Aufsatz des von Fuchs wegen der Königlichen würde*, 1699, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 132, Nr. 1, f.89.
[2] Ilgen, Denkschrift, 1704 in (LEHMANN, 1878: 559)
[3] Frederick III, *Andtwohrt*, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 132, Nr. 1, f.85.
[4] Frederick III, *Andtwohrt*, 1699, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 132, Nr. 1, f.85.

royal dignity because of Prussia, I am an independent king".[5] Frederick's ministers stressed how important it would be to gain recognition of this new title, with one remarking that "it is not enough to be crowned; one must also be assured of being recognised as king" (GÖSE, 2012: 225ff.).[6] He deemed that unsuccessful establishment of Prussian royalty would push Frederick III into diplomatic isolation.[7]

Frederick himself emphasised the importance of imperial consent, stressing that "I want above all else to assure the Emperor's approval" (DAUSER, 2017: 258).[8] The Emperor's traditional position as the preeminent prince in Christendom made his consent indispensable (ROLL, 2002: 190). Likewise, imperial consent was important for gaining the acceptance of Prussian royal status from the princes of the Empire. Once imperial approval was secured, Frederick deemed that favourable circumstances with England, Holland and Poland would enable him to swiftly acquire recognition from them.[9] With regard to the Emperor, Frederick linked the issue of his rank elevation to the impending Spanish Succession crisis:

> "He [the Emperor] also requires my assistance in the Spanish succession, and as the Emperor wishes to gain entire kingdoms in such a succession, [and] I will render him with that as much service as any other potentate in the world can, I can only conclude that this is an opportunity to oblige the Emperor and negotiate something good for myself in return, for if I let this opportunity pass, it will not come again for many generations or at least not during my reign, and from which I must necessarily profit in order to achieve my intention. If I miss this opportunity and the Emperor gains more realms and power through the Spanish succession, he will subsequently not only hold all other potentates, and me in particular, in lower esteem than he does now, but will also hinder rather than promote the growth of my dignity and authority. If I intend to make my services to the Emperor in the Spanish succession count, I must do so soon, before he aligns himself with France, England and Holland, for afterwards he will no longer need me…".[10]

The *Krontraktat*

Frederick and his ministers raised the matter of the royal title with the Emperor at an opportune moment, instructing his envoy in Vienna, Christian Friedrich Bartholdi, to do so in October 1699 (GÖSE, 2012: 215-235; ROLL, 2002). Frederick mused that a change in diplomatic circumstances could prove beneficial for the project, for "now, in

[5] Frederick III, *Andtwohrt*, 1699, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 132, Nr. 1, f.85.
[6] Ilgen, Memorial, 11.11.1700 in (WADDINGTON, 1888: 426).
[7] Ilgen, Memorial, 11.11.1700 in (WADDINGTON, 1888: 428-429).
[8] Frederick III, *Andtwohrt*, 1699, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 132, Nr. 1, f.85.
[9] Frederick III, *Andtwohrt*, 1699, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 132, Nr. 1, f.86-88; Ilgen, Memorial, 11.11.1700 in (WADDINGTON, 1888: 427)
[10] Frederick III, *Andtwohrt*, 1699, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 132, Nr. 1, f.86-87.

the Spanish succession affair, the Emperor is being pressured so hard from all sides".[11] This was indeed the case; an initial partition treaty drawn up between France, England, and the Dutch in 1698 had sought to avoid a war over the Spanish Succession by awarding Spain, the Spanish Netherlands and its overseas Empire to Joseph Ferdinand, the electoral prince of Bavaria. Thereunder, Habsburg and Bourbon candidates were to be compensated with territories in Italy (RULE, 2007: 96-97; WHALEY, 2013: 108-110). The premature death of Joseph Ferdinand in February 1699 however put paid to this prospect. William III attempted to negotiate a second partition treaty with France, now making the Habsburg claimant the main benefactor and compensating the French with Milan. Whilst Vienna rejected the second partition treaty (ROLL, 2002: 201), the Spanish court became outraged upon discovering its provisions, and Charles II concluded a will which named Louis XIV's grandson, the Duke of Anjou, as sole inheritor of Spain and all its dependent territories (RULE, 2007: 100-101).

News of the will in favour of the Bourbon prince was circulating openly in Madrid and beyond, and these alongside the continuing precarious nature of Charles II's health exacerbated Habsburg concerns (PRIBRAM, 1885: 186; ROLL, 2002: 201). Fearing isolation in the event of a conflict with the French over the Spanish succession, the Emperor set about looking for allies. From the Brandenburg side there was a desire to utilise the Emperor's isolation and extract concessions, most notably recognition of the Prussian crown, whilst Frederick's military assistance was still of importance (PLASSMANN, 2002). In a personally written letter to the Emperor of June 1700, Frederick requested support for his 'assumption of the royal title on my Duchy of Prussia' and at the same time assured Leopold I that in recognition "Your Imperial Majesty may also be assured that I [will] acknowledge this not with empty words, but with everything that I can contribute to the advancement of Your Imperial Majesty's glory and Interest".[12] The implication was of course, that Frederick would support the Emperor's claims in the case of the Spanish Succession, though naturally other issues were also implied (ROLL, 2002: 218).

Emperor Leopold I and the then Elector, Frederick William, had already signed a twenty-year defensive alliance in 1686 in which both pledged to defend each other's territories, including those:

[11] Frederick, 18.10.1699, I. HA Rep. 132, Nr. 1 f.2.
[12] Frederick III, 09.06.1700, in (VOTA, 1911: 546).

> "That may accrue to them in the future by divine providence through succession or other lawful means, including in particular the case, which God in His goodness may long prevent! when the King of Spain should die without an heir, namely that His Electoral Highness will also then provide His Imperial Majesty with the promised assistance to claim what will thereupon rightfully fall to him and his heirs".[13]

Although this agreement was technically still valid until 1706, both sides desired to renew it around 1700. It was now Frederick III and not his father who reigned as Elector in Brandenburg, and the Emperor saw an agreement as a means to bind him more tightly to his cause. He also saw the renewal of the agreement as a means to prevent Frederick from forming alliances with his enemies, or with other actors who might threaten Habsburg domains (ROLL, 2002: 206-208, 225; GÖSE, 2012: 226-227). Moreover, while France, England, and the Dutch were devising partition treaties to divide up the Spanish Empire upon Charles II's death, the Emperor in August 1700 declared that "as long as the king [of Spain] lives, there is regarding the succession, nothing to discuss, nor any action to be taken".[14] Frederick III thus saw the opportunity to utilise the Emperor's relative isolation to make promises of troop commitments for any Spanish succession war in exchange for an imperial guarantee that they would recognise Frederick's coronation as King in Prussia (PLASSMANN, 2002: 231ff.). On the imperial side, it was surmised that Frederick may crown himself no matter what, and that this, and any potential pledging of himself to others in exchange for recognition, would bring harm to the House of Austria. As a result, they sought to extract as much as they could from the Elector for the recognition of the crown (ROLL, 2002).

Whilst Frederick emphasised that Leopold was "recognising" and not "creating" his new royal title, and thus rejected a reactivation of medieval imperial prerogatives that allowed the creation of kings, the weight of that recognition from the traditional leading prince in Christendom was inordinate (FRIEDRICH, 2010: 8-9; GÖSE, 2012: 230). Thus, once Frederick's ministers discovered the conditions under which the Emperor would be willing to accept Frederick's elevation to king, and some points were further negotiated, Frederick's envoy in Vienna, received instructions to conclude a treaty with the Emperor's ministers.[15] The 'renewed secret defensive alliance', which

[13] Printed in (MOERNER, 1867: 754).
[14] Quoted in (PRIBRAM, 1885: 163).
[15] Imperial conditions, 06.08.1700 & report from Wartenberg, Dohna and Ilgen, 13.08.1700, in (LEHMANN, 1878: 473-475, 476-492).

has since gone into historiography as the *Krontraktat*, or crown treaty, was consequently concluded on November 16th 1700[16]. It stated that:

> "Should His Royal Majesty in Spain (which God in His mercy may prevent) die without descendants, […] that His Electoral Highness, His Imperial Majesty and your heirs, should they be prevented from succeeding to the throne and from obtaining what they claim to be theirs, and should war break out before or after the death of the aforementioned king of Spain, the aid promised in the said treaty of eight thousand men shall be provided without any exception or dispute […] in order to use them for that purpose according to the reason of war, and His Royal Highness will continue to provide such assistance until peace is made and the succession dispute is thereby resolved" (MOERNER, 1867: 812-813).

For these troops, the Emperor pledged to pay yearly subsidies of 100,000 *Gulden* in peace and 100,000 *Reichsthaler* (equivalent to 150,000 *Gulden*) in times of war (MOERNER, 1867: 643, 816-817; GÖSE, 2012: 234). But that while these troops could be used to secure Habsburg succession to the Spanish monarchy, they could not be dispatched "overseas or in the Kingdom of Naples, but only in those lands and fiefs belonging to the Holy [Roman] Empire" (MOERNER, 1867: 813). This importantly assuaged Brandenburg fears that those troops might be sent "to India [sic]"[17], but enabled them to be sent to the Duchy of Milan, part of the Spanish monarchy, but technically an imperial fief (ROLL, 2002: 213; GÖSE, 2012: 234; PLASSMANN, 2002: 232-233).

In exchange, Frederick received imperial recognition for his impending coronation as king. Article seven declared that:

> "if His Electoral Highness[…] on account of his Duchy of Prussia, allows himself to be proclaimed and crowned as a King, His Imperial Majesty will bestow[...] immediately, without any further delay or postponement[…] within and outside the Empire, [the] honours, dignity, and recognise all those prerogatives, titles, and honours, as other European kings[…] In sum, to make no difference between his Electoral Highness and other European kings, in particular those kings of Sweden, Denmark and Poland, in the titles and other marks of honour" (MOERNER, 1867: 814).

Moreover, the Emperor promised that he would:

> "through all appropriate offices, in writing and through his ministers, will ensure that all foreign crowns and potentates, especially Spain and Portugal, as well as the Italian princes and republics, and above all the estates of the Empire, do likewise, and that His Electoral Highness [is] no less accepted and acknowledged as king from the same than

[16] Printed in (MOERNER, 1867: 810-823)
[17] *Report from Wartenberg etc*., 13.08.1700, in (LEHMANN, 1878: 479).

from his Imperial Majesty" (MOERNER, 1867: 814-815).

The *Krontraktat* would thus seem, on the surface at least, to define Frederick's approach to the death of the Spanish monarch, obliging him to support the Habsburg candidate and surely reject any French claimant. Yet, the *Krontraktat*, also left many details unresolved or poorly defined, and this would lead to later conflict (PLASSMANN, 2002: 222-225; GÖSE, 2012: 233-234). Frederick and his ministers, for example, knew the Emperor's precarious financial position would make him unable to wholly fulfil his subsidy obligations, and they planned to use this as a potential excuse to also renege on their own troop commitments should it suit (PLASSMANN, 2002: 235). Important ceremonial matters were also left ambiguous and would lead to a future rupture between Berlin and Vienna (MATTHEWS, 2024: 151).

The initial response to Charles II's death

The conclusion of the *Krontraktat* was eclipsed by events regarding the Spanish succession. When Bartholdi and the Habsburg ministers signed that agreement on November 16th 1700, they did not even know that Charles II had died on November 1st, due to delays engendered by the speed of the early modern postal network (FECKL, 1979: 38). Indeed, the *Krontraktat* was in fact signed on the exact same day as Louis XIV proclaimed his grandson as King Philip V of Spain at Versailles.

In advance of the conclusion of the *Krontraktat*, Frederick was, however, discussing the prospect of gaining French recognition for his prospective elevation to king. In October 1700 for example, Ezechiel Spanheim, Frederick's envoy at the French court was assuring Louis XIV's ministers that though Frederick was obliged to support the Emperor over the Spanish succession, this was only with 8,000 of his 30,000 troops. These in turn could only be used defensively in the Empire and Habsburg hereditary lands, and he speculated that he might otherwise be able to remain neutral (COLE, 1733: 222; PRIBRAM, 1885: 183).

With the Spanish court, Frederick made very little attempt to pre-emptively secure recognition of a prospective Prussian royal title. Though Brandenburg diplomats in Vienna had informally discovered, through Spanish diplomats, that the Spanish King might even be one of the first to recognise a Prussian king (WADDINGTON, 1888: 248). Throughout 1700 Frederick's envoy in Madrid, Pierre de Falaiseau, was not

convinced that Charles II was nearing his end and even hoped as late as October 1700 that he may produce an heir (WADDINGTON, 1888: 249-250). Nevertheless, developments obliged him on November 4th, to inform his master of the Spanish king's deterioration and death. He moreover reported, that Charles II's testament had named the Duke of Anjou as "universal successor" to the Spanish monarchy and all of its territories, commenting that this 'unexpected blow' represented a 'cruel mortification' for the Emperor's ambassador.[18] Falaiseau continued to transmit news from Madrid including copies of Charles II's full will and the imperial protestations thereto, as well as news of Philip V's imminent arrival in Madrid.[19] Rhetorically, Falaiseau continually referred to the nominated Spanish king as 'the Duke of Anjou', due to the uncertainty of Frederick's approach towards him.[20] Falaiseau was ordered not to engage with Philip V, as it was assumed Spanish policy was subordinated to French interests, and was recalled from Madrid at the end of February 1701 (WADDINGTON, 1888: 250).

At the French court, the Brandenburg envoy, Ezechiel Spanheim, had instructions to keep Frederick III abreast of developments relating to French intentions around the Spanish Succession.[21] On November 11th Spanheim reported Charles II's death and that Louis XIV and his ministers had been informed of the Spanish king's will, with rumours circulating that it favoured the Duke of Anjou.[22] Spanheim likewise reported thereafter on the French acceptance of Charles II's will and the ceremony at which Louis XIV proclaimed Anjou as King of Spain, before a kneeling Spanish ambassador and humiliated imperial envoy[23] (EXTERNBRINK, 2021: 252-262). Spanheim himself was not present at this event, or as he dubbed it the "metamorphosis of the Duke of Anjou into the King of Spain", but he thereafter remarked that he was now 'embarrassed' by the situation, not knowing whether to pay respect to the Duke of Anjou as king or to refrain from doing so.[24] Unsure, Spanheim avoided taking an audience with or congratulating Philip V, remarking that he had not been sent to him. He contented himself with vaguely congratulating Louis XIV on the "great occasion" that had taken place at Versailles, whilst appealing for further instructions from the

[18] Falaiseau, 04.11.1700, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 11, Nr. 9159.
[19] GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 11, Nr. 9159; GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 11, Nr. 9162.
[20] Falaiseau 13.01.1701, & 07.06.1701 GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 11, Nr. 9162.
[21] Spanheim's instructions in (LOEWE, 1924: 196).
[22] Spanheim, 11.11.1700 & 15.11.1700, GStA PK, I. Ha Rep. 11, Nr. 2658.
[23] Spanheim, 16.11.1700 & 19.11.1700, GStA PK, I. Ha Rep. 11, Nr. 2658.
[24] Spanheim, 19.11.1700, GStA PK, I. Ha Rep. 11, Nr. 2658, fol.211.

Elector.[25] The Elector's privy council however stated that they would take time to consider the approach to Anjou's accession (WADDINGTON, 1888: 247).[26]

On December 17th, following the signing of the *Krontraktat*, and with Frederick departing for the coronation in Königsberg (GÖSE, 2012: 235), Spanheim now requested that Louis XIV recognise Frederick as king as soon as he was crowned[27] (WADDINGTON, 1888: 248; LOEWE, 1924: 143; COLE, 1733: 262, 278). Yet the French king, knowing that his troops would likely soon confront Frederick's, who were obliged to support Habsburg claims to the Spanish succession, gave a noncommittal reply, his response undoubtedly influenced by his "indignance" at Frederick's outstanding recognition of Philip V as Spanish King (WADDINGTON, 1888: 248-249, 361).[28] From this point these two issues became interlinked, with Bourbon recognition of Prussian royalty dependent upon Frederick's acceptance of Philip V as Spanish King, or at the very least his neutrality in any coming war over the Spanish Succession.

Spanheim continued in vain to negotiate, with the French minister Torcy stating that Louis XIV had not refused to recognise Frederick's new crown but merely postponed his recognition, whilst simultaneously voicing his unhappiness over the prospect of Prussian military support for the Habsburgs.[29] Spanheim continued to hold out hope that French recognition of Prussian royal dignity could be obtained, however, after the recall of des Alleurs, the French envoy to Berlin, it was deemed hopeless, and Spanheim was also recalled from Paris, and departed in March 1701 (WADDINGTON, 1888: 249; LOEWE, 1924: 144). He would go on to serve Frederick as envoy and then ambassador to England (LOEWE, 1924: 146-156).

With this, the period of initial Prussian reaction to the accession of Philip V was concluded. Prussian envoys were withdrawn from both Paris and Madrid, and whilst Spanheim, for example, remained informed of the Bourbon courts' dispositions via diplomatic colleagues in Paris (WADDINGTON, 1888: 362), the absence of reciprocal diplomats in Paris/Madrid and Berlin meant that Frederick was left both without direct communication channels to the Bourbon kings, as well as representatives through which recognition could ceremonially be expressed.

[25] Spanheim, 26.11.1700 & 20.12.1700, GStA PK, I. Ha Rep. 11, Nr. 2658, fol.224, 275.
[26] Rescript, 06.12.1700, GStA PK, I. Ha Rep. 11, Nr. 2658, fol.249-250.
[27] Frederick III, 27.11.1700 in (WADDINGTON, 1888: 444).
[28] Spanheim, 07.02.1701, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 132, Nr. 9.
[29] Spanheim, 07.02.1701, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 132, Nr. 9.

Prussian recognition of Philip V?

The Prussian approach to Philip V's accession now entered its next phase. Despite the recall of the Prussian envoys from Paris and Madrid, which might have seemed to indicate a definitive rejection of the Bourbon claimant to the Spanish throne, Frederick and his ministers continued to explore options that might secure Bourbon recognition of Prussian royalty. This included the prospect of recognising Philip V as king. Such ventures illustrate Prussian tactical manoeuvring to achieve the primary goal of gaining widespread recognition of the new royal title, which by no means came to an end with the outbreak of hostilities, despite Frederick I's treaty obligations to support the Habsburg cause in the War of the Spanish Succession. In seeking to obtain recognition of his royal title from further European potentates, Frederick attached particular importance to France (and by extension Spain), England and the Dutch Republic. He sought not only initial written acquiescence of his title, but also symbolic recognition thereof, performed symbolically, through the ceremonial granted to his diplomats at foreign courts, and via high-ranking foreign diplomats in Berlin.

Eager to obtain French recognition of his kingship, Frederick did all he could to avoid open hostilities with the French, which would undoubtedly have precluded this. He even considered making concessions to obtain Louis XIV's recognition of his royal status, the most significant of which would have been to recognise Philip V's accession to the Spanish throne. Thus, even though Frederick himself had conceded in December 1700 that recognising Anjou as king was "morally impossible", he thereafter became more flexible in his approach (KLOPP, 1881: 184). Both the English king, William III, and the Dutch Republic had recognised Philip V as king in January and February 1701 (SCHNETTGER, 2014: 29). The Dutch were forced into doing so in order to secure the release of troops taken captive by the French in their seizure of the Dutch-occupied "Barrier Fortresses" in the Spanish Netherlands (BERNEY, 1927: 9). Consequently, from May 1701 Frederick I also considered recognising Philip V (BERNEY, 1927: 13; KLOPP, 1881: 184; NAUJOKAT, 1999: 21-22). In Frederick's private correspondence he referred to Philip as the "King in Spain" and simultaneously expressed his hopes that there would be no war over the Spanish Succession.[30] However, when Spanheim, intimated such thoughts to the English king and his ministers, they were critical of any scheme to

[30] Frederick I to Electress Sophie of Hanover, 24.05.1701, (BERNER, 1901: 18).

procure reciprocal recognition between the crowns of Prussia and Spain.[31] To Spanheim, William III remarked, that as he himself had recognised Philip, he could not find fault in others doing so, but that he did not think such a recognition compatible with Frederick's *Krontraktat* obligations.[32] In correspondence with Anthonie Heinsius, the Dutch Grand Pensionary, William III was more scathing, stating that

> "it seems supremely ridiculous to me that the King in Prussia has taken it into his head to recognise the King of Spain, given that this is in open contradiction of his treaty with the Emperor, which he has just renewed very recently".[33]

The design for a reciprocal Spanish-Prussian recognition of royalty came to nought because Frederick feared thereby antagonising the English and Dutch. Frederick knew he was far more likely to secure full symbolic recognition of his kingship from these actors, and did not wish to jeopardise this for the uncertain prospect of Bourbon recognition.[34]

Such thoughts were confirmed by the treatment that followed. Ezechiel Spanheim, for example, previously Frederick's envoy to France, was sent to England as envoy in May 1701. He was raised to the preeminent diplomatic rank of ambassador in 1702, though only after it was certain that the English court would grant him the full royal honours (LOEWE, 1924: 146-150; MATTHEWS, 2024: 87-104). He was accorded these at his public entry and ceremonial first audience with the English monarch, Queen Anne, with the Prussian ambassador being "received with the same respect as the ambassadors of France and Spain" (LUTTRELL, 1857: 186). Such ceremonies symbolically marked out Frederick as a sovereign king. In the following years, English and Dutch diplomats were sent to Berlin and took audiences under a new ceremonial, which likewise symbolically recognised Frederick's royal status (MATTHEWS, 2024: 154-163). These precedents proved important in establishing the new king amongst his monarchical peers and were vigorously pursued by Prussian policy in the years following the Königsberg coronation of 1701. They moreover demonstrated the greater willingness of certain partners, most notably the English, to grant ceremonial concessions and cooperatively aid the construction of Frederick's royal status

[31] Spanheim, 26.05.1701, GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 11, Nr. 1830, f.71.
[32] Spanheim, 26.05.1701, GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 11, Nr. 1830, f.79-80.
[33] William III, 31.05.1701 & 28.06.1701 in (SIRTEMA DE GROVESTINS, 1855: 71, 97.
[34] Frederick III, *Andtwohrt*, 1699, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 132, Nr. 1, f.87.

(MATTHEWS, 2024).

Prussian neutrality

Unwilling to take the step of recognising Philip V, Frederick and his ministers nonetheless continued to solicit French recognition of the Prussian crown throughout 1701. Louis XIV and his ministers, however, wanted something “real” in exchange, and with war pending this amounted to Prussia’s neutrality in the coming conflict (WADDINGTON, 1888: 362-363). Through a representative of Anton Ulrich, the Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and an ally of Louis XIV, it was supposedly suggested that France would recognise Frederick's royal dignity in exchange for his neutrality in the impending war, as well as yearly subsidies (LEGRELLE, 1892: 408-409). However, it is unclear whether France was truly prepared to pay subsidies and whether recognition would be immediate or only follow at the conclusion of the war (WADDINGTON, 1888: 362-363). There were even intimations made that Frederick would be able to remain neutral, even whilst providing the Emperor with the 8,000 troops promised under the *Krontraktat* (WADDINGTON, 1888: 362; FREY, 1975: 94-106). Spanheim discussed the proposal with William III, whilst simultaneously reassuring him that Frederick had no intention of abandoning his allies (WADDINGTON, 1888: 363).

It is notable that Louis XIV did not explicitly request that Frederick recognise Philip V. This was likely deemed both unlikely and unnecessary, given that several influential rulers had already recognised Philip V as king, and that he had entered Madrid without opposition on 18 February 1701 (FALKNER, 2015: 13-14). French troops had furthermore captured the barrier fortresses in the Spanish Netherlands in February 1701 (JANY, 1967: 433), and Louis must have adjudged that without significant aid from allies, Bourbon troops would be able to dislodge the Emperor from Spanish territories in Italy, making the accession of Philip V to the entirety of the Spanish inheritance a *fait accompli*. Thus, preventing prospective allies from flocking to the imperial cause became a main objective of French policy. It was in such a manner that Louis XIV’s ministers approached Prussia, seeking to secure Prussian neutrality whilst dangling the prospect of recognising Frederick's royal status.

However, it should be noted that Louis XIV and Frederick I were not negotiating over Prussia’s complete neutrality. The French offer, communicated via the

Wolfenbüttel agent, already accepted the possibility that, in the event of Prussian neutrality, Frederick would still be permitted to provide the 8,000 men promised to the Emperor under the *Krontraktat*, as well as his contingent to the *Reichsarmee*, should the Empire as a whole declare war (WADDINGTON, 1888: 362). The Empire ultimately declared *Reichskrieg*, or imperial war, in September 1702, and Frederick provided around 4,000 troops under his matricular obligations for his various imperial territories (KAUER, 1999: 54; BERNEY, 1927: 46). A case of 'neutrality' whereby one side commits 12,000 troops to fight the other may appear somewhat counter-intuitive. Yet both the terms of the *Krontraktat* and early modern conceptions of international law permitted such eventualities (PLASSMANN, 2002: 239; BERNEY, 1927: 22; HASSINGER, 1943: 48). This was just a portion of the total strength of the Prussian army, which numbered 30,000 troops in 1701, and was gradually expanded throughout the war to a total strength of 39,000 and then to 44,000 troops (PLASSMANN, 2002: 236; FECKL, 1979: 66). For Louis XIV, it was evidently worthwhile to endeavour to prevent the majority of Frederick's forces from entering the conflict.

Nevertheless, in the summer of 1701, Frederick began negotiating with the Dutch over whether they would take on a Prussian auxiliary corps of 5,000 troops in exchange for subsidies (LOEWE, 1923: 8-14). Such arrangements stood in a tradition whereby the Electors of Brandenburg had often supplied troop contingents to wartime allies under such agreements (WILSON, 1998). Most recently, Frederick had committed roughly 21,000 troops against Louis XIV in the Nine Years War (1688-1697) in exchange for Dutch and Spanish subsidies (WILSON, 1998: 90; FREY, 1984: 186-187). The French king was therefore aware of the importance of preventing large numbers of effective Brandenburg/Prussian troops from joining his enemies (MERTA, 2001; FREY, 1984: 171). Frederick was ultimately to commit 31,200 troops against Louis XIV over the course of the War of the Spanish Succession. These contingents took part in many decisive battles and actions, from the Spanish Netherlands, along the Rhine, and in Bavaria, as well as in northern Italy (BRAUBACH, 1923: 124, 170; JANY, 1967: 432-531). However, the agreements for the provision of these troops were only made gradually, over a period of several years, and the French continually sought to hinder the conclusion of further troop agreements by pursuing Prussian neutrality and sowing discontent within the alliance.

That Frederick III / I could even consider such initial French endeavours to secure his neutrality derived from his conception of his separate roles as Elector of Brandenburg and King in Prussia. He posited that he could be at war with Louis XIV as elector, but at peace as king (FREY, 1975: 95; FREY, 1978: 15). Indeed, this distinction was applied in other areas, such as in a prohibition of commerce from his electoral dominions but not from the territory of Prussia (FREY, 1975: 95). Such a distinction was also recognised by the peace treaties that ended the War of the Spanish Succession, with Frederick's son, Frederick William I, concluding peace with France and Spain at Utrecht in 1713 as King in Prussia, but remaining at war with them as Elector of Brandenburg until the peace of Rastatt / Baden in 1714 (FREY, 2004: 373). Indeed, in order to assuage the French, Frederick even suggested that contingents supplied under the *Krontraktat* or to the *Reichsarmee* did not fight as his own troops, but rather "as auxiliary troops of the Emperor" (FREY, 1975: 95). Frederick used such arguments to attempt to secure the neutrality of his Lower Rhenish territories, Cleves and Mark, from French deprivations in the seemingly imminent war (PLASSMANN, 2002: 234; NAUJOKAT, 1999: 22; BERNEY, 1927: 12-13, 32). Ultimately, these discussions with France came to nothing. For the full recognition of his kingship and the neutrality of his territories, the French increasingly insisted upon the withdrawal of Prussian troops from imperial service, which, for Frederick, was too great a concession to make (HASSINGER, 1943: 48-50; LEGRELLE, 1892: 407ff.).

The campaign of 1701

Nevertheless, despite Frederick's refusal to withdraw his troops and retreat into neutrality, the Prussian king remained defiantly stubborn over the precise use of his troops during the 1701 campaign. That year saw the commencement of hostilities, with French and Austrian forces contesting battles in northern Italy, though this was done without a declaration of war and portrayed as a private dynastic matter (PLASSMANN, 2002: 236). The Prussian king began to mass his forces around his territory of Cleves in response the French occupation of nearby fortresses in the Spanish Netherlands and the Electorate of Cologne (JANY, 1967: 434).

The Habsburg Emperor and his ministers wanted to dispatch these Prussian troops to Italy, or at the very least to the Upper Rhine, where they could unite with other

Habsburg troops (PLASSMANN, 2002: 236-238; BERNEY, 1927: 14-18). Frederick however desired to keep his troops stationed on the lower Rhine, nearby his possessions of Cleves and Mark (FECKL, 1979: 41-43). He justified this by stating that the terms of the *Krontraktat* allowed him to recall some of his troops for the defence of his own lands if "absolutely necessary" (MOERNER, 1867: 813; BERNEY, 1927: 14). As well as securing Prussia's western territories, keeping his troops in the northwest, far from Habsburg centres of power enabled Frederick to maintain greater control over them (PLASSMANN, 2002: 236ff.). The Prussian king would, under certain circumstances, be able to delay their dispatch in order to wring further concessions out of the Emperor and his other allies (BERNEY, 1927: 14; MATTHEWS, 2024: 155-162). These troops could also be used to secure the nearby Spanish territory of Guelders, upon which Frederick had longstanding designs and semi-legitimate claims due to outstanding Spanish debts to Prussia (BERNEY, 1927: 221-224). Likewise they could occupy the territories that formed the Orange Inheritance, should the death of William III without an heir make this feasible. Finally, the proximity of these troops to the Dutch border would allow their swift leasing to the Dutch as auxiliaries once an agreement was reached.

Throughout 1701, the Emperor and his ministers responded to Frederick's evasions by declaring that hostilities had not yet broken out in the areas of Cleves and Mark. They correspondingly demanded that Frederick dispatch his troops to the Upper Rhine (PLASSMANN, 2002: 238; BERNEY, 1927: 18). An explosive internal report from the Emperor's council best summarises Habsburg frustrations, providing a clear example of Frederick's flexible interpretation or even downright disregard for the terms of the *Krontraktat*:

> "These 8,000 men, […], are almost the only advantage that, apart from many inconveniences, Your Imperial Majesty has from the new Prussian kingdom. The objection that the King needs the 8,000 men to protect his Cleves lands is not valid because the King of Prussia [sic] still has sufficient other troops. If, on the other hand, he wants to use these 8,000 men to protect Cleves, then the reality is that Your Imperial Majesty has not only made him king without any advantage for himself, but has also paid him 100,000 Reichsthaler annually to protect his Cleves lands."[35]

[35] Quoted in: (KLOPP, 1881: 387-388).

Prussian accession to the Grand Alliance

Whilst remaining intransigent about the dispatch of Prussian troops away from Cleves, Frederick I nonetheless began to negotiate with the Dutch about supplying an auxiliary corps of 5,000 men in the middle of 1701 and in November Prussian diplomats received orders to negotiate Prussia's accession to the Grand Alliance (KLOPP, 1881: 388; NAUJOKAT, 1999: 24-27; LOEWE, 1923: 8ff.). The reasons for this were manifold. The formation of the so-called "Grand Alliance" between the Emperor, England and the Dutch Republic in September 1701 made the anti-Bourbon coalition far more formidable, and the financial might of the Maritime powers of England and Holland moreover meant it could be expected to reliably pay subsidies. This was crucial for Frederick, whose large Prussian army required foreign subsidies for its maintenance (MERTA, 2001; GÖSE, 2012: 287; JANY, 1967: 437). Initial Imperial successes in northern Italy simultaneously demonstrated that Louis XIV's armies were not unassailable and made the prospect of entering open war against Louis XIV less daunting (NAUJOKAT, 1999: 23; JANY, 1967: 434). Frederick and his ministers thus viewed it as advisable to enter into the Grand Alliance early, in order to be recognised as a full participant and to ultimately be admitted to the peace negotiations as such, unlike had been the case at Ryswick in 1697 (NAUJOKAT, 1999: 24; GÖSE, 2012: 200-201). Moreover, discussions were ongoing with the English and Dutch about the prospect of symbolically recognising Frederick's kingship through diplomatic ceremonial. The potential of having Spanheim received as a royal ambassador in London was being negotiated, as was the dispatch of a high-ranking English ambassador to Berlin (LOEWE, 1924: 146-150; NAUJOKAT, 1999: 24). Here the ceremonial aspect should not be overlooked, as has often been the case in older literature, for Frederick repeatedly used diplomatic and military agreements to obtain ceremonial concessions, and rewarded ceremonial concessions with greater military commitments (MATTHEWS, 2024).

Intense negotiations ensued with the Maritime powers, with Frederick requesting numerous concessions (LOEWE, 1923: 10-11; NAUJOKAT, 1999: 24; KLOPP, 1881: 388-389). An alliance treaty was eventually concluded between England, the Dutch Republic, and Prussia in December 1701, under which Prussia was asked to join the

preexisting Grand Alliance already concluded in September 1701. The treaty stated that the "current dangerous situation" required closer cooperation between the three actors, "because the Spanish succession question, as it currently stands, prejudices the rights and claims of the Emperor, the security and freedom of Europe, and in particular that of the neighbouring powers" (LOEWE, 1923: 12). It was concluded that "Great Britain and Holland promise not to make peace with France and Spain, unless the king participates as King in Prussia and is recognised and treated as King by those two crowns" (LOEWE, 1923: 13; BERNEY, 1927: 19-23). A separate treaty regulated the provision of a Prussian corps of 5,000 men to the Maritime powers, who paid their wages and other costs (LOEWE, 1923: 15; BRAUBACH, 1923: 108, 125). It was this agreement that made Frederick far more unwilling to listen to propositions from Louis XIV (WADDINGTON, 1888: 363). Yet this treaty was concluded only with the Maritime powers, and Frederick still needed to reach an agreement with Vienna to assure full accession to the alliance.

Negotiations with the Emperor

The Emperor expected the unconditional accession of Prussia to the Grand Alliance, and considered that the *Krontraktat* offered a satisfactory basis for this (LOEWE, 1923: 23; BERNEY, 1927: 22). Frederick however wanted an additional treaty, with which he could win further concessions (BERNEY, 1927: 22-26). These were numerous, and included the payment of outstanding subsidies and the demand that any Spanish territories captured by Prussian troops could be held until the outstanding Spanish debt was paid off (BERNEY, 1927: 24-25; FECKL, 1979: 49). Ceremonial concessions were demanded, with Frederick attempting to gain symbolic recognition of his new royal rank by having an imperial envoy conform to a new ceremonial based on that recently introduced at the Danish court (BERNEY, 1927: 25,215-220; MATTHEWS, 2024: 151). Vienna was not ready to accept many of the Prussian demands. There were intense debates over the exact terms under which a further 7,000 Prussian troops should be committed to the war, with Frederick only wishing to do so once international circumstances allowed and desiring "favourable conditions" (LOEWE, 1923: 23-24; BERNEY, 1927: 26). The Emperor by contrast wanted the unconditional commitment of these additional troops. The imperial court also rejected

Frederick's ceremonial proposals and referred instead to the clauses of the *Krontraktat*. These were however ambiguous in nature: they guaranteed Frederick the same ceremonial treatment as the monarchs of Denmark, Sweden and Poland, though also stated that if those kings introduced ceremonial innovations, Frederick was obliged not to imitate their example (MATTHEWS, 2024: 151). Following the introduction of a new courtly ceremonial in Denmark in May 1702, these contradictory passages thus sanctioned differing treatment for the King in Prussia in comparison to his Danish counterpart, and this naturally delayed negotiations (MATTHEWS, 2024: 146-148). Negotiation continued on for nearly a year, with Frederick using various means to force Vienna into accepting the inclusion of his conditions into the Accession Treaty. These included temporarily threatening to vote against an imperial declaration of war at the Regensburg Reichstag, despite this contravening the terms of the *Krontraktat* (BERNEY, 1927; LOEWE, 1923: 24). At the same time, Frederick and his ministers let the imperial court know of substantial French offers to entice Prussia into neutrality (BERNEY, 1927: 32-35; FECKL, 1979: 50; HASSINGER, 1943: 49).

The campaign of 1702

In the meantime, Prussian troops took part in their first military engagements of the burgeoning War of the Spanish Succession during the campaign of 1702. Prussian participation, however, stemmed primarily from Frederick's alliance commitments to the Elector of the Palatinate and his desire to protect his Rhenish territories of Cleves and Mark (BERNEY, 1927: 27-28; FECKL, 1979: 46). Of additional significance was Frederick's desire to remain on cordial terms with the Dutch, good relations with whom would be instrumental in helping Frederick secure the Orange Inheritance. William III of England had died without an heir in March 1702 and Frederick, through his own connections to the House of Orange, expected to inherit the majority of the territories and property held by that sovereign prince, as well as the title of "Prince of Orange" (DRECHSLER, 1913; MATTHEWS, 2024: 50). In May of 1702 William's testament was revealed and it unexpectedly named another as the universal heir to his territories and properties (DRECHSLER, 1913: 1-16; GÖSE, 2012: 263). Yet the Prussian king remained determined to obtain some part of the inheritance and thus it became essential to keep the Dutch Estates General, named executors of the testament, on side

(BERNEY, 1927: 29ff.; PLASSMANN, 2002: 239).

The French-allied Elector of Cologne had called French troops into his territories, and in response Prussian, Dutch, and Palatine troops besieged and cleared the fortified town of Kaiserwerth of French troops from April 1702 onwards (JANY, 1967: 438-442). However, because the Elector of Cologne had designated the French not as foreign troops but as "Auxiliaries from the Burgundian circle", that is from within the Empire, the action to clear them could thus be termed as a *Reichsexekution* and thus an internal matter within the Holy Roman Empire, thus not necessitating a declaration of war against France (BRAUBACH, 1923: 50-54; BERNEY, 1927: 27; FECKL, 1979: 45-46).

Declarations of war from the Dutch Republic, England and the Emperor followed on May 15th.[36] Yet despite Frederick's agreements with the Grand Alliance members of England and the Dutch Republic, an individual Prussian declaration of war did not follow, with Frederick stating that he first wanted to wait for the declaration of a *Reichskrieg* by the Empire (BERNEY, 1927: 33, 37). Prussian troops spent the remainder of the campaign capturing strategically important fortresses around the territory of Cleves from Bourbon forces and resisting demands they be dispatched to aid imperial forces elsewhere (JANY, 1967: 438-442).

Frederick did indeed wait for the territories of the Empire to reach the collective resolution to declare *Reichskrieg* against France and its allies on September 30th before himself issuing a declaration of war (FRIEDRICH, 2018: 159-186; FECKL, 1979: 48). Only thereafter, on November 27th 1702(!) did Frederick issue a declaration of war in which he proclaimed:

> "Be it hereby known: After the imperial assembly in Regensburg has passed a resolution that, due to the infringements and contraventions of the peace treaties committed by the French crown, the violent invasion of one or more imperial estates, and the occupation of various imperial fiefdoms, the said crown and its supporters and accomplices are now to be considered open and general enemies of the Empire".[37]

The Prussian pronouncement then referred to a separate declaration from the Emperor, which asserted Habsburg claims to the Spanish territories, which the Louis XIV had "violently seized and installed his grandson, the Duke of Anjou, as king", as

[36] Printed in: (LAMBERTY, 1725: 107-116).
[37] Declaration of War, 27.11.1702 GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 63, Nr. 777.

well as other issues (FRIEDRICH, 2018: 185).[38] The King in Prussia was now explicitly at war with France over its illegitimate installation of Philip V as King of Spain.

The Accession Treaty of December 1702

The Prussian and Habsburg courts were also able to gradually find common ground on the terms of Frederick's accession to the Grand Alliance, which resulted in the conclusion of a treaty in December 1702 (LOEWE, 1923: 23-26). Its terms stipulated that "the treaties of 1686 and 1700 are confirmed and renewed, and the king [Frederick I] promises to faithfully comply with their provisions regarding the Spanish succession" (LOEWE, 1923: 25). Ceremonial difficulties were solved by ambiguous passages that each side could interpret as they pleased. The Emperor promised to support Frederick's claims to the Orange Inheritance and to grant him the title of Prince of Orange. Frederick pledged to supply an additional 7,000 troops to the alliance, but only once the cessation of Polish-Swedish hostilities near his territories enabled him to do so. Thus a treaty was concluded under which "the King [Frederick I] declares himself ready to enter into the Grand Alliance of September 7th 1701" (LOEWE, 1923: 25). Perhaps most significantly for Frederick's aim of constructing his royal status, the Emperor pledged "not to conclude peace with Spain and France without the King being admitted as a principal participant and without both crowns granting him the honours due to him" (LOEWE, 1923: 25).

With this Frederick had signed two agreements with the members of the Grand Alliance, under which they pledged to ensure Frederick was accepted as king by France and Spain at the peace congress and in the treaties that would end the War of the Spanish Succession. This went further than the vague assertions of the 1700 Krontraktat, which merely stated that the Emperor would do his utmost to ensure foreign powers accepted Frederick as king. The treaties of December 1701 and 1702 by contrast contained concrete mechanisms for ensuring the full recognition and appropriate ceremonial treatment of the King in Prussia by the Bourbon crowns. By tying recognition to the peace negotiations, it was ensured that Frederick, or, as it was to be, his successor, must be recognised as sovereign King in Prussia to conclude the War of the Spanish Succession. Historians have accordingly viewed the Accession Treaty

[38] Declaration of War, 27.11.1702 GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 63, Nr. 777.

positively, with Arnold Berney praising it "as a valuable addition to the Krontraktat and in itself a success of Prussian politics" (BERNEY, 1927: 42). Several other historians have also deemed the Accession Treaty as a political victory for Frederick I (FECKL, 1979: 51; PLASSMANN, 2002: 241; KAUER, 1999: 33-34; GÖSE, 2012: 262).

Frederick was now fully committed to the anti-Bourbon Grand Alliance. The combination of the *Krontraktat* obligations, the Accession treaties to the Grand Alliance of 1701 and 1702, Frederick's own matricular obligations to the imperial army after the declaration of Reichskrieg in September 1702, and not least Frederick's own declaration of war against France obliged him to commit considerable numbers of troops to the field. 17,000 Prussian troops were now operating on the allied side (GÖSE, 2012: 263). In the following campaign of 1703 they would besiege and conquer Bourbon strongholds, such as Guelders (which would remain in Prussian possession), Rheinsberg and Bonn, as well as facing Franco-Bavarian troops at the first battle of Höchstädt (JANY, 1967: 444-463). Yet significantly, it was under all of these agreements in their totality, concluded between November 1700 and December 1702, that Frederick fully resolved to support Habsburg claims to the Spanish monarchy through military means, and thus committed himself against Philip V. It was not the Krontraktat alone, and this was evidenced by the fact that Frederick had essentially been able to deny the Emperor the use of any Prussian troops until the campaign of 1703, for it was only at this point that they joined up with imperial forces, having up until that point merely engaged in actions deemed strategically imperative for Prussian security (PLASSMANN, 2002: 255).

Whilst from 1702 relations between the King in Prussia and the Bourbon monarchs were marked primarily by battlefield encounters and a lack of diplomatic representation, negotiations with France continued through an array of informal channels. The French persistently attempted to detach Frederick from the Grand Alliance by offering him a range of incentives, whilst Frederick utilised them, leaking news of them to negotiate for concessions from his allies, whilst remaining committed to the Grand Alliance (FREY, 1975: 94-105; FREY, 1978: 16; NAUJOKAT, 1999: 163-177; HASSINGER, 1943: 43-68; NAUJOKAT, 1999).

Charles III as Spanish monarch

Whilst the Prussian declaration of war against France marked the final step in Prussia's political and military stance towards the Bourbon monarchies, Frederick's ceremonial approach was concluded by the events of 1703. In September of that year, at a ceremony in Vienna, Leopold I proclaimed his younger son, Archduke Charles, as King Charles III of Spain.[39] Upon the instructions of his king, Bartholdi, the Prussian envoy in Vienna, took an audience with Charles III whereby he congratulated him on his proclamation as king.[40] Unlike certain other diplomatic representatives who avoided such an audience, Frederick thus immediately displayed his symbolic recognition of the Habsburg claimant to the Spanish throne.[41]

Charles III now set off to claim his Spanish kingdom, departing from Vienna and travelling to the Iberian Peninsula over the Autumn and Winter of 1703/1704 (LANDAU, 1889: 149-177). His journey took him from Vienna to Prague, then across Germany before making his way to the Netherlands, where he was transported first to England and then to Portugal by English and Dutch ships (LÜNIG, 1719: 116, 207).[42] Whilst crossing the Empire, Charles passed through numerous Prussian towns, including Halle, Aschersleben, Halberstadt, Soest, Unna, Duisburg, Wesel, and Xanten where he was lodged and supplied.[43] Indeed, Frederick knew the new Spanish king would cross his territories, and so repeatedly requested the details of his route so that he could make preparations and dispatch representatives to greet him.[44] Accordingly, various Prussian ministers were given the task of meeting King Charles III along his route and paying their respects on behalf of Frederick I.[45] Charles was additionally greeted with a celebratory triple salvo and other ceremonial honours from the populaces of the Prussian towns he passed through.[46] The ceremonies that awaited Charles in the Prussian towns were admittedly less elaborate than those performed for him in London,

[39] *Außführliche Relation* (1703), Wien: Schönwetter; *Theatrum Europaeum* (1717). (Vol. 16), Frankfurt: Merian, pp.182-192.
[40] Bartholdi reports, 12.09.1703 and 15.09.1703, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 11, Nr. 9166; *Theatrum Europaeum* (1717). (Vol. 16), Frankfurt: Merian, p.190.
[41] Bartholdi report, 12.09.1703, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 11, Nr. 9166; *Theatrum Europaeum* (1717). (Vol. 16), Frankfurt: Merian, pp.190.
[42] *Diarium* (1703). Wien: Schönwetter; *Fernere Fortsetzung* (1704). Wien: Schönwetter.
[43] *Diarium* (1703). Wien: Schönwetter.
[44] Multiple letters in GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 11, Nr. 9166.
[45] *Diarium* (1703). Wien: Schönwetter; *Fernere Fortsetzung* (1704). Wien: Schönwetter.
[46] *Diarium* (1703). Wien: Schönwetter.

Lisbon or Düsseldorf (LÜNIG, 1719: 207-209).[47] However, this can be attributed to the fact that these were cities of princely residence, where the ruler was present, and that they were equipped for the staging of such festivities. Frederick himself did not undertake the journey from his residence of Berlin-Cölln to come and meet Charles on his route, however this was not uncommon due to the ceremonial difficulties engendered by early modern monarchical meetings (PAULMANN, 2000: 30-55). Frederick's avoidance of a personal meeting also circumvented difficulties over titles. Charles III demanded the title of "majesty", and while Frederick instructed his representatives to reciprocally obtain this form of address from the Habsburgs, it proved difficult for the Prussian king to consistently receive it from them (WADDINGTON, 1888: 368; GÖSE, 2012: 269; BERNEY, 1927: 45, 145, 164; DAUSER, 2017: 113-115, 225-226).[48] These marks of recognition were significant in themselves, but when contrasted against the complete lack of Prussian ceremonial recognition of Philip V, they now firmly demonstrated Frederick's allegiances in the War of the Spanish Succession.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the Prussian reaction to Philip V's accession was to side with his adversary; symbolically recognising the Habsburg claimant Charles III and militarily supporting him against the Bourbon crowns. Yet, this did not come about immediately after the proclamation of Philip as king, despite Frederick's obligations under the *Krontraktat*. Frederick utilised the period between November 1700 and December 1702 to attempt to gain widespread acceptance of his royal title (even from the Bourbons) and to extract the highest possible price from the Habsburgs for the commitment to their cause. The *Krontraktat* was accordingly not the determining factor in governing the Prussian reaction to Philip V. The negotiations between 1700 and 1702 culminated in agreements with the Grand Alliance which ensured that the royal status of the Prussian king would be recognised by the kings France and Spain the conclusion of the War of the Spanish Succession. Frederick I died in February 1713 and so it was the royal dignity of his son, Frederick William I, that was recognised in the Utrecht treaty signed

[47] Bonet Report, 11.01.1704, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 11, Nr. 9167; Diarium, Wien, 1703; *Fernere Fortsetzung* (1704). Wien: Schönwetter.
[48] Bartholdi, 01.08.1705 & Ilgen Rescript, 11.08.1705, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 11 Akten, Nr. 9167.

in April 1713. After Charles III's unsuccessful effort to claim the Spanish monarchy and Charles III's election as Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick William I now recognised Philip V's accession to the Spanish crown, while the Bourbon monarchs stated that they recognised the King in Prussia as a king, and pledged to grant him all attached honours, including the title of majesty.[49]

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Außführliche Relation Alles dessen/ was sich sowohl bey der Von Ihrer Römisch=Käyserlichen Und Römisch=Königlichen Majest. An des Ertz=Hertzogen Carls Durchleucht Beschehenen Cession und Declaration wegern der Succession zur Spanischen Monarchie [...] sich zugetragen. (1703). Wien: Schönwetter.

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GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 11, Nr. 9166

GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 11, Nr. 9167

GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 132, Nr. 1.

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[49] Treaty printed in Printed in *Theatrum Europaeum* (1734). (Vol. 20), Frankfurt: Weyland, pp.268-272.

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