

Reflections On Universal Monarchy In Europe

I

It is legitimate to ask whether, given the present state of Europe, it might happen that one nation could acquire a permanent superiority over the others, as the Romans did.

I believe that such a thing has become completely impossible, for the following reasons.

New discoveries in the art of war have equalized the forces of all individuals and consequently those of all nations.

International law has changed and, because of the laws now in force, war is conducted in such a way that it ruins first and foremost those who initially have the greatest advantages.

Formerly, it was the practice to destroy the towns one had taken, to sell the lands one had conquered, and (this fact had even wider implications) to sell the inhabitants. The sacking of a town provided pay for an army and a successfully conducted campaign enriched a conqueror. Nowadays such barbarities are rightly regarded with horror, and military powers now bankrupt themselves in order to capture fortified towns that then surrender, which are not destroyed and which, more often than not, are given back.

In their triumphal processions, the Romans carried all the wealth of the nation they had conquered. Today, victory brings only sterile laurels.

When a monarch sends an army into an enemy country, he sends with it a portion of his wealth so that it can obtain supplies: thus he in fact enriches the country he set out to conquer, and very often he thus enables it to drive him out.

Luxury has increased, and consequently our present-day armies have needs that they ought not to have. The main cause of Holland's ability to wage war on such a large scale was the commerce she was able to conduct as a result of the provisioning her armies, those of her allies and even those of her enemies.

Today war is waged using such a large number of soldiers that, if a nation were to wage war continuously, it would inevitably become bankrupt.

In the past, rulers sought armies in order to lead them to fight in another country. Now they seek countries into which they can lead their armies.

II

In addition, there are particular reasons why no one European country can be permanently prosperous, and why there are continual fluctuations in political power in Europe, whereas political power is, so to speak, permanent in other parts of the world.

At present, Europe conducts all the commerce and is responsible for all the shipping of the whole world. Now, depending on the extent to which a state takes part in this shipping and commerce, its power increases or diminishes accordingly. But since it is in the nature of such things to change continuously and to depend on many factors, especially on the wisdom of each government, it may happen that a state which appears to be victorious in its foreign policy can become bankrupt, while states that remain neutral increase their strength; or that nations previously conquered regain theirs; and decadence begins especially at the time of the greatest successes since these cannot be obtained nor maintained except by violent means.

It is a well-known peculiarity of nations that practice commerce and industry that they are limited by their very prosperity. If there is a large amount of gold and silver in a country, this makes all prices rise; the artisans demand higher rewards for the luxuries they produce, and other nations can sell their goods at a lower price.

In former times, a poor nation was in an advantageous position; here are the reasons.

In time of war armies were composed only of the citizens of each town. Thus the armies of rich towns were made up of men whose courage was diminished by ease, idleness and pleasure-seeking. Consequently, they were often destroyed by the armies of their neighbors who, being accustomed to a harder and more demanding life, were more suited to the kind of war and to the kind of military exercises that were then practiced. But nowadays the situation is different since present-day armies, which are composed of the lowest part of every nation, are all equal with respect to luxury, since military exercises no longer demand the same strength and the same cunning as before, and since it is now easier to form permanent armies.

Often a poor nation posed a considerable threat to all other nations because it was warlike, and because it was able to muster instantly a full-strength army that could then threaten nations whose strength lay primarily in the respect in which they were held by other nations. But nowadays all civilized nations are members of a sort of great republic. Thus power depends on wealth, and there is no poor nation that enjoys advantages which a rich nation cannot also almost always obtain.

But this wealth fluctuates and consequently so does the power that depends on it. Thus whatever military success a conquering nation may enjoy, that very success produces a sort of reaction that eventually reduces it to its former state.

III

History shows that it was not wars that brought about the great changes Europe has seen in the last four hundred years, but rather royal marriages, rights of succession, treaties and edicts. Indeed, it is as a result of civil rather than military factors that Europe changes and has changed.

IV

Many commentators have noted that fewer lives are lost in battle now than in the past, and that, as a result, war has become less decisive. Here is an explanation which may seem somewhat far-fetched: the infantry no longer carries defensive weapons, whereas in the past they had such cumbersome ones that when their army was defeated, they immediately abandoned them in order to escape. That is the reason why, in the history books of the past, we read of armies fleeing and not of armies retreating.

During the course of a battle, those who were lightly armed were likely to be butchered by those who were heavily armed, but in defeat, those who were heavily armed were exterminated by those who were lightly armed.

V

Those political plans which need considerable time to be carried out hardly ever succeed. Changes of fortune, the inconstancy of people's minds, the fluctuations of passion, continual changes in circumstances and, in general, differing causes create all kinds of obstacles.

One of the main disadvantages of monarchical regimes is that those who govern are motivated in turn by the desire for public good and by the desire for private gain. The interests of the favorite, of the principal minister, then of the King predominate one after the other.

Moreover, since it takes longer now than in the past to make territorial gains, these have become relatively more difficult to achieve.

VI

It is clear that the political situation in Europe is more stable than it used to be. Philip III of Spain was unsuccessful in twenty-five campaigns in his wars against France, but Spain lost, as a result, only a small piece of a remote province. The smallest nation in Europe at that time was able to conduct a war against Spain for fifty years with similar success. And in our own times, a monarch who experienced the cruelest defeats possible, at Blenheim, Turin, Ramillies, Barcelona, Oudenarde and Lille, was nevertheless able to face the continual successes of his enemies without his greatness being significantly diminished.

There is no parallel in antiquity to a frontier like the one Louis XIV created along the Flemish border, composed of three lines of fortified towns designed to protect the most exposed part of his kingdom.

VII

Nowadays imitation is the key to success. If Maurice of Nassau learns the art of siege, we quickly learn it too. If Coehoorn puts new techniques into practice, we do the same thing. If a nation starts to use a new type of arm, all the other nations quickly adopt it. If a state increases the size of its army, or imposes a new tax, other states see this as an indication that they must do the same. Similarly, when Louis XIV raises loans from his subjects, the English and the Dutch borrow from theirs.

In ancient Persia, it took a very long time for the court to learn that Tissaphernes had rebelled. Polybius states that the Kings did not know if the government of Rome was aristocratic or popular; and when Rome ruled the world, Pharnaces offered his daughter in marriage to Caesar, but he did not know if the Romans could have barbarians as wives or if they could have several barbarian wives.

VIII

Large empires have always been characteristic of Asia, whereas in Europe they have never managed to survive. This is because the Asia that we know has large plains and is divided geographically into larger units by its mountains and its seas; and since Asia is more southerly than Europe, the rivers are smaller and thus form smaller barriers.

A large empire necessarily requires that the ruler should have despotic authority; that decisions be made promptly to compensate for the distances over which they must be conveyed; that fear must be used to prevent a distant governor or magistrate from becoming negligent; that law must originate from one person, that is to say it must be constantly changing, since the larger a state is, the more unexpected events occur.

If authority were not despotic, such monarchies would be dismembered; the different peoples composing the state would tire of a rule that they would consider to be alien, and would begin to live under their own laws. Political power will always be despotic in Asia, because, if the extreme servitude were relaxed, there would at once be a division of power that would be contrary to the nature of the country.

In Europe, the natural divisions are such that they form several moderately-sized states in which the maintenance of authority is not incompatible with the rule of law. Indeed, such a rule is so conducive to the maintenance of authority that without it, the state becomes decadent and inferior to all the others.

It is this factor that forms, from age to age and in perpetuity a spirit of liberty that makes it very difficult for a foreign power to subjugate any part except by law or in the hope of commercial advantage.

In Asia, on the contrary, there is a spirit of servitude that has always been there; and in none of the histories of that continent is it possible to find a single action that indicates a free soul.

IX

Since the destruction of the Roman empire in the West, there have been several occasions when Europe seemed destined to be governed by a single person once more.

X

After the French had subjugated several long-established barbarian nations, Charlemagne founded a large empire; but this very action divided Europe up into a great number of sovereign states.

When the barbarians established themselves in Europe, each leader founded a kingdom, that is, a separate fief, which had power over several subordinate fiefs. The army of these conquerors was governed on the model of the government of their country, and the conquered territory was governed on the model of the government of their army.

The reason why they established this sort of government is that they knew of no other, and if by chance a Gothic or Germanic ruler of that day had taken it into his head to talk of arbitrary power or supreme authority or power without limits, he would have been mocked by his whole army.

Now, for the reasons which we have mentioned, a large empire where the ruler did not have absolute power would necessarily become divided, either because the provincial governors did not obey, or because, in order to make them obey, it was necessary to divide the empire up into several kingdoms.

This is the origin of the kingdoms of France, Italy, Germany and Aquitaine, and of all the territorial divisions that took place at the time.

When titles and fiefs were established in perpetuity, it became impossible for the more powerful rulers to enlarge their territory through their vassals, for these would come to the aid of their overlord only in order to defend themselves, and conquer only in order to obtain a share of the conquered territory.

XI

The Normans, having made themselves masters of the sea, then penetrated inland along the river estuaries; and although they did not conquer Europe, they almost annihilated it.

They were given the finest province of western France; their duke William conquered England, which became the center of power of the Norman monarchy, then of the proud Plantagenets who followed them.

The kings of England soon became the most powerful rulers of the age: they held the finest provinces in France, and because they were victorious, they imagined they could conquer the remaining provinces.

We must not judge the relative power of the different states of Europe in the past by the power they have nowadays: it was not strictly speaking the size and wealth of a kingdom which determined its greatness but the size of the ruler's personal domain. The kings of England, who enjoyed very large revenues, accomplished great things, while the kings of France, who had more powerful vassals, were long harassed rather than helped by them.

When an army made a conquest, the conquered territory was shared between it and the feudal overlords; but the longer the period of time which had elapsed since the conquest, the more the power of the kings had been diminished by usurpations, gifts and rewards; and since the Normans were the last conquerors, William, who retained all his old domains as well as acquiring some by the new division of power, was the richest ruler in Europe.

But when we in France realized that it was a question of wearing down the English rather than of conquering them, when we gave ourselves time to profit from their internal division, when we began to doubt the value of battles, to understand that our infantry was weak and that we would have to fight hard, our fortunes changed as did our tactics; and since we were always near while they were distant, they were soon confined to their island and, realizing the uselessness of their former ambitions, they thought only of enjoying the prosperity they always could have had but which they had not yet known.

XII

There was a time when it would not have been impossible for the Popes to become the sole monarchs of Europe.

I admit that it was a most unlikely combination of circumstances that allowed the pontiffs, who were not even sovereigns in Rome, to acquire worldly power in addition to their spiritual power, and that removed from Italy both the Eastern and Western emperors.

In order to become masters of Rome, they made it free, profiting from the war that some Eastern emperors were conducting against icons to remove it from its former allegiance.

Charlemagne had taken Lombardy, to which the Eastern emperors had claims, and had given sovereignty over these conquered lands to the Papacy, which was a natural enemy of the Eastern emperors, in order to create a barrier against the latter.

It was also fortunate for Rome that the seat of the Western Empire was moved to the German kingdom and that the kingdom of Italy remained joined to it. The Emperors were soon seen as foreigners by the Italians, and the Papacy was thus able to take up the defense of Italy against invasions by these foreigners.

Other circumstances conspired to extend the power of the Papacy in all directions: the fear of excommunication, the weakness of great princes, the proliferation of small princes, and the need which Europe often had of being united under a single leader.

At the papal court, there was less ignorance than anywhere else; and as the papal judgments were equitable, all rulers came to be judged in Rome, such as Dejoces, of whom we read that he obtained sovereignty over the Medes by papal judgment.

But the schisms (which lasted so long, and in which the Papacy seemed to be making war against itself and degrading itself because of the ambition of the contestants, whose only aim seemed to be staying in power) made rulers open their eyes, examine the nature of the power of the Papacy and limit it where it could be limited.

XIII

It seems, to judge by the accounts of certain monks who were sent by Innocent IV in the middle of the thirteenth century to visit the sons of Gengis Khan, that it was feared in those times that Europe would be conquered by the Tartars. These hordes had conquered the Orient, and then penetrated into Russia, Hungary and Poland, where they had done untold harm.

One of the laws of Gengis Khan ordered the Tartars to conquer the whole world. They always had five large armies ready for war; they kept up their military expeditions for twenty-five or thirty years; sometimes they besieged a town for ten or twelve years, and if they ran short of supplies, they put to death a proportion of their own men so as to feed those who remained; they always sent an advance guard to kill all the men it met; the nations which resisted them were exterminated and those which capitulated were enslaved; they picked out the artisans and used them for their military engineering, and they made the rest into a militia which was exposed to the worst dangers; they employed every known ruse to rid themselves of the rulers and nobility of the countries they wished to conquer; in short their system was quite well thought-out: they never pardoned deserters or soldiers who indulged in pillage before the enemy was totally defeated; and contrary to the usual custom of the time, their leaders concentrated on directing the action and never fought personally. They had good defensive and offensive weapons, they had the same speed, the same lightness, the same talent for ravaging a country and for avoiding the armies which were defending it, as the present-day Tartars have; in short, they were terrifyingly effective in an age where there were few well-organized armies.

But since Europe was covered with castles and fortified towns, the Tartars failed to make any significant progress; and having quarreled among themselves they were about to be exterminated by the Russians. Mahomet II gave them the Crimea, where they had to be content with ravaging their neighbors, whom they still ravage today.

XIV

Once the Turks had conquered the Orient, they menaced the West; but fortunately, instead of continuing their thrust by attacking Southern Europe, where they could have endangered the continent, they attacked Northern Europe, which could not be taken by their methods.

All the histories show that it is very difficult for Southern nations to conquer Northern ones. Roman history above all demonstrates this fact, for the Romans were always active in fighting Southern nations and in pushing them beyond the Danube and the Rhine.

The Southern nations' first enemy was the climate of the North: horses cannot survive there and the men, overwhelmed with discomfort, and thinking only of preserving their lives, can no longer think of glorious actions.

Besides these general reasons, there are particular ones which prevent the Turks from being able to make conquest in the North: they drink only water; they have religious customs and fasts which prevent them from undertaking long campaigns and which cannot be practiced in a cold climate.

Thus the Arabs conquered only southerly states.

XV

As the government of the Goths gradually became weaker, either as a result of the fact that all governments necessarily become corrupt, or through the establishment of permanent armies, feudal authority was gradually replaced in Europe by sovereign authority. From then on, the more independent rulers kept all they had acquired either by conquest, or by acts of disloyalty, or by marriage. The kings of France had the good fortune to inherit the principal fiefs; Castille and Aragon united their two kingdoms, and the House of Austria used the Empire in order to confiscate certain large provinces for itself.

The fortune of the House of Austria became prodigious. Charles V succeeded to Burgundy, Castille and Aragon; he became Emperor; the boundaries of the known world receded and a New World appeared under its sway, thus creating a new form of greatness.

But France everywhere separated Charles V's states and, being in the middle of Europe, was its heart not to say its head; it was the rallying point of all the rulers who wanted to defend their declining political freedom.

Francis I, who did not have the numerous provinces acquired since his time by the French crown, and who was the victim of a misfortune which cost him everything, even his personal liberty, nevertheless continued to be Charles's perpetual rival; and [although in his kingdom his power was limited by law,] it was not thereby weakened because arbitrary power makes greater, but less durable efforts.

XVI

The factor that most intimidated Europe was a new kind of power that seemed to be accruing to the House of Austria; she imported such prodigious quantities of gold and silver from the New World that the amounts that had previously been mined in Europe seemed minute in comparison.

But -- and this is what no one could have foreseen -- the House of Austria was unsuccessful almost everywhere because of its poverty. Philip II, who succeeded Charles V, had to declare himself bankrupt, as everyone knows, and there has been scarcely any ruler who has had more difficulties with his army: his badly-paid troops were always fractious, insubordinate and rebellious.

From then on, the Spanish monarchy was in a continual state of decline: and this is because there was an inherent physical defect in the nature of its riches, which made them useless and which became more and more marked.

Everyone knows that gold and silver are only the appearance or the sign of wealth. Since such signs are very durable and are not, by their very nature, destroyed by use, the more common they become, the more they lose their value, because they represent less.

The misfortune of the Spanish was that, because they conquered Mexico and Peru, they ceased to cultivate their natural wealth in order to obtain these signs of wealth that become debased by their very nature.

When Spain was making its conquests, gold and silver were very rare in Europe; and when she suddenly acquired an enormous quantity of these metals, she developed ambitions that she had never had before. However, the wealth that she obtained from the conquered territories was much less than the quantity that actually lay buried in the mines. The Indians hid some of it; moreover, since they used gold and silver only to decorate their temples and royal palaces, they did not seek precious metals with the same lust as we do; and they did not have the technique of extracting metal from all types of mine, but only from those where the extraction is performed by fire: they did not know how to use mercury for this purpose and perhaps had not even discovered mercury.

Nevertheless, there was soon double the quantity of silver in Europe, and the effect of this was to double the price of everything on the market.

The Spanish delved deeper in their mines, they hollowed out the mountains, and invented machines to conduct water, to crush the ore and to extract the precious metal; and since they cared nothing for the lives of the Indians, they forced them to work excessively. Soon the quantity of silver in Europe again doubled, and Spain's profits were again halved, for each year she imported the same quantity of precious metal, but it had become worth only half its previous value.

The quantity of silver was doubled in twice the length of time, and the profit again was halved.

In fact it was more than halved.

The reason for this was that mining the gold, extracting it by the correct processes, and transporting it to Europe involved a certain outlay, say one sixty-fourth of its value. When the quantity of silver in Europe doubled and when, consequently, it was worth only half as much as before, the outlay represented two sixty-fourths. Thus the fleets which each time brought the same quantity of precious metal to Spain brought something which was really worth only half as much as before and which cost twice as much to produce.

If we follow this phenomenon from one halving of the value of precious metal to the next, we will see the gradual progression that brought about a situation in which Spain's wealth failed to bring her any permanent advantages.

The mines of South America have been worked for about two hundred years. Let us suppose that the quantity of gold and silver to be found today in those parts of the world where commerce is practiced is, compared to the quantity to be found before the discovery of South American gold and silver, thirty-two to one: that is to say that there has been a fivefold increase; in another two hundred years the proportion will be sixty-four to one, that is, the quantity will be doubled again; now at present fifty hundredweight of gold ore yield four, five or six ounces of gold; when they yield only two ounces, the producer merely covers his costs; in two hundred years, when the yield will only be four ounces, the producer will again merely cover his costs; there will thus be little profit in gold-mining.

If new mines are discovered which are so rich that they will enable the producer to make a greater profit, this very richness will soon diminish the profit.

It may be argued that the mines of Germany and Hungary, where the costs of extraction are barely covered, are still useful in that, since they are situated in the country that exploits them, they employ several thousand men who consume surplus agricultural production and that they are thus a kind of national manufacturing industry.

The difference is that the mines of Germany and Hungary stimulate agriculture, whereas those run by the Spanish destroy it.

The South American colonies, and Spain, are two entities with the same ruler, but the South American colonies are the principal country and Spain is secondary. The political policies of Spain attempt in vain to subordinate the principal country to the secondary country, for the South American colonies always draw Spain towards them.

Out of fifty million pounds sterling worth of goods which are sent to South America each year, Spain supplies only two and a half million: South America thus has a turnover of fifty million while Spain has a turnover of two and a half million.

A source of wealth that is merely accidental, which does not depend on the industriousness of a nation, or on the size of its population, nor on its agriculture, is an unsatisfactory source of wealth. The King of Spain, who receives large sums of money from the customs post at Cadiz is thus in a sense a wealthy private citizen in a very poor country.

The whole process is independent of the prosperity of his kingdom; it takes place between him and a group of foreigners: his own subjects have hardly any role to play in it.

If some of the provinces of Castille were to provide him with as much as the customs post at Cadiz yields, then his power would be much greater, his wealth would be the result of the wealth of the country, these provinces would give life to all the others and all would be more able to bear their burden of taxation.

At present the King of Spain has a great sum of money; but he could have a great nation.

XVII

The enemies of a great monarch who reigned recently have often, motivated by their own fears more than by reason, accused him of having planned a universal monarchy and of having put the project into action. If he had succeeded, nothing would have been more harmful to Europe, to his own nation, to himself and to the House of Bourbon. Heaven, which knows what is really advantageous to rulers, helped him more by allowing him to be defeated in battle than it would have done by allowing him to win; and instead of making him the only monarch of all Europe, it favored him by making him the most powerful.

Had he won the famous battle in which he was first defeated, however, the project would not have been completed, but only just begun; he would have had to stretch even further the frontiers defended by his troops. Germany, which up to then had so to speak taken part in the war only by supplying mercenaries, would then have entered it in

defense of its own interests; the North would have declared war on him; the neutral powers would have taken sides, and his allies would have reversed their allegiance.

The character of the French is such that when they are in a foreign country, they think only of what they have left behind; when they leave France on a military expedition, they see glory as the ultimate good and, when they are abroad, they see it as an obstacle to their returning home; they become hated abroad as a result of their good qualities, because these qualities are always accompanied by scorn; they can brave danger and wounds, but they cannot face losing their pleasures; they know how to achieve military success but not how to profit from it; when they are defeated, they abandon everything rather than losing only what they have to lose; they always do very well half of what is necessary, and they sometimes do the other half very badly; they are incorrigibly light-hearted, and forget they have lost a battle as soon as they have sung a satirical song about the general involved. In short they would never have pursued the conquest of Europe to its end, because if such an enterprise fails in one place, it will fail everywhere, or if it fails at one time, it will fail forever.

XVIII

Europe has become one nation composed of many nations; France and England need the wealth of Poland and Muscovy, just as each of their provinces needs the others; a state may imagine it will increase its power by ruining that of its neighbor, but in fact it usually declines if its neighbor does.

XIX

The true power of a ruler does not so much lie in his ability to make conquests, but in his ability to ward off attacks and, so to speak, in his immutability; when a monarchy increases in size, the result is to make its enemies aware of new opportunities of attacking it.

Look, for instance, at the new neighbors Muscovy has just given herself -- she now shares frontiers with the Turks, the Persians, the Chinese and the Japanese, instead of being fortunate enough to be cut off from them by huge deserts; the result is that now she has conquered these new territories, she no longer has sufficient revenues to maintain them.

XX

If a state is to enjoy the greatest power it is capable of, its size must be such that there is a relation between the speed with which its enemies can attack a part of it and the promptness with which it can react to repel such an enterprise. Since the invader may initially appear anywhere, the defending army must likewise be able to go anywhere, so the state must be of a moderate size, suited to the speed with which nature has endowed man for moving from one place to another.

France and Spain are exactly the right size: they are able to show their strength quickly at the relevant place, and their armies can move there almost immediately, passing swiftly from one frontier to another. The frontier regions have nothing to fear from any military incursion that lasts more than a few days.

France is fortunate in having her capital closer to certain frontiers than to others, exactly in proportion to their weakness, and the vigilance of the monarch is related to the degree of vulnerability of each part.

XXI

But when a vast country, such as Persia, is attacked, it takes several months for its widely-scattered troops to gather, and forced marches, which can be used for a week or so, cannot be used over such a long period. If an army that is defending a frontier is defeated, it is inevitably dispersed, because it has no safe place to retreat to; the victorious army, finding no resistance, advances swiftly, and already threatens the capital and lays siege to it, almost before the provincial governors can be asked to send help. Those who foresee the possibility of the overthrow of the present regime help to bring it about by not carrying out orders because, if they remain faithful only through fear of punishment, they will no longer be faithful when the threat of punishment has receded. They work for their private advantage, the empire disintegrates, the capital is taken, and the conqueror fights the provincial governors for control of the provinces.

XXII

China, like Persia, is a vast country, and, since it is very densely populated, if the rice harvest fails, gangs of three, four or five bandits form in many places in different provinces, and live by pillage; most of them are exterminated immediately, and some grow bigger but are still exterminated. But, since there is such a large number of provinces and since they are so distant from the capital, it can happen that one gang can prosper; it then stays in existence, grows stronger, becomes a proper army, and makes straight for the capital: its leader then mounts the throne.

XXIII

In Louis XIV's last war, when our armies and those of the enemy were in Spain, far from their own country, something nearly happened which is almost unheard of in Europe, namely that the two military leaders reached an understanding between themselves and were on the point of out-manoeuvring all the monarchs of Europe and of stunning them by their sheer audacity and by the originality of their plans.

XXIV

Given that huge conquests are so difficult, so useless, and so dangerous, how should one view the disease of our own age, namely the fact that every state maintains a disproportionately large army; this disease has its crises and it is necessarily contagious,

since as soon as one state increases what it likes to call its forces, the others immediately increase theirs, so that nothing is achieved except bankruptcy on both sides. Each monarch keeps in a state of readiness all the troops he would need if the nation were about to be exterminated, and we call this situation of all against all peace. Thus Europe is bankrupt to such an extent that, if three private individuals were in the same situation as the three most opulent European nations, they would be incapable of making ends meet. Thus we are poor, even though we have the wealth and trade of the whole world and soon, because we have so many soldiers, we will have only soldiers and we will be like Tartars.

The great monarchies, not satisfied with buying troops from the smaller ones, seek to buy alliances wherever they can, the outcome almost always being that they squander their money.

The result of this situation is that taxes are constantly being increased and that states do not rely simply on their revenue to make war: they use their capital, which means that any future reforms are doomed to failure. It is unknown for states to mortgage themselves even in time of peace, thus employing emergency measures that ruin them, measures that even a young profligate of good family would hardly be able to imagine employing to his own advantage.

XXV

The regimes of Oriental monarchs are remarkable in that they raise nowadays only the same taxes as those that were raised by the founder of their monarchy; they ask of their people only what their fathers told their children they used to have to pay. Since they enjoy more revenues than they actually need, many oriental monarchs issue only edicts which exempt one province of their empire from paying tax each year. Their will is usually manifested through acts of generosity; but the edicts of European rulers are usually seen as damaging, even before their consequences have been worked out in detail, because these edicts always refer to the needs of the state and never to our own.

Oriental monarchs are rich because their expenditure remains constant: it never increases, because they do not innovate, or if they do, they prepare their plans a long time in advance; this slowness is admirable since it leads to promptness in carrying out designs; thus the harm is quickly forgotten and the good remains for a long time; the monarchs think they have done well if they preserve the status quo; they spend only on projects the benefit of which is foreseeable, and they spend nothing on abortive projects. In brief, those who govern the state do not exploit it because they do not exploit themselves.

It is clear from what I have just said that I am not talking about any particular European state but that I am making remarks that are applicable to all.

Iliacos intra muros peccatur et extra.