

The Accidental Disappearance of the Dynastic Succession Crisis

The causes of dynastic succession crises in early modern Europe

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Introduction

The period between 1500 and 1800 is commonly seen as the era of the rise of the modern state. Still, the early modern European states were distinct from both the medieval states, which were extremely decentralized systems of feudal ties, and the truly modern nation-state.¹ One characteristic of these early modern states was that they suffered from chronic instability. They were composite states that consisted of a complex of different peoples and territories, bound together by laws and customs specifying their rights and obligations and divided by distinctive interests and identities.² Compared to modern states the ability to enforce laws and extract taxes from the population was limited. Instead, they had to rely largely on indirect rule through local elites who often followed their own interests and agendas.³

An important characteristic of the early modern state was the ambiguity in being simultaneously the personal property of a monarch and an autonomous entity with the monarch merely fulfilling the highest office, with consent of the state elites.⁴ Because of this ambiguity, dynastic successions entailed the risk of increased instability. Throughout this period there seemed to be a consensus amongst contemporaries that a structured and legal royal succession mattered. The rule of kings was certainly not simply a matter of seizing power. Instead, royal power was based on the concept of legitimacy. The right to rule could also be derived from a 'right of conquest' but even then, some sort of legal line to the preceding monarch was a requirement to rule in the vast majority of countries.

There was a considerable difference between theory and practice. Even if a ruler might claim his rule was based on birthright, this was not necessarily acknowledged by his subjects.⁵ Conversely, the claim of some subjects, usually the nobility or the gentry, that the monarch should only rule with their consent, could only sporadically be enforced. What the monarch and monarchy really meant, was constantly being redefined and contested between kings, political thinkers and various stakeholders.

Dynastic succession crises were a frequently recurring phenomenon in the early modern state. A succession crisis would be one of the greatest conflicts and threats to the state system that could occur in early modern states, besides general popular risings caused by famines or over-taxation.⁶ According to Daniel Nexton, dynastic successions would only be unproblematic: 'if a ruler lived long enough to produce a competent male heir old enough

¹ Daniel H. Nexton, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change* (Princeton/Woodstock 2009) 6.

² *Ibidem*.

³ *Ibidem*, 7.

⁴ Herbert H. Rowen, *The King's State, Proprietary Dynasticism in Early Modern France* (New Brunswick, New Jersey 1980) 1.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 1, 2.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

to assume the reigns of power'.⁷ This gives us at least part of an explanation why succession crises could happen, but it probably is not a sufficient explanation. There are examples of succession crises where there seemingly was a competent adult male heir, such as the succession of Henry III by Henry IV in France and James I by Charles in England. There are also examples of the absence of a adult male heir where a crisis did not occur, such as the succession of the stadtholders William IV by William V and that of William III by Anne in England.

Religion, or more precisely, religious differences, played an important role in the early modern state. Since the schism that emerged in the sixteenth century between Protestant and Catholic Europe, it was increasingly difficult for a ruler to rule a population whose religion he did not share, especially if he did not live in that country.⁸ Differences in religion could therefore become an important cause for the occurrence of succession crises, at least while the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism continued.

The aim of this thesis is to identify the causes of succession crises in early modern Europe by using the dynastic successions in three early modern states: England, France and the Dutch Republic as cases.

The definition of a succession

When trying to determine the causes of succession crises, it is important to first define what a succession is and what a crisis is. This is not immediately clear. A succession crisis obviously means there is a crisis involved with a dynastic succession, but it is far from simple to say exactly when a particular succession constitutes a crisis. Another problem is the timing of the succession crisis. Is a succession crisis something that happens before, during or after a succession?

All organizations that have a power structure need some kind of system for the transfer of power, which is known as the succession. 'Succession' can refer to both the transfer of personal property and to the transfer of political office. While in the dynastic successions of the early modern period these two meanings were often entwined, in this thesis the second meaning will be used. These successions were mostly based on heritage though they also contained at least some elements of election and appointment.⁹

Occasionally, monarchs in the early modern period tried to establish what Jack Goody calls *pre mortem* succession, meaning the monarch already picked his own successor and abdicated from the throne, before he died. This was more likely to happen when the

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Richard Bonney, *The European Dynastic States 1494-1660* (Oxford 1991) 526.

⁹ Jack Goody 'Introduction' in: Jack Goody ed., *Succession to High Office* (Cambridge 1966) 1-56, there 1, 4.

monarch wanted to divide his inheritance among multiple heirs.¹⁰ One example would be emperor Charles V, who abdicated in 1556 to let his brother Ferdinand succeed him as Holy Roman Emperor and his son Philip II as king of Spain. Another would be Philip V of Spain who abdicated in favour of his son Ferdinand VI in 1713. Some elements of this can also be found in the succession of Henry VII of England by Henry VIII in 1509.¹¹ Most commonly however, the succession happened after the death of the ruler. This often led to an uncertain period of *interregnum* before the new ruler was established. This uncertainty was perceived as dangerous to the state, because most people saw the presence of a monarchic ruler as a necessity for stability.¹²

Stakeholders

In a succession, only a small portion of the population was actually involved in the transference of the highest office. These *stakeholders* were in a position in society where they could influence the succession. They formed different social groups that performed different, often overlapping functions.¹³

In early modern Europe, the first of these groups consisted of the members of the 'high nobility', such as princes and dukes. They were often closely related to both the former and the next monarch. Frequently a special role existed for the eldest brother of the last monarch. The successor usually belonged to this social group too.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the European nobility went through dramatic political changes. As a result of the growing power of the state and the king, the nobility lost much of its special privileges. The nobles were no longer near equals to the king and lost the right to resolve personal differences by violence and to rebel against the king. On the other side the growing bureaucracy and expansive wars also meant there were increased opportunities for nobles to be employed by the state, making them less dependent on the income of their own estates. What they lost in independence, they generally gained in income and stability.¹⁴

Secondly, in many countries a legislative institution emerged that had to give at least formal support to the new monarch. In England for example, Parliament increasingly managed to exercise power over who could succeed. In the Dutch Republic, the stadtholders officially had to be appointed by the States-Provincial.

Thirdly, in many countries a bourgeois elite, or gentry, existed who were not part of the genuine nobility and could therefore not succeed to the highest office, but who could

¹⁰ Ibidem, 8.

¹¹ Mackie, J.D., *The Earlier Tudors, 1485-1558* (Oxford 1952, 1957) 231.

¹² Jack Goody 'Introduction', 10.

¹³ Ibidem, 1, 2, 11.

¹⁴ Jonathan Dewald, *The European Nobility 1400-1800* (Cambridge 1996) 147.

still exact a large influence on the succession due to their important position in the bureaucratic structure of the monarchy. In the Dutch Republic, they played a large role, especially because of the little power held by the nobility.

Both nobility and members of the bourgeoisie would often become courtiers. The court was an important focal point for political actions by the stakeholders. Through the court, a monarch was considered to manifest their power and legitimacy. Court culture first developed in Italy and Burgundy and in the sixteenth century spread out over much of the rest of Europe.¹⁵ Especially in France court culture became increasingly important, to reach its zenith under the rule Louis XIV. Court appointments were a common means through which members of the bourgeoisie would join the nobility, besides intermarriage.¹⁶

The definition of a crisis

There are three main characteristics that are often given of any crisis, which can also be applied to a succession crisis, namely that it is *unexpected*, that it creates *uncertainty* and that it is seen as a *threat to important goals*.¹⁷ In the context of a succession crisis this can be translated as follows: Firstly, there is a sudden 'vacancy of rule', usually caused by the sudden death of the ruling monarch, occasionally because a ruling monarch is dethroned or renounced. Secondly, there must be uncertainty as to who will have to rule next. This means there must be multiple viable options available as to who will succeed to those concerned with the succession. In other words, the succession must be contested and contemporaries must take this contender seriously. What matters most in this context is who the *stakeholders* think should succeed. What the general public thought about this, is of less interest since in most cases they could exercise little or no influence in the succession, even though at certain moments, usually during periods of economic and political crisis they could be an important factor, such as in the re-establishment of the stadtholderate in the 'rampjaar' (Year of Disaster) of 1672.¹⁸

Thirdly, the succession crisis will also be seen as a threat to important goals of the stakeholders, which in this period was mainly stability. In early modern Europe, stability was generally seen an important goal of both the monarchy and the state. The absence of a king was seen by contemporaries as a possible cause of civil or international war, and as such as the cause of death and famines. The politics of Henry VIII of England, for example, were for a large part influenced by his perceived need to strengthen the legitimacy of his rule and

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 123.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 19-21.

¹⁷ M. W. Seeger, T. L. Sellnow and R. R. Ulmer, 'Communication, Organization, and Crisis', *Communication Yearbook* 21 (1998) 231-275.

¹⁸ Herbert H. Rowen, *The Princes of Orange, The Stadholders in the Dutch Republic*, (Cambridge 1988) 133, 134.

increase the stability of his realm. To reach this aim he needed a legitimate direct heir, since the legitimacy of his own rule was considered dubious, because his father, Henry VII derived his position through rule of conquest during the War of the Roses, not through dynastic succession.

The start of a new dynasty is not necessary coupled with a succession crisis; often the end of a dynasty was anticipated for many years, leaving ample time for those concerned with the succession, to prepare for a succession by another branch or dynasty. Some writers use the term 'succession crisis' for a conflict that existed before a succession happens. This illustrates the difficulty of trying to isolate different succession crises. For this thesis, something will count as a succession crisis when a crisis happens within a few years after the previous ruler dies or is deposed. This also means that the likely case of a military clash happening more than a few years after a succession, between the new ruler and a pretender, will not be counted as a succession crisis. This limitation is necessary to be able to make a comparison between so many different cases.

Comparative method

This thesis will make use of Comparative Historical Analysis. Comparative Historical studies are 'united by a commitment to offering historically grounded explanations of large-scale and substantively important outcomes'.¹⁹ In its broadest sense, the term 'Comparative Historical Analysis' can be used to encompass all studies that contrast historical patterns across cases. In a more narrow sense however, as used by Mahoney and Rueschemeyer in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, it refers to studies that have three main characteristics:

- They deal with causal analysis, indicating its emphasis on the explanation and identification of the complex of causes behind major historical phenomena, thereby excluding more interpretative historical approaches.²⁰
- Generally, there is a focus on long-term processes, such as social revolutions and state formation.²¹
- Comparisons of similar and distinctive cases are made systematically and in a historical context. Comparative Historical Analysis makes it possible for historians to go back-and forth between theory and historical evidence.²²

Comparative historical analysis has a long and distinguished tradition in history and the social sciences, being used by main figures such as Adam Smith, Karl Marx and Max

¹⁹ James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, 'Comparative Historical Analysis, Achievements and Agendas' in: James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer ed., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge 2003) 3-38, there 4.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 11, 12.

²¹ *Ibidem*, 12.

²² *Ibidem*, 13.

Weber. After a decline of interest in this method after the Second World War, it made something of a comeback in the 1970s and 1980s.²³

Boolean approach

To find the causes for succession crises in early modern Europe, different possible causes identified by historians for succession crises will have to be tested for validity. To do so, a specific Comparative Historical method using Boolean algebra will be used, as described by Charles C. Ragin in *The comparative method, moving beyond qualitative and quantitative strategies*.²⁴

Boolean algebra was developed in the nineteenth century by George Boole. It can be used in social science to gain clarity in qualitative comparison.²⁵ This Boolean method in social science, and by extension in history, takes elements from both the qualitative and quantitative sides of comparative history.²⁶

The main elements of Boolean algebra are the use of binary data, to express that is something is true (or present) or false (or absent). Cases are defined by a certain outcome the researcher wants to examine and by the possible causes that lead to that outcome. This is represented in a truth table. The number of rows in this table is determined by all the logically possible combinations of possible causes. From this table, a Boolean formula can be created, which consists of capital and lower-case letters, for example $X = AbC$, which means that in case X, cause A and C are present, and cause b is not present.²⁷ Boolean formulas can also be combined into new formulas. When one case shows $X=AbC$ and another $X=Abc$, because the formulas only differ by one cause, this can be combined into a new formula: $X=Ab$, through something called Boolean minimization, since logically Ab covers both AbC and Abc .²⁸

The outcome used in this thesis is 'succession crisis'. To explain this outcome the dynastic successions of France, England and the Dutch Republic, between approximately 1500 and 1800, will be used as cases. The precise demarcation is dependent on the country. The cases will be used to determine the possible causes that could lead to a succession crisis.

There are a number of advantages of the Boolean method in comparative history. For once, it makes it possible to analyse a large number of cases in a systematic, stepwise way.²⁹ In research on succession crises, the Boolean method is of great use for keeping

²³ *Ibidem*, 3, 5.

²⁴ Charles C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method, Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (London 1987).

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 85.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, 70.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, 86, 87.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 93, 94.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, 101.

oversight in the many possible causes for succession crises and to be able to say something at all about this subject in a general way.

Another advantage of the Boolean method is that it makes it possible to approach cases in a holistic manner, thus taking into account the historical context.³⁰ For this paper this is translated to giving a historical background of the successions and the possible causes.

A third strong point of the Boolean Method is its ability to gain insight in the relative importance of the causes; the Boolean method makes it possible to find out whether a cause is necessary or sufficient. Because of this, it has important value for determining the limits of social scientific generalizations.³¹

A disadvantage is some loss of information caused by the binary reduction to true and false statements, but this should be countered by the clarity that is gained by doing so.³²

Selection of cases

As stated before, the cases that will be used are successions in the following countries: England, France and the Republic of the United Netherlands. The main reason for the selection of these case-countries is to try to get a cross-section of European states that is representative for the diversity of European states in this period.

England is interesting, because it is an example of a country that became dominantly Protestant. In addition, though it was mostly a monarchy, there was also a strong Republican element to the monarchy, because of the increasing power of the English and later British parliament. During the period 1649-1660 there even was an English republic in the form of the *commonwealth*, led successively by Oliver and Richard Cromwell.

France is an example of a monarchy that eventually remained Catholic, though only after a long period of religious warfare. It was also the country of the French Revolution, which led to the establishment of a Republic at the end of the eighteenth century and incidentally to the end of the early modern period.

The Dutch Republic is interesting because unlike most European states in this period, it was not a monarchy. Though most states were hereditary monarchies, there was also an alternative political tradition of Republicanism. The United Dutch Provinces, the Swiss Confederation and the Italian Republics, of which Venice lasted longest, are the main examples of European Republics. Republican thought also found support in other countries including France and England. Despite being a republic, the United Provinces did have a semi-dynastic ruling family which fulfilled the position of 'stadtholder'. All stadtholders were members of one of the two branches of the house of Orange-Nassau. Both the lineages of

³⁰ *Ibidem*, ix,x,101.

³¹ *Ibidem*, 101.

³² *Ibidem*, 86.

stadtholder gained monarchic properties. In the nineteenth century, this would culminate in a genuine monarchy, the United Kingdom of the Netherlands under the same dynasty.

The most common types of succession law used in Europe

An important part of succession is the concept of a *direct heir*. What constituted a *direct heir* depended on the law of succession the stakeholders considered to apply. This was often not clear-cut. Complicating the matter further was the composite nature of the early modern states. Usually a monarch would rule multiple possessions, that each could have different traditions of succession law.

The stakeholders in the succession generally took succession laws very seriously. The most common types of succession rules used in European states in the early modern period were ‘agnatic primogeniture’ and ‘male preference primogeniture’. ‘Agnatic primogeniture’, commonly called ‘Salic law’, meant that only men could inherit, that elder sons inherited before younger ones and that sons of the monarch inherited before brothers and brothers before cousins. Female relatives could not inherit at all in this system. Agnatic primogeniture was used in France throughout the period, and was the most common law used in England, at least until the sixteenth century, though it was never as ubiquitous as in France.³³ In France from the death of Hugh Capet in 996 until the succession of Henry III by Henry IV in 1589, the king had always been succeeded in accordance with agnatic primogeniture.³⁴

‘Male preference primogeniture’ meant both men and women could inherit, but a woman only if she had no brothers. Lines of succession were traced through both male and female lineages, with male lineages taking preference over female. This was the most commonly applied rule in early modern England and Spain and since 1747 also in the Netherlands. Different ideas about exactly what succession rules should apply could be a cause for a succession crisis, in some cases leading to succession wars.

A third kind of succession would be through election, which was used in Poland and the Holy Roman Empire. In these cases, the monarch was elected by a group of nobles. In the Republic, the stadtholder was officially elected, though in practice the position became hereditary to the house of Orange-Nassau. A similar process took place in the Holy Roman Empire.

Categories of successions

³³ John M. McCullough, Kathleen M. Heath and Jessica D. Fields, ‘Culling the Cousins: Kingship, Kinship, and Competition in Mid-millennial England’ *The History of the Family* 11 (2006) 59-66, there 60.

³⁴ Richard A. Jackson, ‘Elective Kingship and Consensus Populi in Sixteenth-Century France’ in: *The Journal of Modern History* 44 (1972) 155-171, there 155.

Some successions were more problematic than others. In all successions in this period, there existed at least some resistance to the successor. However, that does not mean all successions involved succession crises. To gain some clarity the successions in each country will be divided into two categories, using the definition of succession crisis given earlier in this introduction. To recap: there is a sudden 'vacancy of rule', uncertainty about who should succeed as ruler, and this has to be seen by contemporaries as a threat to the stability of the realm and the continuity of the state.

The first category is 'problematic succession', meaning there was a sudden vacancy, uncertainty about who should succeed and a feeling of threat by contemporaries to the stability of the monarchy or the state. Usually a consensus exists amongst historians whether or not there really was a succession crisis. The second category of succession is 'unproblematic succession', meaning those elements were all absent. In these cases, there should be a consensus there was no succession crisis. In most cases, this consensus would be difficult to get, since when an author considers a succession unproblematic they will not usually comment on it. In practice, these categories will be used with some flexibility.

Possible causes for succession crises

Using the cases in the different countries I will try to find the possible causes of the succession crises and find out why certain successions led to the outcome of a succession crisis and some, under seemingly similar circumstances, did not. A number of possible causes could contribute to a succession crisis. Some of these possible causes were present in only one case, others in many. Besides possible causes that might have contributed to a succession crisis, there are also possible causes for an absence of such a crisis. Of course, these causes can also be seen inversely as causes for a succession crisis.

Relatively little is written directly about the issue of the succession crisis. This is why it has been somewhat difficult to find direct statements by authors about specific causes for succession crises. For most authors the issue is only peripheral to their own historical research. There are occasional mentions of possible causes in the literature that could lead to succession crises.

To help make a better comparison, some of the various possible causes named in the literature can be grouped into broader categories. I can then divide these categories of causes into two groups. The first are external causes, meaning they are related to the realm as a whole, which are usually long term and structural. The second group are internal causes, meaning they are related to the dynasty itself, which are usually (co)incidental changes. This leads to the following division:

External causes:

A: there is a religious divide between the main stakeholders and/or candidates.³⁵

B: an absence of a powerful representative system with political parties and elections.

Internal causes

C: there is no of legally uncontroversial direct heir.³⁶

D: the heir is under eighteen years old at the death of the former ruler.³⁷

E: the previous ruler dies suddenly, usually at a young age.³⁸

³⁵ Stephen Alford, *The Early Elizabethan Polity, William Cecil and the British Succession Crisis, 1558-1569* (Cambridge 1998) 33.

³⁶ Goody, 'Introduction' 127, 128.

³⁷ Nexton, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*, 7, 8.

³⁸ *Ibidem* 7, 8.

Chapter 1 English successions

1.1 The England monarchy

The English monarchy is one of the oldest of Europe, dating back to the ninth century. The rule of William the Conqueror in the eleventh century started a new Norman era in English history, leading to a society more similar to Europe. The consecutive kings managed to increase their power over the British Isles. In the early fourteenth century, Wales was conquered and eventually incorporated into England.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth century, England fought the Hundred Years' War against France over the crown of the king of France. Though this war eventually ended with a French victory, the English monarchs would continue to style themselves as king of France as well as England. In 1603, James I became the first ruler to simultaneously rule over England, Scotland and Ireland. In the early eighteenth century, England and Scotland were finally combined into the single monarchy of Great Britain.

1.2 Stakeholders in the English successions

As stated in the introduction, there were three major groups of stakeholders during royal successions in the early modern period: the high nobility, the bourgeoisie and the legislative and representative institutions.

In England, the first group the 'high nobility', roughly equivalent to the 'peerage', played an important role. The position of the English nobles was somewhat different from that of the continental nobility. Through Parliament, the high nobility could put a check on the power of the English monarch. The army and the bureaucracy of England also remained smaller than on the continent, meaning there were fewer opportunities for state employment, while the English nobility retained a stronger landed base.³⁹ Various important noble houses had established themselves since the Middle Ages. Younger siblings of the monarch usually received a ducal title by their father or their brother, often leading to the establishment of a new noble house.

The second group, the bourgeoisie was represented in England mostly by the (landed) gentry, though this group is sometimes considered to have also contained members of the lower nobility. They played an important role in English politics and so also played an important role during the English successions. In the second half of the sixteenth century, a 'new gentry' emerged in England, based on the urban elites who in this period became

³⁹ Dewald, *The European Nobility*, 146.

increasingly wealthy. Most of them were royal office holders and many bought titles or were granted noble status by the king.⁴⁰

The legislative and representative institution of England was the parliament, which consisted of a House of Lords, which was composed of and represented the high nobility, and a House of Commons, composed of the lower nobility and gentry and representing the constituencies.⁴¹ The English parliament increasingly managed to exercise power over both the monarchy and the succession.

From the late seventeenth century, the first political parties developed, which would become increasingly important in British politics.⁴² The struggle between Parliament and crown led to a civil war, starting in 1646, involving both control over taxation and the exact nature of religious reform.⁴³ This led to the establishment of a Commonwealth, from 1649 to 1660 where there was no ruling king or queen, though in this period there were two rulers, Oliver and Richard Cromwell, who did attain some monarchic qualities. In 1660, the monarchy was restored, but the struggle between parliament and monarch and the position of the church was not resolved until the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688-1691, which decided mostly in favour of Parliament for the following centuries.⁴⁴

1.3 Religion in England

The arrival of Protestantism in the first half of the sixteenth century increased religious divisions amongst the English population. This increased the possibility for problems during successions, since *stakeholders* could be increasingly likely to be divided on religion, or could adhere to a different religion than the legal heir. Their religious affiliation was an important matter for many English nobles, which could have great consequences for their personal life and political career. An example of this would be in the early 1580s, when the earl of Arundel decided to convert to Catholicism, which led to his arrest and a conviction for treason causing him to spend the last ten years of his life in prison.⁴⁵

In 1660, the monarchy was restored, but the struggle between parliament and monarch and the position of the church was not resolved until the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688-1691, which decided mostly in favour of the parliament and the Anglican Church for the following centuries.⁴⁶ From this time on all English and British monarchs would be

⁴⁰ Thomas F.X. Noble et al., *Western Civilization: The Continuing Experiment* (3rd edition, Boston and New York 2002) 499-535, there 501.

⁴¹ E.B. Fryde 'Introduction', 25, 26.

⁴² Tim Harris, *Politics under the later Stuarts, party conflict in a divided society 1660-1715* (London and New York) 1, 2.

⁴³ Noble et al., *Western Civilization*, 548.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 553.

⁴⁵ Dewald, *The European Nobility*, 70.

⁴⁶ Noble et al., *Western Civilization*, 553.

Protestant. The revolution also represented a general shift in Europe in this period. It marked the end of an era when Protestantism and Catholicism were the main division in Christian Europe, since by this time the religious battles had been mostly settled.⁴⁷ When related to religion, the Glorious Revolution was rather a resistance to a king who threatened religious freedom, than a clash between religions.⁴⁸

1.4 Succession crises in England and Great Britain

Between 1509, when Henry VIII from the house of Tudor started his rule, to 1760 when George III of the house of Hanover succeeded George II, there were twenty successions in England. For this thesis only the dynastic succession between monarchs and depositions of monarchs as cases will be counted, leaving thirteen succession cases to consider. For the purpose of this comparison, the rule of Jane Grey will be discounted, because of its shortness and the lack of recognition. Therefore, Edward VI is considered to have been succeeded by Mary I, not by Jane. Amongst the English successions that involved succession crisis are those of Edward VI by Mary I in 1553, Mary I by Elizabeth in 1558 and James I by Charles I in 1624.

Table 1: Succession of English monarchs

succession	year	old ruler	new ruler	crisis?
1	1509	Henry VII	Henry VIII	no
2	1547	Henry VIII	Edward VI	no
3	1553	Edward VI	Mary I	yes
4	1558	Mary I	Elizabeth I	yes
5	1603	Elizabeth I	James I	no
6	1625	James I	Charles I	yes
7	1653-1660	Charles I	Charles II	yes
8	1685	Charles II	James II	yes
9	1688	James II	William and Mary	no
10	1702	William III	Anne	no
11	1714	Anne	George I	no
12	1727	George I	George II	no
13	1760	George II	George III	no

The following six paragraphs will deal with the five possible causes stated in the introduction followed by a sixth possible cause, not dealt with in the general comparison.

Possible external causes:

1: Religious divide amongst main stakeholders and/or candidates;

⁴⁷ Steve Pincus, *1688, The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven and London 2009) 479.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, 479.

2: The absence of a powerful parliamentary system with political parties and elections.

Possible internal causes:

3: Lack of uncontroversial direct legal heir;

4: Legal heir is under eighteen years old;

5: Sudden death of the previous ruler.

Possible external cause:

6: The presence of important *stakeholders* trying to expand their own influence during the succession.

1.4.1 Religious divide amongst stakeholders and/or candidates

Since the Reformation took ground in England in the sixteenth century, and especially after Henry VIII had broken with the Roman Catholic Church in 1534, a possible cause of a succession crisis in England could be the existence of two candidates of opposing religions.

An example of religious divisions attributing to a succession crisis would once again be the succession after the death of Edward VI in 1553. Though he had no direct male heirs, he did have two half-sisters, Mary and Elizabeth. There was also a third candidate, their cousin Jane Grey. Most of the *stakeholders* were of the opinion that the next in line would be Mary. This was somewhat problematic though, since Mary was a Catholic while the other candidates were Protestant, while the issuing of the Act of Supremacy in 1534 by Henry VIII meant that the English monarchy had detached itself from Roman Catholicism.

Jane Grey was declared queen by her father-in-law John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, but this succession went against the wishes of the English parliament, which considered Mary the rightful heir, despite her Catholicism. Mary, with Parliament on her side, soon managed to gather more political support. Jane Grey and Dudley were imprisoned and executed; Mary could now begin her rule.⁴⁹ Apparently, in this case the religion of the candidates did not seem to be of much importance. This was probably because in England the divisions between Protestant and Catholic were not yet clear-cut. The religion of both candidates did not match up the religion of their respective supporters and in fact, those that supported the succession of Mary thereby would automatically support the future succession of the Protestant Elizabeth.

Mary I would re-establish Catholicism in England, but would only rule for a few years. After her death in 1558, new problems around the succession and religion arose. The main candidate was Mary's sister protestant sister Elizabeth. What spoke in favour of a

⁴⁹ Mackie, *The Earlier Tudors*, 527-529.

succession of by Elizabeth was her initial relatively tolerant politics towards Catholics, making it easier for her to be accepted successor by those amongst the stakeholders who were sympathetic to the Catholic cause. Ironically, Philip II of Spain, Mary I's widower, supported the claim of Elizabeth against Mary Queen of Scots, who was a descendant Henry VIII's sister Margaret. This illustrated how international power struggles could sometimes contradict personal religious convictions.⁵⁰ This did not mean that the succession was unproblematic, as Elizabeth did flow quite some blood. One of the casualties of this succession crisis was England's only remaining duke at this moment, the Catholic Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, who was executed in 1572 for plotting against Elizabeth, partly because of his catholic conviction.⁵¹

The adherence, or even just the suspicion of adherence, of the legal heir to a religion not favoured by the main *stakeholders* was a possible cause for succession crises. One example would be the succession of Charles II by James II. In this case, the succession crisis started some time before James II came to the throne. The period of 1678-1681 was dominated by the idea of the existence of a 'Popish Plot' to assassinate Charles II, restore Catholicism and to establish an absolute monarchy.⁵² The resistance against this succession, was largely caused by James, brother and successor of Charles II, who was first being suspected of being a Catholic, after his refusal to comply with the Test Act of 1673.⁵³ Since Charles lacked any legitimate children, following the English inheritance laws of that time, his brother would be next in line for succession. This met with much resistance among a large part of the British public and parliament.

This led to 'exclusion laws' by the English parliament, the first in May 1679, to exclude Charles II from the succession. Contemporaries definitely saw this period as a time of crisis, though they might not necessarily see it as a succession crisis.⁵⁴ Probably only the proponents of either the restoration of Roman Catholicism, or a strong monarchy would be inclined to name this a succession crisis as they believed the succession of James II to the throne would advance both these goals. There were of course many, represented in Parliament by the Tory party, who were not that bothered by the prospect of a Catholic king and would not have had a feeling of crisis. For something to become a succession crisis, it is necessary for a sizable part of the ruling classes to see problems in the approaching or current succession, for the existence of different opinions about who should succeed.

Using a stricter definition of a succession as starting at the death of a ruler, this should probably be considered a crisis before the succession, since this crisis had mostly been resolved by the time James II ascended to the throne in 1685. He did so without much problem initially. The crisis wasn't truly resolved yet however, since later that year a

⁵⁰ Nexton, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*, 185, 186.

⁵¹ Black, *Kings, Nobles & Commoners*, 33.

⁵² Mark Knights, *Politics and Opinion in Crisis 1678-81* (Cambridge 1994) 3.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, 29-39.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 29, 30.

Protestant pretender to the throne, James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, led the Monmouth Rebellion in an attempt to overthrow the new king. James put down this rebellion fairly quickly and managed to turn this victory to his own advantage.⁵⁵ He consolidated his own power by appointing Catholics at key positions and increased the strength of the standing army.⁵⁶

In 1688, the birth of a male heir to James II opened the prospect of the establishment of a Catholic dynasty and led to yet another rebellion, the 'Glorious Revolution' and the accession of the Protestant William III of Orange and Mary II. Whig politicians under James II were keen to assert themselves as both English and Protestant. Protestantism was by that time, at least for them, an important division in society.⁵⁷

By the late seventeenth century, Protestantism had been firmly established as the dominant religion of Great Britain, especially in the centre of political power. This was similar to most of Europe; everywhere a fixation of the religious constellation took place.⁵⁸ This meant there would be little support for a Catholic succession under the *stakeholders* in that period. The rebellions of Jacobite pretenders in the eighteenth century had therefore little chance of succeeding, as long as they remained Catholic.

1.4.2 Absence of a powerful representative institution

One distinct feature of English and British politics in the early modern period is the highly developed parliamentary system and the power struggle between monarch and parliament for much of this period.⁵⁹ A traditional first milestone in English parliamentary history was the 'Magna Carta' charter of 1215, which was the result of a rebellion against king John by the high nobility and served as a bond between king and the high nobility which documented their rights and liberties.⁶⁰ Later challengers to the king's authority, under the Tudors and Stuarts, would repeatedly refer back to this charter to legitimize their rights.⁶¹ The successive monarchs needed the parliament to effectively raise taxes, but it could also be a threat to their own power.⁶²

The Tudor monarchs, from Henry VII to Elizabeth, mostly saw Parliament as an inconvenience, though they increasingly managed to impose their own will upon it and use

⁵⁵ J.P. Kenyon, *Stuart England* (London 1979) 228-229.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, 231-232.

⁵⁷ Pincus, 1688, 209.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, 479.

⁵⁹ Fryde and Miller 'Preface' in: E.B. Fryde and Edward Miller ed., *Historical Studies of the English Parliament, II 1399-1603* (Cambridge 1970), IX-X, there IX.

⁶⁰ Noble et al., *Western Civilization*, 298.

⁶¹ Godfrey Davies, *The Early Stuarts 1603-1660* (Oxford 1937, reprinted 1959) 148, 149.

⁶² Edmund Fryde 'Introduction' in: E.B. Fryde and Edward Miller ed., *Historical Studies of the English Parliament, II, 1399-1603* (Cambridge 1970), 1-31, there 27.

it for their own (financial) gains.⁶³ Parliaments held sessions rather infrequently and at the initiative of the monarch.⁶⁴ After the death of Elizabeth however, though highly fluctuating in actual power, Parliament eventually managed to attain a crucial role in the royal succession, though this was not consolidated until the ‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688, when William and Mary replaced James II.

A succession crisis threatened in 1700, when Anne’s last surviving son William died, meaning there would be no direct heir. When Anne started her reign in 1702, she was already 37 years old and unlikely to produce another child. This meant that after her death, the throne would revert to the deposed James II or his Catholic descendants. This would most probably have led to a succession crisis

The British parliament was divided on the issue who should succeed Queen Anne. In the Act of Settlement of 1700/1701, it was declared that only a Protestant could succeed, making the Catholic descendants of James II ineligible. The closest Protestant relative was George I of Hanover, whose succession started the Hanoverian line of kings that would rule over Great Britain for the rest of the eighteenth century. In this case, the passing of the law seems to have prevented a real succession crisis.

Until 1746, the British rulers had to deal with a competing claim of the Catholic descendants of James II whose supporters were called Jacobites. The most severe of the Jacobite risings were those of 1715 and 1745. Since that of 1715 happened after the ascendancy of George I to the throne, it was the closest to an example of a succession crisis in the eighteenth century. Despite some initial success in Scotland, the Jacobite movement was bound to fail. By this time, the British parliament had so much power that the virtual absence of Jacobites amongst its members would insure that the ‘pretenders’ would form no real threat to the succession. Neither was there much support from the general populace.⁶⁵

The ‘victory’ of Parliament, with the ‘Glorious Revolution’, also meant that most of the conflict between the *stakeholders* that could result in a succession crisis would be legitimized and institutionalized because it now could be fought out in parliament. This would probably be one of the causes for the absence of any real problems during the successions of the eighteenth century.

1.4.3 The old ruler was not old enough to rule independently

In the early modern period, the age of majority for monarchs usually differed from that of their subjects. In this period in England, twenty-one years was the most common age of majority for non-royals, including the nobility, while eighteen years was considered to be

⁶³ *Ibidem*, 14, 15.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, 28.

⁶⁵ Alvin Redman, *The House of Hanover* (New York 1961) 45.

the age of majority for kings.⁶⁶ The only example of the minority of a ruler for England in the early modern period however would be Edward VI. Edward VI was nine years old when he was crowned king in 1547. The rule of the country was in the hands of a council, whose members were mostly appointed by Henry VIII before his death.⁶⁷

His young age did not lead to a succession crisis directly. The 'clique' that had formed around Henry VIII made sure to keep his death quiet to arrange a quick succession of Edward VI before any opposition could arise.⁶⁸ The minority of Edward VI meant an opportunity for various *stakeholders*, in this period mainly members of the high nobility, to try to increase their power.

The real succession crisis started only at the death of Edward VI, which was probably partly caused by his minority. Because of his minority, after his death most *stakeholders* did not acknowledge the legitimacy of his deathbed decision to declare his half-sisters Mary and Elizabeth as illegitimate, meaning there was a differing of opinion of who should succeed at that moment.

1.4.4 Lack of uncontroversial direct legal heir

Since the succession of Edward VI by Mary I, the legal heir in England could be either a man or a woman. Before this succession, there was general agreement, that in England only a man could legitimately succeed to the highest titles, including that of king. One often mentioned possible cause for succession crises is the absence of a direct male heir.⁶⁹ Because of the high mortality rate in this period, it was in fact quite likely that such a circumstance occurred.⁷⁰

This happened in six of the thirteen succession cases in this period. Two of those have led to what can be considered a succession crisis. One of those succession crises was when Edward VI died in 1553 at the age of fifteen, as he was both childless and an only child himself. The other one is the succession of Charles II by James II. The absence of direct legal heirs in the case of Charles II was probably a reason for the Monmouth rebellion to happen, led by an illegitimate son of Charles II. The succession by a brother, sister or cousin was more likely to be problematic than by a son or daughter.

Another reason for uncertainty about the possible heir would be if the legitimacy of the potential heirs was doubted. An example of this is the succession of Edward VI of 1553. His first two possible heirs, his half sisters Mary and Elizabeth, were both considered by many

⁶⁶ T.E. James 'The Age of Majority' *The American Journal of Legal History: Official Publication of the American Society for Legal History* 4 (1960) 22-33, there 22.

⁶⁷ Mackie, *The Earlier Tudors*, 480.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, 493.

⁶⁹ With 'direct male heir', I mean in this case a legitimate son or brother.

⁷⁰ Nexton, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*, 9.

contemporaries to be illegitimate. In January 1553, on his deathbed, Edward had signed a 'device for the succession' that declared his half-sisters illegitimate and his Protestant cousin Jane Grey as heir.⁷¹

The succession of Queen Mary by Elizabeth is an example of a succession that is not usually considered problematic, especially when compared to that of her predecessors Jane Grey and Mary I. One could expect there to be a power struggle at the death of Mary I, and therefore a problematic succession for Elizabeth. Besides being a woman, who until recently were not usually considered to be able to succeed as monarch in England, she was declared to be illegitimate during the rule of Edward VI. This she had in common with Mary I. Unlike Mary she was a Protestant and a considerable part of the population still was Catholic, which can be seen as another possible reason for a succession crisis.

Because under Catholic law Henry VIII's annulment of his first marriage with Mary's mother, Catharine of Aragon, was considered to be illegal, Elizabeth, daughter of Henry's second wife Anne Boleyn, was considered by many Catholics to be illegitimate. Her being Protestant helped to gain support of the Protestants who wanted to re-establish Protestantism in England after Mary had re-established Catholicism. Elizabeth also had to deal with the competing claim of a Catholic candidate in the form of her cousin 'Mary Queen of Scots', who was seen by many Catholics as the legitimate queen, Mary II. Mary was supported in this claim by her father-in-law Henri II of France. Despite Edward VI's renunciation of the legitimacy of Mary and Elizabeth, the acceptance of Mary as legitimate successor by the *stakeholders*, meant an increased acceptance of Elizabeth as successor by the ruling elites.⁷²

A ruler could try to strengthen the legitimacy of his rule by marrying his heir to a prestigious foreign dynasty. An example would be the marriage of Henry VII's eldest son Arthur in 1499 to Catharine of Aragon, the daughter of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabel of Castile. After Arthur died in 1502, his younger brother Henry became the next heir.⁷³ After Henry VIII came to the throne, he married his brother's widow, by the explicit wish of the dying Henry VII.⁷⁴

During the time of the Republican Commonwealth and Protectorate, Oliver and Richard Cromwell, of relatively low gentry class, could under the circumstances of the time never hope to increase the position of his family amongst the European nobility or royalty, unlike for example the Dutch stadtholders, who had the prestigious title of Prince of Orange. Even if Cromwell would have had the ambition to start his own dynasty, this was likely to have been impossible because of this.

Another way to strengthen the power of a ruler's dynasty and to decrease the number of candidates for the succession was to kill or execute any competing lines that might form

⁷¹ Mackie, *The Earlier Tudors*, 496, 497.

⁷² Nexton, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*, 185, 186.

⁷³ Mackie, *The Earlier Tudors*, 231.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, 231.

competition to their own dynasty. An example would be Henry Courtenay, Marquess of Exeter, who had a claim to the throne and was executed by order of Henry VIII in 1538.⁷⁵

The punishment for failing to be the leader of the victorious party during a contentious succession was grave indeed, since it usually meant execution. Examples of this happening are Jane Grey and John Dudley, who were executed in 1554.⁷⁶ Another is James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, the illegitimate son of Charles II, who was executed after his rebellion was put down in 1685.⁷⁷

1.4.5 Sudden death of the previous ruler

If the previous ruler saw his death coming for some time, he could try to make the necessary precautions to ensure a smooth succession before his death. This usually involved him personally designating the next successor. This is what Goody describes as a *pre mortem succession*.⁷⁸ There is a possible example of this in the succession of Henry VII by Henry VIII in 1509.

Henry VII had come to the throne in 1485. At the time, his rule was considered to be of dubious legitimacy, since he was not the first in line of succession. He could only succeed to the throne after the final victory in the War of the Roses, when his rival Richard III of York had fallen in battle. Nevertheless, it was considered essential for a ruler in England in this period to have some legitimate dynastic claim to the throne. A pure rule of conquest was not considered sufficient legitimacy.⁷⁹

The succession to his son Henry VIII however took place without incident on 22 April 1509, at the age of seventeen which Mackee considers a 'tribute to his father's achievement'.⁸⁰ Henry VII had been meticulously planning the transition of the throne before his death, ensuring his son would succeed without problem. The relatively slow death of Henry VII meant he could plan much of the coming succession before his passing.

The succession of Elizabeth I of England by the Scottish king James VI could be considered as another type of pre-mortem succession, since there had been a correspondence between key English politicians that had started some time before the death of Elizabeth I, over the question who should succeed her, since she had no direct heir. Because this succession was planned, it went relatively smoothly. There were two initial 'conspiracies' against his succession in 1603, the Bye Plot and the Main Plot, in favour of the succession of the Catholic Arbella Stuart to the throne, followed two years later by the

⁷⁵ Ibidem, 396.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, 538, 539.

⁷⁷ George Clark, *The Later Stuarts, 1660-1714*, (rev. ed. 1961; Oxford 1965) 121.

⁷⁸ Goody, 'Introduction', 8.

⁷⁹ Mackie, *The Earlier Tudors*, 46.

⁸⁰ Mackie, *The Earlier Tudors*, 231.

Gunpowder Plot of 1605 but these were resolved relatively simply. This is why this particular succession should probably not be seen as involving a crisis.

1.4.6 Important *stakeholders* trying to expand their own influence during the succession

At first sight, it may seem that the stakeholders trying to expand their own influence during a succession would be a constant during this period. In practice however, in most succession cases there seems to be little evidence that they tried to further their own political causes during the succession, since usually the succession was dictated by strict dynastic succession laws. In most cases, there was little room for *stakeholders* to personally benefit in this way.

When considering the whole period, since the late sixteenth century, Parliament was an important stakeholder in all successions. This mirrored a general shift in the focus of English politics, from the relationship between the ruler and the aristocracy to that of the ruler and the gentry.⁸¹ For much of this period there was a struggle between parliament and the king over the question which side should decide who should succeed as monarch.

An example of a succession where different factions of stakeholders would be able to influence the succession to their own advantage would be succession of Edward VI by Mary I. The young age of the king meant that various *stakeholders* within the group of nobles that had formed around him, each with their own political agenda, could try to obtain power over the king and the kingdom during his life, and would try to influence the succession to their own gains.⁸² At first Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, the king's uncle, was accepted as regent, but in 1550, he was overthrown by John Dudley, Earl of Warwick. After Somerset's execution in 1552, Warwick, now named Duke of Northumberland, became the main influence on the young king. He was supported by a Catholic faction that wanted to prevent Protestantism from taking root in England. Edward would not live long enough to make a definite decision of what religious direction England should take, since he died in 1553 aged fifteen. This led to the succession crisis, involving Henry VIII's daughter Elizabeth and Mary and their cousin Jane Grey.⁸³ This was probably partly caused by Jane Grey's father-in-law Northumberland trying to extend his own influence and dynastic interests, besides trying to advance the Protestant cause.⁸⁴

According to Steve Pincus, the revolutionaries who deposed James II in the 'Revolution of 1688' were mainly motivated by their view that James II was not acting in the

⁸¹ Black, *Kings, Nobles & Commoners*, 51.

⁸² Mackie, *The Earlier Tudors*, 481.

⁸³ Mackie, *The Earlier Tudors*, 481.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 481.

interest of England and was in fact on the hand of France.⁸⁵ By deposing him and letting William III succeed, they hoped to force English politics into a more anti-French direction, something in which they succeeded.⁸⁶

The English parliament increasingly became a channel for nobility and commoners to influence the outcome of the successions to the highest office, thereby widening the number of personal stakeholders in the kingdom. Because of the probable general presence of this possible cause and simultaneously the difficulty to pinpoint it at particular successions, I will not use it in the Boolean analysis.

Boolean calculations English successions

After excluding the first possible cause, the final possible causes for the English succession can be summarized and put into the following table, ranked from no crisis, to crisis and least possible causes present, to most possible causes present:

Table 2: Possible causes of English succession crises

S	year	Old ruler	New ruler	K	A	B	C	D	E
13	1760	George II	George III	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	1714	Anne	George I	0	0	0	0	0	1
12	1727	George I	George II	0	0	0	0	0	1
9	1688	James II	William and Mary	0	0	0	1	0	0
10	1702	William III	Anne	0	0	0	1	0	1
5	1603	Elizabeth I	James I	0	1	1	1	0	1
1	1509	Henry VII	Henry VIII	0	1	1	0	0	0
2	1547	Henry VIII	Edward VI	0	1	1	0	0	1
6	1625	James I	Charles I	1	1	1	0	0	1
7	1653-1660	Charles I	Charles II	1	1	1	0	0	1
8	1685	Charles II	James II	1	1	1	0	0	0
4	1558	Mary I	Elizabeth I	1	1	1	1	0	0
3	1553	Edward VI	Mary I	1	1	1	1	1	0

S = Succession;

K = Succession Crisis;

A = Religious divide between main stakeholders and/or candidates;

B = The absence of a powerful representative system;

C = There is a lack of an uncontroversial direct legal heir;

D = The legal heir is under eighteen;

E = Sudden death of the previous ruler;

1 = Crisis/cause present, 0 = crisis/cause not present.

⁸⁵ Pincus, 1688, 265.

⁸⁶ Ibidem, 265.

From this table the following Boolean formula for the occurrence of a succession crisis K can be concluded: $K = AbcdE + ABcde + ABCde + ABCDe$.

This can be minimized to: $K = AbcdE + ABde + ABCe$.

From this can be concluded that there are three possible scenarios for a succession crisis to occur in England:

1. There was a religious divide amongst either stakeholders, or the stakeholders and the legal heir, coupled with the sudden death of the previous ruler;
2. There was a religious divide and an absence of a powerful parliament.
3. There was a religious divide, an absence of a powerful parliament and no uncontroversial heir.

What also can be concluded is that apparently in England, a religious divide amongst the stakeholders was the most important cause for succession crises.

Conclusion English succession crises

There are two important characteristics to the English monarchy relevant for the subject of succession crises, when compared to most of continental Europe, especially France. One is the relatively late development of the state, meaning the monarchs had much competition from the nobility and gentry in the struggle for power for much of this period. Secondly is the large influence of Parliament. On the one hand, Parliament could be a source of a succession crisis, but once the power struggle between monarch and parliament had been settled, mostly in favour of Parliament, it could become a way to prevent subsequent crises.

Religious divisions could be an important cause for succession crises, but only as long as the state religion was not fully consolidated, which did not happen before the late seventeenth century and the 'Glorious Revolution'. Once the Protestantism of the English king had been institutionalized, religious divisions stopped being a source for problems in the succession. By the eighteenth century, there would be no question of a king ruling without the consent of Parliament, making it a rather unique position in Europe, where, until the late eighteenth century monarchs generally became increasingly more powerful.

The period in English history when the role of the parliament was changing most dramatically was also a period where dynastic successions were likely to be problematic.

Chapter 2 The successions of the French kings

2.1 The French Monarchy

After winning the Hundred Years' War against England in the fifteenth century, France at the start of the sixteenth century once again became one of the wealthiest and most powerful kingdoms of Western Europe. France was a composite realm built through gradual dynastic enlargement during the early medieval Capetian kings and was later rebuilt in the later Middle Ages by the Valois monarchs.⁸⁷ The French kings made much of their descent from the Capetians since this served as an important legitimisation for their own rule.

This prosperous period wouldn't last long, as the sixteenth century also contained one of the many dramatic periods in early modern French history; that of the French Religious wars (1562-1598). Its traditional start is 1562 when the Massacre of Vassy took place, where Huguenots worshippers were killed by troops of Henri de Guise. The Edict of Nantes in 1598, which tolerated Calvinism in certain areas is traditionally considered to be the end, though this did not in fact end religious warfare entirely. The wars involved several clashes between aristocratic houses, with the Guise and Bourbon families as the main stakeholders. This major conflict seriously compromised the ability of France to operate as a major power in Europe for decades.⁸⁸ They also led to a series of succession crises, starting with the death of Henry II in 1559.

The zenith of power of the French king is manifested in the rule of Louis XIV, who, by continuing the groundwork laid by his predecessors and using the talents of his ministers, managed to turn France into an economic and military powerhouse.

Most of the early modern period, international politics for the French kings meant opposition against the Habsburgs who ruled in most of the areas surrounding France. This only really changed after the War of the Spanish Succession, when the French house of Bourbon ascended to the throne in Spain.

In the Middle Ages and especially during the Hundred Years' War, the idea emerged amongst French intellectuals that although the kingdom 'belonged' to the king he could not freely give (core) parts of it away in war negotiations or through inheritance.⁸⁹ This meant that France was no longer considered just the property of a ruler but also something that existed separately from the ruler. The sixteenth century saw the concept of the 'state' imported from Italy that added to the discussion on the nature of kingship.⁹⁰ Together this represented a shift from a purely personal dynastic empire to a more abstract state, which would continue for most of the early modern period.

⁸⁷ Nexton, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*, 236.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, 235.

⁸⁹ Rowen, *The King's State*, 23.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, 27.

The French monarchy found a temporary end in 1791, when after the French Revolution Louis XVI was disposed and a Republic was declared, eventually leading to the rise to power of Napoleon.

2.2 Stakeholders in the French successions

As in other countries, far from being decided by just succession laws, the actual transfers of power from one king to another were influenced by a number of stakeholders, including the nobility, the bourgeoisie and legislative institutions.

Since the fourteenth century, the French nobility had undergone huge changes. A revolution in warfare caused the nobility's central role on the battlefield to be increasingly taken over by common foot soldiers, although they did maintain an important role as military officers. Simultaneously, the Hundred Years' War, coupled with a general demographic decline in France, caused many noble families to die out and to become impoverished which caused increased marriages with the bourgeoisie. This continued during the fifteenth and sixteenth century.⁹¹

The growing bourgeoisie also became the second group of stakeholders in this period.⁹² Apart from their economic rise, the bourgeoisie in the fifteenth and sixteenth century also became increasingly important politically. This was an effect of the growing bureaucratic state, which relied increasingly on government offices, increasingly held by members of the bourgeoisie. This was caused by the greater complexity of the state requiring a thorough study of law.⁹³ Like in England, many government officials did manage to be ennobled by the king, which especially since the sixteenth century, led to the emergence of the *noblesse de robe*, as opposed to the old 'warrior nobility', the *noblesse d'épée*.⁹⁴ Although the old nobility was considered to be consisting of military men as opposed to the new nobility, in fact in the late seventeenth century there was a higher percentage of the nobility involved in the military than during the Hundred Years' War, partially caused by the enormous growth of the French army in this period.⁹⁵

The main legislative institutions of France were the parlements of which the Parlement de Paris was the most important, since they could have an important role during successions in upholding the laws of the realm. The other political institution was the States-General, though they took little part in the actual successions or any crises, since there were

⁹¹ Donna Bohanan, *Crown and Nobility in Early Modern France* (New York 2001) 8, 9.

⁹² *Ibidem*, 8.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, J. Russel Major, *From Renaissance Monarchy to Absolute Monarchy, French Kings, Nobles, & Estates* (Baltimore and London 1994) 98, 99.

⁹⁴ Bohanan, *Crown and Nobility in Early Modern France*, 9, 10.

⁹⁵ Major, *From Renaissance Monarchy to Absolute Monarchy*, 318, 319, 334.

no meetings between 1614 and 1786.⁹⁶ Much of the power of the stakeholders depended on how much the king needed them to govern the realm. This was especially true for the nobility and the ministers.⁹⁷

2.3 Religion in France

Though by the end of the early modern period France had one of the most distinct Catholic populations of Europe, Protestantism did play an important role in much of France's history during this period. The relationship between Protestantism and the French kings has often been contradictory. Protestantism first emerged in France during the reign of Francis I (r. 1515-1547). On one hand, in 1535-1536 Francis tried to join the Schmalkaldic League, which consisted of Protestant states. This was most probably initiated by the wish to find allies against the common enemy, the Habsburgs.⁹⁸ On the other hand, he fiercely persecuted Lutheranism in his own realm, leading to an exodus of Protestants during his rule.⁹⁹ This ambiguity against Protestantism would be a constant for most of the later French kings.

In 1559, Henry II personally appeared before the Parlement de Paris to confront the supposed 'heresy' in France's most important court of law. By the 1560s, Protestantism had firmly taken root amongst the lawyers and nobility leading to a religious division of the stakeholders, though they were still a minority. Despite the persecution, Protestantism, and especially Calvinism, managed to flourish in many parts of France and in 1572 it had the largest and most influential community of Calvinists in Europe.¹⁰⁰

2.4 Causes of successions crises in France

Between 1515, when Louis XII rose to the throne, and 1774, when Louis XV was succeeded by Louis XVI, there were ten successions of French kings. The length of the kings' rule varied quite strongly. The king with the longest reign was Louis XIV, who ruled for seventy-two years, from 1643 to 1715. Though he began his reign at a very young age, there also was a long period when he could rule independently and consolidate the power of the French monarchy. The shortest rule in early modern France was that of Francis II, who only reigned for eighteen months. The average length of rule was twenty-seven years. Amongst these successions, five can be considered to have been succession crises.

⁹⁶ Bonney, *The European Dynastic States 1494-1660*, 322.

⁹⁷ Major, *From renaissance monarchy to absolute monarchy*, 369.

⁹⁸ Bonney, *The European Dynastic States 1494-1660*, 40, 41.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, 164.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

Table 3: Successions of French kings 1515-1774

succession	year	old ruler	new ruler	crisis?
1	1515	Louis XII	Francis I	no
2	1547	Francis I	Henry II	no
3	1559	Henry II	Francis II	yes
4	1560	Francis II	Charles IX	yes
5	1574	Charles IX	Henry III	yes
6	1589	Henry III	Henry IV	yes
7	1610	Henry IV	Louis XIII	yes
8	1643	Louis XIII	Louis XIV	no
9	1715	Louis XIV	Louis XV	no
10	1774	Louis XV	Louis XVI	no

As with the English successions the various possible causes named in the introduction in five will be discussed in five successive sub-paragraphs. The possible causes are:

External:

1. There is a religious divide between the main stakeholders;
2. The absence of a powerful representative system;

Internal:

2. There is no (uncontroversial) direct legal heir;
4. The legal heir is under eighteen years old;
5. The previous ruler dies suddenly, usually at a young age.

2.4.1 Religious divide between main stakeholders

As seen in the English cases religious divisions in a kingdom can be an important cause for succession crises. This is especially true when there is a strong religious divide between the main stakeholders or when the legal heir adheres to a religion that is not favoured by the main stakeholders. This will often lead to a rival candidate of the opposite religion.

For example, when the last Valois king, the Catholic Henry III, was assassinated in 1589, he was childless. The next in line was his very distant cousin Henry of Navarre, who was king Henry III of Navarre and a Protestant. The French Huguenots had previously been mostly republican, since Catholicism and the French monarchy had been practically entangled.¹⁰¹ Now the first heir to the French throne was a Protestant, they tended to change their view of monarchism.

This inheritance was much contested by members of the 'Catholic League', who contended that inheritance was only possible through twelve degrees.¹⁰² The Catholic League

¹⁰¹ Herbert H. Rowen, *The King's state*, 24.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, 43.

was created ostensibly to combat Protestantism in France and prevent Henry of Navarre from succeeding to the throne. It was originally led by Henry, Duke of Guise and his brother. At first, they claimed the throne for themselves, as they asserted descent from Charlemagne. After they had been killed at the order of Henry III in 1588, the League's candidate became cardinal Charles de Bourbon.

Henry IV only managed to capture the throne after he decided to renounce Protestantism, thereby mostly ending the resistance of the Catholic League. Later in 1598 with the edict of Nantes, the Huguenots too would be pacified. After the revocation of this edict in 1685 by Louis XIV, the French population would be almost entirely Catholic.

2.4.2 The absence of a powerful representative system

Unlike England and the Dutch Republic, in the early modern period France lacked powerful representative institutions. The States-General never had any real power separate from the king, while the parlements, that did offer some resistance to the king's rule, functioned mostly as law courts, without being a representation of the French population. This is why this possible cause can be considered present with all the successions between French kings.

2.4.3 There is no legally uncontroversial direct heir

A succession problem could arise when there was no obvious direct legal heir. What constituted a 'direct legal heir' depended on the most common succession laws followed in the monarchy. As written earlier, 'direct' refers in this case a sibling or child of the previous ruler, since these successions seem to proceed with the least problems.

The general inheritance rule of the French monarchy was 'agnatic primogeniture', meaning the royal crown could only be passed to a man and through male lineage. This meant that it was more likely for a royal dynasty to die out, since no daughters, or even sons of daughters could succeed to the throne. This was in contrast to other countries like Spain and England that used 'Male preference primogeniture', meaning women could succeed provided they had no brothers or sons.

This would also mean that there was a higher risk in France than in other countries for the situation to arise that there was no direct heir, meaning the succession had to pass to a different house or dynasty.

The first time this happened after 1500 was in 1515, when king Louis XII died. Since he had no sons or brothers, the succession went to his cousin's son, Francis of Valois-Angoulême, who descended from the fourteenth century French king Charles V. With him,

the branch of Valois-Orleans had died out and the crown passed to the Valois-Angoulême branch. However, this did not produce any sign of crisis. Even though he did have a daughter Claude, no attempt seems to have been made for her to become his heir. Her marriage to Francis of Valois-Angoulême meant that descendants of Louis XII would succeed as king eventually, meaning neither Louis nor any stakeholders would have any reason to try to challenge the existing succession rules.

The other king to die without any direct male heirs was Henry III in 1589. This time the inheritance had to be traced back through king Louis IX who lived in the thirteenth century to arrive at the closest male relative through male lineage, which turned out to be Henry of Bourbon, king of Navarre, who was his cousin in the twenty-second degree.¹⁰³ With this succession, the house of Valois died out and was succeeded by the Bourbons. This time it did lead to a succession crisis. Apart from the religious reasons mentioned before, there was also the problem of the uncertainty of this succession, because of the long lineage, even longer than in the previous case, between the succeeding kings. If Henry III would have had a son or brother who had been Protestant, it would have been much more difficult for the stakeholders to challenge the succession.

Throughout this period there seemed to be a consensus amongst the stakeholders that only a king's son 'on the right side of the bed' (legitimate) could inherit, or succeed to, the throne.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, in 1714 Louis XIV, who was at that point without legitimate male sons, declared in his testament that his formerly illegitimate sons, the Duke of Maine and the Count of Toulouse would in fact be eligible to succeed to the throne. Such a move went completely against common law in Western Europe as it had been followed for centuries. After his death, the Parlement of Paris therefore quickly overturned his testament, restoring the old order of succession.¹⁰⁵

When Henry III was proclaimed king of France in 1574, he had already been elected king of Poland though he had reigned there for only 118 days and would never return. When he arrived in France, he had difficulty in being accepted as king, because of the Religious Wars that had erupted two years before. He had not only to face a coalition of Huguenots and French Malcontents. He could only be accepted as king by making great concessions to them at the Peace of Monsieur.¹⁰⁶

2.4.4 The heir is under eighteen years old

¹⁰³ Ibidem, 43.

¹⁰⁴ Ibidem, 90.

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem, 90, 91.

¹⁰⁶ Bonney, *The European Dynastic States*, 172.

One distinctive characteristic of France monarchy was the high number of kings who were minors when they succeeded. A king too young to rule is often considered as a cause for succession crises.¹⁰⁷ Of the ten French kings who started their rule between 1515 and 1774, there were five under the age of eighteen and three under the age of ten, while the average age at the start of their reign was seventeen.

One example would be Francis II, who was fifteen when he came to the throne in 1559, after the unexpected death of Henry II. Since he was still considered too young to rule his mother, Catherine de' Medici, acted as regent, though the government of the realm was actually in the hands of his uncles, Francis, Duke of Guise and his brother Charles, who was cardinal of Lorraine.¹⁰⁸ During the rule of Francis II and his brother Charles IX, who both died young and without sons, this situation continued. This meant that the Guises could have a large influence on the government in this period. At least partly because of their low age, the period of the reign of Francis II and Charles IX can be seen to be a continuing succession crisis.¹⁰⁹

Louis XIII in 1610, Louis XIV in 1643 and Louis XV in 1715 were successive kings, who were all under ten years old when they came to the throne. Unlike the succession of Henry IV, these successions themselves were all uncontested, but they did lead to power struggles between various stakeholders within the realm, of various intensity¹¹⁰

The succession of Henry IV by Louis XIII can be seen as a succession crisis, as it led to a severe power struggle over the regency between his mother, Marie de' Medici and other stakeholders, royal princes and high nobles.¹¹¹ After more than ten years of civil war and unrest, the crisis was resolved when in 1624 Louis XIII, now of age, appointed Cardinal Richelieu as his first minister, who gained control over the French government and managed to vastly increase state efficiency and power.¹¹² One reason why this succession was problematic was probably that Henry IV was assassinated and did not have the time to set up a government to rule for his son.

The succession of Louis XIV however seemed less problematic in this respect, even though, like his father had been, he was underage when he succeeded to the throne in 1715. Louis XIII, who saw his death coming for some time, established a regency council, possibly to try preventing a repeat of the crisis that happened at the start of his reign.¹¹³ After his death however, his right to establish such a regency council was promptly challenged by his widow Anne of Austria and the Parlement of Paris, who contended that the monarchy was 'successory' and not 'hereditary', meaning a former king had no right to impose his will on a

¹⁰⁷ Nexton, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*, 7.

¹⁰⁸ Bonney, *The European Dynastic States*, 165.

¹⁰⁹ Nexton, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*, 237.

¹¹⁰ Rowen, *The King's state*, 60.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*, 60.

¹¹² Rowen, *The King's State*, 62.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, 67.

succeeding one.¹¹⁴ The regency and the government soon came in the hands of his mother Anne of Austria and her favourite, cardinal Mazarin. The minority of Louis XIV coupled with the reaction to cardinal Richelieu's autocratic regime led to a period of political instability, though it probably did not involve a true succession crisis.¹¹⁵

The succession of Louis XIV by Louis XV in 1715 was one between great-grandfather and great-grandson, a rather unusual situation, which will still be considered a succession by a direct heir. Like his father before him, Louis XIV had stipulated that a regency council should rule until Louis XV reached the age of majority. This council consisted of various figures from Louis XIV's administration, the most influential of them being Philippe d'Orleans. After Louis' death, however this council soon split into factions, with the Orleans faction acquiring dominance, partly because they had the support of the Parlement of Paris that tried to regain the power that Louis XIV had withheld from them.

2.4.5 Previous ruler dies suddenly, usually at a young age

The average age of the French kings in the early modern period at death was forty-six. Of the eleven French kings dealt with in this chapter, only two, Francis II and Charles IX were under thirty years old when they died. When Francis II died in 1560 at the age of sixteen, this was not unexpected, since he had been sickly for much of his life, but it did seem to have caused a succession crisis.¹¹⁶ Examples of monarchs who did die unexpectedly were his father Henry II in 1559 and Francis' younger brother Charles IX in 1574. All these successions can also be seen as one long succession crises, temporarily resolved when Henry III ascended the throne in 1574, but not beyond doubt until Henry IV was finally accepted as king after his renouncement of Protestantism in 1593.

Henry III's assassination in 1589 and that of Henry IV in 1610 were also examples of sudden deaths of French kings, and both were accompanied by succession crises. From this can be argued that a crisis is probably more the sudden aspect than the young age of a king at his death that attributes to a problematic succession, at least in France.

¹¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹¹⁵ Bonney, *The European Dynastic States*, 232, 233.

¹¹⁶ Ibidem, 165

Boolean calculations French successions

Similarly to the possible causes for English succession crises, those for France can be put into the following ranked table.

Table 4: Possible causes for French succession crises

S	year	Old ruler	New ruler	K	A	B	C	D	E
10	1774	Louis XV	Louis XVI	0	0	1	0	0	0
9	1715	Louis XIV	Louis XV	0	0	1	0	1	0
8	1643	Louis XIII	Louis XIV	0	0	1	1	0	0
2	1547	Francis I	Henry II	0	0 ¹¹⁷	1	0	1	1
1	1515	Louis XII	Francis I	0	1	1	1	0	0
4	1560	Francis II	Charles IX	1 ¹¹⁸	0	1	0	1	1
6	1589	Henry III	Henry IV	1	0	1	0	1	1
7	1610	Henry IV	Louis XIII	1	0	1	1	0	1
3	1559	Henry II	Francis II	1 ¹¹⁹	1 ¹²⁰	1	0	1	1
5	1574	Charles IX	Henry III	1 ¹²¹	1	1	1 ¹²²	0	1

S = Succession;

K = Succession Crisis;

A = Religious divide between main stakeholders and/or candidates;

B = The absence of a powerful representative system;

C = There is a lack of an uncontroversial direct legal heir;

D = The legal heir is under eighteen;

E = Sudden death of the previous ruler;

1 = Crisis/cause present, 0 = crisis/cause not present.

When excluding B, since in France they are K present in all successions, from this table the following Boolean formula can be deduced, where capital A-E refer to causes present and lowercase a-e to cause not present:

$K = acDE + aCDE + AcDE + ACdE$, which can be minimized as:

$K = cDE + CdE$

From this it can be concluded that for the outcome 'succession crisis' to occur in the French successions, there are two possible combinations of causes:

1. There is an absence of a religious divide, but the previous king dies suddenly, while the heir is a minor.
2. The legal heir is not a minor, but there is controversy over the legitimacy of the heir while the previous ruler dies suddenly.

¹¹⁷ Ibidem, *The European Dynastic States*, 164.

¹¹⁸ Nexton, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*, 237.

¹¹⁹ Ibidem, 237.

¹²⁰ Bonney, *The European Dynastic States*, 164.

¹²¹ Ibidem, 172, 173.

¹²² Ibidem, (Oxford 1991) 172.

In other words, the previous ruler needs to die suddenly while there is either a controversy over the legitimacy of the heir or the heir is a minor. This would only be sufficient cause though, as long as there was no powerful representative system present.

Following De Morgan's Law, $K = cDE + CdE$ can be recoded to $k = (C + d + e)(c + D + e) = CD + Ce + cd + de + ce + De$, which minimizes to $k = CD + e$. In other words, there will not be a succession crisis in France when there is a lack of an uncontroversial heir and the legal is under eighteen (which is probably just coincidental) and when there is no sudden death of a ruler.

Conclusion French Succession crises

The most problematic period for dynastic successions was during the French Wars of religion (1562-1598), which caused great devastation to France as a nation. This was also the only period in French history when the religion of the king was a political issue. Before and after this period, succession crises had to be caused by other factors. Following from the Boolean calculations, when looking at the early modern period as a whole, religion divisions did not seem to have been a decisive cause for the occurrence of succession crises in France.

The heir being either underage or of contested legitimacy seems to be the most common cause for succession crisis, but only when coupled with the sudden death of the old ruler. It is also likely that the lack of representative institutions in France contributed to the number of succession crises, though it is hard to say to what extent, since this it was present in all successions, not just the problematic.

The biggest crisis for the French political system would take place at the end of the early modern period, involving the French Revolution. This would also temporary end the French dynastic succession, though this would be restored in the nineteenth century.

Chapter 3 Successions in the Dutch Republic

3.1 Background of the stadtholderate and the Republic

Even though the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands, or the Dutch Republic, was not technically a monarchy, it did have a dynastic succession since the stadtholderate was hereditary in practice. The stadtholder, literary 'placeholder', had originally functioned as the representative of the Dukes of Burgundy in their various dominions in the Netherlands. The position continued under emperor Charles V and king Philip II of Spain. William of Orange became Philip's stadtholder in this sense for the important provinces of Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht in 1559. In 1567 however he was removed from this position for his role in the revolt against Philip. In 1572 he was reinstated in the position, though now by the representatives of the provinces, the States Provincial. Though at this time the stadtholder was essentially only the leader of the Rebellion and had to be appointed by the States Provincial, over the centuries the position increasingly took on monarchic properties and started to act as the unofficial head of state of the Republic of the Netherlands.

Traditionally the Dutch state that manifested itself with the Union of Utrecht of 1579 has been characterized as weak and filled with conflict, supposedly in contrast to the neighbouring monarchies. In actuality however, the Dutch Republic was generally more stable than its neighbours and quite capable of extracting taxes without this leading to massive resistance amongst the population.¹²³ As in the neighbouring countries, stability generally was one of the most important goals in the policies of its rulers. Since the nobility only played a limited role in Dutch politics when compared with France and England, costly land wars were generally seen as something that should be avoided as much as possible, thereby lowering the chance for long stability-decreasing wars.

The position of 'head of state' of the Republic was contested by the States of Holland, represented by the 'raadpensionaris' (Grand Pensionary) of the province of Holland, who could, under certain circumstances become the unofficial political leader of the entire Republic.

Over the centuries, gradually two loose coalitions formed, the Orangists, who favoured a powerful position for the stadtholder, and the *Staatsgezinden*, or States-party, who were in favour of more power for the regents of the cities of Holland.¹²⁴ It was in Holland

¹²³ Jan Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe, Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as Fiscal-Military States, 1500-1660* (London and New York 2002) 142.

¹²⁴ A.J.C.M. Gabriëls, *De heren als dienaren en de dienaar als heer, het stadhouderlijk stelsel in de tweede helft van de achttiende eeuw* (Leiden 1990) 75.

that the Staatsgezinden were most powerful, and where resistance against the stadtholders was greatest.¹²⁵

For most of this period, between 1584 and 1747, the Republic had no single stadtholder, because some northern provinces, most notably Friesland, would at various times appoint a stadtholder of a different branch of the Nassau family. This chapter will only deal with the line of stadtholders of Holland and Zeeland, since those were the most important provinces by far and these stadtholders can be considered the closest to an equivalent to the monarchs of other countries.

By the eighteenth century, the Republic had fallen into an economic and cultural decline. This manifested itself in de-urbanisation and a crippling of commerce and industry, especially since the 1720's.¹²⁶ Caused by this bad economical situation and triggered by a small-scale military invasion by the French, a critical political situation arose in the Republic. In 1747, this led to the reinstatement of the stadtholder, when the Frisian stadtholder was appointed in all provinces. This was followed by, what Jonathan Israel calls an 'Orangist revolution', which fundamentally altered the character of the Dutch Republic and its institutions.¹²⁷

One of the effects of this revolution was a strengthening of the political position of the stadtholder.¹²⁸ The Orangists managed to make the stadtholderate hereditary through the succession law of 'male-preference primogeniture'; meaning women would be eligible to succeed. This was an attempt to increase the dynastic continuity of the stadtholderate.¹²⁹

Probably the biggest crisis in Dutch history can be situated before the actual 'birth' of the Dutch Republic, after the official 'abjuration' of the Spanish king Phillip II by the 'Plakkaat van Verlatinghe' that was adopted on 26 July 1581¹³⁰. Even though the king was officially denounced, this did not mean that a Republic was considered the most desirable system of government. The Netherlands were at this time torn by a civil war between those loyal to the Catholic king and the rebels, whose leaders Protestant and fought for religious freedom and against taxation.

The leader of the resistance, William of Orange, initially tried to find a new protector, which he found in Francis, Duke of Anjou, the youngest son of king Henry II of France, by which he hoped to gather French support against Phillip II. On 19 September 1581, Anjou was recognized as hereditary lord of the Netherlands by the Dutch states provincial. This can be considered the first attempt at a solution to the perceived problem of the power vacuum, caused by absence of an official monarch. However, Anjou was

¹²⁵ Ibidem, 75.

¹²⁶ Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic, Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806* (Oxford 1998) 1012.

¹²⁷ Ibidem, 1079.

¹²⁸ Ibidem, 1072.

¹²⁹ Gabriëls, *De heren als dienaren en de dienaar als heer*, 77.

¹³⁰ Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 26.

considerably curbed in his power by the treaty, since it was declared he would have to rule with provincial councils, appointed by the separate provinces and taxation could only be issued by the approval of the States.¹³¹

During the lordship of Anjou over the Netherlands, William of Orange was recognized as stadtholder of Holland and Zeeland, as he had been under Phillip II. The States of Holland and Zeeland actually wanted to accept Orange as count, but he refused, probably because that would mean risking the loss of French support.¹³² That did not mean he became a stadtholder for Anjou, since by now the position of stadtholder derived from the States rather than the monarch. Anjou soon became dissatisfied with the limited power assigned to him by the treaty and tried to take Antwerp by force, leading to the end of his political career in the Netherlands and an increased focus to William of Orange as political leader. Orange's assassination in July 1584 led to the first succession in the new Dutch stadtholderate.

At this time, the stadtholderate was still mostly a military position and the stadtholder was considered only an interim head of government. The Dutch revolt was at this moment at a critical low point, while Spanish power was at its peak, now that its biggest rival France was caught up in religious wars.¹³³ The States of Holland had considered offering William of Orange the title of count and now his son Maurice urged the states of Holland to recognize him as count. This met with little enthusiasm though, and in fact, the states were still searching for a foreign monarch to accept the sovereignty of the Netherlands.¹³⁴

After Henry III of France had declined, the sovereignty was offered to Elizabeth of England, who also declined, but she did send her favourite, Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, who was appointed as governor-general of the Netherlands by the States-General. After the continued refusal of Elizabeth to accept the sovereignty, the states gave up the search for an alternative foreign sovereign thereby accepting the reality of a Dutch Republic.¹³⁵ This would also be the start of a semi-dynasty of the House of Orange in the Netherlands.

The position of the stadtholder and the role he could play was continually in development. Owing to the military successes booked by Maurice, the stadtholderate became the most important political office, though mostly during times of war.

¹³¹ Ibidem, 24, 25.

¹³² Ibidem, 27.

¹³³ C.A. Tamse ed., *Nassau en Oranje in de Nederlandse Geschiedenis* (Alphen aan den Rijn 1979) 78.

¹³⁴ Rowen, *The Princes of Orange, the Stadholders in the Dutch Republic*, (Cambridge 1988) 34.

¹³⁵ Herbert H. Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 34, 35.

3.2 The Dutch stakeholders

As with the cases of England and France, only a small portion of the Dutch population was *stakeholder* in the succession, meaning they had a direct interest in the succession and were in a position to influence its outcome, but who could also be a possible rival to the succession.¹³⁶

Unlike England, France and most of the rest of Europe, in the Republic there was a distinct absence of the nobility as an important political factor. Even though the nobility made up a similar percentage of the population as in England, the political power of the nobility as a whole was much smaller.¹³⁷ Especially the states of Holland were dominated by the cities, which started under the Burgundian and Habsburg rulers and continued under the Republic.¹³⁸

The high nobility in the Republic was almost entirely constituted of the two branches of Orange-Nassau. Much of the power of the Princes of Orange was derived from their being the highest nobility in the Netherlands. This meant there was less chance for a succession crisis, since there was no contention from other high nobles, unlike in England and France where several powerful noble families existed.

The Republic had a comparatively powerful representative institution in the States Provincial and the States-General. The stadtholders officially had to be appointed by the States Provincial.

The bourgeois upper class, or *regenten* as they are called in Dutch, also played an important role in Dutch politics. They formed an oligarchy, a tightly connected web of related families that ruled the various cities of the Netherlands. The term is especially used for those of the major towns and cities of Holland, by far the most powerful province of the Netherlands.¹³⁹ Like the other provinces, Holland had only a single vote in the States-General.¹⁴⁰

3.3 Religion and the Republic

William I had favoured a strategy of 'religious peace', meaning toleration of both Catholicism and Protestantism in Netherlands united against the Spanish.¹⁴¹ By 1583 however this ideal had to be given up. Because in the southern Netherlands the Spanish army was swiftly gaining

¹³⁶ Goody 'Introduction', 2, 11.

¹³⁷ Nierop, *Van ridders tot regenten*, 45-47.

¹³⁸ *Ibidem*, 177.

¹³⁹ Price, J.L., *Holland and the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century, the politics of particularism* (Oxford 1994) 32.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, 235.

¹⁴¹ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 213.

ground, the focal point of the revolt had now definitely shifted to the north. The States of Holland had by now become the de facto government of the Netherlands.¹⁴²

Though in 1572 the States of Holland had declared to be in favour of religious freedom, this ideal quickly lost support after 1573, as a result of the Spanish military successes and the exodus of Protestants from the southern provinces.¹⁴³ Protestantism now became the politically dominant religion in the United Provinces. Religious divisions were increasingly becoming political divisions and Catholics and other non-Calvinists were effectively kept away from political offices and could therefore no longer play a role during successions.¹⁴⁴

3.4 Dutch succession crises

Between 1584 when Willem of Orange was (eventually) succeeded as stadtholder by his second son Maurice, and 1751, when the last stadtholder William V succeeded his father William IV, there were six successions of stadtholders. Two of the stadtholders' reigns, those of William II and William III, ended with a 'stadtholderless period'. These can also be considered as succession crises. Because of the uncertain position of the stadtholderate, until 1747 the successions were all more or less problematic, since it was never completely clear who would succeed and what power he would have. Four of the successions were directly between stadtholders, while two were interrupted by a 'stadtholderless' period. Of these six successions, three can be seen as succession crises; those of William I by Maurice in 1584 and 1585, William II by William III from 1650 to 1672 and Willem III by William IV from 1702 to 1747.

Table 5: Successions of Dutch stadtholders

succession	year	old ruler	new ruler	succession crisis?
1	1584-1585	William I	Maurice	yes
2	1625	Maurice	Frederick Henry	no
3	1647	Frederick Henry	William II	no
4	1650-1672	William II	William III	yes
5	1702-1747	William III	William IV	yes
6	1751	William IV	William V	no

¹⁴² Ibidem, 213, 214.

¹⁴³ Ibidem, 272.

¹⁴⁴ Ibidem, 273.

3.4.1 Religious divide amongst stakeholders

The effective exclusion of Catholics from all public offices after 1573, meant that at the death of William I, there were no potential Catholic stakeholders left. This meant there also were no voices that might protest the succession of Maurice, ahead of his elder brother Philip William. In 1568, at the start of the Dutch uprising, this eldest son of William I had been taken hostage by Phillip II to be raised a Catholic at the Spanish court.¹⁴⁵ His presence at the Spanish court meant he was not considered a viable candidate for the succession, therefore his faith could never become an issue.

However, in the Republic religion did continue to play an important role. Despite the religious heterogeneity of Dutch society, the Dutch Reformed Church became a binding factor since the ruling elites of the provinces were all members.¹⁴⁶ This also meant that the Dutch state essentially became a Calvinist state.¹⁴⁷ A common state religion was still seen as a necessary ideological dimension to the idea of the state, despite the limited adherence by the Dutch population as a whole.¹⁴⁸ There existed a fear that without a unified church the Republic might not survive.¹⁴⁹

Since after the Revolt all the main stakeholders were members of the Dutch Reformed church, the divide between Catholic and Protestant stakeholders could not be a cause for succession crises like it could be in France and England. Within the Reformed Church however, there soon emerged religious divisions of which that between *remonstrants* and *contraremonstrants* in the early seventeenth century was the most important.¹⁵⁰ After the military *coup* by stadtholder Maurice in 1618, which asserted the dominance of the *counterremonstrants* all stakeholders at least nominally adhered to *counterremonstrant* Calvinism.¹⁵¹ This meant that this division would not be a cause for succession crises either.

3.4.2 Absence of a powerful representative system

Even though before the nineteenth century the Dutch Republic never developed a parliamentary system as it existed in Great-Britain, it did have a representative assembly in the States-General, which was quite different from that of France. Before the Dutch Revolt, under the Burgundian rulers, the States-General functioned similarly to the French States-

¹⁴⁵ Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 32.

¹⁴⁶ Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century*, 260.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 260.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, 277.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, 276.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 272-275.

¹⁵¹ *Ibidem*, 82, 272.

General and the English parliament. They were only convened periodically and at the initiative of the ruler when he wanted to raise new taxes from his subjects.¹⁵²

In the Republic however, the States-General and the Provincial States, became the principle legislative institutions, with the sovereignty resting in the provinces.¹⁵³ It can be said that the Dutch States-General qualify as powerful representative system for most of this period, though at some periods, such as under William II and in the second half of the eighteenth century, they were relatively less powerful than in other periods, such as the stadtholderless periods. Based on this it can be said that it was unlikely for succession crises in the Dutch Republic to be caused by the absence of a representative system.

3.4.3 Lack of uncontroversial direct legal heir.

Another possible cause of succession crises in the Dutch Republic, was the relatively novelty of the position of stadtholder, as was the Republic in general. It was clearly distinct from states, such as France and England, whose monarchies dated back to the Middle-Ages and where the king was generally more accepted amongst the stakeholders. For most of this period the stadtholders had to be appointed by the States, making the position quite different from that in neighbouring countries, though the monarchy in especially England certainly has many similarities in this respect.

On the one hand, the unclear nature of the stadtholderate meant that during a succession there could be room for many different opinions on who should succeed, or if the stadtholderate should exist at all. On the other hand, the lack of any official rules of succession meant that no claimant could ever have a convincing legal claim if he would decide to fight the succession.

The chance of an uncontroversial direct legal heir to exist in such a system would probably be less likely, though in the Republic this did not seem to be the case. Because the United Provinces had no king, there was only a very limited nobility. In fact, there were only two main high noble families in the Netherlands, the two branches of the Nassau family. This meant that there was little opportunity for power struggles, since so very few people were eligible to become stadtholder in the eyes of the stakeholders. The succession of William III in 1702 did lead to a claim by king Frederick I of Prussia, who asserted the right to succeed to William's possessions in Germany and France as well to the title of Prince of Orange, based on his descent from his grandfather stadtholder Frederick Henry. This was opposed to the testament of William III, who named his cousin John William Friso as successor. Based on this claim Frederick also tried to be appointed as stadtholder by the states of Holland, but these attempts turned out to be futile, since few of the regents felt any need

¹⁵² Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 39.

¹⁵³ *Ibidem*, 446.

to accept him in this manner, nor did Frederick attempt to press his claim through violence.¹⁵⁴

When William IV was declared hereditary stadtholder in 1747, this meant it would now be very difficult for the states to dispose with the stadtholderate in the future, as became apparent later in that century, during the Patriotic revolts.

3.4.4 The legal heir is under eighteen years old at the death of the former ruler

Since William the Silent, the position of military leader of the States' army had been considered to be one the main tasks of a Dutch stadtholder. For a stadtholder to execute power, it was therefore important to be of an age where he could actively execute military leadership, in this time usually considered to be about eighteen. When the old stadtholder did not have a legal heir of sufficient age, this could be a possible cause for succession problems.

The succession of William the Silent can be seen as the first occurrence of this happening, since his son Maurice was only sixteen years old at the time of his father's death. The government of the country was put in the hands of an eighteen-member Council of State, made up of representatives of the provinces. Though Maurice wasn't given the position of stadtholder immediately, even at this early state of the Dutch stadtholderate the office was considered to be essentially hereditary and it was generally taken for granted that he would succeed his father as stadtholder of Holland and Zeeland once he had reached the right age.¹⁵⁵

More distinct examples of young heirs were two later successions, that of William II in 1650 and that of William IV in 1751. In the case of William II this led to the first of the two 'stadtholderless' periods, which can also be seen as succession crises. When he died on 6 November 1650, the popularity of the stadtholderate was at a low point. During his short three years rule, he tried to gain a more absolute, monarchic rule as stadtholder and to break the power of the province of Holland. This led to him to head a unsuccessful attack against the city of Amsterdam in 1650.¹⁵⁶ His early death meant he could not succeed in his plans. His orthodox Calvinist supporters, who believed in the idea of divine intervention, were in a state of shock.¹⁵⁷ Most of the city regents and members of the states were relieved, since he represented such a threat to their power.

His son William was born a week after the death of his father. If the Republic would have been a monarchy, he would probably succeeded his father and get a regency council to

¹⁵⁴ Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 150.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, 32.

¹⁵⁶ Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 93, 95.

¹⁵⁷ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 609.

rule for him until his majority. As stadtholder, however, the position of the young prince was uncertain. The States Provincial moved swiftly and took over the provincial offices that had been fulfilled by William II. The States of Holland, of all the provinces, responded quickly and convened a 'Great assembly' to decide what should happen next.¹⁵⁸ This assembly decided that there would be no supreme commander of the army under normal circumstances, and if it were necessary, it would no longer be a lifelong position. By this the States hoped to prevent another strong stadtholder coming to power and threatening their position.¹⁵⁹

In 1653, Johan de Witt was elected as Raadpensionaris of Holland. His political and diplomatic skill helped the Republic to gain stability throughout this stadtholderless period.¹⁶⁰ In a way, he could be seen as the successor of William II as unofficial 'head of state' of the Republic. Because the future William III was still an infant, he could not yet pose a threat to the position of De Witt.

A third possible candidate for the succession of William II was the Frisian stadtholder, William Frederick of Nassau-Dietz, who wanted the position of Lieutenant-General of the State Army, but was unable to obtain this position. His chances to succeed as stadtholder in Holland and the other province as well as obtain this position was bound to fail, because of his role in the coup of William II and the attack against Amsterdam in 1650. Though he did manage to succeed William II as stadtholder in Groningen en Drenthe, on top of this position in Friesland, the other provinces remained without stadtholder, as William Frederick made no real attempt to fight the claim of the senior branch of the Nassau family, represented by the future stadtholder William III.

The next succession was at the death of stadtholder William III in 1702. Since he did not have any dynastic direct heirs, sons or brothers, his closest heir would have been the Frisian stadtholder John William Friso who was fifteen at this time. Though he did inherit the title of Prince of Orange of William III, the States of most provinces did not appoint him as stadtholder. He had been appointed stadtholder of Friesland and Groningen in 1696 at the age of nine, so his age should not have been decisive in their decision to do so.

The death of William III also led to conflicts between regents that had been appointed by him, the 'Oude plooi' and those that had been expelled, by him when he had come to power in 1675, or their descendants, the 'Nieuwe plooi'.¹⁶¹

Unlike the case of William II, the death of William IV in 1751 did not lead to a problematic succession. This was despite William V being only three years old at this

¹⁵⁸ Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 95.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, 96.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, 96, 97.

¹⁶¹ *Ibidem*, 149.

moment. At this time, the regents of the Republic felt they did not have the power to abolish the stadtholderate like they had done twice before.¹⁶²

¹⁶² *Ibidem*, 186.

3.4.5 Sudden death of the ruler, usually at a young age

The average length of the reign of the Dutch stadtholders was twenty-two years. The average age at the start of their reign was twenty-six, while the average age at death was forty-eight. There was a large variance between the stadtholders' age at the start of their reign, from William V who was three when he succeeded as stadtholder to William of Orange who was thirty-nine. Obviously, because the stadtholders were elected for most of this period, this led to a higher average age at both the start and end of their rule, meaning a stadtholder was also less likely to die at a young age.

Three of the Dutch stadtholders died suddenly and in all cases their deaths subsequently led to a succession crisis. The first sudden death was that of William I, who was assassinated in 1584. When William II died in 1650, he was only twenty-four and had been stadtholder for three years. At fifty-two William III was quite old for this period when he died in 1702, but his death did come unexpectedly, caused as it was by a riding accident.¹⁶³

Boolean calculations Dutch successions

As in the English and French cases, the results of the previous paragraphs can be put in the following ranked table, coupled with the relevant data of the other successions:

Table 6: Possible causes of succession crises in the Dutch Republic

S	year	old ruler	new ruler	K	A	B	C	D	E
2	1625	Maurice	Frederick Henry	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	1647	Frederick Henry	William II	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	1751	William IV	William V	0	0	0	0	1	0
1	1584	William I	Maurice	1	0	0	1	1	1
4	1650-1672	William II	William III	1	0	0	1	1	1
5	1702-1747	William III	William IV	1	0	0	1	1	1 ¹⁶⁴

S = Succession;

K = Succession Crisis;

A = Religious divide between main stakeholders and/or candidates;

B = The absence of a powerful representative system;

C = There is a lack of an uncontroversial direct legal heir;

D = The legal heir is under eighteen;

E = Sudden death of the previous ruler;

1 = Crisis/cause present, 0 = crisis/cause not present.

¹⁶³ Ibidem, 147.

¹⁶⁴ Ibidem, 147.

From this the following formula can be deduced: $K = abCDE$. This leads to the conclusion that in the Dutch Republic, a succession crisis occurred when there was no uncontroversial direct legal heir, the legal heir was under eighteen years old and the previous ruler died suddenly. All these causes are internal and not external, meaning the high number of succession crises in the Dutch republic is probably mostly internal than external. The Dutch succession crises are also remarkable in their similarity in present causes. A problem with interpreting these successions is that there are just six of them, while the Stadtholderate underwent great changes throughout this period

Conclusion Dutch succession crises

The stadtholder dynasty of the Dutch Republic underwent a large variation in power and form. The stadtholderate fluctuated from elected to hereditary and from almost monarchic to abolished. From its very start, the basic legitimacy and necessity of the stadtholder was put into question. This led to two 'stadtholderless' periods when most of the Republic would have no stadtholder whatsoever, without there being evidence of this causing many political problems. Twice, the stadtholderate was reinstated when the Republic was under foreign threat experienced an economic downturn, but the two successive reinstatements of the stadtholderate did not have the desired effect of revitalising the Dutch economy and state.

Half of the successions in this period led to succession crises, which occurred when there was no uncontroversial direct legal heir, the legal heir was under eighteen years old and the previous ruler died suddenly. The Dutch succession crises are more internal than external.

Comparative analysis

When the tables of the different states are combined, this leads to the following results:

S	Year	Old ruler	New ruler	K	A	B	C	D	E
E13	1760	George II	George III	0	0	0	0	0	0
R2	1625	Maurice	Frederick Henry	0	0	0	0	0	0
R3	1647	Frederick Henry	William II	0	0	0	0	0	0
E11	1714	Anne	George I	0	0	0	0	0	1
E12	1727	George I	George II	0	0	0	0	0	1
R6	1751	William IV	William V	0	0	0	0	1	0
E9	1688	James II	William and Mary	0	0	0	1	0	0
E10	1702	William III	Anne	0	0	0	1	0	1
F10	1774	Louis XV	Louis XVI	0	0	1	0	0	0
F9	1715	Louis XIV	Louis XV	0	0	1	0	1	0
F2	1547	Francis I	Henry II	0	0	1	0	1	1
F8	1643	Louis XIII	Louis XIV	0	0	1	1	0	0
E5	1603	Elizabeth I	James I	0	1	1	1	0	1
E1	1509	Henry VII	Henry VIII	0	1	1	0	0	0
E2	1547	Henry VIII	Edward VI	0	1	1	0	0	1
F1	1515	Louis XII	Francis I	0	1	1	1	0	0
R1	1584	William I	Maurice	1	0	0	1	1	1
R4	1650-1672	William II	William III	1	0	0	1	1	1
R5	1702-1747	William III	William IV	1	0	0	1	1	1
F4	1560	Francis II	Charles IX	1	0	1	0	1	1
F6	1589	Henry III	Henry IV	1	0	1	0	1	1
F7	1610	Henry IV	Louis XIII	1	0	1	1	0	1
E8	1685	Charles II	James II	1	1	1	0	0	0
E6	1625	James I	Charles I	1	1	1	0	0	1
E7	1653-1660	Charles I	Charles II	1	1	1	0	0	1
F3	1559	Henry II	Francis II	1	1	1	0	1	1
E4	1558	Mary I	Elizabeth I	1	1	1	1	0	0
F5	1574	Charles IX	Henry III	1	1	1	1	0	1
E3	1553	Edward VI	Mary I	1	1	1	1	1	0

S = Succession;

K = Succession Crisis;

A = Religious divide between main stakeholders and/or candidates;

B = The absence of a powerful representative system;

C = There is a lack of an uncontroversial direct legal heir;

D = The legal heir is under eighteen;

E = Sudden death of the previous ruler;

1 = Crisis/cause present, 0 = crisis/cause not present.

This leads to the following Boolean formula:

$$K = abcDE + aBcDE + aBCdE + ABcdE + ABcde + ABcDE + ABCde + ABCDE + ABCdE$$

This can be minimized as: $K = abCDE + BcDE + BCdE + ABcd + ABd + ABcE + ABCe$
 This means there are no less than seven different constellations of causes, or scenario's that can lead to succession crises in the early modern Europe states that are used as cases.

The external cause B, the absence of a powerful representative system, is the one most present in the succession crises and apparently most instrumental in causing succession crises.

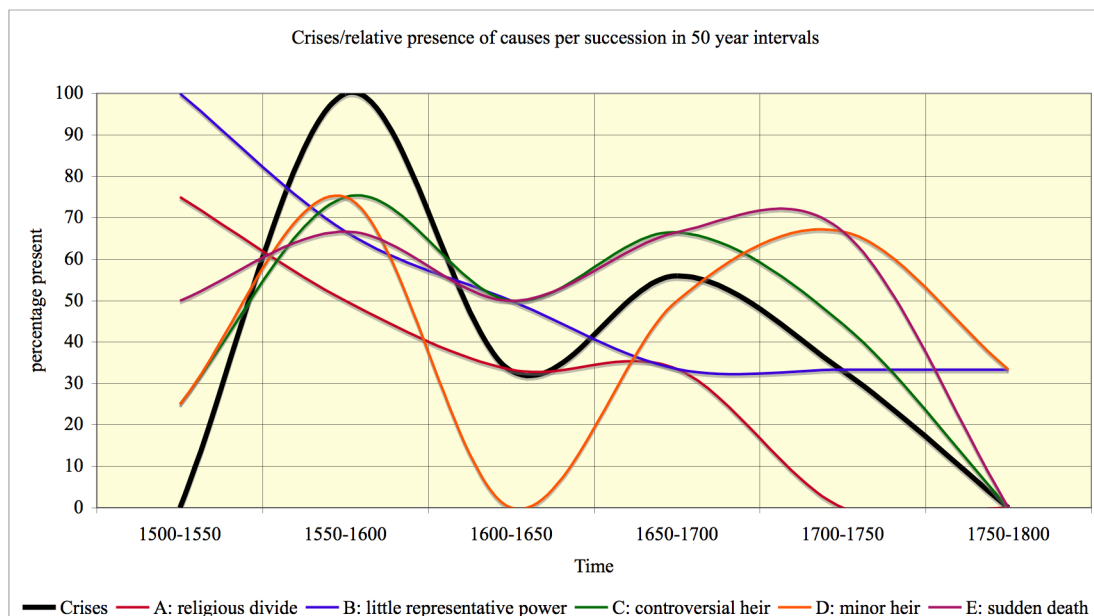
It is also possible to compare the Boolean formulas of the separate countries:

- England: $K = AbcdE + ABcde + ABCDE$;
- France: $K = cDE + CdE$;
- Dutch Republic: $K = abCDE$.

This shows that cause A, that is present in all the English crises, is not present in the two other countries. This shows that religious divides are an important contributing factor to succession crises in England, but not in France or the Republic.

The various causes present per succession and the amount of successions that were problematic, both in fifty-year periods, can also be translated into the following graph. The coloured lines show the percentage of successions where a certain possible cause was present in a fifty-year period. The black line shows the percentage of successions that were problematic in fifty-year periods.

Figure 1: graph of possible causes of succession crises 1500-1800



K = Succession crisis

A = There is a religious divide between main stakeholders and/or candidates

B = The absence of a powerful representative institution

C = There is no of legally uncontroversial direct heir.

D = The legal heir is under eighteen years old at the death of the former ruler.

E = The previous ruler dies suddenly, usually at a young age.

The period with the highest number of problematic successions is the second half of the sixteenth century. This is also the period where the external, structural causes A and B, 'a religious divide between stakeholders and/or candidates', and 'the absence of a powerful representative institution', are highest. From this can be concluded that the higher number of succession crises in this period are mainly the result of a lack of involvement of the nobility and bourgeoisie in the successions in this time and religious divisions. Both factors gradually decrease in importance in the following centuries. The late sixteenth-century peak also shows a clustering of possible causes in this period.

A second, lower peak of problematic successions took place in the second half of the seventeenth century. In this case, the external causes seem less important, while the causes that are present, are internal to the dynasty and more incidental, such as a minor heir or a sudden death of a ruler. The causes are also more diffused in this period than in the earlier peak.

What is further noticeable is the decline in problematic successions in the period between 1600 and 1650. This is paired with a large drop (to 0%) of minor heirs in this period. The amount of both the presence of causes and problematic successions is also lowest at the start and end, the early sixteenth century and the late eighteenth century.

Conclusion

Succession crises are difficult to generalise into a system. Their very nature means that they for a large part depend on eventualities. This is probably part of the reason why the Boolean method of Comparative history failed to give very distinct results when an attempt was made to tackle the issue of the causes of Succession crisis in the early modern period.

What can be said is that although succession crises happened quite often in the early modern period, there apparently were few strategies available for contemporaries preventing them. Though the number of succession crises seemed to diminish during this period, and would continue to do so during the nineteenth century, this was not the effect of any policies by the stakeholders in the respective states, but rather the side effect of structural changes. Examples of this are the consolidation of the religious divisions in Europe, the development of representative institutions and probably, though this hasn't been given much attention in the thesis, secularisation and the development of the state.

Of the three early modern states dealt with, England relatively had the lowest number succession crises. How much of this is due to coincidence and how much to structural differences is hard to say. Both the late development of the state and a large influence of the parliament are distinctive of England and could be a cause. Religious divisions were a source for succession problems, but only until the late seventeenth century.

Probably most problematic in successions was France, especially during the French Wars of Religion in the second half of the sixteenth century. This period was the most problematic for dynastic successions in Europe in general. This was mostly caused by the religious division that ran through much of Europe.

The stadtholderate like many other elements of the Dutch Republic were quite distinct from the monarchies in surrounding states. From the beginning, the basis of the stadtholderate was much weaker than in most monarchies, since this type of leader was much a novelty. However, when compared to France and England, this did not seem to translate to more problematic successions.

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