

**LENDING TO THE BORROWER FROM HELL:
DEBT AND DEFAULT IN THE AGE OF PHILIP II***

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Abstract

What sustained borrowing without third-party enforcement, in the early days of sovereign lending? Philip II of Spain accumulated towering debts while stopping all payments to his lenders four times. How could the sovereign borrow much and default often? We argue that bankers' ability to cut off Philip II's access to smoothing services was key. A form of syndicated lending created cohesion among his Genoese bankers. As a result, lending moratoria were sustained through a 'cheat the cheater' mechanism (Kletzer and Wright, 2000). Our paper thus lends empirical support to a recent literature emphasizing the role of bankers' incentives for continued sovereign borrowing.

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I. Introduction

What sustains sovereign borrowing? An important school of thought argues that punishment mechanisms outside the lending transaction itself are necessary to make governments pay (Bulow and Rogoff 1989a; Fernandez and Rosenthal 1990). Other authors have emphasized the role of reputation and gains from intertemporal smoothing (Eaton and Gersovitz 1981; Eaton and Fernandez 1995). A recent literature focuses on coordination and enforcement of moratoria amongst lenders (Kletzer and Wright 2000; Wright 2002; Kovrijnykh and Szentes 2007).¹ Finally, some authors have argued that lender ‘sentiment’ contributes determines funding availability for sovereigns, especially those with a poor repayment record (Reinhart and Rogoff 2009). In the empirical literature, there is no consensus on what has sustained sovereign borrowing over the centuries.

This paper attempts to shed new light on what made sovereign lending possible in practice. To do so, we examine one of the most famous historical episodes, the debts of Philip II, King of Spain from 1556 to 1598. At war for most of his reign, the king accumulated towering debts equivalent to 60% of GDP. He also suspended payments to his lenders four times. We show that Philip II’s borrowing can be explained without punishments or banker irrationality. Instead, we document the importance of lenders’ incentive structures and banker collusion, using hand-collected evidence from the archives. Our paper is the first to provide empirical support for models of sovereign lending that rely only on the borrower’s need for intertemporal smoothing and lateral enforcement amongst creditors.

¹ A third school of thought argues that reputation matters for interactions outside the credit market itself. Cf. Cole and Kehoe (1995).

We compile a new, comprehensive dataset based on 438 lending contracts signed between the king and his bankers between 1566 and 1600. A close analysis of the loan documents, combined with bankers' correspondence and the eventual settlement of the 1575 bankruptcy, shows that bankers imposed effective lending moratoria. Additional sanctions were ineffective. Genoese bankers provided two thirds of short-term loans in overlapping partnerships, effectively forming a network or 'coalition'. This lending structure created a web of multilateral obligations. As a result, lending moratoria stopped the king's access to credit: no network members broke rank; no pre-existing lender from outside the network lent; no new bankers provided funds. The reason, we argue, is that bankers who 'cheated' by lending during the moratorium would have faced severe penalties. Network members could hurt each other financially by seizing cross-posted collateral or failing to make payments due. Outsiders also did not enter since they feared being defaulted upon by the king.

The king's repeated bankruptcies were not signs of insolvency, as has been argued in the literature (Lovett 1982; Thompson 1994). In a related paper, we demonstrate that future primary surpluses were sufficient to repay Philip II's debts (Drelichman and Voth 2010b). In addition, lending was profitable (Drelichman and Voth 2010a). Nonetheless, we refer to the payment stops as 'defaults' or 'bankruptcies', following standard practice for international loan covenants.²

Our paper relates to the sizeable literature on the theory and practice of sovereign borrowing. Eaton and Gersovitz (1981) argue that consumption smoothing is a key motivation for sovereign repayment. Because incomes fluctuate, intertemporal trade is valuable. If a borrower defaults, lenders punish him by cutting off funding permanently.

² In a technical sense, missing a single debt repayment constitutes a default.

In equilibrium, these punishments should not be observed. In contrast, Bulow and Rogoff (1989a) argue that in the presence of two or more potential lenders, lending cannot be sustained without third-party enforcement. This is so because an alternative lender to the one who has been defaulted upon can still obtain a surplus, either by offering fresh funds or by accepting a deposit. Reputation and the desire to smooth consumption alone cannot underpin cross-border credit. Instead, punishment *in addition to a moratorium by the existing lender* is necessary to make sovereign borrowing feasible.

An alternative, recent approach has emphasized that the structure of incentives for new lenders may be crucial for sustaining sovereign borrowing. Kletzer and Wright (2000) build a formal model where the environment is ‘anarchic’ – neither lenders nor borrowers can commit. Lenders can only punish a borrower by cutting him off, but have no additional sanctioning mechanism. Nonetheless, borrowing can be sustained because of the incentives facing alternative lenders. New creditors do not enter since the sovereign borrower has an incentive to default on them too, should they extend credit. Their model is similar to that in Wright (2002) where existing creditors have market power. Kovrijnykh and Szentes (2007) focus on debt crisis resolutions, and emphasize lenders’ market power to explain how countries can escape debt overhang.

Testing these theories is not without difficulty. The fact that punishments should not be observed in equilibrium can be avoided in models with imperfect information (Atkeson 1991). Nonetheless, the evidence on punishments via trade sanctions and the like is, at best, mixed. Few governments interfered with the trade of debtors in the past (Eichengreen and Portes 1989). Sachs (1989) makes a similar argument for recent Latin American defaults. In contrast, Mitchener and Weidenmier (2010) show that armed

intervention by the US in Latin America influenced 19th century bond markets. Also, for the last fifty years, Rose (2005) concludes that trade between creditor and borrower countries declined during debt renegotiations. Tomz (2007) argues that direct sanctions are rare. Future access to credit – and not fear of military intervention or trade sanctions – was the main concern of countries servicing their debts in the 1930s. Tomz also finds that investor handbooks focused on a borrower's repayment history, not trade sanctions. Flandreau and Flores (2009) examine the role of market power amongst intermediaries in sustaining sovereign debt. In a similar spirit, Esteves (2006) looks at the role of bondholder associations.³

Thus, while both the reputation and the sanctions views have some empirical support, doubts remain. Recent models of contracting under anarchy, where enforcement and punishment occurs as a result of lateral incentives amongst lenders, are even harder to test. If the search for a single theoretical model that fits all facts is in vain, we should study what made sovereign lending feasible during key episodes. Uniquely, our data allow us to observe incentives directly. The case of Philip II offers empirical support for reputation-based models where 'cheat-the-cheater' incentives play a major role.

Earlier work on Philip II's borrowing emphasizes the Crown's hopeless financial position.⁴ Braudel (1966) famously argued that the king's payment stops resulted in major losses for his lenders. To this day, journalists use Castile's bankruptcies to illustrate banker irrationality.⁵ Reinhart and Rogoff (2009) argue that lending to serial defaulters may not be fully rational.⁶ In contrast, Conklin (1998) concluded that sanctions

³ Mauro and Yafeh (2003) make a related argument.

⁴ See, among others, Thompson (1994), Lovett (1982), Ulloa (1977), Artola (1982).

⁵ *The Economist*, 23–29 September 2006.

⁶ Benabou (2009) offers a model of (individually) rational reality denial.

sustained lending to Philip. When he stopped payments in 1575, his bankers stopped all transfers, and the Army of Flanders mutinied. This caused a sharp setback for Spain, according to Conklin, and forced the king to settle. Our data speak against the existing interpretations of Philip's bankruptcies. Sanctions were not effective, and bankers were not irrational in lending to the king.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section II summarizes the historical background, and section III describes our data and its limitations. Section IV shows why neither banker turnover nor a 'transfer stop' explain lending to the Spanish monarch. We then analyze the structure of the market for lending to the Spanish Crown, illustrate the operation of the bankers' coalition, and show how it satisfied the conditions for incentive compatibility outlined by the modern literature. Section V concludes.

II. Historical Background

Early modern states spent more on armies and navies than on any other activity. Philip II was at war every single year of his reign.⁷ Fully 60% of the Crown's expenditures went to the military.⁸ Battlefield success required large forces, often in distant theatres of war. To succeed, states needed to ramp up spending quickly, and to sustain it for long periods.

Early modern fiscal systems were not well suited to these tasks. Little additional revenue could be raised in times of need. Sales taxes constituted the largest source of Crown income. Collection was either farmed out to private collectors or delegated to cities in exchange for annual payments. In addition, the Crown taxed silver imports from

⁷ Parker (1998), p. 2. During Philip II's reign of 42 years, Castile was at peace for a total of six months.

⁸ Drelichman and Voth (2010b).

the New World. This revenue was volatile. In some years, it accounted for 40% of Crown revenue; in others, almost no silver arrived.⁹

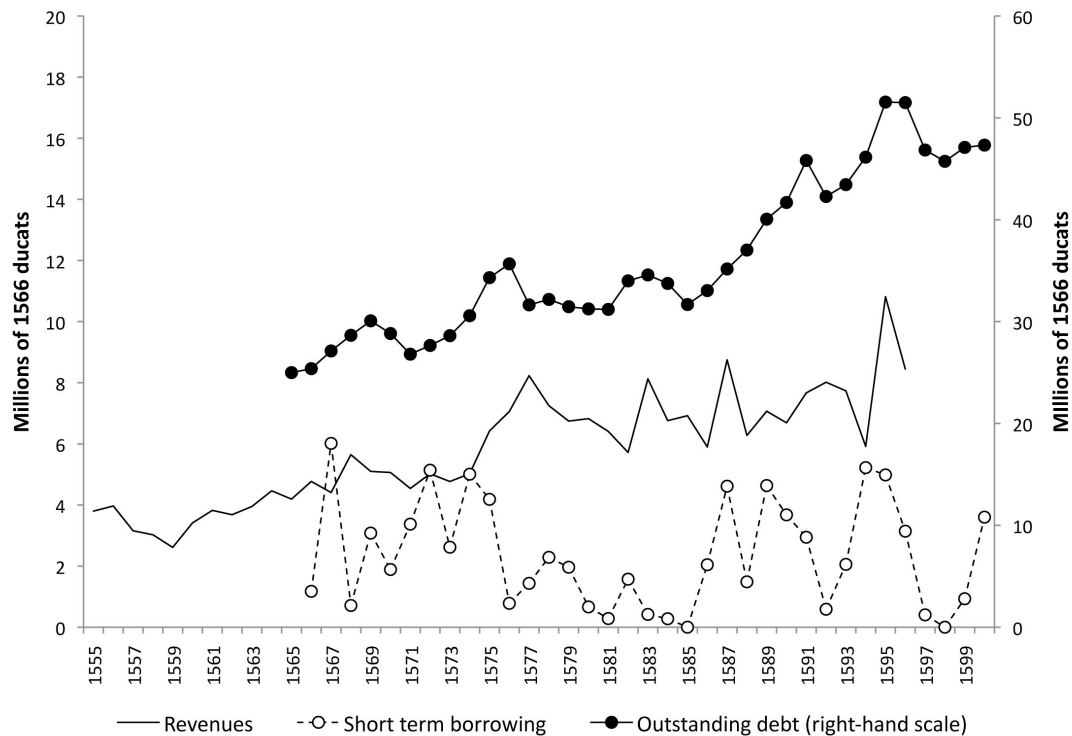
Faced with variable expenditure and volatile revenues, the king needed to be able to borrow, and on a large scale. Borrowing took two forms: perpetual bonds and lifetime annuities, both known as *juros*, as well as short-term loans (*asientos*). Between 1566 and 1600, outstanding debt grew by 20.7 million (constant 1566) ducats. Over the same period, the king entered into short-term contracts for 83.2 million ducats.¹⁰ In an average year, he contracted *asientos* for 2.5 million ducats, carried total debts of 34.9 million, and had revenues of 6.6 million. Overall, revenues and debts both grew in parallel during the second half of the 16th century. Figure 1 provides an overview of the king's fiscal position.¹¹

⁹ For a detailed analysis of fiscal revenue during Philip II's reign, see Drelichman and Voth (2010b).

¹⁰ Castilian prices rose by 53% between 1566 and 1600. Unless otherwise specified, figures in this paper are reported in constant 1566 ducats, deflated using the price index for Old Castile in Drelichman (2005).

¹¹ Figures are from Drelichman and Voth (2010b). Revenue data are available from 1555–1596; all other series are from 1566–1600. All the summary figures refer to the 1566–1596 period.

Figure 1: Castile's fiscal position, 1555–1600



Asientos were issued against the general credit of the king, not against a specific tax stream. They typically filled an urgent funding need. In some cases, *asientos* formalized loan agreements struck by field commanders. Long-term bonds (*juros*) accounted for a large share of Crown debt throughout. They were secured by regular taxes, and authorized by the Cortes (the representative assembly of the Castilian cities).¹² If a tax stream was insufficient, *juro* holders suffered.

Bankers like the Genoese principally lent short-term; they also placed *juros* for the Crown. Long-term bonds were often used as collateral for *asientos*. Typically, the king had the option not to repay the *asiento* in cash. The banker could then sell the *juros*.

¹² *Juros* could be issued only against 'ordinary' (as opposed to 'extraordinary') revenues. The classification was largely a matter of political bargaining between the king and the Cortes. Highly unstable revenues, such as remittances from the Indies, were not considered 'ordinary' and hence could not be securitized; see Toboso Sánchez (1987).

The king exercised this option frequently, making the Genoese key intermediaries in the bond market. Between 1560 and 1565, the Crown placed some 6 million ducats' worth of *juros*. Of these, the Genoese handled 3.6 million.¹³ They also specialized in acquiring information about the health of the fiscal streams backing *juros*.¹⁴ Between 1566 and 1575, 31 million (current) ducats lent through *asientos* were collateralized with *juros*—86% of the total volume lent. Over the same period, the value of outstanding *juros* increased by 11 to 17.5 million ducats.¹⁵

The first and second payment stops, shortly after Philip II's accession to the throne in 1556, affected *asientos* held by the German Fugger and Welser banking families. Two rounds of negotiations brokered by Genoese bankers resulted in the settlement of 1560, which involved the transfer of Crown monopolies and revenues.¹⁶ Our archival series of *asientos* starts in 1566.

The third bankruptcy took place in 1575. It affected 12.3 million ducats of outstanding debt, or 1.9 times annual revenue. Interest payments, repayments of principal, and service of long-term bonds held as collateral for *asientos* were suspended. The bankruptcy occurred at a time of particular strain on royal finances: Spain was fighting in the Mediterranean and in Flanders.

The Genoese bankers formed a consortium representing about 70% of outstanding debt. In addition, individual bankers and the king engaged in bilateral negotiations,

¹³ De Carlos Morales (2008), pp. 95-96.

¹⁴ The superiority of the bankers in assessing the fiscal health of the Crown was widely acknowledged by Royal officials. Juan de Ovando, who was in charge of the initial stages of the 1575 restructuring, described the Royal treasury officials' "lack of order in books and papers, their bad diligence and low reliability." In the end, the king had to appoint Juan Fernández de Espinosa, a banker himself, to oversee the general settlement (De Carlos Morales 2008, p. 151).

¹⁵ The estimate of 11 million ducats is from Artola (1982), pp. 88-89. The higher figure was calculated by the king's treasurer, although it almost certainly included collateral *juros* not yet sold on the open market (De Carlos Morales 2008, pp. 142-3).

¹⁶ Lovett (1980); Alvarez Nogal (2003).

looking for exemptions from the payment stop in exchange for new loans. No such bargains were struck. All lending, both by the Genoese and other bankers, stopped. Eventually, a general settlement was agreed in 1577. Bankers had to write down the value of their debts by between 30% and 58%. On average, the king agreed to pay back 62%. Repayment was in the form of long-term bonds, backed by new taxes. The bankers also provided a new loan for 4.2 million ducats.¹⁷

In 1596, the Crown stopped payments for a fourth time. The eventual rescheduling affected loans for 5.4 million ducats, equivalent to 62% of annual revenue. A combination of negative fiscal news and battlefield setbacks was to blame: in 1594 the silver fleets did not sail, and the remittances of 1595 failed to make up for the shortfall. At the same time, the Elizabethan War raised the spectre of British invasion. This led to particularly high expenditures.

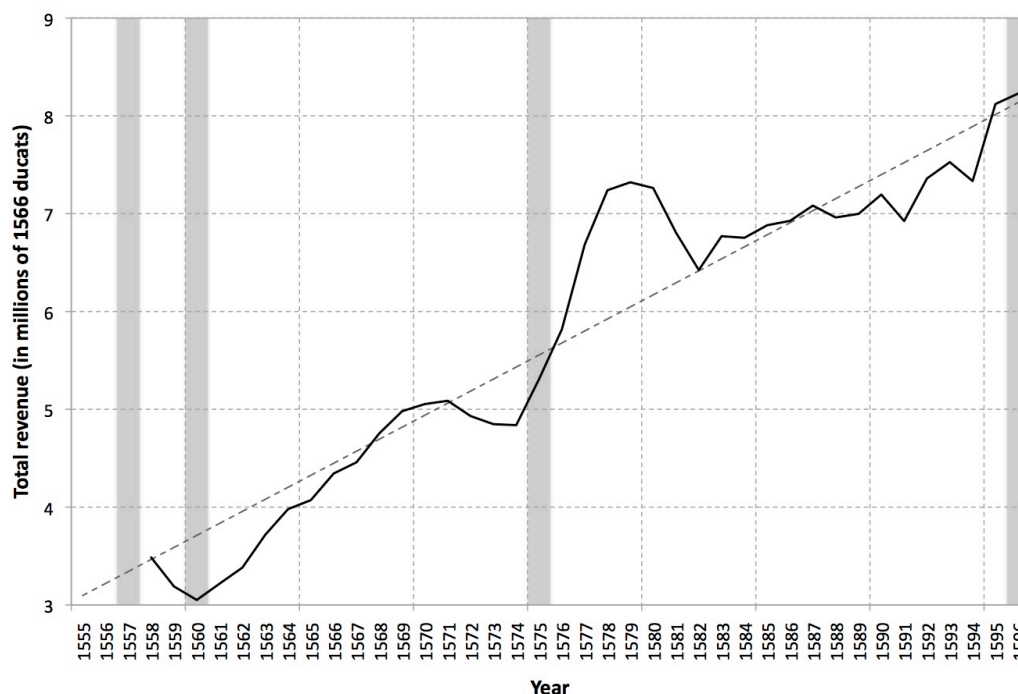
Compared with the third bankruptcy, the fourth was mild. The earlier one had involved *asientos* worth more than twice as much (at constant prices), at a time when royal income was significantly smaller. Philip's last default was also settled swiftly. In 1597, a new *medio general* was agreed, and lending resumed. Bankers lost an average of 20% of outstanding claims.

The king's defaults are best characterized as 'excusable' in the sense of Grossman and Van Huyck (1988). They occurred when tax receipts and other forms of revenue were unusually low. The king settled once the shocks had passed. In figure 2 we plot total income relative to trend for the reign of Philip II. Defaults are highlighted in grey. At the

¹⁷ In keeping with legal conventions, the king recognized the full face value of his debts. Our calculation of the haircuts takes into account the present value of the settlement payments when compared to the original promises. For a full discussion, see the online appendix to Drelichman and Voth (2010b).

time of each default, revenues had been well below the trend for several years. Royal income surged after the payment stops of 1560 and 1575, facilitating the renegotiations.

Figure 2: Crown revenue for 1555–1596, trend and five-year moving average (shaded years = defaults)



Lending to the King of Spain occurred in an ‘anarchic’ environment, in the sense of Kletzer and Wright (2000). The monarch could not credibly commit to repay his lenders. Contracts were frequently violated: more than 20% of the loan documents contain detailed references to earlier contracts that were not completely fulfilled. Although the king never rescheduled *juros*, payments could be less than promised if they were secured against a poor tax stream.¹⁸ Optimal Ramsey taxation suggests that the king should have defaulted on both *asientos* and *juros* if the cost of doing so was similar.¹⁹ There is no good estimate of the losses sustained by *juro* holders as a result of excess issuance relative to the yield of various tax streams. Anecdotal evidence points to average trading

¹⁸ At various junctures, the king and his advisors considered forced conversions but ultimately decided against them. Cf. Braudel (1966).

¹⁹ We thank Daron Acemoglu for this point.

discounts of about 7% at the end of the 16th century (Toboso Sánchez 1987). Some discounts were greater.²⁰ Bankers could not commit effectively, either. In some cases, foreign bankers failed to return deposits by the Crown.

There was a wide range of possible outcomes between full compliance and outright repudiation. King and bankers engaged in frequent recontracting, as is to be expected without third-party enforcement (Bulow and Rogoff 1989a). In this sense, Philip's 'defaults' were similar to the renegotiations that occurred at every stage of interactions between borrower and individual lenders. The principal difference is that haircuts were larger, and that all bankers were affected simultaneously.

The king had access to few smoothing mechanisms: short-term borrowing, depositing funds with bankers, and long-term borrowing. Given urgent, volatile spending needs, only the first of these mechanisms was practical. Foreign bankers could and did default on the king's deposits. Enforcement across borders was slow and complicated.²¹ In such an environment, depositing funds with a banker was not an alternative to borrowing.²² *Juros* could not be sold quickly enough to smooth out revenue variability and sustain spending. In addition, new *juro* issues required the authorization of the Cortes. This involved a drawn-out process. The same Genoese bankers who dominated the *asiento* business also enjoyed a near-monopoly over *juro* issuance (Castillo Pintado

²⁰ One example is the case of *juros* guaranteed by the taxes on silk in the area of Granada. A rebellion of the *morisco* population in 1568–1571 destroyed much of the stock of mulberry trees, which caused the silk industry to collapse. The *juros* supported by this revenue stream were soon trading at 40–50% below par.

²¹ See, for example, Archivo General de Simancas (henceforth AGS), Contadurías Generales, Legajo 84. "Tomás de Marín. Asiento tomado con Pirro Boqui en su nombre." The document describes how a Genoese banker failed to return a deposit of 300,000 ducats that he held on behalf of the king. We learn of this because the issue is settled through the intervention of a third banker, who agrees to lend an equivalent sum at a preferential rate in exchange for the king dropping the proceedings against the banker who defaulted.

²² In this sense, the alternative considered by Bulow and Rogoff (1989a) was not available to the King of Spain.

1963, p. 49). Thus, they controlled the king's access to long-term debt, his only alternative smoothing mechanism. As a result, Philip could effectively ramp up spending ahead of revenue only through short-term borrowing.

III. Data

We collect a new, comprehensive set of short-term loan contracts (*asientos*) between Philip II and his bankers.²³ The series, preserved in the Archive of Simancas, starts in 1566. We use the complete set of contracts until 1600, two years after Philip's death. While earlier authors used information on lending volume, the actual loans contain a wealth of additional information that has never been exploited: the identity of lenders, services performed, and other contractual arrangements.²⁴ In Section IV, we focus on this detailed micro-data from the contracts.

Financial transactions between the bankers and the king involved transfers, loans, or exchange operations—usually in combination. Transfers allowed funds to be disbursed in distant locations. Exchange operations normally specify the currencies involved, the exchange rate to be used, and permits for exporting specie. The contracts are generally between 4 and 20 pages in length. Other details include the place of delivery and repayment, the tax stream for repayment, as well as transfer and exchange fees. Occasionally, the king posts collateral in exchange for a loan. Other benefits included lifetime pensions or noble titles. Often, the time of repayment depends on the king's fiscal position (e.g., as a function of the silver fleet's annual arrival).

²³ AGS, Contadurías Generales, Legajos 86–93. Our series is missing nine contracts because of physical deterioration in the archival documents. The dates of the missing observations are evenly spread between 1578 and 1598.

²⁴ The standard series in use is by Ulloa (1977). It suffers from the double counting of *asientos* contracted by field commanders in Flanders, which left most details to be negotiated later in consolidated contracts between the king and the bankers' representatives in Madrid (Lapeyre 1953, p.48). Our database includes only the final agreements, which superseded those made elsewhere and fully specified all terms and conditions.

Regular borrowing in Philip's reign started after the resolution of his second bankruptcy. After 1566, the king concluded an average of 12.5 *asientos* per year—sometimes none and in other years as many as 38. Their duration varied between a few months and several years (with a maximum of 134 months). The largest contract was for 2.1 million ducats (equivalent to 30% of fiscal revenue at the time).²⁵ The smallest contract was for a mere 1,663 ducats.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.	<i>N</i>
Principal	190,080	275,853	1,663 ^a	2,386,755 ^b	438
FX	0.418	0.494	0	1	438
Duration	22.605	20.286	0	134	438
Stated <i>r</i>	0.099	0.039	0	0.16	318
Collateral	0.320	0.467	0	1	438

Note: Principal is given in constant 1565 ducats. FX is a dummy variable for the presence of a foreign exchange transaction. Duration is given in months, and *r* is the nominal rate stated in the contract. Collateral is a dummy variable for the presence of collateral.

^a The minimum value for principal is calculated excluding nine contracts that merely restructured old loans; because they did not result in fresh cash for the king, they are deemed to have a principal of zero.

^b The maximum loan corresponds to a portion of the general settlement of 1577, which was apportioned between four banking syndicates. The largest contract excluding the settlement was for 2.08 million ducats.

Foreign exchange transactions appear in 42% of all contracts. The interest rate stated in the loan documents averages 9.9%. It can be as low as 0% in special cases involving the construction of ecclesiastical buildings, and as high as 16%. In one third of all cases, the king posts collateral (typically *juros*).

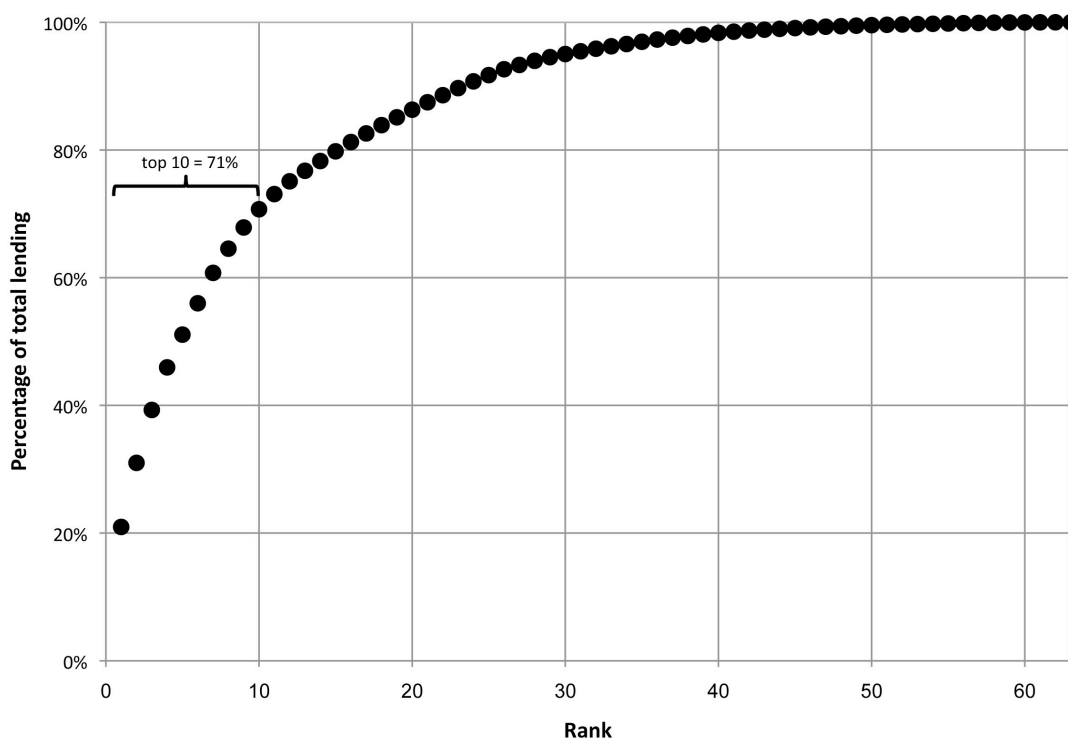
Philip borrowed from several banking families. No fewer than nine members of the Lomelín family lent to him. The Spinola family contributed twelve lenders, the Gentil ten, the Centurión six, and the Fugger five.²⁶ Often, several members of the same banking family lend through a single contract. For example, on 13 March 1572 we find Gerónimo

²⁵ We exclude the 5 million ducat loan that accompanied the general settlement of 1577.

²⁶ For bankers residing in Spain, we use the Spanish spelling of the banking families' names throughout. For those residing abroad, such as the Fugger, we keep the original language spelling.

and Esteban Grillo providing a loan of 100,000 ecús to the king.²⁷ The brothers Augustín, Tadeo, and Pablo Gentil join forces in several contracts between 1567 and 1569.²⁸ Lending in small syndicates was common. Of 438 total transactions, 141 had multiple lenders. They account for 30% of all money lent.

Figure 3: Cumulative lending to Philip II by rank of lending family, 1566–1600



Lending was heavily concentrated. While 130 individuals from 63 families lent to Philip II, a few account for the bulk of funds. The top 10 banking families were responsible for more than 70% of all money lent. The Spinola, Grimaldo, and Fugger families extended 40% of all loans. In contrast, the bottom 48 lenders combined provided less credit than the Spinola family alone. Figure 3 plots the cumulative percentage of the total amount

²⁷ AGS, Contadurías Generales, Legajo 85. “Gerónimo Grillo y Esteban Grillo. Traslado del asiento con ellos tomado a 13 de marzo de 1572.”

²⁸ AGS, Contadurías Generales, Legajos 84 and 85.

lent to the Crown against the rank of the banking family. The Gini coefficient of 0.73 indicates a highly unequal distribution.

Lending relationships proved to be enduring. The Fugger started lending to Charles V early in the century and continued until 1596. Jakob Fugger lent in 1519. His nephew, Anton Fugger, does the same in the 1550s, and in 1590 we find Jakob's great-grandson, Marcos Fugger, also providing credit to the king.²⁹ The Grimaldo family lent 27 times between 1566 and 1589. The record holders in terms of frequency were the Spinola, whose members participated in a total of 98 loan contracts over the period 1566–1599.

Table 2: Place of delivery of asientos

Location	Delivery	
	In 1566 ducats	In percent
Castile	31,407,408	37.8%
Flanders	30,383,774	36.5%
Italy	16,588,412	19.9%
Elsewhere	4,808,984	5.8%
Total	83,188,578	100%

Table 2 summarizes the place for delivery of funds by bankers before and after the 1575 default. Fully 62% of the amount borrowed was delivered outside Castile. Flanders was the most important foreign destination for funds. Italy was a distant second: the Mediterranean fleets were partly funded by local revenue.³⁰ Repayment typically took place in Castile. The Spanish Empire, for all its size and might, was mainly financed by the Castilian economy — the strongest in Europe at the time (Alvarez Nogal and Prados de la Escosura 2007).

²⁹ The Fugger never stopped lending for more than nine consecutive years.

³⁰ Parker (1998), p. 135.

IV. Analysis

In this section, we contrast the predictions of sovereign debt theory with the evidence we have assembled. Table 3 gives an overview of key approaches guiding our analysis. Two interpretations are not well-supported by the evidence – sanctions, and sentiment-based models. In contrast, reputation, combined with lateral enforcement amongst lenders, can explain an important part of the behavior we observe.

Table 3: Key predictions of debt models

Example	reputation	sentiment	explanation	
			sanctions	cheat-the-cheater
Example	Eaton-Gersovitz 1981	Braudel 1965; Reinhart and Rogoff 2009	Bulow-Rogoff 1989a, b	Kletzer-Wright 2000
Punishment	lending withheld	none	sanctions <i>outside lending relationship</i>	lending withheld
Duration	permanent		temporary	temporary, reversed quickly
Defaults observed in equilibrium?	no		no	yes
Commitment		none	borrowers cannot commit, lenders can	none
Banker turnover	low	high	low	low

Banker Turnover

Braudel (1966) argued that Philip II managed to borrow massively, stop payments often, and pay back little because of frequent banker turnover: “... every time the state declared itself bankrupt, bringing contracts to a violent end, there were always some actors who lost, fell through a trap-door, or tiptoed away towards the wings.”³¹ Sequential default and financial ruin of this kind requires banker irrationality. Journalistic references to Philip’s defaults often make this point, referring to bank lending as “a sober business

³¹ Braudel (1966), p. 362-3. He also argued that “the Fuggers and their acolytes, ... were to withdraw (apart from brief reappearances in 1575 and 1595) from the dangerous business of the asientos”, and that “the decree of 1st September, 1575, then, was a blow struck at the entire fortunes of the Genoese. [...] To the Genoese this brought massive losses.” [p. 351-2 and 355]

punctuated by odd moments of lunacy. Genoese lenders' indulgence of Philip II of Spain's expensive taste for warfare caused not only the first sovereign bankruptcy in 1557, but the second, third and fourth as well."³²

Did successive waves of lemming-like lenders—first from Germany, then from Italy, and finally from Portugal and Spain—enter the borrowing game? We examine the nationality of bankers in our database. The 438 loan transactions demonstrate that the composition of financiers remained stable throughout. After 1575, the share of Spaniards declined from 28.8% to 25.6%. The German bankers, who were allegedly burned by the first bankruptcy, acted as a continuous source of funding. Their share more than doubled—from 4.3% to 10.9%—after the third bankruptcy. The Genoese provided 67% of the loans before the 1575 bankruptcy and 64% after it. Thus there is little to suggest that the king's access to finances depended on the repeated fooling of bankers from different countries.

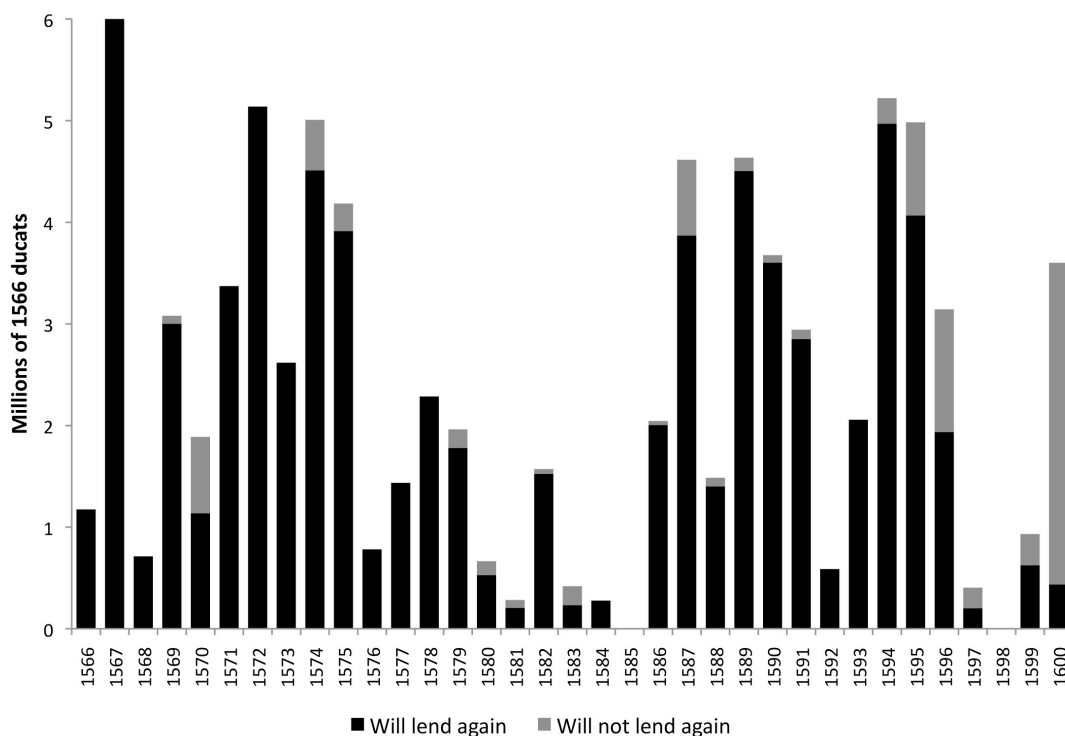
Was the frequency of repeat business unusually low after the bankruptcy? We define repeat lenders as those who offered funds during one of the preceding 50 transactions. This gives us a time-varying measure of banker turnover. The volume of lending by bankers without a prior relationship was small throughout. During the period as a whole, an average of 85.4% of borrowing came from bankers who had lent recently. In the seven years before the 1575 suspension, 91% of lending was repeat business; for the seven years thereafter, this figure was 89%.³³ Repeat lending continued after 1575, and much of Philip's borrowed money came from bankers who had lent to him earlier.

³² *The Economist*, 23–29 September 2006.

³³ See the online appendix for a complete yearly chart of repeat lending.

Other financiers, whose expectations were disappointed by the bankruptcy and its resolution, may have decided to cease lending. To examine this possibility, we look at *exits* from the pool of active bankers. Figure 4 shows the evolution of funds provided by bankers that will not lend again.

Figure 4: Annual volume lent in terms of future interactions with the king



Few lenders terminated their lending relationship with Philip II. Conditional on having lent in a single transaction, the chance that the same banker will enter into another contract is 88%. Crucially, the period before the bankruptcy of 1575 does not show a spike in bankers who subsequently exit our sample. Bankers who lent before the bankruptcy had a 3.8% likelihood of dropping out of the business, compared with 4.4%

afterwards.³⁴ The folly of bankers—lured into lending by the king, only to be ruined by repeated defaults—cannot account for the behavior we document.

After the 1577 *medio general*, there was little lending. Did access to credit suffer after the default? This is unlikely, for two reasons. First, Philip received a fresh loan (worth 4.2 million ducats over three years) from the most influential lenders prior to the default: the Grimaldo, Lomelín, de la Torre, Centurión, Spinola, Grillo, Cattaneo, Lercaro, and Gentil families. This is comparable to the peak volume of pre-default lending. Second, both ordinary tax revenues and silver remittances were unusually strong in the years 1576–1581. Figure 2 (in Section II) shows the evolution of total revenues relative to trend. 1575 saw a large tax increase. Sales-tax revenue grew from 1.1 million ducats in 1575 to 3.2 million in 1576 and 1577 before settling down to an annual rate of 2.4 million, more than twice its pre-default level.³⁵ Silver revenue also surged, amounting to almost 2 million ducats in 1577 (compared with an average of 0.7 million between 1570 and 1575). Overall, lending during the 8 years after 1576 declined by 2.1 million ducats p.a. compared to the period before. Annual revenue was up by 1.8 million ducats. In addition, warfare in the Low Countries declined following the Pacification of Ghent. Lower borrowing does not imply that the Crown was shut out of credit markets. Rather, the elimination of the deficit through a combination of revenue windfalls and lower expenditure made further borrowing unnecessary.

The results presented so far suggest that banker irrationality is not a probable explanation for continued lending to Philip II. The same banking families, from the same

³⁴ Because our data set ends in 1600, those lending for the first time later in our sample period have less of a chance to enter into repeat business. This explains the gradual increase of the proportion in the ‘never again’ category over the final few years. In the online appendix, we also look at exits of lenders who had a pre-1575 relationship. There was no discontinuity after the payment stop.

³⁵ All the fiscal data are from Drelichman and Voth (2010b).

countries, supplied funds to the monarch throughout his reign. They did so regardless of the defaults: the rate of banker turnover does not change after the payment stops. This makes it unlikely that lender sentiment, as suggested by Braudel, was responsible for the king's continued access to funds.

Stopping Transfers

Conklin (1998) argued that sovereign lending to Philip II was sustainable because Genoese bankers had a powerful sanctioning mechanism – stopping transfers to Flanders. After the 1575 bankruptcy, they used this penalty. According to Conklin, the Genoese refusal to transfer cut off funding for the Army of Flanders. This caused the 1576 mutiny. It culminated in the sack of Antwerp and undermined Spain's position in Flanders. Having learned his lesson, the king quickly settled with his bankers. In Conklin's view, the case of Philip II's debts thus gives powerful support to the sanctions view in the sovereign debt literature (Bulow and Rogoff 1989b).

We show that the Genoese failed to impose sanctions on the monarch. The transfer stop was ineffective, and the 1576 mutiny was not caused by a cash shortage. Mutinies were common in Flanders – Spanish troops there rebelled 32 times during the reign of Philip II (Parker 1973). Transfers continued apace after the payment stop; the king sent more than enough money to Flanders to pay off the rebellious soldiers. A shortage of funds cannot have been responsible for the mutiny. Instead, a crisis of political authority was crucial for turning an everyday 'soldiers' strike' into a major setback. We reconstruct total transfers from the *asientos* in our database. Table 4 shows

volumes transferred to Flanders between 1566 and 1577, as derived from the archival record.³⁶

Table 4: Amounts transferred to Flanders (ducats)

Year	Transfers	Year	Transfer
1566	390,111	1572	434,248
1567	1,830,243	1573	925,937
1568	92,040	1574	1,479,735
1569	180,394	1575	1,610,422
1570	130,384	1576	889,988 ^a
1571	0	1577	1,192,933

Note: The 1577 value is the amount transferred before the *medio general*.

^a In addition to this amount, Conklin (1998, note 11) reports that the Crown physically transported slightly under 400,000 ducats to Flanders in 1576.

Sources: Archivo General de Simancas, Contadurías Generales, Legajos 86-93; Vázquez de Prada (1960, pp. 330-3).

After the decree suspending payments from September 1575, the Genoese stopped all lending and transfers. Other bankers did not lend, but they moved funds. In total, German and Spanish bankers transferred 2.1 million ducats during the two years of the suspension.³⁷ Combined with the 400,000 ducats transported directly to Flanders, an average of 1.25 million ducats per year were available. In the four years prior to the decree, average remittances ran at 1.1 million per annum. Thus, after 1575, the Crown had access to nearly the same amount of money in Flanders as before. Only the peak remittances of 1574-75 were higher than transfers in 1576 and 1577.

How much would have been necessary to pay off the mutineers? Total pay owed amounted to 123,000 ecús in August 1576. Philip II transferred 400,000 ecús to Flanders between May and August, 300,000 of which were earmarked for the mutineers (Gachard

³⁶ Our coding of the *asientos* in the archive of Simancas allows us to separate transfers to Flanders from those to other destinations, which were not part of the penalty suggested by Conklin. The transfers during the bankruptcy years are also discussed in Lapeyre (1953), p. 22, Vázquez de Prada (1960), pp. 330-3, and Ulloa (1977), pp. 795-6.

³⁷ Ulloa (1977), pp. 795-6.

1861). The total sent exceeded the demands of the mutineers by a factor of two *before the sack of Antwerp*. Philip II never lacked the funds to put an end to the mutiny, nor the means to transfer them. What was missing were loyal officials willing to carry out Philip's orders. The untimely death of the Governor General, Don Luis de Requesens, in March 1576 created a power vacuum. Elements of the Dutch nobility seized control of the Council of State in a coup, trying to reduce Spanish influence. In the online appendix, we use a close reading of Philip II's correspondence to show that the crisis of authority following the Governor General's death was crucial for turning an everyday mutiny into an important setback for Spain.

The decision by the Genoese to stop transfers was not only ineffective. It also made no difference to the mutiny, considered by Conklin as the crucial punishment. Philip II's position in 1576 was clearly not comfortable. Yet Bulow-Rogoff sanctions require a punishment *beyond halting normal lending*. Whatever the Genoese did beyond suspending lending clearly did not work. To explain why lending to Philip II was sustainable, we must look for explanations other than sanctions.

Philip exempted one banking family from the bankruptcy decree—the Fugger. They were essential for transfers after 1575. Yet not even the Fugger lent after 1575. We next describe how this simple fact can help us shed light on what sustained lending to a sovereign monarch such as Philip II.

Reputation and the Genoese Coalition

To keep the king from defaulting, incentives other than direct penalties must have been at work. Lending structure was important for aligning incentives. The Genoese provided funds in overlapping groups. Approximately one third of all transactions involved more

than a single banking family.³⁸ This created a de facto network or alliance of financiers that would act as one – a lenders’ coalition. Contemporaries referred to the Genoese as a closely-knit group, subject to the same treatment by the king, and acting largely in concert.³⁹

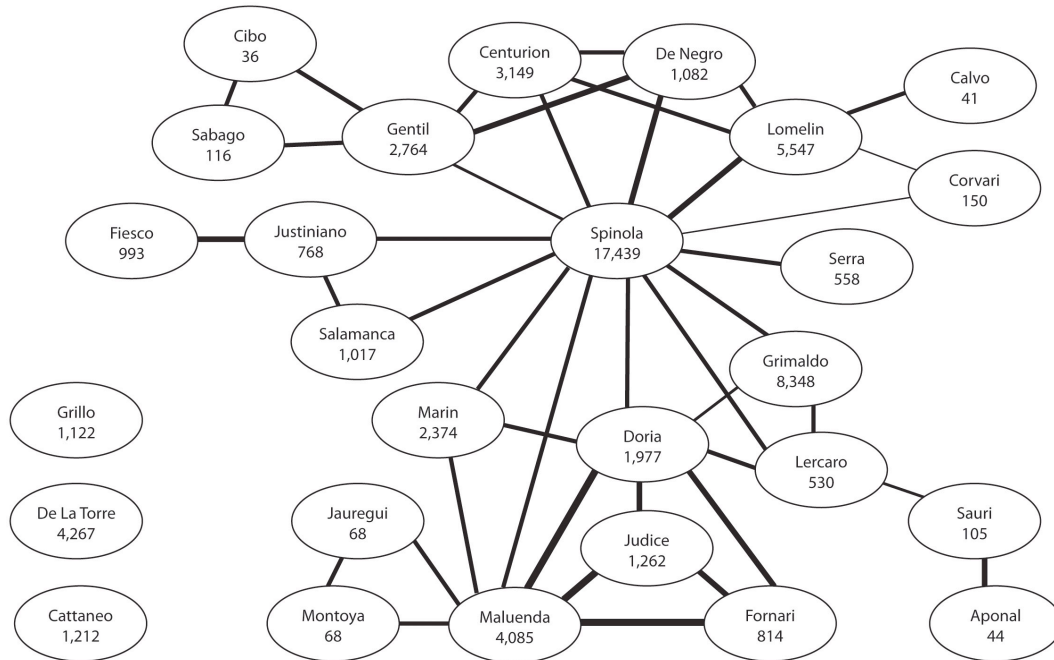
Some of the co-lending relationships involved multiple loans by stable groups of bankers. For example, Lucián Centurión and Agustín Spinola lent together no fewer than seven times during 1566–1567. In other cases, the co-lending occurred only once. Most of the network members were engaged in repeated interactions with each other. The Grimaldo and Spinola families often co-lent, as did the Judice and Doria and the Centurión and De Negro. One family stands out as the ‘spider in the web’: the Spinola. Their transactions involved 16 other banking families as partners. The next most influential, the Doria, lent together with seven other dynasties. The Doria and the Spinola networks were linked through loans they provided together as well as by both families co-lending with the Grimaldo, the Lercaro, the Marín, and the Maluenda. Many of these families also played a leading role in Genoese politics since the 1270s. Figure 5 provides an overview of the network’s structure.⁴⁰

³⁸ Whether the Genoese with their high degree of collaboration constituted a cartel has been debated in the historical literature (Alvarez Nogal 2003). We do not take a view on their pricing behavior. We refer to them as a network simply because of their co-lending and their behavior during the defaults.

³⁹ Cf. the Fugger correspondence summarized in Karnehm (2003) and the several pieces of official correspondence in De Carlos Morales (2008).

⁴⁰ The online appendix shows the structure of the network when only the transactions prior to 1575 are taken into account, illustrating the links between bankers that participated in the *medio general*.

Figure 5: The Genoese network



The numbers below family names show total lending in thousands of 1566 ducats.

Thicker lines indicate higher average lending (scaled by the log of lending volume). The Grimaldo, Lomelín, De La Torre, Centurión, Spinola, Grillo, Cattaneo, Lercaro and Gentil families are all linked in the four contracts stipulated in the *medio general*, but for clarity of exposition those links are not shown here.

We define all transactions by bankers who co-lend—either through joint loans or through sharing business partners—as network lending. This must constitute a lower bound on the actual business and family relationships between bankers.⁴¹ Even under this restrictive definition, bankers in the network accounted for a large share of transactions and lending volume. There are only 27 families (out of 63 total) in the largest network we

⁴¹ To further illustrate how our definition understates the true extent of the network, we return to an example given previously. As part of an *asiento* with Francisco Spinola, the king agreed to drop lawsuits against Lucían Centurión, Antonio Alvarez de Alcócer, and Manuel Caldera. These four bankers were clearly connected, but we do not consider Alcócer and Caldera to be network members because they never lent to the king in conjunction with other bankers.

identify, but they account for 72% of principal and for almost the same proportion of all transactions (see Table 5).

Table 5: Network lending (millions of 1566 ducats)

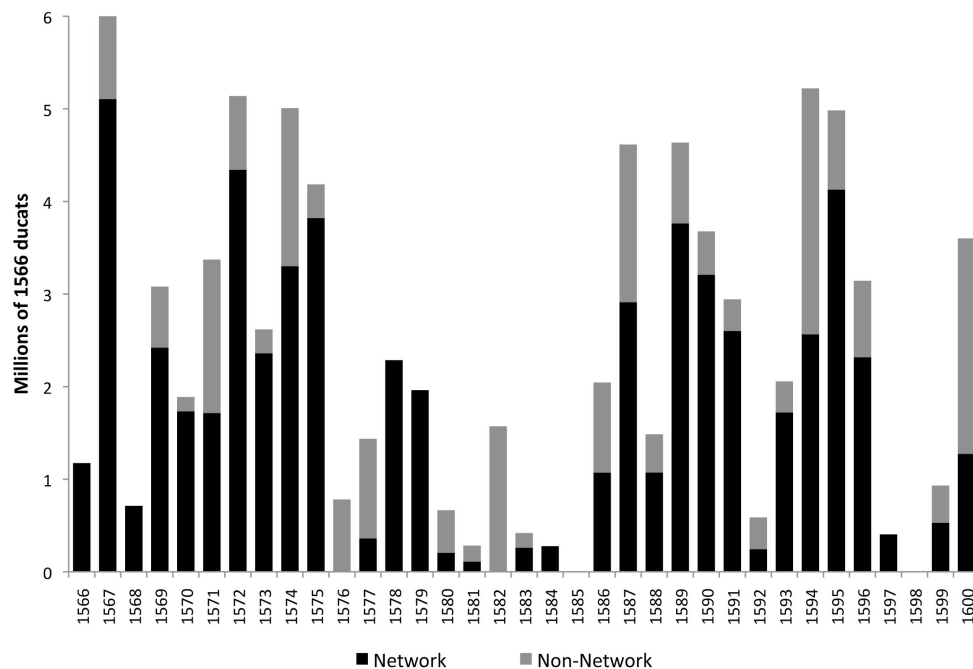
	Number of		Volume lent
	Families	Transactions	
Network	27	308	59.9
Non-network	36	130	23.2
Total	63	438	83.1
Network	43%	70%	72%
Non-network	57%	30%	28%

Source: Archivo General de Simancas, Contadurías Generales, Legajos 86–93.

Over time, the size of the network was broadly stable. Before the bankruptcy of 1575, network members accounted for 80% of lending; after it, for 67%. There were two years when the king borrowed or transferred funds without any support of network members. In 1576, no banker was lending to the king, and the entire amount transacted consisted of transfers by non-network members. In 1582, the king borrowed almost exclusively from the Fugger, the most prominent family outside the network.⁴²

⁴² The largest loan by the Fugger was for 1.3 million ducats in 1594, a year in which the silver fleets did not sail.

Figure 6: Lending by network members, 1566–1600



Co-lending was not the only way in which the network operated. In many cases, collateral was passed from one banker to the next.⁴³ This practice made it much more difficult for the king to selectively default on members of the Genoese coalition. Cross-posted collateral could be seized by lenders left out of a deal. Thus, the use of *juros* as collateral enhanced network cohesion. Collecting debts on behalf of other bankers was also common. Often, the king borrowed from one banker and agreed to repay another banker's loan as part of the new deal. In addition, the king also promises repayment through other bankers. All these agency relationships hindered side deals.

For example, the king borrows 80,000 ducats from Lucian Centurion and Agustin Spinola in 1569.⁴⁴ Half of the repayment comes in the form of tax revenue; the other half

⁴³ See e.g. AGS, Contadurías Generales, Legajo 85, where several loans made by Lorenzo Spinola are collateralized with bonds held by Nicolao de Grimaldo.

⁴⁴ AGS, Contadurías Generales, Legajo 85. "Lucián Centurión y Agustín Spinola. Traslado del asiento con ellos tomado a 2 de mayo de 1569."

from a group of six Genoese bankers.⁴⁵ This type of arrangement made it difficult for the king to default and then enter into a special deal with the Spinola family. They were substantial backers of Philip, lending the largest quantity (17 million ducats) of all banking families. Yet in these two contracts alone, had the Spinola cut the other bankers out of any arrangement, funds equal to half the principal could have been seized.

Similarly, on 5 March 1595 the king agrees to borrow 330,000 ducats from Francisco and Pedro de Maluenda. Repayment is via Adán de Vivaldo, from whom the king also borrows. Vivaldo, a Spanish banker, does not co-lend with the Genoese in any of our contracts. This illustrates that multilateral relationships among bankers transcended mere co-lending. Some of the relationships that emerge from our sources link members of the network that do not co-lend. The Lomelín and Grimaldo families do not join the same syndicates. Nonetheless, as part of a lending contract between the king and Baltasar Lomelín, in 1588 both Esteban Lomelín and Doña Sasandra de Grimaldo are allowed to change the tax stream against which their long-dated debt is secured (a transaction that increases the value of the debt they hold).

Cooperation among bankers also extended beyond lending. In 1567, for example, Tomás de Marín accepted a deposit of 300,000 ducats from the king in Milan but then failed to repay. Nicolao de Grimaldo stepped in, agreeing to lend the king the same amount if the case against Marín was dropped. The deposit at Marín's bank was converted into a perpetual rent in favor of the king at 8% interest.⁴⁶ As another example,

⁴⁵ These were Nicolás and Visconte Cattaneo, Alberto Pinelo, Miguel de Mena, Constantin Gentil, Benito Sabago, and Juan Antonio de Negro. Many of them also lend in syndicated loans with the Spinola and Centurion families.

⁴⁶ AGS, Contadurías Generales, Legajo 84. "Tomás de Marín. Asiento tomado con Pirro Boqui en su nombre." We never observe Grimaldo and Marín lending together to the king. Nonetheless, they both belonged to the network because they did extend loans jointly with other bankers.

in 1587 the king entered into an *asiento* for a million ducats with Agustín Spinola. The king agreed to drop a number of lawsuits against three other bankers, Lucían Centurión, Antonio Alvarez de Alcócer, and Manuel Caldera.⁴⁷ Bankers also used their network clout to force the king to honor his commitments. For example, a 30,000 ecú loan by Francisco Spinola in 1588 included a clause that required the king to settle an old debt with Lorenzo Lomelín.⁴⁸

We argue that network membership and syndicated lending were crucial in sustaining sovereign borrowing. For this argument to stick, there should be no other reasons for co-lending. However, larger loans could require the resources of more than one banking family. Pooling would then reflect capacity constraints. The data do not support such an interpretation. Single family loans are actually slightly larger (by one percent) than multifamily loans. Loan duration was very similar, too – 26.4 months for single family loans vs. 25.5 months for the rest. Transfers, another possible reason for co-lending, are also more common in the single family loans than in the multifamily ones. All other observables, including interest rates, the use of collateral, and contingency clauses show no major differences. We conclude that loan requirements or simple ‘capacity constraints’ on the part of lenders cannot be the reason for co-lending.

While our quantitative analysis focuses on syndicated lending, direct financial links are only a subset of the web of relationships amongst banking families. Ties through marriage can be particularly powerful.⁴⁹ We use the partial genealogies for seven

⁴⁷ AGS, Contadurías Generales, Legajo 88. “Agustín Spinola, hijo de Francisco difunto. Asiento tomado con él sobre un millón de ducados que provee en Italia.”

⁴⁸ AGS, Contadurías Generales, Legajo 88. “Lo que por mi mandado se asienta y concierta con Francisco Spinola genovés sobre 30,000 escudos.”

⁴⁹ For example, the text of the *medio general* specifies that Esteban Lomelín is Nicolao de Grimaldo’s son-in-law. AGS, Consejo y Juntas de Hacienda, Libro 42. Similar family relationships are occasionally mentioned in the text of the *asientos*.

Genoese banking families documented in the Doria Archive of Genoa to explore these ties (Saginati 2004). Six families intermarried amongst each other while also co-lending; they account for 47% of all network lending. There are also five other families that intermarry with other network members, although they do not co-lend with the families they marry into. They contributed 9.5% of total network lending.⁵⁰ Co-lending was only one dimension of important other connections.⁵¹ Since our genealogical data is limited, these results constitute a lower bound on the ties that transcend joint lending.

Cheat-the-Cheater Enforcement

Two factors interacted to make lending to Philip II sustainable: the stability of the bankers' network and the presence of a dominant lender. The Genoese coordinated their actions closely. Because of his financing needs, Philip II could not do without the Genoese coalition. Therefore, he eventually had to settle with the bankers when they imposed a moratorium on him.⁵² This also made it unappealing for outsiders to start lending. This illustrates the importance of market structure, along the lines of Kovrijnykh and Szentes (2007) and Wright (2002). Genoese market power derived from control over the only means that allowed intertemporal 'barter'. Crucially, there was no entry of new lenders and no disintegration of the dominant Genoese network. Our preferred interpretation emphasizes 'cheat the cheater' enforcement (Kletzer and Wright 2000).

⁵⁰ Three families both intermarried with network members with whom they co-lent, and with other network members that did not feature on the same loan documents.

⁵¹ In the online appendix, we augment figure 6 by including intermarriages. Figure A3 graphically illustrates the extent to which members of the coalition were interconnected, be it by co-lending or by intermarriage.

⁵² Recent examples of historical network analysis include Jobst and Flandreau (2005) and Carlos et al. (2007).

The crucial test of any coalition occurs in times of crisis. Genoese lenders experienced two: the defaults of 1575 and 1596.⁵³ In both, the king needed cash urgently. The sack of Antwerp had weakened Spain's position in the Low Countries. It took eight years and a large offensive just to recover lost ground; victory began to look unlikely. Similarly, the threat of an English invasion in 1596 forced heavy spending to rebuild the fleet lost during the Armada. During these episodes, both the Crown and individual bankers from the network explored the possibility of a side deal. None was concluded, nor did any new lender enter. A combination of social enforcement mechanisms (among the Genoese) and incentives (for the Genoese and all other potential lenders) were responsible for this outcome.

During the debt renegotiations of 1576–1577 and 1596–1597, the king's representatives attempted to undermine the coalition's cohesion. They focused on the Spinola family as well as selected large bankers. Despite offering preferential treatment of old debts in exchange for fresh loans, no deal was concluded. In 1576, Lorenzo Spinola and Nicolao de Grimaldo engaged in protracted negotiations but failed to come to an agreement with the Crown (Lovett 1982, pp. 12–13; De Carlos Morales 2008, p. 170). Eventually Nicolao de Grimaldo took part in the *medio general*. Although Lorenzo Spinola did not participate in the negotiations of the general settlement, his brother Agustín (a member of the family partnership) did. Overall, 93% of the loans in default were rescheduled. The remaining ones were contracts with small bankers that did not take part in the negotiations but were offered the same terms at a later date. In 1596, Ambrosio Spinola played a double game. He negotiated on behalf of other network members while

⁵³ The earlier defaults involved loans by the Fugger and Welser to Charles V. The settlements involved large transfers of physical assets—including mines, land, and tax farms—that are difficult to value. Furthermore, our series of *asientos* extends back only to 1566.

discussing a special deal for himself. At the same time, the Crown also offered favored treatment to a small syndicate. In the end, all bankers again settled on identical terms through a general agreement (Sanz Ayán 2004, pp. 34-36). We do not know exactly what was on the minds of the Genoese banking families as they decided to maintain the moratorium, but it seems likely that the tight network of mutual commercial and other relationships kept individual opportunistic behavior in check.

By analyzing the behavior and writings of bankers outside the coalition, we can gain further insight into the motivations of both Genoese and others. Throughout the second half of the 16th century, Philip borrowed from 36 families that did not belong to the Genoese network – a ‘competitive fringe’. The most important bankers outside the network were the Fugger, who were responsible for about half the volume of transfers to Flanders during the 1575 suspension. To be able to transfer, the Crown continued to service its debt with the Fuggers. The Royal advisor Dávalos de Sotomayor said as much: “Your majesty has the inexcusable obligation . . . of paying back the Fugger, who are not affected by the decree, somewhat less than two [million ducats]”.⁵⁴ Transfer and lending operations were kept separate.⁵⁵

The Fugger tried to benefit from the crisis in the Netherlands and the Crown’s need for funds. The Fugger agent in Spain, Tomás Miller, suggested a loan to pay Spanish troops in the Low Countries.⁵⁶ In the end, there was no new lending by the Fugger until 1580. What stopped them was the fear of being defaulted upon if they lent

⁵⁴ Cited in Lovett (1982), p. 13.

⁵⁵ There is one possible exception: the transfer of 100,000 ducats to Flanders in 1576. The initial request by Garnica, one of the King’s officials, was for 50,000 ducats to be advanced by the Crown with the rest to be paid from the next year’s tax increase. But we have no evidence that the Fugger actually lent any of this money.

⁵⁶ Lovett (1982), p. 13.

during the moratorium. The Fugger family in Germany took a dim view of the new loan proposed by Miller. Hans Fugger wrote to his brother Marx, emphasizing that Miller must be stopped. Otherwise, the Fugger would be cheated and end up being included in the payment stop.⁵⁷ If a new loan goes forward, he fears that

the Spaniards will forever take advantage of us, they will suck us dry and exploit our position, and *if we don't do everything they say*, they will throw us into the decree,⁵⁸ and ... mistreat us like the Genoese, whose fate we have before our own eyes.⁵⁹

What was on the mind of Hans Fugger is clear enough: after receiving fresh funds, the king would default on them, too. Thus, the Augsburg banking family decided to follow the network's behavior in lockstep. The Fugger's concern illustrates what Kletzer and Wright (2000) call a 'cheat the cheater' mechanism. Because they would not be able to satisfy all of the king's demands, the Fugger saw it as a virtual certainty that they would be cheated and defaulted upon. The reason they could not satisfy every possible demand by Philip is also clear: his smoothing needs were simply too large. Eventually the king would have to settle with the Genoese. Then, the Fugger would lose everything. There is every reason to believe that the same logic that kept the Fugger from lending was also a constraining the behavior of the Genoese bankers. Thus, the power of the 'cheat the cheater' mechanism reflected the Genoese coalition's market power, deterring insider

⁵⁷ "Du siehst, daß sich von Tag zu Tag die Servitios, so wir dem König [von Spanien] thun müeßen hauffen" Karnehm (2003), p. 408-9. ...wirds ain grosse Notturfft erfordern, dem T[homas] Miller ain Bys einzulegen, wir khummen sonst burlando ins Decret." According to Karnehm (2003), "burlare" here means "fraudulently"; an alternative translation is "mockingly".

⁵⁸ That is, apply the Royal Decree that imposed the payment moratorium on the lenders.

⁵⁹ "die Sp[ani]er [werden sich] unser zu ewigen Zeitten . . . bedienen wellen, uns aussaugen, und nött[igen], wan wir dann nit jederzeit thun werden, was Sie wellen, so wirdt man uns das Decret fürwerffen, und sagen, man wöll uns darein schließen und tractieren wie die Genueser, wie dan schon vor Augen." Letter from Hans Fugger to Marx Fugger, 5 September 1576, cited in Karnehm (2003), pp. 408-9; emphasis added.

defections as well as outsiders. As in Wright (2002), syndicated lending is a key factor sustaining the market power of the dominant banker coalition.

V. Conclusions

We examine lending under ‘anarchy’ in a prototypical environment – the case of Philip II of Spain. He accumulated towering debts, and stopped all payments to his bankers four times. Using a new data set collected from the General Archive of Simancas, we document a unique way in which his Genoese bankers overcame enforcement and collective action problems — lending in overlapping syndicates. By structuring incentives through a private order institution (Greif 2006), the largest and most important bankers acted as if they were a single financial entity, a lenders’ coalition. Effective coordination between lenders gave the coalition substantial market power vis-à-vis the king; in effect, Philip II had access to only a few lenders who acted in unison. Ultimately, we argue that ‘cheat-the-cheater’ incentives (Kletzer and Wright 2000) ensured that a simple lending moratorium of the Genoese was sufficient to force a powerful monarch like Philip II to pay his debts.

The crucial test for our hypothesis is the default of 1575. Lenders had few ways to sanction Philip II by means other than a stop to lending. They attempted to impose a transfer stop that would have cut off funding for the troops in Flanders. We document that this penalty was ineffective. Crucially, Spain’s major setback in the Netherlands in 1576 was not driven by a funding crisis, but by the volatile politics of the time. The Fugger and other bankers continued to transfer funds for the Spanish sovereign, and enough money was made available in the Netherlands to pay off the mutineers.

Therefore, the case of Philip II cannot be claimed as an example of Bulow-Rogoff style sanctions.⁶⁰

Banker irrationality or ‘sentiment’ also played no role in lending to the Spanish monarch. Contrary to the argument in Braudel (1966), banker turnover was minimal. There was no mass exodus of lenders following the defaults. This suggests that expectations were not massively disappointed by the temporary payment stops and general settlements with bankers.

When the payment stop of 1575 came, neither new nor existing lenders undermined the Genoese lenders’ moratorium. The reason is that doing so was unlikely to make money. The king’s borrowing needs were so high that he would eventually have to settle with the Genoese coalition. Because the Genoese acted in unison, any lender who had offered funds to Philip II during the moratorium would most likely be cheated, in line with the predictions of Kletzer and Wright (2000).

Lending occurred under conditions of anarchy, with neither side being able to make commitments. Why established lenders in the Genoese coalition repeatedly agreed to debt reductions and a resumption of lending is also probably best explained by the market power derived from the group’s cohesion (Kovrijnykh and Szentes 2007). This ensured that, even after earlier debts had been reduced, future profits would be ample. Far from indicating banker irrationality and the importance of lender sentiment, the boom-and-bust cycles of the 16th-century Spanish monarchy reflect the efficiency and flexibility of private-order institutional arrangements.

⁶⁰ This is the case made by Conklin (1998).

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Online Appendix I

Table A1: Value of repeat lending (millions of constant ducats)

Year	Repeat lenders	Sporadic lenders	% Repeat lending
1569	2.642	0.275	90.6%
1570	1.851	0.036	98.1%
1571	2.386	0.986	70.8%
1572	4.374	0.764	85.1%
1573	2.618	0.000	100.0%
1574	5.007	0.000	100.0%
1575	3.928	0.256	93.9%
1576	0.781	0.000	100.0%
1577	1.436	0.000	100.0%
1578	2.286	0.000	100.0%
1579	1.962	0.000	100.0%
1580	0.459	0.205	69.2%
1581	0.152	0.130	53.9%
1582	0.954	0.617	60.7%
1583	0.238	0.181	56.8%
1584	0.000	0.277	0.0%
1585	0.000	0.000	—
1586	1.644	0.401	80.4%
1587	4.348	0.266	94.2%
1588	1.276	0.209	85.9%
1589	4.406	0.229	95.1%
1590	3.584	0.092	97.5%
1591	2.567	0.376	87.2%
1592	0.587	0.000	100.0%
1593	1.870	0.186	90.9%
1594	3.418	1.804	65.5%
1595	4.023	0.960	80.7%
1596	2.728	0.414	86.8%
1597	0.303	0.101	75.0%
1598	0.000	0.000	—
1599	0.529	0.402	56.8%
1600	1.764	1.837	49.0%
Total	64.121	11.004	85.4%

Source: Archivo General de Simancas, Contadurías Generales, Legajos 86–93.

Figure A1 examines how the composition of lending changed after the default of 1575. In the immediate aftermath of the settlement, all lending came from bankers who had made loans to the Spanish king beforehand. In the six years after 1576, 96% of funds were made available by lenders who had lent before the bankruptcy. As late as 1586, almost 9 out of 10 ducats borrowed by the king came from the same bankers who had financed his

previous ventures. As time went by, the same banking families continued to provide a high (albeit eventually declining) share of total funding. In 1596, more than 60% of funds borrowed in the short-term loan market still came from the same families that had been active before 1576.

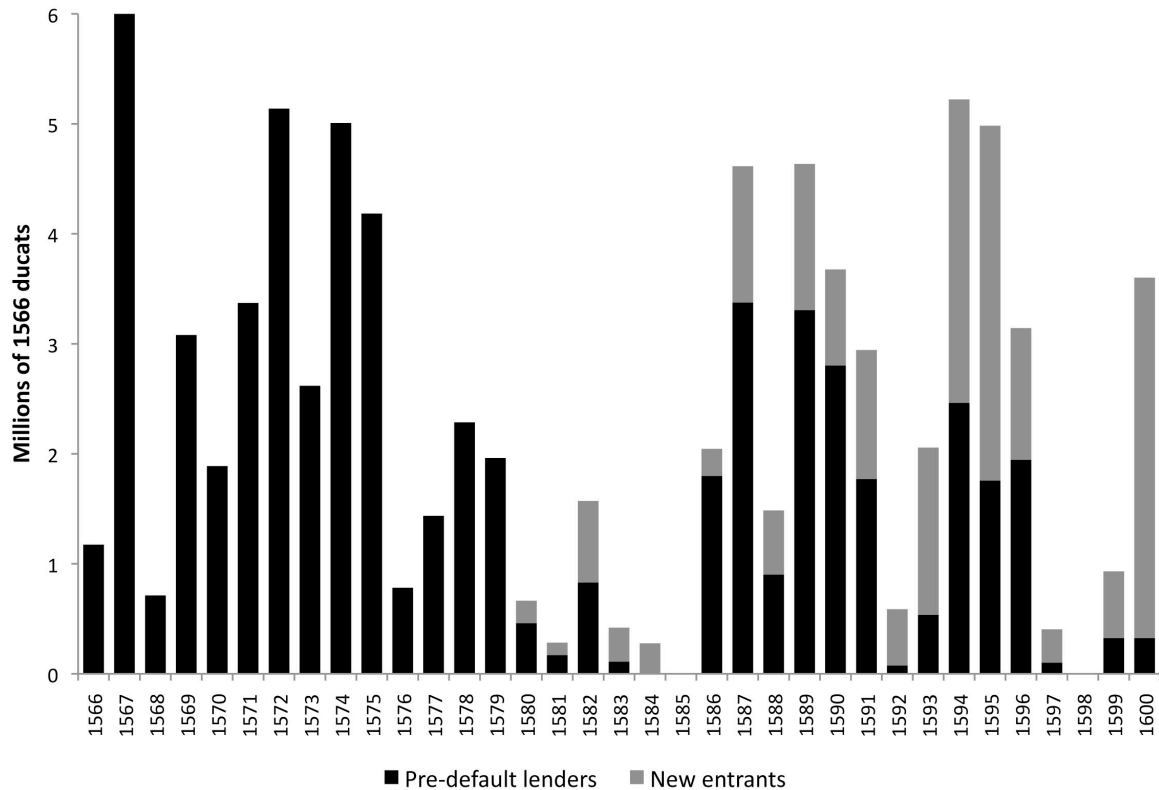


Figure A1: Value of lending by new entrants and by bankers with a pre-default relationship, 1566–1600

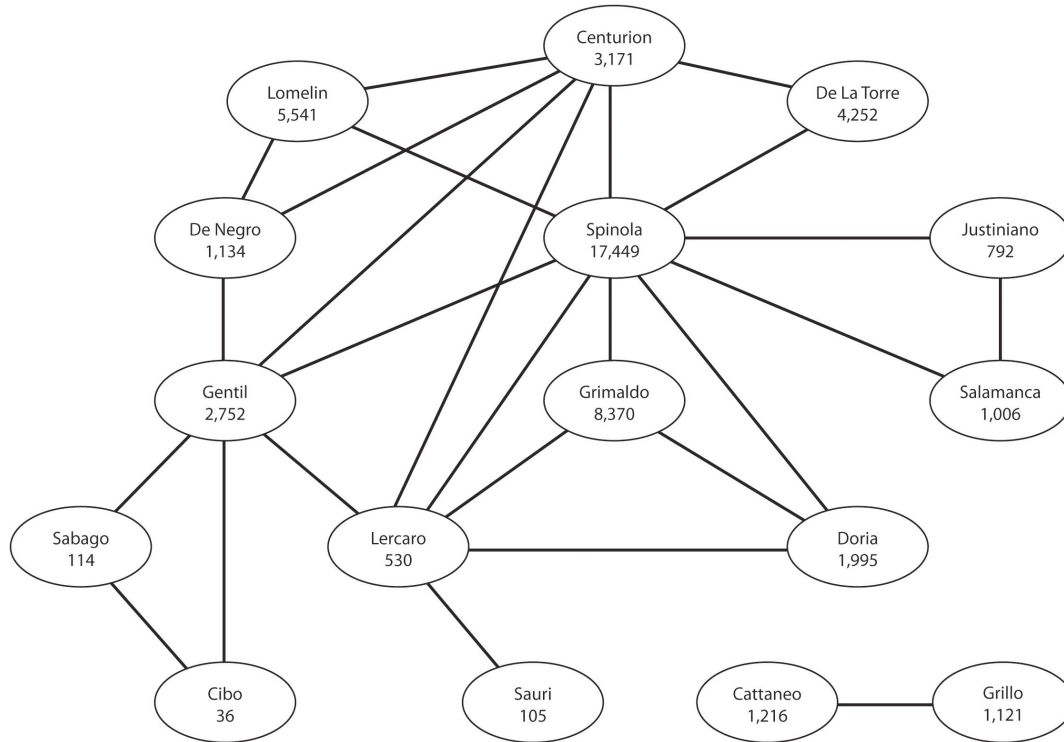


Figure A2: Structure of the network based on transactions prior to 1575 only

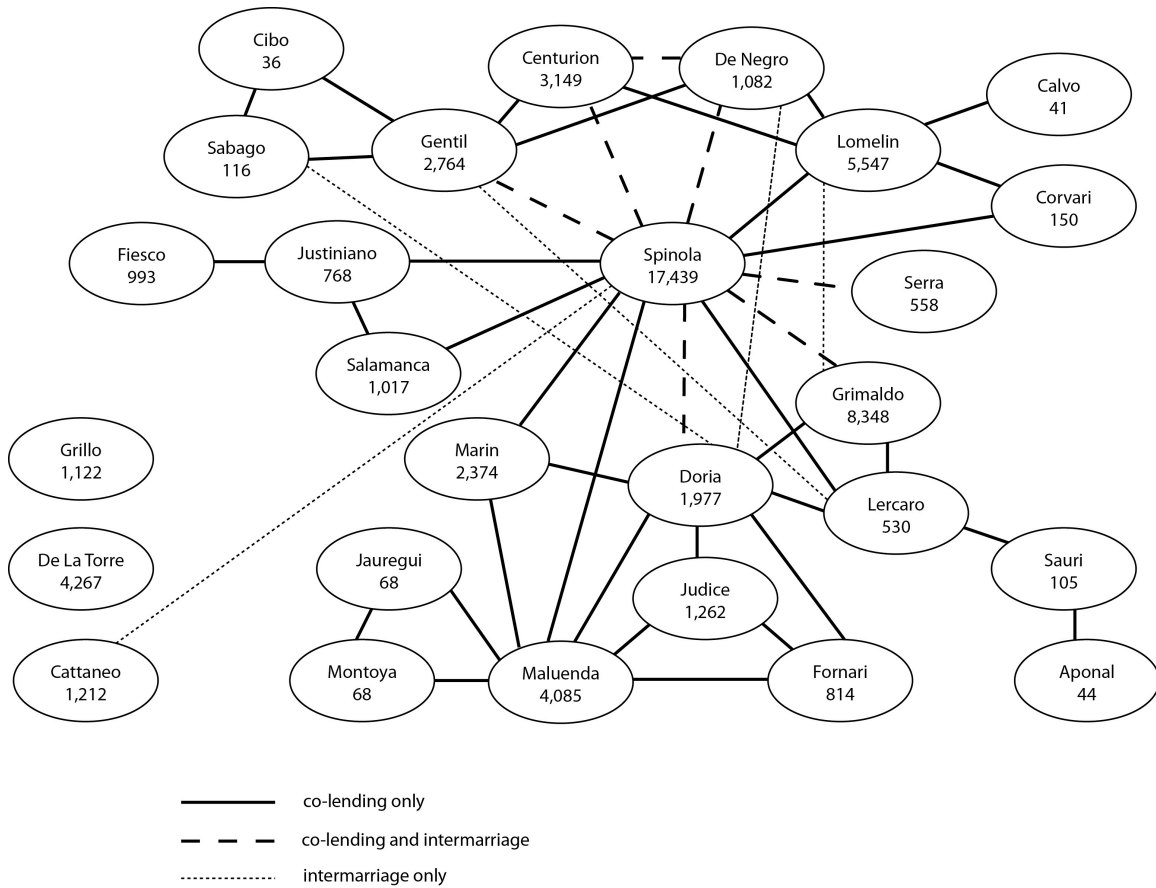


Figure A3: Structure of the network based co-lending and intermarriage

Appendix II

“Few fighting forces could boast of as many mutinies or of mutinies better organized than the Army of Flanders” (Parker 1973).

The mutiny of 1576 that led to the sack of Antwerp was neither the biggest (in terms of the number of soldiers involved), the longest, nor the most costly to resolve (on the basis of the final settlement for the mutinous troops). It was more costly than preceding mutinies, but not by a large margin – the final cost was 633,000 escudos, some 89,000 greater than the previous one (also in Antwerp, in 1574). Many of the subsequent mutinies were larger, involving more men, rebelling for longer periods, and demanding more back pay. Thus, the pay owed to the men was not unusually large in 1576. The mutiny and the sack of Antwerp therefore do not reflect a unique, catastrophic shortfall of cash, caused by the bankruptcy of 1575. Instead, it was an ordinary case of soldiers ‘on strike’ that turned out to have devastating consequences.

Why did an everyday mutiny turn into a massacre and a major setback for Spanish ambitions in the Low Countries? As in many early modern armies, troops in the Army of Flanders often went unpaid for extended periods. At the mutiny of the garrison of Antwerp in 1598, for example, one man was owed back pay since 1584. Even if this was extreme, pay received was normally only a fraction of what was owed. For example, mutineers at Zechem in 1594 had received 66 percent of the promised wages during 1582-1590 (Parker 1972). In normal times, the mutinous troops would elect a leader, expel all those who were not joining forces with them, and enter into negotiations with the government. Demands could include, in addition to back pay, a pardon for the

mutineers, and a general muster (giving a chance to join another regiment), a hospital, religious care, and cheap provisions from government granaries (Parker 1972). If resolving a mutiny took time, the government would normally move mutineers to a town of less military importance, and provide a minimum allowance (*sustento*) until enough money had arrived to pay off the men.

As table 4 showed, transfers were high, but were they sufficient? A closer look at the correspondence between the king and high-ranking officials in the Low Countries demonstrates that the turn towards violence in 1576 did not reflect a shortage of transferred funds. Philip II sent large sums to satisfy the mutineers' demands. The amount of money made available was several times larger than the back pay owed to the mutineers. As the letters between the king and local officials make clear, the Council of State, dominated by Dutch nobles, failed to employ these funds because it saw the mutiny as an opportunity to end the war by thwarting Spain's military ambitions.

In August 1576, Spain's total debt with the mutineers stood at 123,000 ecu.⁶¹ Between May and August 1576, Philip II had sent 400,000 ecu to Flanders, 300,000 of which were earmarked for the mutineers. On the 27th of August, 1576, the king wrote to Council of State (Gachard 1861): "In an attempt to remedy matters as much as possible, we [the king] have sent a few days ago a bill of exchange for 200,000 ecú, in addition to the other 100,000 ecú already sent, so that you have the means to satisfy the demands of the soldiers..." [doc 1699]. By mid-September, the Fugger alone had transferred 600,000 escudos to the Netherlands on Philip's behalf. The total transferred after the bankruptcy,

⁶¹ The eventual cost of settlement was larger, since the mutineers were joined by others and because they received back pay for the months of the mutiny.

and before the sack of Antwerp, amounted to 732,000. This is approximately five times more than the debt at that time with the mutineers.

What, then, caused the disastrous attack by mutinous troops on a loyal city? In August, the king urged the caretaker government to deal generously with the mutineers. He insisted that “it is necessary to avoid this [further conflict with the mutineers] by all possible means, as we expect you will do, by negotiating with one and the other, as well as using the money that we have sent to you in the past days.” [doc 1699] However, on the 17th of August, 1576, the Council of State wrote to the king, telling him that all attempts to subdue the rebellious provinces fighting under the lead of the Prince of Orange had failed. The only way forward, they urged, was to settle with the rebellious regions. If the king did not agree, they asked to be dismissed [doc. 1692]. In addition, the representative assembly of Brabant had authorized the raising of local troops to defend against the mutineers. Led by a local nobleman, Jacque de Glimes, these troops then proceeded to arrest the Council of State, and expelled the Spanish members. This destroyed all hope of containing the mutiny, as the new Council declared the mutineers outlaws who could be killed at will.

By mid-September, the King was in despair. He complained to the Council of its lack of “obedience and good intelligence, which ministers should have” because the mutiny had not yet been settled with the funds sent. He then commanded the Council to use the 200,000 ecu already provided with the express purpose of satisfyng the mutineers [doc. 1712]. In a letter to Gerónimo de Roda, one of Philip’s officials in the Low Countries, he emphasized that there was no problem in transferring funds.⁶² Money had

⁶² In his letter from August 27th, the king emphasized that he would “try and find other sources of funds, to send via the same (said) person, in order not to leave anything undone, so that with divine kindness it will

been available from August 21, and it should finally be used to pay off the Spanish and Walloon mutineers.

Again, the Council of State failed to do as it was told, and did not use the fresh money from Spain to pay off the mutineers. By 18th of October, Gerónimo de Roda reported that the mutineers had received no more 43,000 ecú, and that without a further 80,000 plus the two months pay since August, they were unwilling to return to the colors [doc. 1744]. Instead of following the king's orders, the Council renewed its ban on the mutinous soldiers. The estates of Flanders and Brabant published an edict declaring the Spanish mutineers outlaws, which must be put to death [doc. 1729]. This left the mutineers with no choice but to continue their armed struggle.

The correspondence between Philip II and his ministers in the Low Countries shows that political events – the untimely death of the Governor General, and the independent agendas of the local assemblies and noblemen – determined why a run-of-the-mill mutiny was not quelled quickly. Philip II repeatedly tried to get his officials to use the standard remedies to mutiny in the Army of Flanders – kindness to the soldiers, disbursement of back pay, an avoidance of conflict. All financial means necessary for a settlement were available from August 1576, three months before the sack of Antwerp. Instead, the Council of State and the Estates of Flanders and Brabant used the pretext of the mutiny, and the death of the Governor General, to pursue their own agenda – making peace with the rebels in Holland and Zeeland while expelling the Spaniards altogether.

be possible to achieve the true pacification of our good country over there.” Clearly, the king's ability to obtain money was the key difficulty – transferring was not. The king explicitly emphasized that he had good ways of transferring funds, through a trusted intermediary with all the right qualities.

Deprived of a chance to seek redress from the government in the normal way, the troops began to sack loyal cities violently – first Aalst, then Antwerp.