Post-1471 "New Monarchy" under Edward IV and Henry VII

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After 1471 and the return of Edward IV to the throne following the Readeption, royal policies saw the renewal of an expanded, powerful monarchy under an active king. Post-Victorian analyses of the late medieval shift in monarchical management have largely fallen into two opposing camps: the "New Monarchy" thesis, supported by such historians as J.R. Green, A.J. Pollard, and Steven Gunn, and the "Tudor Revolution in Government" thesis, put forth by Geoffrey Elton. While the former emphasizes a gradual centralization of power beginning under Yorkist rule and credits these monarchs with a return to the medieval – and in no real sense "new" or novel – management techniques of such monarchs as Edward I, the latter posits that such centralization began only after 1485 and was concentrated primarily in the 1530s as a Tudor phenomenon, building upon the Whiggish influence of "Lancastrian constitutionalism." Looking at the latter half of Edward IV's reign and all of Henry VII's, these late medieval monarchs concentrated power by reining in their nobles, renewing effective treasury-bolstering economic techniques within the context of a general Western European economic upturn, and standardizing and expanding the justice system and governmental bodies, thereby creating the momentum necessary for the authoritative tendencies of later Tudor reign. Given these expansions of monarchical authority under both Yorkist and Tudor rule, the theory of New Monarchy is a much more appropriate description of the period's developments than Elton's explanation, and both Edward IV and Henry VII's policies were essential to the development of bureaucratic modernity in the later Tudor administrations of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I.

Acknowledging the role of Edward IV's reign in paving the way for Tudor interventionism and, eventually, the Henrician Reformation, Green was the first to expound on the idea that the Yorkist and early Tudor monarchs created a new kind of monarchical authority.[1] While it is notable that he cited the period of 1471-1509 for this era of change, encompassing both Edward IV and Henry VII within the upswing of crown authority, this initial presentation of what became the New Monarchy thesis equated centralization of monarchical power with despotism, attaching judgment for the perceived removal of liberties in a constitutionalist bend. Again countering Elton's view of the Tudor dynasty as the starting point of this shift in government and administration, Pollard described the years preceding Henry VII's rise to the throne as "not years of continuous and all-consuming destructive anarchy," as both Victorian historians and Elton's Tudor-centric theory might have portrayed them.[2] In a more favorable interpretation than Green's, Pollard saw this process of centralizing the administration as merely an orderly system returning to Edward I's successful administrative style of management, and he did not attach Green's constitutionalist judgment to his assessment of this governmental trend because such admirable values as "chivalry could not provide the means for a lasting political solution to England's problems."[3] Emphasis on noble obedience to a monarch over considerations of the community, exemplified by the royal control of Tudor monarchs, became the solution to a crisis that arose in the absence of active kingship, the unfortunate state of Henry VI's reign.[4] Pollard even described the period of 1471-1509 as one in which "royal authority recovered and normal politics were restored," suggesting that the state of increased authority was actually a return to normalcy rather than a divergence from appropriate practice; the lack of innovation creates, to an extent, a nonthreatening historical narrative.[5]

In his work *Tudor Revolution in Government: Administrative Changes in the Reign of Henry VIII*, Elton, even within the very title of his book, narrowed the focus of his analysis of governmental shift to Henry VIII's reign and, more specifically, the 1530s of the Henrician Reformation. While this period did see some drastic change in the use of monarchical power, to highlight such a specific period as central in the overall trend of increased monarchical authority and bureaucratic modernity is to ignore the earlier centralization of authority under Edward IV and Henry VII that made the Henrician Reformation possible. Elton cited "new man" Thomas Cromwell as the main source of bureaucratic modernity during Henry VIII's reign. Given this benchmark of governmental modernity, Elton treated Edward IV and Henry VII's expansion of the royal household, which became an institutionalized governmental body, as a "temporary aberration" and "quintessentially medieval."[6] This perspective placed Henry VIII's administration as the

[1] A. Goodman, *The New Monarchy: England 1471-1534* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1.

[2] A.J. Pollard, ed., *The Wars of the Roses* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995), 2.

[3] Pollard, *Wars*, 15.

[4] Ibid., 15.

[5] Ibid.

[6] S.J. Gunn, *Early Tudor Government, 1485-1558* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995), 5.

savior that brought England into modernity, a conclusion that brings up its own questions of periodization. By imply-ing that the early modern period began squarely with the shifts of the 1530s and Henry VIII's implementation of the English Reformation, Elton created a barrier between the Middle Ages and modernity and painted all medieval gov-ernment as somewhat backward, contributing to a problematically Whiggish historiographic approach. K.B. McFar-lane and G.L. Harriss both "questioned the novelty of many of the attributes of Elton's newly forged sovereign state… finding both the establishment of a national church and the supremacy of statute strongly prefigured in the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English polity."[7] Both Henrician and especially Elizabethan policies were the "outcome of the Yorkist and Tudor experiments," including the expansion of demesne and increased reliance upon regional agents of the crown, and saw the "restoration of the old bureaucratic exchequer after two generations of turmoil," highlighting that these precursors to absolutist monarchy stemmed from the practices of the late Middle Ages.[8] As Pollard and his disciples similarly pointed out, "only a mature new monarchy could have accomplished [Henry VIII's royal suprema-cy over the church]."[9]

After Edward IV returned to the throne in 1471, the dynamic between him and his nobles contrasted greatly with the ineffective management of Henry VI's impotent reign, as Edward tightened control over the seemingly un-wieldy nobility. This addition of a central authority figure, after an essentially leaderless period, provided a necessary point of stability, as nobles had previously asserted their own claims to power in an attempt to remedy the power void at the head of the body politic. Exemplary of this new relationship between Edward and his nobles was his treatment of Warwick's holdings after his rebellion and death. Simultaneously expanding the crown's influence into local poli-tics and rewarding allegiance, Edward seized the "kingmaker's" holdings and gave a significant portion to his brother, the Duke of Clarence, for switching his allegiance from Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou's faction to his own. The re-mainder went to the Duke of Gloucester, contributing to a northern power base and extension of the royal household's authority into a region troubled by conflict with Scotland. However, such a grant, which included the title of Earl of Warwick and the income associated with it, was still contingent upon Clarence's continued loyalty, and Edward was unafraid to seize Clarence's holdings and execute him upon finding him guilty of treason in 1478. Although highlight-ing Edward's often-unappreciated ability to discipline his nobles, historian Christine Carpenter did acknowledge that the extension of the crown into local politics could have some damaging effects. Following the change from War-wick's authority to Clarence's in Warwickshire, Carpenter noted Clarence's inability to provide "extremely assertive noble intervention to bring [the Staffords] and similarly-minded gentry to heel," a phenomenon that turned Warwick's former estates into "the most disordered part of the region."[10] Without Edward's changes in regional leadership to sup-port the national aims of his administration, regional and local stability might not have been sacrificed in this manner.

However, in spite of the effects of this period of intervention on this local level, Carpenter suggested that historical accounts have been unkind to Edward and have failed to appreciate his administrative abilities in Warwick-shire following Clarence's execution, even describing Edward's rule there from 1478 to 1483 as "an almost perfect exemplification of how to use royal power to its best advantage."[11] He achieved this success because of his ability to balance the gentry's contradictory desires: the aim to pursue their own ambitions without the limitations of royal imposition of power and the simultaneous need for some restraint to prevent the damaging effects of local feuds and some self-destructive ambitions. Unlike the feuding nobles and gentry, much of the clergy remained "unassertive, and even,…cravenly subservient," as in the case of Archbishop Bouchier of Canterbury.[12] Edward's firm hand reinstituted stability in the region of Warwickshire and beyond, displaying the strong, active kingship he exhibited with hegemo-nies in other regions, such as the Woodville contingency ruling Wales in the prince's name, and on the national stage as well.

In a continuation and expansion of similar policies, Henry VII was an expert at maintaining a tight hold over his nobles, even combining this royal authority with increased revenue for the crown. Using such techniques as bonds and recognizances, peace bonds, the creation of local councils, and the institutionalization of nobles as royal council-lors, Henry extended his authority into local dynamics between gentry and nobility and kept a watchful eye over his noble subjects, ensuring at least an outward display of noble cooperation with and obedience to the crown. His monar-

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[7] Gunn, *Government*, 5.

[8] Ibid., 5.

[9] Goodman, *New Monarchy*, 3.

[10] C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 517.

[11] C. Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the constitution in England, c. 1437-1509* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 194.

[12] Pollard, *Wars*, 16.

chy became "more bound by institutions and by formal and legal routine than had been the more personal government of medieval kings," suggesting the beginnings of the bureaucratic features in the fifteenth century that Elton attributed only to Henry VIII's reign and the defined early modern period.[13] Financial fears emerged as a political tool to keep a tight reign on nobles such as the Baron of Bergavenny and the Duke of Buckingham, as the potential for debt to the crown prevented the temptation for disobedience in land agreements. Such techniques were beneficial for the crown under either potential end; stability and order would be maintained in local politics should such landowners remain within the terms of the agreement, or the crown would acquire significant financial compensation in the event of failure to uphold the agreements.[14] While this manoeuvre did provide some stability amidst the questionable legitimacy of the new Tudor dynasty, Carpenter argues that such interventionist policies were overly disruptive to local politics, failing to achieve the balance of Edward IV's brand of rule. The practice of setting up local councils, in particular, proved problematic at militarized borders – primarily Scotland, Wales, and the Pale in Ireland – by threatening the independence and autonomy of those nobles who sought to maintain order in difficult environments. The Percy family in Northumberland and the Fitzgerald earls of Kildare bore the brunt of this policy. While both monarchs crushed uncooperative nobles when necessary – Edward IV's execution of Clarence is a notable and previously discussed example within his Yorkist reign – Henry did so on a much greater scale and maintained a tighter grip on his nobles overall, even attacking the practice of retaining to weaken the numbers of a noble household as well as its ability to rival the splendour of court.

In spite of the sometimes-obstructive aspects of his greater hold on the nobility, Henry built upon the nobles' natural role as royal councillors, institutionalizing to a greater extent the Great Council, House of Lords, and Privy Council. Such a standardization of these roles created opportunities for nobles and those members of the gentry incorporated into the royal household to become politically involved in Henry's court on a consistent basis, mirroring the loyalty reward system of Edward's demesnes. Henry's implementation of this system of reward created a new pattern in regional leadership, diverging from the land-ownership basis still remaining in Edward's version and creating a network of agents whose authority was derived solely from Tudor loyalty. Such representatives of the crown's interest included the earl of Oxford, who provided military leadership at the Battle of Bosworth Field and in quashing the Northern Rising of 1489, and the earl of Surrey, who replaced the earl of Northumberland as lieutenant in the north, also as a result of the Northern Rising. While the clergy was also involved in these councils and in the politics of the realm, there was a constant power struggle between the Church of England and the "new men" of the period, such as Lovell and Cromwell. This reshaping of the court and royal councils created a "remarkable stability within the ruling groups," thereby avoiding the factionalism at the heart of the Roses, a phenomenon that plagued Henry VI's reign and, to some extent, Edward IV's.[15] In both Edward and Henry VII's cases, such grants of position allowed the kings to observe the activities of the nobility and gentry closely, reward loyalty, and punish nobles for disobedience to the crown.

Useful on both the national and international stage was the economic expansion of both Edward and Henry's administrations. Under Edward IV, England finally joined the general economic upturn of the rest of Europe. Burgundy and Flanders proved key to Edward's international economic success, as the alliance formed through the marriage of his sister Margaret to Charles the Great of Burgundy provided the necessary power base to compete with France. The advantage of the Burgundian alliance for economic benefit can be seen in such instances as the Treaty of Picquigny, a 1475 treaty with France – thanks largely to Charles – that provided both immediate and long-term income for the English crown. Terms of the treaty awarded Edward and his advisors pensions as well as ensuring the payment of customs, providing for English income from international trade. The treaty also offered a ten-year truce, providing some political stability on the international stage. Although the pensions were a favorable outcome of the campaign in France, Edward's use of taxes to fund a war he did not really fight led to the questioning of his ability to manage funds efficiently and honestly. However, in spite of repeated misappropriations of funds in the same vein, Edward managed to successfully receive parliamentary consent for a high tax rate while maintaining a cooperative relationship with Parliament and proving that the "New Monarchy" did not necessarily mean the dissolution of constitutionalism, nor did it cause the weakening of governmental bodies outside of the crown. Although Edward ran the risk of earning his subjects' displeasure for his abuse of funds, there was enough overall economic recovery to avoid any taxation crisis, thanks in large part to the Treaty of Picquigny, collection of customs, prevention of piracy, and the absorption of noble

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[13] B. Thompson, ed., *The Reign of Henry VII: Proceedings of the 1993 Harlaxton Symposium* (Stamford: Paul Watkins Publishing, 1995), 8.

[14] S.J. Gunn, "Politics and Government in England, c. 1460-1550" (lecture presented at University of Oxford, Oxford, Oxfordshire, November 11, 2013).

[15] M.M. Condon, "Ruling Elites in the Reign of Henry VII" in *Patronage, Pedigree, and Power*, ed. C. Ross (Great Britain: Redwood Burn Limited, 1979), 109.

land holdings, such as Clarence's, into the crown. The "Yorkist land revenue experiment" expanded upon the same principle seen in the seizure of Clarence's lands, retaining noble holdings and offering the stewardship of these estates to local men allied with the king as reward for faithful service, encouraging both economic growth and a nonthreatening yet guiding royal presence at the local level from 1471 to 1483.[16]

Henry VII, often portrayed as the "stingy" king of the Tudor dynasty, used many of the same techniques to fill the coffers as he did to control the nobility, gentry, and clergy. However, much of this image of thriftiness and a bare, sparse court is a result of Francis Bacon's problematic observations written over a century after the existence of Henry VII's court. While Bacon's accounts exaggerated the myth of the tight-fisted monarch, Henry did expand and standardize sources of monarchical income.[17] Taking advantage of the previously discussed recognizances and peace bonds, Henry also ensured increased revenue from the expansion of crown lands, clerical and lay taxes, feudal dues and wardship, and the customs of expanding trade. With the expansion of crown lands, Henry increased the net annual income from crown lands beyond that of Henry VI, Richard III, and what Henry VIII would achieve before the dissolution of the monasteries, earning approximately £40,000 per year on average between 1502 and 1505.[18] However, this expansive demesne was not without cost, both in unpopular appropriation of estates for such reasons as "supposed idiocy, political unreliability or incapacity to pay large fines for various offences."[19] Such actions contributed to his image as an ignoble and greedy king, somewhat lessening his legitimacy in the eyes of his subjects. In a similarly unpopular manoeuvre, Henry created a more accurate taxation system, thereby increasing revenue from taxation of his subjects. Previous tax assessments had underestimated the amount owed by any given layperson, relying on self-reporting of statistics or collusion between neighbors in reporting under-assessed taxation. Diverging from the previous loose parliamentary dependence on the fifteenth and tenth, in which taxes were imposed at a rate of one fifteenth on counties and one tenth on towns but inaccurately assessed, this new system of taxation imposed a higher tax rate and earned financial stability, if not all the desired and expected political stability.

Evidence to support the "New Monarchy" thesis relies heavily on the expansion and institutionalization of the administration of justice, a process that took effect over the course of both Edward and Henry's reigns as well. The beginnings of this development began with Edward's creation of crown affinities at the local level. Numerous local men were chosen for the office of justice of the peace (JP) or sheriff, extending the tentacles of monarchical authority into the local implementation of justice.[20] Again contributing to this network of regional agents, not only did the number of JPs increase during this period, but their number of duties and works expanded as well, taking on a significant role in local administration and in the implementation of peace bonds. These peace bonds served a dual purpose: should the concerned parties obey the terms of the agreement, the source of conflict would be removed, but if they failed to uphold the bond's terms, they would forfeit to the crown substantial fines. The threat of such financial burden was a common tool for keeping a tight rein on potential sources of instability within families of the nobility and gentry throughout Henry VII's reign. The implementation of this policy expanded even further, according to such contemporaries as Polydore Vergil after about 1500, at which point Henry's hold on the throne was more stable than in the 1480s and 1490s, suggesting that such strong assertions of authority became less necessary.[21] The role of the JP became so substantial in local justice that books on how to be a JP were printed and widely accessible, suggesting a broader standardization of government and the office.[22]

The establishment of a broadly accepted judicial procedure allowed for the extension of the crown's authority as well as increased stability for the local polity. The rise of local hegemonies aided in this endeavor in particular regions as well, such as York and Wales, but as previously discussed, there were some drawbacks to interventionist tendencies in politically unstable regions. While ecclesiastical courts were still involved in the deciding of many disputes, the expansion of secular institutions for dealing with civil matters began to chip away at the church's jurisdiction, perpetuating a power struggle between the two parties. This shift from ecclesiastical to civil methods signals the social shift from lineage values to civic ones, emphasising the rise of civic humanism and the impending sixteenth-century Renaissance. As historian J. Watts has noted, a shared language arose at court, seeing the rise of the term "common weal" to describe the civically united political body. Although this concept of government, a system in

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[16] Carpenter, *Wars of the Roses*, 200.
[17] Ibid., 225.
[18] Gunn, *Early*, 114.
[19] Ibid., 115.
[20] Carpenter, *Wars*, 193.
[21] S. Cunningham, "Henry VII and Rebellion in North-Eastern England, 1485-1492: bonds of Allegiance and the Establishment of Tudor Authority," *Northern History* 32 (1996): 51.
[22] Gunn, "Politics," 11 Nov. 2013.

which the monarch is beholden to said body of subjects, was not a new concept within this period, originating instead in the republican ideals of Roman government, the dissemination of ideas into an increasingly politically aware polity was a fifteenth-century trend.[23] Such emphasis on the common interests of those subjects below the nobility provided fodder for Cade's Rebellion in 1450, a conflict arising from a common perception of ineffective leadership that failed to fulfill what Fortescue idealized as the *regnum politicum et regale*.[24] In more localized and practical terms, the rise of equity courts provided remedies other than the winner-takes-all approach of older forms of courts, thereby preventing the return of dissatisfied complainants to flood the court system and providing long-term solutions for potential sources of local discontent. These courts of chancery allowed for the quick intervention in disputes between landlords and tenants, and chancery's flexibility, speed, and efficiency proved appealing, leading to an increase in number of suits over the course of Edward's reign. With such success, these courts grew even further under Henry VII and Henry VIII.

The process of judicial expansion that began under Edward IV developed to an even greater extent under Henry VII, leading to the rise of institutions such as the Star Chamber. Henry VII, with the aid of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, exhibited a sense of judicial dynamism that led to a boom in conciliar justice over the course of his reign.[25] These conciliar courts, with the emphasis in ecclesiastical justice placed on the council rather than the overarching authority of the pope, set the stage to some extent for the Church of England's separation from the Church of Rome in the hearing of cases during the Henrician Reformation. This policy also allowed Henry VII to maintain personal oversight in the administration of justice, thereby exemplifying the "New Monarchy's" emphasis on monarchical authority and centralization, as the king's person was so involved in the workings of this aspect of government. Much like both equity courts and conciliar courts, the Star Chamber proved more appealing than common law courts, aiming for quick and equitable settlements that would be enforced by the crown.[26] Largely settling land disputes, the Star Chamber provided an effective route to justice until it became swamped with too many cases because of its popularity. All of these courts offered a divergence from the very medieval practices of the common law courts, providing for compromises in the same vein as peace bonds and other forms of crown intervention in the local polity. Introducing the practice of arbitration, these alternatives to common law courts allowed the king to directly extended his power through his agents, as through his conciliar justice system Henry appointed his most trusted councillors and noblemen to arbitrate disputes. The king could use equity courts and arbitration to extend his authority effectively into every locality, providing an effective extension of interventionism less problematic than some of the regional governmental councils had put in place. As this power extended geographically and hierarchically, the establishment of a new judicial system reinforced the legitimacy and strength of the Tudor monarchy, shoring up many of the doubts in the wake of Henry VII's usurpation of the throne.

Over the course of the second half of Edward IV's reign and all of Henry VII's, spanning the period from 1471 to 1509, England saw a return to a form of active male kingship missing since Henry VI's ascension to the throne. Centralizing the power within the monarch and his institutions, this period ushered in what many historians have dubbed the "New Monarchy," a potentially misleading term referring to a reinvigoration of monarchical authority much in the same vein as Edward I and Henry V. However, the rise of the "New Monarchy" has signaled for some historians a transition into modernity, particularly exemplified by the rise of bureaucratic institutions and the extension of kingly managerial techniques into the nobility, gentry, and general local polity. Although Elton put forth the theory that this transition into modernity was a result of the Henrician Reformation and the developments of the 1530s, Mc-Farlane, Pollard, Gunn, and others have established that the restructuring and reshaping of government throughout Edward and Henry VII's reigns were necessary for the possibility of Henry VIII's policies, establishing a sense of monarchical agency and centralized power. Edward IV and Henry VII diverged from the disorganized ineptitude of Henry VI's rule by disciplining and controlling their nobles, making policies that ensured economic growth, and establishing a judicial system that would both allow the king's involvement with the local polity and maintain some amount of stability in the midst of local feuds. Although the start of the early modern period in England still remains contested and somewhat unclear, what is clear is the role of Yorkist and early Tudor monarchy in paving the way for the authoritative policies of later Tudor monarchs, supporting the "New Monarchy" thesis over Elton's "Tudor Revolution in

[23] J.L. Watts, "The Pressure of the Public on Later Medieval Politics," in *The Fifteenth Century IV: Political Culture in Late Medieval Britain*, eds. L. Clark and C. Carpenter (Woodbridge:The Boydell Press, 2004), 159.
[24] D. Starkey, "Which Age of Reform," in *Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the History of Tudor Government and Administration*, eds. C. Coleman and D. Starkey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 13.
[25] Gunn, *Early*, 81.
[26] Ibid., 82-83.

Government." The general upswing in the crown's power over this period was necessary for later Tudor success and the rise of the much-debated beginning of modernity. Although to attach such value to modernity is a problematically Whig approach to this historical narrative, implying that medieval characteristics are inherently less sophisticated and a bit backward, Edward IV and Henry VII certainly improved upon the ineffective, weak rule of Henry VI. The return of effective management of nobility, local polity, economy, and justice through the use of new institutions created a strong and active monarchy, providing relief after a period of relative chaos.