

Scrutinize the Society: What Dismantles English Commonwealth

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Abstract: Upon scrutinizing the study on field of Collapsing of English Commonwealth, we found the specific topic-the transition between Commonwealth and the Restoration blank for supplements. In specific, this essay analyzes that firstly, the Rump Parliament British Commonwealth collapsed for lacking of legitimacy, failing to maintain balance between interest groups, and losing the trust of citizens; furthermore, the New Model Army with its internal conflicts, who to support and tolerance towards diversified groups, did contribute to the collapse of the Commonwealth; mutually, these two factors made the Commonwealth have to maintain in power. In addition, this article analyzes the changes in British ideology before and after the Rump parliament from the perspective of ideological struggle and the important role of liberal ideology in this period, and discusses the impact of ideology on the restoration of the monarchy. Combining these three sections, this essay in a whole, presents a picture on the collapse of English Commonwealth, and the direct reason of restoration-to stabilize the conflicting society.

Keywords: ideology, legitimacy, the New Model Army, the Rump Parliament

1. Introduction

The British Civil War had taken place before the Rump Parliament established, leading to the capture and trial of Charles I; afterward, the Parliament gained full power, while Cromwell purged it. The purge left challenges soon and buried the bane for its final collapse, which eventually brought the restoration of Charles II. Inability of the Rump to govern effectively significantly contributed to the return of the monarchical rule. This passage elaborates the influence of mainstream ideology, in-state religious conflict, and new model army's inner conflicts on the restoration of the Stuarts. In the beginning, we explore whether the ideology of Britain's rump parliamentary period largely determine the restoration. In the second chapter, Rump parliament did face several challenges, as it failed to address them, its lost the trust of society and patience of Cromwell, leading to its dismissal. We will focus on this procedure and how subtle changes took place. In the last chapter, we illustrate how the new model army detriment common's trust on the commonwealth by stating its internal and external problems, which created instability and dissatisfaction.

2. The fall of rump parliament

2.1. Formation of rump parliament

In the wake of the chaos after the English Civil War, the Rump Parliament aimed to stabilize the economy and holding the legitimacy for the commonwealth (legitimacy: The legal foundation of a reign or nation). But because of exacerbated political stability, its initiatives backfire and failed both of its aims. In fact, its own aim to stabilize the society with concentrated power (concentrated power: Thomas Rainsborough stated that in the Commonwealth, the parliament have just power), did exacerbate instability and inherent challenges faced not only by themselves, but also the commonwealth government in a context of revolution.

Historian Croft states that the Rump Parliament formed after the Pride Purge when Colonel Pride took over the Parliament, expelling loyalists and leaving seats only for supportive members of the military's objectives. The remaining members - because they constituted only a small fraction of the long parliament - were named Rump, and kept in office until Cromwell dissolves it in 1653 [1].

2.2. Challenges faced by the parliament

The Rump Parliament's legitimacy was its foundational issue, as historian Kaplan states that the perception of its illegitimacy mainly originates from its military-backed inception, which undermines its authority and even governing efficacy. Another point Kaplan raises is that the absence of legitimacy not only alienated the broad segment of society since the commons no longer trust these military-backed members, the widespread non-compliance and resistance happened all along [2]. Holding various belief on this topic, historian Blair Worden suggests that while the Rump Parliament's legitimacy was inevitably questionable, its formation was a necessary and critical attempt to stabilize the nation during a politically turbulent period; by expelling the objecting conservative members, the parliament managed to increase its administrative efficiency. Indeed, the Rump Parliament served as a critical transitional governing machine with a highly concentrated power, aiming to maintain order and implement necessary reforms. In regard of such aim, the fundamental problem of lack of legitimacy directly undermines the government's ability to govern and control people, especially when facing sudden challenges which revokes a widely shared panic among the public after.

Moreover, the financial instability harmed the administrative efforts further. As the Civil War had severely devastated national finances, especially consumed the National Treasury, driving the Parliament to attempt to levy new taxes for administrative expenditure (Mainly inherit the crowned treasury before the civil war, also included rioted property from the Royalists). Nevertheless, the policies failed to generate enough funding for the new government. In particular, the financial strain was exacerbated by the need to maintain a constant army, the New Model Army, which is the largest pillar of Rump Parliament's rule. Owing to achieve such goal, the Rump Parliament's reliance on traditional forms of taxation, such as customs duties and excise taxes, became crucial. Though it kept creating revenue, it was later proven insufficient as Habakkuk claimed that in the post-war economy, due to the economic disruptions caused by the war. The devastated economy reduced trade and agricultural productivity, limiting the potential revenue could be generated from these sources.

Formed after Colonel Pride's Purge in 1648, the Rump Parliament was characterized by its New Model Army-backed stance, which significantly undermined its legitimacy. According to Kaplan, the perception of illegitimacy stemmed from the Rump's association with military force, alienating a broad segment of society and leading to widespread non-compliance and resistance. This lack of legitimacy not only eroded public trust but also hampered the Parliament's ability to enforce policies effectively.

Meanwhile, the most suppressing obstacle for the Parliament to address is that, as Habakkuk affirms, the country could not raise new fresh money by taxation, drove them to attempt to dispose of royalists' forests and estates [3]; thus, the Parliament decided to perform the sale of crown land in 1649, as supplements to Decimation Tax (Decimation tax: one out of ten fine from people that are considered as potential threats of the government). Moreover, the imposition of such policies generated strong resistance among the population, especially the peasants who already suffered the failing economic of the civil war. Furthermore, the administration of this tax was plagued by corruption and inefficiency, leading to widespread evasion and a failure to collect the anticipated revenue.

The financial instability was exacerbated when the Rump Parliament failed to gain broad support for its policies. As Croft notes, the lack of legitimacy and trust in the Rump Parliament's authority made it difficult to enforce compliance with tax measures. The military-backed identity of the Rump Parliament naturally alienated many of society, leading to resistance and non-cooperation.

Historian Lobo, reviewed in his study that this resistance was far more than non-compliance; in some extreme cases, it was exemplified by active rebellion and unrest, further straining the government's limited resources [4]. Another trait of this period is the increasing demands from groups like the Levellers and Diggers for more radical reforms. Lobo underscores how the Parliament's conservative stance and failure to engage with these groups intensified social tensions and, eventually created a polarized political situation between the commons and reformers (Conservative Stance: Ireton won support for limit the power of progressive benchers such as Thomas Rainborough).

The reliance on military support to enforce policies created a precarious balance of power. Cromwell and the army held substantial influence over the Parliament, leading to a situation where military priorities often took precedence over civil governance. This militarization of politics undermined efforts to develop stable administrative structures.

2.3. Failed administration

The Rump Parliament's failure to establish a stable government after the English Civil War is a critical aspect of understanding the broader challenges faced during this tumultuous period. The crisis of legitimacy, financial instability, and reliance on military power collectively exacerbated the administrative difficulties, ultimately leading to the dissolution of the Rump Parliament by Oliver Cromwell in 1653.

Financial instability further complicated the Rump Parliament's efforts to govern. The Civil War had devastated national finances, necessitating new taxes to fund administrative expenditures and maintain the New Model Army. Despite attempts to levy customs duties and excise taxes, these measures failed to generate sufficient revenue due to the economic disruptions caused by the war. Habakkuk highlights that the post-war economy, marked by reduced trade and agricultural productivity, limited the potential revenue from traditional tax sources [3]. In response, the Parliament resorted to selling crown lands and confiscated properties to supplement its finances. However, these policies generated strong resistance, particularly among the already struggling peasantry, leading to widespread evasion and administrative corruption.

The period also saw increasing demands from radical groups like the Levellers and Diggers for more profound reforms, which drives the political competition more chaotic. Lobo's study underscores how the Parliament's conservative stance and failure to engage with these groups heightened social tensions and contributed to political polarization [5]. The Rump Parliament's conservative approach alienated these groups, which both harmed their support in the commonwealth and further strained their limited resources. Such failed attempts made the commonwealth lose the support from the peasants, who originally fund the commonwealth and support it.

2.4. The necessary process

Regarding all these obstacles and unsuccessful reformation, according to historian Cunningham, Cromwell, seeking for greater, more direct control over the government to prevent inefficiency and corruption, dissolved the parliament and create a more stable and peaceful society. Cunningham notes that Cromwell's role in addressing the challenges (Lack of legitimacy and stressing finance, while the Parliament was too radical to address the problems through ordinary methods) of the post-war period involved balancing military authority through political compromise with their head [6]. After eliminating the support of the military, he soon dismantled the Rump Parliament, vowing to make more radical and effective reform by himself.

Historian G.R. Abernathy [7], on the contrary, states that Cromwell's ambition wasn't the primary reason for RP's dismissal (Dismantle the Parliament). Abernathy highlights the financial request by the commons, claiming that the inefficient and keep-compromising parliament enormous strain on the government's finances, hindering its ability to govern effectively [7]. In addition to these challenges, public discontent and opposition from various political factions, including Royalists (Monarchy supporters in the Parliament) and radical groups like the Levellers and Diggers, exerted immense pressure on the Parliament. The Levellers and Diggers (a radical protestant group that supported the publication of crown-owned property, they didn't necessarily have a political stance, but generally represent the peasants' will), as a radical Protestant groups, pursued an publication of former crown-owned properties that included redistributing crown-owned land to be freely tilled and planted by peasants, relieve taxes on peasants, and transfer the taxation to the nobles. Base on these request, they represented a significant portion of the peasant population, voicing strong demands for social equality. The conservative stance of the Rump Parliament and its failure to engage with these radical groups intensified social tensions and contributed to political polarization, finally, the Common Land Act (The parliament agreed to Identify underutilized or confiscated lands and allocate parcels to landless peasants and small farmers), highlights the final compromise of the Parliament. While this compromise came too late and failed to meet the initiation of peasants for an instant financial relief. Cromwell, witnessed the widespread resistance and unrest further strained the government's limited resources and exacerbated its administrative difficulties, ultimately decided to dismiss Parliament's to improve the administrative structure and raise its efficiency.

In short, the Rump Parliament failed to establish a strong government and generate support from the society after the English Civil War. Moreover, such failure complicated post-war English politics, creating frequent conflicts that finally dissolved the Parliament. Additionally, the failed economic policy not only exacerbated the financial security of commonwealth government, but also raised the opposition from the commons. This opposition made it difficult for the Parliament to continue its rule, and eventually made it dismissed by Cromwell.

3. Rump parliament period

3.1. Resistance to absolutism

From the perspective of ideological struggle, this paper divides the period before and after the Rump Parliament into two stages, and through these two stages, it sorts out and argues that the ideology of this period affected the restoration of the monarchy.

The first stage is the beginning of the conflict, and it is also the first struggle between absolutism and constitutionalism in the seventeenth century. Charles I officially ascended the throne on March 27, 1625. At the same time as he ascended the throne, a wave of nation-building swept across Europe, largely thanks to the “military” revolution of the time, which eventually led to a country that directly controlled the national territory, so we can directly call it a modern country [8]. And the new

monarchy was gradually transformed almost everywhere into a real despotism. Charles I had this idea because British monarchs had been trying to further strengthen the royal power since his father, James I, proposed the “divine right of kings” [9]. Charles I further interfered in politics, was very strong in taxation, made arbitrary arrests and imprisonments, and tried to rule without Parliament (Ibid. 15.). Also because of his brother-in-law, King Louis XIII of France, successfully completed the above-mentioned “military” revolution [8]. In order to strengthen the royal power and centralization, the ambitious new king proposed the concept of "divine right of kings" and wanted to overthrow the authority of the English and Scottish parliaments and make his rule reach the pinnacle of royal power. However, this was strongly resisted by the parliament, and even a revolution broke out in the end (there were also many religious reasons. The religious situation in Britain during the reign of Charles I was very chaotic, which was caused by Charles I's departure from Protestantism).

The revolution ended with the victory of the parliament represented by Cromwell, and also represented the end of the first stage of the ideological struggle with the victory of constitutionalism. However, subsequent historical developments did not naturally lead to the creation of a new Britain with constitutionalism at its core. In order to execute Charles I, Cromwell expelled the members of Parliament who disagreed with him and formed a Rump Parliament. The Rump Parliament passed a vote to execute Charles I. Charles I was executed, and Cromwell established a republic and named himself the Lord Protector. The essence of this revolution was that the House of Commons refused to accept the absolutist model of state formation and constructed the inevitable change of the traditional political system dominated by Parliament rather than the royal family. This view was put forward by Maria [8].

Seventeenth-century liberal ideology also played a great role in this historical period. This idea was manifested in the fact that the British civilians believed that they were not strictly bound by the government in which they had no say. Therefore, everyone who wanted to live under a government should first voluntarily accept the rule of that government (Ibid. 133). Charles I supported his absolutist ideas with the idea of divine right of kings, while Parliament supported constitutionalism with the idea of popular sovereignty represented by the people. People carried out the revolution based on constitutional political thought, aiming to resist the monarchy and strengthen the power of parliament, or in other words, to place parliament in the highest position of power. The basis of this is that sovereignty lies with the people and parliament represents the people. This is a conflict between two different ideologies, and its development had a profound impact on the future political system of Britain.

3.2. Constitutionalism before and after the Rump Parliament

The second stage of ideological conflict occurred at the beginning of the Rump Parliament. When Charles I wanted to strengthen the royal power for autocratic rule, the revolution during this period can be considered to be based on constitutionalism as the ideological basis. The original purpose of the parliament was to oppose autocratic rule, strengthen the authority of the House of Commons as the representative of the people, and use laws to limit the king's rights and protect citizens' rights. However, this revolution based on constitutionalism as the ideology under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell changed. Cromwell was the leader of the New Model Army and had absolute military power. This army played a key role in the expulsion of members during the civil war and at the beginning of the period of the Rump Parliament. What is important is that the original intention of the parliament represented by this army was to pursue constitutionalism and resist Charles I's attempt to rule autocratically, but this original intention changed. In fact, the beginning of the Rump Parliament was that Cromwell and the New Model Army expelled members of parliament by force, which had already shown signs of military dictatorship - because he forced people who disagreed with him to submit, which could be considered as autocracy. Cromwell may be defended by saying

that he used force to force others to submit in order to establish a government based on constitutionalism, but this is not convincing in light of Cromwell's behavior after the establishment of the republic. After the end of the period of the Rump Parliament, the House of Commons abolished the House of Lords and the monarchy, and announced the establishment of the Council of State as the national government. Cromwell became the first chairman and Britain entered a short period of republic. However, in 1653, Cromwell announced the dissolution of Parliament and established himself as the Protector of the Country, starting a dictatorship.

This article argues that the constitutionalist revolution of Parliament led to dictatorship under the leadership of Cromwell. In fact, we can see from this continuous event that Cromwell and Charles I did the same thing. The difference is that Charles I's actions and ideas to strengthen the royal power made his absolutist tendency very obvious, which also caused widespread dissatisfaction in the context of the popularity of individualism in Europe in the seventeenth century. He also had conflicts with the Church of England on religious issues. In contrast, Cromwell represented Parliament (more specifically the House of Commons) and in the early days of the Civil War, Parliament was considered the representative of the people. They were revolutionizing for the purpose of resisting despotism, which naturally received more support. But in the late Civil War, after the defeat of Charles I, Cromwell, who held military power, carried out a series of dictatorial means, which represented that constitutionalism had transformed into despotism while winning.

3.3. The wave of liberal ideology in the seventeenth century

In the seventeenth century, liberal ideology and a strong sense of freedom had emerged and gradually became important ideologies [10]. These two ideologies emerged as a political philosophy in the late Renaissance. Thinkers at the time, such as Hobbes [11], Locke [12] and Rousseau [13], believed that legitimate government came from a contract between individuals who agreed to be governed, this is the origin of liberal ideology. John Locke's thought was that in an equal country, all rights and jurisdictions were mutual, and no one had rights over other individuals. In seventeenth-century England, the House of Commons was a government institution based on this idea [14]. It represented the will and demands of the people, so when Charles I tried to overthrow the authority of Parliament, he was actually violating the free will of the people, which was extremely difficult to do when liberal ideology was prevalent in society, forcing the people to unite more with Parliament. This article believes that this ideology is the fundamental reason for Charles I's failure and the beginning of the Republican era. Liberal ideology played a key role in the restoration of the monarchy. As mentioned above, Cromwell's dictatorship alienated the essence of the republic established on the basis of constitutionalism. The formation of the Rump Parliament is the most prominent example. The people will also resist any form of despotic rule, which explains for the failure of the republic. What happened in these two stages is essentially the same, that is, it is an ideological struggle. The people with free will cannot tolerate despotic rule. This ideology runs through the beginning and end of the Rump Parliament period and also largely determines the restoration of the monarchy. Liberal ideology is very important for understanding the subversion of a series of regimes in Britain in the 17th century. This ideology is the root cause of all revolutions in the 17th century and the key factor in determining the restoration of the monarchy. This process is manifested as an ideological struggle between liberal ideology and despotism, which ultimately completely changed the British monarchy.

4. The impact of the New Model Army on restoration

4.1. The development and composition of the New Model Army

The New Model Army was created by parliamentarians in 1645, and was disbanded when the Stuarts restored. Cromwell held a leadership position where he represented and led the army, with the officers acting as intermediaries or representatives of his party within the military [15].

After Cromwell became the Lord Protector, a transition in relation to the character of the New Model Army can be witnessed: at first, it was a military force to help the parliament defeat the Royalist forces and win the first English Civil War, then it became a political player in the struggle for power in England; after that, with the corruption and internal divisions within the army, Cromwell suppressed the uprising of the Leveller soldiers, which were a faction that urged radically for civil rights and the first to include the right of conscientious objector. Finally, the army was transformed into a part of apparatus for maintaining Cromwell's governance.

The change of the character was related to the growth of the army. With the addition of other regiments, the number of soldiers in arms increased gradually. Given that the campaign of 1644 resulted in the shortage of infantry, most of the infantry of the army were "pressed men" [16] who were appointed by authorities to serve as infantry but not voluntary. The soldiers shared the same zeal for Puritanism. Oliver Cromwell, as well as the chaplains and preachers that were with the army, made the soldiers full of "godly spirit" [17]. However, this religious zeal had an underlying problem, which will be examined in the later part.

4.2. Decline of the NMA's influence

The New Model Army faced significant internal divisions and lacked a unified leadership after Cromwell's death. The internal divisions of the New Model Army were a result of a complex interplay of ideological differences, political conflicts, personal rivalries, economic grievances, social discontent, and religious tensions. The following passage will elaborate on each factor in turn.

4.2.1. Ideological divisions: Levellers and Grandees

Levellers and Grandees (Spanish nobility, objectors towards the Levellers) held different perceptions of the relationship between the franchise and political participation. Levellers were in pursuit of thorough changes. *The Heads of Proposals* were regarded by the Levellers as a betrayal of their initial principles, in terms of the maintenance of the monarchy, decentralized governance and the negotiation with the king. In three incarnations of *the Agreements of the People*, they advocated for the establishment of a written constitution aimed at delineating the structure of government, eliminating arbitrary exercise of power, establishing checks on authority, and addressing grievances. They also insisted that military authority should be subservient to the Parliament. Thus, gentry within or without of parliament supported the Levellers and shared their objections to a standing military power.

Grandees hoped to restore the Rump Parliament or some other form of constitutional rule. Because the Grandees' originated from landed gentry, they supported restricted franchise. They believed that only those having property should have a say in governance. Additionally, they were more willing to negotiate with the king, hoping to reach a settlement that would avoid further conflict and stabilize the nation. It is the Grandees' willingness to compromise and maintain relevant conventional structures that put them at odds with the Levellers' push for more profound and sweeping changes.

4.2.2. Political conflicts

Besides different ideological stances, political instability and power struggles resulted in a decline in the influence of the NMA. Richard Cromwell, the successor of Oliver Cromwell, whose weakness and lack of authority led to a power vacuum as well as the friction between those who wanted a republican government and those who favored the Protectorate, brought unrest to the whole society. As mentioned at the very beginning of this essay, a majority of members in the army were religious zealots. However, the conservatives and moderates in Parliament might be dissatisfied with the religious radicalism within the army. The House thought General Geroge Monck's refusal to sign the Humble Petition was acceptable [18]. This attitude was not only an indication that Parliament regarded itself as being opposed to Army leaders, but also a significant portent of the open split within the Army.

4.2.3. The unfair payment among the NMA

The pay of soldiers varied according to their identities and ranks, which may contribute to the conflicts between commanders and low-ranking soldiers: at the beginning, infantry received eight pence per day, a dragoon one shilling and six pence, while cavalry riders got two shillings [16]. The average price of a quarter of wheat was thirty-five shillings at that time, thus most soldiers' income was hardly sufficient for covering expenses for food and accommodation. In case of revolt over grievances, an additional penny was added to the soldiers' income until a resolution saying that Cromwell disbanded the Rump Parliament and became Lord Protector formally released. The soldiers disapproved of this diminishing expenditure, especially when high-ranking officers lived a lavish life, as was represented on a pamphleteer [19]. In the late years of the Protectorate, the foot soldiers were treated less handsomely, according to historian Stephen Gardiner [20]. Parliament bestowed generals and officers by using the confiscated lands of the Royalists. This act of generosity by parliamentary was viewed by some Republicans as an excessive expenditure of public resources [16]. As a result, this underlying class differentiation and unfair distribution were detrimental to unity and morale.

4.3. Non-compliance with people's will

When it comes to the external contradictions, the New Model Army fought many battles and triggered chaos, which was against public sentiment for a return to peace and soldiers' disinclination to fight. Basically, the Restoration was a repudiation of government by force and a test of Englishmen's attitude towards professional soldiers. English populace gradually realised that Cromwell was not a man of leniency as he had claimed on behalf of the Puritan. For example, to vent their dissatisfaction against "Manchester's inactivity" [21], he led the Pride's Purge when the New Model Army required to formulate a settlement for the realm. To maintain a standing army was an expensive undertaking, so they figured out other methods as a supplement to the military income, such as confiscating property. When George Monck stormed Dundee in 1651, he allowed his subordinates to plunder the town. Tension between residents and the army grew deeper because the burden of billeting and taxes was unaffordable [22].

Antiarmy sentiments were also heard from various political persuasions, such as Levellers, royalists, Presbyterians, republicans, and Fifth Monarchists. One of the factors was that the NMA interfered in politics and was powerful enough to make their own choices. This situation can be illustrated by the fact that they managed to refuse to demobilize at Parliament's request and Cromwell became the Lord Protector of England. The strict Puritan moral codes increased heavy-handed governance. Consequently, aversion to this army deepened during the Commonwealth years. This misgiving of army was and still is reasonable: a military approach may be seen as the solution to many problems if the army has an overwhelmingly high status, which may lead to increased

repression, corruption, and social division, with long-term detrimental effects on the stability and prosperity of a nation.

4.4. General George Monck's role

The most prominent example of those effects is General George Monck, commander-in-chief of the large English army of occupation, who connived subordinates to plunder. This not only intensified resentment of people, but also played a pivotal role in facilitating the return of Charles II. To seek public support in monarch, he turned to support from the parliament to reinforce political credibility. Monarch, itself as a traditional authority, already had political legitimacy. Just as Max Weber's theory [23] (Tripartite classification of authority: charismatic authority, traditional authority and rational-legal authority), the Stuarts was a regime that had a long history and custom, so it would be easier for people to embrace its reign. Another reason was that people believed it was better to trust a militia serving the king rather than a parliament, as it was more possible to overthrow a prince than an organ of power [24].

4.5. The tension between the NMA and the Rump Parliament

The Rump Parliament originated from this army, but also disbanded because of it. Under the influence of increased army involvement in politics, financial issues, the allegations of corruption, and disapproval over social, religious aspects, there developed a growing estrangement between the grandees and the government [25]. It was the failure of the Rump to gain wider support that hindered its existence and further polarized divisions, culminating in Cromwell's forcible dissolution of the Rump.

Just as what Lord Acton said, "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely" [26], the restoration of the monarchy was not only a denial to the dictatorship of the New Model Army, but also a reflection on corruption of absolute power. The NMA can be also regarded as a catalyst for the restoration of the monarch, its external and internal problems certified the disillusionment with the republican form of government and led to estrangement between the army and the Rump, which created a conducive environment for Charles II.

5. Conclusion

According to theory of authority proposed by Max Weber, political legitimacy involves the relationship between "domination" and "obedience". However, The Rump Parliament alienated key factions, including the New Model Army and the broader populace, failing to address widespread grievances or regulate the military overreach in politics. The Rump was not only ill-dominated, but also lack of obedience from people. The ideological struggle between people with free will and despot ran through the Rump Parliament period. This erosion of legitimacy created a power vacuum and undermined the Parliament's ability to maintain practical domination. Finally, with these failures combined, the public was disillusioned with Parliament and switched their allegiance to Charles II.

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