The Seventeenth-Century Anglo-Dutch Wars: Economic or Political Issues?

Bartholomeus van der Helst, *The Celebration of the Peace of Münster in the Headquarters of the St George's Guard, Amsterdam.* 1648. Canvas, 232 x 547 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

In 1648 the Dutch Republic signed the Peace of Münster with Spain, bringing to end a period of some eighty years of war. The main benefit of the treaty immediately became apparent, as economic activity in the Provinces of Holland and Zeeland entered a period of rapid growth following the recession and stagnation of the war years.[1] However, the Peace of Münster also had other consequences, not the least of which was the prestige which it lent to this small Republic as a state of some note within Europe; had the United Provinces, as the Republic was known, not succeeded in defeating mighty Spain? But it remained to be seen whether the Republic, great power and economic centre that it had become, would be able to continue to exist peacefully, as many desired.

The answer was not long in coming. Within thirty years of the signing of the Treaty, the United Provinces had fought three wars with England: from 1652 to 1654, between 1665 and 1667 and between 1672 and 1674. During the same period they were also involved in conflicts in the Sont region and between France and Spain, were at war with the Bishopric of Münster and, since 1672, had had to withstand the combined forces of France, Münster and Cologne, as well as England – a conflict in which the Provinces them-

selves became the core of an alliance with Spain, the German Emperor, Denmark and Brandenburg. And the end was not yet in sight.[2]

Interpretations

In general historical surveys the Anglo-Dutch wars have traditionally been characterised as trade wars or sea wars – in other words as economic conflicts. More specialised books and articles bring more detail to this general picture. In his book *Profit and Power*,[3] for example, Charles Wilson describes the first war as a purely economic affair. The English were not able to cope with the competition from Holland and Zeeland fishermen off the British coasts, nor that from Dutch traders and merchantmen. Envy led to English aggression and, in 1652, to war.[4] This aspect is discussed in more detail by J.I. Israel in his extensive and stimulating study of Dutch trade: *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740*.[5] The Dutch historian Pieter Geyl, however, adopts a totally different approach. The decisive factor for him was the action of the Stadholders of the House of Orange – Frederick Henry and William II. In his book *Orange and Stuart 1641-1672* (Oranje en Stuart 1641-1672), Geyl argues that both Princes were seeking to raise the status of their house. Frederick Henry allied himself with the English Royal House of Stuart by marrying his son William into that family. When civil war broke out in England in 1642 and continued, with some interruptions, until the 1650s, it was an obvious decision for the Prince of Orange to choose the side of Stuart against the English Parliament. The latter ultimately gained the upper hand, however, founded a new state – the Commonwealth – and, in its irritation over the help given by Orangists to the Stuart supporters, headed for war with the Republic.[6] The English historian J.R. Jones adopts an intermediate position which, while recognising economic causes underlying the war, attributes the conflict mainly to political factors. He argues that the Dutch had repeatedly derived benefit during talks with the English

Johannes Lingelbach, *The Naval Battle near Livorno in 1653* (detail), 1653. Panel, 114 x 216 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

from a tactic of delaying decisions. In 1651-1652, however, Parliament was no longer prepared to join in this game, making war unavoidable: *'The first war was not the direct result of deliberate English aggression, but followed from Dutch miscalculations based on underestimates of English determination and power.'*[7]

The result was a fierce war which went badly for the Dutch in the North Sea but which, as Israel points out, was less dramatic for them elsewhere in the world because of the superiority over the English which the Dutch derived from their tremendous trading potential.[8]

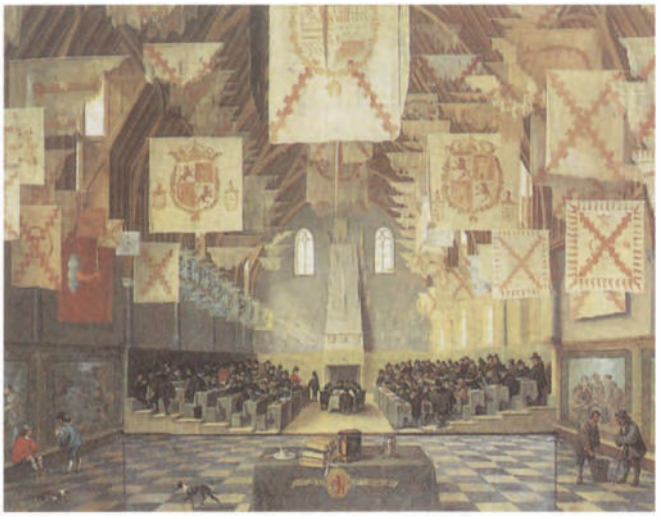
The views of the different authors show a greater consensus regarding the second war, which was fought after the restoration of the monarchy in England (1660). Wilson quotes his fellow countryman G.N. Clark, stating that this war was *'the clearest case in our history of a purely commercial war'*.[9] Others – including both Israel and Geyl – draw the same conclusion. The conflict was the result of a growing English rejection of the continuing Dutch supremacy throughout the world. The war was fought on a worldwide front: in Europe, in Africa – where it began – and in America.

Jones, however, points out that it was not only the merchants in Parliament who tried to persuade the new king, Charles II, to go to war, but also a politically motivated faction with James, Duke of York – later James II – as the driving force behind it. His aim was to revive British claims to sovereignty of the surrounding seas, so that the English would be able to demand taxes from foreign fishermen and merchantmen in order to provide financial reinforcement for an absolute monarchy.[10]

However, this war ran a different course from that which the aggressive English leaders had expected on the basis of their successes in the first war. While it was true that the Dutch fleet, though greatly strengthened, was not impregnable, the Dutch maritime potential worldwide still proved stronger than the English. At the Treaty of Breda in 1667, the English were even forced to make a number of economic concessions.

The third war was only five years in coming. During those five years, however, the shifts which took place in Anglo-Dutch relations were such that several authors prefer not to describe this as a trade war. In 1930 Johan E. Elias even concluded that the economic agreements contained in the 1667 Treaty made further economic confrontations superfluous. The English and the Dutch had reached agreement in the Treaty and were to develop into allies; the war of 1672-1674 was no more than an unfortunate intermezzo. This view was contested by Geyl, who maintained that political tension remained and that the 1672 conflict was therefore above all a political struggle, connected to the rise of French absolutism and the opportunism of Charles II of England who, with French support, wished to become independent of the English Parliament – and who hoped to make the Republic subordinate to himself through collaboration with his young cousin, William III of Orange; the latter, however, proved unwilling to be a party to this plan.[11] Wilson goes along with this to some extent. It is true, he writes, that rivalry remained between English and Dutch merchants, but the former saw that war had brought no solution and were less inclined to the conflict; this left only the political argument.[12]

Yet the economic factor did not disappear entirely. Jones and Israel point out that England was still trying in 1672 to break the Dutch commercial



Dirck van Delen, *The Great Hall of the Binnenhof, The Hague, during the Great Assembly of the States General in 1651.* 1651. Panel, 52 x 66 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

hegemony and to conquer Dutch colonies. The chief aggressor now, however, was France, which was able to draw the English into its bid for political as well as economic advantage. When Charles II declared war on the Republic in March 1672, however, he cited both economic and political motives: conflicts concerning the East Indies and Surinam and failure to observe English sovereignty at sea. According to Jones, however, '*these commercial issues were pretexts. Once again the real reason for war was predatory greed – this time for power as well as wealth*'.[13] The behaviour of English merchants during the war confirms the correctness of this view. The English failed to win any battles in the North Sea, but lost large numbers of ships to Dutch privateers. The English merchants affected added to the pressure on Charles II to make peace in 1674. The heavily threatened Republic survived this attack, too, and retained its world-wide trade supremacy.[14]

This brief summary makes it clear enough that labelling the Anglo-Dutch wars as trade wars is at the very least open to discussion. The same applies if the wars are described as purely political conflicts. Can these wars in fact be explained on the basis of a single cause? Analysis of the background to the First Anglo-Dutch War can provide a first, tentative answer to this question.

Political developments [15]

Undoubtedly there were political factors underlying the First Anglo-Dutch War. In order to understand these factors, we have to go back to the 1630s. The Dutch Republic was still in a full state of conflict with Spain: its war policy, like its foreign policy, was determined by the States-General, in which each of the seven regional States Colleges had a delegation. These regional States Colleges were each sovereign within their own province. Their armies fought under the command of Frederick Henry of Orange, the highest nobleman in the Republic. In five provinces, he was also Stadholder, the highest official of the province, though subordinate to the States College.

England at that time was ruled by King Charles I, who governed with the advice of his Privy Council, and who only summoned Parliament when he deemed it necessary. This was primarily when he needed money. However, precisely because Parliament was seeking to influence the King's policy via its control on royal expenditure, the King convened it as infrequently as possible. After 1629 Charles ruled without a Parliament; but in 1640 his problems became so great that he was forced to summon the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament on no less than two occasions.

War was raging throughout Western Europe. England was the only neutral power, a not unattractive position as it was approached from all sides with requests for support and was able to select the highest bidder. France and Spain, who were at war with each other from 1635 onwards, were particularly anxious to curry English favour; both countries had much to gain from a safe passage through the Channel, which was ruled by England. Towards 1639, Spain was in favour. The Spanish King, Philip IV, even talked with Charles about the possibility of a marriage between his son and Charles' eldest daughter. In these circumstances, Philip received English cooperation in ensuring the safe passage of a combined war and transport convoy to his domains in the Southern Netherlands. This was a direct threat to the Dutch Republic, which accordingly showed no hesitation in attacking – and defeating – the Spanish fleet in English waters.

Now that it was clear to the Dutch how dangerous a neutral England could be for them, they immediately sought diplomatic contact with King Charles in order to break his good relations with Philip IV. At first the King proved unwilling, but he changed his mind when the Spanish King, following revolts in Portugal and Catalonia, was no longer able to offer him any benefits, particularly money. And money was precisely what the English King needed to reduce his dependence on Parliament. Accordingly, he responded to the approaches of the Dutch. Ultimately this resulted not in a political treaty but in a marriage between William II of Orange and Charles' eldest daughter Mary, who had originally been intended for the Spanish crown prince (1641). This was a great victory for the Dutch, who had succeeded in driving a wedge between the Spanish and English rulers and between their lands.

Shortly after this, the conflicts between the English King and his Parliament led to the outbreak of the English Civil War. Both parties now sought support from the Dutch Republic, the King via the regular ambassador in The Hague, Parliament via its own delegate, Walter Strickland. The English were thus now the appellants. It was up to the Dutch to whom they were appealing to decide what stance they would adopt towards the two English camps.

Opinions in the Republic were not undivided. In the States-General the eastern provinces had little interest in English affairs and could therefore not be prodded into involvement in them. More important was the opinion of the maritime Province of Holland. Here, there were two factions in the States College with opposing views on foreign policy. One faction, led by the merchant cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Dordrecht, had long been seeking an end to the damaging maritime war with Spain. They now wished to pursue a policy of active neutrality vis-à-vis England, in which contacts were maintained with both parties in order to influence developments in England as much as possible without themselves becoming involved in the

School of Anthony van Dyck. *Portrait of William II and Mary Stuart.* 1641. Canvas. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Daniel Mytens. *Portrait of Charles I.* 1631. Canvas. National Portrait Gallery, London.

British conflicts. The other Holland faction, spearheaded by the industrial towns of Leiden and Haarlem, was primarily interested in continuing the struggle against Philip IV which was causing such damage to the competitive position of the textile industry in the Southern Netherlands. Action by the States in England would only make the problem more difficult. This faction was therefore in favour of a policy of passive neutrality vis-à-vis the English, and this policy line was in fact passed by a majority in the States-General in November 1642. In spite of this Holland maintained direct contacts with the delegates of both English camps, and the Amsterdam faction continued to hammer away at the need for mediation.

The English Parliament, too, contained diverse factions.[16] The two extremes were marked by a war faction and a faction favouring peace, with an influential centre group between them. From the end of 1643 onwards, however, several members of this centre group became more radical and aligned themselves with the war faction. In spite of this turbulent situation, the Amsterdam faction managed to continue sending mediators from the States-General. When they arrived in England in 1644, however, they caused only embarrassment; neither of the two warring parties was in the mood for mediation, but at the same time no one wanted to offend the Dutch. Accordingly, Charles I in principle agreed with the offer from the States-General, while Parliament endlessly postponed its reaction. In 1645 the embassy returned to The Hague without having achieved any success; the only result was irritation. Both Charles and the English Parliament were irritated because the Dutch had proved willing only to provide mediation rather

than actual support for the war effort. The Dutch States, for their part, were irritated because they felt they had been dealt with so undiplomatically by the English, particularly by Lords and Commons. This irritation was to be exacerbated in the late 1640s. In 1646 Charles fell into the hands of his opponents, bringing an end to the conflict. Trouble flared up again in 1648, however, when Parliament became even more radical; it sentenced the King to death, had him beheaded, established the Commonwealth (1649) – and caused new problems for the Dutch.

Religious factors

The desire of the English Parliament to avoid offending the Dutch of all people in their mediation efforts was primarily based on religious factors.[17] Like its forerunners in the 1620s, this Parliament contained a strong puritanical element. This was not restricted to a single faction, but was spread throughout the various groupings. The puritans saw England as the new Israel, the chosen people whose destiny was to lead the struggle against the Anti-Christ, which they equated with the strongly Catholic Spain. The Dutch were at the forefront of the peoples alongside whom this apocalyptic struggle had to be fought. Had they not fought against Philip IV and his predecessors for decades? Did they not share the English beliefs very closely? Had they not constantly shown hospitality to religious exiles? And did their trading successes, however irritating they might be for some English people, not bear witness to God's rich blessing of their actions? When the Civil War broke out, these ideas changed on one point. Charles I was now seen as the Anti-Christ on the grounds that he himself showed Roman Catholic leanings, was misled by his French Catholic wife Henrietta Maria and his papist advisers, and thus oppressed his subjects in their liberty and religious beliefs. From now on, the apocalyptic struggle would have to be fought out on British soil.

In this situation it was a natural step for the English Parliament to send the first delegate it accredited at a foreign court, to the Dutch Republic. Here he was to call for a *'more neere and straight league and union'* between the Republic and Parliament; Strickland set out this idea in more detail in a letter to the States-General in which he called for the formation of a confederation based on religious, economic and historical grounds.[18] Parliament continued to repeat this proposal, even while the war faction was gaining support and when, from 1643 onwards, it began working in closer cooperation with Scotland by signing the Solemn League and Covenant.

What was the position of the Dutch in all this? Here, too, there were ideas of a new Israel – though this was equated to the Northern Dutch in their struggle against Spain, with no role being accorded to England.[19] Politicians paid no attention to this; they received the English proposal for union with the same reserve with which they had approached political rapprochement. They had no wish to burn their fingers in the fire of English affairs, and thus refrained from responding to any suggestions. In 1645 the States of Utrecht even went so far as to request that Strickland, following a meeting, should not leave any copies of the Covenant with them, so as to remove any appearance of agreement.[20] The response of the church organisations was very dif-

ferent. The four *classes* of Zeeland expressed feelings of spiritual kinship with the English and Scottish puritans by urging them in letters written in 1643 to fight against the papist superstitions with all their might. When the States of Zeeland discovered this, they forbade the church elders to enter into any further correspondence on this subject.[21] The *Heren Staten* persisted in this attitude for many years. The irritated English puritans, however, concluded that the Dutch brothers were subordinating spiritual interests to material profit.

Dynastic causes[22]

In the same way that political factors were sometimes intertwined with religious issues, they occasionally also became entangled with dynastic interests, both on the part of the Orangists and the Stuarts. This is already apparent from the marriage treaty of 1641. Politically, the treaty brought an end to the collaboration between England and Spain. Its dynastic significance, however, was entirely different for Charles I and Frederick Henry of Orange. For the English King, it set the seal on a misalliance: after all, the House of Orange was of a much lower order in the hierarchy of royal families than the Stuarts. For Orange, the marriage held out the promise of an increase in status. Thus it was able to form the counterpart to the unionist plans of the English Parliament: a basis for close collaboration, but this time between the Royalists and the Republic, stimulated by Orange. Would this actually happen?

The question arose as early as 1642, when Queen Henrietta Maria personally brought Prince William's bride Mary to the Republic. The main purpose of her journey was to acquire funds, to buy munitions, and to obtain permission for English officers serving the Dutch States to go over to the Royalist army. She was counting heavily on the cooperation of a grateful Frederick Henry. Contrary to her expectations, however, he first left her in the cold for four months before providing any support in acquiring funding, and granted permission for only a few officers to leave. In a letter to Charles, the Queen wrote that the Prince appeared to be *'une personne malaysée à engager'*.[23] She was even more upset when Frederick Henry granted an audience to the Parliamentary delegate Strickland in January 1643. Shortly afterwards she left the Republic in a fury, taking with her a shipload of weapons. Strictly speaking this was contrary to the neutrality resolution of November 1642, but Frederick Henry managed to instill a degree of flexibility into those who criticised this action. Otherwise she would remain even longer in the Republic, *'doing a very great disservice to the country'*, as he wrote.[24]

The fact that dynastic advantage did not cause the Prince of Orange to lose sight of the national interest of the Dutch States is also apparent from the following. When discussions took place in the Republic on mediation in England, he adopted the same standpoint as the Amsterdam faction in the States of Holland. He felt that such mediation should take place, but that it must not lead to the involvement of the Dutch States in the English conflicts. He was not in favour of passive neutrality.

Even clearer were his actions in 1644-1645 with respect to a plan for a

second Stuart-Orange marriage. The proposal came from the circle surrounding Henrietta Maria, who was now looking after the affairs of the Stuarts from her mother-country France. It was a proposal filled with tempting conditions. Frederick Henry's eldest daughter was to marry the crown prince Charles: the Dutch Stadholder could not wish for anything more prestigious. The House of Orange would be expected to pay only a small dowry, but would have to join an offensive and defensive alliance with the Royalists and, according to a later proposal, participate in a maritime action against the English Parliament. However, Frederick Henry showed no desire whatsoever to cooperate, finally producing convincing evidence of his lack of commitment by putting forward a different bridegroom, the Elector of Brandenburg! The marriage took place in December 1646. Everything had taken place behind closed doors; the States had no knowledge of anything. The House of Orange had not subordinated the Republic to its own dynastic interests.

Things changed after Frederick Henry's death in 1647, however, when his 21-year-old son William II assumed his titles. The young prince still had little authority. Moreover, he was confronted with the Dutch-Spanish peace process, making it impossible for him to gain esteem through military exploits, as his father had done. Accordingly, he worked quietly towards a war policy, in opposition to the peace policy of the States-General. For England this meant that he did not take the neutrality resolution of 1642 seriously, not even after the States-General had renewed it on 6 November 1648.

William maintained contact with his brother-in-law Charles, later to become Charles II, who had left England, travelled to France via the Channel Islands and came to The Hague in 1648, followed by his father's Privy Council. The number of royal exiles in The Hague was to grow rapidly in subsequent years. Having the honour of being associated with the Stuart family, William was keen to offer support, he wrote to the young Charles. Accordingly, he encouraged the sale in the Republic of booty obtained by the Royalists, even though the States-General had forbidden this. In addition, he encouraged cooperation between the Stuarts and Scotland, an endeavour in which he expected cooperation from Dutch Calvinists. And more than once he became ensnared in attack plans of precisely the type which Frederick Henry had rejected during negotiations for a second marriage. Ultimately all these plans led to nothing, but they did cost William a great deal of money.

What the Prince hoped to achieve for himself through these actions is not entirely clear. He probably thought that in due course he would obtain the support of his in-laws in his bid to strengthen his position within the Republic. His sudden death in November 1650, however, precluded such an outcome. He had undoubtedly contributed to the fact that The Hague had become a Royalist stronghold – something which raised doubts in the English Parliament as to how genuine the Dutch neutrality really was.

Maritime issues[25]

Neutrality also played an important part in confrontations on the North Sea and in the English Channel, where the Republic fought against the Spaniards

Jan van de Cappelle, *The Home Fleet Saluting the State Barge*, 1650. Panel, 64 x 92.5 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

and the inhabitants of the Southern Netherlands (Flanders) until shortly before the Peace of Münster. These same seas were also the scene of battles between Royalists and Parliamentarians in the English Civil War. All this led to the development of new rules of international law, or the application or tightening up of existing rules.

From the end of the sixteenth century, the Dutch attempted to paralyse the shipping trade to and from the Flemish ports. Initially they did this through written bans on navigation, which also forbade the import of all goods. However, the development of international law led to the rule that such a ban should be realised by means of an effective blockade and that, except in the case of a siege, only the import of a limited number of goods – contraband – could be forbidden.[26] The difficulty lay in strictly enforcing the blockade.

The English, in particular, caused problems. Following Scottish examples, the Stuart kings James I and Charles I applied sovereign rights to the seas around England. These rights, so they claimed, stretched as far as the opposite coasts.[27] They therefore expected all passing ships to signal a greeting with flags and topsail, and began demanding money from the users of their *Mare Brittanicum*, in particular fishermen, in recognition of their sovereign power. Charles I even equipped a new war fleet for this purpose in the late 1630s, though this brought in little revenue. Opposing this English argument and the inconvenience it brought, the Dutch, who were major users of these waters, claimed that, apart from the coastal waters, the seas were nobody's property.

The inconvenience mounted when the English announced that they regarded their warships and the water around them as inviolable English territory. This stance assumed particular importance when England became the only neutral power in Western Europe after 1635. From that time on, all manner of warring countries attempted to sail in and out of Flanders in safety with their trading goods via Dover in convoys guarded by neutral English warships. This policy was successful, to the anger of the blockading

Dutch, who did not wish to come into conflict with the English and who could therefore do no more than stand and watch.

The advent of the English Civil War made the whole situation even more complicated. In June and October 1642 the English Parliament enacted ordinances banning voyages involving contraband goods to Royalist ports in Ireland. A similar ban followed in the same year for voyages into Newcastle and surrounding ports. In 1643 and 1644 the Lords and Commons extended these measures to cover all Royalist towns in Great Britain. These bans applied both to the English and to foreigners. Anyone infringing the bans would be arrested and tried before a new, central body in London, the High Court of Admiralty.[28]

For reasons which are unclear, Charles I did not issue any similar ordinances until July 1643. Ships and goods intercepted by his supporters were not tried in one location, but according to the old-fashioned, decentralised apparatus of admiralty courts, which had sittings in various port towns in England, Ireland and Jersey.[29]

The English found it difficult to implement these measures. Part of their fleet had remained loyal to the Crown, while the remainder had sided with Parliament. Both sides had insufficient ships to simultaneously fight their opponents, protect the trade of their own followers and prevent voyages to hostile ports. Accordingly, Parliament chartered armed merchantmen from private owners, in particular from the 'New Merchants' in London. These were merchants who did not belong to the large, monopolistic trading companies, but who had become rich as interlopers, traders who managed to operate commercially in specific areas in spite of a monopoly. They also obtained letters of marque from Parliament, which enabled them to act as privateers operating separately from the Parliamentary fleet. They made a great deal of profit from both chartering and their privateering activities. Charles, too, in addition to his war fleet, was supported by private merchantmen.

All these ordinances and actions by English ships had their effect on the Republic. Sometimes this was because the conflicting parties carried the fight into Dutch waters; usually, however, it was because Dutch skippers infringed the ordinances or were suspected of doing so, and were brought in by one of the two English sides, in spite of the Dutch States' neutrality. Most of the arrests were carried out by Parliament: five in 1643, twenty-nine in 1644, nineteen in 1645 and four in 1646. The fluctuation in these figures reflects the intensification and weakening of the conflict between Parliament and Charles I. Royalist arrests are more difficult to trace because of the decentralised system of admiralty courts. Sources reveal only four cases over the years in question, plus four Dutch ships which became ensnared in battles between the two English sides.

The lull in the Civil War in 1646 meant that the number of arrests in 1647 was also low: nine arrests by Parliament, two by Irish Royalists. When the conflict flared up again in 1648, however, the picture changed. Parliament won ground and drove its opponents to outlying parts of the British Isles and into the sea. Many sought support and shelter abroad. In line with its earlier ordinances, Parliament issued new bans on navigation: against Ireland in 1649 and against Scotland in 1650 – both of them Stuart kingdoms. In addition, a general ban on navigation was issued in 1650, affecting all trade

goods – not just contraband – to and from the English settlements in America which had remained loyal to the Crown. Similar orders followed against foreign powers which provided help to the Royalists: against France in 1649, which led to the start of an undeclared war, and against Portugal in 1650. The Royalists, for their part, were forced to make more and more use of foreign ports – in France (Dunkirk) and Flanders – in order to bring in and try their prizes. This was banned in the Republic because of its official neutrality. Nonetheless, the Council of the later Charles II did sometimes function as a prize court thanks to the dubious support of William II.

Unavoidably, more and more Dutch ships were now taken. The numbers once again reflect the shifts in English power relations. In 1648 the Royalists confiscated fourteen Dutch vessels; in 1649 the figure was twenty-five, in 1650 eleven and in 1651 fourteen. Parliamentary ships, for their part, confiscated twelve Dutch vessels in 1648, twenty-two in 1649, fifty in 1650 and one hundred and twenty-six in 1651; in the first half of 1652 alone the figure was as high as one hundred and six. There was a clear turnaround in the years 1649-1650, when the triumphant Parliament began to expand its land-based sovereignty over the land to include the sea, continuing the former pretensions of the Stuarts.

The Dutch suffered greatly as a result of the English Civil War. On average, a fully laden ship was valued in London at £15,000 in this period. Some ships and / or cargoes were later released by the English, but they were seldom undamaged. As neutrals, the Dutch States felt an increasing irritation towards their neighbours across the sea. The latter, for their part, were indignant that precisely this neutral Republic took so little notice of their parliamentary ordinances, and provided both English camps – and thus the Stuarts too – with all manner of goods.

The ups and downs of trade

The battles at sea also had a trading aspect. On the one hand war damaged trade, while on the other hand it generated profit. For example, the English benefitted from the trade to and from Flanders, while on the Dutch side a great many arms suppliers profited from the English Civil War.

In the late sixteenth century the Hollanders and Zeelanders were not only the freight carriers of the world, but also built up inside their provinces the international stock of all manner of goods. According to most studies the economy of the western provinces of the Republic continued to flourish until the middle of the seventeenth century. Recently, J.I. Israel has added some further detail to this broad picture,[30] arguing that the war against Philip IV brought a serious economic setback for the Dutch in the years 1621-1647/8. Embargoes were promulgated in the Iberian kingdoms of Aragon, Castile and Portugal, which meant that subjects of the Republic were no longer permitted to transport the highly prized Spanish and American goods themselves. In addition, they suffered great damage on the high seas from the warships and privateers of Philip IV. However, the Spaniards were not capable of shipping their goods to the European markets themselves. As a result, the Dutch activities were taken over by the Hanseatics, with Hamburg as their leading city, and by the English. The former derived most

benefit from this arrangement in the 1620s, with the English rising to supremacy after 1630.

Hanseatic ships brought goods from Spain directly to Hamburg, while the English transhipped many goods in Dover. The English pushed the Dutch out of the Mediterranean Sea entirely. In the Baltic, however, neither the Hanseatics nor the English managed to achieve this; although the volume of trade handled by the Dutch in the Baltic was smaller than before 1621, they did not lose their supremacy. The English also failed to push the Dutch out of the East Indies. In the West Indies, with Spanish support, they had more success. The rise of the English at the expense of the Dutch gave rise to optimism among English merchants, though they were also irritated when that rise to supremacy took place less quickly elsewhere, or failed to materialise altogether.[31]

A sudden change took place in 1647-1648, however, mainly under the influence of the Spanish-Dutch peace process. The misery caused by the English Civil War to the English themselves also played a role here.[32] Philip IV opened up his European and American ports to the Dutch once again. Dutch primacy in the Baltic grew at the expense of English trade. In Portugal, which had shaken off Philip's authority in an uprising in 1640, the Dutch managed to secure the whole of the important salt trade once again. In the Caribbean, they encouraged the growth in sugar production in the mainly Royalist English colonies by financial investment, and suddenly found themselves in control of the shipment of freight.

The recovery of the Republic was reflected in a rapid reduction in Dutch freight fees and insurance costs. And because bullion from Spain no longer had to be shipped via Dover but went directly to the Republic, the price of this commodity also fell. Dutch profits rose so rapidly, that it was soon possible to reduce interest rates on loans to, on average, half the levels charged in England.[33] In the face of this thriving economic activity, the surrounding countries, particularly England, were plunged into crisis. A new source of irritation had been created.

The build-up[34]

All the loose ends came together in the years 1651-1652. In England, the newly-formed Commonwealth had been striving since 1649 to achieve rapid recognition abroad, above all by the Republic. As early as 1649 the Commonwealth sent an embassy to The Hague for this purpose. This raised the old question of union once again, though this met with little response in the Republic. Significant in this were not only the strong Stuart coterie surrounding William II, but also the general Dutch distaste regarding the beheading of Charles I. The fact that the Republic was itself not a kingdom was irrelevant: the Dutch felt that a ruler whose power existed by the grace of God should not be executed.[35] As a result, the two states stood alongside each other without formal relations.

For the Provinces of Holland and Zeeland, in particular, this situation was unacceptable because of the damage it inflicted on their trading activities. On the death of William II in November 1650, therefore, both provinces immediately took steps to recognise the Commonwealth, which became

effective on 29 January 1651. The Republic and Commonwealth could now at least discuss their problems together.

Even before that date, work had been going on in Westminster to set up an embassy in the Low Countries. Once again the instruction was to work towards *'a more strict and intimate alliance and union'* with the Dutch. Once again, reference was made to mutual affinity on a religious and economic level; and this time reference was also made to the fact that both states had freed themselves from royal tyranny. A majority of members of the Commons (forty-two, to be exact), apparently moderates, were prepared to go quite a long way here; this caused their twenty-nine more radical opponents to speak dismissively of an *'impotent haste to integrate with neighbouring states'*.[36]

Negotiations in The Hague went anything but smoothly, however. The English – represented by Lord Chief Justice Oliver St John and Strickland – were hampered by exiled Royalists, by the distaste on the part of the Dutch population for 'regicides', by their own arrogance as victors in the Civil War, and by their unfamiliarity with the complex administrative apparatus of the Republic. On arrival on 27 March 1651 they immediately demanded a general declaration of intent by the Republic, a somewhat bold approach. The Province of Holland, which was keen to cooperate at most, was able to convince all the other provinces to back this demand within a month – a rapid achievement given the sluggishness of the administration, but much too slow for the English. The latter now proposed entering into a confederation, which among other things would defend itself against its common enemies – i.e. the Stuarts and their protectors, the House of Orange – by expelling exiles and banning the supply of contraband goods. The Dutch made a number of amendments to the English proposals and countered them by submitting thirty-six articles of their own, dealing primarily with economic relations between the two states. The two sides continued to talk at cross purposes until the English suddenly departed on 2 July. This disappointed the Province of Holland so much that within three days the States College proposed sending an embassy to London in order to pick up the thread of the discussions once again. The Province thus accepted that the Republic would once again become the requesting rather than the requested party. It was to be December 1651, however, before the proposed embassy actually arrived in London.

In the autumn of the same year the English Parliament underwent a further radicalisation. In September 1651 the Royalists suffered a decisive defeat in a land battle near Worcester. Army officers now returned to Parliament and strengthened the radical element there. The Dutch ambassadors identified four factions in the English Parliament. Some, they wrote, wished to see an immediate break with the Republic for political reasons. A second group was seeking legally defensible means of paralysing Dutch trade without coming to a state of war. A third group hoped to be able to repay the Dutch for old defeats through reprisals. And a fourth faction, to which Oliver Cromwell belonged, was genuinely in favour of an alliance with the Republic, though the latter would immediately have to *'ruin the house of Stuart'*.[37]

This latter faction, which had undoubtedly been the driving force behind the mission of St John and Strickland in early 1651, was now outvoted by

more radical members. It was primarily the New Merchants within the other factions who added to the existing legislation against overseas enemies of the Commonwealth; the Act of Navigation passed by the Commons on 19 October was prepared by them and their friends. This Act forbade free passage to foreigners except where they were carrying their own products. The aim was to stimulate British shipping, both for the benefit of trade and to foster the acquiring and maintenance of sovereignty at sea which, following the victories on land, a majority of the Parliament now wished to achieve.[38] This Act was thus part economic, part military in nature, and would undoubtedly have harmed the Dutch more than others. This danger became even greater when, before the end of the same year, letters of reprisal were granted to the heirs of a certain Pawlett empowering them to seek recourse for earlier damage caused by the Dutch.[39]

It was under these circumstances that the Dutch embassy had to hold their discussions with England from the end of 1651. The first aim was to have the measures relating to free passage of ships lifted before the interrupted negotiations could be reopened. Amsterdam stimulated these efforts in December 1651 by arranging through the States of Holland a ban by the States-General, forbidding merchants from sailing, in order to avoid the risk of a further deterioration in relations. These efforts were successful, and the Act of Navigation was barely enforced in the first half of the following year. With the same aim in mind, the States of Holland and Zeeland avoided issuing any hard statements against Parliament, banned the printing of defamatory writings and described a large war fleet, which had put to sea in the spring, not as offensive but as being *'purely for the defense and conservation of free shipping and commerce'*.[40]

Negotiations in Westminster, meanwhile, did not really get going until May. The Dutch were taken aback by the English view that the Republic had failed to take a stance in the previous year; the Dutch had thought that agreements on a political union had been reached to the satisfaction of St John and

Reconstructed model of the *Prins Willem*, built for the Dutch United East Indies Company. During the First Anglo-Dutch War it was converted to a warship and served as Admiral Witte de With's flag-ship (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).

Strickland. As a result, discussions began once more on the treatment of enemies of the other side, particularly the Stuarts, and on free passage at sea. Before these barriers had been removed, an incident took place off Dover between a Dutch and an English flotilla regarding the 'obligation' of the Dutch to lower the flag to the English in recognition of their sovereignty at sea. The talks were immediately broken off, and the English flatly refused to consider any new Dutch concessions. The ultimate political weapon – war – would have to resolve these issues.

Conclusion

Many issues – political, religious, dynastic, maritime and economic – had led to growing irritation between the Dutch and the English in the 1640s and early 1650s. All of these contributed directly to the First Anglo-Dutch War. At this stage, the economic factor did not stand out emphatically among these causes; it was only in the final run-up to the outbreak of hostilities that this factor began to predominate. The reason for this was that merchants held an important position in the radicalising English Parliament, while the Dutch, for their part, were primarily seeking to protect their trading interests during the negotiations with England. On the English side, however, the political element remained of equal importance, expressed in the commitment of the triumphant Parliament to achieving the *Dominium Maris*, a commitment which ultimately proved stronger than the puritanical urge towards union with the Republic. This latter urge continued to be cherished by a minority, however, and from 1653 onwards was to become a not insignificant factor in the achievement of peace between the two states.

This analysis of the causes leading up to the First Anglo-Dutch War shows with sharp clarity that this conflict cannot simply be labelled a trade war, nor yet a political conflict. The term 'sea war' says little in this context, because it can at best be applied to the area where the actual battles took place and says nothing about the causes leading up to the conflict. The First Anglo-Dutch War was a multi-faceted conflict, which does not lend itself to a monolithic explanation. In fact, this applies equally to the two subsequent wars as well; further research will be needed, however, in order to ascertain whether it is correct to describe the second war primarily as a trade war and the third as a mainly political conflict.

S. GROENVELD
Translated by Julian Ross.

NOTES

1. ISRAEL, J.I., *Dutch Primacy in World Trade 1585-1740*. Oxford, 1989, pp. 197-207.

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3. WILSON, CHARLES, *Profit and Power. A Study of England and the Dutch Wars*. London / New York / Toronto, 1957; The Hague / Boston / London, 1978.

4. WILSON, *Profit and Power*, pp. 1-60, pp. 145-148.

5. ISRAEL, *Dutch Primacy*, pp. 121-210.

6. GEYL, PIETER, *Oranje en Stuart 1641-1672*. Zeist / Arnhem / Antwerp, 1963², pp. 13-80.

7. JONES, J.R., *Britain and Europe in the Seventeenth Century*. London, 1966, pp. 38-49; pp. 48-49.

8. ISRAEL, *Dutch Primacy*, pp. 207-213.

9. WILSON, *Profit and Power*, p. 151; on the causes of this war: pp. 90-126.

10. JONES, *Britain and Europe*, pp. 55-60. Cf. JONES, J.R., *Country and Court. England 1658-1714*. London, 1978, pp. 98-99.

11. ELIAS, JOHAN E., *De Tweede Engelsche oorlog als Keerpunt in Onze Betrekkingen met Engeland*. The Hague, 1930. GEYL, PIETER, 'Economische verklaringen van politieke verhoudingen', in: *Kernproblemen van onze geschiedenis. Opstellen en voordrachten 1925-1936*. Utrecht, 1937, pp. 106-115. Idem, *Oranje en Stuart*, pp. 338-341.

12. WILSON, *Profit and Power*, pp. 154-158.

13. ISRAEL, *Dutch Primacy*, pp. 282-299. JONES, *Britain and Europe*, pp. 61-66. Idem, *Country and Court*, pp. 103-106.

14. ISRAEL, *Dutch Primacy*, pp. 297-299.

15. For a discussion of subsequent developments, see: GROENVELD, S., *Verlopend getij. De Nederlandse Republiek en de Engelse Burgeroorlog 1640-1646*. Dieren, 1984. Idem, 'The English Civil Wars as a Cause of the First Anglo-Dutch War, 1640-1652', *The Historical Journal*, 30 (1987), pp. 541-566.

16. For a discussion of relationships within Parliament during this revolutionary period, see: HEXTER, J.H., *The Reign of King Pym*. Cambridge (MA), 1968³. UNDERDOWN, D., *Pride's Purge. Politics in the Puritan Revolution*. Oxford, 1971. WORDEN, B., *The Rump Parliament 1648-1653*. Cambridge, 1974.

17. See: GROENVELD, S., '"Als by het huwelyck van man ende wyf". Puriteinse voorstellen voor een Nederlands-Engelse unie, 1642-1652', in: GROOTES, E.K. and J. DEN HAAN (ed.), *Geschiedenis, godsdienst, letterkunde. Opstellen aangeboden aan S.B.J. Zilverberg*. Roden, 1989, pp. 147-158. BRESLOW, M.A., *A Mirror of England. English puritan views of foreign nations, 1618-1640*. Cambridge (MA), 1970. HILL, C., 'The English Revolution and the Brotherhood of Man', in his *Puritanism and Revolution. Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*. London, 1958, pp. 123-152. MITZUKURI, G., *English-Holländische Unionsbestrebungen im Zeitalter Cromwells*. Tübingen, 1891.

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22. For a discussion of this topic see: GEYL, *Oranje en Stuart*, pp. 13-80. The views posited here are contested on a number of essential points in: GROENVELD, S., 'Frederik Hendrik en de Stuarts, 1640-1647. Herziening van de opvattingen van Pieter Geyl', *Oranje-Nassau*

Museum Jaarboek 1987, pp. 7-28. Idem, 'Willem II en de Stuarts, 1647-1650', BMGN, 103 (1988), pp. 157-181. Idem, 'The House of Orange and the House of Stuart, 1639-1650: a revision', *The Historical Journal*, 34 (1991), pp. 955-972.

23. COMTE DE BAILLON C., (ed.), *Lettres inédites de Henriette-Marie de France, reine d'Angleterre*. Paris, 1884, pp. 21-24 (27 March 1642): Henriette Marie to Charles I.

24. District Archive of the West Frisian Municipalities in Hoorn, Resolutions of the States of Holland by Nicolaes Stellingwerff 115, 25 February 1643.

25. For a discussion, see *inter alia* Groenveld, *Verlopend getij*, pp. 135-219. Idem, 'English Civil Wars', passim.

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32. ISRAEL, *Dutch Primacy*, pp. 197-207.

33. Cf. BARBOUR, VIOLET, 'Dutch and English merchant shipping in the seventeenth century', *Economic History Review*, 2 (1930), pp. 261-290.

34. See *inter alia*: GROENVELD, 'English Civil Wars', pp. 551-566.

35. GROSHEIDE, D., *Cromwell naar het oordeel van zijn Nederlandse tijdgenoten*. Amsterdam, 1951, pp. 5-34.

36. *Journals of the House of Commons*. Vol. VI, no location, undated, pp. 527-528, 535. *The Manuscripts of his grace the Duke of Portland, preserved in Welbeck Abbey*. Vol. I. London, 1891, pp. 556-558. WORDEN, *Rump Parliament*, pp. 237-262.

37. ARA, Loketkas Staten-Generaal 12589.62: secret letter of 10 February 1652 from the ambassadors to the States-General.

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40. ARA, Resolutiën van de Staten van Holland 1652, 83, 97.