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Keeping corruption at bay: A study of the VOC's administrative encounter with the Mughals in seventeenth-century Bengal

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Chapter 1

Allies in Political Lies: The Administrative World of the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic

I cannot neglect taking this opportunity to address the fact, that through the establishment of the Union it was hoped, that such atrocious and outrageous corruption and intrigues, as has been practiced now for some time, openly and shamelessly, would be condemned and no longer tolerated; since it affected the Generality's finances to not any little extent and considerably loosened it from its principal institutions; and I would not have dared bring forth this affair (since many influential men are engaged in it) had I not known, that many other good and pious men, holding the offices of the States-General, even in the entire Province of Holland, as well as other inhabitants, seeing this work daily, had not abhorred and cursed it and cried for revenge to the great God; and it could also not have been otherwise, that it could not be foreseen that God Almighty would soon inflict some lamentable punishments and miseries on this land, that would cause trouble for the good inhabitants, and for which the lord-regents would not be able to excuse themselves.¹

The Dutch East India Company (VOC) came to be established in 1602 in the newly formed Dutch Republic, that was governed without a monarch. Throughout the entire span of the seventeenth century, the young Republic witnessed frequent political disruptions, civil unrest and financial turmoil. Its very existence as a combined entity of the constituent seven provinces was

¹ *'Ick en kan oock niet ledigh zijn by dese gelegentheydt aen te roepen, dat by het refideeren van deselve Unie gehoopt werdt, dat mede sal af-gekeurt, ende niet langer toe-gelaten werden al sulcke grouwelijcke ende gantsch ongehoorde corruptien ende kuyperijen, als nu eenigen tijt in't openbaer, ende onbeschaemt ghebruyck geweest zijn; want het niet weynigh de Generaliteyts Finantien ontroert, ende van haer eerste instellingen merckelijck verset hebben: ende en soude dese saeckje niet wel derven op de baen brengen (als vele grooten hun daer mede besigh houdende) in dien ick oock niet en wiste, dat vele andere goede ende vrome Heeren, bekleedende het Ampt als Staten Generael; jae selver de geheele Provintie van Hollandt, ende andere Ingesetenen, het werck daghelijcks siende, niet en hadden een grouwel, ende hetselve verfloekende waren, ende vraecke riepen tot aen den grooten GODT; ende het en kan oock niet anders wesen, soo daer inne niet en soude versien werden, of Godt Almachtigh, soude eer lange eenighe beklagelijcke straffen ende ellendigheden den Lande doen openbaren, dat voor de goede ingesetenen lastigh, ende voor de heeren regenten niet en soude te verschoonen wesen.'*

Anonymous, *Extract uytghegeven by een liefhebber des vaderlandts, raeckende de Godtloose corruptien ende kuyperyen van den griffier van hare Ho Mo: Cornelis Musch* (1646), A2, (Dutch Pamphlets Online Database, pamphlet nr. 5361).

challenged repeatedly, when political decisions were made. And yet, there was a simultaneous growth of scientific knowledge, culture and commerce around these years that created the essence of the urban culture of certain provinces in the Republic. These developments led to an intricate and elaborate political and social structure. As the above lines from a pamphlet circulated in Holland around 1646 show, administrative corruption became a subject of debate and discussion among the elites in the new socio-political setting and came to garner ‘public’ attention. The state apparatus was evolving constantly and tried to keep up with the changes, regulating administrative behavioural rules. Such developments, of course, must have had their impact on the VOC administration in the Republic and overseas. It is therefore necessary to study the political background in which discussions against the Company’s corruption were initiated, to understand better its importance and perceptions at home and abroad. This chapter, thus, delves into the analysis of administrative corruption among the elite in the political space of the Republic. It raises questions about how corruption came to be perceived and how corruption allegations ended up being used in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. What was its importance in the existing political arena? It is precisely in trying to answer these questions through the developments in the Republic that the reason for the VOC’s corruption-control measures overseas can be explored.

Political Institutions

In order to decipher the differing meanings and implications of corruption in different societies, the differences in governing systems should be examined, as these played a crucial role. To understand the perceptions of corruption in the Dutch political administration, it is therefore useful to shed light on its formal institutions of government. The existence of the seven Dutch provinces as a Republic (or the United Provinces) emerged from the treaty of the Union of

Utrecht signed in 1579.² After the renunciation of the Spanish rule by the Act of Abjuration in 1581, and the concluding of the 'Twelve Years' Truce in 1609, the Republic gained its *de facto* independence. The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 officially put a stop to the prolonged Dutch Revolt, that was begun by Willem van Orange (William of Orange). In the end, he emerged as the symbol of victory for Dutch society, ensuring the House of Orange-Nassau a special place within the Republic's political set-up. It marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the Low Countries with the Republic as a separate state, eventually consisting of the provinces of Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Overijssel, Groningen, Friesland and Gelderland.³ When Maarten Prak wrote in 2007, 'it is amazing to see how much has been written in the last twenty years about the subject' meaning the seventeenth-century Dutch history, he was really not exaggerating.⁴ The profusion of writings on the political, cultural and socio-economic aspects of the Dutch Republic cannot possibly be recorded in all its entirety.⁵ This chapter thus attempts no more than understanding the importance and use of corruption in the political space of the Republic, using the existent literature.

To begin with, the political institutions of the Republic can be roughly divided into three levels of organisation – central, provincial and local. As for the functioning and extent of control at every level, there have been intense debates about its nature of governance that started with Robert Fruin and was carried on by Daniel J. Roorda, John L. Price and more recently by Judith Pollmann and Maarten Prak.⁶ While Fruin as one of the pioneers, developed a top-down

² J.C. Boogman, "The Union of Utrecht: Its Genesis and Consequences," *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 94, no. 3 (Jan. 1979): 377–407.

³ Certain southern provinces like Flanders, Brabant, Luxembourg etc. were for some time still under the Habsburg rule before being gradually incorporated into the Republic. It began initially with the northern provinces such as Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht (and some parts of Gelderland) and the rest of the provinces were absorbed later. See, Boogman, "The Union of Utrecht".

⁴ Maarten Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: The Golden Age*, trans. Dianne Webb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), x.

⁵ Julia Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 39–49.

⁶ Robert Fruin, *Geschiedenis der staatsinstellingen in Nederland tot den val der Republiek* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1901); D. J. Roorda, *Partij en factie: De oproeren van 1672 in de steden* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff,

approach of highlighting the political institutions and its functions in details, Roorda and Price went on to examine it from a bottom-up perspective. They argued that it was the city governments and the factions within these governments that were the basic unit of Dutch politics. Roorda surpassed the element of a political ‘party’ and argued that the urban administrative space was rather composed of factions which were ‘bundles of political forces’.⁷ Price argued that faction was the only form of political organisation which was ‘available for party objectives’.⁸ Pollmann’s explanations, on the other hand, revealed the operation of simultaneous forces from the top (as a Union of Provinces) and bottom (as city and provincial governments) that advocated the need to maintain the much-needed harmony and stability in the Republic. An entirely decentralised system as modelled by Roorda would have had otherwise resulted in friction and disintegration. Prak too argued along this line. According to him, the system of decentralised governance worked for a Republican setting where the provinces could act in unison in the face of external threats and could turn their attention to local squabbling once the crisis had been dealt with. These narratives altered the way of seeing the political arrangement of the Republic as a regressive system and a continuation of the traditional set-up inherited from Burgundian and Habsburg times, to eventually seeing it as something very ‘modern’.

Such debates sprang from the need to understand how well the political rearrangement following the establishment of the United Provinces worked. The question of sovereignty

1961); J.L. Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: The Politics of Particularism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Judith Pollmann, “Eendracht maakt macht: Stedelijke cultuurijsden en politieke werkelijkheid in de Republiek,” in *Harmonie in Holland: Het poldermodel van 1500 tot nu*, eds. Dennis Bos, Maurits Ebben, and Henk te Velde (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2007), 134–51; Maarten Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: The Golden Age*, trans. Dianne Webb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁷ Roorda, *Partij en factie*, 3–4. For explanations and debates on the term ‘party’ see, Michel Reinders, “Burghers, Orangists and “Good Government”: Popular Political Opposition during the “Year of Disaster” 1672 in Dutch Pamphlets,” *The Seventeenth Century* 23, no. 2 (Autumn 2008): 317–18; Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 47.

⁸ Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic*, 66.

remained a contested affair in the seventeenth century.⁹ At the central level, sovereignty was exercised in the name of the States-General – a body comprising delegates from all the provinces that convened in The Hague. The delegates representing the seven provinces collaborated to discuss matters of war and peace and finance in the Republic as and when it was required, along with the *stadhouders*. To assist with the administration of the States-General, a *Raad van Staat* (the Council of State) existed whose functions evolved gradually and included certain executive tasks such as managing the finances of the *Generaliteit*, controlling the army and making supreme military decisions as well as exercising the judicial powers of the *Generaliteit*.¹⁰ This Council consisted of twelve ordinary provincial delegates – three from Holland, two each from Friesland, Zeeland, and Gelderland and one each from the rest of the provinces, including the *stadhouders*. Besides this, there was the *Generaliteits Rekenkamer* (the Accounts-Chamber of the States-General) meant for controlling the finances of the revenue from the Generality lands. There was also the *Generaliteits Muntkamer* (the Minting-Chamber of the States-General) for keeping the economy of the Republic stable with standard weights ascribed to all the provincial currencies. The States-General also demanded accountability of the Admiralty colleges located in Amsterdam (Holland), Rotterdam (South Holland), Hoorn and Enkhuizen (the North Quarter), Middelburg (Zeeland) and Dokkum till 1645, and afterwards in Harlingen (Friesland), although their delegates came from all the cities and sometimes from other provinces. These colleges regulated all shipping, naval, customs and other sea-related decisions and policies under the States-General.

At the provincial level, there were separate political arrangements for the different provinces of the Republic. In this dissertation, I will however focus on Holland and pay particular attention to Amsterdam as the core of the analysis. The reason for choosing Holland

⁹ The concept of sovereignty and where it should lie had been a subject of constant debate in the seventeenth century Dutch political forum. Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 41–44.

¹⁰ The *Generaliteitslanden* (the lands of the Generality) included States Flanders, States Brabant, Maastricht and the Overmaas (added in 1632), Wedde-Westerwolde and States Upper Gelderland (i.e. Roermond and Venlo added in 1713). Between 1597 and 1605, Lingen was counted among the Generality Lands. Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford: Oxford University Publishers, 1995), 297.

lies in its obvious dominance in terms of its political and financial power in the Republic for the seventeenth century.¹¹ Holland's financial might stemming from its urban trade and steady taxation implied that even though it had to bear the burden of the greatest share in the finances of the *Generaliteit*, its earnings were still higher than the other provinces (except Zeeland, a close competitor), dependent on agriculture.¹² The States of Holland's physical proximity to the States-General in The Hague where all governmental business was executed also added to its advantage.¹³ Within the provincial government, the States of Holland also had its own permanent council called the *Gecommitteerde Raden* (Commissioned Council) that met on a regular basis to sort out its legal, military and financial matters. Besides this, there was the *Raadspensionaris* or the Grand Pensionary (former Advocate of Holland) who acted as an advisor to the States of Holland and was also the spokesperson for the delegation sent from Holland to the States-General. He could in theory hold a tenure of five years and had a considerable say in the political setting of the Republic.¹⁴

At the local level, there were separate city governments for several cities within a particular province which were represented in the different States of all the Provinces. For Holland, there were the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Leiden, Haarlem, Delft, Dordrecht and so on, each having their own representative government. Most of them also voted separately in the States of Holland.¹⁵ Besides this, there was the *ridderschap* (the council of nobles) which too enjoyed a single vote along with the cities. Every city government had a council called the *vroedschap* or *raad* (in Amsterdam there was the *vroedschap*). The members had tenure for life and

¹¹ To understand how Holland influenced the Union of the Republic see, Boogman, "The Union of Utrecht"; Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism*, 47–48.

¹² Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century*, 131, 176–77; Israel, *The Dutch Republic, 1477-1806*, 287.

¹³ Paul Knevel, *Het Haagse Bureau: 17de-eeuwse ambtenaren tussen staatsbelang en eigenbelang* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverijen Prometheus/ Bert Bakker, 2001), 11.

¹⁴ For more on this position of the *raadspensionaris* or Grand Pensionary see, Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century*, 183.

¹⁵ Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic*, 19.

fulfilled several functions.¹⁶ Most members usually started out with local administrative offices like that of the *weesmeesters* (members of *weeskamer* administering estates of minor orphans), *kerkmeesters* (the church-overseers), tax collectors and so on, until some of them climbed up to higher positions like that of the *burgemeester*. Most of the judicial and executive powers was vested in the organisation of the *gerecht* (loosely translated as magistracy) that consisted of the *burgemeesters* (burgomasters), the *schout* and the *schepenen* (the aldermen). Each city usually had more than one *burgemeester*, each serving for one or two years and then being ineligible for the office for a similar period.¹⁷ In Amsterdam, the *burgemeesters* had relatively greater power than the *vroedschap*, unlike some other cities such as Rotterdam. The *schepenen* constituted the body responsible for managing the civil and criminal law courts of the cities that were further subordinated to the Provincial Court of Holland (*Hof van Holland, Zeeland and West-Friesland*) and the Supreme Court (*Hoge Raad*), both located in The Hague.

Many ambitious young men trying to make a career in bureaucracy were often known to start off as jurists in minor cities before occupying suitable positions in the *vroedschap* and aiming for the office of *burgemeester*. The *schout* combined the role of the police and the public prosecutor and was responsible for bringing criminals and other prosecuted offenders before the *schepensbank* (a court of law that held office for two years, half of whom were replaced annually to maintain a balance between change and continuity). Every city also had their *pensionaris* (the senior city councillor) and a few secretaries. The delegations from the cities to the States of Holland were accompanied by their *pensionarissen*. These delegates could only give their decisions in the States of Holland according to how they had been instructed by their respective city authorities (*ruggespraak*).¹⁸ If new situations arose where fresh decisions had to be made, the delegates had to refer back to their city governments before any further announcements could be made in the States' assemblies. The *raadspensionaris* would at the end sum up all the decisions made by the

¹⁶ Prak, 171.

¹⁷ Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic*, 26.

¹⁸ Price, 12.

ridderschap and the city councils in the States of Holland, after voting sessions on a particular issue had been conducted.

Within Holland, Amsterdam was one of the most important cities to affect the decisions of the States of Holland. But Marjolien 't Hart argues that there were other cities which were important in certain other respects like that of The Hague as a political centre, or Leiden as a cultural centre.¹⁹ Moreover, the fact that all the cities had equal votes in the States of Holland meant that they too had the power to assert their influence, along with Amsterdam. But significant gaps in the system still left Amsterdam with relatively greater advantages. Decisions in the States of Holland, for example, were not required to be taken unanimously and motions could be passed with a majority vote.²⁰ In this respect, Amsterdam's huge trading profits and tax income gave it a dominant position to make decisions vis-à-vis the other cities. As a leading investor in the commercial space, it often also enjoyed an edge in the political deliberations, because of the support of smaller cities that were dependent on Amsterdam. With plenty of power and money at its heart, the province of Holland with powerful cities like Amsterdam and political centres like The Hague were in the ascendant regarding the public image of politics and the accompanying discussions on administrative corruption.

The office of the *stadhouder* (stadholder) emerged from the residue of the previous Habsburg government. The person holding this office was supposed to function at the central level but was appointed and approved by the provinces. Though initially there were three *stadhouders*, this number was soon reduced to two. The one was the *stadhouder* of Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht (as also of Overijssel and Gelderland) and the other represented Friesland and Groningen (and in certain periods of time of Drenthe as well). Throughout the seventeenth century, the *stadhouders* of Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht were from the House of Orange –

¹⁹ Marjolien 't Hart, "Intercity Rivalries and the Making of the Dutch State," in *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe, A.D. 1000 to 1800*, eds. Charles Tilly and Wim P. Blockmans (Boulder (Co.): Westview Press, 1994), 196–217.

²⁰ Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century*, 171–72.

Maurits van Oranje-Nassau, Frederik Hendrik van Oranje, Willem II and Willem III van Oranje-Nassau.²¹ As regards the power of the *stadhouder*, he was the captain-general of the army in the Republic. He also had the power to appoint *schepenen* from the list of nominations sent to him by the *vroedschap* of certain cities in the province of Holland although this did not include Amsterdam and differed from one city to another. The *stadhouder* also enjoyed the privilege of attending the meetings of the States of Provinces, if he wished to at any time. Ölaf Morke has argued that the *stadhouder's* courtly culture and his pompous residence represented almost a princely presence in the midst of a Republic.²² Others like Jill Stern showed that the Orangists consciously resorted to a propaganda that used the rhetoric of the *stadhouder* as ‘the guardian of the principles of the state’, much like that of a monarchy.²³

Thus, in summing up the political situation of the Dutch Republic, one can say that it was a combination of a Republic with traces of princely rule. Formally, it was designed as a decentralised system where the States-General exercised the highest authority in matters of war and peace and finance of all the provinces while acting as the custodian of the *Generaliteitslanden* and other Dutch overseas settlements.²⁴ All provinces and city governments therefore had their individual say, though certain cities and provinces enjoyed greater political and commercial advantages over the others. Within this set-up, the office of the *stadhouder* operated as a significant political tool of monarchical reminiscence within the Republic. Informally, however, the Republic was able to respond as a single territory with patriotic sentiments in times of crisis, despite its regular decentralised structure. Within this complex of governance, there were the elite regents functioning on the Republic’s political forum who were the main movers and

²¹ For the seventeenth century, the *stadhouders* of Friesland and Groningen were Willem Lodewijk van Nassau-Dillenburg, Maurits van Nassau, Ernst Casimir and Hendrik Casimir I van Nassau-Dietz, Frederik Hendrik van Oranje, Willem II van Oranje-Nassau, Willem Frederik van Nassau-Dietz, Hendrik Casimir II and Johan Willem Friso van Nassau-Dietz.

²² Ölaf Morke, “William III’s Stadholderly Court in the Dutch Republic,” in *Redefining William III: The Impact of the King-Stadholder in International Context*, eds. Esther Mijers and David Onnekink (Aldershot etc.: Ashgate, 2007), 227–40.

²³ Jill Stern, “The Rhetoric of Popular Orangism, 1650-72,” *Historical Research* 77, no. 196 (May 2004): 224.

²⁴ See glossary of Dutch administrative terms at the end for *Generaliteitslanden*.

shakers and cut across all institutional boundaries. This is elaborated in the next section where their roles have been dealt with in greater detail. Oebele Vries has pointed out that the administration was generally split into a hierarchy of officials – comprising those regents that formed the highest elite group (*regentenambten*), followed by lower subordinate public servants (*dienende ambten*), the labouring or working groups (*arbeidsambten*) and the rest serving in the remaining smaller offices (*overige ambten*).²⁵ It is especially the group of high-ranking officials that this dissertation focuses on, while discussing corruption in the Republic's political administration.

Patronage and Factions

While the above structure clearly indicates that it was the cities and their regents that formed the core of the Dutch political system, it also reminds us of yet another greater force that went beyond these institutions. This was the system of patronage in the elite society that tied together friends and families who went on to form political factions within the administration of the Republic. These factions were responsible for the entire system working the way it did in seventeenth-century Dutch politics. How were these factions formed? There were no written rules that can help us to answer this question. It was not until the time that the 'contracts of correspondence' came to be formally recognised during the tenure of the *stadhouder*, Willem III that the existence of patronage among administrative officials was openly acknowledged.²⁶ These contracts formally allowed privileged families to have offices reserved for their family members and friends within the administrative apparatus. But the practice had been persisting all along, prior to the official implementation of these contracts. Distributing administrative positions to one's friends and family members as factions was the usual practice for the time among the wealthy regent families. According to Julia Adams, these familial factions were so powerful and crucial to the politico-economic developments of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, that

²⁵ Cited from Michel Hoenderboom, "Scandals, Politics and Patronage: Corruption and Public Values in the Netherlands (1650-1747)" (PhD diss., Vrije University, 2013), 44.

²⁶ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 837; Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic*, 25.

they deserve a separate status of political institutions alongside other elements of state formation. Adams called these family units as symbolising the rule of patriarchal patrilineal relations.²⁷

Strategic friendships and family alliances formed the core of factionalism and were the mainstay of all relations in elite society. Friendships bore special meanings and implications and so did families containing members connected by blood ties. These people as members of a political faction were obliged to share common ideological affiliations, wealth, honour and status in order to acquire recommendations and offices in the political administration of the Republic.²⁸ By virtue of this norm, families with fathers, brothers, uncles, in-laws, nephews and cousins were related not only by blood but were also connected as colleagues, spread around the government machinery in different positions. Often intermarriage among the families of good friends turned friendships into extended familial factions. In trying to stress the importance of building strategic marriage alliances, a certain regent's remark from the *vroedschap* of Delft in the eighteenth century revealed the denigrated worth of women in these political families. He once supposedly said in jest – 'My little niece carries a place on the city council under her skirt'.²⁹ An official would expect his friend to establish marriage links with his family members and exchange favours in return. A 'friend' in the seventeenth century was, therefore, a 'friend' with 'benefits' (*uitwisselen*

²⁷ Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism*, 9.

²⁸ Similar ideological affinities in factions were connected to religious choices as well. On the extent of its practical implications in the Republic, there have been studies about the Dutch 'religious' tolerance in the seventeenth century that emphasised the *stadhouders'* and the prominent regents' informal connections with Catholics and other non-Calvinist groups. See, Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 600. For the policies of tolerance on paper and their practical implications throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries see, Judith Pollmann, "From Freedom of Conscience to Confessional Segregation? Religious Choice and Toleration in the Dutch Republic," in *Persecution and Pluralism: Calvinists and Religious Minorities in the Early Modern Europe, 1550-1700*, eds. Richard J. Bonney and David J.B. Trim (Oxford: Peter Land, 2006), 123–48. Scholars who have highlighted the limitations of tolerance include, Erika Kuijpers, *Migrantenstad: immigratie en sociale verhoudingen in de 17e-eeuws Amsterdam* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2005); Benjamin Kaplan, "'Dutch' Religious Tolerance: Celebration and Revision," in *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age*, eds. R. Po-Chia Hsia and Henk van Nierop (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 8–26.

²⁹ Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism*, 86.

van diensten), where ‘reciprocity’ (*wederkerigheid*) was the underlining factor that kept friendships stable and ongoing.³⁰

Building a career in the bureaucratic circles became increasingly important in the course of the century as trade and business began to be pushed to the background in favour of university-educated professions.³¹ In fact, a kind of combined training of accounting along with political and juridical learning became the trend.³² This gave a further thrust to the competition for gaining administrative offices as a serious career. Under such circumstances, strategic cultivation of friendships turned out to be even more crucial. This meant that friends and families allied with a certain faction protected each other’s jobs, wealth, reputation, social image and shared the fruits of their labour. But there were several of these factions vying for their own self-interests and it could not have been all very happy and cordial. And it was indeed not so! Every time a vacancy appeared in the administration, all the factions had their eyes on it as everyone wanted to install their own men in that vacant post. It resulted in intense factional strife which made it difficult to persist without collective support. Solidarity acted as a defence or a social wall against this factional infighting in the political arena.

However, there were disadvantages and risks involved in this venture as well. Factional solidarity did not necessarily always accrue profit but could also result in loss. If a family or a faction lost its position in the government, it would mean that all the members would run the risk of being disqualified from holding advantageous positions. Opponent factions would then try to block their access to all offices and power bases. Without wealth and connections, the abandoned family would gradually lose its former status and influence. It was a game of political power where groups or factions had either the opportunity to rise together or the ill-fate to fall and lose it all. This, therefore, called for a strategic bonding coupled with calculated moves. It

³⁰ Luuc Kooijmans, *Vriendschap en de kunst van het overleven in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 1997), 326–27.

³¹ Maarten Prak, “Loopbaan en carrière in de Gouden Eeuw,” *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 27, no. 2 (Jan. 2012): 130–40.

³² Jacob Soll, “Accounting for Government: Holland and the Rise of Political Economy in Seventeenth-Century Europe,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 2 (Autumn 2009): 221.

does not however suggest that every member in a faction would have had to forego his position, if their opponent factions became dominant in the political space. It just meant that the older members, belonging to rival factions, were stripped of the protection offered by a defensive wall of their friends and families and were left vulnerable on the losing side. What also needs to be noted is that these factional bonds were certainly imposing, but not always unbreakable and rigid. Though not a frequent occurrence, members of factions did sometimes change sides. Strategic switching from older factions to new ones also occurred during periods of political crisis, when the powerholders had to be all the more careful about taking sides. Luuc Kooijmans, therefore, quite rightly named this ‘the art of survival’ to be mastered by the seventeenth- and the eighteenth-century elites.³³

Perceptions of Administrative Corruption

The governing machinery in the Republic was, thus, a combination of formally decentralised institutions with a parallel system of patronage and factionalism that made personal relations extremely important in the political apparatus of the Republic. It was this given political set-up, along with the functional rules and regulations of right administrative behaviour that eventually went on to shape perceptions of administrative corruption. One can begin with the basic question of whether the word ‘corruption’ existed at all in the seventeenth-century Dutch vocabulary. The word ‘*corruptie*’, in itself, existed in Dutch as early as the Middle Ages (almost as early as the twelfth century), and probably had been in use throughout the subsequent years.³⁴ It goes without saying however that its meaning and context differed in all these years. In the seventeenth century, one comes across this word having varying socio-political connotations,

³³ Kooijmans, *Vriendschap*.

³⁴ See the word ‘*corruptie*’ in *De geïntegreerde taal-bank: Historische woordenboek op internet*. There is further no comprehensive study done as of yet on the terminology and its varying context in the ‘medieval’ and ‘early-modern’ periods.

though often not freed from religious rhetoric.³⁵ An early version of a Dutch to English dictionary dating from the year 1648 gave the translated meaning of the word *corruptie* in English as corruption or dissolution.³⁶ In 1668, this had become more concrete acquiring a particular administrative connotation, as is evident from the dictionary of Adriaan Koerbagh compiled in that year. It provides synonyms for the word *corruptie* which loosely translates to bribery, violation and the act of corrupting or *corrumperen* by bribing someone with money or misleading someone with gifts for committing misdeeds.³⁷ In 1669, L. Meijers *Woordenschat* also clarifies ‘*corruptie*’ as ‘*verderving*’ (closest possible translation as depravity) and ‘*omkoop*’ (bribery). In the administrative papers of the regents and in the pamphlets, the word *corruptie* came to be associated closely with other words like ‘*omkoop*’ (bribery), ‘*defraudatie*’ (fraud), ‘*fraude*’ (fraud), ‘*maleversatie*’ (malpractice), ‘*kuiperij*’ (machinations) and ‘*mesuse*’ (misuse), all of which indicated misdeeds related to pecuniary matters.³⁸ Being ‘corrupt’ definitely implied a pejorative meaning, as can be discerned from the set of words used for its remedy, such as ‘*redres*’ (redress) or ‘*reforme*’ (reform).³⁹

³⁵ I have checked for the word ‘*corruptie*’ in the available databases (dbnl.org, dutchpamphletsonline including the Knuttel and Van Alphen collections) for Dutch literature in the seventeenth century. Till 1650, they tend to be used mostly in the religious context when the author condemns the act of not abiding by his religious views as corruption of the body or soul. At other times, it is used in the context of bodily sickness as corruption or decay of some body part. The first time it appears in a strong political and administrative context is in the *Deductie* of Jan de Witt as ‘*incorrupte regeering*’ (incorrupt government) and later in the work of Pieter de la Court called *Interest van Holland, ofte gronden van Hollands-Welvaren* in 1662. Pieter de la Court, *Interest van Holland, ofte gronde van Hollands-Welvaren* (Amsterdam: Joan Cyprianus van der Gracht, 1662), 5r.

³⁶ Hendry Hexham, *Het groot woorden-boeck: Gestelt in ’t Nederduytsch, ende in’t Engelsch* (Rotterdam: Arnout Leers, 1648), 663.

³⁷ ‘*Corrumperen*, omkopen, omkopen iemand met geld, of iemand door giften en gaaven verleyden, en verblinden, om tot zijn vermeeten te komen; *Corrumperen*, bederven, schenden; ‘*Corruptele*, een kwaade invoering, omkoop; *Corruptele*, een verderving, schending, bederf; ‘*Corruptie*, een verderving, bederving, schending; *Corruptie*, omkoop.’ See, Adriaan Koerbagh, *Een bloembhof van allerley lieflijkheyt sonder verdriet geplant door Vreederijk Waarmond, onderzoeker der waarheyd, tot nu en dienst van al die geen die der nut en dienst nuyt trekken wil* (Amsterdam: Adriaan Koerbagh, 1668), 204-05.

³⁸ NA, Collectie Hudde, inv. nr. 38, Copy of the instructions of the *Heeren XVII* for Hendrik van Reede, lord of Mijndrecht, appointed as the commissioner of Bengal, Coromandel, Ceylon etc. in Amsterdam, 1684: f. 4v and 5r. For the word ‘*kuiperij*’ also see, Anonymous, *Doodt-Stuypen van d’Heer Cornelis Musch* (1646), page not numbered.

³⁹ NL-HaNA, Collectie Hudde, inv. nr. 5, Concept of the redressal of Company affairs as had been put forward by Coenraad van Beuningen, 1687: folios not numbered.

But to understand what precisely was perceived as corrupt, one can begin by referring to the officially approved rules for regulating proper administrative behaviour. It is important to note in this context, that perceiving ‘corruption’ was a socio-political process beyond the technicalities of the legal domain. The written laws of course represented the ideal standards of moral behaviour and in cases of corruption charges, the judicial courts could only work with reference to the violation of these written laws.⁴⁰ This meant that the accused officials could be tried or found guilty of committing illegal acts in the judicial sphere. These illegal deeds got translated under the broader term ‘corruption’, as it was recognisable in the socio-political sphere. Illegal acts in the form of violation of formal rules were therefore identified as immoral behaviour and condemned as corruption in the social space. Even today in the Netherlands, there is no direct concept of corruption in the Dutch formal legal system.⁴¹ Using the written laws as a parameter naturally did not mean that non-compliance with them always amounted to immediate corruption allegations. But they at least provided the window through which one could see what was likely to be perceived as corrupt and illegal in seventeenth-century Dutch administration.

The oaths sworn by the high officials while assuming their offices in this respect, provided a clear idea of the standards of administrative behaviour. Such oaths were directed against two explicit prohibitions that set the boundaries of (im)propriety while acknowledging the possibility of corruption. The oaths forbade - (a) undue favouritism in the distribution of offices and (b) the accepting of gifts as a favour for administrative services. The oath to be taken by all the ambassadors and other ministers in the States-General in 1651 contained the following lines – ‘I promise and swear that before entering this office, I have not accepted or enjoyed, and that during the tenure of this office and after the signing of this contract, shall not accept any gifts or presents directly or indirectly offered (to me) in questionable or unquestionable

⁴⁰ Pieter Wagenaar, “Extortion and Abuse of Power in the Dutch Republic: The Case of Bailiff Lodewijk van Alteren,” *International Journal of Public Administration* 34, no. 11 (Aug. 2011): 731–40.

⁴¹ For discussions on law and corruption see, Torsello and Venard, “The Anthropology of Corruption,” 25–27.

ways...'.⁴² Other oaths to be sworn by officials like the *schout*, the *schepenen* and the *secretaris* also contained similar duties – 'I swear...to help in the preservation and the administration of law and justice, and to the best of my ability help the gentlemen and their officials to get verdicts; without taking advantage (of them) through any reward, favour or partiality, nor to accept any gifts and presents for this, and to respect the (limitations caused by) family relations and friendships, and further to do here everything...'.⁴³ The oath of the *essayjeur-generaal* (expert on the gold and silver purity of currency) of the United Provinces read as, 'I swear...to maintain and fulfil my duties, without having to accept or amplify in any way from the above-mentioned merchants or others, by virtue of my aforementioned office, any gifts, presents or instructions, and not exercise the powers of my aforementioned office to grant undue favours or harm anyone.'⁴⁴ Thus, abstinence from monetary gifts and familial favours was seen as the official ethos, which made bribery and nepotism acts of corruption.

But this constructed image of morality had to suit the political system of the Republic that was a mix of allegiances at different levels – at a personal or city level, a provincial level or finally to the 'fatherland' represented by the States-General. Quite obviously therefore, in a system based on patronage and factional alliances, the ideal of non-favouritism clashed with the regular norm of appointments based on personal relations. In order to deal with this, the written

⁴² 'Ik belove ende sweere dat ick, voor't aengaen vande handelinghe niet en hebbe genomen nochte genooten, dat ick gedrujrende deselve mochte oock naer het besluyt van het tractaet, niet en sal nemen oft genieten eenige giften ofte presenten directeljk of indirecteljk op eeniger manieren bedenkeljk oft onbedenkeljk maer dat ick ter contrarie bij aldien...so waerlijck moet mij Godt Almachthigh helpen.'

NL-HaNA, Staten-Generaal, inv. nr. 12532, Applications of the oath of the men who were to make contracts on behalf of the States-General with ambassadors of foreign kings, Republics, princes, aristocrats and other lords etc., 23 February, 1651: folios not numbered.

⁴³ 'Ik sweere...het recht en justitie helpen besitten en administeren, en near mijne besten verstande ter manisse des heeren off sijnen officieren helpen vonnis raemen; sonder daer in te gebruijcken eenigh port, faveur ofte partialiteijt, giften ofte gaven dienthalven te nemen, maegschap off vrientschappe te respecteren, en voort alhier des geene te doen, ...'

NA, Staten-Generaal, inv. nr. 12532, Oath of the *schepenen* (aldermen) of Delft, not dated: f. 49r.

⁴⁴ 'Ik sweere...onderhouden en volbrengen, sonder dat ik in eenige manieren van de voorn. Coopliden ofte anderen uijt vorsake van mijn voorsc officie eenige gifte gaven ofte gelasten zal moeten neemen ofte amptieren bij de welke ik in't exerceeren van mijn voorsc. officie ymant soude mogen favoueren ofte agterdeel doen,...'

NA, Staten-Generaal, inv. nr. 12532, Oath of the *essayjeur-generaal* of the United Provinces of Netherlands, not dated: folios not numbered.

regulations found a way through its invention of skills required for government work. These skills were mostly based on the personal character traits of potential candidates. Along with basic university training; experience, honour, industriousness and the humanist virtues of honesty and integrity were considered important for determining an official's skill and administrative capability.⁴⁵ On a certain occasion, the Amsterdam *burgemeester*, Joan Huydecoper van Maarsseveen (Jr.) was requested by his sister, Constantia to grant her brother-in-law, Coenraat van Westerhoff an administrative position. But after every opportunity of offering a position to Coenraat failed because of Coenraat's own irresponsible behaviour, Huydecoper became reluctant to vouch for Coenraat's character. Despite persistent pressure from Constantia and her husband, Huydecoper wrote back telling Constantia that he would see to it that the number of rogues in Amsterdam was not increased, which is why he would not give Coenraat a job.⁴⁶ Govert Brasser succeeded Johan van Goch, as the *thesaurier-generaal* (the official in charge of the treasury of the States-General) but despite having the required professional skills and training, he still had to survive several political intrigues before gaining his position.⁴⁷ Jacob Cats, the politician and poet from Zeeland, served in the position of the *raadspensionaris* and had all the right family connections. But his administrative abilities were questioned by many and praised by others.⁴⁸ Willem Frederik van Nassau-Dietz, the *stadhouder* of Friesland had to dismiss Cornelis Haubois from his office since his fellow regents complained of his character.⁴⁹ There was thus space for the recognition of skills but these skills were often influenced by private contacts and personal character traits, rather than by adopting our 'modern'-day eligibility criteria of merit and

⁴⁵ M.P. Hoenderboom and A.D.N. Kerkhoff, "Corruption and Capability in the Dutch Republic: The Case of Lodewijk Huygens (1676)," *Public Voices* 10, no. 2 (2008): 9–10, 19–21; Jan Hartman, Jaap Nieuwstraten, and Michel Reinders, "Introduction," in *Public Offices, Personal Demands: Capability in Governance in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic*, eds. Jan Hartman, Jaap Nieuwstraten, and Michel Reinders (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 1–19.

⁴⁶ Kooijmans, *Vriendschap*, 141–43.

⁴⁷ Knevel, *Het Haagse bureau*, 59.

⁴⁸ Knevel, 153.

⁴⁹ Geert H. Janssen, "Patronage en corruptie: Publieke en private rollen van een stadhouder in de Republiek," *Tijdschrift voor sociale en economische geschiedenis* 2, no. 4 (Dec. 2005): 54.

open competition. The political arrangement of factional alliances also ensured the retaining of the practice of gift-giving as an essential part of maintaining contacts. But the existing bribery rules acquired new connotations that prohibited the direct exchange of money as a favour for the execution of administrative tasks.⁵⁰

Corruption, as such, formed the flip side to loyalty in the Dutch Republic.⁵¹ Loyalty to the States-General and the ‘fatherland’ as well as to different provinces and cities was defined by written rules in the public forum. But the informal existence of patronage relations also necessitated loyalty to friends and factions in practice. Loyalty was thus to be manifested through adherence to both the written rules as well as the unwritten norms, necessitated by the governing structure of the Republic. The ability to strike a balance between these loyalties was proof of an official’s skills and administrative calibre. Individual moral character in this process came to be regarded as an integral part of governmental ethics, along with professional skills for holding administrative positions. Being ‘corrupt’ thus implied resorting to favouritism and bribery which was being disloyal to the formal institutional rules, while also being disloyal to informal factional allies and benefactors. The perception of ‘corruption’ as it emerged was, therefore, juxtaposed to a complex governmental ethos of multiple loyalties shaped by the incongruous rules and political structure of the Republic. But this inevitably led to complications when corruption allegations were made. There were occasions when situations turned ugly, triggering accusations of bribery or nepotism against certain officials. But the question that remained was, when and why were these accusations made in the Dutch Republic. Under what circumstances, did certain actions come to be regarded as ‘corrupt’? Finding an answer to this has been the most confusing part of studying administrative corruption in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, a problem which has given rise to an increase in the number of researches on corruption in recent years.

⁵⁰ See Knevel, *Het Haagse bureau*, 146–47, 162–63.

⁵¹ Michiel van Groesen and Judith Pollmann, “Inleiding,” in *Het gelijk van de Gouden Eeuw: Recht, onrecht en reputatie in de vroegmoderne Nederlanden*, eds. Judith Pollmann and Michiel van Groesen (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014), 9.

Debates on Corruption and Uses of its Allegations

In their introduction to the special issue on corruption in the ‘pre-modern’ Netherlands entitled ‘Corruptie in de Nederlanden, 1400-1800’, Pieter Wagenaar, Otto van der Meij and Manon van der Heijden argued that it was the informal norms rather than formal laws that determined (un)acceptable administrative behaviour.⁵² When these norms were violated, allegations of corruption were raised in the Republic. Separate case studies by other authors, such as Michel Hoenderboom and Toon Kerkhoff who worked on the project, ‘The Genesis of Public Values’, also used this idea of the violation of informal norms as the reason for corruption accusations. In their case study on Lodewijk Huygens (the *schout* of Gorinchem), they showed how norms or shop-floor codes, as discussed by Simon Hoetjes, could be used for studying the situation of corruption in the ‘early-modern’ Dutch Republic. Hoetjes named four sources – formal legal codes, public opinion, the best opinion and morality of the time and shop-floor codes for use as analytical tools in studying corruption.⁵³ Hoenderboom and Kerkhoff placed these elements on a spectrum, placing the legal codes on the one end and public opinion and best opinion on the other. The legal code as formal laws, they argued, were not sufficient to be used to study corruption in the Republic since most of the time such laws were imprecise and not always put into practice. The pamphlets and philosophies representing public opinion and best opinion, on the other hand, reflected the ‘ideal’ situation but did not portray what happened in practice. In between the two ends of this spectrum, they located the ‘shop-floor’ codes or what they called norms, as the real standards linking theory and practice. These codes of conduct, according to them, determined the limits of acceptable official behaviour in public service. The subsequent violation of these codes led to the eruption of corruption allegations. Hoenderboom and

⁵² Wagenaar, Meij, and Heijden, “Corruptie in de Nederlanden,” 3–21.

⁵³ See for the NWO project,

<http://www.nwo.nl/onderzoek-en-resultaten/onderzoeksprojecten/i/04/2104.html>, accessed 30 December, 2017; Hoenderboom and Kerkhoff, “Corruption and Capability,” 7–24.

Kerkhoff showed how Lodewijk Huygens actually transgressed these shop-floor codes or norms that led to his exposure as a corrupt official in the public space.

In the Dutch administrative space, there were several unwritten practices which could qualify as shop-floor codes or norms. Regents, for instance, were often used to making payments through private money which needs to be distinguished from the usual practices of gift-giving.⁵⁴ Appointment of officials and rotation of their offices were usually made on the basis of seniority.⁵⁵ Shop-floor norms also complemented the inadequacy of a not so well-formulated and incomplete written code of rules. Hoenderboom in his dissertation ‘Scandal, Politics and Patronage’ took this standard of shop-floor codes further.⁵⁶ Using five cases of corruption accusations against officials in the Dutch Republic who were working between the 1630s and 1750, he argued that it was the transgression of ‘shop-floor’ codes that actually brought these officials to their ruin.

As Hoenderboom and Kerkhoff argued, such shop-floor codes included appointment by patronage based on unwritten norms of seniority and rotation. Besides this, for Amsterdam, much like other cities, there were the *verboden graden* (forbidden grades) which did not allow certain candidates and officials of specific blood relations to be considered for appointment in the city council.⁵⁷ It is conceivable that if these norms were violated, the daily functioning of patronage would suffer a rude intervention and trigger accusations of undue favouritism from fellow officials. Similarly, Geert H. Janssen in his work – ‘Patronage en corruptie’ – provided a means of distinguishing the accepted norms from the unacceptable, by using the practice of gift-giving and the patronage system as an indicator.⁵⁸ He concluded that as long as gifts were not big and conspicuous and did not involve money directly, they were acceptable. This was an

⁵⁴ Knevel, *Haagse bureau*, 162-63.

⁵⁵ Hoenderboom and Kerkhoff, “Corruption and Capability,” 17-18.

⁵⁶ Hoenderboom, “Scandals, Politics and Patronage”.

⁵⁷ Jan Wagenaar, *Amsterdam in zyne opkomst, aanwas, geschiedenissen, voorregten, koophandel, gebouwen, kerkenstaat, scholen, schutterye, gilden en regeeringe*, vol. 12 (Amsterdam: Yntema and Tieboel, 1768), 24.

⁵⁸ Janssen, “Patronage en corruptie”.

unwritten norm and accusations of bribery appeared only when such norms were broken. But in the private space these norms did not apply.

Regarding patronage, Janssen showed how the *stadhouder* of Friesland, Willem Frederik van Nassau-Dietz had to act against his own clients who were charged with corruption by the other regents. He needed to do this to prove himself a good patron. The moment a client broke the traditions and norms of public administration, he could be labelled as corrupt which could in turn jeopardise his patron's position as well. Patronage, therefore, also operated in a way that regulated the preservation of norms in public administration. Violation of these norms provoked corruption charges. The alternate argument that was added to the argument of violation of norms was by Pieter Wagenaar again, through his case study of 'Hugo van Arckel, Dike Warden of the Krimpenerwaard'.⁵⁹ Wagenaar proved that the violation of norms was not always the underlying factor for the initiation of corruption charges against certain officials. As Van Arckel's case failed to fit into the explanation regarding the violation of norms, Wagenaar explained it in the light of the changing political and military context in which Van Arckel was operating. Van Arckel's measures of compensating for a shortage of money through additional taxes was not exposed as corrupt (even though they violated the formal rules) as long as the political situation in the Republic preserved his patron's power. With the fall of this patron in a politically changing environment, Van Arckel's opponents began to allege that his actions too were corrupt, which culminated in his downfall.

While various scholars have concentrated on different theories and methodological approaches to describe the practice of corruption, little attention has been paid to the political situation within the Republic of this time. Given that it was riddled with factional infighting, intense competition for career-building, unstable political situations, and multiple loyalties to provinces, cities, individual patrons, families and friends, the chances were high that these factors

⁵⁹ Pieter Wagenaar, "Classical Corruption: Hugo van Arckel, Dike Warden of the Krimpenerwaard, and the Corruption of His Time," *Public Voices* 10, no. 2 (2008): 44–57.

affected the rise of corruption allegations from time to time. To provide a complementary argument therefore, I would propose that the use of corruption allegations was a political tool in the Dutch administration that triggered its growing importance in political discourse. Factional rivalries in fact played a significant role in accusing one's political opponent of being corrupt. It paved the way for perceiving corruption in a way that merged personal disloyalty with general disloyalty towards the Republic and its political institutions.

The Political Use of Administrative Corruption

Competing factions, as I will argue here, used corruption charges against their political opponents in order to oust them from their administrative positions. A show of legitimacy was preserved in this manner where opponents were first discredited openly as inefficient administrators and then removed from their offices with a valid reason. It was precisely during this process of framing corruption charges that the boundaries of what could be called corrupt became stretched or retracted. Not surprisingly then, the legal sentences passed by the provincial courts or the supreme court were often printed and circulated as political pamphlets for the general audience to refer to as precedents in the future.⁶⁰ This mechanism of using corruption allegations as a political tool, in fact, sustained the entire political system of the Republic that was ridden with factional discord. But how was it all implemented? Every time a member or members of a particular faction were accused of corruption, the charges mostly emanated from the members of the opposing faction. The intention of the plaintiffs was to remove the accused from their offices or to stain their character by calling into question their administrative capability. Collecting evidence or manipulating people would have been easier, if the dominant faction had had greater support in the political institutions. The goal of the opposing faction was then to install their own men in these same offices in order to wield greater political power in the

⁶⁰ Hoenderboom, "Scandals, Politics and Patronage," 111; Roeland Harms, "Thievery of Literature. Consequences of the Interaction between Politics and Commerce for the Form and Content of Pamphlets," in *Pamphlets and Politics in the Dutch Republic*, eds. Femke Deen, David Onnekink, and Michel Reinders (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 42–44.

administrative machinery. The threat to personal reputation made favouritism work, if not always smoothly, yet reasonably well to make change possible in the political sphere.

Before providing examples to establish this point further, it is important to mention J. L. Price's work on Holland's factional politics revolving around the crisis years. He has, for instance, given an account of how in 1618, 1650 and 1672, the process of factional infighting led to the toppling of men from a politically less advantageous faction by their opponents, who replaced them in better political positions.⁶¹ He first talked about 1618 when Prince Maurits as the *stadhouder* came into conflict with the *landsadvocaat* of the States, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt. This conflict was limited not just to these two prominent political figures of the Republic but extended to their factions as well. Consequently, when Van Oldenbarnevelt was executed as a traitor, the men closest to him in his faction were also removed from their positions and Maurits' men took over the government. The entire trial was more of a political show rather than a just jury judging Van Oldenbarnevelt. After 1650, when the Republic had no suitable *stadhouder* and the *raadspensionaris* Johan de Witt along with his brother Cornelis de Witt had taken over political power, his faction appealed for the removal of the office of *stadhouder*. Men who were allies to the former *stadhouders* Frederik Hendrik and Willem II now belonged to the opposing faction of the De Witt brothers and attempts were made to remove them from office. Most offices in the States of Holland, consequently begun to be occupied by the De Witt family members and friends. After the political turmoil of 1672 when the Republic had survived the blows of French, English and German invasions; the tables were turned. The *stadhouder*'s office was resumed by Willem III and the regime of the De Witt brothers came to a terrible end with their political murder in The Hague. The factions that were closer to the *stadhouder* now resurfaced in the political institutions and held important administrative offices, while most of the men from De Witt's faction were removed.

⁶¹ Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic*, 40–45.

It is to some extent using this analysis of Price that I attempt to show that corruption allegations started to play a prominent role in the game of factions. Most of the time such allegations of corruption were used by the winning faction against its opponents to discount them of their administrative capability. Van Oldenbarnevelt's execution was provoked by allegations of treason and partly of corruption raised by his political rivals. They blamed Van Oldenbarnevelt for siding with the Catholic French against the hard-won Calvinistic faith, which according to them was the 'true religion' of the Dutch population. He was accused of bribery and denounced as a traitor for violating the laws of the States-General.⁶² This example also illustrates the importance of loyalty to the 'fatherland' and the use of corruption allegations such as bribery in the administrative forum. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the word 'corruption' had become integrally connected to politics and appeared repeatedly in pamphlets and official reports. It can be seen in the accusation against Cornelis Musch, the *griffier*, as has been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The author of the pamphlet accusing Musch, charged him with squandering 30,000 guildens from the treasury, accepting bribes from the enemy of the Republic, France, and amassing undue power for himself to the point of acquiring 'God-damned monopoly'.⁶³

It is evident that the charges against Musch and his allies who had been closer to the *stadhouders* Frederik Hendrik and Willem II, emanated from the opposing faction propagating Republicanism. Proper administrative behaviour now came to be presented with the rhetoric of Republican ideology. The political factions who supported Republican ideas promoted peace and *burgerschap* (importance of how citizens should act according to their duties), industriousness and

⁶² Johan van Oldenbarnevelt was charged with sedition and disloyalty to the Republic, for harbouring remonstrant sympathies, for abusing the *burgemeesters*, *schepenen* and *vroedschappen* of Holland for his own ends, for having embezzled money and for bribing the French government and other officials. He offered his defence against these allegations on 20 April, 1618. See, Joannes Naeranus, *Waarachtige historie van 't geslacht, geboorte, leven, bedrijf, gevangenisse, examinatie, bekentenisse, rechters, brieven, laatste woorden en dood, van wijlen den Heer J. van Olden-Barnevelt*; Ridder, Heere van den Tempel, Berkel, Rodenrijs, advocaat en groot-zeegel-benvaarder van Holland, & c. neffens zijn remonstrantie aan haar Ed Groot Mog. mede de sententien van hem en de andere gevangene (Rotterdam, 1670), 146–99.

⁶³ Anonymous, *Extract uyt-gheven by een liefhebber des vaderlandts*, folio not numbered.

economic prosperity as the elements of appropriate governance.⁶⁴ The politics of the De Witt regime, that was based on Republican ideology, heightened the political significance of ‘corruption’ in the administrative space further. The *Deductie* of Johan de Witt stressed the creation of a government based on Republican values that would lead to the establishment of an ‘*incorrupte regeering*’ (incorruptible government).⁶⁵ He attributed corruption to the luxurious life and courtly pomp of the *stadhouder* and contrasted it to the diligence and humility that characterised *burgerschap*. The ostentatious use of corruption allegations as a political tool served him well in the factional battle between the winning side of the De Witts and the shaky position of the *stadhouder* and his friends. Interestingly, however Johan de Witt never objected to the distribution of offices among one’s kith and kin as going against his moral principles.⁶⁶

Another voice that emerged strongly from the Republican wing was that of Pieter de la Court. Through his treatise *Interest van Holland ofte gronden van Hollands-welhaven*, De la Court appealed to his readers to relinquish the position of *stadhouder* by frequently referring to corruption as the vice of rule by a monarch (or one man). One of the extracts from his work reads as follows –

Moreover, as long as the province of Holland does not turn over its sword (of state) and its governance to the Captain-General (the *stadhouder*), there are high hopes of recovery from all defects and weaknesses that have been left over from the old system; for the cities that have suffered the most damage from the corruption of the *Generaliteit* and the provincial governments, are the same as those whose regents had benefitted the least from their bad government (*wiens regeerders het minste door die quade regeringe werden gebaat*). All the more they are the most powerful cities as Amsterdam, Leyden, Rotterdam, Haarlem and so on, and it has truly depended on their very own cautious and courageous

⁶⁴ Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 92–99.

⁶⁵ Serge ter Braake, ed., *Deductie van Johan de Witt: Manifest van de ware vrijheid uit 1654* (Arnhem: Sonsbeek Publishers, 2009), 173.

⁶⁶ Boogman, “The Union of Utrecht,” 394–95.

resolutions to make themselves (the cities) capable of withstanding external violence by building good fortifications.⁶⁷

Yet another extract from his text pointed to corruption as the primary evil that infested the entire land under the administration of the former *stadhouders*. He wrote –

Although it is clear from the above statements, that the citizens of a Republic live infinitely happier than the subjects of a land ruled by a Prince or one who stands as the head (among others); the contrary is always believed in countries where there is a monarch, or in Republics where someone is climbing to a position for becoming one. For not only the civil servants, aristocrats, noblemen and soldiers, but also everyone else who would want to be one (monarch), having enriched themselves through the corruption of the government, and looking for their own greatness, have elevated the monarchical government up to the Heavens, for their own profit, as if it had descended from there; although the Lord God in all his mercy, had installed nothing other than a Republican government, and thereafter in his wrath had chosen a Prince over it, and to add to that, all the bloodsuckers of the state and the human race, despising the Republics as if they were mere filth and having churned elephants out of mice (having exaggerated and misreported), have measured out its failures in detail, and have made obscure its virtues, while knowing that they would not be punished by anyone for doing that. To all of this, the common men, ignorant of knowledge and judgment, have said Amen.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ ‘Daarenboven zo lange als de Provintie van Holland het zwaard en de Regeringe aan geen Kapitein Generaal over geeft, is daar goede hope van beterschap aller gebreken en zwakheden die uit den ouden zuerdeessem noch overgebleven zijn; want de Steden die door de corruptien van de Generaliteit en Provintiale Regeringen de meeste schade lijden, zijn even de zelve, wiens Regeerders het minste door die quade regeringe werden gebaat: En daarenboven zijn het de machtigste Steden, als Amsterdam, Leyden, Rotterdam, Haarlem &c. en ’t hangd voorwaar maar van voorzichtige en couragieuse resolutien van zijn eigen zelfs, om de voorsz. Steden door goede fortificatien en gevolge van dien bequaam te maken tegen geweld van buiten.’

Court, *Interest van Holland*, 142.

⁶⁸ ‘Hoewel uit het voorgaande blijkt, dat de ingezetenen van een Republiek oneindelijk gelukkiger zijn, als de onderdanen van een land, geregeert door een Heer ofte een uitstekend hoofd, zo zal nochtans het contrarie meest altijd werden geloofd in Landen, daar een Heer is, of in Republiken daar iemand op den trap is om Heer te werden. Want niet allen de Officianten, Hovelingen, Edelluiden en Soldaten, maar ook alle die het geren zouden wezen, door de corruptie der Regeringe zich verrijkende, ofte hare grootsheid zoekende, verheffen de Monarchale regeringe, om ijgen profijt, ten Hemel, als daar uit nedergedaald zijnde: Hoewel God en Heer geen dan een Republiksse regering genadiglijk ingesteld, en daar na in zijnen toorn een uitstekend hoofd over de zelve gekoren heeft, En daarenboven derven alle die bloedzuigers van den Staat, en van het menschelijk geslacht, de Republiken tot in den drek verachtende, en van muizen olifanten makende, de feilen der zelve breed uitmeeten, en de deugden verduisteren, omdat zy weten daar over van niemand te zullen werden gestraft. Waar op alle ’t gemeene volk, ontbloomt van kennis en oordeel, zegt Amen.’ Court, 4v–5v.

Such clear and recurrent associations of corruption with the *stadhouder* and the pro-Orange factions as used by the Republicans, increasingly made administrative behaviour and governmental corruption a burning political agenda.

But the events of 1672 changed the situation, as the *stadhouder's* office was restored in the person of Willem III. In his new position, Willem III gained considerable influence with his faction in the States-General, after the political murder of the De Witt brothers. The pro-Orangist campaigning in these years gained support on the basis of corruption accusations against the De Witts and their faction.⁶⁹ Willem III's factional allies accused the De Witts and their friends of behaving like regent oligarchs and failing to fulfil their promises and duties. Among the various pamphlets that were circulating around this time, one by Wouter Schouten called 'Moedt-schepping op Nederlants droevige val' ('Encouragement on the Sad Fall of the Netherlands') set out a number of reasons for the political hardships that the Republic had to face. One of them was the corrupt lifestyle of the anti-Orangist regents that Schouten blamed for being responsible for the crisis –

We have excelled in everything that displeases God,
 In great wantonness, and proud arrogance.
 ...
 Who had ever seen our land so full of courtly habits,
 And wicked cheats? How has arrogance taken over (so much)?
 Bankruptcy, bad cheats, foul appeals,
 Drunkenness, licentiousness, and great gluttony,
 Insufferable scourge, untimely chaos
 All of these have inflicted on us a curse.
 ...
 Our land which is only apt for God to reside,
 There all the clothing had to be in French fashion:
 What pomp and splendour each one here has displayed,

⁶⁹ Reinders, "Burghers, Orangists," 315-16, 321.

Anyone who was dressed sober, oh he was a monk.⁷⁰

Many men from the De Witt faction were consequently removed from the States of all provinces by the *wetsverzetten* on grounds of their disloyalty and maladministration.⁷¹ Those who had been in the anti-De Witt factions, lent their support to Willem III and gained the vacant offices in return.

However, two important points need to be stressed here before further conclusions may be drawn. The first point concerns Price's focus on crisis moments, as markers of important factional changes in seventeenth-century Dutch history. While reviewing all the corruption allegations, there seems to be no correlation between crisis and factional strife and the use of corruption allegations. Factional rivalries and political contestations continued all the time in the Republic and therefore corruption too was used, now and then, as a convenient tool for this purpose. Corruption accusations and removals happened even in times of peace, in fact all the more since the local tensions were then brought to the fore and external worries were pushed aside. Case studies of local officials charged with corruption and tried in the courts show different periods of time that do not necessarily indicate any urgent political crisis. However, they all show that the charges were initiated by the members of opponent factions with the purpose of removing them from office.

In the case of Lodewijk Huygens, the *schout* of Gorinchem, allegations of extortion and corruption were raised against him by the opposing faction led by Jacob van der Ulft. These

⁷⁰ 'Wy hebben uytgemunt in al wat Godt mishagden, /In grootste dertelheyl, in trotse bovaerdy;/ ...Wie sagh ons Landt voor heen soo vol van hoofse grepen, /En boose linckerny? hoe greep de hoogmoedt stant? /Banckroeten, vyl bedrogh, en listige Pleydoyen, /uytsuypery, ontucht, en grove gulsigheudt, /Onlijdelijck gerloeck, ontijdig rinckelroyen /Die hebben al-te-mael een vloeck op ons geleydt/ ... Ons Landt, daer Godt alleen behoorden in te woonen, /Daer moest de kleedingh al naer Fransse moode zijn: /Wat pracht, wat pronck en prael dorst elck daer niet betoonen, /Wie maer iet ned'rigs droegh, ó die was al te fijn.' Wouter Schouten, *Moedt-schepping op Nederlants droevige val: Aen alle edelmoedige, vrome, getrouwe inwoonderen van ons vaderlandt, lievelingen van hare soo diergekochte vryheydt, en vyanden van de Fransse en Munstersse slavernye, mede-gedeelt*. (Haerlem: Johannes Theunisz. Cas, 1672), f. A3-B.

⁷¹ *Wetsverzetten* were unusual emergency changes in the membership of the *magistraat* and *vroedschappen* which were made by the *stadhouder* on certain occasions as happened in 1618 and 1672. Price writes that the *stadhouder's* right to carry out such changes was highly dubious in law, but his actual power to do so was established in practice in these years.' Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic*, 39.

tensions erupted in the years after 1672 when Huygens and his faction opposed Van der Ulft and his men.⁷² Similarly, the trial of Lodewijk van Alteren (*baljuw* of Kenmerland) in the *Hof van Holland*, was initiated in the years around 1664 when there were no apparent signs of crisis or political instability.⁷³ Andries Hessel van Dinther, the *baljuw* of Bijerland, was dismissed from his office on charges of extortion and corruption by the *Hof van Holland* in 1660.⁷⁴ His successor was Cornelis de Witt, whom he accused with counter-charges of extortion in 1662. De Witt was at that time acting in the dual capacities of the *ruwaard* of Putten and the *baljuw* of Bijerland.⁷⁵ But both of these allegations were not made at any particular crisis moment that Price mentions in his political history of the Dutch Republic.

Even though these incidents happened in the years that did not necessarily witness any political crisis, they show how corruption charges were still used by rival factions as a political tool for playing out their power politics in the Republic. For instance, in the case of Van Dinther, he was restored to his official position by 1672, thanks to the patronage of Willem III as a result of his opposition to the De Witts.⁷⁶ Another example is that of Jacob van Zuijlen van Nijeveld, the *baljuw* of Rotterdam who took up office in 1676.⁷⁷ In 1690, he passed the death sentence of Cornelis Kosterman for a crime of manslaughter involving an incident on the night of the 28th August. The *burgemeesters* in the city who were supposedly in an opposing faction to that of Van Zuijlen, and were friends of Kosterman, spread accusations of extortion and corruption against him (Van Zuijlen) which ignited a riot leading to the plundering of his house. The case went up to the provincial court and the *stadhouder*, Willem III was asked to investigate. His interrogation report betrayed his factional support for Van Zuijlen. The questions were clearly biased in favour of Van Zuijlen. In the end, Van Zuijlen was acquitted after he had managed to gather

⁷² Hoenderboom and Kerkhoff, "Corruption and Capability," 12.

⁷³ Wagenaar, "Extortion and Abuse of Power," 731–32.

⁷⁴ Hoenderboom, "Scandals, Politics and Patronage," 56.

⁷⁵ Hoenderboom, 61.

⁷⁶ Hoenderboom, 69.

⁷⁷ Hoenderboom, 89.

testimonies from the men of his faction that included several *schepenen* and *ex-schepenen*. This incident also showed the use of corruption accusations at a time when there was no obvious political crisis. Factional rivalries were definitely operating in all these years.

While all these examples show that factional infighting was not just limited to moments of crisis as Price suggested, they nevertheless reinstate the argument of corruption allegations being used as a political tool in the Republic. Most of these corruption allegations were raised by opposing factions to discredit the administrative capability and political credibility of the accused. Accusations were also made in the courts sometimes involving pamphleteering, as in the case of Van Zuijlen, so that all of it was made public. But these factional interplays were not always successful. It was also not an easy strategy to push people out and install men of one's own choice smoothly. Factional infighting was a messy business with uneven results and such attempts often resulted in failure. Rival factions, for instance, often had to coexist and work together in the States of Holland despite ideological and political differences. The regent, Gillis Valckenier and his faction opposed the De Witts, but they were still compelled to work together in the States of Holland for some time before 1672. Valckenier eventually managed to gain prominence after he allied with the *stadhouder*, Willem III. The *stadhouder* of Friesland, Willem Frederik van Nassau-Dietz was patron to the *burgemeester* of Sneek, Cornelis Haubois and his (Haubois') opponents at the same time. But the conflict escalated and Willem Frederik had to drop Haubois as his ally.⁷⁸ The faction of Adriaan Pauw had to work with their opponents belonging to the faction of Van Oldenbarnevelt, together in the States of Holland.⁷⁹ Both the Pauws and the Bickers worked as opposing factions in the States of Holland at the same time

⁷⁸ Janssen, "Patronage en corruptie," 54.

⁷⁹ Adriaen Pauw (1585-1653) became the *pensionaris* of Amsterdam in 1611 and continued till 1627. Besides this, he was also one of the directors on the board of the VOC from 1618 and he continued there till 1641. This was the same time, as Johan van Oldenbarnevelt was the *landadvocaat* in the States. Pauw and Van Oldenbarnevelt belonged to rival political factions, and Pauw as a member of the judicial bench, later tried and executed Van Oldenbarnevelt, along with the others. Thereafter from 1631-1636 and from 1651-52, he served as the *raadspensionaris* and *grootzegelbewaarder* (the chief keeper of the seal) of Holland and Westfriesland. Johan E. Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam, 1578-1795* (Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1963), 192.

and vied for alliance with the *stadhouder* Frederik Hendrik.⁸⁰ The rival factions of Gillis Valckenier and Henrick Hooft also worked in the States at the same time after 1672.⁸¹ Moreover, the factions themselves were sometimes not stable as can be seen from the example of the Witsens. Members of the Witsen family had once been allied with the Pauws but after a quarrel with them, they moved over to join the faction of the Bickers who were the strongest anti-Pauw opponents of the time.⁸²

From these examples, one can deduce that the *stadhouder's* office and the States of Holland were two important political platforms used by the factions in Amsterdam and other major cities in Holland. In these settings, they struggled to gain prominence over each other. For this, the members had to sometimes collaborate and manipulate each other according to their own political convenience. The *stadhouder* too wanted to retain his position and did not want the *raadspensionaris* of Holland to overpower him in the Republic. The States of Holland on the other hand, did not want other provinces to be united with the *stadhouder* in case its supremacy might be suppressed. The other provinces did not want the States of Holland to have all the authority, despite knowing that they did have a clear edge in this political struggle. Factional strife and the mechanism of using corruption allegations provided automatic checks and balances in this entire arrangement. If any one of the elements in this arrangement was missing, it could create an

⁸⁰ Andries Bicker was no longer part of the *vroedschap* of Amsterdam after falling out with the Pauws who were in alliance with the *stadhouder*, Willem II. But in 1650, he was installed back to his position and served thereafter in different offices, including being the ambassador with Jacob de Witt and others to Sweden in 1651. The other members of the Bicker family who served in the *vroedschap*, next to the Pauws were Roelof Bicker (1640-56) and Jacob Jacobz. Bicker (1625-1626). Elias, 346.

⁸¹ According to Elias, Valckenier had his alliance with Cornelis Claming van Oudtshoorn, Joan Munter, Nicolaes Pancras, Joan Huydecoper van Maarseveen, Joannes Hudde and cousin of Valackenier, Cornelis Geelvinck, a brother-in-law of Munter, and Louis Trip. On the other side, was Henrick Hooft and Cornelis van Vlooswijk. See, Elias, cxxvi–cxxvii, cxxx.

⁸² The Bickers were connected to the Witsens through family alliances (Cornelis Bicker was married to Aertge Witsen). But previously, through the wedding connections of Jonas Cornelisz. Witsen, the Witsens were related to the Pauws. Jonas Cornelisz. Witsen (1596-1626) married Weyntge Jansdr. Swaerooch in 1590, the daughter of Jan Pietersz. Swaerooch. His sister-in-law was Weyntgen Heyckens who was married to Pieter Pauw. Elias, 239–240.

imbalance in the Republic. At the same time, it also filled in the gaps between the formal and the informal layers of Dutch governance, keeping the administrative machinery running.

Politics and the Public

The question that has, however, remained unaddressed so far is why corruption became important in the Dutch Republic. Why did it attract such heightened attention in this political setting? The answer lies in the emergence of a new political arrangement which further led to the production of new ideas and theories on the Dutch political front. The so-called ‘scientific revolution’ of the seventeenth century in Europe sustained the ‘historical laboratories of politics’ in several countries of the world.⁸³ The Dutch were a leading society in this endeavour where new theories and philosophies were invented and discussed to justify their existence as a Republic (*res publica* or affairs of the people). With the aid of a robust printing culture, these ideas came to be disseminated widely among the ‘citizens’ in the political arena.⁸⁴ One of the most prominent ideas of the day emanated from the works of scholars with possible Cartesian leanings and one such group of political theorists emerged in the Dutch Republic.⁸⁵ They came to be labelled as the ‘Radical Cartesians’ by Tammy Nyden-Bullock.⁸⁶ Leiden University, among other places, became a hub of such academics as Lambertus van Velthuysen, Pieter de la Court and Benedict Spinoza, whose theories were spread among the wider audience in the second half of the seventeenth century. These scholars did not invoke Descartes directly but used his worldview (his methodology of scepticism that inspired his works on mathematics, natural

⁸³ Hans Willem Blom, *Causality and Morality in Politics: The Rise of Naturalism in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Political Thought* (Rotterdam: Offset drukkerij ridderprint, 1995), 9.

⁸⁴ For an overview of fables being part of this process of spreading political ideas see, Arthur Weststeijn, “The Power of “Pliant Stuff”: Fables and Frankness in Seventeenth Century Dutch Republicanism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 72, no. 1 (Jan. 2011): 1–27, Project MUSE.

⁸⁵ Robert J. Roecklein, *Politicized Physics in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy: Essays on Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes and Spinoza* (Lanham etc: Lexington Books, 2014): 62. For an overview or summary of the ideas of Descartes on physics, physiology and psychology see Zbigniew Drozdowicz, *Cartesian Rationalism* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Edition, 2015), 109–38.

⁸⁶ For the Dutch Republic see, Tammy Nyden-Bullock, “Radical Cartesian Politics: Velthuysen, De La Court, and Spinoza,” in *Spinoza and Dutch Cartesianism*, ed. Wiep van Bunge, vol. 15, *Studia Spinozana* (Rotterdam: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999), 35–65.

science and metaphysics), in combination with the ideas of Thomas Hobbes, Machiavelli and other existing theories which in turn they applied to Dutch politics.⁸⁷ They also varied from each other in their interpretations and the extent to which they accepted all of Descartes' ideas, connecting them to the politics of the Republic. To what extent such theories inspired the regent-administrators in the execution of their political decisions is a matter of debate that requires more research in future which this dissertation does not engage with elaborately.

The drive behind the intense production of such political theories in the Dutch Republic emerged out of the need for finding solutions on questions of 'sovereignty' and the 'reason of state'.⁸⁸ With the political institutions constantly disagreeing on the issue of who held the sovereign status and what could be the true interest of the Dutch state, administrative behaviour and right conduct in politics began becoming central to these theories. Added to this, were the anxieties of civil decay stemming from the huge influx of riches coming from the flourishing commerce of the chartered East and West India Companies where several regent-administrators held shares.⁸⁹ But there was another vital force that worked from the bottom and necessitated the production of these political theories and pamphlet literature. These were the citizens in the Republic who engaged indirectly in the political debates of the seventeenth-century. Their presence played a massive role in not only producing theories but also bringing the focus on right administrative conduct in the political space.

Roorda had argued in his work that the regents in the Republic were able to manipulate the 'public' through their political provocations.⁹⁰ But researches by other scholars put forth a different image of the Dutch 'public' space in politics. Paul Knevel showed how the *schutterij* (militia) displayed political awareness in the cities of the Dutch Republic.⁹¹ Jill Stern showed how the active presence of the people and their activities influenced and shaped the political rhetoric

⁸⁷ Nyden-Bullock, 35; Blom, *Causality and Morality*, 69.

⁸⁸ Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 41.

⁸⁹ Weststeijn, "Republican Empire," 491-509.

⁹⁰ For this discussion see, Roorda, *Partij en factie*, 57. Also see, Reinders, "Burghers, Orangists," 317-18.

⁹¹ Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer: de schutterijen in Holland, 1550-1700* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1994).

of the Orangists.⁹² Michel Reinders assertively included the *burghers* as a part of the Dutch political sphere and pointed them out as “a politically significant group with their own political ideas, power and grievances”.⁹³ Through his study of the pamphlets circulated during the upheavals of 1672, Reinders showed that there were open debates between the politicians and the *burghers* which often revolved around subjects such as the capability of the regents in administering their offices.⁹⁴ It revealed the importance of the citizens in the political domain and showed how their presence affected the increased focus on right administrative behaviour of which accusations of corruption were an integral part.⁹⁵

To what extent was this public awareness actually visible in the Republic and who were the so-called ‘public’? Judith Pollmann and Andrew Spicer pointed out that the visible presence of public opinion could already be detected as early as the sixteenth century.⁹⁶ In the subsequent years, the circulation of political information increased and with it the political awareness of the public. By the seventeenth century, a high literacy rate and the flourishing Dutch literary market, that Guido de Bruijn described as ‘cockaigne for printers, booksellers, gazetteers and pamphleteers’, helped maintain such developments at a steady pace.⁹⁷ While Craig Harline showed the power of pamphleteering to intensify political awareness, Reinders talked about petitioning as another means of exerting public presence in the political space of the Dutch Republic.⁹⁸ The common men travelling in the barge and discussing the political state of affairs

⁹² Stern, “The Rhetoric,” 202-24.

⁹³ Reinders, “Burghers, Orangists,” 318.

⁹⁴ Reinders, 319-20.

⁹⁵ Reinders, 315. Also see Femke Deen, David Onnekink and Michel Reinders, “Pamphlets and Politics: Introduction,” in *Pamphlets and Politics in the Dutch Republic*, eds. Femke Deen, David Onnekink, and Michel Reinders (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 15.

⁹⁶ Judith Pollmann and Andrew Spicer, “Introduction,” in *Public Opinion and Changing Identities in the Early Modern Netherlands: Essays in Honour of Alastair Duke*, eds. Judith Pollmann and Andrew Spicer (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2007), 1-9.

⁹⁷ Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century*, 189, 233; Guido de Bruijn, “Political Pamphleteering and Public Opinion in the Age of De Witt (1653-1672),” in *Pamphlets and Politics in the Dutch Republic*, eds. Femke Deen, David Onnekink, and Michel Reinders (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 63.

⁹⁸ Craig E. Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing, and Political Culture in the Early Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987); Michel Reinders, ““The Citizens Come from All Cities with Petitions”: Printed

became one of the most used themes for the pamphlets that were printed and circulated.⁹⁹ Not only were these numerous pamphlets and petitions functional in boosting the presence of public opinion, but they also generated rumours in the society that played a major role in spreading political tidings.¹⁰⁰

Those, whose opinions mattered as the ‘public’ in the seventeenth century, were in fact a limited number of inhabitants called *burghers* or ‘citizens’.¹⁰¹ Throughout the years, they distinguished themselves from the other inhabitants and foreigners by acquiring a set of political rights and duties in the cities and by paying taxes to the government.¹⁰² Those citizens who were of a higher order and belonged to the elite families of regents functioned at multiple levels, holding two or more offices simultaneously. Manon van der Heijden provided the example of the cloth merchant, Cornelis Jacobszoon Back, who was not only appointed as a member of the *vroedschap* and the *schepensbank* of his city several times between 1596 and 1625, but also performed several other tasks like that of the city book-keeper, the commander of the *schutterij*, the overseer of textiles and wheat, and being the wardens of the church building, the leprosy-house and the

Petitions and Civic Propaganda in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Pamphlets and Politics in the Dutch Republic*, eds. Femke Deen, David Onnekink, and Michel Reinders (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 97–120; Reinders, “Burghers, Orangists”.

⁹⁹ Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing, and Political Culture*, 54.

¹⁰⁰ Judith Pollmann and Andrew Spicer, “Introduction,” in *Public Opinion and Changing Identities in the Early Modern Netherlands: Essays in Honour of Alastair Duke*, eds. Judith Pollmann and Andrew Spicer (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2007), 5. Note that the word pamphlet or *pamflet*, in itself, was not used in the seventeenth-century and all the publications around this time, went by the names of *libellen* (libels), *maren* (tidings), *paskwillen* (pasquils), *blaumboexkens* (little blue books), *briefjes* (letters) and *boekjes* (booklets) appearing in different forms: songs, edicts, poems, petitions, letters and tracts among others. See, Deen, Onnekink, and Reinders, “Pamphlets and Politics: Introduction,” 10.

¹⁰¹ According to Prak – “The nerves of the city...were more likely the “*burghers*”, a term with great many meanings. *Burghers* could mean poorters, those people who possessed full rights of citizenship. In a more general sense it also referred to established folk, people firmly rooted in society. Militiamen were popularly known as *burghers*, and the guilds organized the *burgher* trades (*burgerneringen*). *Burghers* of all descriptions, therefore, were the property owners who comprised the middle classes.” For the concept of *burghers* see, Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: The Golden Age*, 158–59; Prak, 216–20.

¹⁰² Jan Luiten van Zanden and Maarten Prak, “Towards an Economic Interpretation of Citizenship: The Dutch Republic between Medieval Communes and Modern Nation-States,” *European Review of Economic History* 10, no. 2 (Aug. 2006): 116.

local hospitals.¹⁰³ Although, not all citizens had access to the dominant political circles, they did have political rights and asserted their presence in the public society of the Dutch Republic. In addition to this, in return for paying taxes and doing various voluntary services to the community, they could demand greater political transparency and accountability from the city administrators.¹⁰⁴ However, not all citizens were part of the ranks of regent administrators and this distinction between the two was clearly maintained and emphasised upon. Reinders points out that this was why the pamphleteers on both the Republican side as well as that of the pro-Orangists in the years before and after 1672 harked back repeatedly to the idea of ‘obedience’ of the governed towards their governors.¹⁰⁵ The De la Court brothers, too, were not in favour of inclusion of the non-regent ‘ignorant rabble’ who did not understand politics at all.¹⁰⁶

The presence of the citizens, was therefore nothing close to democracy as such. Citizenship rights could be purchased, subjected to the approval of the *burgemeesters* and it was mostly the moneyed ranks of society who could do that.¹⁰⁷ But citizenship rights could also be acquired through marriage, inheritance or gifts in the seventeenth century, opening the doors to those sections of the society who did not belong naturally to the elite regent families.¹⁰⁸ But there were certain limitations to those who were eligible for acquiring citizenship rights. There was discrimination on the basis of ‘religious correctness’ when it came to granting citizenship to Catholics and other non-Calvinist ‘minority’ groups in provinces like Utrecht, Overijssel and Gelderland.¹⁰⁹ While for the province of Holland, Catholics were reportedly not such a problem,

¹⁰³ Manon van der Heijden, *Civic Duty: Public Services in the Early Modern Low Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 1–2.

¹⁰⁴ Zanden and Prak, “Towards an Economic Interpretation of Citizenship,” 119.

¹⁰⁵ Reinders, “Burghers, Orangists,” 316, 319, 325–27.

¹⁰⁶ Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 67.

¹⁰⁷ Zanden and Prak, “Towards an Economic Interpretation of Citizenship,” 121.

¹⁰⁸ Erika Kuijpers and Maarten Prak, “Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling: burgerschap in Amsterdam in de 17^e en 18^e eeuw,” in *Burger: Een geschiedenis van het begrip ‘burger’ in de Nederlanden van de Middeleeuwen tot de 21^{ste} eeuw*, eds. Joost Kloek and Karin Tilmans (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002), 119.

¹⁰⁹ Maarten Prak, “The Politics of Intolerance: Citizenship and Religion in the Dutch Republic (Seventeenth to Eighteenth Centuries),” in *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age*, eds. R. Po-Chia Hsia and Henk van Nierop (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 159–75.

it was those from a Jewish background who were restricted from obtaining citizenship as foreigners.¹¹⁰ Despite all these restrictions, the presence of citizens with their citizenship rights influenced the political debates of this century and intensified pamphleteering on both sides. It inevitably garnered attention on the behaviour of the regent-administrators and their accountability in the public domain.

Under these circumstances, charges of corruption against an administrator openly discredited him in his office as his administrative efficiency was challenged. The stain on his personal character gave him the image of someone who was considered incapable of holding a post. This fed into the citizens' political consciousness and brought in the desired impact – primarily, the dismissal of the credibility of an accused administrator. On the other hand, an official's lofty promises of establishing an incorrupt and good government for the public drew applause and hope and admiration for his personality. Knevel pointed out abundant examples that showed how prominent officials in the government described their own duties as difficult and taxing, where they sacrificed their private lives in the service of the 'common good'.¹¹¹ This, in turn, made them appear more capable of performing administrative tasks, strengthening their own claims and those of their factions to hold public office, so setting in motion the process of using corruption allegations to achieve political power within the public gaze.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the growing importance of corruption in the political forum of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic has been studied. The struggle of the Republic for its credibility as a political system generated numerous political debates and theories around this time. Such theories went on to fan the formation of stricter rules on administrative manners and conduct.

¹¹⁰ Prak, 171. On the context of the citizenship status of Jewish refugees, Prak writes that, 'The competition between the cities put Jewish refugees in a strong position to demand favourable settlement terms. Among other cities, Amsterdam allowed its Jewish immigrants to acquire citizenship in 1632, subject to certain conditions.' For a detailed account of the status of Jewish immigrants in the seventeenth-century Dutch society see, Prak, 216–20.

¹¹¹ Knevel, *Het Haagse bureau*, 155–56.

In a setting of overseas trade and conquests, although wealth and opulence became a concern, it was encouraged as long as it did not culminate in visibly decadent courtly lifestyles. To suit the circumstances, an impersonal code of administrative ethics, thus, evolved that forbade bribery, nepotism and an unworthy show of opulence in political behaviour. But alongside these rules, factionalism in political practice also thrived. With administrative corruption becoming a political agenda, factional politics imbibed it in their infighting and used corruption accusations against their opponents for their own convenience. The urge to bring about a reformation of administrative moral conduct, therefore, became combined with the urge to align factions in the administrative domain. What speeded up the process was the presence of citizens who claimed accountability of the regents and their behaviour. This was manifested in the vibrant pamphleteering culture, the print machinery churning out copies of books in large numbers, bold illustrations and other material that provoked debate on corruption. Consequently, political theories and rhetoric of the day were infused into popular discourse of corruption. Corruption allegations as such became a regular part of the Republic's political and factional existence by the late seventeenth century. The following chapter will look into the influence of these developments within the VOC administration that was conceived at the beginning of the seventeenth century and operated continuously in the Republic throughout the subsequent years.