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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 2

The Company They Keep: Studying VOC Corruption in the Dutch Republic

Twice of five goes on to make ten,
 Keep one and set down the zero then.
 The 1 remains for all the gentlemen (the directors),
 And the 0 is what the shareholders gain.¹

Pieter de la Court penned the above lines in support of his plea to make Holland the core of commerce by doing away with the monopolies of the chartered Companies.² His was not a solitary voice and as has been discussed later in this chapter, the Dutch East India Company faced continual challenges against its monopoly throughout the seventeenth century, both from inside as well as from outside its administrative organs. But it carried on enjoying the privileges granted by the charters of the States-General, banking on the propaganda that it was establishing an exemplary structure for conducting world trade.³ The VOC consequently came to be presented as the face of the Dutch Republic in the global platform of territorial possessions and commercial profits.⁴ Back home, it remained the largest employer in the labour sector, second

¹ 'Tweemaal vijf is tien, /Ik zet nul and how ien. 1 voor de quanten, /En 0 voor de participanten.'
 Court, *Interest van Holland*, 45.

² Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 234.

³ The charter of the States-General granted to the VOC in 1602 was renewed and extended frequently in the years 1622, 1647, 1665 and 1696 for the seventeenth century.

See, NL-HaNA, VOC, Octrooien, inv. nr. 1, Charter granted by the States-General to the *Heeren XVII* for maintaining monopoly of trade in the Cape of Good Hope and the area west of the Straits of Magellan for 21 years, 20 March, 1602: folios not numbered; NA, VOC, inv. nr. 2, Charter extended by the States-General for a period of 21 years with the changes brought about, 22 December, 1622: folios not numbered; NA, VOC, inv. nr. 4, Charter extended by the States-General for a period of 25 years, 1647: folios not numbered; NA, VOC, inv. nr. 5, Charter extended by the States-General to the year 1700, 1665: folios not numbered; NA, VOC, inv. nr. 6, Charter extended for a period of 40 years from 1700, 1696: folios not numbered.

⁴ This has been elaborately discussed later in this chapter. For examples see, Gerrit van Spaan, *Het nieuw Oostindisch huis gebouwt in de boomtjes tot Rotterdam, nevens de opkomst van de Oostindische Compagnie met de voornaemste land- en zee geweest* (Rotterdam: Engelbertus Solmans, 1698), (Dutch Pamphlets Online, pamphlet nr. 14400); Anonymous, *Lof der Oost-Indise Compagnie ende de E. Heeren bewinthebberen van dien waer onder anderen aen-ghevesen*

only to the Dutch army.⁵ It also boosted special educational programmes like the maritime studies that were often sponsored by different *kamers* (chambers) of the Company.⁶ Thus, on the socio-political and economic front, the VOC remained a prominent organisation with much at stake and a credible image to preserve for its investors in the Republic.

But, as Nicolaus de Graaff would have us believe, the contemporary society in the Republic was not always particularly impressed with the VOC administrators and their overseas management. The general perception was that nobody would go to Asia for ‘a simple monthly salary, unless there was something more to gain there’.⁷ Complaints against the directors and their mismanagement with the finances were often heard through petitions and pamphlets that were further accompanied by pleas for reform.⁸ The complaints of corruption in the VOC administration intensified over the years and came to be squarely associated with the Company

wort, hoe nootsakelijck het is voor ons vaderland in dese occurentie van tijden haer versochte octroy niet te weygheren (Amsterdam: Hendrick Jansz. Visscher, 1646), (Dutch Pamphlets Online, pamphlet nr. 5358).

⁵ Prak, “Loopbaan,” 135.

⁶ Prak, 138.

⁷ Nicolaus de Graaff, *Oost-Indise spiegel van Nicolaus de Graaff*, eds., Marijke Barend-van Haeften and Hetty Plekenpol (Leiden: KITLV-uitgeverij, 2010), 99. There are, however, contrary contentions that argue on the basis of few examples that several men joined the VOC for reasons other than economic plans. They reflected the desire to explore Asia as driven by pure curiosity as well as the desire to make paintings of the eastern landscape along with its local populace, plants and animals. For this argument see, Roelof van Gelder, “Noodzaak of nieuwsgierigheid: Reismotieven van Oostindiëgangers in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw,” *Indische Letteren* 8, no. 2 (1992): 51–60.

⁸ Simon van Middelgeest, *Den vervaerlijcken Oost-Indischen eclipsis vertoont aende vereenichde provincien door de participanten van d’ Oost-Indische Compagnie met een oodtmoedich beklach aen de hoogh-moghende heeren Staten: Over de groote abuysen ende disordren deser Compagnie mits de groote swaricheden die uyt dese te verwachten staen* (1625), (Dutch Pamphlets Online, pamphlet nr. 3585); Ymant Adamsen pseud. of Simon van Middelgeest, *Den langh-verwachten donder-slach voorsien en vooseyt in den Oost-Indischen eclipsis een swaer-lydende discours, teghen de ontrouwe bewinthebbers, ende ongherechtighe ghenwinthebbers van de Indische Compagnie* (1625), (Dutch Pamphlets Online, pamphlet nr. 3585 B); Simon van Middelgeest, *Nootwendich discours oft vertooch aan de hoogh-mogende heeren staten generaal van de participanten der Oost-Indische Compagnie tegens bewinthebbers* (1622), (Dutch Pamphlets Online, pamphlet nr. 3348); Anonymous, *Kort onderricht der participanten rechtveerdighe klachten over de bewinthebbers van de Oost-Indische Compagnie* (1622), (Dutch Pamphlets Online, pamphlet nr. 3355); Anonymous, *Tegen-vertooch, by eenighe liefhebbers van de waerheyt ende haer vaderlandt, ende mede participanten van de Oost-Indische Compagnie aen de Ed. Hog. Mo. Heeren Staten Generael op seecker vertooch op eenige gein?? participanten soo sy haer thoonen in’t openbaren druck uyt ghegeven, ende hare hoog: moog. doen behandigen tegen de regeringe van de bewint-hebberen van de Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Jacob Pietersz., 1622), (Dutch Pamphlets Online, pamphlet nr. 3347); Anonymous, *Vertooch aen de Ed. Ho. Mo. Heeren Staten Generael aengaende de tegenwoordige regeringe van de bewinthebbers van de Oost-Indische Compagnie, ende boeveel dat den staedt van’t landt daer aen ghelegen is, dat deseve voortaan door goede ordere better mach geregeert worden* (1622), (Dutch Pamphlets Online, pamphlet nr. 3345).

officials working abroad. This was reflected in anonymous pamphlets and popular books published in the Dutch Republic which provided information on the malpractices and illegal trade of the VOC personnel working abroad.⁹

The ensuing anxieties and apprehensions about the overseas officials were reflected in the Company's frequent resolutions against illegal trade.¹⁰ A historical analysis of such policies makes it likely to conclude that corruption was the primary reason for the bankruptcy of the VOC.¹¹ But this idea has been recently challenged and revised. Concepts of malpractices and illegal trade were subject to the constant policy changes of the Company throughout the years of its operation in the Indian Ocean. There is little truth in the claim that they increased in certain years or that the administration had to impose stronger measures for controlling the illegal trade because it reportedly grew out of hand at times. Chris Nierstrasz, in fact, concluded that corruption was not a greater problem in the eighteenth century than it had been in the seventeenth.¹² The question remains as to why then the Company's ranting about corruption and the necessity for reforms kept growing. Why was it necessary to have corruption included as an important part of the Company's administrative vocabulary? What did corruption mean in the context of the VOC, as it was framed by the directors in the Republic? This chapter will undertake the task of finding the answers to these queries. By going beyond quantitative details,

⁹ Hullu, "Het Oost-Indische sacspiegelkje," 173; Anonymous, *Oost-Indisch-praetjen voorgevallen in Batavia, tusschen vier Nederlanders den eenen een koopman, d'ander een krijghs-officier; den derden een stuyrman, en den vierden of den laesten een kerankebesoecker*, ed. A.J.E. Harmsen (Leiden: published by Wiebe Koek en Cheng Weichung, 1663), (Knuttel 8756); Schouten, *Het Oost-Indische voyagie*, 372.

¹⁰ NA, Collectie Hudde, inv. nr. 5, Letters of Coenraad van Beuningen, Pieter van Dam, Rijkloff van Goens and Johannes Camphuys with supplementary attachments, besides other things related to the general redress of the affairs of the East India Company from the years c. 1676-89: folios not numbered. Also see, J.A. van der Chijs, ed., *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkaatboek, 1602-1811, eerste deel 1602-1642*, vol. 1 (Batavia, 's Hage: Landsdrukkerij, Martinus Nijhoff, 1885), 3, 5, 42, 47, 123-24, 217-18, 238, 254, 330-32, 339, 465; J.A. van der Chijs, ed., *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkaatboek, 1602-1811, tweede deel 1642-77*, vol. 2 (Batavia, 's Hage: Landsdrukkerij, Martinus Nijhoff, 1886), 99-100, 101, 102, 108, 112, 118, 121, 1125, 172, 200, 202, 230, 239, 270, 329-330; J.A. van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkaatboek, 1602-1811, derde deel 1678-1709*, 91.

¹¹ See the introductory chapter of this dissertation and the section on 'Historiography' for scholarly debates on VOC corruption.

¹² Nierstrasz, *In the Shadow of the Company*, 6.

it will seek to explore corruption through the existing political connections between the Company administration and the Dutch Republic.

The Organisation of the VOC

The VOC came to be established in 1602 and from then till the final days of its demise remained busy experimenting, growing, evolving and adjusting to keep up with the dynamic political setting of the Republic. Before it started off, there had already been a group of small companies referred to as the *Voorcompagnieën* which were funded by the wealthy merchants from different cities in the Republic.¹³ Some of these companies launched a number of expeditions for finding alternative routes to reach the Cape of Good Hope and the Indian Ocean. Consequently, they began competing fiercely against each other, as a result of which, they brought about net losses for themselves and their investors. This was coupled with the danger of being militarily weak as separate units on the high seas and thereby becoming vulnerable to the Portuguese fleets in foreign waters.¹⁴ Noting that this was not leading to anything resembling a profitable enterprise, the then *landsadvocaat*, Van Oldenbarnevelt picked up the reins and took control of affairs.¹⁵ By proposing to merge all the companies into a single monopolistic concern, he sowed the seeds of the first united Company in the Republic, resulting in a cooperation of the big merchant magnates. His proposal materialised, albeit reluctantly in certain quarters of the different city governments, and the VOC came to be finally founded in 1602, legitimised by a formal charter of the States-General on 20th March of the same year.¹⁶

This charter ensured a union of the merchants and political elites with commercial stakes in the Company's ventures and allowed most *burghers* to be shareholders in the Company

¹³ For a list of these small companies see, Gaastra, *The Dutch East India Company*, 19.

¹⁴ During the Eighty-Years War in Europe, the conflict between the Netherlands and Spanish-Portugal (1580-1640) was extended to the trading sector with attacks on naval fleets on the high seas and in various territories in the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic.

¹⁵ Naeranus, *Waarachtige Historie*, 184.

¹⁶ Chijs, ed., *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkaatboek* 1: 1–2.

according to their potential.¹⁷ This privilege was sealed with the promise of securing dividends when the profits reached 5% in cash of the original capital. As an arrangement, it led to the creation of the first concept of a stock market that went on to pervade economies the world over. Such mechanisms of pooling capital and naval resources to merge into a single unit was also existent among the merchants of London around 1599-1600 and the VOC followed this pattern.¹⁸ A charter in 1602 was granted to the VOC with the right to monopolise trade between the Republic and Asia for the next twenty-one years, besides laying the basis for its organisation into different chambers.¹⁹

The Company came to be organised along the lines of the political structure of the Republic and was dominated primarily by investors from Holland and Zeeland, and was comprised of six chambers, Amsterdam, Zeeland (Middelburg), Rotterdam, Delft, Hoorn and Enkhuizen.²⁰ The extent to which the tasks of maintaining fleets, bearing the cost of fitting out and engaging personnel, and the sale of goods were distributed, was fixed by the charter of 1602 and distributed between the cities and their chambers. This meant that Amsterdam had to be responsible for half of these functions within the VOC administration, followed by Zeeland which shared a quarter of it, while the rest of the chambers were to have 1/16th of the total. Every chamber had its own directors, the proportion of whom was assigned by the charter of 1602 granted by the States-General. There were 20 directors assigned to Amsterdam, 12 to Zeeland and 7 each to the other chambers. There were 76 directors in total at the beginning, but this number shrank throughout time to 60 when a few directors who died were not replaced by further nominations.

¹⁷ For Jewish investors in the VOC see, Ab Caransa, *Vrijmetselarij en jodendom: De wereld een tempel* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001), 71; F.S. Gaastra, *Geschiedenis van de VOC* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2007), 34.

¹⁸ Claudia Schnurmann, "Wherever Profit Leads Us, to Every Sea and Shore...": The VOC, the WIC, and Dutch Methods of Globalization in the Seventeenth Century," *Renaissance Studies* 17, no. 3 (Oct. 2003): 475.

¹⁹ Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkaatboek*, 1:1.

²⁰ Gaastra, *Geschiedenis van de VOC*, 20.

Seventeen representatives, from the directors of all the chambers, met collectively twice a year for some weeks in Amsterdam (Holland) and Middelburg (Zeeland) alternatively and acted as the supreme decision-making body of the VOC administration. This board of seventeen directors was known as the *Heeren XVII* (the Gentlemen Seventeen) and comprised 8 representative directors from Amsterdam, 4 from Zeeland and 1 each from the other cities with the additional seventeenth member (in rotation) being appointed in turn by Zeeland or one of the smaller chambers. But the Company needed the support of other cities and provinces as well, for its survival.²¹ This meant opening up the doors of the Company's main chambers to representatives from other parts of the Republic, beyond the limits of the cities of Holland and Zeeland. For this purpose, several positions of *ordinaris* and *extra-ordinaris* directors were instituted in the VOC administration. In 1645, Leiden and Haarlem acquired the right to appoint one *ordinaris* director, while in 1696 the *ridderschap* of Holland acquired two positions for *ordinaris* directors. These positions came to be attached to the smaller chambers – one representing the *ridderschap* that alternated between the chambers of Hoorn and Enkhuizen (every three years) and the other between Delft and Rotterdam (depending on whichever chamber had a vacancy arising from death or resignation). Besides this, the chamber of Amsterdam came to contain 5 *extra-ordinaris* directors from other cities and provinces (Utrecht, Gelderland, Friesland, Dordrecht and Gouda) while the chamber of Zeeland acquired 1 *extra-ordinaris* director. Delft, too, had 1 *extra-ordinaris* director represented by Overijssel, and Rotterdam shared with Amsterdam the position of the *extra-ordinaris* director from Dordrecht. These directorial settlements became relatively more pronounced in the VOC administration after 1700.²²

It is also noteworthy that much like the composition of the political institutions in the Republic, the administrative machinery in the Company also kept evolving so that all of these positions were added, scrapped or modified along the way by means of consecutive charters and

²¹ Pollmann, *Religious Choice*, 179.

²² Gaastra, *Geschiedenis van de VOC*, 34.

other VOC resolutions. To assist the *Heeren XVII*, there were three important organs. The first was the board of the *rekeningopnemers* who examined the general accounts together with the directors. The second group was the board of *keurvorsten* that operated from each chamber as an electoral college and was convened when a director's position fell vacant. They had the responsibility of proposing three possible candidates for this vacant post, in consultation with the rest of the existing directors. Finally, there was the board of *beëdigde hoofdparticipanten* consisting of 9 members to voice the concerns of the major shareholders.

The *Heeren XVII* also received from 1649 onwards the assistance of a special committee based in Den Haag called the *Haags Besogne* which consisted of 12 members – 4 directors from Amsterdam, 2 from Zeeland and 1 each from the rest of the chambers. Their task was to read, analyse and examine the accounts, papers and letters exchanged between the *Heeren XVII* and the administration in Batavia, in order to draw up a compiled report annually that was called the *Haags Verbaal*. Besides this, there was an *advocaat* (secretary who was the head of the office and first councillor of the Board of Directors) who worked in a secretarial capacity for the Company and the *Heeren XVII*. The chambers of Amsterdam and Zeeland, too, had their small assisting committees such as the *Commissie van ontvang* (for helping with financial administration), the *Commissie van de rekenkamer* (for controlling the accounts) and the *Commissie van equipage* (for all affairs related to the ships, ship-building and the employees). Besides this, the chamber of Amsterdam had a separate *Commissie van het pakhuys* for regulating the administration of the merchandise in the warehouses and organising the auctions in Amsterdam (all 'chambers' had their own auctions).

The VOC, in itself, was thus formally an extension of the decentralised political administration in the Dutch Republic and remained integrally connected to its cities and provincial arrangements. However, even though the VOC reflected the Republic's decentralised organisation, it presented itself to be used as the 'national' device for representing the interests of

the United Provinces as the ‘fatherland’ on the global forum.²³ This was evident in various ways through the language used by and for the Company in the Republic. Firstly, there was the rhetoric of pamphlets that eulogised the Company as a single unit representing Dutch overseas interests in the global forum. In 1646, the author of a pamphlet entitled *Lof der Oost-Indise Compagnie ende de E. Heeren bewinthebberen enz.* (The Praise of the Dutch East-India Company and the honourable Directors etc.) opened his address with the following lines –

My lords (addressed to the *Heeren XVII*),

Some time ago, one of my good friends and acquaintances, came to visit me, and among other things, spoke with great affection and inclination of your Honourable skilled and praiseworthy Company, and we could not but be bewildered thinking, how in such few years, with such good policies, your Honourable gentlemen have managed to raise this (Company) to such a great power and wealth? And among other things, we have had then discussed and considered, how useful and important its prosperity was for our fatherland.²⁴

This rhetoric was further extended to the global forum as he remarked –

²³ This does not indicate the word ‘nation’ in its present-day connotation. It implies roughly a territorial unit with sovereign power competing with the other trading empires. What is also worth noting is that the word ‘*natie*’ (nation) was in use during this period in the Dutch vocabulary, though not implying its meaning in today’s political context. It cannot be ignored that Amsterdam was dominant in influencing much of the image of the VOC that was being sold to the outside world. This is evident from its sponsored painting of the apotheosis of the VOC by Nicolaas Verkolje in 1701 or for that matter, the fact that foreign delegates and royal members were received in Amsterdam by displaying the cabinet of exotic objects collected by the VOC directors-burgemeesters, most of whom were from Amsterdam. See, Siegfried Huigen, “Introduction,” in *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks*, eds. Siegfried Huigen, Jan L. de Jong, and Elmer Kolfin (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1–2. For the painting, see the online collection of Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam – <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/SK-A-4290>.

Also note the mention of the steadily growing occurrence of this word in the seventeenth-century VOC records by Gijs Kruijtzter, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth-Century India* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2009), 23.

²⁴ ‘*Myne Heeren,*

Weynigen tijt geleden, eenen van myne geode vrienden ende bekende, my comende besoucken, ende onder anderen onderhouden van U. E. Deftige, Treffelijcke ende Manhafte Compagnie; dewelcke neffens my met eene beoorlijcke affectie ende inclinatie daer van sprekende, ons selven niet genoeg connende verwonderen, Hoe in soo wynighe jaren deselve door U.E. goet beleyt tot soo grooten Macht ende Rijckdommen ghecomen was? Ende onder anderen discourerende ende considererende, hoe nut ende noot sakelijck 't prosperen van deselve voor ons vaderlandt te wesen: ...?'

Anonymous, *Lof der Oost-Indise Compagnie, ende de E. Heeren bewinthebberen van dien waer onder anderen aen-ghewesen wort, hoe nootsakelijck het is voor ons Vader-Land in dese occurentie van tijden haer versochte octroy niet te weygheren* (Amsterdam: Hendrick Jansz. Visscher, 1646), f. A2, (Dutch Pamphlets Online, pamphlet nr. 5358).

I am aware that this is a pro-Company pamphlet produced at a time when the Company’s charter was about to expire and needed to be renewed soon. However, the intention here is to draw attention on the rhetoric used to appeal to the Company and its directors.

All nations admire it: have their mouths full of it, and wonder how it is possible that private capital with so much power (that in itself is understood as royal treasury) could so quickly not only dominate but also increase daily, to augment and prosper... If one makes comparisons among foreign nations in terms of their wealth/ it (the Company led by the *Heeren XVII*) is set on the rank of the greatest; there are even many who compare it to some of the kings: and truly, there is no other prince in all of this Christian world that can or even dare to match up to its power.²⁵

Earlier in 1647, Johan van Heemskerck (a poet and advocate) had published his first completed version of the *Batavische Arcadia*, in which he gave an impression of the Dutch glory in settling in Batavia. One of the extracts from his work contained the following lines –

You know...that our fatherland, although small in its very perimeters, has still extended its powerful arms, in pursuing the Spaniards, our arch-rivals, to the East and West Indies: and that the name of Holland has been made famous, in our era, by its navigation, in places where the sun both rises and sets. Our countrymen, by building, much to their praise, a new town in the Far East have brought to life again the former glory of the once renowned Batavia, for which our forefathers have always been known so well: and have made themselves, with their small country so unbeatable and well-known to both their friends and foes.²⁶

By 1698, another pamphlet by Gerrit van Spaan (a writer who wrote among other things on the *Oost-Indisch Huis* of Rotterdam) reinforced this point. Van Spaan wrote –

²⁵ ‘*Alle natien admireren deselve; hebben haer mont vol ende verwonderen haer hoe het moghelijk is dat particuliere vermogen soodanige macht (die in sich selven een conincklijcke schat begrijpt/ soo voorspoedigh niet alleen domineren/ maer dat meer is/ daghelijck toenemen augmenteren ende prospereren... Als men by vreemde potentaten eenige comparatie maecht van rijckdommen/ setmen deselve in den graet van de grootste; ja selver zijnder vele die haer met die van sommige coninghen vergelijken: Ende voorwaer en connen gheen princen in Christenrijck ghevonden worde die haer met hare macht connen ofte derven egalieren.*’

Anonymous, *Lof der Oost-Indise Compagnie*, f. A3

²⁶ ‘*Ghy weet...dat ons Vaderlandt, hoewel kleyn in syn eyghen om-vangh, nochtans syne machtighe armen, in ‘t vervolgen van den Spanjaert, onsen erf-ryandt, uyt-ghestreckt heeft zelfs tot in Oost en West Indiën; en dat den Hollandschen naem in onse eeuwte door de Zeevaert beroemt gheworden is beyde daer de Son op en daerse onder gaet. Hebbende onse Lands-luyden, tot haeren grooten lof, in’t uysterste van’t Oosten, met het bouwen van een nieuwe stadt weder levendig ghemaect den ouden naem van het eertijts vermaerde Batavia, daer onse voorouders hier voren so beerlijck by bekendt zijn gheweest; en haer selven, met haer kleyn Landeken, by vrienden en ryanden, soo ontsachtelijck en ruchtbaer door hebben gemaect.*’

Johan van Heemskerck, *Batavische Arcadia*, waer in, onder’t loof-werck van liefkooserytjes, gehandelt werdt, van den oorspronck van’t Oud Batavien, vryheydt der Bataviens, vrye zee, zee-vonden, vindere van verborgen schatten, verbeurt-maecten van goederen, uyt-perssen der waerheydt door pyningen, onbeyl van de lancknyligheydt der rechts-plegingen, en andere diergehycke ernstige saken meer (Amsterdam: Gerrit Jansz., 1647), 150–53.

Thus, the Company being honourably chartered/ is administered in a highly praiseworthy manner by gentlemen of wisdom/ who from time to time, have no scruples in buttressing/ the enemies' plans and ploys with all their goodness and blood; / so that to this day,/ one might speak (in amazement) of it./Europe stands as of yet and watches with open eyes:/ How they speak daily about it, and get exalted over (the fact)/that such a handful of people with so limited power/ could have been able to bring so many empires (*rijken*) under their control.²⁷

This notion accords well with Judith Pollmann's contention that beyond the plural political attachments of cities and provinces, the Republic propagated the idea of a united power to avoid conflicts and external crisis.²⁸ The VOC with its overseas operations, as well as its status as the Company representing a single Dutch interest within Europe, thus attempted to uphold an image of a unique Dutch identity for the outside world.²⁹

Secondly, this representation of a united Dutch interest was also evident in the VOC's language of loyalty to the Republic and its Reformed religion, vis-à-vis other non-Christian and non-Calvinist presence in overseas lands.³⁰ The different cities represented in all the chambers of the Company administration, therefore, found solidarity in this united appeal of loyalty to the 'fatherland' and its Reformed faith.³¹ The *Heeren XVII* used it freely to imbue their officials

²⁷ 'Dus is de Compagny wel eer geootroyeert, / Door Heeren van verstand zeer loff'lijk geregeert/ Van tijd tot tijd, en die in't minst haar niet ontzagen/ Om met haar goed en bloed des vijands lift en lagen/ Te stutten; dat men nu op dezen zelve dag/ (Als met verwondering) daar wel van spreken mag./ Europa staat als nog en kijkt met open oogen:/ Hoe spreekt 'er daaglijks van, en is als opgetogen, /Dat zoo een hand vol volks, en met zoo weinig magt, / Zoo vele rijken heeft ten onderen gebragt.' Gerrit van Spaan, *Het nieuw Oostindisch huis gebouwt in de boomtjes tot Rotterdam, nevens de opkomst van de Oostindische Compagnie. Met de voornaamste land- en zee gevechten* (Rotterdam: Engelbertus Solmans, 1698), 50, (Dutch Pamphlets Online, pamphlet nr. 14400).

²⁸ Judith Pollmann, "Eendracht maakt macht," 138. Julia Adams points out that the appeal to the 'fatherland' was part of the general European elite hagiographies of the time, much like other characteristic elements such as that of family line, honour, alliance, state, God, war, manhood, antiquity, paternal authority and maternal fecundity. But in the Dutch case, this was integrally connected with their 'celebration of oceangoing commerce.' See, Julia Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 96.

²⁹ On a whole, the VOC as a United Company was officially designed to represent Dutch interests on the overseas waters, though whether or not it operated abroad as a joint body informally in practice is a different issue altogether. See, Antunes, "Introduction," xviii–xix.

³⁰ See the next footnote for this. Also see, Kruijtzter, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth-Century India*, 35.

³¹ The oath of the governor-general of the VOC stresses the elements of 'getrouwheid' (loyalty) and 'naarstigheit' (industriousness). The members of the *Raad van Indië* were required to take an oath that instructed them to

abroad with the spirit of upholding the Dutch flag against their Iberian, English, French and other European competitors. As is evident from the reports that appeared in the newspapers of the Dutch Republic, information about the VOC's naval achievements in competition with other trading nations seemed to be the biggest item of curiosity, particularly news about the cargoes and losses of ships and other equipment on the high seas.³² This demonstrated the desire of the *Heeren XVII* (who were also political personalities) to emphasise their overseas feats as achieved by a united Dutch power in the world, manifested in the Dutch East India Company (and the WIC as well).

Thirdly, as Andrew Fitzmaurice argued, the language of the Company was so designed that the purpose of its existence was connected to the idea of the self-preservation of a nascent Republic, which was being challenged repeatedly by its surrounding political contenders in

keep the following qualities in mind while choosing a governor-general – ‘*op het allerhoogste letten op den vroomsten, getrouwsten en ervarensten persoon, inzonderheid wezende van de gereformeerde religie.*’ (to be aware to their utmost of choosing the most loyal, trusted and experienced person, especially one who has been of the Reformed faith). The ideal standard of loyalty that was expected to be professed by the other Company servants like the commanders, the *schippers*, the predicants etc. can be judged from the following oath that they were required to undertake – ‘*Wy belooven ende sweeren, dat ny de doortuchtige Hoog Mog. Heeren Staeten-Generael van de Vrye Vereenichde Nederlanden als onse hoogste ende souveraine Overheyt, syne Princehycke Excellentie Frederik Hendrik by der gratie Godts, Prince van Orangien, Grave van Nassouwe etc. ende de Bewinthebberen van de Vereenichde Nederlandsche Oost-Ind. Comp. in deselve landen, als oock den Heer Gouverneur-Generael ende Raeden van India, mitsgaders oock alle commandeurs ende bevelhebbers, die gedurende dese reyse te waeter ofte lande over ons gestelt sullen werden, gebouw ende getrouw te wesen...*’ (We promise and pledge, to remain true and loyal to the esteemed honourable lords of the States-General of the independent United Provinces of the Netherlands as our highest sovereign government, his excellency Prince Frederik Hendrik by God's grace, Prince of Orange, Count of Nassau etc., and the directors of the VOC of the same country, as well as the honourable governor-general and the Council of the Indies, along with all commanders and overlords, who during this journey have been appointed above us, both on land and in sea). See Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek*, 1: 22, 354-55.

³² The newspapers available through the digital library of Delpher.nl provides information about the political events of monarchies in Asia, about the ships and cargoes of the VOC that arrived in the Netherlands and that of France, England and Denmark overseas or about shipwrecks and loss of cargo. For some examples see, Anonymous, “Wt Ceulen den 9. Februarij,” *Tijdinghe nyt verscheyde quartierien.*, February 15, 1622; Anonymous, “Oost-Indien,” *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*, May 4, 1675; Anonymous, “Oost-Indien,” *Oprechte Haerlemsche Courant*, August 30, 1691; Anonymous, “Oost-Indien,” *Oprechte Haerlemsche Courant*, June 23, 1697. It is true that this information has been derived from the newspapers put in the database of the Delpher, but it is by no means wholly representative of the Dutch seventeenth-century media. See, Michiel van Groesen, “Digital Gatekeeper of the Past: Delpher and the Emergence of the Press in the Dutch Golden Age,” *Tijdschrift voor Tijdschriftstudies* 38 (Dec. 2015): 9–19; Adriaan van Berkel, *The Voyages of Adriaan van Berkel to Guiana*, eds. Martin van den Bel, Lodewijk Hulsman, and Lodewijk Wagenaar (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2014), 17–18.

seventeenth-century Europe.³³ The growing concern about the United Provinces' vulnerability led to the production of a strong rhetoric for Dutch commercial conquests.³⁴ It is, with respect to this, that the VOC came to be championed as the primary vehicle for furthering such interests to earn profits, while representing Dutch sovereign claims in overseas territories. Nicolaus de Graaff wrote –

...without money, one cannot wage wars and without trade and navigation a land, especially as our Netherlands, cannot exist, on which it is actually and principally dependent; of which the shipping and trade of the *Vereenigde Oost-Indise Compagnie* (VOC) has been the foremost in enriching the Netherlands, for the flourishing and welfare of all its inhabitants; and have had made it so rich and powerful, within a short span of time, that it currently dares to face the most competent potentates in this world in times of war.³⁵

The VOC as the legitimate face of the Dutch power was strengthened, as reflected in this extract, through its purpose of earning profits for the self-preservation of the Dutch state.³⁶

Fourthly, the image of the VOC as an extension of united Dutch power was also mirrored in the privileges granted to it by the charters of the States-General. The Company was

³³ Andrew Fitzmaurice argued that seventeenth-century European empires were created through the idea of the reason of state, manifested in discourses of greatness and self-preservation, that was extended to the policies and actions of the quasi-sovereign trading corporations like the East India Companies. However, he also contended that for overseas survival, that is 'to become "great", it was necessary to negotiate with existing indigenous authorities in the territories concerned and either to assimilate those peoples or produce hybrid jurisdictions.' See, Andrew Fitzmaurice, "The Dutch Empire in Intellectual History," *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 132, no. 2 (June 2017): 97–109.

³⁴ Koekoek, Richard, and Weststeijn, "Visions of Dutch Empire: Towards a Long Term Global Perspective," *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 132, no. 2 (June 2017): 85–87. For a critical note on breaking free from exclusive reliance on Dutch-oriented historiography for studying the Dutch empire, as has been traditionally done so far, see, Susan Legêne, "The European Character of the Intellectual History of Dutch Empire," *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 132, no. 2 (June 2017): 110–120.

³⁵ '...sonder geld kan men niet oorlogen en sonder koophandel en schipvaart kan het land, insonderheid ons Nederland niet bestaan, dat eigenlijk en principaal aan den selve hangt; van de welke schipvaart en koophandel dat de Vereenigde Oost-Indise Compagnie wel de voornaamste is die de Nederlanden doet verrijken, ende ook alle ingezetenen doet floreren en wel varen, ende ook in korte jaren so rijk ende so magtig heeft gemaakt dat het tegenwoordig de magtigste potentaten des werelts in tijden van oorlog 't hoeft durf bieden.'

Graaff, *Oost-Indise spiegel*, eds. Marijke Barend-van Haften and Hetty Plekenpol, 83.

³⁶ For the commercial 'reason of state' also see, Jan Hartman and Arthur Weststeijn, 'An Empire of Trade: Commercial Reason of State in Seventeenth-Century Holland,' in *Political Economy of Empire in the Early Modern World*, eds. Sophus A. Reinert and Pernille Roge (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 11–31.

allowed to conclude treaties with local princes and potentates, as well as build fortresses and appoint officials of justice and governors in all the places, where it was based abroad.³⁷ This meant that the Company virtually came to enjoy those powers which were essentially reserved exclusively for the state – precisely that of building forts, waging wars, minting coins, conducting diplomatic missions and taking other important political decisions. In itself, the VOC administration therefore seemed to belong to the quintessential category of what Philip Stern identified as a ‘body politic’, festooned with ‘bundles of hyphens’ that represented the Company’s pluralistic, hybrid character and its unwritten share of the Republic’s sovereign powers exercised abroad.³⁸ All the officials of the Company were supposed to owe their allegiance to the States-General and execute their duties abroad in its name.³⁹ The basis of the VOC, thus, lay in displaying it as a unit of solidarity with the Dutch Republic, against threats of dissipation, especially while living together in close proximity with non-Christian locals and non-Calvinist Europeans in foreign lands.⁴⁰

The last point showed how the Company facilitated control over their men abroad. It had an elaborate system set-up in Asia that exercised quasi-state powers, delegated to it by the *Heeren XVII* through the charters of the States-General. The headquarters for all VOC factories and settlements spread across the Indian Ocean was situated at Batavia. A walled city with a fort (that was called the ‘castle’) came to be built there, following Jan Pietersz. Coen’s conquests in

³⁷ Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkaatboek*, 1:1–2; Knaap, “De ‘Core Business’ van de VOC,” 13.

³⁸ The phrase – ‘bundles of hyphens’, has been borrowed by Stern from Harold Laski. Stern, *Company-State*, 6, 9.

³⁹ Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkaatboek*, 1:2. But this clause, though theoretically agreed upon, did not guarantee unquestioned loyalty in practice. All oaths were naturally sworn in the name of the States-General but the officials did not hesitate to put their individual interests before the expected standards of the States-General, as and when opportunities arose.

⁴⁰ A few works rightly attempt to discuss or refer to the need for greater investigation into the Dutch overseas empire in its religious context. Tracy, “Asian Despotism? Mughal Government as seen from the Dutch East India Company Factory in Surat.” *Journal of Early Modern History* 3, no. 3 (1999), 256–80; Koekkoek, Richard, and Weststeijn, “Visions of Dutch Empire,” 86.

1619, and its administration was referred to as the *Hoge Regering* (the High Government).⁴¹ It was headed by the *gouverneur-generaal* (governor-general) appointed by the *Heeren XVII* along with a 9-member committee called the *Raad van Indië* (Council of the Indies). All factories, forts and trading posts in every region of Asia and the settlement at the Cape of Good Hope were subjected to the authority of the *Hoge Regering* in Batavia and all letters dispatched there were instructed to be always addressed in the name of the then governor-general and his Council. Within the *Hoge Regering*, the other very important body was the *Raad van Justitie* (Council of Justice) which enjoyed jurisdiction over all Company servants and *vrijburgers* (free-citizens) for civil and criminal cases in Asia and the Cape.⁴² The other administrative bodies were the *College van schepenen* (board of aldermen), *College van weesmeesteren* (board of administrators supervising the property of orphans below 25 years of age) and *College van heemraden* (board of administrators over the *ommelanden van Batavia* or surrounding areas outside Batavia) for the city of Batavia and its surroundings. Jurisdiction over local affairs in Batavia and its *ommelanden* was maintained by the *baljuw* of Batavia and *landdrost*, in a similar fashion to how it was in the Dutch Republic. The presence of these administrative bodies and their functions provided proof of the quintessentially fragmented and overlapping sovereign existence of the VOC in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic.

The Dutch East India Company held different political status and privileges in the areas where they had set up their bases, in the Indian Ocean.⁴³ That did not, of course, mean that the

⁴¹ For more on the governance of the Company in Asia, see TANAP website; Hendrik E. Neimeijer, 'The Central Administration of the VOC Government and the Local Institutions of Batavia (1619-1811) – an Introduction', in *The Archives of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the Local Institutions in Batavia (Jakarta)*, eds. G.L. Balk, F. van Dijk, and D.J. Kortlang (Leiden: Boston, Brill, 2007), 61–86.

⁴² For more on the *Raad van Justitie* see, Carla van Wamelen, *Family Life onder de VOC: Een handelscompagnie in huwelijks en gezinszake* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014), 74–134. The *vrijburgers* (free-citizens) were those European servants who had completed the tenure of their contract with the VOC and were allowed to either repatriate back or settle as married or unmarried citizens in Asia and continue trading on their own account (in goods over which the VOC had no monopoly). They were allowed to live only in certain restricted areas with the permission of the Governor and the Council. They were nevertheless subjected to the jurisdiction of the VOC in Asia. For details see, Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek*, 1: 46-52; Wamelen, 107–9.

⁴³ Prakash, "European Trade and South Asian Economies," 189–205.

individual Company servants were deterred from pursuing their own interests and political ambitions abroad. Nor does it mean that their interests always coincided with that of the *Heeren XVII*'s instructed goals. For instance, the Company's varied means of establishing sovereign claims overseas involved certain subtle methods such as trying to penetrate the domains of local jurisdiction, securing a better military position through fort-building projects or producing thick layers of ethnography stereotyping the lesser 'other' than the superior 'self' in implementing good governance.⁴⁴ Most of these measures required abundant supply of financial resources, the availability of which was subject to the *Heeren XVII*'s approval. Plans for military engagements and fortification projects entailed huge expenditure that stirred frequent disagreements and debates among the different chambers within the Company administration.⁴⁵ The differences among the representatives of all the cities and provinces in the VOC became prominent on such occasions. There is no denying the fact, therefore, that the image of the VOC as a united Company which was projected in Europe was not consistent with its perceived reality, either in the metropolis or in Asia.

Despite this, there was a trend for creating an official narrative that identified the Dutch officials as a distinct group catering to the needs of the Republic. The directors of all the chambers of the VOC were required to swear that they would remain trustworthy to the administration of the Company and not betray the injunctions of the charters and the resolutions. No one was allowed to hold shares in any English, French or other European trading company outside the VOC as a mark of loyalty to the 'fatherland'.⁴⁶ The organisation of the VOC therefore remained a complex of individual interests, combined with various city and provincial interests that were woven together to write a story of a united Dutch interest via-a-vis other European and non-European powers on paper.

⁴⁴ Clulow, "The Art of Claiming".

⁴⁵ Sinappah Arasaratnam, "Monopoly and Free Trade in Dutch-Asian Commercial Policy: Debate and Controversy within the VOC," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 4, no. 1 (Mar. 1973): 1–15.

⁴⁶ Pieter van Dam, *Pieter van Dam's Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*, ed. F.W. Stapel (?s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1927), Book I, Part I, 198.

Factionalism in the VOC

Within this institutional maze, the composition of the Company's administrative set-up was an elite affair, surrounded by key figures from prominent political families in the Republic. It was often the case that political elites worked both for the administration of the Company in the Republic as well as within the political institutions of city governments. A classic example of such overlap can be found in the case of the appointment of a director to a vacant position for the chamber of Amsterdam. In this case, the *burgemeesters* were allowed to choose from the list of nominations because they were supposed to have the '*vaste kennis*' (required knowledge) about the capabilities of the candidates.⁴⁷ This meant that *burgemeesters* from city governments often chose themselves to hold the position of directors for different chambers in the Company or at best to assign these to men from their political factions.⁴⁸ Coenraad van Beuningen, for example, was both a *burgemeester* and a director of the VOC (representing Amsterdam in the *Heeren XVII*) simultaneously in the years 1681, 1683 and 1684. This was also the case with Gerrit Pietersz. Bicker, who became one of the founding members of the VOC and functioned there as a director from 1602 onwards while being appointed simultaneously as a *burgemeester* of Amsterdam in the following year (he was also a *schepen* and held other minor offices as well). Reynier Adriaensz. Pauw too belonged to this category of being one of the founding directors of the *Heeren XVII* in 1602 while being appointed as a *burgemeester* in 1605 around the same time (he already held a position in the *vroedschap* of Amsterdam from 1590 and several other offices as well). Lambert Reynst was given the office of a director in 1667 and between 1667 and 1672 he was chosen as a *burgemeester* three times. Andries Bicker was a member of the *Heeren XVII* but also a *burgemeester*, a member of the *vroedschap* and went on to gain important positions in the

⁴⁷ F. S. Gaastra, *Bewind en beleid bij de VOC: De financiële en commerciële politiek van de bewindhebbers, 1672-1702* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1989), 25.

⁴⁸ It is to be noted that *burgemeesters* were chosen annually which meant that these were not permanent positions unlike the directorship of the VOC where directors could practically be in office throughout their lifetime.

admiraliteit (admiralty) of Amsterdam and the *weeskamer* (committee for managing orphans) while having been a *schepen* before.⁴⁹ Adriaen Pauw was also known to be one of the directors among the *Heeren XVII* who had earlier held the office of a *pensionaris*, and became a member of the *vroedschap* and the *rekenkamer* in the States of Holland, ending his career as a *raadspensionaris* for the States-General.⁵⁰ Gerrit Jacob Witsen was a *burgemeester*, a member of the *schepen* and even presided over it for some time, besides being on the list of the VOC directors.⁵¹

Consequently, these common links also ensured the simultaneous transfer of families and friends from the political to the administrative space of the Company. In 1650, for instance, the Bicker-De Graeff league was so strong as a political faction that they occupied the most important positions in Amsterdam being members of the *vroedschap* as well as in the directorial boards of the chartered East and West India Companies.⁵² Their predominance as an administrative family has been recorded by a pamphleteer in 1650 who wrote –

...You ask, who is the director of the East and West-India Companies; who is sent to The Hague to the assembly of the Provincial States? Who is the *burgemeester*? Who is the *schepen*? Who is the colonel of the citizens' guard? Who is the supervisor of the dykes (*dijk-graef*) in the board regulating the water-laws? And were you to ask ten more times about such other offices, and I will not lie, if I always reply – the Bickers.⁵³

Such examples abound the administration of other cities as well and show how links were established between the political institutions and the Company administration, through such personalities and their family and friendship networks. A word of caution though should be added here in relation to the idea of familial relations, as has been argued by Suze Zijlstra in her

⁴⁹ Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam*, 346.

⁵⁰ Frouke Wieringa, *De VOC in Amsterdam: Verslag van een werkgroep* (Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1982).

⁵¹ Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam*, 168.

⁵² Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism*, 99–101.

⁵³ ‘...vraegt gy, wie is Bewinthebber van de Oost- ende West-Indische Compagnie; wie Afgesonden in den Haag ter Vergaderinge van de Staten? wie Borgermeester? wie Schepen? wie Coronel van de Borgerije? wie Dijk-graef van het waterrecht? en vraeght noch so vry tienmaal van andere Ampten, ende ik sal sonder leugen altijd mogen antwoorden Bickers.’

Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam*, XCII.

work on the Dutch merchants in the seventeenth century.⁵⁴ From the correspondences within Dutch families operating as trading partners, she concluded that the understanding of family in the Dutch society did not automatically eliminate the need to prove solidarity to each other. Much like formal business partners, family members trading together were expected to provide explanations for loss of goods, financial accounts and other commercial details that were needed to preserve credibility as partners in the market. This leads us to assert that family or ‘friendship’ bonds in the political and commercial space did not imply that there were no obligations to provide proof of loyalty. But families were expected to maintain their solidarity by sticking together as a cluster through both good and bad times.

The family Huydecoper, for example, stuck together in times of distress despite their disagreements and strained personal relations. Luuc Kooijmans mentions that although Joan Huydecoper van Maarseveen (Jr.) had his differences with his father Joan Huydecoper, lord of Maarsseveen (1599-1661) and his mother-in-law, Sophia Trip, he had to maintain cordial relations with them to preserve the family’s public image. Besides this, there was the question of inheritance as well as Huydecoper’s political career which was at stake, if he had a conflict with his family members.⁵⁵ In the family Van der Meulen, one of the brothers, Andries, advised his other brother Daniel to resolve all disputes with his wife and his brother-in-law, over the share of Daniel’s inheritance. This was needed to show solidarity which, according to Andries, was crucial for preserving their social status and reputation as a family.⁵⁶ Joan Huydecoper (Jr.) wrote that his principles lay in extending support to his family and friends first, by providing them with jobs and other administrative opportunities, in spite of all personal discord.⁵⁷ Similarly, the Amsterdam regent Johan de Witt, deemed it essential to call all his distant family members as

⁵⁴ Suze Zijlstra, “To Build and Sustain Trust: Long-Distance Correspondence of Dutch Seventeenth-Century Merchants,” *Dutch Crossing* 36, no. 2 (July 2012): 128.

⁵⁵ Kooijmans, *Vriendschap*, 125.

⁵⁶ Kooijmans, 12.

⁵⁷ Kooijmans, 143–44.

cousins, who used his name regularly in acquiring official positions.⁵⁸ Blood ties and friendships based on reciprocal obligations, thus, formed the basic unit of bonding among these administrative elites. Consequently, familial and friendship relations remained as much the core of the VOC administration as it had been for the political institutions in the Republic. The ongoing factional politics in the Republic, thus, could not have been far removed from that of the Company's administration, owing to the overlapping networks connecting both the VOC and the political institutions of cities and provinces.

Moreover, since it was the same people who invested in the Company as well as running the government, there were deeper financial connections established between the two governing bodies. Every attempt was made to save the Company and provide financial support, whenever needed, with the result that the Company's money also flowed into the state machinery during wars and other crisis moments. In the disaster year of 1672, when the finances were hard hit, the *Heeren XVII* along with the other directors suspended their payment on the Company's bonds. The States of Holland and Zeeland at this time, which were naturally filled with many men from the VOC boards of directors, took over the burden onto their own shoulders. A loan of 2 million guilders was forwarded by the directors as bonds in the name of these provincial governments, in return for a guarantee of protection against the protests of the creditors.⁵⁹ In 1673, these bonds in the name of the States were transferred by the directors to the shareholders who were eager to obtain their dividends after a patch of rough financial years.⁶⁰ Beyond the institutional perspective, if one considers the fact that most of the officials in both the political bodies as well as in the VOC administration shared common commercial and political links, it is understandable that the leading political families would try to protect the Company where they had financial stakes involved.

⁵⁸ Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism*, 77.

⁵⁹ Gaastra, *The Dutch East India Company*, 27. It is to be noted that creditors were those who held different bonds issued by the VOC and did not immediately imply all shareholders that included the directors themselves.

⁶⁰ Gaastra, 28.

There was, thus, an integral connection between the political administration of the Republic and the VOC, as is evident from the above-mentioned factors. These consisted of the fact that – (a) the very foundation was laid through the political intervention of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, with the States-General being involved and the Company exercising its authority overseas in the name of the States-General, (b) the arrangement of the chambers was in accordance with the Republic’s fragmented political anatomy while a united image was still sustained on the global forum, (c) the administrative ties between the Company and the Republic’s office-holders were often overlapping and (d) the economic inter-dependence of these two bodies led them to support each other in times of crisis. Such an intertwined administrative existence (more of which has been shown through examples of factions later in this chapter), meant that the way corruption came to be perceived and fashioned in the political space, must have had its influence in the VOC administration as well. So how did the perception of corruption evolve within the VOC administration, in the context of the ongoing socio-political developments of the Republic?

Perceiving Corruption in the Company

In his recent work on VOC corruption, Chris Nierstrasz wrote that ‘Corruption was never really explicitly defined’, but ‘incidents of embezzlement, nepotism, and illegal private trade’ did exist.⁶¹ All these terms, according to him, fell under ‘the umbrella definition of what is now called corruption as all are considered activities which militated against the true interests of the Company and inhibited its profits.’⁶² Even though this is true, it is possible to modify this argument by adding that the VOC at least resorted to the explicit use of the word ‘*corruptie*’ (corruption) along with the verb form, ‘*corrumperen*’ (to corrupt) in their administrative

⁶¹ Nierstrasz, *In the Shadow of the Company*, 15:4.

⁶² Nierstrasz, 15:4–5.

documents.⁶³ In addition, there were of course descriptions of certain activities that appeared frequently such as ‘*vuile handelingen*’ (foul trade), ‘*malversatie*’ (malpractices), ‘*fraude*’ (fraud), ‘*fourberies*’ (treachery) and so on to indicate illegal acts in the Company’s domain.⁶⁴ The word ‘*corruptie*’ does not occur very frequently at the beginning of the Company’s rule-books but it seemed to have caught up quickly in a few years since its initiation in the political platform of the Republic in the 1650s. An oath of the notarial officer (*notaris*) drafted in 1625, shows the use of the word ‘*corrumperen*’ in the following manner – ‘(The notarial officer) shall in the administration of his service...not let himself be corrupted by gifts or presents, money or any goods or anything by anyone’.⁶⁵ Gradually, much as in the political space of the Republic, the word ‘*corruptie*’ seemed to become a part of the administrative vocabulary of the Company’s oaths. The existent labyrinth of rules, set through numerous *resoluties* (resolutions) of the *Heeren XVII* since 1602, and incorporated into the Statutes of Batavia (codified in 1642), always fell short of controlling all violations. The *Heeren XVII*, therefore, had to constantly struggle to engineer specific terms for regulating all activities of the Company overseas. The adoption of a more holistic and looser term such as ‘*corruptie*’ at this point solved this problem of the insufficiency of written rules.⁶⁶ It came to be inserted into the general rules and codes of conduct, such as that of the qualifications for the members of the *Raad van Justitie* in Batavia. There is explicit mention there of, among

⁶³ Dam, *Pieter van Dam’s Beschryvinge*, Book I, Part II, 335; Dam, Book II, Part II, 383; Chijs, ed., *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkaatboek* 1: 160. Also see, NA, VOC, inv. nr. 1421, Missive from Van Reede to Camphuys and the *Raad van Indië*, 18 March, 1686: f. 235v; VOC 1421, Missive from the Governor-General Johannes Camphuys and the *Raad van Indië* to Van Reede, 7 September, 1685: f. 364v; f. 365rv.

⁶⁴ NA, VOC, inv. nr. 1421, Missive from Van Reede to the *Heeren XVII*, 9 December, 1686: f. 32r, f. 55r; NA, Collectie Hudde, inv. nr. 38, Instructions for Van Reede from the *Heeren XVII*, appointed to Bengal, Coromandel and Ceylon, 1684: f. 1v.

⁶⁵ Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkaatboek*, 1: 160.

⁶⁶ On the insufficiency of written rules of the Company see, Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 17. On the VOC’s struggle to sustain control over its officials see, Julia Adams, “Principals and Agents, Colonialists and Company Men: The Decay of Colonial Control in the Dutch East Indies,” *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 1 (Feb. 1996): 12–28. For an understanding of the presence of VOC officials as a ‘web of empire’ operating not always in cohesion with the VOC in the Republic which made it difficult to control them with written laws see, Cátia Antunes and Amélia Polónia, “Introduction,” in *Beyond Empires: Global, Self-Organizing, Cross-Imperial Networks, 1500-1800*, eds. Cátia Antunes and Amélia Polónia (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015), 9–11.

other things, the requirement of the members to stay away from all kinds of ‘thoughts of corruption’ (*buyten alle gedachten van corruptie te houden*) during the period of their service.⁶⁷ By the time the *Heeren XVII* was planning to send a commissioner for redress of the Company’s affairs overseas, Johannes Hudde wrote about the enormous ‘corruption’ (*corruptie*) of the VOC in the Indies.⁶⁸ The reports of the Van Reede committee and the missives of the governor-general and *Raad van Indië* also used the words ‘corruption’ (*corruptie*) and ‘to corrupt’ (*corrumperen*) quite a number of times.⁶⁹ The issue seemed to have escalated to such an extent that by the 1680s there was particular insistence on the inclusion of an ‘oath of corruption’ (*eed der corruptele*) for all VOC officials, especially those working outside the Republic.⁷⁰

This concept of ‘corruption’ in the Company was juxtaposed to right behaviour, which inevitably embodied a similar balance, as in the Dutch Republic, between respecting formal rules and maintaining informal obligations. For example, the formal oaths of the governor-general and other high officials contained the same usual prohibitions against favouritism and bribery as those of the administrators in the Republic. The oath of the governor-general contained the following injunctions –

...that he should not engage himself or let anyone else, directly or indirectly, trade in the least amount: no porcelain, ornaments, or other goods should be sent from the Indies, either for himself or for any other person, and should try his utmost to prevent and hinder the same being done by anyone under his powers; that during the nomination and appointment of the members of the councils, both in the *Raad van Indië*, as well as the councils of other states and offices, he shall choose only the most faithful, loyal and

⁶⁷ Dam, *Pieter van Dam's Beschryvinge*, Book III, 89.

⁶⁸ Cited in Stapel, ed., *Beschrijvinge*, Book I, Part I, x.

⁶⁹ NA, VOC, inv. nr. 1421, Missive from Van Reede to Camphuys and the *Raad van Indië*, 18 March, 1686: f. 235v; VOC, inv. nr. 1421, Missive from the Governor-General Johannes Camphuys and the *Raad van Indië* to Van Reede, 7 September, 1685: f. 364v; f. 365rv.

⁷⁰ NA, VOC, inv. nr. 1421, Missive from Camphuys and Council of the Indies to Van Reede, 18 March, 1686: f. 235r; VOC inv. nr. 1421, Missive from Camphuys and Council of the Indies to Van Reede in Hooghly, 16 November, 1686: f. 262r; VOC inv. nr. 1421, Missive from Camphuys and Council of the Indies to Bengal, 23 August, 1686: f. 365v.

experienced people, without any favours, jealousy or conditions of friendship or familial relations or enmity compelling him to do otherwise.⁷¹

In his oath, the *baljuw* was required to adhere to the following instructions –

I promise and swear, that I shall promote good, righteous and true justice for everyone equally, who would seek it, without consideration of accepting any reward, (or having) hatred, jealousy or friendship with someone and without favouring someone more than the other beyond the rightful causes...⁷²

All other oaths were formulated along the same lines and forbade undue favouritism and acceptance of bribes for executing administrative tasks.⁷³

But at the same time, they were also obliged to comply with the factional favours because of the overlapping networks between the *Heeren XVII* and the political administrators in the Republic. This subject will be dealt with in more detail in the section following this. What it meant was championing the show of loyalty towards the ‘fatherland’ by adhering to the Company rules while professing loyalty towards one’s political allies at the same time. It was a precarious balance in which factionalism determined the distribution of positions, and was not seen as unacceptable, as long as there were no transgressions of the normative borders. An incident revealing Huydecoper’s exasperation at a letter written to his wife by one of his nephew’s wife in Asia, makes this point about transgression of norms evident.⁷⁴ The letter said that if Huydecoper helped his nephew become an *extraordinaris* member of the *Raad van Indië*, his

⁷¹ ‘...dat hij voor *zich zelve* of voor andere particulieren geene de allerminste negotie directelyk of indirectelyk zal doen of laten doen; geene poseleinen, gentleissen of eenige andere goederen voor *zich zelve* of andere particulieren uit Indië zenden, ook ’t *zelve* naar *zijn uiterst vermogen* aan alle personen, die in dienst *zijn*, weren en verbinderen zal; dat hij in ’t nomineren en stellen van raadspersonen, *zoo in Rade van Indië, als in alle andere staten en officiën*, zal verkiezen de vroomste, getrouwste en ervarenste personen, *zonder door hundert, afgunst of door eenige consideratie van vriendschap, maagschap of vijandschap anders te doen.*’ Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkaatboek*, 1:21–22.

⁷² ‘...*ick* beloove ende sweere, dat *ick* sal bevoirederen goede, oprechte ende maerachtige justitie aan allen ende een yegelycken, die *sulcx* versoecken sullen, sonder aenscou te nemen op winninghe, haet, nydt ofte vriendschap van yemanden ende sonder eenich persoon meer te favoriseeren dan recht ende reden toelatende syn.’ Chijs, 1:137.

⁷³ Chijs, 1:147, 152, 158, 161, 186, 351, 354, 356, 357, 360, 380, 386, 408.

⁷⁴ The Dutch equivalent for both the words nephew and cousin is *neef/ nevens* (pl.). It could thus also be a cousin of Huydecoper’s instead of being a nephew. In fact, the word *neef* was rather commonly used for such relations as the *achter-neven* implying grand-nephew or any connections through sons of brothers in the family.

nephew would be willing to offer the first two years of his salary to Huydecoper. This outraged him (Huydecoper) who wrote back saying –

I must confess that I have never come across anything more outrageous and scandalous than this...that I must find it necessary, against my honour and oath, to sell offices for my profit and consequently, let my good name and fame be defiled by such a dirty and unwarranted gain.⁷⁵

In the end, he refused to promote his nephew and grant the requested position. This was in sharp contrast to Huydecoper's usual character of obliging his friends and family members with such requests. His act laid clear the norm that such requests were tolerated, as long as they were not accompanied by extravagant gifts or direct money, though there were strong expectations of reciprocal obligations. Corruption in the VOC, thus, as understood from this perspective, had a similar dimension to that of the political administration in the Dutch Republic when it came to gifting and patronage norms. Money was not acceptable and seen as an act of bribery against right administrative behaviour.

However, besides bribery and undue favouritism being condemnable practices, what corruption mainly implied in the context of the VOC was the violation of the Company's monopoly. Adherence to this was equated with loyalty towards the *Heeren XVII* and the 'fatherland' (as an extended concept of the *Generaliteit*). This added an extra aspect that stretched the perception of corruption for the VOC administrators. Monopoly in the VOC was active at three levels which included – (i) the Company's Europe-Asian trade (ii) the Company's intra-Asian trade and (iii) a monopoly on certain commodities and spice-producing areas backed by brute force.⁷⁶ Non-adherence to this rule proved to be the most visible aspect of perceiving corruption in the VOC administration. It was equated with disloyalty to the Republic, to its commercial spirit and a disdain of the personal integrity of Company officials. The part of the

⁷⁵ 'Icke moet bekennen dat mijn noijdt ergelijcker, noch schandaleuser saeck is voorgekomen...dat ick tegens eer en eedt mijn voordeel met het verkoopen van considerable ampten genootsaect soude sijn te soecken, en gevohlijck mijn goede name en faem door soo een vuijl en ongeoorlooft gewin komen te besoedelen.'

Kooijmans, *Vriendschap*, 144.

⁷⁶ Nierstrasz, *In the Shadow of the Company*, 15:74.

monopoly quotient, however, was applicable to high officials of the Company who functioned outside the Republic in the lands and waters of the Indian Ocean (like commanders, Governors, shippers and so on). This is why allegations of corruption were raised mostly, in this regard, against VOC employees serving in overseas functions.

There has been a large body of literature on ‘corruption’ in the Company, particularly in Asia and specifically concerning individual VOC officials throughout the seventeenth century. The ones that immediately come to mind with reference to the VOC in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century India include the works of scholars like Om Prakash, Femme Gaastra and Chris Nierstrasz.⁷⁷ However, there appears to be a lesser interest in the case studies within the Republic at the same time. It was not that they never happened but the overriding concern of the directors, that was prominent in all the official reports, was largely about the maintenance of the monopoly in overseas affairs.⁷⁸ Thus, the ‘total disorder and corruption of our [the Company’s] business in the Indies’ about which Johannes Hudde, one of the *burgemeester-cum*-directors from Amsterdam complained, seemed to provide a more exciting theme to the historians than the bookkeeping frauds of different chambers in the Republic. Gaastra has fortunately paid some attention to such cases in his work *Bewind en beleid bij de VOC, 1672-1702*, but there has been little of this that has been researched further.⁷⁹ Notwithstanding the recent

⁷⁷ Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal*; Gaastra, “Constantijn Ranst”; F. S. Gaastra, “Private Money for Company Trade: The Role of the Bills of Exchange in Financing the Return Cargoes of the VOC,” *Itinerario* 18, no. 1 (June 2011): 65–76; Nierstrasz, *In the Shadow of the Company*. Note that these are works that engage directly with corruption in the Company. But besides them, there are several other scholars who have worked on the numerous aspects of the Dutch in India.

⁷⁸ In the years before the first investigation committee was formed in 1626, there were rampant claims of disorder and abuses among the Company directors, due to conflict with the investors. See, Simon van Middelgeest, *Den vervaerlijcken Oost-Indischen eclipsis vertoont aende vereenichde provincien door de participanten van d’ Oost-Indische Compagnie met een oodmoedich beklach aen de hoogh-moghende heeren Staten: Over de groote abuysen ende disordren deser Compagnie mits de groote swaricheden die nyt dese te verwachten staen*, 1625 (Dutch Pamphlets Online, pamphlet nr. 3585); Ymant Adamsen pseud. van Simon van Middelgeest, *Den langh-verwachten donder-slach voorsien en vooseyt in den Oost-Indischen eclipsis een swaer-luydende discours, teghen de ontrouwe bewinthebbers, ende ongeberechtigte gheninhebbers van de Indische Compagnie*. 1625 (Dutch Pamphlets Online, pamphlet nr. 3585 B); Simon van Middelgeest, *Nootwendich discours oft vertoock aan de hooch-mogende heeren staten generaal van de participanten der Oost-Indische Compagnie tegens bewinthebbers*, 1622 (Dutch Pamphlets Online, pamphlet nr. 3348).

⁷⁹ Gaastra, *Bewind en beleid*, 65–66; 68.

research on intellectual history of the VOC in the Republic, the focus for studying the Company in the Republic has been on the production of knowledge by prominent regent-directors while corruption has remained an overseas affair.⁸⁰

Monopoly in this debate formed the core element of discussion for understanding why the *Heeren XVII* was reluctant to relax its restrictions, despite contentions that this could have had lessened corruption among its overseas personnel. Intermittent pleas to relax the monopoly were made throughout the entire span of the seventeenth century, even by those from within the Company's administration.⁸¹ But it was never formally done away with, though challenged by men from both within and outside the VOC administration. During the 1650s particularly, with the coming of the Republicans to the political forum, it was explicitly talked and heard about in the VOC domain. The ideology of 'free trade' and 'liberty' that hung in the air began to exert pressure on the Company's directors. The philosophy advocated giving up of the VOC's long-guarded privileges, as the military costs incurred to preserve monopoly came to be viewed as a drain on the economy of the major provinces in the Republic. Pieter de la Court, an entrepreneur himself and a prominent friend of Johan de Witt, suggested that commerce should have been the ideal goal of the Dutch state.⁸² His suggestion was to cut down the extra expenses through the establishment of independent colonies settled abroad. While remaining linked to the metropolis, these colonies would generate sufficient resources to sustain themselves, backed by naval power. At the same time, the removal of a monopoly would encourage 'free trade' and thereby relieve the state of the financial pressure, opening up chances of greater commercial success in the global forum.

⁸⁰ Pieter Baas, "De VOC in Flora's Lusthoven," in *Kennis en Compagnie: De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie en de moderne wetenschap*, eds. Leonard Blussé and Ilonka Ooms (Leiden: Uitgeverij Balans, 2002), 124-37; Marion Peters, *De wijze koopman: Het wereldwijde onderzoek van Nicolaes Witsen (1641-1717), burgemeester en VOC-bewindhebber* (Rotterdam: Balkema, 1983); Alfons van der Kraan, "The Dutch East India Company, Christiaan Huygens and the Marine Clock, 1682-95," *Prometheus* 19, no. 4 (2001): 279-98.

⁸¹ Arasaratnam, "Monopoly and Free Trade", 1-15.

⁸² Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 221-24.

As Weststeijn put it, – ‘By the early 1660s, the claim that “a happy continuation of commerce requires freedom” had become all but commonplace among the propagators of Dutch commerce.’⁸³ Notwithstanding the fact that Pieter de la Court himself came from an entrepreneurial background which shaped his arguments, there were lots of individual merchants in the Republic like him, who wanted to explore the provisions for trading in Asia beyond the Company’s limitations. Even among some of the Company’s governors and other high officials, there were open disputations about whether or not monopoly was supposed to be preserved over certain commodities in some areas. Rijkloff van Goens, who went on to become the governor-general of Batavia in 1678, wrote earlier to the *Heeren XVII* about his plans for establishing settlements in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) through plantation colonies.⁸⁴ In the memoir that he left for his successors, he made it clear that if his plans were executed, there could still be room for the monopoly of the Company on some commodities such as Indian cotton products in Ceylon.⁸⁵ He thus proposed a deal that wedded the colonial proposals of De la Court with the *Heeren XVII*’s monopolistic ambitions. Joan Maetsuyker, on the other hand, pressed more openly during his governor-generalship in the 1650s, for granting greater trading privileges to the *vrijburgers* in Ceylon, beyond the limits of the Company’s then permitted monopoly.⁸⁶ He reasoned that it would give the Company access to local markets and products through their own men, instead of local Muslim brokers.

Despite all of these promises of commercial greatness guaranteed through the freedom of trade, the Company introduced several reforms from time to time but never really removed its monopoly claims on Asian waters. The charter of 1602 had forbidden everyone to travel between the Cape and the Republic or sail through the Strait of Magellan beyond the Company’s

⁸³ Weststeijn, 228.

⁸⁴ E. Reimers, ed., *Memoirs of Ryckloff van Goens, Governor of Ceylon Delivered to His Successors Jacob Hustaart on December 26, 1663 and Ryckloff van Goens the Younger on April 12, 1675*, trans. E. Reimers (Colombo: Ceylon Government Press, 1932), 8.

⁸⁵ Reimers, 27.

⁸⁶ E. Reimers, ed., *Memoir of Joan Maetsuyker, President and Commander-in-Chief Delivered to His Successor Jacob van Kittensteyn on the 27th of February, 1650*, trans. E. Reimers (Colombo: Cottle, 1927), 18.

ambit.⁸⁷ These instructions were renewed by the charter of 1622, 1647-48 and 1665, laying emphasis on the VOC's exclusive rights to trade in specific commodities in the profitable regions.⁸⁸ Though limited trading permits were given to the free traders within the intra-Asian trade network, the monopoly was retained in greater parts and reinforced from time to time.⁸⁹ It was this factor of monopoly that became the basis for all the formal rules which were entered into the Company's ordinance books, and used as the standard reference point for defining (im)proper official behaviour. It leads us to wonder why there had been such strict monopoly laws despite all the conflicting opinions, especially when its removal was argued to have guaranteed better commercial success for the profit-driven Republic. In order to find the answer to this, it is necessary to study the VOC's monopoly regulations and use of corruption allegations, in connection with the political implications in the Dutch Republic.

Political Connections Behind Allegations of Corruption

The Company's increasing mention of corruption in its records, coincided with the growing concerns about administrative corruption, in general in the Republic. But there has been, as of yet, no exhaustive research done to establish this connection between the VOC corruption and the political developments in the Dutch Republic. Ample studies exist in the conventional literature about families in the Republic who were tied to the Company, both as administrators or part of the *Heeren XVII* as well as in the VOC overseas.⁹⁰ While these studies invite further investigation into the role of the VOC beyond its commercial cadre, they illustrate the importance of establishing a link between the Republic and the Company overseas, on the basis

⁸⁷ Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkaatboek*, 1:1–2.

⁸⁸ Chijs, 1:108; Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkaatboek*, 2: 112, 389.

⁸⁹ Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkaatboek*, 1:46.

⁹⁰ A few examples can be seen in studies on the family Trip by Klein. See, P.W. Klein, *De Trippen in de 17de eeuw: Een studie over het ondernemersgedrag op de hollandse stapelmarkt* (Routledge: London and New York, 1965), 163–83. Kooijmans examines the connections of the family Huydecoper in the Republic and overseas. See, Kooijmans, *Vriendschap*. Apart from these, there are extracts from biographical works. For some such examples see, J. Heniger, *Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Drakenstein (1636-1691) and Hortus Malabaricus* (Rotterdam: A.A. Balkema, 1986); Wim Buijze, *Leven en werk van Georg Everhard Rumphuis (1672-1702). Een natuurbistoricus in dienst van de VOC* (Den Haag: W. Buijze, 2006).

of known factional and personal alliances. Such an endeavour, as has been attempted in this dissertation, can reveal the politics behind the functioning of the VOC administration. This attempt to explore the political connections in historiography may lead to further revelations about the way in which corruption allegations and incidents were viewed within the Company.

In the previous chapter, it has been shown how corruption became a political agenda in the Dutch political forum. The numerous ideologies and political theories that were current at the time, elevated commerce to become a crucial factor in sustaining the Republic. But this process also raised anxieties of moral and civic decadence. Weststeijn reasoned that the overwhelming anxiety to control corruption in the Republic and in the Company, was influenced by images from the classical past, especially that of the *Sallustian* moment that led to the decline of the Roman Empire. The possibility of a similar fate, he argued, constantly haunted the Dutch Republic. In such a growing and prosperous economy, the key political figures therefore wanted to prevent anything similar befalling them, thereby triggering calls for the reform of administrative morale.⁹¹ By the end of the century, these discussions coincided with the moment that corruption in the VOC had started attracting greater political attention.⁹² This was triggered by the flow of exotic commodities which enhanced conspicuous consumption and in turn stirred up controversial images of power, wealth and luxury in the Dutch society.⁹³ With the ‘public’ dimension of the government mounting, the financial accountability of the *Heeren XVII* to those citizens with investments in the Company also increased. It brought more attention on the subject of VOC corruption in the political front of the Republic.

⁹¹ Weststeijn, “Republican Empire,” 491–509.

⁹² A relevant example of an account written around this time though published later is that of Graaff, *Oost-Indise spiegel*.

⁹³ For a brief historiographical overview on the state and consumption and its relation to morality see, Sven Dupré and Christoph Lüthy, “Introduction: Silent Messengers. The World of Goods and the Circulation of Knowledge in the Early Modern Netherlands,” in *Silent Messengers: The Circulation of Material Objects of Knowledge in the Early Modern Low Countries*, eds. Sven Dupré and Christoph Lüthy (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2011), 2–7; Weststeijn, “Republican Empire,” 491–509; Mary Lindemann, *The Merchant Republics: Amsterdam, Antwerp, and Hamburg, 1648-1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 80–87; Adams, *The Familial State*, 69. Harold Cook introduces another perspective that showed that consumption of luxury goods came to be associated with refined taste and an indication of ‘human betterment’. See, Cook, *Matters of Exchange*, 14–15.

The VOC in the Republic had not always been financially stable because of its difficulties in being able to return dividends on time.⁹⁴ This aroused tension between the shareholders and the directors from time to time, especially during those years when the charter needed to be extended by the States-General. Petitions and pamphlets directed against the *Heeren XVII*, for instance, flooded the Republic in 1622 when the VOC applied for the renewal of its charter. Corruption and mismanagement of money by the directors was one of the chief allegations voiced by the shareholders in these pamphlets. In a complaint to the States-General, those citizens with investments in the Company noted –

It seems that the dissident shareholders of the Dutch East-India Company have been brought to such a situation by some of the directors through their self-centered administration, as they are the ones who driven by their insatiable greed have let themselves go so far, as to act as usurpers of all rights and reason to make themselves masters of other people's goods (who are much wiser than them) which they then administer against the will of others, without ever accounting for it (that is silently appropriating goods that belong to other people). Everywhere their blinding greed have misled them so far away from reason that they are not ashamed to ask the honourable States-General to formalize their practice in a charter and privileges.⁹⁵

Thus, the political changes combined with the ideological motivations and financial tensions shook the Company's base repeatedly in the Dutch public space with corruption allegations. However, the *Heeren XVII* retained its monopoly but made earnest efforts to address these issues and adapt. One of the strategic responses in the beginning of the seventeenth century was to shift the attention to overseas Company servants, who came to be blamed for their illegal riches earned abroad. This was given a legal voice when in 1626, the office of a commissioner

⁹⁴ Gaastra, *The Dutch East India Company*, 27–28.

⁹⁵ *In sulcken staet schijnen nu de dolerende participanten van de oost-indische compagnie vervallen te wesen/ deur eenige der bewinthebbers eygen-baat-soeckende regeringe/ die met eene onversadelijcke gierichheit haar so verre verlopen/ dat sy tegen alle recht en reden als geweldenaars haar hebben willen meesters maken over ander lieden goederen (die wijser sijn als zy) om die te regieren tegen haren dancke/ sonder immermeer rekeninghe te doen (t welck stil swijgende ander luyden goet eygenen is). Alwaar haar de verblinde gierichheit oock soo verre van alle redelijckheit verleyt heeft/ dat sy haar niet geschaamt hebben/ hier van octroy en privilegie/ als een groot werck nyttgewerckt Hebbende/ aan de Ho. Mog. Heeren Staten-Generaal te versoecken.* Simon van Middelgeest, *Nootwendich discours oft vertooch aan de hoogb-mogende heeren Staten-Generaal van de participanten der Oost-Indische Compagnie tegens bewinthebbers*, 1622 (Dutch Pamphlets Online, pamphlet nr. 3348)

came to be introduced in the VOC whose duty was to investigate the Company's factories abroad.⁹⁶ As Pieter van Dam, the *advocaat* of the VOC recorded, this measure was meant to resolve the rising concerns about –

...the negligence, wastages, faults, excesses and even the disloyalty of the Company servants in the Indies, especially with regard to the private (illegal) trade, which is contrary to the contract and the oaths that they are bound to, (and which) has caused great damage and hindrance to the Company's trade and a stark reduction of its resources and capital, and notwithstanding the continuous attempts and exhortations directed against it, it has been opined that necessary measures should be taken in order to preserve the Company from its forthcoming ruin.⁹⁷

But there was another significant reason for this shifting of the attention to overseas corruption. In the previous chapter, it has been contended that corruption allegations had been used as a political tool in the process of factional infighting with political rivals attacking each other. Since most of the political figures rose to the top ranks of the VOC administration, it is not illogical to think that they attempted to introduce their factional intrigues into the Company's forum. Several of the initial directors of the *Heeren XVII* were men who had been part of the earlier small companies (the *Voorcompagnieën*) trying to explore the trading prospects in Asia. These directors (primarily from the chamber of Amsterdam) included people such as Reinier Adriaensz. Pauw, Hendrick Arentsz. Hudde, Gerrit Pietersz Bicker (all of whom had been directors of the *Compagnie van Verre*), Geurt Dircksz. van Beuningen (who was the director of another Company that merged with the *Oude Compagnie*) and others, who had taken the first step in forming an alliance with Van Oldenbarnevelt to have a chartered United Company established in the

⁹⁶ Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkaatboek*, 1:188. Also see, NL-HaNA, Familiearchief Van Goens, inv. nr. 27, Instructions for the commissioners attached with the letter for Rijkloff van Goens Jr. on his appointment as commissioner of the Cape in 1680, 23 April, 1686: folios not numbered.

⁹⁷ '...de onaghtsaambeden, verquistingen, fouten, excessen, selfs ontrouw van de bedienden in Indiën, en specialijck mede over den particulieren handel, tegens de verbintenis en den eedt, by deseelve gedaan, tot grote schade en verbindingh in Compagnies handel, en merckelycke verminderingh in haere middelen en capitalen, en dat onaengesien de geduyrige aanschrijvingen en vermaningen daartegens gedaan, en waarin dienvolgende gemeynt niert, dat om de Compagnie voor haar aanstaende ruïne te preserveren, nootsaeckelijck diende voorsien te worden.'

Dam, *Pieter van Dam's Beschryvinge*, Book III, 128. It is to be noted that Van Dam's work was meant only for the directors of the VOC as a secret report on the Company's affairs.

Republic.⁹⁸ They were at the same time important political figures and the men with the required capital to invest in the Company in order to make it a possible venture. Consequently, their factional bickering which had pervaded the political space, spilled over inevitably into the Company administration. Owing to these strong bonds between the Company and the political administration, factionalism and elite political relations crept into the administration of the chambers. It is then quite likely that the aligning of factions in the political space corresponded to the factional shuffling in the VOC administration. But there was the extra dimension of the factional interplay in overseas settlements that required the VOC in the Republic to be connected to the governor-general and the *Raad van Indië* in Batavia. Was the rule of monopoly then retained so rigidly in order to make political use of corruption allegations and synchronise factions abroad with the purpose of influencing the composition of the Company? This could be, as I contend in detail in the later chapters, another reason for diverting attention towards overseas corruption.

But before investigating the factional connections between the Company in the Republic and overseas, it is necessary to explore the VOC's political connections in the Republic. It was through the factional changes in the *vroedschap* where corruption allegations played a subtle role, that subsequent changes were brought about in the factions of the *Heeren XVII* and the Amsterdam chamber of the VOC in the Republic. In the years after 1618-19, for instance, following the execution of Van Oldenbarnevelt, such factional forces became highly conspicuous. Certain cliques began gaining dominance over the others in both the political and the Company administration. Reinier Pauw, as an active member of the States of Holland, had not been on good terms with Van Oldenbarnevelt. He, therefore, found solidarity with Van Oldenbarnevelt's political opponent, the *stadhouder* of Holland and West-Friesland, Prince Maurits van Nassau. Pauw eventually went on to join the jury that tried Van Oldenbarnevelt and assented to the order of his execution. In the course of these political upheavals, Pauw along

⁹⁸ Gaastra, *The Dutch East India Company*, 30.

with his family and friends founded a strong Counter-Remonstrant faction in the *vroedschap* of Amsterdam.⁹⁹ This factional alignment was reflected in both the Republic's political institutions as well as the VOC administration.

Within the political institutions, most offices soon came to be filled with members of Pauw's faction who had clashed with the opponent faction of Van Oldenbarnevelt's friends and political partners.¹⁰⁰ Many of the officials with Remonstrant links like IJsbrand Ben Albertsz., Herman Gijsbertsz. van de Poll and Dierick de Vlaming van Oudtshoorn, who were allies of Van Oldenbarnevelt, had already been removed from power and replaced with men from the pro-Maurits and Pauw factions.¹⁰¹ In 1619, the *burgemeesters* Sebastian Egbertsz. and Jacob de Graeff Dircksz., who had also been aligned with Van Oldenbarnevelt were forced to leave their positions. They were replaced by men from Pauw's group who took over the leading positions.¹⁰² Among the newly appointed officials in the *vroedschap* of Amsterdam; were two members who happened to be cousins/great-nephews (*achterneven*) of Pauw – Albert Coenratsz. Burgh and Arent Pietersz. van der Burgh while the others, Simon van der Does and Gillis Jansz. Beth also joined in as friends attached to the Pauw family circle.¹⁰³ Their patron was one of the *burgemeesters* of Amsterdam, Frederick de Vrij, who was known to be close to the Pauws.¹⁰⁴

This was followed by visible attempts of factional realignments in the VOC administration (and also the WIC which is beyond our scope here), as can be traced through the changes in the composition of the Amsterdam chamber of the Company. A study of the shuffling of office-holders within the chamber of Amsterdam revealed links to the changes of political factions in the *vroedschap*. The Pauws as a powerful family saw to it that their friends and cousins were seated in the Company's chief directorial positions. While Adriaen Pauw joined the

⁹⁹ See Chapter 1 for this reference on the Remonstrants and the Counter-Remonstrants.

¹⁰⁰ Geert H. Janssen, *Het stokje van Oldenbarnevelt* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001), 52.

¹⁰¹ All three were related to the Hooft family that had Remonstrant connections and were quite anti-Pauw. Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam, 1578-1795*, 217, 221, 280, 495.

¹⁰² Elias, 258, 266.

¹⁰³ Elias, LXX.

¹⁰⁴ Elias, LXX.

board of directors in 1618, Hillebrand Schellinger, another relative of the Pauws, continued in office as a director of the Amsterdam chamber.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, the Witsen family saw Gerrit Jacob Witsen continuing in the directorial office that he had occupied since 1614, while Gerrit Hudde, the brother of Hendrick Hudde was recruited in 1632 as family of the Witsens and a relative of the Pauws.¹⁰⁶ There was thus clear factional linkages between the *vroedschap* of Amsterdam and the VOC chamber of Amsterdam in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic

As mentioned earlier, removals and new appointments did not always go so smoothly or were as unanimous as may have first seemed. Not everyone could be ousted at the same time. There were different mechanisms through which officials could be added or removed by the political factions. There was the system of *contracten van correspondentie* (contracts of correspondence) which allowed existing members of the *vroedschap* to make appointments among themselves, preventing the *stadhouder's* intervention (that is allowing room for a period of stadholdership).¹⁰⁷ This allowed for the winning faction to install men of their choice into city governments. In other cases, with vacancies arising because of death or other reasons, the dominant faction could press for putting in their candidate in the vacant position.¹⁰⁸ But nothing guaranteed a neat factional sweep all the time. Political opponents had to frequently work together, despite their differences under the same roof of political institutions. For instance, the faction led by Reynier Pauw and his cousins Gerrit Jacob Witsen, Jonas and Jan Cornelisz. Witsen operated alongside their rival faction of the brothers-in-laws, Frans Hendricksz. Oetgens and Barthold Cromhout.¹⁰⁹ Thus, while retaining their offices simultaneously, these two opposing factions also coexisted in the *vroedschap*, triggering greater competition for offices and

¹⁰⁵ Elias, 192, 300.

¹⁰⁶ Hendrick Hudde was already affiliated to the political group of the Orangists as he was appointed by the stadhouder Maurits in the *vroedschap* in 1618. See, Elias, 168, 162.

¹⁰⁷ Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic*, 25–26.

¹⁰⁸ Price, 46.

¹⁰⁹ Laurens Jansz. Spiegel was removed by the *stadhouder* from his position in 1618 but his daughter was married to Michiel Pauw while his sister to Anthony Oetgens van Waveren. Considering both Pauw and Oetgens belonged to the Orangist territory at that time, there could have been competition. See, Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam, 1578-1795*, LXVIII.

personal favours. Friction was also caused by certain families harbouring mixed political affiliations and switching sides to join opposing factions. The Witsen family, for example, changed sides many times and different family members supported different factions. While at some point the Witsens were related to the Pauws and to the Huddes, at another point there were Witsens connected to the Bickers and the family of Huydecoper-Coymans.¹¹⁰ Gerrit Jacob Witsen in 1621 did not care about breaking the obligation of his friendship with Pauw when he switched over to the opposing faction. Witsen's nephew, Jonas Cornelisz. Witsen also followed his uncle in this switchover. Disruptions in the factional alliances was thus possible, even though it was not the general rule or frequently done. But this risk ensured that there was everything done to secure cohesion among the members, making the familial and friendly factions a complicated yet vulnerable mark of solidarity in the political sphere.

To return to the factional linkages between the VOC and the political administration, one must point out that towards the end of the 1640s the Pauws began to fade out because of intense competition from the Bickers. The Bicker family and friends emerged as another powerful faction in Holland's political forum and even managed to win the confidence of the then *stadhouder*, Frederik Hendrik. The family De Graeff had been earlier displaced by the Pauws in 1618, but they received a new chance when Jacob de Graeff in 1630 returned to the *vroedschap* under the patronage of the *stadhouder*, Frederik Hendrik.¹¹¹ The Bickers and the De Graeffs formed an alliance against the Pauws whose power had already been dwindling in the States of Holland. This rivalry was laid bare when both the groups put forward or proposed for or nominated their candidates for a vacancy in the *vroedschap* and continued fighting tooth and nail

¹¹⁰ Gerrit Hudde, whose brother Hendrick Hudde was appointed in 1618 by Maurits to the *vroedschap*, married Maria Witsen. Jonas Cornelisz. Witsen was related to the Pauws. This was already a different faction from the Bickers who were also related from the in-law's side to the Witsens. Cornelis Bicker was married to Aertge Witsen and later in-laws of the Witsens were married to Huydecoper and Coymans daughters. Clearly, there were shifting loyalties in the family according to the turn of vacancies and factional conflicts in the political institution. See, Elias, 327.

¹¹¹ Elias, 266.

to install their own candidates in that position.¹¹² By 1650, the Bicker-De Graeff league had emerged as the stronger faction in the Republic. In the subsequent years when the *stadhouder* of Holland was missing from the political scenario, the De Witt family came to the fore. They enhanced their power by uniting with the Bicker-De Graeff league through marriage alliances, leading to the creation of such a strong bureaucratic wall that it was almost impossible for an outsider to penetrate into this regent oligarchy.

The VOC in these years also turned into a tightly knit network of factions filled with these regent families and their friends who formed a clique as strong as the ones in the political administration. Andries Bicker, who had already held the position of a Company director in Amsterdam since 1641, continued in office as did Cornelis de Graeff, who had been there from 1636.¹¹³ Andries Bicker went on to become both a *burgemeester* and a Company director simultaneously in 1641, and so did De Graeff for the years after 1643 when he became a *burgemeester* while holding on to his office as one of the Company directors.¹¹⁴ Among others were Roelof Bicker who had joined as a director in the VOC in 1647 and continued thereafter, and Gerard van Papenbroeck who was also related to the Bickers and caught up with the administration of the VOC in 1658.¹¹⁵ Add to this, later in 1667 Lambert Reynst who had been an in-law of the Bickers, as well as Nicolaes Pancras who came on board the VOC in 1668.¹¹⁶

The States of Holland, however, was never entirely won over by the De Witts, for the simple reason that competition always ensured the rise of opponent factions. Gillis Valckenier emerged as the fountainhead of this counter-De Wittian faction, campaigning for the restoration of the office of the *stadhouder* and publicly proclaiming his support for Willem III. In the aftermath of the events of 1672, the De Witts' execution paved the way for the rise of Valckenier and his faction who now stood strong in the States of Holland and the *vroedschap* of Amsterdam.

¹¹² Elias, XCIV.

¹¹³ Elias, 346, 422.

¹¹⁴ Elias, 346.

¹¹⁵ Elias, 267, 348, 435.

¹¹⁶ Elias, 452, 467.

Valckenier's turn against the De Witt-De Graeff-Bicker link is to be seen in light of the fact that Valckenier's great-grandfather was Reynier Pauw whose family later had their differences with the Bickers.¹¹⁷ It was at this time that Johannes Hudde also emerged as a prominent figure in the politics of the Republic and allied with Valckenier to form the Hudde-Valckenier league. Fresh opposition stemmed from Henrick Hooft and his faction against Valckenier and his faction, which led to another tense situation within the *vroedschap*. But by the end of the 1670s, the power of the *stadhouder*, Willem III had compelled Hooft to make peace with Hudde and Valckenier, to maintain a more stable situation in the States of Holland. After the death of Valckenier in 1680, Hudde and Huydecoper with their factions turned out to be the major power-holders and held a relatively powerful stronghold in the political domain in the subsequent decade.¹¹⁸

The displacement of officials from opponent factions played a key role in these major power swaps after 1672. The *wetsverzettingen* could be used in times of political emergencies by the *stadhouder* to choose members of the *vroedschap* of a limited number of cities.¹¹⁹ This happened formally after 1672 when the *stadhouder*, Willem III returned to his position. By virtue of his power, many of the older men from the De Witt faction were replaced by men who pledged their allegiance to the House of Orange. Both Cornelis de Graeff and Andries de Graeff were the first among many to lose their positions in the *vroedschap* of Amsterdam, followed by Lambert Reynst (who was married to a Bicker), Jan van de Poll (who was related to the Hoofds who were in turn related to the Bicker-de Graeffs), Roetert Ernst (who was married to the family de Vrij that was close to the Bicker-de Graeff faction) and several more.¹²⁰ In their places, offices were distributed to Jean Appelman who was related to both Gillis Valckenier and the family Huydecoper; Joan Commelin who belonged to the Bouwer family that was related to Valckenier;

¹¹⁷ The father of Gillis Valckenier was Wouter Valckenier (1637-50) who was the son of Gillis Jansz. Valckenier and Claertgen Pauw. Elias, 52.

¹¹⁸ While Tulp's daughter Anna Catharina Tulp was married to Nicolaes Witsen, Hudde's mother was Maria Witsen belonging to the Witsen family.

¹¹⁹ Wout Troost, *Stadhouder-Koning Willem III: Een politieke biografie* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001), 97–98; Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic*, 39–43.

¹²⁰ Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam*, 422, 520, 452, 445, 488.

Nicolaes Opmeer who was related to the Witsens and the Huddes; and Coenraad van Beuningen who was again related to Valckenier and Huydecoper van Maarsseveen among many others.¹²¹

These changes in the *vroedschap* of Amsterdam were reflected in the administration of the Company as well. Within the chamber of Amsterdam, no less than sixteen replacements were made during these years.¹²² Johannes Hudde came in and established his stronghold as a VOC director from 1679 that added further weight to his earlier position as a *burgemeester* of Amsterdam (which he held from 1672).¹²³ Valckenier had obtained the office of a director of the VOC representing Amsterdam in 1657 but he also became one of the prominent *burgemeesters* of Amsterdam in his later years and continued in that position till 1679.¹²⁴ Among others, appointed as friends of the Valckenier league were Louis Trip, who joined the VOC's directorial board in 1678 and Cornelis de Vlaming van Oudtshoorn, who had come in the year before Trip's appointment.¹²⁵ Valckenier's political opponent in the *vroedschap*, Henrick Hooft had died in 1678. But his son Gerrit Hooft obtained a directorial post in the Company in the same year and continued to work there until he reconciled later with the Hudde-Huydecoper faction. As a dominant personality after Gillis Valckenier's death, Huydecoper continued with his directorship in the Amsterdam chamber – an office that he had occupied since 1666. He was also distantly related to Gillis Valckenier through the family Bartolotti in the Republic.¹²⁶ Both Valckenier and Hudde were thereby also related to Coenraad van Beuningen who had married Guilielmo Bartolotti's daughter, Jacoba Bartolotti.¹²⁷ Gerrit Hooft, Jan Rodenburgh, Gerard Bors van

¹²¹ Elias, 558, 569, 571, 512.

¹²² Kooijmans, *Vriendschap*, 133.

¹²³ Gaastra, *Bewind en beleid*, 39; Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam*, 528.

¹²⁴ Gaastra, *Bewind en beleid*, 478.

¹²⁵ Gaastra, 547, 506.

¹²⁶ Joan Huydecoper's sister, Jacoba Sophia Huydecoper was married to Guilielmo Bartolotti. Valckenier's great grandfather from his mother's side was Adriaen Pauw whose great grandson married a Bartolotti daughter. In some way, therefore, both Valckenier and Huydecoper were connected as family and as friends.

¹²⁷ Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam, 1578-1795*, 513.

Waveren and Salomon de Blocquerie all now allied themselves to this Hudde-Huydecoper faction as some of them gained important positions in the VOC during the 1680s.¹²⁸

It is evident from these examples that factionalism made up the basis of the Republic's political administration and influenced the Company administration as well. When it came to the use of corruption allegations as a political tool, however (as was common in the political institutions), it was seldom used for the VOC in the Republic. The shuffling in the political administration of Amsterdam's city council ensured that there were corresponding changes in the composition of the VOC's Amsterdam chamber and that of the *Heeren XVII*. Since most of the times, the rules for appointment in the Company required political figures to step in, it was not much of a problem for these men to install their favourites from their own factions. Some *burgemeesters* from Amsterdam even went on to appoint themselves to the board of the *Heeren XVII* or become directors for the Amsterdam chamber by using their privilege of being able to choose the right candidate for the Company. Furthermore, even though theoretically the tenure of the VOC directors was mostly for life, it was not impossible to remove existing directors from their offices citing other political reasons like incompetency or disagreement with the *stadhouder*. This meant that the winning faction was sometimes able to directly remove directors belonging to opposing factions from their positions, without having to resort to any strategy. A list of the directors from the chamber of Amsterdam as provided by F. Wieringa in her book shows the diversity in the length of their tenures in serving on the board of the *Heeren XVII*. It could sometimes be as long as twenty-nine years and at other times as short as one, two or three years.¹²⁹ It is also important to note that most of these officials were holding multiple offices at the same time such as being members of the the *vroedschap*, the *schependraad*, a *burgemeester* and a Company director. In this way, the system allowed these officials to exploit their multiple connections, thereby, seizing the privilege to change or shuffle individuals within the Company's

¹²⁸ Gaastra, *Bewind en beleid*, 121.

¹²⁹ Wieringa, *De VOC in Amsterdam*, 180–84.

administration. It ensured furthermore that they did not necessarily need to use corruption allegations here, unlike in the political forum. Changes in the political institutions automatically ensured influence in the Company's core administration, owing to this connected factional interplay.

But the real problem emerged when it came to administering the extended wing of the Company in Asia. Direct shuffling of all the factions in all the places was not always possible, and the most that could be done was to change the governor-general in Batavia. When Johan Maetsuyker was called back from his position as the governor-general in 1676, Gillis Valckenier was one of the most politically powerful men in the States of Holland. He could, thus, influence the decisions of the *vroedschap* of Amsterdam as well as that of the *Heeren XVII* in the VOC. The choice to replace Joan Maetsuyker with Rijkloff van Goens as the new governor-general had much to do with Gillis Valckenier's patronage and alliance with the latter.¹³⁰ Similarly, when Johannes Camphuys obtained the position of the governor-general in 1684, he acquired the open support of Joan Huydecoper, one of the foremost men of his times in the Republic and the *Heeren XVII*.¹³¹ Earlier, Cornelis Speelman, who served for a brief period as the governor-general of the VOC in Batavia (1681-1684), was also known for his factional connections with Huydecoper.¹³² But beyond this position of governor-general, shuffling or removing the rest of the officials in overseas factories without a valid reason was not always feasible within a short span of time. The reasons were distance, slow communication and everything else that could possibly hinder contact between two continents connected only by ships in the seventeenth century.

¹³⁰ Gaastra, *Bewind en beleid*, 125.

¹³¹ UA, Familie Huydecoper, inv. nr. 60. Letter written from Amsterdam by Joan Huydecoper, lord of Maarsseveen and Neerdijk (1625-1704) to his cousin, Joan Bax, dated 10 October, 1685: folios not numbered.

¹³² UA, Familie Huydecoper, inv. nr. 60. Letter written from Amsterdam by Joan Huydecoper, lord of Maarsseveen and Neerdijk (1625-1704) to his cousin, Joan Bax, dated 29 November, 1683: folios not numbered.

Monopoly and its violation as a political tool could, under such circumstances, prove to be a useful strategy, as allegations of illegal trade against certain officials who had been working abroad could displace them from their positions. The vexations of the *Heeren XVII* in controlling corruption among their officials abroad, was therefore enmeshed with, besides pragmatic goals, the opportunity to control the Company's factional politics abroad. These overseas factional politics, reflecting the factionalism of the Company in the Republic, have been elaborated on and substantiated in Chapters 5 and 6 through the case study of the Van Reede Committee in Bengal (in Mughal India). It suffices to say here that this factionalism, combined with the other political, financial and ideological developments discussed earlier, led the VOC in the Republic to stretch its perception of corruption to accommodate new overseas connotations. But despite this corruption and 'pride and single-mindedness' among the directors, the Company was to be sustained as Arnoldus Buchelius, a VOC director in the chamber of Amsterdam put it – for it was 'proper and necessary for our Republic'.¹³³

However, when studying the Company's administration abroad, one should take note that the Company did not operate in an isolated bubble with its own employees and rules abroad. The VOC in seventeenth-century India, for example, had to deal with various external political and socio-cultural forces in the midst of diverse administrative rules. Considering the vastness of the territory served and the variety of the non-Dutch actors there, the way the anti-corruption drives and factional politics worked deserves closer examination. In our case of Mughal India, detecting the extent to which the local factors played a role in the VOC administration requires studying the administrative system of the Mughals. As the VOC remained particularly concerned about Bengal being a den of corruption, the following chapter focusses on this region in order to explain the Mughal administrative ethos there, where the Dutch administrative ideals also had to function.

¹³³ Judith Pollmann, *Religious Choice in the Dutch Republic: The Reformation of Arnoldus Buchelius (1565-1641)* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 180.

Conclusion

The VOC administrators in the Dutch Republic were exposed to the same public sphere as the political institutions in cities. They, too, therefore were confronted with the rising concerns about corruption. This was more intense because of the intimate ties between the Republic's and the Company's administrative domains. Factional allies and often certain personnel served on multiple occasions simultaneously in both these institutions. This connected the VOC and the political space of the Republic through common links. As political figures, the Company officials in the Republic felt the need to be accountable to their investors. The financial situation of the VOC depended on the investments of the citizens for whom the directors had to maintain their credible image. This constant pressure combined with the ideological discussions on the essence of commerce and its power to corrupt added to the rise of debates within and outside the VOC on its policies and actions. Corruption in the VOC consequently began becoming a major part of the *Heeren XVII's* discussions. The *Heeren XVII* defined corruption in the VOC as the violation of its monopoly rules that was further intertwined with the ideals of the prohibition of bribery, undue favouritism and loyalty to the 'fatherland' and its reformed religion. But in the course of the seventeenth century, owing to financial, ideological, political and factional developments, the focus on VOC corruption came to be diverted towards the overseas factories and the administrators there. It opened up the possibility for the VOC to connect their political factions in the Republic with the administration of the Company abroad by using corruption allegations (as was done in the *vroedschap* of Amsterdam), while also responding to the call for reforms and redress of the Company in the Republic.