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7. Conflict in the Council

Van Goens' final decade, 1670-1680 and the loss of information control

This chapter will explore the final phase of Van Goens' career, from 1670 until his death in 1682. This was a particularly tumultuous period in an already remarkable career since although Van Goens reached the zenith of the VOC hierarchy in Asia by becoming governor-general in 1678, his tenure as governor-general was exceptionally unproductive as he was increasingly blocked by an uncooperative council. This period of his career thus provides an interesting contrast between success and failure, as well as highlighting an important tension at the very heart of the VOC: the discrepancy between personnel policy and commercial strategy.

Van Goens was able to rise to the top of the company hierarchy because of the strong backing he enjoyed from important VOC directors in Amsterdam. But this same group became ever more critical of his policies and strategies on Ceylon, and this led to conflicted policy-making and extended disputes within the High Government of the Indies. Tellingly, Van Goens was not formally fired by the XVII, but requested to be allowed to resign because of the council's vehement opposition to his policies. True to form, he then traveled to the Netherlands in 1681 in the hope of repeating his success of the 1650s: to sway the directors by a personal meeting. This meeting was to be on behalf of his son, Rijckloff van Goens junior, who he hoped would be able to rise to become governor-general himself. The attempt was in vain, however, as Rijckloff van Goens senior died shortly after arriving in the Netherlands. Though he died in Amsterdam, he was buried in The Hague as the mayor, Joan Huydecoper, did not want Van Goens buried within Amsterdam's walls.⁵³⁶ Van Goens was therefore buried in the *kloosterkerk* in The Hague. This was a fitting choice as it was here that stadholder Maurits had gone to a counter-remonstrant service to signal his support for the hardline Calvinists, way back in 1617. The *kloosterkerk* had thus become a central site to the counter-remonstrants, of whom Van Goens had always been part.

In studying the final decade of Van Goens in Asia, this chapter will make a number of related points. The first, the incompatibility of personnel policy and overall strategy, has already been mentioned. The second, the idea of *information control*, will be explored in depth as Van Goens was in the enviable position of being able to control the flow of information coming from Ceylon, especially information flowing to the directors in the Netherlands. This allowed him to present the effects of his proposed (and enacted) policies in a much more positive light than they actually merited. The subsequent loss of this control was catastrophic as the sudden outburst of information conflicting with Van Goens' official reports crucially diminished his reliability in the eyes of the directors and the High Government in Batavia. This chapter will spend some time moving back and forth between Amsterdam, Colombo and Batavia so as to place the important actors in their proper setting. The third important point to be made concerns the VOC directors in the 1670s, with the focus on the changing composition of the XVII in the early 1670s underlining the extent to which the VOC directors were now part of the political elite of the Republic and how shocks external to the company could have a profound impact on its governance. The shock in this case was, of course, the French invasion of 1672, followed by the near-collapse of the Republic and the purging of the city councils of Holland by stadholder William III. This was the classic case study that underpinned D.J. Roorda's study of factional and

⁵³⁶ Zandvliet et al., *De 250 Rijksten van de gouden eeuw*, 86.

party-political struggles in the Republic, as discussed in the Introduction. However, the purging of the Amsterdam city council also had major ramifications for the composition of the VOC's board of directors in the 1670s and 1680s. The rise to power after 1672 of the faction around Gillis Valckenier had a significant impact on Van Goens' career, as well as on those surrounding him. This effect would go from very positive in the early 1670s to highly negative in the final years of the decade and the early 1680s, a conundrum that will be explained in this chapter. The fourth main point to be addressed concerns the fate of the clients of Van Goens during the 1670s and after his death. I will pay special attention to the fates of his two sons, Rijckloff junior and Volckert, as their careers tell a lot about Van Goens senior's ability to promote the careers of those close to him.

This chapter is thus divided into four main sections: firstly the issue of information control and its implications for company policy-making from a perspective of Van Goens' position on Ceylon; secondly the conflict between policy goals as seen from Colombo, Batavia and Amsterdam; thirdly the effects of the outbreak of war in 1672, both in Asia and in the Netherlands; and finally the ability of Van Goens to protect and further the careers of those individuals close to him. The chapter will also tell a chronological tale, beginning with the situation on Ceylon in 1670, as Raja Singha counterattacked and demolished Van Goens' projections of easy annexation of the entire island. The tale will continue through the French invasion of 1672 and its effects on the VOC and Van Goens personally to the latter's promotion to Batavia in the mid-1670s with the status of a war hero and his subsequent falling-out with much of the council there, and end with his appointment as governor-general and ultimately his retirement in 1680.

Information control and company policy-making

The strong position that Van Goens had built up in Ceylon during the 1660s and into the 1670s allowed him, to a large extent, to control the flow of information from the island. Information features in several different ways in the theory and debate on Early Modern long-distance trade. Sheilagh Ogilvie states that traders wanted to 'transform *uncertainty* into *risk*'.⁵³⁷ This meant moving from something that could not be measured or calculated precisely because it was unknown to something that could be taken into consideration when making business decisions, and thus could be deflected or provided for by means of insurance. To make sound business decisions, merchants needed information on markets, supply, demand and the political situation. Ogilvie argues that merchant guilds and companies (whether chartered or regulated) were not more efficient in providing qualitatively good information on business conditions.⁵³⁸ This focus on the *efficiency* of chartered companies compared with that of non-incorporated merchants is predominant in the economic history literature on the topic. On these kinds of topics, the performance of the institutionalized information-gathering by the VOC (and other chartered companies) is compared with that of private merchants. Ogilvie argues that the private merchants were more efficient. This contrasts with Carlos and Nicholas, for example, who argue that chartered companies filled an organizational need and enjoyed efficiencies of scale in gathering information.⁵³⁹ The weakness of this entire body of literature is that it approaches the topic

⁵³⁷ Ogilvie, *Merchant Guilds*, 344.

⁵³⁸ Ibidem, 344-390.

⁵³⁹ A.M. Carlos and A.J. Nicholas, "Giants of an earlier capitalism": The chartered trading companies as modern multinationals', *Business History Review* 62:3 (1988) 398-419, 398-419, 404-407.

backwards. Many economic historians seek to interpret the companies either as precursors of modern forms of corporations, or not. However, as this entire thesis has argued (in agreement with Philip Stern's recent work), the chartered companies were much more than mere merchants: by the 1660s, the VOC was a state in Asia, as the directors realized only too well. To interpret their complex overseas organizations primarily as a mercantile or commercial organization consequently ignores a crucial characteristic of their decision-making processes. The VOC, for example, gained many of its most important return cargoes not by virtue of its trade, but by virtue of its 'high government' in areas of production.⁵⁴⁰ Products were not bought on open, competitive markets; instead, the VOC sought to use its armed force or diplomacy to create geographic areas in which it dominated the markets for specific goods, with Van Goens' policies on pepper in Malabar and cinnamon on Ceylon being perfect examples of such practices. This meant that the VOC needed very different modes of governance and information-gathering than if it had simply been a large form of mercantile organization. Focusing on 'efficiency' overlooks this crucial aspect.

Ogilvie argues that the VOC restricted itself in its information-gathering primarily to '*the type of trade goods required and the state of the market in imported products, and even in those limited spheres information was often incomplete.*' This is a gross simplification of the type of information that the company requested its servants to gather. The reason that the VOC archives are such an important source for Early Modern Asian history today is because the VOC made its servants overseas also systematically gather information on politics, religion, warfare and the like. It is furthermore instructive that both Ogilvie as well as Jones and Ville refer to a much earlier work by Holden Furber, who argued that much of the material sent to the Republic was simply never read.⁵⁴¹ This is belied by the intense debates on many issues among the directors, as well as the internal-use-only history of the company compiled from the VOC's archives by the then-secretary, Pieter van Dam.⁵⁴² In addition, one only has to look at the *personal* archives of VOC directors and governors held in the archives in The Hague to see that not only was the information read, but it was also intensely analyzed, criticized and debated.⁵⁴³ These claims about the insufficient gathering and processing of information therefore have to be dismissed as being unsubstantiated by the source material.

In all this, an important point has been overlooked. Individuals could consciously manipulate information in order for their own policy suggestions to be considered more acceptable. This is different from the simple withholding of information that features in the principal-agent literature.⁵⁴⁴ The latter was presumably done in order to create favorable conditions for (illegal) private trade at the expense of the company's official trade. The conscious

⁵⁴⁰ G. Knaap, *De 'core business' van de VOC; Markt, macht en mentaliteit vanuit overzees perspectief* (inaugural lecture: Utrecht 2014) 21.

⁵⁴¹ S. Ogilvie, *Institutions and European Trade* 357. S.R.H. Jones and S.P. Ville, 'Efficient Transactors or Rent-Seeking Monopolists? The Rationale for Early Chartered Trading Companies', *The Journal of Economic History* 56:4 (1996) 898-915, 906. *Rival empires of Trade in the Orient* (1976) 191.

⁵⁴² Van Dam and Stapel, *Beschryvinge van de Oost-Indische Compagnie*. This published version is based on the manuscripts in the VOC archives in The Hague: NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. nos. 4621-4629. An example of a book published for a wider audience in the period itself and partially based on secret VOC documents is: I. Comelin, *Begin ende voortgangh van de Vereenighde Nederlantsche Geotroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie: Vervatende de voornaemste reysen, by de inwoonderen der selver provincien derwaerts gedaen* (Johannes Jansonius: Amsterdam 1646).

⁵⁴³ For this period, see, for example, the archives of the Radermacher family, the Sweers collection and the Huddle collection in the Dutch National Archives in The Hague, and the Huydecoper collection in the Utrecht Archives.

⁵⁴⁴ Carlos and Nicholas, 'Agency Problems in Early Chartered Companies', 857.

manipulation of information by Van Goens was on a completely different scale and of a completely different order of magnitude. In the first place, it does not seem to have been done with the aim of private trade in mind. Rather, Van Goens manipulated information to make his recommended policy – the conquest of the entire island – seem like the most economical and rational strategy. Of course, conquest would have offered kickbacks of all sorts to Van Goens personally, but his main aim seems to have been to steer *official* company policy in a certain direction, rather than merely seeking to create favorable conditions for murky personal profits. Van Goens was already a very wealthy man by this point, thus increasing the unlikelihood that adding to his personal wealth was his main motivation. Non-monetary rewards, however, could still exert a powerful influence. The glory and honor associated with successful implementation of his policies could have been an important reason to persevere, in addition to a deeply-held belief that Ceylon could – and should – become a ‘second fatherland’ in Asia. Secondly, the scale on which Van Goens worked and the types of information manipulated were quite different. Van Goens succeeded in misleading the company’s directors for years, thus leading them to support his plans despite objections from Batavia. This required the support, or at least non-opposition, of the majority of the company’s high-ranking personnel on the island. The social construction of this new elite within the company should thus be examined more closely. Firstly, however, it is time to consider the subjects on which Van Goens sought to manipulate information. This automatically leads to a closer examination, in the next two sections, of the government of Ceylon and the relations with Kandy.

The latent crisis concerning the setting of consistent policy for Ceylon came to a head in 1679-1680 after Rijckloff van Goens junior, who had been governor of Ceylon since 1672 in practice and since 1675 officially, left the governorship of the island. This meant that, for the first time in nearly twenty years, information could emanate from the island that had not first been approved by a Van Goens. Senior had arrived in Ceylon in 1658 in the wake of the fall of Colombo and, with a brief intermission in 1663-1664, had held the position of either governor or commander-in-chief for the *Westerkwartieren* until departing for Batavia in 1675. The succession by his son had continued the family’s hold on power and the official company hierarchy of the island. This had also meant, importantly, that the Van Goenses remained in control of information emanating from the island, despite critical reports from the government of Ceylon throughout the 1670s, as Kandy struck back and the budgetary woes of the government of Ceylon intensified. Yet while developments on the island had clearly worried the VOC directors in the Republic, they had not doubted the veracity of the official reports coming from Ceylon. And while the directors may have become more hesitant to believe the spin that Van Goens (father or son) put on events, they did not question his thoughts. However, a remarkable shift in the news from Ceylon became discernable when Van Goens junior was removed from office in 1679 and his successor, Laurens Pijl, the former Commander of Jaffna, took up the reins of power on Ceylon. This held true for all the important issues that had been debated: the policy towards Kandy, the character of Raja Singha, the need for territorial control, and the position of the company as a sovereign on the island.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴⁵ Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, 92-97.

Fighting over policy: Amsterdam, Batavia, Colombo

Although never complete and heavily shaken by the Kandyan move to open warfare in the 1670s, the control that Van Goens was able to exert on information emanating from Ceylon allowed him to present his preferred policies as reasonable and feasible. The system of information control described in the previous section thus had a twofold goal: to allow the government of Ceylon a free hand in making choices on personnel policy, and to promote the policies preferred by the leadership of the Ceylon government. So what were these policies and why did Van Goens need his system of information control to be able to promote them? This section will explore the policy prescriptions as developed in Colombo and Batavia and analyze how and why a significant conflict between the two was, in this setting, unavoidable. As decisions on policy were ultimately taken in the Republic by the XVII, it is here that the two issues of policy and information control really became intertwined. Because of the extent to which Van Goens could control information coming from Ceylon, he was very successful, at least initially, in presenting his plans to the XVII, and especially to an important faction within the Amsterdam chamber. So what were the basic points in this fight over policy?

By the late 1660s, Van Goens was well entrenched in the Ceylon government. As chapter five has argued, he was able to link himself familiarly to the important VOC elites in the neighboring commands, especially the Pitt and Hartsinck families on the Coromandel Coast. These ties gave him cover for his actions on Ceylon as the governors of these neighboring areas did not reflect critically on his actions on Ceylon. As also argued in chapter five, Van Goens envisioned a VOC conquest of the entire island, with the aim of turning it into a VOC settlement colony and an entrepot for trade with South Asia. This strategy differed from the initial plans to control only the best cinnamon lands in the coastal stretch from Galle to Negombo and brought the VOC into direct confrontation with Raja Singha, the King of Kandy. This necessitated higher than anticipated expenditure on garrisons and fortifications, and this expenditure, moreover, could not be fully covered by the income generated on Ceylon. This cycle of loss-making was the prime problem that Van Goens had to resolve. Rather, however, than coming to terms with the inherent problems in his preferred strategy, Van Goens chose to present alluring vistas that could be realized if only his plans were implemented *in full*. Under these plans, Kandy had to be subdued quickly and decisively so as to allow a reduction in the garrisons needed on the island. Effective Dutch colonization and the settlement of free burghers would, in turn, ease the problem of supplies as private merchants could then be entrusted with shipping food to the island. This would also reduce the need for soldiers and consolidate the VOC's grip on the island.⁵⁴⁶ To lure colonists, Van Goens argued, it would be enough to offer them land. It is interesting to see that he was simultaneously able to support the mutually exclusive goals of colonization and strict monopoly control of the island's trade.⁵⁴⁷ The reason for this dissimulation was Ceylon's unenviable position as a loss-making establishment in the VOC's Asian books. Table 9 shows the annual deficit of the government of Ceylon in the period 1666-1675.

⁵⁴⁶ An argument made quite early on by Van Goens and Van der Meijden in a letter to the High Government in April 1660: NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. no. 1123, fol. 164.

⁵⁴⁷ Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, 159-176.

Table 9: Income and expenditure of the Ceylon government in the late 1660s and first half of the 1670s (in guilders).

Year	Expenditure	Income	Deficit
1666-67	1,041,378-19-11	974,487-16-10	246,891-3-1
1667-68	1,088,496-12-6	852,464-11-14	236,032-0-8
1668-69	1,197,539-3-1	926,673-0-0	270,866-3-1
1669-70	923,469-19-14	678,639-4-15	244,830-14-15
1670-71	1,001,611-13-4	471,256-1-4	530,355-12-0
1671-72	1,088,060-5-8	600,218-16-3	487,841-9-5
1672-73	1,250,831-13-3	591,319-2-5	659,512-10-10
1673-74	1,366,215-5-9	635,633-15-15	730,579-9-10
1674-75	1,500,022-12-1	840,248-18-7	457,554-6-9

Source: S. Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, 73.

These numbers do not reveal the full significance of Ceylon for the VOC. Ceylon produced cinnamon that was fetching more than a million guilders a year on European markets. Besides sending cinnamon to Europe, Ceylon also sent bales to Batavia, as well as to the Indian factories, free of charge. From eighteenth-century data, we know that some 71 per cent of cinnamon production was sent to Europe, with most of the remainder being forwarded to Batavia.⁵⁴⁸ This was delivered to Batavia or the Netherlands for a pittance of 2 *stuivers* per pound, while prices in Europe varied between 3.06 and 4.9 guilders per pound.⁵⁴⁹

An earlier attempt by Van Goens to offset Ceylon's losses in the Asian books against the profits garnered from its cinnamon in both Asia and Europe was met by a stern rebuke. Clearly then, these numbers, which perhaps unfairly painted Ceylon as purely a burden on the VOC, had to be justified or explained away. Rather, however, than apologizing for the high costs of his proposals and attempting to placate views by proposing budget cuts, Van Goens opted for a more aggressive strategy.

The emperor strikes back – August 1670

The losses incurred by the Ceylon government were the result, on the one hand, of the rebuilding work that simply had to be done in the aftermath of the conquest and, on the other hand, of unpredicted externalities such as the outbreak of war with England in 1664, with England and France in 1672 and with Kandy in 1670, all of which necessitated higher expenditure on defense. More fundamentally, Van Goens argued that the poor results from Ceylon were attributable to the incomplete implementation of his policies. By conquering the entire island, Van Goens argued, the VOC could raise enough revenue through taxation and trade with the inhabitants to cover the costs of the commercial-military system that had been built up. This would require the company to expand inland and to reduce the Kingdom of Kandy. In August 1670, however, Raja Singha finally responded to the VOC's slow-moving expansion inland and attacked the company's outlying fortifications, first the fort at Arandora and then the Ruanwella and Sitawaka forts on the upper reaches of the Kelani river. This was an embarrassment for Van Goens as he had always claimed that Raja Singha was sickly and weak and would not respond to the territorial

⁵⁴⁸ A. van den Belt, *Het VOC-bedrijf op Ceylon: Een voorname vestiging van de Oost-Indische Compagnie in de 18de eeuw* (PhD dissertation, Leiden 2008) 54.

⁵⁴⁹ Arasaratnam, *Dutch power in Ceylon*, 189-191.

gains made by the VOC on his orders. Although the Kandyan offensive of 1670 did not really threaten the VOC's position on Ceylon (as Kandy could never hope to successfully besiege the great fortresses), it acted as a 'wake-up call' for the directors and other VOC officials alike. Batavia had opposed many of Van Goens' more ambitious projects since the second half of the 1660s, given that the proposed move of the capital from Batavia to Colombo constituted a direct threat to the High Government, as did Van Goens' direct communications with the directors. This direct link with the Netherlands was backed up by a largely supportive Ceylonese bureaucracy. In the 1670s, however, Van Goens' policies came under intense criticism from VOC personnel on Ceylon itself, with numerous officials starting to voice criticism of him in letters destined for the Netherlands. Even before the attack, the way in which Kandy was portrayed had become very important in Van Goens' plans as he had to 'sell' the idea of conquest to the directors. In the aftermath of the short-lived rebellion in the late 1660s that provided the impetus for redeploying VOC forces on the East Coast, Raja Singha was increasingly portrayed as a weak king. A king, moreover, who was despised by his subjects and without an heir. This portrayal of Raja Singha as weak was intended to suggest that conquest would be easy. His lack of an heir and his supposed tyranny were designed to provide the VOC with a moral case for taking over the kingdom. Events, however, were to unfold quite differently as, in 1670, Kandy successfully mounted an offensive against the most advanced inland posts of Van Goens' creeping expansion: the forts in the Kelani Ganga valley.⁵⁵⁰ This was a shock of the first order to Van Goens' project for Ceylon. Even Kandy's ability to mount an attack, let alone to succeed against the VOC outposts, was a shock, given that Van Goens had previously argued that Kandy was moribund and would not resist annexation. This portrayal was thus clearly proven to be false. Attention then quickly turned to how to proceed after Kandy's attack. Van Goens argued that all-out war with Kandy was now unavoidable and that Raja Singha's surprising resilience in the face of the VOC's creeping expansion did not refute the basic soundness of his proposals to annex the whole of the island. In a letter to the directors of November 1670, Van Goens and the council give seven arguments in favor of expanding the company's control over the island. The first of these clearly summarizes the thinking in the council of Ceylon at that time:

*That Ceylon should be kept in such a state and in its entirety and not only in part, for if the least bit of it were to be occupied by any other power, the entire island would not only be brought into great turmoil but it would also divert from the profits on which it [the Ceylon government] has to exist.*⁵⁵¹

The war with Kandy threw Van Goens' reliability into doubt, thus casting a shadow over his other policy prescriptions. In the short term, however, it allowed him to increase the VOC's control over the island's trade, with the ports previously accessible by Kandy, and which had been allowed to maintain their contacts with India, now being closed and a monopoly being proclaimed. This monopolization of commerce was also intended to promote colonization. Until 1675, VOC burghers on Ceylon were encouraged to trade, but although trade did indeed increase, the burghers did not become engaged in the agricultural production for which Van

⁵⁵⁰ Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, 53-61.

⁵⁵¹ NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. no. 1274, fol. 35-37, 'Dat Ceylon van soodanigen gelegentheijt moet warden gehouden en om 't selve geheel en geensints voor gedeelte te besitten dewijl het minste gedeelte daer van door een ander beseten zijnde 't geheele eylandt daer door niet alleen tot groote alteratie soude werden gebracht maer oock gediverteert vande proffijten daer op het bestaan moet.

Goens had held such high hopes. By 1675, therefore, even Van Goens argued that there should be no further concessions to the burghers as their profits from trade were detrimental to the company. This was, in effect, an admission of defeat for his plans for colonization and private trade.⁵⁵²

The VOC's monopolization of trade was disastrous for the island's welfare as many crucial staples and basic commodities, such as rice and textiles, were mainly imported from India. The VOC's attempts to control the island's chief exports – cinnamon and areca nuts – deprived villagers of the ability to buy the food and textiles they needed.⁵⁵³ The VOC lacked the ships needed to import these commodities in the quantities necessary to meet demand, while it also proved impossible to incentivize Indian merchants, chiefly from Bengal, to sail to Ceylon with rice if they could not buy cinnamon, areca nuts or shanks at competitive prices. In the short term, therefore, famine threatened and the VOC had to free up valuable ships to buy rice on the Karnataka Coast and to distribute it in the worst-hit areas at its own expense.⁵⁵⁴ The precipitous decline in commerce also affected the duties levied by the VOC and so hit the VOC in its treasury. These problems were compounded by Kandyan disruptions of cinnamon-peeling in the western lowlands. The VOC was thus caught in a double bind: its expenditure rose by more than fifty per cent between 1670 and 1675 because of the need to field more troops, while its annual income fell from nearly 930 thousand guilders in 1668-1669 to 470 thousand in 1670-1671, although recovered somewhat in later years.

⁵⁵² Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, 209-210.

⁵⁵³ S. Arasaratnam, 'Elements of social and economic change in Dutch maritime Ceylon (Sri Lanka) 1658-1796', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 22:1 (1985) 49.

⁵⁵⁴ The problem of convincing Indian merchants to import rice, while at the same time controlling exports of the commodities in which these merchants were interested is detailed very well for a slightly later period in: S. Arasaratnam, 'Dutch Commercial Policy in Ceylon and its effects on the Indo-Ceylon Trade (1690-1750)', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 4:2 (1967) 109-130, 111.

Figure 20: Political map of Ceylon 1670



Source: Goonewardena, *Dutch Power in Ceylon*. as a base map the British 1805 map by A. Arrowsmith was used, as this precisely showed the positions of forts and the existing borders. As reference, the post 1767 borders are also shown, illustrating the territorial control in the west in Van Goens's period.

A breakdown of reciprocity: Van Goens, Van Reede and the loss of Malabar

A first significant blow to Van Goens' projects in Ceylon and South India, as well as a leak in his system of information control, came in 1670 with the separation of the Malabar command from Ceylon. This was an important moment as it not only signaled a loss of control over Malabar, but, owing to Van Goens' inability to deal with this setback, also resulted in one of his most important clients becoming an inveterate enemy. This man was Adriaan van Reede tot Drakensteyn, a rare nobleman in VOC service. Van Reede had enlisted as a soldier with the company at young age and was present at both sieges of Cochin. His conduct during the siege had impressed Van Goens, who took him on as a client and who furthered his career in the coming years by offering him the same kind of opportunities to broaden his professional experience that he himself had enjoyed. Though Van Reede started his career as a soldier, Van Goens ensured that his client was also given opportunities to develop other skills during, for example, inspection tours in northern Ceylon in 1665 and as head of the VOC establishment in Quilon. When Isbrand Godske resigned as commander of Malabar in 1668, Van Goens nominated Van Reede to succeed him. The High Government did not, however, follow this nomination and instead appointed Lucas van der Dussen.⁵⁵⁵ To placate Van Reede, he was appointed '*first captain of the Ceylon government*'.⁵⁵⁶

The departure of Godske and the appointment of Van der Dussen requires some extra attention as this was the first in a series of three resignations of commanders of Malabar provoked by disagreements with the governor of Ceylon: Godske in 1668, Van der Dussen two years later, and Van Reede in 1676. Isbrand Godske had served with Van Goens and Hustaert in the first Siege of Cochin, but left the VOC's service in 1662. Van Goens wrote a very positive report and was sorry that Godske had left the company.⁵⁵⁷ However, the latter returned to serve VOC two years later and was appointed commander of Malabar in 1666 at the express orders of the XVII. The previously amicable relationship between Van Goens and Godske then rapidly began to deteriorate. Van Goens attempted to keep Godske's predecessor, Van Coulster, in office and when Godske voiced doubts about the feasibility of maintaining a pepper monopoly, arguing that the only way to secure domination of the market was by offering higher prices, the relationship collapsed. Godske left in 1668 to become director of Persia and later governor of the Cape.⁵⁵⁸ His successor was Lucas van der Dussen, whom Van Goens had refused to accept as fiscal in Colombo just a few years before (see chapter five). Van Goens had nominated Van Reede as commander, but his proposal was ignored. The appointment of Van der Dussen shows that the High Government was still able to intervene in the appointment procedures in Ceylon if it so wished. This created an unworkable relationship between Malabar and Ceylon as the new commander of Malabar was now a bitter rival of his direct superior. So when Van der Dussen, too, offered his resignation in 1669, the High Government took an important decision: at Van Goens' recommendation, Van Reede would succeed Van der Dussen, but Malabar was from then on to be detached from Ceylon:

After ample deliberation it has been approved to elevate Cochin, and the places which resort under it, as a separate command, not dependent on the Ceylon government... and to prevent the sad

⁵⁵⁵ Heniger, *Adriaan van Reede and Hortus Malabaricus*, 22-23.

⁵⁵⁶ W. Ph Collhaas, *Generale Missiven*, deel III, 596.

⁵⁵⁷ s'Jacob, *Nederlanders in Kerala*, LXVIII.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibidem.

*discord, unrest and disputes that for several years have occurred between the aforementioned commandment [Malabar] and Ceylon... and also because Lord van Goens, aforementioned, has let it be known through his letters that he is averse to remain in that government much longer, in which case it will be easier to find a qualified person than when Malabar would remain part of the same.*⁵⁵⁹

Van Reede's appointment was presented by the High Government as a compromise. Van Reede had inspected Malabar on behalf of Van Goens and reported negatively on Van der Dussen. The High Government noted that this should make Van Reede ineligible to succeed him. In this case, however, the rules were ignored and Van Reede was appointed. But the relationship between the patron in Colombo and his client in Cochin quickly soured, as had also been the case with Van Goens and Godske some years earlier.

Like Godske, Van Reede dared to voice the opinion that making Malabar profitable would be challenging and that profitability was conditional upon free exports of the Malabar areca nuts. Van Goens proved unable, however, to accept differing opinions, even from a client such as Van Reede. The relationship between the two men consequently quickly soured as Van Goens tried to manage a command that was formally no longer under his remit, while Van Reede was answerable to Batavia rather than Colombo for his performance in Malabar. From 1670 onwards, Van Reede quickly developed into one of the most outspoken opponents of Van Goens and his policies. The fact that Van Reede was a former client is illustrative of Van Goens' inability to delegate and to offer his clients the opportunity to make their own name in the company. This was a mutual failure of the reciprocity underlying every patron-client relationship. Van Goens could not reasonably expect his clients to remain loyal if they were not offered opportunities to make a name for themselves.

Although Malabar became detached from Ceylon, Van Goens' appointment in 1672 to his old position of superintendent, admiral and commander-in-chief upon the outbreak of war with France still allowed him to meddle in Malabar's affairs and to continue agitating for its return to Ceylon. His disagreement with Van Reede had significant consequences when the latter moved to Batavia as extraordinary council of the Indies in 1677 and where he was asked to write a review of Van Goens' policies on Ceylon and Malabar. This was a clear indication of the Batavian council's disapproval of Van Goens as, by then, it was clear that Van Goens and Van Reede were rivals. This decision by Batavia was all the more ominous since Van Goens had been appointed director-general in Batavia in 1676. By supporting Van Reede in this matter, the High Government, led by governor-general Maetsuijcker, signaled to Van Goens their opposition to his appointment. The criticism by Van Reede and the other criticism emanating from Ceylon in the second half of the 1670s will be dealt with later in this chapter, after I have analyzed the impact that 1672 and the war with France had on the career prospects of Van Goens, who arrived in Batavia shortly after Van Reede in 1677.

⁵⁵⁹ NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, VOC, inv. no. 684, p. 198-201. 'nae rijpe deliberatie goetgevonden het selve vast te stellen, ende Cochin metter plaetse daer onder sorterende tot een appart Commandement te erigeren van het Ceijlons gouvernement niet dependeren... daer met oock verhoopen af te snijden, ende voor te comen de verdrietoge Cavillatien, onlusten ende dispujten eenige jaren herwaerts tusschen het voros. Commandement ende Ceijln voorgevallen... mitsgaders oock om dat d'Heer van Goens meergenoempt, bij sijne brieven te kennen geeft, sijn ongenegentheijt, om veel langer in dat gouvernement te continueeren, en dat ons alsdan gemakelijcker sal valllen, daer toe een ander bequaem persoon uijt te vinden, dan of den omslagh van Mallabaer oock tot laste van het selve waer gelaten.'

Van Reede was perhaps the most important, but by no means the only critic of Van Goens on Ceylon and Malabar. From the mid-1670s onwards, as Van Goens' grasp on the information flows from Ceylon weakened, more critical reports began to emanate from the island. Before examining these reports, however, I will first consider the effects, both in Europe and Asia, of the outbreak of war with France in 1672.

A year of disasters and beyond, 1672-1679

In the summer of 1672 a new threat was added to the already precarious situation of the Ceylon government: war with France and England. With the VOC being acutely vulnerable to invasion as most of the best troops had been redeployed on the frontier with Kandy, especially in the uplands above Colombo and Negombo, the outbreak of hostilities with France and England in March/April of that year could have spelled disaster for the company on Ceylon. In reality, England was actually not much of a threat as the EIC was dysfunctional and no match for the armed might of the VOC. France, however, had sent a singularly powerful squadron to Asia in 1670 under the joint command of Jacob Blanquet de la Haye and the notorious former VOC employee François Caron. The purpose of this singularly powerful expedition – totaling nine navy ships (including five ships-of-the-line and one frigate), as well as three vessels from the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, with 2100 men and 238 cannon – was to erode VOC power in Asia.⁵⁶⁰ This formed part of Jean-Baptiste Colbert's strategy of destroying Dutch commercial strength worldwide. In principle the French squadron had a strong position as France had a secret alliance with England and the fleet could thus expect support from the EIC at its installations at Bombay and Madras. Portugal ultimately decided not to become involved in this conflict, despite the allure of having such powerful allies in a renewed war against the VOC.⁵⁶¹ Meanwhile the VOC's great fortification program on Ceylon and the Malabar Coast had not yet been completed, and VOC troops on Ceylon were stretched due to the war with Kandy.

Arriving in Surat in September 1671, the fleet sailed south, past the Malabar Coast, where Commander Adriaan van Reede hastily finished the defenses, and headed for Trincomalee on Ceylon. Here, the French hoped to effect a connection with Raja Singha by being granted permission to erect a factory and fort in the inner bay. This evoked a strong response from the VOC. Rijckloff van Goens had already been reinstated in his old capacity of *superintendent, admiraal en veldoverste*, with his son Rijckloff junior being in charge – albeit not yet officially – of the government of Ceylon. Interestingly, the appointment document reflects the state of Dutch intelligence at that time: it mentions that Van Goens would command the VOC's forces in the West (India, Ceylon, Persia) in the coming war with France and Portugal.⁵⁶² As we just saw, Portugal decided to remain neutral, while England joined in the fray. The latter, however, was a most ineffective ally for the French in Asia, and the coming hostilities were consequently predominantly a Dutch-French struggle, in which Van Goens reaffirmed his reputation as an able diplomat and field commander.

Though the French had not yet attacked the fort at Trincomalee, they had expelled Dutch sentries from the inner bay and were constructing defenses at its entrance. Not wishing to start a major conflict, Van Goens, now with twelve ships, inaugurated a blockade of the Bay of

⁵⁶⁰ D.F. Lach and E.J. van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago 1994) 99.

⁵⁶¹ J.J. Ames, *Renascent Empire?: The House of Braganza and the Quest for Stability in Portuguese Monsoon Asia, c.1640-1683* (Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam 2000) 209.

⁵⁶² NL-HaNA, 1.10.32, Collectie Van Goens Goens, inv. no. 17.

Trincomalee, locking the French fleet inside.⁵⁶³ This meant that the French fleet would have to rely on Kandyan support to sustain itself, support which proved not to be forthcoming. This is an interesting case and merits some closer study as it reflects both on the success of Van Goens' strategy of isolating Kandy and on Raja Singha's ineptitude in making powerful allies at this crucial juncture. Arasaratnam, who wrote on the episode from the Kandyan perspective, finds no flaws in Raja Singha's conduct and blames the French for the ultimate failure of perhaps Kandy's best chance of enlisting foreign help in getting rid of the VOC. He argues that the French proved to be very poor allies of Raja Singha. They refused to openly attack the VOC as they had not yet received news of the outbreak of hostilities in Europe. As a result, the Kandyans got nothing in return for the valuable Bay of Kottiyar. In noting this, Arasaratnam did not zoom out to see the bigger picture: Kandy, on its own, could never have forced the Dutch out of Ceylon as it lacked the necessary artillery and naval force. Any effort to placate the French and keep them on the Kandyan side was consequently justified, including much more generous provisioning. Arasaratnam describes the nascent alliance between Kandy and France as a meeting of equals. It was not: Kandy needed the French squadron much more than the French needed Kandy, and locking up the French ambassador after the fleet had left for the Coromandel Coast did not help Kandy's chances of developing long-term alliances.⁵⁶⁴ French-Kandyan cooperation was also likely to have been hampered by the VOC's close watch on the Ceylonese ports and waters, in itself a result of Van Goens' insistence on erecting fortifications and keeping a large force on Ceylon.

The French fleet, starving at Trincomalee, left the bay in July 1672 and headed for the Coromandel Coast, with Van Goens in pursuit. By capturing Meliapore on the Coromandel Coast, the French acquired a base of operations, but at the same time angered the Qutb Shahi of Golconda, who joined an anti-French alliance. Until September 1674, Meliapore was intermittently besieged by forces from Golconda on land, and by VOC fleets commanded by Van Goens at sea.⁵⁶⁵ The eventual capitulation of the French garrison underlined Van Goens' aura as a capable military commander and diplomat. Indeed it is likely that the 'Moorish gold fine woolen tunic with belt and turban', mentioned as having belonged to Van Goens senior in the inventory taken after Rijckloff van Goens junior's death, was given at this stage of his career.⁵⁶⁶ This underlines the importance of effective diplomacy for Van Goens personally. By convincing the Qutb Shahi to cooperate with the VOC, Van Goens brought the siege to a successful end, thus enhancing his reputation in the Netherlands as a successful commander. In addition, the gifts given by the Qutb Shahi were valuable in their own right and hint at the kinds of spoils that a successful commander and diplomat could amass during his career. Golconda was world-famous for its diamond mines, and the same inventory mentions that the gold and silverwork of the Van Goens' family was inlaid with some three hundred diamonds and that the family possessed some 1950 loose diamonds.⁵⁶⁷ Though Van Goens was never convicted for private trades, these figures make it clear that he was very successful at amassing a considerable private fortune. However, the

⁵⁶³ Van Dam and Stapel, *Beschryvinge*, 1.2, 624.

⁵⁶⁴ Arasaratnam, *Dutch power in Ceylon*, 61-66.

⁵⁶⁵ G.J. Ames, 'Colbert's Indian Ocean Strategy: A reappraisal', *French Historical Studies* 16:3 (1990) 536-559; page 549 onwards describes the ill-fated expedition from the French perspective.

⁵⁶⁶ A.M. Lubberhuizen-Van Gelder, 'Rijckloff van Goens de jonge en zijn bezittingen', *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 101:1 (1942) 289-310, 306.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibidem, 306.

war with France had other effects besides burnishing Van Goens' military reputation, and these included the significant ramifications for the composition of the VOC's board of directors.

Factional strife amidst invasion: the effect of '1672' on the VOC in the Republic

The Anglo-French declaration of war and the invasion of the Republic did not have an effect on the VOC merely in Asia. After war was declared in March-April 1672, the French quickly proceeded also to overrun the Dutch border defenses. The speed of the French advance was shocking to contemporaries, with areas over which the Dutch and Spanish had competed for years, even decades, being overrun within a matter of weeks. In mid-May, Wezel fell, along with the other Lower Rhine fortresses garrisoned by Dutch troops – including Rees, where Van Goens had been born. A month later, on June 12, the French crossed the Rhine at Lobith and, within a month, a whole range of fortresses quickly fell into French hands: Arnhem capitulated on June 17, followed by Doesburg on June 21, Deventer on June 22 and Zwolle, Utrecht and Kampen all on June 23, with Zutphen falling two days later. Only Nijmegen defended itself, but it, too, ultimately capitulated on July 9. By then, the French advance westwards had stalled, roughly at the border between the provinces of Holland and Utrecht. After Utrecht fell on June 23, the provincial board of engineers for Holland had decided to inundate the low-lying polder lands on the border of the two provinces. Louis XIV's vacillation after taking Utrecht, confident that the Republic was beaten, gave just enough time to create a continuous defensive barrier to shield Holland and the battered States' army. An elderly Johan Maurits was in charge of one of the main sectors of this 'water line', commanding the northernmost area with the crucial fortresses of Muiden and Weesp.⁵⁶⁸ With the exception of a venture to Charleroi, the States' army was confined to defensive positions behind the water line until late 1673.⁵⁶⁹

However, the invasion also had other important consequences. The rapid collapse of the Republic's defense caused widespread rumors of betrayal by the leading regents within the States of Holland. This criticism was directed against the party leaders who had opposed William III's ascension to the office of stadholder, and especially Johan de Witt, with the latter's murder by a mob of Orangists being a sad and well-known low point in the panic of 1672. Roorda argued, however, that important factional fights were taking place amidst all this obvious party-political posturing. Behind the seemingly ideologically-driven debates about the relationship between States and the Generality and the nature of sovereignty and the role of the stadholder in all this, underlying factional interests in the cities of Holland were now conspiring to use the upheaval for their own interests. This resulted, in August 1672, in the empowerment of William III to replace, if necessary, members of the city councils of Holland.⁵⁷⁰ This was an extremely powerful tool as most urban councils coopted new members and so a one-off elevation of followers of Orange could have long-lasting effects. Though the purging of the city councils took place in all cities in Holland, this section will concentrate mainly on Amsterdam since, besides Amsterdam being of course the most important chamber within the VOC, the effect on the support for Van Goens can be seen most clearly there. Although the purges of city councils in September 1672 were seemingly unrelated to the dynamics of the allocation of directorships within the VOC, these being separate institutions, the two were in reality closely connected. VOC directors were nominated in triplicate by the principal shareholders, being those who had invested (in the case

⁵⁶⁸ Bouman, *Johan van Maurits van Nassau*, 166-176.

⁵⁶⁹ Van Nimwegen, *'Deser landen chrijchsvolck'*, 367-375, describes the invasion and the defense of the water line.

⁵⁷⁰ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 804.

of Amsterdam) at least 6000 guilders in the company. Election, however, was by the city council (or the Provincial States in the case of Zeeland). This meant that individuals with support in the city council would also find the support they needed to be elected as VOC directors. Indeed, directorships became an integral part of the division of jobs within the urban elite and one of the prizes for which rivaling factions would compete. In the eighteenth century, directorships were awarded on the basis of ‘contracts of correspondence’, which regulated the allocation of jobs.⁵⁷¹ But the effect of a change in the composition of the city council would only become noticeable in the Amsterdam chamber’s directorships over the course of time as the eighteen directors of the chamber Amsterdam generally remained in office for the rest of their lives (contrary to the relevant stipulations in the company’s charter). Only, therefore, when positions became available naturally could new directors from dominant factions be appointed.⁵⁷² So when the city council of Amsterdam was purged in September 1672, this did not affect the VOC chamber in Amsterdam until later in the 1670s. The main beneficiaries of the change in Amsterdam in the fall of 1672 were Gillis Valckenier and the faction that supported him. Valckenier had been mayor of Amsterdam, but had been excluded from the plush offices in the elections of 1671, an event that Bontemantel described as an ‘eclipse of the sun’.⁵⁷³

The Valckenier faction perhaps best illustrates the nature of factional politics in the Republic as it did not form a coherent group either in terms of previous party-political affiliations (Valckenier himself having been a States party supporter until 1670) or in religious or social terms.⁵⁷⁴ What bound the sixteen new appointees to the city council in 1672 was their relations to Gillis Valckenier. The social backgrounds of these men differed widely, with some being drawn from the ranks of militia officers and others from merchant circles. But the most coherent group, the ‘core’ of the new council, was composed of direct family members of Valckenier and his two associates, Joannes Hudde and Adriaan van Beuningen. Hudde himself was a cousin of Valckenier. The triumvirate of Valckenier, Hudde and Van Beuningen ruled Amsterdam from 1672 onwards, and placed an increasingly heavy stamp on VOC policy-making throughout the 1670s. Coenraad van Beuningen ascended to the directorship in February 1681, shortly after the death of Valckenier.⁵⁷⁵ Table 10 shows the changes in the composition of the directors of the VOC chamber in Amsterdam between 1671 and late 1679.

Table 10 shows that the changes in the composition of the Amsterdam chamber during the period 1671-1679 were incremental rather than revolutionary. But their effect was important nonetheless as, with the exception of Damas Guldewagen, who was appointed by the Haarlem council, all the new directors were from the Valckenier faction. Of these six new appointments, Louis Trip was related to Gillis Valckenier as his daughter had married Valckenier’s son, while Gerrit Hooft and Cornelis de Vlamingh van Oudshoorn were related through the latter’s marriage to a niece of Hooft. The directors of the Amsterdam chamber were thus characterized by their manifold, overlapping and multi-faceted links.

⁵⁷¹ Roorda, *Partij en factie*, 25-26, 53. Adams, ‘The familial State’, 516.

⁵⁷² Gastra, *Bewind en beleid*, 33-41.

⁵⁷³ Roorda, *Partij en factie*, 180-181. H. Bontemantel and G.W. Kernkamp, *De regeeringe van Amsterdam, soo in 't civiel als crimineel en militaire, tweede deel* (Martinus Nijhof, The Hague 1897) 168.

⁵⁷⁴ Roorda, *Partij en factie*, 185.

⁵⁷⁵ Gastra, *Bewind en beleid*, 256-259.

Table 10: The twenty directors of the VOC chamber in Amsterdam, 1671 and 1679.

	Directors in Amsterdam 1671	Other positions	Directors in Amsterdam at end of 1679	Other positions
1	Joan Munter		Joan Munter	
2	Daniel Bernard		Daniel Bernard	
3	Joan Hulft	Council until 1672	Louis Trip	Appointed in council 1672
4	Nicolaas Rochusz. van Capelle	Council until 1672	Nicolaas Rochusz. van Capelle	
5	Jeronimus de Haze		Jeronimus de Haze	Succeeded by Coenraad van Beuningen in 1681
6	Gillis Valckenier		Gillis Valckenier	
7	Dirck Tulp		Dirck Tulp	
8	Pieter van Loon		Jan Rodenburgh	
9	Cornelis Backer		-	Seat only filled in 1681 by Jan de Vries
10	Pieter de Graef	Council until 1672	Pieter de Graef	
11	Cornelis Graafland		Cornelis de Vlamingh van Oudshoorn	Burgomaster in 1676-80
12	Joan Huydecoper		Joan Huydecoper	
13	Hendrik Brouwer	Director on behalf of Leiden	Hendrik Brouwer	Director on behalf of Leiden
14	Lambertus Reynst	Mayor, removed 1672	Gerard Bors van Waveren	Appointed in council 1672
15	Cornelis van Vlooswijk		Cornelis van Vlooswijk	
16	Nicolaas Pancras	Ally Valckenier	Gerrit Hooft	
17	Hendrik Scholten		Joannes Hudde	
18	Isaac Hohepied		Isaac Hohepied	Dismissed 1680
19	Cornelis Silvius	Director on behalf of Haarlem	Damas Guldewagen	Director on behalf of Haarlem
20	Hendrick Becker	Appointed in council 1672	Hendrick Becker	

Source: Gaastra, *Bevind en beleid*, 256-260.

Reading the lists of marriages and family connections in Elias' *De vroedschap van Amsterdam* can be confusing as it quickly becomes clear that everyone who was anybody was related to many other important families. We know, as mentioned before, that family ties, however remote, were important for a person's professional and personal connections. But having a relatively coherent group of family connected directors did not result in coherent policy-making. Indeed, there

were major disagreements within the directorship of Amsterdam, even within the Valckenier faction. These included a latent tension between the ideas of Gilles Valckenier himself and those of Joannes Hudde, Joan Huydecoper and Pieter van Dam, the XVII secretary. The role of Huydecoper is illustrative of how the factional politics of the city council spilled over into the VOC's management. Joan Huydecoper had belonged to the faction of Cornelis de Graeff. After his patron's death in 1664, Huydecoper joined the faction in the city council led by Gerard Hasselaer. But his new patron could not offer him sufficient incentives to persuade him to continue his support. After the faction led by Gillis Valckenier offered Huydecoper a directorship in the VOC, Huydecoper duly shifted his allegiances to Valckenier.⁵⁷⁶ As long as Valckenier dominated both the city council and the VOC chamber in Amsterdam, his 'creatures' like Hudde and Huydecoper were expected to follow his lead in making company policy. After Valckenier's death in 1680, however, these two men became more critical of the policies that Van Goens had advocated to Valckenier.

These voices were joined in 1681 by that of Coenraad van Beuningen, a long-time Valckenier ally in the council and a grandson of Albert Coenraetsz. Burgh, who had appointed Johan Maurits back in 1636.⁵⁷⁷ Van Beuningen's appointment was important as he took the seat of Jeronimus de Haes, who died in 1681. Like Valckenier, De Haes had been an important patron of Van Goens and his network in Asia. The connection between Van Goens and De Haes has already been addressed in chapter five, when the role of Van Goens as a patron on Ceylon was discussed. The same letter reveals more of the connections between the two men, with Van Goens thanking De Haes as follows: *'Your honor has so obliged me by sending the red wines that I wish with what I have earned this, as my health seems to be fed and cultivated greatly by the red wine and which is why I would wish that my delegates could yearly obtain and forward me one or two oxheads.'*⁵⁷⁸ Reciprocal gift-giving, of course, served to strengthen the bonds between patron and clients.

The loss, in quick succession, of both men meant that the Van Goens faction in Asia was suddenly without any strong support in the most important VOC chamber. Hudde and Van Beuningen, supported by secretary Van Dam, now embarked on a fundamental reinterpretation of what the company was and should be in Asia. The VOC, they argued, had become rather too much like a state in Asia, whereas it should have been a merchant. The high costs and unfulfilled promises of Van Goens' campaigns of conquest on Ceylon and Malabar played an important role in this shift. As Van Beuningen noted:

*It is in a certain degree true that the Dutch East India company is a company of state as well as of commerce. It would be wrong and hurtful, however, if those who have been entrusted with its management in Asia were to conclude from this fact that it was proper to make efforts to occupy, to conquer and to fortify for reasons of state alone, rather than for commercial advantages.*⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁶ Kooijmans, *Vriendschap*, 144-147.

⁵⁷⁷ Coenraad van Beuningen was a son of Albert Coenraetsz. Burgh's daughter Catharina Burgh. Elias, *De Vroedschap*, deel 1, 513.

⁵⁷⁸ NL-HaNA, 1.10.78, Sweers, inv. no. 2, fol. 178: *'UE heeft mijn met den gesonden rooden wijn soodanig geobligeert dat ick wel wenste waer meede ick sulcks soude verdienen, schijnende mijn gesontheitj doorde roode wijn gevoet en seer gecultiveert te werden en daerom wensten ick mijn gemagtigden condon obtineeren jaerlijcx een a twee oxshoofden herwaers te senden'*.

⁵⁷⁹ Dutch original, as quoted by Gaastra, *De geschiedenis van de VOC*, 57: *'t Is een gemeen ende in seeckeren sin waerachtig seggen dat de Nederlandsch Oost Indische Compagnie is niet alleen een Compagnie van commercie maer oock van staat. Edoch 't selve soude en seer verkeerd ende schadelijk impressie geven in de gedachten van degeende die het Bewid van deselve Compagnie is touwertrouwt, indien bij haer daeruyt besloten wiert, dat men om insigheten vn Staet, ende niet alleen om voordelen te doen door commercie moeyte ende kosten voor 't occupereen, conquesteren, fortificeren... moet aanwenden'*.

This sentiment, penned in 1685, was a clear rebuke of the kind of strategic thinking that Van Goens had practiced. And it came at exactly the same time as Van Goens' eldest son requested advancement in Asia (see later on in this chapter). This turned out to mark a monumental shift in the company's self-perception. Although the VOC did not give up its arms, it became much more reluctant to engage in expansive military adventures in South Asia. This policy of neutrality was not of much help in the rapidly changing eighteenth-century India. Van Beuningen even tried to calculate whether abandoning the fortifications and garrisons in Malabar and becoming a pure merchant would not be of more benefit to the company.

Criticism from Ceylon

Van Reede had been requested by the Batavian council to write a review of Van Goens' policies on Ceylon and Malabar when he arrived there in 1677. This became a lengthy piece, combining a history of the VOC's presence on the island and a description of the wars and difficulties between the VOC and Kandy with a great amount of tabulated information on the incomes, outlays, troop strengths and troop requirements that would be needed if the fortification programs advocated by Van Goens were to be carried out in full.⁵⁸⁰ This tabulated information proved especially effective as it presented a clear argument, backed up by (seemingly) iron-clad numbers. In addition, Van Reede argued that the manifold reconstructions of fortifications had been undertaken uneconomically. Of Colombo, Van Goens' pride and joy, Van Reede said:

*The capital Colombo, conquered from Portugal with so much effort, expenditure and blood, had been furnished with many beautiful buildings and churches, which were all laid to waste and destroyed. One can verily say that of that great city no stone was left untouched, which was not necessary, for everything could have remained as it was without diminishing the strength of that fortress, as circumference was expanded.*⁵⁸¹

Though Van Reede also criticized Van Goens' projections for trade and profits, the most damning arguments centered on the program for building fortifications as this was seemingly the most important objective. Van Reede took what he considered normal manning levels for fortifications in Europe, three men per Rhineland Rod (3.77m). Using this total, Van Reede criticized Van Goens' insistence that his new fortifications would be defensible even against a European adversary. Van Reede simply listed all the fortifications and multiplied the length of their walls by the number of men required to defend them. According to this first calculation, an army of no fewer than sixty *thousand* men would be required – clearly the stuff of fantasy. By making some concessions to his original calculations, Van Reede reduced this number to around thirty thousand men. This was still a damning figure, given that the VOC regular army never amounted to more than around ten thousand.⁵⁸² However, this seemingly objective calculation was actually a clever piece of rhetoric. Van Reede had made some basic assumptions in his

⁵⁸⁰ NL-HaNA, Hoge Regering Batavia, 1.04.17, inv. no. 544.

⁵⁸¹ NL-HaNA, Hoge Regering Batavia, 1.04.17, inv. no. 544. *'De hoofdstad Colombo, met zoo veel moeite, kosten, en bloet den Portugees ontnoomen, was voorzien met veel prachtige gebouwen, en kerken, diemen alle tesamen heeft onder de voet geworpen, en geslegt, sodat van die groote stad men seggen mag, dat den eenen steen op den andren niet gelaaten is, 't welke niet noodzakelijk is geweest, maar had alles kunnen blijven, en egter omtrent de sterkte der vestingh geen hinder doen, want den omtreck is vergroot.'*

⁵⁸² Gastra, *De geschiedenis van de VOC*.

calculations, and these went unexplained and unchecked. The total mileage of the fortifications was actually a poor proxy for calculating required troop strengths as many fortifications made the most of their location, often leaving only a single front open to attack, and thus reducing the manpower required for a lasting defense. But the numbers gathered by Van Reede left a lasting impression on a group of directors and Pieter van Dam, the company secretary. The latter used Van Reede's report in his *Beschryvinge*, as did François Valentijn in his *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*.⁵⁸³ But Van Reede was not the only person whose criticism of Van Goens reached the directors' ears in this period. Van Goens' departure from Ceylon and his succession by his son (made formal in 1676) triggered a storm of criticism.

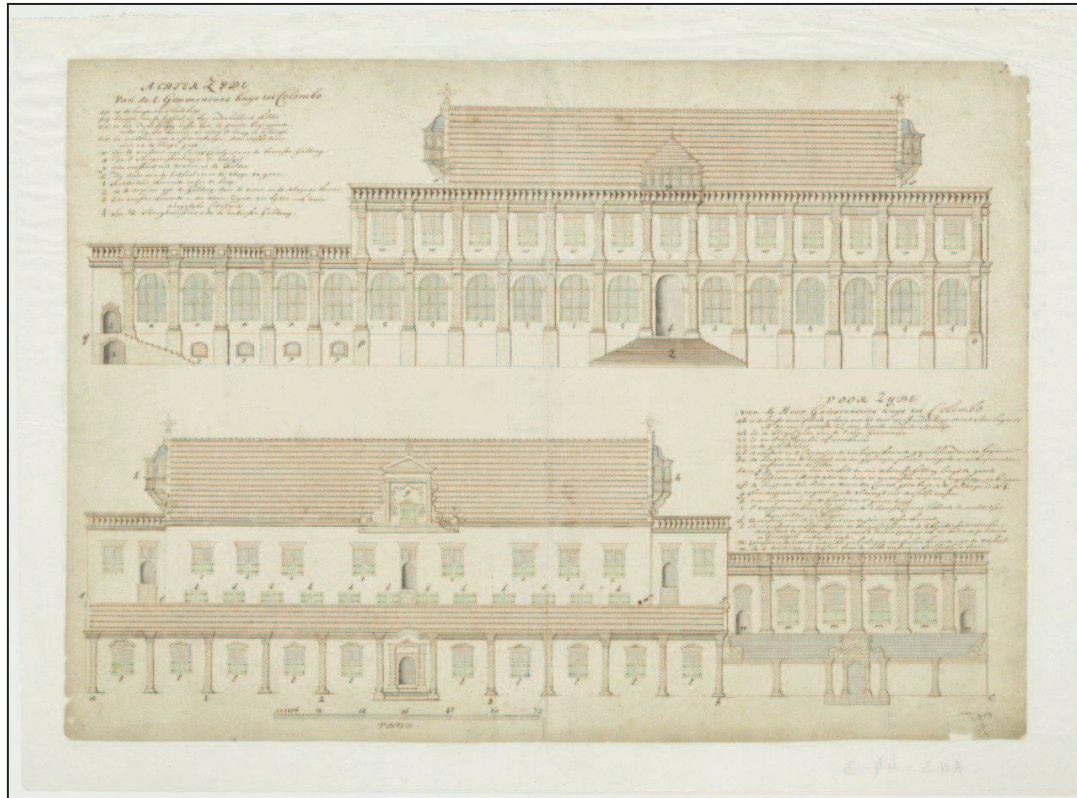
On November 3, Joost Segenaar, lieutenant in the Colombo garrison, penned his criticism of Van Goens' policies on Ceylon. His '*brief elucidation of the isle of Ceylon*' largely made the same points as made by Van Reede, but focused more on the adverse effects of Van Goens' proclaimed monopolies on the island. The war with Kandy had spread discontent with the company to the coasts of Madurai and Coromandel and had actually made the VOC more vulnerable. Excluding the 'Bengal Moors' – Muslim traders from Bengal – from the opportunity to trade on Ceylon had greatly harmed the trade in elephants and areca nuts as it was only possible to trade these items profitably by cooperating with these merchants. The pearl fisheries, too, were harmed by Van Goens' monopolies, given that the only people now fishing the banks were robbing them and fishing without a license.⁵⁸⁴ Another, anonymous, letter of 1678 also highlighted the high costs incurred by the fortification projects favored by Van Goens.⁵⁸⁵ The anonymous author argued that these costs simply could not be borne and proposed reductions. Although the author is anonymous, he is likely to have been a member of the Ceylon council or a high official working in Colombo as he cited figures from the papers of the Ceylon government. Besides criticizing the rule of the Van Goenses, these documents also show that, by then, there was also an audience for this criticism among the directors in Amsterdam. Another interesting point of criticism in the anonymous letter refers to houses that Van Goens senior had arranged to be built for himself in Colombo, Jaffna and Negapatnam. This is a faint echo of the kind of criticism that Johan Maurits also received in Brazil. Van Goens' plans included plans for a large palace for the governor of Ceylon in Colombo. A comparison of this structure with the palace of the governor-general in Batavia, completed in the 1640s during the tenure of Cornelis van der Lijn, clearly shows the aspirations that Van Goens had for Ceylon: the governor's palace would be fit to become the governor-general's palace if and when the seat of the VOC government were to be shifted (see Figures 18 and 19). Like *Vrijburg*, the governor's house in Colombo also contained a large garden, where plants from Ceylon and South India were collected. And like Johan Maurits, Van Goens was criticized for overly ambitious building programs. Unlike in Johan Maurits' case, however, the criticism of Van Goens never really caught on. A difference in rhetoric may have helped in Van Goens' case. Whereas Johan Maurits presented *Vrijburg* as his personal palace – *Friburgum Aula Comitum* – in the map inserted into Baldaeus' book, the large building in Colombo was referred to as '*the Governor's house in Colombo*'.⁵⁸⁶ By making the association less personal and more institutional, it became more palatable and less threatening.

⁵⁸³ Van Dam and Stapel, *Beschryvinge* 2.2, 309. F. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, deel 5, 247-285.

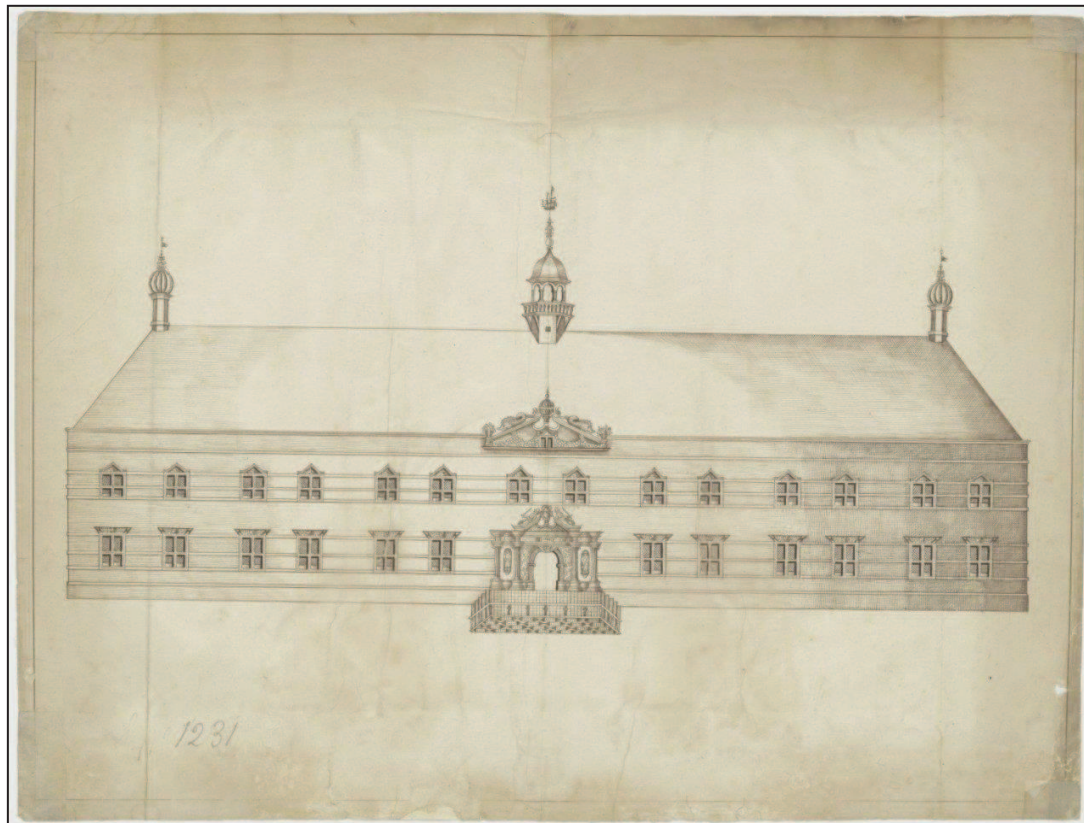
⁵⁸⁴ NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. no. 4895.

⁵⁸⁵ NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. no. 4897.

⁵⁸⁶ See, for example, the description of *Vrijburg* in the ground plan in C. Barlaeus, *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia*, 144, and NL-HaNA, 4.VEL, Collectie Leupe, 985.

Figure 21: Ambitions in stone: the palace of the governor and council of Ceylon.

Source: NL-HaNA, 4.VEL, Collectie Leupe, inv. no. 985.

Figure 22: The competition: the palace of the governor-general in Batavia, 1648.

Source: NL-HaNA, 4.VEL, Collectie Leupe, inv. no. 1231C.

Batavia: Director-general and governor-general, 1676-1681.

Again successful in command, Van Goens received a most unwelcome promotion: he was appointed director-general, the second-highest office in Batavia. This meant, however, that he would have to leave his beloved Ceylon. This posed a number of problems for Van Goens. In the first place, he had been keeping a close watch on the government of Ceylon ever since the early 1660s. Over time, he had presented his views on what the company should try to achieve there, and in so doing had knowingly manipulated information sent to his superiors, whether in Batavia or the Netherlands, in order to build support for his proposed policies. This is best shown by his about-face in the way he presented the Kingdom of Kandy and Raja Singha. Leaving Colombo entailed the risk that a new governor, who would perhaps not share Van Goens' ideas, would discover and report on this deception. In addition, Van Goens had built up a closely-knit network of support during his decade and a half on Ceylon, both by extending familial ties and by playing the role of patron. In Batavia, by contrast, he had few friends and family who could support him. The first point was somewhat overcome by having his son Rijckloff junior succeed him as governor of Ceylon, albeit not yet officially, back in 1672. But this unprecedented succession of father by son in the same position became a target of criticism in its own right. The second problem – lack of a network – proved much more difficult to overcome. Table 11 shows the members of the High Government of the Indies in January 1675 prior to Van Goens' accession to the council later that year.

Table 11: The members of the High Government of the Indies in January 1675

ID	Name	Position	Remarks
1	Joan Maetsuijcker	Governor-general	Governor-general since 1653
2	Nicolaes Verburgh	Director-general	Director-general since 1668. Removed 1675 to make way for Van Goens
3	Laurens Pit		Former governor of Coromandel 1650-1663. Dismissed 1677
4	Pieter Overtwater		Ordinary council since 1669. Dismissed 1677
5	Cornelis Speelman		Former governor of Coromandel in 1663-1665
6	Pieter van Hoorn		Dismissed 1677
7	Sybrand Abbema	Extraordinary council	Father-in-law of Maetsuijcker, extraordinary council since 1673. Dismissed 1677

Source: Gaastra, *Bevind en beleid*, 273-274.

Van Goens was appointed to the High Government of the Indies in replacement of Nicolaes Verburgh, who was ordered to return to the Netherlands. This makes it clear that the directors in the Republic intended for Van Goens to succeed the now elderly Maetsuijcker. Pieter van Dam argued that the reason given for his recall – Verburgh's alleged disagreements with governor-general Maetsuijcker – was in fact an excuse as Verburgh was recalled with full honors and remuneration. The directors, Van Dam argued, favored Van Goens and preferred to have him in a position to succeed the aging and increasingly feeble Maetsuijcker.⁵⁸⁷ It was indeed the

⁵⁸⁷ Van Dam and Stapel, *Beschryvinge deel 3*, 87.

Amsterdam chamber that had argued most vociferously for the dismissal of Verburgh, thus showing the strong support for Van Goens in the VOC's most powerful chamber.⁵⁸⁸

However, the way in which Verburgh was forced out did not help establish an easy working relationship between the new director-general and the council. By then Joan Maetsuijcker had been governor-general for twenty-two years and had established a powerful position in Batavia. Even a smuggling case brought against his wife in 1670 could not dislodge him.⁵⁸⁹ His father-in-law, Sybrand Abbema, was appointed as an extraordinary member in 1673, while Maetsuijcker had also established strong working relationships with the other members of the council. Van Goens had, of course, always corresponded with Batavia, but had often ignored its advice or gone over the council members' heads to the directors. Through the Hartsinck family link, Van Goens was related to Laurens Pit, whom he had also encountered as governor of Coromandel in the 1660s. Cornelis Speelman, too, had been governor of Coromandel. Between Van Goens' accession to the council in August 1675 and July 1677, another two members joined: Constantijn Ranst at the same time as Van Goens, while Anthonij Paviljoen joined in November 1676. A year later, the directors enforced radical changes to the High Government: the regular councils Pit, Overtwater and Van Hoorn and the extraordinary councils Paviljoen and Abbema were to be fired, as was Andries Boogaert, governor of Ambon. This amounted to a wholesale cleansing of the High Government. In their stead Balthasar Bort, Willem Volger and Anthony Hurdt were appointed as ordinary councils and Adriaan van Reede, Willem van Outhoorn, Joannes Camphuys, Jacob Joris Pits and Constantijn Nobel as extraordinary councils.⁵⁹⁰ Though not all of these individuals – Adriaan van Reede being a good example – were closely connected to Van Goens, neither were they closely connected to Maetsuijcker. A relatively junior council would also be more easily dominated by the experienced Van Goens. To understand the background to this unprecedented change of government, and Van Goens' role in it, we need to examine a letter sent by Van Goens to Gillis Valckenier in 1676.

A letter to Valckenier: gossip from the Council

Femme Gaastra has argued convincingly that a letter written by Van Goens in 1676 '*As accompaniment to the letter to the Gentlemen XVII with the homeward-bound fleet (sent November 22 under the flag of his Lordship Director Verburgh)*', and nowadays to be found in the Hudde collection in the National Archives, was in fact addressed to Gilles Valckenier, the powerful VOC director and mayor of Amsterdam.⁵⁹¹ In this letter Van Goens presented a very frank and critical view of the situation in Asia, both as regards the policies followed, as well as the composition of the High Government. It is particularly interesting that Van Goens not only specifically criticized the council members who were removed in 1677, but also praised Speelman, the only pre-1675 member of the High Government to be retained in 1677: '*Speelman being a man who has always held me in high esteem, and I have held him in no less esteem, for we have known each other a long time and maintained good friendship*'.⁵⁹² The letter furthermore confirms the tense relationship between governor-general Maetsuijcker and the newly-appointed director-general. Van Goens saw a direct

⁵⁸⁸ Gaastra, *Bewind en beleid*, 120-121.

⁵⁸⁹ NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, VOC, inv. no. 686. Briefly mentioned in: Gaastra, *Bewind en beleid*, 120.

⁵⁹⁰ Gaastra, *Bewind en beleid*, 121.

⁵⁹¹ Ibidem, 123. NL-HaNA, 1.10.48, Collectie Hudde, inv. no. 5. '*Tot geleijdens vanden brieffaende Heeren 17 en met de retourvloot (22 gber onder de vlagge van 'd H directeur Verburgh afgesonden)*'.

⁵⁹² NL-HaNA, 1.10.48, Hudde, inv. no. 5. '*Speelman een man die mij altijd seer hoogh, en ick hem niet minder g'estimeert hebbe, gelijk oock wij melcanderen langh gekent en goede vruntschap onderhoudende hadde.*'

conflict of interests between the city of Batavia and the company: Batavia prospered by giving Asian merchants more licenses to trade, but these licenses, in turn, hurt the company. Van Goens was especially critical of the traditions that allowed the city's elite – the members of the High Government first and foremost – to profit from the company's trade. He mentions the custom of allowing the wives of members of the High Government to select their choice from wines imported to Batavia on the company's ships. A strict pecking order applied in this respect: first the wife of the governor-general, then the director-general's wife and so on. The remainder was auctioned off, with the husbands' accounts being charged for the proceeds of the auction. But since the best wines had, of course, already been selected, this auction resulted in a considerable loss for the company. The wives of the members of the High Government then sold some of their selection on the black market. Van Goens was able to put an end to this since his wife was first in the hierarchy as Maetsuijcker's wife had died. However, this did not endear him to the wives of the members of the High Government, nor in all likelihood to the councils themselves: *'but the other [wives] are so wrathful that some of their husbands follow their women, from which it might seem to Your Honor that I am perhaps not as well suited to serve as director[-general] as the ladies might have wished.'*⁵⁹³

However, the letter to Valckenier also points to a weakness that would hamper Van Goens in his years as governor-general: his incoherent network. Van Goens had expected to be able to rely on Speelman and Constantijn Ranst for support, but now found out that these two men hated one another so much that the good relationship that Goens had had with Ranst, mentioned as a cousin of the addressee, was now lost: *'the aforementioned Ranst presently showing such antipathy that the friendship which I had infallibly established now seems completely cut off.'*⁵⁹⁴ Even in those cases where Van Goens had expected cooperative behavior from his clients, his plans were foiled by antipathy between them. Constantijn Ranst was in any case a problematic ally: his conduct in Bengal before being appointed to Batavia meant that he was isolated in the council and not much use to Van Goens as an ally.⁵⁹⁵ Overtwater, meanwhile, was angry with Van Goens because of the latter's support for the dismissal of Jacob Cops, a relation of Overtwater's wife, on charges of private trade.

Convincing a powerful patron to dismiss many of his rivals was thus a chance for Van Goens to improve his own position in anticipation of Maetsuijcker's death, which occurred in January 1678, shortly after the changes came into effect. But the rivalry between Speelman and Ranst and indeed the appointment of Van Reede already show that the changes in the High Government were perhaps not radical enough to firmly establish Van Goens as governor-general. Indeed, his tenure at the head of the VOC in Asia in 1678-1681 was wrought by strife and dissent with the High Government. This can best be illustrated by examining the careers of his sons, Rijckloff junior and Volckert van Goens.

⁵⁹³ NL-HaNA, 1.10.48, Hudde, inv. no. 5, *'soo sijn d'andere egter soo vergramt, dat sommige mans de wijven navoegen, ende waer nijt UEd can blijcken, dat ick misschien niet soo bequaem ben, tot het bedienen vande directie, als de Juffrouwen welgaarne hadden'.*

⁵⁹⁴ Ibidem, *'toonende op gem. Ranst tegenwoordich soo grooten affkeericheijt, dat daer door nu de vruntschap die ick onseijlijke vast gestelt had, geheel verschijnt affgesneden'.*

⁵⁹⁵ For the problems of Ranst in Bengal in the 1670s, see: F. Gaastra, 'Constantijn Ranst en de corruptie onder het personeel van de VOC te Bengalen, 1669-1673', in: S. Groenveld, M.E.H.N. Mout and I. Schöffer (eds.), *Bestuurders en Geleerden: Opstellen over onderwerpen uit de Nederlandse geschiedenis van de zestiende, zeventiende en achttiende eeuw, aangeboden aan Prof. Dr. J.J. Woltjer bij zijn afscheid als hoogleraar van de Rijksuniversiteit Leiden* (De Bataafse Leeuw: Amsterdam 1985) 126-136.

The sins of the father: the sons of Van Goens in the VOC

So how did the changes in Van Goens' position in the chain of communication in Asia impact on his ability to act as a patron to other company officials? This question can best be answered by looking at the careers of the two men most closely linked to Van Goens: his two sons, Rijckloff junior (1642-1687) and Volckert van Goens (1644-1693). A brief study of their careers in the 1670s and 1680s reveals the changes in their father's ability to dominate company policy-making and protect his clients. Although the careers of the two sons within the VOC were quite different, they also show remarkable parallels. Rijckloff, the older son, succeeded his father as governor of Ceylon in January 1672.⁵⁹⁶ As the objections from Ceylon show, this in itself became a cause for complaints. Volckert enjoyed a different career: having studied law in the Netherlands, he sailed for Batavia in May 1676 to take up a position on the Council of Justice in Batavia.

Rijckloff van Goens junior had worked with and under his father on Ceylon from the mid-1660s onwards, first as *opsiender* of the Galu Korale and the dessave of Matara. Upon his father's advancement to superintendent in January 1672, Rijckloff junior was promoted to the governorship of Ceylon and, in this capacity, largely followed his father's policies of trying to increase the company's territorial control on Ceylon and completing the program of fortification. But his position on Ceylon was undermined by the loss of information control described earlier in this chapter, while the adversarial stance he propagated also came under increased scrutiny from Batavia. As Arasaratnam has written a comprehensive overview of the struggles between Colombo and Batavia during these years, it is unnecessary to go into much detail here.⁵⁹⁷ The struggle was resolved in 1680, when Rijckloff junior was ordered to come to Batavia and offered the honorable position of *Commissaris en Vistateur-Generaal over de subalterne comptoiren in India* – commissioner and inspector-general of the subaltern commands in India.⁵⁹⁸ This position allowed the High Government to use Rijckloff junior's undeniable experience in the area without actually making him responsible for managing one of the company's regional administrations. It was thus an honorable 'way out' for a problematic governor.

When Rijckloff junior arrived in Batavia in January 1680, however, he communicated that he did not wish to accept this position. This was an insult to the authority of the High Government. Given the close cooperation between father and son in earlier years, and the strong role of Van Goens senior as a patrimonial family head, it seems unlikely that senior was caught unawares by this development. It is possible that father and son had agreed that it would be better for Rijckloff junior to travel to the Netherlands in an attempt to communicate directly with the directors, much as senior had done a quarter of a century before. But the High Government was not prepared to let matters pass so easily. A key role in the discussions on Rijckloff junior was taken by the man upon whom Van Goens had previously lavished so much praise: director-general Cornelis Speelman. In the meeting on January 19, Speelman raised the question of whether Van Goens senior should have a seat in the meetings to discuss his son: '*For he is a son of his Lordship, the Governor-General*'.⁵⁹⁹ A week later Van Goens senior refused to leave the meeting, presided over by Speelman, but he was outvoted by the council and forced to leave, thus clearly showing that controlling the Council of the Indies was now well beyond his ability. In a further

⁵⁹⁶ Generale Missiven, deel 3, p. 792.

⁵⁹⁷ S. Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, 77-100.

⁵⁹⁸ F.W. Stapel, *Cornelis Janszoon Speelman* (Nijhoff: The Hague 1936) 123.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibidem, 123. '*ten aansien by een soone van Zijn Edelheyt, den here Gouverneur-Generaal*'.

stroke of misfortune, Rijckloff senior's third wife died on July 21, still only twenty-one years old.⁶⁰⁰ Van Goens junior again refused a commission to inspect the Moluccas. In an attempt to placate the Council of the Indies, Van Goens senior announced that his son would volunteer for an inspection commission to Sumatra. But the council, led by Speelman, refused this offer, arguing that it would not do to advance a man who had twice defied the wishes of his superiors. Rijckloff van Goens junior responded by requesting in September 1680 to be allowed to return to the Netherlands. He left on November 1 of that year, crucially as commander of the fleet and thus able to explain his vision for the company to the directors upon arrival in the Netherlands.⁶⁰¹ This strategy worked as Rijckloff junior was appointed ordinary council of the Indies in 1682 and left for Batavia two years later. He was overtaken at the Cape by none other than Adriaan van Reede, by then the *Commissaris-Generaal* (specially empowered inspector-general) with far-reaching powers to root out perceived corruption.⁶⁰² The two men quarreled at the Cape and, in December 1684, after hearing of the death of governor-general Speelman, Rijckloff van Goens wrote to the XVII to remind them of the promises made in regard to his advancement in the event of the death of either the director-general or the governor-general. Since both Speelman and his director-general Balthasar Bordt had died, Van Goens expected at least to be appointed director-general. This did not come to pass, however, as the directors who had appointed Van Reede to his position did not look kindly on the legacy of Van Goens. Indeed, the letter of December 1684 had the opposite of its intended effect, with the directors angrily responding that as Van Goens was not content with a lower position, it would be best for him to return to the Netherlands. Rijckloff van Goens junior died on board the *Oosterlant* on his way to the Netherlands in May 1686, followed only a few weeks later by his wife, Catherina van Adrichem.⁶⁰³

Rijckloff van Goens senior, however, had another son who lived into adulthood and served the company – and who was also fired. At the same time as matters surrounding Rijckloff junior were slowly spinning out of control in 1680, the other son of Van Goens, Volckert, was also embroiled in a scandal that would terminate his career. Volckert was born in Batavia in 1644 and sent to the Netherlands for his upbringing in the 1650s. It was for his sons that Van Goens senior wrote the autobiography that featured so prominently in the previous chapter on Van Goens. Volckert van Goens studied law in the Netherlands and left the Republic in May 1676 as *opperkoopman* (chief merchant) on board the East Indiaman *Wapen van Alkmaar*, a 160-foot ship of the largest charter.⁶⁰⁴ He was to take up a position as an extraordinary member of the council at Batavia and a member of the council of justice, a logical appointment in view of his background in law. This background did not stop him, however, from transgressing the company's rules from the very start. Once clear of the anchorage and the coast, the *Wapen van Alkmaar* was intercepted by a small vessel, and a large number of barrels of wine and German beer were placed aboard. After notification of this transgression against the *artikelbrief* was received by the directors, Volckert van Goens was ordered to return to the Netherlands.⁶⁰⁵

It was not, however, until 1680 that Volckert sailed back, ironically on the fleet commanded by his brother. Throughout this period he served on the council of justice – no doubt shielded by his father, who was then governor-general. Once back in the Netherlands in

⁶⁰⁰ Lubberhuizen-Van Gelder, 'Rijckloff van Goens de Jonge en zijn bezittingen', 292.

⁶⁰¹ Ibidem, 124.

⁶⁰² Lubberhuizen-Van Gelder, 'Rijckloff van Goens de Jonge en zijn bezittingen', 293.

⁶⁰³ Ibidem, 299-302.

⁶⁰⁴ VOC site: <http://www.vocsite.nl/schepen/detail.html?id=10022>. (3-3-2017).

⁶⁰⁵ Van Dam and Stapel, *Beschryvinge 1.1*, GS 63 655-656.

February 1681, Volckert and *schipper* (captain) Willem Hagendoorn were questioned by the delegated directors of the *Haags Besoigne*, and especially by the company secretary, Pieter van Dam, an inveterate opponent of Van Goens senior.⁶⁰⁶ Interestingly, the Van Goens family archives also contain an extract of the minutes and resolutions on the case.⁶⁰⁷ Captain Hagendoorn was questioned first, and confessed that the barrels had been taken aboard. Upon questioning, Volckert van Goens said he had no recollection of the event. Hagendoorn was then questioned again, but would testify only after being given written confirmation that he would not be prosecuted for his own transgressions. Afterwards he attested that the barrels had belonged to Volckert van Goens and were destined for private sale in Batavia.⁶⁰⁸ It is unlikely that Volckert had organized the whole operation himself as he lacked the capital to purchase the goods. Hagendoorn mentioned that a certain Van der Meulen had delivered the *mom*, a type of German beer. However, Volckert had been swindled by his suppliers as a number of barrels had contained not *mom*, but far inferior ship's beer, and had therefore fetched only low prices in Batavia. Hagendoorn qualified his entire testimony by saying: '*...that he could give some more disclosure, but that he would not be able to prove it, as matters of this nature – conducted between four eyes – are unverifiable...*'⁶⁰⁹

Despite being confronted by Hagendoorn's confession, Volckert persisted in denying any wrongdoing. This proved a successful strategy: given that it was now a case of the captain's word against his, there were insufficient grounds for a formal conviction. However, the delegated directors decided that Volckert would receive his wages only for the period until he had been ordered to return to the Netherlands, and during the voyage home. The years he remained in Batavia, dragging out his return, would therefore remain unremunerated. Volckert van Goens ultimately left the company's service, settled in Schiedam in the Netherlands and was in due course elected to the magistracy.⁶¹⁰

The case of Volckert van Goens is in itself interesting as it provides insight into a type of illegal private trade that is rarely if ever mentioned in the literature: the smuggling of high-quality European goods – beverages in this case – to the Asian settlements. Good-quality spirits were in especially high demand, and on one occasion Rijckloff van Goens senior thanked his contacts in the Netherlands for sending him good wine.⁶¹¹ This, it must be remembered, was before the Cape became a major wine-producing area. But Volckert van Goens' case is interesting for another reason as well: he was fired from the company, despite his father's connections. It shows that, by then, the structure of support for the Van Goens family within the VOC hierarchy in the Netherlands had collapsed. Although Van Goens senior was able to shield his son from an early return, this cannot have endeared the directors to him. This in turn helps explain why Volckert van Goens' beer smuggling received so much attention in Van Dam's *Beschryvinge*.

Conclusion

The period 1670-1681 was a period of change and upheaval for Rijckloff van Goens. It is also a period that is difficult to grasp and analyze as many of the events and decisions taken during this time seem contradictory. I have argued that, to a large extent, the personnel and strategic policies of the directors were not aligned. Van Goens enjoyed strong support among the directors of the

⁶⁰⁶ Which explains why the case received so much attention in Van Dam's book.

⁶⁰⁷ NL-HaNA, Goens, van, 1.10.32, inv. no. 31.

⁶⁰⁸ NL-HaNA, Goens, van, 1.10.32, inv. no. 31.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibidem.

⁶¹⁰ Molhuysen, Blok and Kossman, *Nieuw Nederlands biografisch woordenboek*, deel 6, 591.

⁶¹¹ NL-HaNA, Sweers, 1.10.78, inv. no. 2.

Amsterdam chamber, with the figure of Gillis Valckenier forming a central node in that network. This support would see Van Goens promoted to director-general in 1677 upon the dismissal of his predecessor Verburgh. However, support of Van Goens did not translate into support for his policies, something that he himself did not seem to realize. Though the faction around Valckenier furthered Van Goens' career well into the 1670s, as witnessed by his promotion to director-general, this did not mean that, by that time, the directors still supported his ambitious vision for Ceylon. It was this misunderstanding that in large part helped to make Van Goens' tenure as governor-general so unproductive.

So why did the directors' views change over the course of the 1670s? In the 1660s, they were generally supportive, not only of the person of Van Goens, but also of his policies. Even the calamitous counter-strike by Raja Singha in 1670 did little to dent their confidence in Van Goens, at least at first. What made a difference was the collapse of Van Goens' stranglehold on information emanating from the island over the course of the 1670s. Whereas in the 1660s Van Goens was able to control information on the island's situation, by the mid-1670s critical sounds were emanating from Ceylon itself, including from individuals such as Adriaan van Reede and Joost Segenaar who could credibly claim to know what was actually going on. These critics strengthened the critical voice of the High Government in Batavia, who had always seen Van Goens' project on Ceylon as a threat to its power. What is more, these critics were now also able to reach an audience in the Netherlands, as is testified by the fact that the critical letters were taken from the regular correspondence and stored together in a separate file. The crucial node at the Dutch end of the network that was slowly turning against Van Goens seems to have been the secretary of the XVII, Pieter van Dam.

Van Goens faced a number of setbacks in seeking to implement his grand strategy in the early 1670s. Firstly, the separation of Malabar from Ceylon in 1670 meant that his vision of a united South Asian VOC command controlling the littoral from Cranganore to Negapatnam, including the Gulf of Mannar, the Palk Strait and the coastal waters of Ceylon itself, remained unfulfilled. Furthermore, this separation created an implacable foe in the figure of Adriaan van Reede tot Drakensteyn. The evolution of the relationship between Van Reede and Van Goens is particularly interesting as it shows Van Goens' failure as a patron. Unwilling to let important clients make their own judgments and rule subaltern commands such as Malabar as they saw fit, Van Goens succeeded only in turning clients into foes and losing control over Malabar. This setback was compounded in the same year by the Kandyan counterattack. The latter also meant a disruption of cinnamon-peeling and so worsened the outlook for the Ceylon government's finances.

The outbreak of war with France in 1672 was an excellent opportunity for Van Goens to once again prove himself to be a capable military commander. His success in repulsing the French attack on Ceylon and his successful Siege of Meliapore in cooperation with Golconda were likely to have been instrumental in his advancement to director-general. In an attempt to retain control over Ceylon, and thus control the flow of information that might hamper his proposed policies for the island, Van Goens – in an unprecedented move – had himself succeeded by his eldest son, Rijckloff junior. Although familial ties were crucial for advancement in the VOC, the direct succession of a father by his son in the same position had not previously been seen. Van Goens junior had admittedly been well-trained for the job, having been *dessave* of the lands around Colombo. However, while the advancement might have been defensible on 'meritocratic' grounds (Van Goens junior did indeed have the experience and qualifications

needed for the job), it still looked like the creation of a dynasty and was roundly criticized by opponents of the father's policies.

The advancement of Rijckloff van Goens senior to the position of governor-general was in many ways an anticlimax: appointed to the highest office of the VOC in Asia, he could not convince even the purged post-1677 council to support his policies. His long tenure on Ceylon meant that, by the late 1670s, he was less well connected with the elite in Batavia. This problem was exacerbated by tensions between the very individuals Van Goens had counted on for support. His network of support lay on Ceylon, while his old friends in Batavia were dead or retired. Even purging the council to meet Van Goens' requirements did not help as the people Van Goens had identified as possible allies, most notably Cornelis Speelman, were not amenable to his ends. The long association of Van Goens with a regional 'Ceylonese' strategy made it difficult for him to reach out to a cadre of officials who had mostly made their career in the Far East and the Indonesian archipelago and who realized that a focus on Ceylon and India would threaten their career prospects and those of their clients as they lacked the experience needed to rise to high office in Ceylon.

By the late 1670s, the situation in the Netherlands, too, had begun to change. As a consequence of the political changes in 1672, vacant directorships were filled by members of Valckenier's clique over the course of the next decade. But while these men formed a coherent familial group, their opinions on policies for the company were in fact widely divergent. Four men became increasingly important: the directors Joannes Hudde, Joan Huydecoper van Maarsseveen and Coenraad van Beuningen, and the secretary Pieter van Dam. These individuals turned decisively against the militarized, aggressive and expansionist policies advocated by Van Goens and towards a (relatively) more pacific, mercantile position for the VOC in Asia. This change was effected in the 1680s and 1690s, with direct and dire consequences for the remaining members of Van Goens' network in Asia. This episode will be dealt with in the conclusion to this book. For now, it is enough to conclude that the height of Van Goens' career marked a turning point for the VOC. Never again would the company play the same important role in the wars between Europeans in Asia. While the EIC discovered the importance – and potential profitability – of military power over the course of the eighteenth century, the VOC – still moved by the exhortations of Pieter van Dam – tried, wherever possible, to avoid the outlays for fleets and armies. As a result, and in the words of Winius and Vink, post-Van Goens the 'merchant-warrior' was pacified.⁶¹²

⁶¹² G.D. Winius and M.P.M. Vink, *The Merchant-warrior pacified: the VOC (The Dutch East India Co.) and its Changing Political Economy in India*.