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The second Anglo-Dutch war (1665-1667) : international raison d'état, mercantilism and maritime strife

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Holmes's raid on the island of Terschelling (Museum Behouden Huys, Terschelling)
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Preface

There are many people who have in some way contributed to the research and preparation of this book and to them I owe my gratitude. Professor Reinier Salverda mentored me during my two and a half years in London. His enthusiasm and broad interests have taught me a great deal about Dutch culture and history, as well as teaching and mentoring. Professor James Jones was kind enough to spend whole days discussing Anglo-Dutch history in general and the research for this project. The hospitality I received from him and his wife during my visits to Yorkshire were heart-warming. He kindly commented on earlier drafts, improving both content and language. Professor Jonathan Israel's classes have taught me a lot about Dutch history and approaches to history. I think he taught me more than he is aware of. Life in London was so much more enjoyable thanks to my friends David Onnekink, Thomas Meeh, Tim Kundu, Nigel Little, Kevin Jones and Richard Sherry. We spent long days in the British Library and the Public Records Office working on manuscripts, reading books and writing. Discussing history and research in the local pubs was always interesting and pleasant.

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Contents

Preface 5

Abbreviations 9

Note on dates and translations 10

Introduction 11

Chapter 1 The powerplay of European politics 1658-1662 15
The European system of international politics after 1648 15
Changing conditions in the tactical game 21
Manoeuvring in the early 1660s 26

Chapter 2 England 1660-1663: politics, factions and mercantilism 35
The City's response to the Restoration 35
A difficult start for the new regime 37
Strengthening the royal finances 43
The mercantilist debate in the 1660s 46
The construction of a mercantilist lobby 50
The Stuart Court and mercantilism 55
Economic policies during the early Restoration years 58
International affairs and faction rivalry, 1661-1663 64

Chapter 3 The Dutch Republic 1660-1663: surviving the game 67
The true interest of De Witt's Dutch Republic 67
De Witt and the True Freedom 70
The possibilities and impossibilities of Dutch international politics 73
Franco-Dutch relations between 1663 and 1664 76
Anglo-Dutch relations between 1661 and 1663 78
Confrontations in the Asian trade 1660-1663 84
Confrontations in the African trade 1660-1663 89

00 voorwerk dissertatie 12-05-2006 09:17 Pagina 8

Chapter 4 The road to war: the escalation of Anglo-Dutch tension in the European powerplay 93
Increasing mercantile strive in 1664 93
Careful manoeuvring and positioning 99
On the brink of war 105
Open hostilities 112
Persuading France 117
The declaration of war 120

Chapter 5 Lowestoft and Bergen: the first year of the war 123
Privateering and war 123
The Battle of Lowestoft 126
France and the outbreak of the war 132
The attack on the homebound VOC fleet at Bergen 135
The struggle for the Mediterranean and Asia 138
Prisoners of war 140
France, Münster and the Nordic kingdoms 143
Domestic affairs in England and the Dutch Republic 148

Chapter 6 Annus horibilis: plague, fire and naval battles 151
France and Denmark enter the war, Münster leaves 151
Preparations for the campaigning season 153
The Four Days Battle 156
The St James Day Fight and Holmes's Raid 161
Disaster strikes: the plague and the Great Fire of London 163
Manoeuvring in the international powerplay 167
The war in the Mediterranean, in the American colonies and against trade 171

Chapter 7 The Raid on the Medway: victory, defeat and international complications 175
English financial difficulties and Dutch commercial recovery 175
Peace negotiations and the question of the Spanish Netherlands 176
The Raid on the Medway 180
The war in the West Indies 183
The peace treaty of Breda 184
The Dutch Republic at the end of the Second Anglo-Dutch War 188
England at the end of the Second Anglo-Dutch War 189

Conclusions 195

Primary sources 203
Secundary sources 209
Samenvatting 221
Index 226
Curriculum vitae 231

Abbreviations

Additional Manuscripts (BL)	ADD MS
Admiralty Papers (PRO)	ADM
Bodleian Library (Oxford)	Bodl
British Library (London)	BL
Colonial Papers (PRO)	CO
Corporation of London Record Office	CLRO
Green, M.A.E. (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series 1658-1667* (London 1865-1886)	CSPD
High Court of the Admiralty (PRO)	HCA
Hinds, A.B. (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian Series 1664-1668* (London 1933-35)	CSPV
Lias Engeland (NA)	LE
Lias Frankrijk (NA)	LF
Lias Portugal (NA)	LP
Lias Spanje (NA)	LS
Lias VOC (NA)	LVOC
Lias WIC (NA)	LWIC
Loketkas Engeland (NA)	Lok.E
Loketkas Frankrijk (NA)	Lok.F
Loketkas Spanje (NA)	Lok.S
Loketkas VOC (NA)	Lok.VOC
Loketkas WIC (NA)	Lok.WIC
Nationaal Archief (Dutch national archives) (The Hague)	NA
Newspapers (PRO)	ZJ
Privy Council (PRO)	PC
Public Records Office (London)	PRO
Resolutions of the States General (NA)	RSG
Routledge, F.J. (ed.), *Calendar of Clarendon State Papers* (Oxford 1970)	CSP Clar
Sainsbury, E.B.(ed.), *A calendar of court minutes of the East India Company* (Vols. 6 and 7) (Oxford 1922-38)	Sainsbury, *Calendar*
Sainsbury, W.N. (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series 1661-1668* (London 1880)	CSPC

00 voorwerk dissertatie 12-05-2006 09:17 Pagina 10

Secrete Kas Engeland (NA)	SKE
Secrete Kas Frankrijk (NA)	SKF
Secrete Kas Spanje (NA)	SKS
Secrete Kas VOC (NA)	SKVOC
Secrete Loketkas Lopende (NA)	Slok.L
Secret Resolutions of the States General (NA)	RSG
State Papers (PRO)	SP
States General (NA)	SG
Zeeuws Archief (Zeeland Archive)(Middelburg)	ZA

Note on dates and translations

All dates in this book, following continental dating, are New Style. The year is taken as beginning on the first of January. In England the Julian calendar was still used. In this period Old Style dating was 10 days behind New style. The Julian New Year began on the twenty-fifth of March. Dates of English correspondence and other sources have been adapted to New Style.

Translations of Dutch sources are by the author.

Introduction

In March 1665 the second war between England and the Dutch Republic finally broke out after years of increasing tension between both countries. Historians are still debating the origins of this armed conflict. Three different explanations can be distinguished in this discussion. A number of recent publications have revived and complicated the debate. The historiographic variety has only become wider but the three main interpretations are all still prominent.

Mercantile competition between the British Kingdoms and the Dutch Republic over maritime trade was fierce. The British and the Dutch rivalled each other in almost every branch of maritime commerce. Both parties participated in almost every possible trade. In order to expand their share and to maximise profits they tried to outmanoeuvre their competitors in the rich trades of the Mediterranean and the exotic colonial trades of Africa, Asia and the Americas. Yet other, more traditional, markets in Europe were fought over as well. Thus merchants and entrepreneurs from both nations clashed in every part of the world. This rivalry in commerce was the main cause of the war according to the traditional explanation. This view is defended by historians like C.R. Boxer, C. Wilson and J.I. Israel.[1]

J.R. Jones and N.A.M. Rodger put more focus on the political process that preceded the actual declaration of war. They argue that factional rivalry at the Restoration Court of Charles II caused young and ambitious courtiers, politicians and naval officers to support an aggressive attitude towards the Dutch Republic. Notably James duke of York, Lord High Admiral and the younger brother of king Charles II, was prominent in this process. He and his friends managed to organise mercantile and parliamentary support for their plans. They provoked the conflict for their own personal benefit. They hoped to gain financially from captured prizes and be rewarded for their brave conduct. An impressive victory over the Dutch would guarantee an increase in political power and influence at Court. By supporting the pro-war factions they also sought to outsmart the older, established genera-

1 Wilson, *Profit and power*; Boxer, *Dutch seaborne empire*; Boxer, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*; Israel, *Dutch primacy*

00 voorwerk dissertatie 12-05-2006 09:17 Pagina 12

tion of politicians. They would then profit from Charles's royal favour by pushing out rivals. This process continued throughout the war.[2]

A third explanation is offered by S.C.A. Pincus. He argues that ideological and religious controversies between both nations caused the war. The recently restored English government, Court, majorities in the Houses of Lords and Commons, and the Anglican clergy all believed that the Dutch radical republicans posed a serious threat to monarchs and monarchy in Europe. British Anglican Royalists were of course seriously alarmed by their views and threats to the newly established monarchy of Charles II, which was obviously still unstable and had to be defended against outside challenges. A new group of courtiers, politicians and merchants rose to power in Parliament in 1663 and 1664 and managed to impose their view on politics. The Protestant religion was another source of conflict between the two nations. According to this view the Dutch obsession with worldly goods caused them to worship Mammon rather than God. This perception had, Pincus argues, already influenced the Rump and the Council of State between 1651 and 1653. A conflict about political ideology and religion was therefore unavoidable and led to the Second Anglo-Dutch War. The roots of the conflict should be sought much deeper than in the opportunistic and pragmatic squabbling that seemed so important on the surface. The rise of mercantilism in the second half of the seventeenth century caused the conflict to be conducted in economic terms.[3]

The war was not simply the direct result of economic competition between England and the Republic. Mercantilist disputes could only cause a major international conflict when they became the subject of a political process. Merchants in England could not decide to declare and wage war. They were forced to seek political support for their ideas and plans because they lacked direct political power. Few traders sat in the Commons and they were therefore forced to use their contacts at Court. They could not automatically get governments involved, but benefitted from the fact that both Charles II's government and the Dutch regent regime deliberately chose to encourage and defend their economic interests.

After the Restoration a highly competitive atmosphere at the English Court developed. Courtiers and politicians tried to increase their power and wealth and cooperated in factions in order to achieve this. On an ad hoc basis courtiers and aspiring politicians worked with the leading commercial and financial men in the City. Although their objectives were different, the project of a victorious war against the Dutch united them. Using Parliament, Court and the City of London the merchants and directors of companies gained more and more influence. Together these groups won much political power. The mercantilists hoped to win economic primacy and the politicians hoped for royal favour and personal benefits.

2 Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 145-146; Rodger, *Command of the ocean*, 66

3 Pincus, *Protestantism and patriotism*, 201-203; Pincus, 'Popery, trade and universal monarchy', 2-29; Pincus, *England's Glorious Revolution*, 18

00 voorwerk dissertatie 12-05-2006 09:17 Pagina 13

During these very years the Dutch Republic experienced the so-called period of True Freedom. The regent regime, centred around Johan de Witt, aimed to protect the young republic according to its own principles of raison d'état. Safeguarding territorial integrity and freedom of shipping were the main pillars of the citizens' wealth. The Dutch Republic could only exist because of the maritime trade that yielded high revenues. Defending commercial interests was therefore vital to the Dutch. Most English demands were totally unacceptable because of the economic damage they were expected to cause. It would invite the English to bring forth further complaints. The Dutch would certainly not give up their economic primacy to the English.

The first aim of this book is to study the political processes and considerations, that preceded the declaration of war in January 1665, and continued throughout and after the conflict. In this sense it elaborates on the views of Boxer, Wilson, Israel, Jones and Rodger and tries to combine and integrate international political, economic, maritime and ideological history. Mercantilist issues became an important part of the political agenda in both England and the Dutch Republic. Mercantilist thought became more prominent in general and was allowed to play its role. Looking at the dynamics and structures of decision and policy making in the political centres of London and The Hague is therefore essential to understand the outbreak of the war. Pincus' ideological explanation will be examined implicitly and will be discussed in the conclusion.[4]

The Second Anglo-Dutch War was not just a bilateral affair. France, Denmark and Münster were directly involved. Other states influenced the event and were affected in an indirect way as well. All countries played their part in the highly competitive international arena. They all tried to increase their territory or to improve their position and power.

The Peace Conferences of Westphalia of 1644 to 1648 had brought an end to religious wars in most of Europe. A new system had been set up in order to maintain peace. States would conclude peace treaties agreements with other governments. France and Sweden would supervise and guarantee this system of agreements and intervene when necessary.[5] Yet these arrangements did not succeed as politics secularised and became more opportunistic and pragmatic then before. This raison d'état meant that governments would use all methods to serve their political, military and also economic interests. In this highly competitive arena all states had to manoeuvre carefully to protect their safety or expand their power. This required constant anticipation on all developments in the international powerplay.

Obviously the deterioration of Anglo-Dutch relations influenced and affected other states. Each government had to decide whether or not to get involved, how

4 This issue is discussed in my article 'Dutch radical republicanism and English Restoration politics in the 1660s', forthcoming in *Dutch Crossing*

5 Groenveld, 'Ter inleiding', 3-4

00 voorwerk dissertatie 12-05-2006 09:17 Pagina 14

to profit from it or how to protect its own position. France was allied to the Dutch Republic and became involved more or less against its will. Spain was threatened by France and was looking to align itself with either England or the Republic. The Nordic kingdoms and the German princes hoped for financial gains. The second aim of this book is therefore to study the importance and role, which the outbreak and course of the Second Anglo-Dutch War played in the dynamics of this international powerplay. Obviously attention will also be paid to the importance of European powerpolitics in causing and shaping the conflict.

The course, outcome and consequences of the war will make up the third part of this book. Attention will not just be paid to the well-known naval confrontations that took place in the North Sea. The war in the Mediterranean and the West Indies will be taken into account as well. The private war effort, obviously an important aspect of economic warfare, will be analysed in the wider context of the complex events that are known as the Second Anglo-Dutch War.