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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)
and council of war on board De Ruyter’s ship Zeven Provinciën
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The Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667)

Raison d'état, mercantilism and maritime strife

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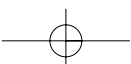
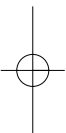
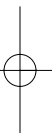
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Prof. dr. R. Salverda (University College London, Groot Brittannië)
Dr. M.A. Ebben

Preface

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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.), <i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series</i> 1658-1667 (London 1865-1886)	CSPD
High Court of the Admiralty (PRO)	HCA
Hinds, A.B. (ed.), <i>Calendar of State Papers, Venetian Series</i> 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.), <i>Calendar of Clarendon State Papers</i> (Oxford 1970)	CSP Clar
Sainsbury, E.B. (ed.), <i>A calendar of court minutes of the East India Company</i> (Vols. 6 and 7) (Oxford 1922-38)	Sainsbury, <i>Calendar</i>
Sainsbury, W.N. (ed.), <i>Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series 1661-1668</i> (London 1880)	CSPC

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*

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

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 than 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

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.