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

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Citation

Rommelse, G. A. (2006, June 28). *The second Anglo-Dutch war (1665-1667) : international raison d'état, mercantilism and maritime strife*. Verloren, Hilversum. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4403>

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

CHAPTER 3

The Dutch Republic 1660-1663: surviving the game

The true interest of De Witt's Dutch Republic

In 1662 Pieter de la Court, a well-known cloth merchant and political publicist from the city of Leiden in the province of Holland, published his *Interest van Holland ofte gronden van Hollands welvaert* (published in English as *The true interest and political maxims of the Republick of Holland and West-Friesland*). He had worked on it for years together with his brother Johan who had died in 1660. The works of Pieter de la Court, an acquaintance of Johan de Witt, were highly controversial and radical but at the same time also very representative and illustrative for the period of *Ware Vrijheid* (True Freedom). The book became one of the most important and influential works of Dutch history of political ideas. It was translated and internationally considered a major apology for the regent regime. It was one of the most distinct examples of theoretical and practical republicanism.

Between 1650 and 1672 no Prince of Orange held the position of stadholder over the majority of provinces or had the functions of captain-general of the army and admiral-general of the fleet. During the Burgundian and Habsburg regimes of the 15th and 16th centuries, the stadholders had been the sovereign's substitute in each of the seventeen provinces of the Netherlands during the periods of the liege's absence. The stadholder worked closely together with the council and states of each province. After the Dutch began their revolt against Philip II of Spain around 1566 the stadholders became the highest civil servants of the now sovereign provincial States.¹ This office and their position as functioning commander over the armed forces had provided the sons and grandson of William the Silent of Nassau with considerable, increasingly monarchical power. The great importance of the war effort increased the influence of the commanding general.

1 Sovereignty was held by the different provincial States. All *gewesten* could choose their own stadholder who from the 1590s onwards was usually a member of the Nassau family. Yet there were different branches in this family the Orange family being one of these, and no single member held all stadholderships over all provinces at the same time during the 17th century.

The death of William II in 1650 initiated the first so-called *Stadholderless Period* (Stadhouderloze Periode) in five provinces. For twenty-two years the office of stadholder was left vacant in most provinces because there was no immediate successor to fill the post and because William II had demonstrated the dangerous aspects of the stadholderate. His infant son William III had been born eight days after he died and his mother Amalia van Solms tried hard to uphold her grandson's rights and protect the family's domestic and foreign properties, in a direct clash with the mother, Mary Stuart. Despite Amalia's efforts a vacuum developed in the offices William II had held and a number of important Holland regents were eager to exploit this situation. The Dutch Republic was from 1653 onwards effectively governed by a faction of regents centered around the person of Johan de Witt, a regent's son from the city of Dordrecht. This brilliant lawyer and mathematician was appointed grand pensionary to the States of Holland. He was a very capable politician and could usually organise sufficient support to manage the States General and the assemblies of most of the other provinces.

Some political pamphleteers like De la Court, who held a doctorate in law from his hometown university, actively promoted the public association of this republican spell with the struggle against Spanish monarchical tyranny and eagerly emphasised the relative freedom citizens now enjoyed. His books were the ideological apex of this political era. He was not the most radical author but his ideas were influential, because he still belonged to the mainstream and his works were translated into French, German and English. Other writers like Baruch de Spinoza and Franciscus van den Enden were not part of the political establishment and had no ties to leading regents. They had greater difficulty publishing their books, although De la Court too came in to conflict with church authorities.²

De la Court had pessimistic and skeptic views about human nature. His ideas were based on the assumption that all men are driven by their passions and desires. Monarchs were no less human than ordinary people in this respect and should therefore not be trusted too easily. Some of their policies were not rational at all and sometimes even illogical. They cared only for their own power, wealth and dynastic continuity, easily sacrificing their subjects' or ally's interests when necessary for these purposes. Calculating and rationalising the European political powerplay was dangerous because of this. The irrational factor was not fully appreciated by a large number of rulers. This complicated matters and made international relations with princes less consistent than those with republics.

De la Court's conception of human nature is very Machiavellian; his following conclusions were very different from those of the Italian thinker though. He stated that the province of Holland would not be served by a monarchy. The 'common mob' (*het gemeene graww*) would always support the monarch for reasons of tradition and emotion rather than ratio. Their childish sentiments would then grant the prince the opportunity to change into a tyrant and enabling him to pursue his own personal interests.

2 Japikse, *Johan de Witt*, 199-201.

Pointing out the negative examples of Philip II and William II, De la Court argued that a monarchical system should be prevented at all times. In the second half of the 16th century Philip II of Spain had attempted to wipe out Protestantism in the Netherlands and he had violated the burghers' privileges and freedom. Many Holland cities had been besieged and conquered by his armies and many people had died. The Peace of Munster had only been concluded twelve years before. The Habsburg ruler had already become subject of a *black legend* in which he was depicted as the proverbial example of a bloody tyrant who abused his power at the expense of the civilians.

William II of Orange had tried to occupy Amsterdam in 1650 in order to strengthen his semi-monarchical grip on politics. He desired the same power his father Frederick Henry and his uncle Maurits had possessed. Yet because of the Peace of Westphalia the Dutch army had been decreased significantly during the late 1640s. The position of the Princes of Orange had been very strong as a result of their military and political leadership during the struggle against the foreign enemy. Yet William II had not yet had the chance to prove himself on the battlefield. Commanding a strong army in a resumed war against Spain would provide all the opportunities he required. He therefore hoped to plot a completely different course by attempting to surprise the faction of peace favouring regents of Amsterdam. Yet he could not follow up on his coup as he died soon after leaving a political vacuum that was filled by a regent regime.

De la Court argued that the prince had committed a crime by 'violating the past government.'³ The *coup d'état* had clearly alarmed republicans and caused their sentiments to become more radical and provided authors with arguments: 'He could have overwhelmed all Holland cities since most of them are not defended nowadays, and consequently someone might have remarked that by choosing this ruler, the Hollanders would have been governed like ignorant sheep by an untouchable sovereign.'⁴ De la Court therefore opposed monarchy for ideological as well as practical reasons.

De Witt's regime was highly pragmatic and very practical. Raison d'état had by now become the standard. Like most aristocrats De la Court advocated these characteristics as principles of state. Yet many faction members of De Witt's regent government only participated for their personal profit and were not truly convinced republicans. Despite this more cynical approach there were some distinct ideological features that characterised his faction. Like De la Court De Witt generally mistrusted monarchs and believed that only a republic would really serve its people's interests. Monarchs on the other hand only cared about their own person. The Leiden

³ Court, de la, *Interest van Holland*, 70-75, 92-97 and 149-151 '... de voorige verkrachte Regering'.

⁴ ibidem, 12 'Zulks hij meest alle Hollandse steden, nu genoegzaam open leggende, ter loops zoude konnen overweldigen, en dienvolgende zoude warelik iemand konnen zeggen: dat de Hollanders door het kiezen van zodanig uitstekend hoofd, als onnozele lammeren zouden werden geregeerd door een onwederstandelik soeverain.'

pamphleteer became the faction's prime spokesperson and the pensionary's friend. Republicanism as a political concept had existed in the Dutch Republic since the 1570s when the Spanish king had violated Dutch privileges and freedom. An increasing number of educated upper class people became convinced of the dangers of monarchy. William II's violence against Amsterdam had only strengthened these feelings. The period of *Ware Vrijheid* was an outburst and peak of republican political thought and practice.

De Witt and the True Freedom

Traditionally Johan de Witt is seen by many historians as one of the greatest patriots and politicians of Dutch history. His person was admired and remembered in the same terms as William the Silent, Oldebarnevelt, Maurits and Frederick Henry. His portrait had a prominent place in many classrooms in twentieth century schools. Nowadays his name still counts as proverbial for determined, brave and energetic persons.

A number of biographies have been written about him. Japikse praised his personal integrity, political and academic intellect, resourcefulness and determination. Yet De Witt did not fully grasp the sentiments that the Dutch people held. He dismissed these as the incoherent and irrelevant complaining of ignorant people. The higher interest of state should prevail over their demands. He was therefore considered to be an exponent of an intellectually superior elite that monopolised politics. His republican views were not really understood and appreciated by his contemporaries. This was perhaps his only real shortcoming.⁵ Yet Japikse's biography, which dates back from 1915, was very traditional in its approach: De Witt's political career was analysed very thoroughly but other aspects of his personal life were not, or to a much lesser extent. Japikse himself had strong Orangist sympathies.

Since then characteristics, scope and concept of historical biographies have changed completely. H.H. Rowen, in a much more recent study of De Witt, too admires him for the same qualities. The author also sheds more light on his personal and family life. Yet his focus is still very much on his political career and not De Witt's character.⁶ Despite this existing vacuum in historiography some general features of his personality are clear.⁷

De Witt was certainly not a man of the people. He did consider himself, I think, a man for the people though. He believed that the mob should not be given any influence on political matters as their education did not allow them to take rational decisions at this level. They would be easily manipulated and would be governed by illogical sentiments. De Witt was certainly not an enlightened advocate of a

⁵ Japikse, *De Witt*, 153, 357-358.

⁶ Rowen, *John de Witt*.

⁷ Unfortunately, Luc Panhuysen's new biography of Johan and Cornelis de Witt was published when the manuscript of this book had already been sent to the publisher.

Johan de Witt, Grand Pensionary of Holland (Netherlands Institute of Military History, The Hague).



democracy like Franciscus van den Enden, who broke with many contemporary conventions, dogmas and traditions, but held more aristocratic views. According to modern standards his self-confidence could perhaps even be described as haughty or arrogant. Yet De Witt was convinced that his republican regime and republicanism in general ensured the people's freedom, welfare and happiness. Like De la Court he believed that monarchs and their predatory courtiers and ministers would exploit their subjects for their own causes. A republic guaranteed the common interest per definition. The people's well-being and prosperity would therefore be best safeguarded by a regent government of highly educated and wealthy men. The personal wealth of these men would guarantee their honesty in politics. They would not have to advance their own interests and would have sufficient time to devote to governing the city, province or country. Thus his conception of aristocratic republicanism was not only influenced by pragmatism but also by the personality of a superior mathematician and regent.

De Witt was much too careful and clever to connect his name and political fate to De la Court's books and pamphlets. The work provoked some serious criticism from various clergymen and caused an uproar in certain Orangist circles. Speaking out for radical republicanism was not at all opportune and would almost certainly

damage his position. Privately he agreed with some of De la Court's ideas, yet in public he would not burn his fingers. Opposition would be provoked and provided with some considerable arguments that could be used against the regime and De Witt personally. He therefore distanced himself somewhat from its contents. Privately he supported and encouraged the Leiden merchant though. Yet in his approach to politics he believed his own social and political views. He was not really influenced by others as well but merely took notice of their ideas. Theoretical concepts were therefore never a guideline. He valued pragmatism too highly to adopt a rather rigid strategy.

The regent regime was based on family ties and personal connections. Many cousins and other relatives held positions in other Holland cities, councils or other institutions. This could connect many local factions on ad hoc basis creating one large one and controlling politics. The pensionary had contacts with factions and regents in all but two of the eighteen Holland cities represented in the States of Holland. Naturally he could not control these cities or even depend on their votes. He had to work continuously to gain support from the prevailing local factions.

Yet De Witt's ability to manoeuvre clients into political offices was the most important tool in the construction of his group. He had to move carefully not to provoke too much opposition against his recommendations. Manipulating the mechanisms of Dutch politics and carefully gaining support from certain key figures he could arrange for his clients to be promoted or appointed. This skill had ensured him of a large provincial faction that could control the States of Holland. His regime therefore depended on a system of patronage and carefully handling all local factions and interests. Securing sufficient support in other provinces was far more difficult and complicated De Witt's position and affairs even further. Local and provincial factions competed for power and similar tactics had to be followed on a higher level.⁸

His extensive family was the inner core of this network in the province of Holland. Assisting and advising others in gaining jobs in government, diplomacy and the army created an obligation that could later be used in policy-making. These clients could then be of use or the favour might be exploited directly. Many officers in the armed forces, diplomats abroad, local officers such as pensionaries and magistrates in Holland were involved in De Witt's system of patronage, creating a large network throughout all institutions and organisations of the province. Handling this extensive group of supporters was complicated. Sometimes De Witt did not want to estrange candidates that competed with his clients for positions. He might require the support of both in the future. A compromise then had to be sought between both parties ensuring stability of the political process. He was sometimes forced to disappoint a petitioner.⁹

8 Groenveld, *Evidente factiën*, 43-57.

9 Rowen, *John de Witt*, 154-169.

Rival regent factions continuously opposed De Witt's regime and policy making. They worked to gain appointments for members of their clientele. This would increase and strengthen the foundations on which the position of these politicians was built. Some local factions in the cities of Haarlem, Leiden, Edam and Enkhuizen tried to advance prince William III's interests. The weakened Orange family was not completely powerless. Certain groups chose William III's side and schemed to have him appointed as captain-general and stadholder. De Witt controlled a relatively stable provincial faction during the early 1660s. Yet during the later years of the decennium he met more opposition and could no longer automatically count on the mighty city of Amsterdam.¹⁰

The possibilities and impossibilities of Dutch international politics

Effective policy-making in the Dutch Republic had been difficult ever since the founding of the state in the 16th century. Many different domestic and foreign forces tried to influence the process of decision-making in their favour. Factions and groups hoped to serve their own interests by exerting political pressure. They were able to do this because of the fragmented and decentralised structure of the Republic. One single opposing province or even a city could sometimes delay national politics significantly. The States General was an intergovernmental institution that consisted of representatives of all different sovereign provinces that merely co-operated. It was sometimes difficult to convince all delegates to support a certain measure. In other European countries small numbers of rulers with assistance from nobles determined the affairs of state. This allowed the process of decision-making to be much less time-consuming. Yet the number of delegates in the States General was too large and the composition of the institution was too complex to be effective. A smaller group therefore discussed and prepared foreign policies. The process of decision-making could be efficient and quick when the situation called for it. De Witt often benefited from the space the system provided. The Dutch Republic could operate as a proper great power when this was necessary. Yet the institutional weaknesses never completely vanished and continued to complicate politics throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.

The province of Holland was by far the strongest, richest and most influential of all Netherlands. It contributed a standard 58 percent of the national tax revenue. This meant that Holland could almost always determine the effective outcome of debates in the States General. The dependence of the Dutch Republic on revenues and loans from Holland enabled Holland to overrule other provinces in certain situations. Of course the States of Holland would first seek to co-operate with other provinces and would succeed in this most of the time. Holland's position enabled De Witt, the pivotal civil servant of the States of Holland, to hold a central role in Dutch politics.

¹⁰ Groenveld, *Evidente factiën*, 43-57.

De Witt was forced to operate within political parameters. Local, provincial and national interests always had to be balanced out for this purpose. He had to compromise or simply outsmart his opponents. A single, clear and uniform policy was therefore almost impossible. Yet this sometimes prevented hasty decisions being taken.

Changing international situations and shifts in the relative power of states made it difficult for the Dutch Republic to maintain consistent political strategies towards either France or England. Of course all European states had similar difficulties in following a coherent foreign policy, but De Witt did not have the authority of a sovereign. He faced the problems involved in trying to maintain a status quo which benefited the Dutch Republic but which his two neighbouring major powers had ambitions to change for their own advantage.

Simplistically reflecting the mentality of many of De Witt's regent opponents in Holland De la Court argued that the province should isolate itself from the others, which he saw as an inconvenient burden. The richest of all *gewesten* should rid itself from this by digging an enormous moat that would separate it from the rest of the Dutch Republic. Holland's international interests would be served more effectively as well. His suggested plan was of course not very realistic. De Witt and his fellow regents would have to continue seeking compromises and sailing a less steady and more pragmatic course.

Johan de Witt and his political allies always tried to uphold a number of rules that were essential towards protecting the Dutch Republic. The territorial integrity of the Dutch Republic had to be secured at all times. The Spanish threat, violence and bloodshed during the Eighty Years War had only been too recent and were still remembered vividly. France had by now emerged as the new main territorial and military power on the continent. The Dutch intended to keep Louis XIV as a distant friend rather than as a good neighbour.¹¹ The sheer size of the French armies and the king's apparent ambition did not yet pose a danger but caused anxiety nevertheless. The regents thought it wise to keep a close eye on any international activity that might endanger the Dutch Republic. Ideally a policy of 'passive neutrality' should be observed. The Dutch would not participate in the dangerous game of European politics unless the bases of their advantageous status quo were threatened. In reality however, this would not be possible: the Republic would have to protect its interests by designing an 'active neutrality' that meant that the Dutch must always be vigilant in foreign affairs and try to secure themselves and international peace by concluding international agreements.¹² Commercial interests were equally important in De Witt's vision. Trade and shipping had provided the Republic with the funds to fight off Spain. Without the considerable profits the young state would quickly be forced on to the defensive and into a lower international ranking. Foreigners to serve in merchant ships and the navy could be hired with readily ac-

¹¹ Franken, 'Algemene tendenties'; Lossky, *Louis XIV*, 130.

¹² Groenveld, *Evidente factiën*.

cessible funds available. In the Dutch case trade was therefore very much associated with true *raison d'état*.¹³ Both political maxims were intertwined as well since the commercial successes enabled the States General to finance territorial integrity. The Dutch military and naval power was founded upon the same commercial successes. Yet despite its great wealth the state could never afford both a large standing army and fleet simultaneously, and it faced first English and then French policies to take over part of its trade.¹⁴

Yet despite this political vision, De Witt was also a Hollander. The interests of this province carried most weight and prevailed in many cases. The eastern provinces were much concerned with their safety from Christoph Bernhard von Galen, the Bishop of Münster. The Holland pensionary and his fellow regents cared more for the maritime and commercial interests of the seaward provinces. The defense of landward *gewesten* was important because these provinces created a buffer. Consistently, much more money was spent on the fleet than on the army during De Witt's years in office.

Good and stable relations with France and England were essential to the survival of the Dutch Republic. De Witt and many of his fellow regents understood that the Republic could not expect to gain a decisive victory in an armed conflict with either of these two major powers. Dutch political survival relied on skilled diplomacy and the ability to raise large amounts of money. The availability of these funds depended on maritime trade. War with France or England would only disrupt commerce and the flow of money. In that case the Dutch Republic could therefore survive and not win such a struggle.

When diplomatic means did not bring the desired outcome, military and especially naval strength was used. The 'active neutrality' included employing of armed forces to serve political and economic interests.¹⁵ Dutch interventions in the Baltic between 1658 and 1660 show this eagerness. The war effort against Portugal demonstrates the general willingness to invest in commercial expansion as well. Yet the regent regime was very rational in employing its army and large fleet. At some occasions weaker opponents like Portugal could be robbed of colonial possessions. Minor European states could be forced to submit to Dutch political demands. Fighting either France or England would not be opportune though.

De Witt hoped to conclude defensive triple alliances with both Paris and London. These agreements would, in his opinion, guarantee peace in Western Europe. Combined the three major powers would enforce stability. Obviously this would then serve Dutch political and economic interests.¹⁶ This explained the diplomatic missions to France and England.

¹³ Boogman, 'Raison d'état'.

¹⁴ This problem continued to plague Dutch governments throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. William III tried to solve this by combining the English and Dutch powers against Louis XIV.

¹⁵ Franken, 'Algemene tendenties', 277-279.

¹⁶ Boogman, 'Raison d'état', 393-407; NA SG 4566 SRSG, 18-4-1659; NA SG 6779 LF, Dutch delegates in Paris to the States General 20-4-1662.

Franco-Dutch relations between 1663 and 1664

Although the 1662 treaty with France had apparently restored friendly relations, it did not cover the major problems which increasingly evident French designs on the Spanish Netherlands would create when king Philip IV of Spain died. If Louis successfully asserted claims in the name of his Spanish wife to strategically vital cities and areas, Dutch security would be weakened and an international crisis would erupt. It could also boost commercial competition from Flemish coastal cities. Keeping the Schelde River closed was still of major importance. De Witt foresaw that the problem of French ambition could one day force the Dutch to choose between their valuable treaty and the comfortable southern buffer. The ratification of the agreement had not even been signed and exchanged yet. In April 1663 the Dutch pensionary proposed to the French king to turn the Spanish Netherlands into a republic after Philip's death. The Dutch and the French would then both occupy a number of key cities and would protect the new state. This would safeguard the Dutch Republic on its southern borders, but unlike De Witt with his defensive pre-occupations, Louis was maturing plans for aggressive moves of his claims were rejected by Madrid.

De Witt then suggested that the southern provinces might be turned into a league of cantons like Switzerland. Again France and the Dutch Republic would protect the freedom and would therefore keep control. This plan was superficially more attractive to the French. Negotiations were abortive, cooling Franco-Dutch relations although the alliance treaty was ratified in May 1663.¹⁷

Louis refused to be tied to an agreement that would prevent him from plotting his own course in such a vital area of international affairs. It would serve Dutch and Spanish interests and it would only limit his options. De Witt then urged Louis to promise not to undertake a war in the Netherlands until after the Spanish Succession. Obviously the French king did not give in to these Dutch demands. De Witt however, was still determined to solve the question. He suggested to the French ambassador, count Godefroy d'Estrades, that the Dutch Republic would be forced to conclude an alliance with Spain to protect the Spanish Netherlands unless France accepted the Dutch had an interest in their future. Louis was unimpressed with this move and believed the threat to be illogical and unlikely.¹⁸ Louis understood that Anglo-Dutch relations were deteriorating rapidly and this made the Dutch value their alliance with Paris more highly. The issue of Spanish Succession would have to wait.

Meanwhile maritime trade had become another difficult point in Franco-Dutch relations. More and more, French politicians, courtiers and traders had become aware of the importance of economics. State power and individual gain could both be

¹⁷ Brown, *Letters*, 99-103 D'Estrades to Louis XIV 12-4-1663, 117-119 Louis XIV to D'Estrades 11-5-1663, 127-128 D'Estrades to Louis XIV 24-5-1663, 139-141 Louis XIV to D'Estrades 29-6-1663; Lossky, *Louis XIV*, 130; PRO SP 84/167 f111 Willem Boreel to the States General 11-5-1663.

¹⁸ Brown, *Letters*, 178-181 D'Estrades to Louis XIV 11-10-1663, 203-209 D'Estrades to Louis XIV 20-12-1663.

served with the expanding and the stimulating of commerce. In January 1663 Willem Boreel, the Dutch ambassador in Paris, commented that “in all provinces of this realm and in all coastal towns people explore the possibilities to expand commerce and shipping. They try to bring it all in French hands and to exclude others.”¹⁹ Obviously the Dutch would be harmed severely since they controlled a large share in the international transportation of French products. They supplied France’s market with foreign commodities as well. Louis and his ministers, like most of their contemporaries, understood that the Republic’s political, military and naval power depended on the ability to gain financially from merchants’ and skippers’ efforts. France’s government too could be strengthened this way if France’s economy could be boosted when its own shipping industry would be encouraged sufficiently. Profits on the export of wine, brandy and salt should be earned by French rather than foreigners. Thus mercantilist thinking became an increasingly important factor in French politics. And as in England, the regime and the people believed that wealth, progress and power would best be secured by competing with Dutch interests. Government was convinced it could command these changes by introducing protectionist legislation stimulating its industries and expanding colonial trade.

In 1662 and 1663 the French government decided to raise tariffs on exports and imports. A set amount of money would have to be paid for every barrel of wine or brandy or load of salt that was transported out of France. Obviously Dutch traders complained about this situation.²⁰ Boreel and Van Beuningen were required to negotiate the abolition of these export duties. The Rotterdam Admiralty began charging French shippers to pay 50 stuivers per imported barrel. The States General agreed with this measure that was meant to neutralise the trading advantage the French government had intended to create for its own subjects.²¹ This counter measure enraged Louis and his ministers. They refused to allow the Dutch Republic spoiling their plans and making infringements on the royal prerogative.

Boreel continued trying to discuss the issue at Court. The States General hoped to remove all French and Dutch tariffs that obstructed maritime commerce. Obviously maintaining the old status quo was very beneficial to the Dutch. Louis showed his willingness to listen to official complaints. Yet it was clear that he would only stimulate French commercial interests further. The king, his ministers and courtiers planned to establish an East India Company that should be able to compete with its Dutch and English counterparts. Funds were raised at Court and hopes and ambitions were high for a first expedition.²² These mercantilist efforts were bound to lead

19 NA SG 6780 I LF, Boreel to the States General 19-1-1663. “Men is hier door alle provincien van dit Rijck ende inde steden aen de zee gelegen seer besich, om op te soucken ende uyt te vinden de bequaemste voorslagen tot de vermeerderinghe van commercien ende navigacien: ende die selve te brengen aen de nateure onderdanen van Vrancrijck, tot exclusie van de vreemde nacen.”

20 NA SG 6780 I LF, Boreel to the States General 26-1-1663.

21 NA SG 3269 RSG, 25-6-1663 and 6-8-1663; Elzinga, *Voorspel*, 156-157.

22 NA SG 12587.166 SKF, Boreel to the States General 9-11-1663; NA SG 12587.169 SKF, Boreel to the States General 28-12-1663; NA SG 6780 II LF, Boreel to the States General 13-6-1664 and 29-8-1664; Elzinga, *Voorspel*, 32-36.

to future international confrontation. Yet for the moment the Dutch could not afford to risk the Franco-Dutch alliance. The States General would have to allow French commercial competition to increase at its subjects' expense.

Anglo-Dutch relations between 1661-1663

Initially the negotiations between England and the Dutch Republic seemed promising. Negotiators of both sides hoped to co-operate in a constructive manner. Yet very soon relations between both nations deteriorated. This was caused mainly by commercial and maritime confrontations that spoiled the ongoing discussions between the delegates. The English refused to guarantee not to introduce measures that would disturb the continuing of Dutch economic enterprises.²³ Free trade would only benefit the Republic. The decision, taken by the new regime and Parliament, to plot a mercantilist course and to re-introduce the Act of Navigation, harmed Dutch interests directly and attacked one of the main pillars on which this state and society rested. Fruitful discussions between both diplomatic delegations became almost impossible as both governments were determined to uphold their rights and claims. On either sides interest groups tried to influence the process in order to protect or expand their commercial activities. Eventually a treaty of friendship was signed in September 1662 that did not solve any of the really important controversies, but it merely delayed the escalating of friction and distrust. The real issues were left to be dealt with at a later stage.²⁴

The deteriorating of Anglo-Dutch relations did not only take place on a political and diplomatic level. More and more collisions between English and Dutch traders and sailors occurred. Commercial and maritime competition developed into hostile confrontations. In every single trade in the world Dutch and English met and competed for a larger share. Close to home the European markets of the North Sea, the Baltic, the Levant, the Iberian Peninsula, France, and Moscovia witnessed fierce rivalry. The fishing industry caused tension as well. Outside Europe the rich colonial trades of Africa, Asia and the Americas contributed increasingly to the international friction.

In the decades before the Restoration English privateers and men of war had used and abused the domestic political confusion to capture Dutch and other foreign merchantmen. Many vessels were taken with Royalist or Parliamentary authorisation and escorted to London and various so-called outports. These events had caused some serious diplomatic, political and juridical debates. Anglo-Dutch relations did not really improve after the First Anglo-Dutch War. Exploiting the grow-

23 Scheurleer IV, 78-79 L. de Nassau and S. van Hoorn to De Witt 4-2-1661; NA SG 12589.114 SKE, Dutch delegates to the States General 21-3-1661.

24 PRO SP 103/46 14-9-1662; NA SG 12589.117 SKE, 14-9-1662.

ing economic rivalry and English protectionist legislation these privateering entrepreneurs regularly intercepted Dutch ships. This meant that the Act of Navigation, which served both as pretext and justification for these activities, became the subject of much hatred in the Netherlands. The Interregnum regimes refused to give in to complaints and to adjust the protectionist laws. Practical enforcement only made things worse. The tense international situation between both states created opportunities to make a profit from these confiscations. The English regimes were not very cooperative towards Dutch complaints and often easily approved of these captures.

After the Restoration the States General hoped that relations would improve and that the juridical affairs of Dutch vessels would be solved quickly and conveniently. An alliance would hopefully safeguard Dutch commerce from future enforcement of protectionist laws. Yet captures continued. Charles could not and would not bring an immediate end to privateering. No letters of marque or reprisal were given out but the Act of Navigation was renewed and enforced more strictly than ever before. In June 1660 the *Oostsaenen* was escorted to an English prize court. The Dutch ambassador Nieupoort was ordered by the States General to issue an official complaint.²⁵ The *Medea* met a similar fate in October. Again restitution was demanded.²⁶ The *Vreede* was taken in December.²⁷ The ship *Zeehond* from Amsterdam was brought to Ireland and several herring busses to Scotland.²⁸ By strict enforcement of the Act of Navigation English mercantilist forces hoped to stimulate commerce, industry and trade. Harming Dutch maritime interests seemed an efficient method. Privateering and other acts of aggression were therefore continued during the following years.²⁹

Captured prizes were not only escorted to British ports. The city of Dunkirk functioned as one of the most prominent centers of privateering with significant number of Dutch vessels being brought to Dunkirk by local privateers using Portuguese letters of marque and English letters of reprisal. In May 1662 the *Patriarch Isaac* was intercepted by Jean Reijersen. The High Court of the Admiralty ordered the ship to be released, but local bureaucrats, serving as prize court, delayed the process.³⁰

The Flemish corsairs benefited from English letters of reprisal. Portuguese Letters of Marque had been handed out to all foreigners who could damage Dutch shipping. The Portuguese had decided to exploit this private war effort to harm their enemies. Many of Charles's subjects were only too happy to comply, accepted

25 NA SG 12589.111 SKE, Nieupoort to the States General 4-6-1660.

26 PRO SP84/163 f66a, States General to Charles II 15-10-1660.

27 NA SG 3266 RSG, 15-12-1660.

28 PRO SP 84/163 f39, f 40 and 71, City of Amsterdam to Charles II 8-9-1660, the States General to Charles II 10-9-1660 and the States General to Charles II 20-10-1660; NA SG 3266 RSG, 4-10-1660.

29 NA SG 5904II LE, Dutch delegates to the States General 5-5-1662 and 30-6-1662; NA SG 12589.118 SKE, Dutch delegates to the States General 19-5-1662.

30 NA SG 12589.118 SKE, Dutch delegates to Charles II 31-5-1662; NA SG 5904II LE, Dutch delegates to the States General 18-7-1662.

these permits and used them to intercept Dutch vessels. These entrepreneurs operated from English, Scottish and Irish harbours as well as from Dunkirk.

The *Coninck David* and the *Oude Simeon* were taken to Rye. The *Oranjeboom* was escorted to Plymouth.³¹ Obviously these cases led to official complaints. The States General felt that British privateering with Portuguese licenses should no longer be allowed. They propagated a new interpretation of international customs and the Law of Nations. Only official permits issued by the sovereign of a state to his subjects would be acceptable. In 1660 the States General sent letters to Charles about the issue, but the king claimed that his subjects had the right to take and exploit foreign Letters of Marque.³²

During 1661 these practices continued causing captain Banckert to arrest an English vessel he suspected of using Portuguese Letters of Marque. The ship, the *Experience*, was a small craft that belonged to customs. James of York then ordered a Dutch man of war to be arrested as a reprisal. This was considered a violation of Dutch sovereignty. In October the *Experience* was returned to its owners but this was not accepted. They claimed that damage had been done. Negotiations about this little incident dragged on for a while contributing to the further deteriorating of relations.³³

The matter of using foreign permits became a bargaining point that was used to press the Dutch in the ongoing negotiations. The whole affair irritated the Dutch; they felt that the English were merely bullying them. In March 1662 Charles finally agreed to bring an end to privateering. His endorsement was a paper bullet though. In May 1662 the province of Zeeland went as far as to suggest the breaking off of the conference.³⁴ Sir George Downing then suggested that Charles would finally carry out his promise if the Dutch would give in to English complaints about maritime and commercial losses.³⁵ The issue was only solved when in 1663 the Dutch Republic finally ratified the 1661 peace agreement with Portugal. The Portuguese withdrew all licenses and stopped the privateering. Charles then ordered Lord Rutherford to release all Dutch ships from Dunkirk and to end local exploitation of Portuguese Letters of Marque.³⁶

All these juridical procedures had caused much friction and delay. The High Court of the Admiralty had to examine prize papers, interrogations and the exact

31 NA SG 3267 and 3268 RSG, 20-7-1661 and 27-3-1662; NA SG 5904I and 5904II LE, Dutch delegates to the States General 25-2-1661 and 7-10-1661, Sir George Downing to the States General 12-4-1662; PRO PC 2/56 f170-172 25-10-1662; NA SG 6778 LF, Willem Boreel to the States General 24-11-1661; CSP Clar 211-212, Dutch delegates to Clarendon May 1662.

32 NA SG 3266 RSG, 28-8-1660; PRO SP 84/163 f29a The States General to Charles II 8-9-1660.

33 CSP Clar p122 17-8-1661; BL ADD MS 22919 f162 Nicholas to Downing 26-8-1661; NA SG 5904 I LE, Dutch delegates to the States General 26-8-1661 and 4-11-1661; PRO SP 84/164 f140 October 1661.

34 NA SG 12589.118 SKE, Dutch delegates to the States General 14-3-1662; PRO SP 84/165 f234 Abraham de Wicquefort to Joseph Williamson 25-5-1662.

35 NA SG 12563.41 Lok.VOC, Sir George Downing to the States General 24-5-1662; NA SG 12589.118 SKE, Dutch delegates to the States General 22-5-1662; NA SG 3268 RSG, 24-5-1662.

36 NA SG 3268 RSG, 14-6-1662.

circumstances. Legal expenses had to be paid before any complaints were dealt with in High Court. During the legal case the prize vessel and its cargo would be stored and protected. Yet embezzlement and storage often decreased the actual value of the goods. This damage was hardly ever fully compensated, even when a ship was released. Owners and merchants simply had to accept these losses or they were lucky when they had insured their property.³⁷ Altogether the practical and juridical handling of these cases contributed significantly to sentiments of distrust and rivalry. Obviously the Anglo-Dutch negotiations did not benefit from these events.

Meanwhile Dutch privateers captured English vessels as well. A number of merchantmen was intercepted on their way to Portuguese harbours. In 1659 the *Experience* was captured on its return voyage from Brazil just off the Portuguese coast by three Zeeland entrepreneurs.³⁸ In 1661 the *St John Baptist* was taken as well.³⁹ Prizes like these were, according to Dutch admiralty courts, legal confiscations as they had issued Dutch sailors with Letters of Marque against Portugal. Any foreign ships trading on enemy ports could then legally be confiscated and brought up to the Dutch Republic. The cargo would be forfeited as well.

The case of the *Charles* complicated Anglo-Dutch negotiations as well. In 1659 Captain Spragge had used his Royalist license to capture the Dutch merchantman *Moor* in the Bay of Biscay. He was then arrested by Dutch vessels. After the Restoration Downing stated that he had had every right to confiscate the Dutch vessel because of the Anglo-Spanish War. Obviously the English ambassador had conveniently forgotten that it was Cromwell who had declared war on Madrid. The Royalists were in fact receiving help from the Spanish and so Spragge's action had been illegal. After 1660 the restored monarchy regarded Cromwell's regime as illegal under English constitutional and international law. Yet Downing believed that the Dutch had had no right to issue reprisals against these practices. Downing did not agree with the States General calling Spragge 'one of ye famous pirates of Biscay.' To support his claim he added a copy of the High Court of the Admiralty's report to James of York.⁴⁰ The disagreement about the case continued though as the States General refused to acknowledge these arguments.

Confrontations, with petitioners going above the Admiralty High Court and the Dutch admiralty courts by addressing their governments, requesting their involvement, led to the English undertaking aggressive diplomatic moves and the States

37 Rommelse, 'English privateering', 18-26; Grant and Munro, *Acts of the Privy Council*, 340-341 24-11-1662. The *Oranjeboom* from Middelburg was captured for a second time after having been released. Legal procedures and embezzlements meant significant expenses.

38 Bodl. Carte MS 73 f319 June 1660 Petition of Thomas Bretton and Symon Delboe to the Privy Council; NA SG 3266 RSG, 20-9-1660; PRO SP 84/164 f167 18-11-1661.

39 PRO CO 388/1 f16 and PRO SP 84/164 f126 10-10-1661 Petition Edward Adams 4-10-1661; NA SG 3268 RSG, 6-7-1661; BL Egerton MS 2537 f405 Downing to Nicholas 2-1-1662.

40 NA SG 12563.41 SKVOC, Downing to the States General 13-7-1662, 14-7-1662 and 19-7-1662; PRO SP 84/164 f40 Thomas Hyde (Judge of the High Court of the Admiralty) to James of York 2-4-1661.

General having to reciprocate defensively. Consequently the ongoing negotiations were also affected. New and urgent cases were brought up continuously and had to be discussed.

In 1661 the English regime decided to draft a catalogue of complaints covering the period after 1654. The Levant and East India Companies were invited to add their losses to the list. Altogether hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of damage had been inflicted up from 1659. This official collection of complaints was sent to the States General, Dutch admiralties, the Dutch East and West India Companies and the Levant Company. The States General then ordered the other organisations to examine the English catalogue and to bring forward their own demands for compensation.⁴¹

Charles decided to send Sir George Downing to The Hague as ordinary ambassador. He was ordered to negotiate payments for all losses English traders and sailors had sustained. Nicholas, the Secretary of State, told Downing to increase his efforts and exert even more pressure upon the States General. It was expected that Louis would not give in to Dutch demands at the ongoing Franco-Dutch negotiations. This would, according to Nicholas, enable the diplomat to secure higher payments.⁴²

In the early months of 1662 continuous maritime confrontations and Dutch reluctance to deal with English complaints led to a serious deterioration of relations. It seemed the discussions between both delegations had reached a deadlock that would obstruct a permanent agreement. The Admiralty in London had already issued application forms for Letters of Reprisal.⁴³ The English regime had expected to solve matters quickly and on a diplomatic level. Charles and his ministers thought that by directly addressing the States General without involving courts of justice they could speed up affairs. They did not fully understand the nature of Dutch political and juridical institutions. The States General were a representative body and were usually quite unwilling to develop such executive effectiveness. In most cases the legal procedure would have to be followed and they advised Downing to contact the various admiralty courts. They argued that no exception could be made. This policy was of course partly intended to delay matters. It resembled England's own official line on captured foreign vessels. This taste of its own medicine increasingly frustrated Downing who believed even more pressure should be exerted in order to force the Dutch to comply. This would also demonstrate that Dutch mercantile interests could not rely absolutely on protection from the States General. He wrote to Nicholas stating that four or five Amsterdam ships should be ar-

41 PRO SP105/144 f264 24-10-1661; BL Oriental and India Office H/42 f1 24-10-1661; NA SG 5904 I LE, Dutch delegates to the States General 17-12-1661; NA SG 3267 RSG, 17-12-1661; NA SG 12576.77 Lok.E, Levantsche Compagnie to the States General 3-1-1662; Admiralty of Rotterdam to the States General 2-3-1662; West Indische Compagnie to the States General 6-3-1662.

42 NA SG 12563.41 SKE, Downing to the States General 18-1-1662; BL ADD MS 22919 f182, Nicholas to Downing 20-1-1662.

43 PRO SP 84/165 f97 Dutch delegates to the States General 17-2-1662.

rested as compensation because the Dutch would never pay up.⁴⁴ Amsterdam was the most influential city in Dutch politics and confiscation of its vessels would certainly be felt.

An excellent opportunity to increase political pressure was provided by a dispute between the Dutch Republic and the Order of St John of Jerusalem. This catholic order, since 1530 based on the island of Malta, demanded the restitution of certain estates and goods in the province of Utrecht that had been confiscated during the Dutch Revolt. In August 1661 Charles ordered Downing to mediate between both parties. This 'mediation' was not officially proposed and Downing's involvement was yet another tool to intensify pressure on the Dutch. Fishing in troubled waters might just offer vital chances to the English to obtain compensation. Charles raised the stakes when the States of Utrecht and the States General proved to be reluctant to give in. Obviously he tried to exploit the increasingly tense Anglo-Dutch relations to his advantage. In the summer of 1662 Charles decided to support the Order's cause by arranging the capture of several Dutch merchantmen. Even the High Court of the Admiralty meddled in the matter. In June eight vessels were arrested in English ports in order to force the States General to compensate the Order. But Clarendon, concerned with legality, argued that the juridical body had usurped the right to pass judgement in this foreign case. William Coventry agreed whole-heartedly with the action however, because, as he said, the Dutch themselves never acknowledged international justice and refused to give in to legal demands.⁴⁵ Obviously the English had chosen to interfere in a controversial issue that caused them to adopt rather dubious legal methods. The High Court of the Admiralty gave legal justification to an act of foreign policy. The disagreement between both politicians clearly demonstrated how a claim from the catholic order was exploited to further pressure the States General.

In July 1662 the matter was more or less resolved diplomatically and tension decreased slightly. The English decided that a shift in political strategy would be preferable. The ships that had been arrested on the behalf of the Order were now released. This caused the States General to believe that Charles gave in to their demands. For a moment they hoped to persuade him to release all Dutch vessels and to bring an end to English privateering with foreign licenses.⁴⁶ This was not a very realistic view though. Despite the return of the *Oude Simeon* not all problems were solved. Charles had merely demonstrated his good intentions and now expected similar measures from the Dutch Republic in return. This did not happen and so the Privy Council de-

44 BL Egerton MS 2538 f63-64 Downing to Nicholas 19-5-1662.

45 PRO SP84/164 f101 Charles to Downing August 1661; PRO SP 84/165 f282 De Wicquefort to Williamson 12-6-1662, f296 De Bacquoy to Williamson 10-6-1662; PRO PC 2/56 f7 18-6-1662; NA SG 3268 and 3270 RSG 15-6-1662, 31-7-1662, 24-1-1664; NA SG 5904I and 5904II LE, Dutch delegates to the States General 2-12-1661, 28-4-1662; NA SG 12589.118 SKE, Dutch delegates to the States General 9-6-1662; BL Egerton MS 2538 f71-72 Downing to Nicholas 16-6-1662; BL ADD MS 22919 f219 Coventry to Downing 23-6-1662.

46 CSP Clar. p.232 Downing to Clarendon 7-7-1662; NA SG 3268 RSG 6-7-1662.

cided that all Dutch claims dating from 1642 to 1660 would be dismissed. The actions giving rise to Dutch complaints had been taken under the illegal authority of usurpation Interregnum regimes. Potential cases of fraud and false witnesses would make legal court cases impossible as well.⁴⁷ This policy upset the States Generals's calculations. Downing hoped to go even further when he advised that no more concessions should be made by the English.⁴⁸ Yet, despite the continuing difficulties, the Anglo-Dutch treaty of friendship was signed in September 1662. Relations remained very tense and maritime rivalry remained. In 1663 complaints about aggression were brought forward by both sides and disruption of trade continued.⁴⁹

Confrontations in the Asian trade 1660-1663

After the Restoration the EIC quickly sought government support to protect and expand its trade. The VOC required official assistance as well and hoped to persuade the States General and the provincial states to advance its interests. Ever since its founding in 1602 the VOC had used aggressive means to strengthen its position. Fighting the Spanish and the Portuguese during the Eighty Years War had been one of the reasons for the creation of the company. Maintaining a large fleet of men of war in Asia had therefore always been an important policy. To combat the catholic enemies the VOC had been delegated the implementation of sovereign rights. The directors were allowed to declare and wage war and to conclude treaties and agreements with Asian states.⁵⁰ This unprecedented structure proved very effective in the building of Dutch trading contacts with Asia and competing with the Spanish and Portuguese. Yet sometimes the VOC's Asian interests collided with Dutch national policies back in Europe. The commercial situation could require forceful measures or even hostilities with rival European powers whereas Dutch politics in Europe demanded a more peaceful approach. The early 1660s promised to deliver just that problem. The EIC hoped to increase its trade in India and use government back up to re-establish its position in the Indonesian archipelago. The VOC used its strong fleet to expand its Asian dominion at the expense of the Portuguese and would not freely allow its old rivals back to the traditional sources of precious spices. It was therefore inevitable that the competition between both companies became an important issue at the official Anglo-Dutch negotiations.

The 1660s witnessed the increasing focus of the English on rich colonial trades. A number of markets closer to home were slumbering and the prospects of gaining wealth in other continents seemed promising. Obviously this shift in its economic

47 NA SG 5904 II LE, Downing to the States General 28-6-1662; PRO PC 6/1 f35-36 16-7-1662.

48 CSP Clar. p.238-239 Downing to Clarendon 28-7-1662.

49 BL ADD MS 22920 f6 Robert Parker to Downing; NA SG 3269 RSG, 24-4-1663.

50 Somers, J.A., *De VOC als volkenrechtelijke actor* (Gouda 2001).

51 Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Finch*, 262 The Earl of Winchelsea to Bennet 29-6-1663; NA SG 5903 II LE, Charles to the States General 14-9-1660.

activity would provoke more confrontations with Dutch competitors. The Mediterranean and Iberian markets were the traditional rich trades. Rivalry had much increased when the Dutch concluded their treaty with Spain in 1648. This, and the Anglo-Spanish War, had led them to gain at the expense of the English. Competition between the two nations remained after the Restoration.⁵¹ Yet other trades became more prominent as sources of deteriorating relations and even hostilities.

The East India commerce was especially competitive. The VOC had had the upper hand during most of the 17th century driving the English out of most of the Indonesian archipelago. Yet the East India Company now hoped to benefit from the support of the Restoration regime to improve its position in Asia. In June 1660 the Board of Directors wrote to the VOC to complain about a number of cases of disruption of trade and shipping that had taken place during the 1650s.⁵²

Dutch attempts to expand trade in India and obtain more monopolies in Asia were a source of concern and anger as well. The VOC systematically conquered Portuguese forts and territories in India and on the island of Ceylon. Negapatnam on the Coromandel Coast was taken in 1659. Colombo was captured in 1656 and Jaffnapatnam followed in 1658. The VOC then focused on the Malabar Coast of India. Cochin, the center of the Portuguese pepper trade, was finally conquered in January 1663 after a first attempt in 1662 had failed.⁵³ The Portuguese later claimed that the conquest had taken place after the ratification but the VOC argued that this news had not yet been received in Asia.

Native princes were made to break off trade relations with the Portuguese. In June 1660 the king of Maccassar on the south coast of the island of Celebes was defeated and was forced to expel all Portuguese from his lands. The Dutch company benefited from the lingering negotiations with Lisbon. The peace treaty had still not been ratified and the VOC made full use of this. The EIC feared this delay would also harm English trade in Asia because the VOC would not only exclude the Portuguese from trading but also other European competitors. The English company hoped Charles would soon find a remedy to keep a check on Dutch expansion: "The Dutch at this tyme in India are the only lords of the sea and sea coasts in all places where they trade, and are making themselves masters of the south seas, wherein all the spices are, and now only in their hands. They have so farr of late prevailed upon the Portugall that not above five sail of ships in a yeare are employed by that nation, and they by stealth more than strength. (...) [The Dutch], understanding of his Majesties match with the Infanta of Portugall, are very zealous to possesse themselves of so much as possible, before his Majesties shippes may arive to prevent them." The Portuguese marriage could therefore provide much needed opportunities to assist the Portuguese in India and to protect and strengthen English commercial interests there.⁵⁴

⁵² Sainsbury, *Calendar*, 18 EIC to the VOC 11-6-1660.

⁵³ Winus, 'Luso-Nederlandse rivaliteit', 128-129; s'Jacob, 'Rijcklof Volckertsz van Goens', 141-145.

⁵⁴ Sainsbury, *Calendar*, 83-84 Sir Richard Ford to Nicholas 10-2-1661, 134 14-10-1661; NA SG

Similar aggressive tactics were used in the ongoing competition with the EIC. Downing complained to Clarendon that 'the trick of the Hollanders [is] to declare warre with the natives in the East Indies and upon the Coast of Africa, with whom his Majesty's subjects have any trade, and then thereupon to forbid them all trade with them, and to continue the warre till they have brought those natives to an arrangement with them, to sell them all their comodities, and then to keep the English from tradeing, upon the accompt that the natives have agreed with them, to sell all to them.'⁵⁵ This same method had already been used with great success by Jan Pieterszoon Coen, the ruthless governor general of the VOC in Batavia, some forty years earlier. It enraged the ambassador who regarded the Dutch way of trading as playing dirty tricks by expecting Asians to recognise European styled contracts that had been extorted from them. At first the Dutch had signed contracts assuming that native princes would observe and respect them the way Europeans did but now they used them as a most effective weapon in establishing a commercial monopoly. The VOC used war to obtain the signing of the lucrative contracts and effective compliance. This way they shrewdly obstructed the expansion of English trade by abusing European legal customs and traditions. The VOC denied this however, and claimed that the company had every right to send its men of war to Asia. Moreover, the company claimed, the contracts with native princes were perfectly valid according to international law.⁵⁶

In times of war an area or city could be besieged or cut off from supplies and trade. In Europe the attacking party could then forbid communication and trade between the defender and neutrals. The besieger was allowed to intercept and confiscate neutral vessels attempting to break the blockade. Yet the limits of international prize law were stretched when the VOC declared war with a native prince and considered his whole territory in a state of blockade. This then enabled the Dutch to intercept English ships or at least prevent them from trading. These legal practices were of course highly controversial, although the English had applied the same strategy during the Civil Wars.⁵⁷ Should the naval blockade be a physical one or would a simple declaration of war turn neutral merchantmen into justified prizes? Could European customs be applied in the Asian situation at all? Both the English and the Dutch explained these rules differently and to their own advantage. In Asia the VOC exploited its maritime dominance and benefited from these legal complexities by harming English trade and shipping.

In 1661 the High Court of the Admiralty reported that the *Endymion*, the *Drag-*

12589.114 SKE, Dutch delegates to the States General 4-3-1661; NA SG 7011 II LP, Portuguese ambassador to the States General 25-3-1661; NA SG 5738 II LVOC, VOC to the States General 14-7-1661; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Finch*, 128-130 Morice to the Earl of Winchelsea 28-6-1661 and 151-152 Benjamin Lannoy to the Earl of Winchelsea 17-9-1661, 22-8-1662, 1-9-1663, 13-3-1663 and 15-5-1663.

55 BL Oriental and India Office E/3/26 f199 June 1660; PRO SP 84/167 f288 and 84/168 f52 Downing to Bennet 28-9-1663 and 2-11-1663; Lister, *Life*, 249-253 Downing to Clarendon 28-9-1663.

56 NA SG 12563.38 Lok.VOC, VOC to the States General 5-5-1661.

57 Groenvelde, *Verlopend getij*, 136-141; Oudendijk, *Status and extent*.

on, the *Advice* and the *Marigold* had been obstructed but not confiscated when they tried to reach their factory at Bantam. The *Mayflower*, the *Anne* and the *Samaritan* met a similar fate near Achin on the western tip of the island of Sumatra. The *Constantinople* had been threatened near Goa on the Malabar Coast.⁵⁸ Compensation for these commercial losses should, according to the High Court judges, be negotiated with the Dutch delegates. Meanwhile the *Charles* and the *Experience*, that had already been intercepted in 1659, were officially confiscated. Downing complained to the States General and in a letter to Nicholas he even used the words 'robbers and pirates'. The States General did not interfere with the normal legal procedures that involved the judgement of an appropriate court of justice. They ordered the Court of the Admiralty of Amsterdam to handle the case.⁵⁹ In January 1662 the English ambassador complained again because the States General claimed the taking of the *Experience* had been legal.⁶⁰

The island of Run, the center of nutmeg trade east of Sulawesi, became an important issue as well in Anglo-Dutch relations. The Restoration regime supported the EIC claim for restitution. The Dutch delegates in London met with representatives of the EIC to discuss the matter. No solution was accomplished as the Dutch gentlemen had no authority to strike deals on behalf of the VOC.⁶¹ Yet in public the VOC and the States General gave in on this issue. The company admitted that the island should have been given back as a result of the 1654 Peace of Westminster. An official English representative would have to be dispatched to take possession though. Nobody had ever been appointed to this task and the VOC had kept Run. In December 1660 the Chamber of Amsterdam ordered Abraham Weijns, governor of the island of Banda, to provide restitution. An official English delegation would have to be sent to Asia. The States General agreed with this clause.⁶² Yet the controversy continued as the VOC tried to delay the procedure as much as possible. During most of 1662 the Dutch claimed that they waited for a response from the governor of Banda. In July 1663 it became clear that the Dutch in the East Indies had refused to return the ownership over the island. In March 1662 they had been unwilling to acknowledge the English credentials.⁶³ In January 1663 the VOC ordered Johan Maetsuycker, the governor general in Batavia, to give Run back to the English after the ratification of the Anglo-Dutch treaty had been done. The EIC

⁵⁸ Sainsbury, *Calendar* 77-80 29-1-1661.

⁵⁹ NA SG 12563.41 Lok.VOC, Downing to the States General 3-12-1661 and David de Wildt to the States General 3-12-1661; BL Egerton MS 2537 f402-402b Downing to Nicholas 13-12-1661.

⁶⁰ BL Egerton MS 2537 f407-412b Downing to the States General 30-1-1662.

⁶¹ NA SG 12589.111 SKE, Dutch delegates to the States General 10-12-1660; Sainsbury, *Calendar*, 52 10-12-1660.

⁶² NA SG 5738 II LVOC, VOC to the States General 26-11-1660 and 16-12-1660; NA SG 3266 and 3267 Resolutions of the States General 14-12-1660, 6-1-1661 and 20-1-1661; PRO SP 84/163 f110 VOC to the EIC 16-12-1660.

⁶³ Sainsbury, *Calendar*, 217-218 EIC to the Privy Council 23-6-1662; ibidem 325-328 July 1663; NA SG 12563.39 Lok.VOC, VOC to the States General 23-6-1662; NA SG 3268 RSG, 6-7-1662.

then planned to equip ships again to take possession. Downing was requested to demand compensations for the lost profits. Yet again the Dutch officials in Batavia refused to comply. They still would not surrender the island. Exploiting the delay, they ordered all nutmeg trees to be destroyed.⁶⁴ Production was concentrated on other islands that were safely controlled by the Dutch. Thus the VOC used all sorts of excuses to profit from the extremely tedious procedure and the long distance to monopolise precious spices. The Gentlemen XVII would give in to English demands, but only on their own conditions and after playing the EIC a trick.

In October 1661 Charles ordered the EIC to draw up a list of complaints and financial losses that had been suffered since 1659. The total sum amounted some 2.5 million guilders. This official list should be used in the ongoing talks. The States General decided to uphold the interests of the VOC as well. The Dutch company and the admiralties were requested to bring in complaints in reaction to the English policies.⁶⁵ The exchange of demands resulted in a contest in which both parties tried to surpass the other in adding more points. Both regimes continued siding with their companies.

Downing was then ordered to demand reparations for the ships *Bonna Esperanza* and *Henry Bonadventure* that had both been captured in 1643. Compensation was asked on behalf of John Eycon, George Carew and Charles Whitaker. The Dutch delegates in London replied that this was outrageous. Yet Charles insisted that payment should be made for all damage that had been done in Asia after 1654 and for these two vessels. The States General refused as these cases had already been dealt with in 1654 and 1659. They agreed with the VOC that enough had been paid. The gentlemen only wanted to discuss reparations in cases that occurred after 1659. In September 1662 the Anglo-Dutch treaty was finally signed but the two ships were not mentioned in the agreement.⁶⁶

Throughout 1663 Downing continued bringing up the same demand for compensation again and again. Yet the States General and the VOC now even refused to deal with the case and passed it on to the appropriate court of justice. As a result Downing became more and more frustrated with the issue as “the States General have sent my memoriall concerning the ships *Bona Esperanze* and *Bona Adventure* to the chamber of the East India Company at Amsterdam but from them is noth-

64 Sainsbury, *Calendar*, 288-289 VOC to Johan Maetsuycker 14-1-1663 and the States General to Maetsuycker 18-1-1663; ibidem 294 and 301-302, 14-2-1663 and 30-3-1663; BL Oriental and India Office E/3/27 f51 and f71, 4-9-1663 and 26-9-1663.

65 PRO PC 2/55 f403 24-10-1661; PRO SP 84/164 f194 De Gamarra to Philip IV of Spain 27-12-1661; PRO SP 84/165 f19 De Bacquoy to Williamson 6-1-1662; Sainsbury, *Calendar*, 142-143 October 1661.

66 PRO SP 84/165 f193 Downing to Thomas Breton 12-5-1662; ibidem f209 Dutch delegates to the States General 15-5-1662; PRO PC 2/56 f2 16-6-1662; NA SG 12589.118 SKE, Dutch delegates to the States General 11-8-1662, 18-8-1662 and 15-9-1662; PRO SP 84/166 f113 Dutch delegates to the States General 15-9-1662; BL ADD MS 22919 f237 Morrice to Downing 4-8-1662; BL Egerton MS 2538 f66-67 Downing to Nicholas 4-6-1662; NA SG 3268 RSG, 26-8-1662; NA SG 5738 II LVOC, VOC to the States General 27-9-1662.

ing to be expected but the justifying themselves.”⁶⁷ He felt he was being sent off none the wiser. This only convinced him that more diplomatic and political pressure should be exerted in order to obtain what he saw as justice. The Dutch authorities thought that the English were clearly exaggerating with their complaints. They therefore supported the VOC in refusing to compensate what had already been paid for. Giving in would only be counterproductive and would invite more demands. Thus it is clear how the rivalry over Asian trade and shipping influenced European international politics as both the English and Dutch government concerned themselves increasingly with national mercantile interests.

Confrontations in the African trade 1660-1663

The international rivalry over African trade developed rapidly after 1660 and soon became more hostile and much more violent than the competition over Asian commerce. Early in 1661 the Dutch *West Indische Compagnie* was informed that an English expedition of five or six ships would be sent to Gambia. This worried the directors who immediately notified the States General. The high and mighty lords then ordered their representatives to gain as much information as they could about the forthcoming event. It had to be explained to Charles that the island in the estuary of the river Gambia had been claimed by the Dutch since 1623. The English called it James Island after their patron. The king was also requested not to provide licenses to Dutch interlopers who might cut into the WIC's monopoly.⁶⁸

Very soon the increasing rivalry between the WIC and the Royal Adventurers resulted in armed confrontations. In March 1661 the English company, benefiting from heavy governmental support, captured the fort St Andries on James Island in the Gambia estuary. The factory on Cabo Verde was taken by commander Holmes. Both sides stated they had claimed the site first. The WIC hoped to gain the support of the States General in its struggle and quickly informed the gentlemen about the sustained losses.⁶⁹ For the Dutch company holding on to its African interests and possessions in the Caribbean was its *raison d'être*. Between 1645 and 1654 it had lost Brazil to the Portuguese and its factories and forts on the West African Coast and in the Caribbean were all that remained. The directors now hoped to benefit from the increasing demand for slave labour in the Americas. The *asiento*, the government-regulated privilege to supply the Spanish colonies in America with slaves was especially lucrative and had been given to Genoese entrepreneurs. The Italians had provided the WIC with a lucrative subcontract. The company would not voluntarily surrender its interest in this

67 PRO SP 84/167 f273b Downing to the States General 21-9-1663; PRO SP 84/168 f4 Downing to Bennet 12-10-1663 and f94 De Bacquoy to Williamson 11-11-1663; NA SG 3269 RSG, 8-10-1663.

68 NA SG 5767 I LWIC, WIC to the States General 10-1-1661 and 31-1-1661; NA SG 3267 RSG, 13-1-1661, 21-1-1661 and 5-2-1661.

69 NA SG 12576.77 Lok.E, WIC to the States General 28-7-1662; NA SG 3267 and 3268 RSG, 18-10-1661 and 18-8-1662.

trade to the new English competitor. In 1663 both companies received a subcontract from the Genuese. All the WIC could do now was remind the States General about the eight million guilders of compensation the Portuguese were supposed to pay the company for Brazil and the urgent need to support the African trade.⁷⁰

The West Indische Company had been established in 1621 with a charter of the States General. Modeled after the VOC, the new company was permitted to sign treaties with native princes and wage wars. The aim was to increase trade and to fight the Spanish and Portuguese in Africa and the Americas. Taking over their colonies and trade and intercepting enemy merchantmen would be the way to achieve this. For these reasons the company maintained a significant number of men of war and soldiers. These had been decreased after the loss of Brazil but the WIC was still capable of competing with the Royal Adventurers trading into Africa.⁷¹

Immediately in 1661 the WIC took up the challenge posed by the Royal Adventurers. The company asked the States General for help and planned to check and disturb English progress on the Guinea Coast. Six English ships were captured and others were forced to leave without trading "by the Flemings whose whole endeavour is to gain the whole coast into their possession." They even claimed to have conquered sovereignty of the Guinea Coast against the Portuguese.⁷² These cases were reported to the English High Court of the Admiralty. Yet the Dutch delegates in London refused to engage in legal proceedings. Receiving official letters from the High Court they sent them back stating that any complaints should be directed to the proper court in the Republic and that they could not take it upon them to pass judgement.⁷³ Obviously Downing was again not satisfied with the way Dutch officials handled his complaints. He became more and more convinced that only drastic measures would force the WIC and the States General to comply and pay compensation for sustained losses. Negotiations about the cases of the vessels *Charles* and *James* became very prominent in Anglo-Dutch diplomatic relations. Both ships had been hampered in their attempts to trade with natives at the Guinea Coast. The Royal Adventurers wrote to Downing asking him to take the matter up with the States General. The WIC would under no condition compensate. The English board of directors remarked that 'they will send us to a town where there is no house.' The States General also refused to give in and upheld the Dutch company's argument that the WIC had had the right to intercept both vessels as the coast had been blockaded because of a war with the local tribes.⁷⁴ In September 1663 Charles

⁷⁰ NA SG 5767 II LWIC, WIC to the States General 4-7-1663 and 28-11-1663; Israel, *Primacy*, 236-244.

⁷¹ Heijer, *WIC*.

⁷² CSP Clar. 168, 212 and 248 Downing to the States General 20-12-1661, 13-5-1662 and 16-8-1662; BL Oriental and India Office E/3/27 f106 28-2-1662 Letter from Fort Coromantin; Grant and Munro, *Acts of the Privy Council*, 328-330 21-4-1662; PRO SP 84/167 f38 8-3-1663; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Finch* 305; Denzil Hollis to Winchelsea 17-4-1664.

⁷³ BL ADD MS 22919 f243 Van Hoorn and Van Gogh to the States General 21-8-1662.

⁷⁴ PRO SP 84/167 f269 Downing to Williamson 11-9-1663; *ibidem* f282 Downing to the States General 27-9-1663; PRO SP 84/168 f38 States General to Downing 18-10-1663; BL ADD MS 22920 f19 The Royal Adventurers trading into Africa to Downing 5-10-1663; NA SG 12576.81.2 Lok.E.

lent three naval ships commanded by Robert Holmes to the English company in order to advance commercial interests. Holmes had served under Rupert of the Palatinate visiting Guinea in 1652. The English government clearly got itself more and more involved with this increasingly hostile collision of mercantilism.

The Dutch and English were not the only Europeans who were trying to profit from the lucrative African trade. The Danes and the Swedes had commercial contacts as well. The WIC tried to maintain its monopoly by expelling them from the market. In 1661 the Swedish vessel *Christina* was captured by four Dutch warships. Various other Danish and Swedish ships were taken as well and ambassadors of both countries in The Hague complained to the States General which then required the WIC to deliver proof that would justify its policy in Africa towards rival companies. The WIC claimed that two of its ships, the *Vrede* and the *Moor*, had been plundered by Danes. The fort of Cabo Corso, taken by the WIC, caused more diplomatic tension between the Dutch and the Swedes.⁷⁵

The States General could again be persuaded to uphold commercial rights and interests of the nation's most important companies. They did not take a clear position on the various cases and issues though. They did not connect themselves with mercantilist causes the way the Restoration regime did. They supported commerce yet to Downing it seemed they were only delaying affairs. Thus Anglo-Dutch relations deteriorated as both regimes became increasingly involved in these mercantile disputes. Both the Royal Adventurers and the WIC took aggressive steps to defend their position. The governments approved of these measures and justified them. It was now only a matter of time before African and Asian hostilities would play a significant role on the European political agenda.

75 NA SG 3266, 3267, 3268 and 3269 RSG, 15-12-1660, 25-10-1660, 10-1-1662, 21-3-1662 and 24-7-1663; NA SG 5767 II LWIC, Johan Silvercroon (Swedish ambassador) to the States General 2-8-1662; CSP Clar 154-155 Downing to Clarendon 18-11-1661.

