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Dark horses of business : overseas entrepreneurship in seventeenth-century Nordic trade in the Indian and Atlantic oceans

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6 Brokers of Violence

6.1 Introduction

In the history of business and entrepreneurship, the primary focus has conventionally been on trade. In contrast, the role of violence has been dismissed as counterproductive, in that it increased uncertainty and risk, thereby heightening transaction costs. Indeed, studies of entrepreneurship have been almost completely silent regarding the relationship between trade and violence. In other words, historians have rarely moved beyond the assumption that violence is always costly for business. However, Sanjay Subrahmanyam has argued that individuals involved in overseas trade often behaved like warriors as well as merchants.⁷⁸⁸ As such, it is also important to study business from the perspective of violence. In this chapter I will argue that the deployment of violence within an entrepreneurial context can in fact be an effective way of achieving personal business goals.

To illustrate the role of violence in early modern overseas entrepreneurship, I will focus on Leyel's use of violence as a means to shatter the social hierarchy of the Danish settlement at Tranquebar, as well as his use of violence against local ships in the Bay of Bengal. In the case of Carloff, I will focus on how violence was used to disrupt the hierarchy of the Swedish settlement at Carolusborg (1658), as well as in the course of a maritime campaign in the Caribbean (1676). These events were related to the maritime world of trade, business and violence, even if some of them occurred on land. Violence was common in the overseas context, and Leyel and Carloff were not only willing to use it for purposes of business, but also internalised it as an essential feature of overseas entrepreneurship.

6.2 The use of violence in seventeenth-century maritime trade

Although there have been relatively few studies of the relationship between violence and entrepreneurship, the wider historiography of early modern trade has often touched upon the question of violence. For the Swedish historian Jan Glete, "the sea was a violent place of work".⁷⁸⁹ The maritime world offered many incentives for ship captains, pilots, sailors and merchants to use violence; attacking and plundering ships was a good source of income, a means for political engagement and a way for states to assert their sovereignty.⁷⁹⁰ At the time, the definition of legality and illegality was a question of political power. States, companies and individual traders defined the borders of legality in accordance with their own interests. This made overseas business different from business in Europe. Investigating ships suspected of illegal practices provided a means to earn a

⁷⁸⁸ Subrahmanyam, "Introduction", in *Merchant Networks in the Early Modern World*, xiii–xxiii, xiii.

⁷⁸⁹ Jan Glete, *Warfare at Sea, 1500-1650: Maritime Conflicts and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 40.

⁷⁹⁰ The literature on the topic is too extensive for one footnote. However, some examples are: Carlo M. Cipolla, *Guns and Sails in the Early Phase of European Expansion, 1400-1700* (New York: Random House, 1965); Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), chapter 3; L. H. J. Sicking, "Naval Warfare in Europe, c.1330–c.1680", in *European Warfare, 1350-1750*, ed. Frank Tallett and D. J. B. Trim (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 236–63; L. H. J. Sicking, *Neptune and the Netherlands: State, Economy, and War at Sea in the Renaissance* (Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2004).

living, and here, too, violence played a crucial role. The line between trade, privateering and piracy was blurred, and became increasingly so the further one was from Europe.⁷⁹¹

Violence at sea included pirates, privateers, corsairs and buccaneers.⁷⁹² Privateering was an activity in which ships belonging to private owners and sailing under state commission (so-called “letter of marque”) seized enemy vessels and cargoes. This meant that privateering was confined to periods of war. On the other hand, piracy was an act of maritime robbery. The main difference was that a privateer acted under the authority of a state.⁷⁹³ While a privateer would share his “prize” with the state, a pirate, if caught, would be hanged.⁷⁹⁴

However, at this time, the largest source of maritime violence was states themselves. The seventeenth century witnessed the expansion of navies, through which commercial companies and convoy systems could maintain an immense apparatus of violence, particularly for purposes of overseas expansion. For example, the studies of Erik Odegard, Henk den Heijer, Michiel de Jong, Gerrit Knaap, Han Jordaen and Victor Enthoven have convincingly demonstrated the way in which the Dutch trading companies were, to a certain extent, developed in order to participate in wars (WIC), and to have the capacity to engage in naval battles (VOC).⁷⁹⁵ In this chapter, however, the aim is not to study the companies as instruments of war, but rather to acknowledge that they had a violent side. For many companies, using violence was common. For example, as has already been mentioned in chapter two, while Carloff was employed by the WIC, he took part in the military expeditions of Cornelis Jol in Luanda and São Tomé.⁷⁹⁶

Adam Clulow has argued that the reality of Asia was often very different from the discussions regarding the use of violence that took place in Europe. In his words, “company agents on the ground in Asia tended to pile a number of ideas on top of another with little thought to connection or consistency, or to rely on the more basic notion that force was essential to doing business in Asia.”⁷⁹⁷ Either way, maritime violence was an integral part of overseas business. Indeed, an act of violence such as privateering was potentially very profitable. However, it could also be ineffective: instructions to fleets were written by people lacking specific knowledge of the areas concerned, often the wrong ships were captured, captains and crews risked their own lives as well as those of those on board the ships they sought to capture, and there was a possibility that some of these captains and crews would overstep the limits specified by the original commissions, turning from privateers into pirates.⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹¹ On these different forms of illegal activities in global history, see S. Amirel and L. Müller, eds., *Persistent Piracy: Maritime Violence and State-Formation in Global Historical Perspective* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁷⁹² Janice E. Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns*; Kris Lane has extensively studied the different kinds of privateers, corsairs, sea rovers and buccaneers. See Kris Lane, *Pillaging the Empire: Global Piracy on the High Seas, 1500-1750*, 1 edition (New York: Routledge, 2015).

⁷⁹³ Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns*, 22–23.

⁷⁹⁴ Terms like *corsair* and *buccaneer* also fell under the umbrella of the term *pirate*, but these are concepts directly related to the French and Spanish Caribbean, Lane, *Pillaging the Empire*, chapter 1.

⁷⁹⁵ Erik Odegard, “The Sixth Admiralty: The Dutch East India Company and the Military Revolution at Sea, c. 1639–1667,” *International Journal of Maritime History* 26, no. 4 (2014): 669–84; Victor Enthoven, Henk den Heijer, Han Jordaen, (eds.), *Geweld in de West : een militaire geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Atlantische wereld, 1600-1800*, Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2013; Michiel de Jong, Gerrit Knaap and Henk den Heijer, *Oorlogen overzee: militair optreden door compagnie en staat buiten Europa 1595-1814*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 2015.

⁷⁹⁶ On Cornelis Jol and other similar military expeditions by the WIC, see Enthoven, Heijer, Jordaen, *Geweld in de West*, 20–29.

⁷⁹⁷ Adam Clulow, “European Maritime Violence and Territorial States in Early Modern Asia, 1600-1650” *Itinerario* 33, no. 3 (2009): 72–94, 79.

⁷⁹⁸ Clulow, “European Maritime Violence” 79.

For individuals, the sea brought both opportunities and risks, in both legal and illegal settings. The risks included premature death, illness, shipwreck and accidents on board, all of which risks were increased by violent attacks at sea. However, since violence was used for aggression and for protection, delimitation and justification of violence was performed in contracts, charters, commissions and treaties. Lastly, violence could be justified as a means to improve trade. In this sense, Jan Glete has suggested that violence was one of the skills acquired by seamen in pre-modern times. He has further stated that long-distance trade tended to be controlled by those groups that used violence most efficiently at sea.⁷⁹⁹ Violence thus played a crucial role in early modern expansion and trade. To paraphrase Carlo Cipolla, during the early modern period, guns, sails and empire were closely intertwined.⁸⁰⁰

The role of violence as an entrepreneurial tool has nevertheless attracted very little attention from historians, with the exception of the historiography relating to the Portuguese empire.⁸⁰¹ The Indian and Atlantic Oceans were zones of opportunity, and violence was a natural means of pursuing the latter, giving the sea the character of a frontier, on which trade and violence were intertwined. The sources and the nature of violence were often unclear: states sponsored some acts and forbade others, violence was performed by private entrepreneurs, and the dividing line between the state and private violence was often unclear. Rulers offered individuals opportunities for privateering, a decision that entailed several consequences. First, at least in theory, states became stronger as privateers used violence in their name. However, violence often backfired, especially in Asia. Second, privateering was a means of upholding mercantilism, since attacks on foreign ships were in keeping with this ideology. Third, rulers used privateering licenses as a means to distribute privilege and power among specific social groups, in an attempt to win support for the mounting expenses that maritime expansion entailed. Fourth, states provided a cover of legitimacy for violence by private parties. Indeed, this can be referred to as the ‘nationalisation’ of violence, this being part of the process of the monopolisation of violence that was inherent to modern states. Finally, violence at sea during times of peace was a way of maintaining a constant preparedness for war.

Privateers, pirates, and admirals and captains at the service of overseas companies have been omitted from the recently well-defined category of “military entrepreneurs”.⁸⁰² For Jeffrey Fynn-Paul and his co-authors, a military entrepreneur was “a person who undertakes to supply the state with the means to wage war.”⁸⁰³ According to these authors, such a person needed to either supply the state with additional financial capacity, to provide troop levies or to supply arms, goods, uniforms or other

⁷⁹⁹ Glete, *Warfare at Sea, 1500-1650*, 42.

⁸⁰⁰ Cipolla, *Guns and Sails*.

⁸⁰¹ There are several examples in the Portuguese historiography that relate to violence and entrepreneurship. Pedro Teixeira, Diogo Pereira and Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo, to name but a few examples, combined violence and entrepreneurship. See for example, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700: A Political and Economic History* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 253–258; C. R. Boxer, *Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo: A Portuguese Merchant-Adventurer in South East Asia, 1624-1667* (Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967); A. J. R. Russell-Wood, *The Portuguese Empire, 1415-1808: A World on the Move* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 94–105, 96.

⁸⁰² David Parrott, *The Business of War: Military Enterprise and Military Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); David Parrott, “The Military Enterpriser in the Thirty Years’ War,” in *War, Entrepreneurs, and the State in Europe and the Mediterranean, 1300-1800*, ed. Jeff Fynn-Paul (Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2014), 63–86.

⁸⁰³ Jeff Fynn-Paul, Marjolein ’t Hart, and Griet Vermeesch, “Entrepreneurs, Military Supply, and State Formation in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods: New Directions,” in *War, Entrepreneurs, and the State in Europe and the Mediterranean, 1300-1800*, ed. Jeff Fynn-Paul (Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1–13, no 8.

material necessary for violence. Their approach focused on those men who developed a war industry, rather than those who used violence for social or economic gains. Unlike the large war contractors of European states, Leye and Carloff's main concern was not logistics or supply. Rather, they had the means of violence provided to them by the companies that they served, and were able to use these in a very direct way to further their own entrepreneurial projects.

According to Glete, the relevance of men like Leye and Carloff can be explained by the demand for "*private entrepreneurs*". In short, states lacked fleets and skilled men to participate in long-distance trade. Hence, private entrepreneurs, connected with local maritime communities, offered a potential solution. As already stated in chapter five, the latter were able to provide the necessary provisions and personnel, and offered experience and knowledge to the enterprises that they served.⁸⁰⁴ Although private entrepreneurs were often a diffuse group, they shared common features: they often belonged to social groups inferior to those that provided officers in the navy and commercial fleets, and they often used their role to attain upward social mobility. Furthermore, most early modern societies believed that violence against those from different cultures and religions was permissible, and, as the distances grew, the more permissible it became. Indeed, this belief will be illustrated with reference to the cases of Leye and Carloff.⁸⁰⁵

Needless to say, not all overseas entrepreneurship involved violent behaviour. There were in fact several merchant groups who did business without violence, and even condemned the use of it by others. Nonetheless, at least in the Nordic companies, violence was often present. This does not mean that individuals always chose violence in order to make profit, but rather that they were prepared to use violence if necessary to secure new opportunities for profit. Thus, violence was not necessarily a priority, but rather an option. Unlike most of those studied in historical accounts of entrepreneurship, overseas entrepreneurs did not shy away from deploying violence if necessary. From a short-term perspective, one could profit from privateering or pillaging settlements. However, from a long-term perspective, violence was seldom successful, because it created potential enemies and weakened the capacity of the workforce overseas.

6.3 *Leye and violence in the Indian Ocean*

In 1628, Leye was appointed captain in the Danish navy, a fact which suggests that he was deemed ready to engage in combat. The task was, however, short lived, since the King, Christian IV, left the Thirty Year's War only one year after Leye's appointment.⁸⁰⁶ Later, in the Indian Ocean, Leye's first experience of violence came in 1643, during the siege of Fort Dansborg. After Leye's return from Emeldy and Masulipatnam, he corresponded with the governor, Jakob van Stakenborrig, and Chaplain Niels Andersen Udbynder. In these letters, he threatened to use violence if he was not allowed to enter the fort.⁸⁰⁷ When he was refused entry on 21 June, he justified his recourse to violence as part of his mission to rescue the DEIC. He was assisted in this endeavour by Simão D'Almeida, his Portuguese contact in Negapatnam. On 22 June, Leye arrived at Tranquebar with 70 soldiers, both European and local. In the town, he met three DEIC employees, who had left the fort, and who informed him that the people inside would not resist in the case of an attack. According to

⁸⁰⁴ Glete, *Warfare at Sea, 1500-1650*, 42.

⁸⁰⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁰⁶ *Kancelliets brevbøger, 1627-1629*, 01.05.1628, Leye appointed as captain in the Danish navy, 406-407.

⁸⁰⁷ See chapter four for further discussion of this tension.

Leyel, the inhabitants of Tranquebar saw his troops as liberators from the tyranny of Pessart and Udbyneder. Soon after that, Leyel, assisted by the people of Tranquebar as well as the firepower of the *Christianshavn*, took over the fort, meeting with little resistance.⁸⁰⁸ Although he may have exaggerated the local response to his arrival, violence proved an excellent means of achieving his aims.

The instructions and rules devised to punish company employees indicate that physical violence was not exceptional. Rigorous discipline was expected of all DEIC employees. For example, the crews had to participate in daily prayers. The punishment for failing to obey this rule was being tied to the mast. The crew was punished severely for misconduct, the captain could cut their wages, meals and drinks, and corporal punishment was not uncommon. The person receiving the punishment could be tied to the mast, stabbed with a knife through the hand, or even keel-hauled.⁸⁰⁹ In the case of an attack on a commander, captain or merchant, the assailant was punished with death.⁸¹⁰ Throughout Leyel's rule in India, he deployed violence as a means to maintain control within the settlement. Thus, it is important to stress that not all violent behaviour was directed towards other companies and competitors. Indeed, within the companies themselves, violent acts were often used to punish deviant behaviour, as we have seen in the example of the siege of the fort and the subsequent punishment of its employees. Such harsh discipline and punishments demonstrate that men like Leyel and Carloff were constantly surrounded by violence. As such, it is not surprising that violence was also an integral part of trade. To paraphrase the Swedish historian Jan Glete, maritime trade was indeed a violent workplace, particularly overseas.

The violence that arose from attempts to control assets (forts, factories, castles, etc.) and people (discipline) serve to partially explain the blurring of the line between legitimate and illegitimate violence. Furthermore, raiding as a means to destroy competitors was a common feature of European activities in the Indian Ocean. Leyel's participation in privateering raids against Bengali ships in the Bay of Bengal provides an example of this. Although the DEIC was involved in such activities, the latter were not typically associated with the trading companies. For her part, Kathryn Wellen has raised the question of why such a small company would choose to attack one of the largest powers in the world through acts of privateering.⁸¹¹ In response, she has suggested that the motive was to profit from the seized ships, especially since the Mughals, with their almost non-existent navy, were hardly capable of resisting the DEIC at sea.

European naval advantage has long been understood by historians, and Wellen goes to great lengths to account for the DEIC's raids, presenting her argument from the company's perspective. In my view, Leyel's participation in the raids in Bengal can also be explained from an entrepreneurial point of view: in short, the circumstances and the opportunity to make a profit coincided. The administration in Europe hardly knew what was going on in the Indian Ocean. This was different to the case of the VOC and EIC, whose directors were aware of the situation in the Indian Ocean, and occasionally intervened to stop privateering and to keep profit-driven agents at bay.⁸¹² The word privateering as used here is based on the seventeenth-century justification of violence at sea. As the

⁸⁰⁸ RAC, DK, B 246 A, Leyel to the directors, 22.11.1644.

⁸⁰⁹ RAC, DK, B 246 A, Instructions to the commander.

⁸¹⁰ Ibidem. On discipline onboard ships, see N. A. M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 205–244.

⁸¹¹ Wellen, "The Danish East India" 439–61.

⁸¹² Clulow, "European Maritime Violence.", 78.

representative of the king in India, Leyel used his authority to justify privateering, so as to avoid accusations of piracy back in Europe. However, for their part, local merchants and rulers probably saw such violent attacks as a clear-cut case of piracy.

After studying the privateering campaigns in the Gulf of Bengal, Kay Larsen, Gunnar Olsen and Kathryn Wellen have concluded that these began with the loss of the DEIC ship *St Jacob* in 1640. The ship was sailing from Makassar to Masulipatnam, but a storm forced it to seek shelter on the coast. The local authorities refused assistance and the ship was wrecked, the crew imprisoned and the cargo seized. The crew was eventually freed, but the cargo was not returned. As a result, Pessart, commander at the time, declared a naval war on the Bengalis, using the *St Jacob* and its treatment by the local authorities as his *casus belli*.⁸¹³ The violence against the Bengali ships continued when Leyel arrived. However, in his case, privateering took on a more organised form, becoming an important source of income and business, especially during the years when Copenhagen failed to support the company. On 24 August 1644, Leyel wrote a document in Portuguese, justifying the use of violence against the Bengalis.⁸¹⁴ He provided a detailed overview of events dating back to 1625, while using strong language and doing everything in his power to vindicate his own actions. The five-page document concluded by stating that the Danes had been forced to cease trading in some places due to acts of robbery and tyranny committed by the Bengalis.⁸¹⁵ For Leyel, the aim was to justify acts of violence as a morally legitimate reaction to the injustices of the locals, even if such violence was technically illegal.

Kathryn Wellen has suggested that early modern European justifications of violence were often built upon complex narratives. According to Wellen: “company agents wrote complicated, and sometimes convoluted, arguments to justify their use of violence. Often, they compiled long lists of grievances, made assumptions about who was responsible for losses incurred, and supplemented these with accounts of unsuccessful attempts at obtaining compensation.”⁸¹⁶ In his reports to the directors, Leyel stated that he had intervened against the Bengalis because they had seized a Danish frigate, which had been carrying four elephants intended for the governor in Masulipatnam.⁸¹⁷ However, he also acknowledged that Danish raids were a means to improve the difficult state of the company and to increase the wealth of its employees. Leyel also wrote of how the *Wahlby* and the *Christianshavn* had raided the Bay of Bengal, capturing several ships with valuable cargoes.⁸¹⁸ In 1644, the company continued with these actions, seizing both smaller and larger ships, some as big as 250 lasts.⁸¹⁹ Leyel explained that between September and January, he had developed a patrolling system to detect Bengali ships, and as a result would be able to seize up to thirty-five ships of various sizes during the winter months. During the raids, the cargo was seized, and the confiscated ships came under company authority. The growing organisation of the raids proves that Leyel had no intention of ending these attacks. However, such continuous raids did not necessarily mean that Leyel was planning a full-scale

⁸¹³ Larsen, *Dansk-Ostindiske koloniers historie*, 435; Olsen, “Dansk Ostindien,” 126; Wellen, “The Danish East India”, 448.

⁸¹⁴ RAC, DK, B247A, Manifest 24.08.1644; This manifest has been extensively studied by Wellen; her study will form the basis for this discussion. Wellen, “The Danish East India”, 449–450.

⁸¹⁵ Wellen, “The Danish East India”, 449.

⁸¹⁶ Wellen, “The Danish East India”, 450.

⁸¹⁷ RAC, DK, B 246 A, Leyel to the directors, 22.11.1644.

⁸¹⁸ RAC, DK, B 246 A, Leyel to the directors, 22.11.1644.

⁸¹⁹ Wellen, “The Danish East India”, 451–452.

war against the Mughals.⁸²⁰ In this case, maritime violence remained primarily a tool to achieve an economic goal.

Towards the end of 1645, Leyel commented on the prospect of ending the privateering raids. The Prince of Bengal had declared his willingness to negotiate with the DEIC, and Leyel was also willing to negotiate, on the condition that the prince would send ambassadors to Tranquebar.⁸²¹ However, he complained that the VOC would oppose this plan, since the prospective treaty would entitle the DEIC to enter the Bay of Bengal legally and to establish a factory there, which was against the interests of the VOC.⁸²² Privateering and violence had thus given Leyel a way into trade in the Bay of Bengal. Curiously, when writing to the king, Leyel does not mention the privateering raids, despite the fact that he usually provided detailed information about events on the coast and further afield in Asia. The reason for this silence was probably his concern about the king's reaction, especially if the latter were to discover that these raids had been committed under royal authority. Even when Leyel did relay some information about the privateering raids, he tended to associate these with trading endeavours, particularly the purchase of rice on the coast of Zinzley in Bengal.⁸²³

Tales of violence were far more evident in local correspondence.⁸²⁴ This stemmed from Leyel's need to defend his actions, to show resilience and to command respect from others. In an instruction to skipper Simon Charstenson and pilot Willem Mouridsen of the *St Michael*, Leyel ordered them to be on the alert for the Bengalis, since the latter were everyone's "worst enemies". As such, he explained, attacking Bengali ships was a "fair deed".⁸²⁵ In 1646, Leyel continued to assert that the Bengalis had severely mistreated the Danes, and even condemned them for murdering Danish company employees. In Leyel's mind, this meant that his subordinates ought to attack them at all costs, and he wished them: "God be on your side and bring plenty of success."⁸²⁶

Leyel also disclosed some practical information about the raids in his correspondence with his subordinates. He advised his men to embark upon these raids without hoisting the company flag, in order to avoid unpleasant reactions from the EIC or the VOC.⁸²⁷ He also ordered the captains to head for the coast of Bengal during the night, and to harass and attack as many Bengali ships as possible.⁸²⁸ Having seized the ships, Leyel made an inventory of what they carried and to whom they belonged. One of his most reliable sources of information in this regard was his local Portuguese connections.⁸²⁹ The availability and organisation of this information enabled Leyel to estimate the value of the cargo on board, and to intimidate local rulers into compliance by threatening to attack their ships. How many of the raided ships and goods became assets of the company and how many went to enrich Leyel and his employees personally remains unclear.

⁸²⁰ RAC, DK, B 246 A, Leyel to the directors, 12.12.1645.

⁸²¹ The prince refers to the nawab/governor Shazada Muhammed Shah Shuja (1616–?). He was the son of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (1592–1666).

⁸²² RAC, DK, B 246 A, Leyel to the directors, 12.12.1645.

⁸²³ RAC, DK, B 246 A, Leyel to the directors, 16.11.1646; RAC, DK, B 246 A, Leyel to P. Nielsen, 16.09.1646; RAC, DK, B 246 A, Leyel to J. Hansen and S. Janssen, 22.08.1644.

⁸²⁴ For example the letters: RAC, DK, B 246 A, Leyel to J. Hansen, 04.08.1647; RAC, DK, B 246 A, Leyel to J. Hansen, 09.08.1644; Wellen, "The Danish East India", 451.

⁸²⁵ RAC, DK, B247 B, Instruction S. Charstenson and W. Mouridsen 19.09.1645.

⁸²⁶ RAC, DK, B 246 A, Leyel to J. Hansen and S. Janssen, 22.08.1644.

⁸²⁷ Ibid.

⁸²⁸ RAC, DK, B247 B, Instruction S. Charstenson and W. Mouridsen 19.09.1645.

⁸²⁹ RAC, DK, B 246 A, Leyel to J. Hansen and S. Janssen, 22.08.1644.

Several unsuccessful attempts were made to re-establish peace. Unable to reach an agreement with Leyel, Mughal officials pressured other Europeans to serve as a buffer between the DEIC and their merchant shipping in the Bay of Bengal.⁸³⁰ However, VOC officials replied that they would not take measures against the Danish. On the one hand, this underlines the degree of toleration for such actions. On the other hand, it also shows that the companies wished to avoid confrontation with one another. The Mughal requests were thus to no avail; privateering continued throughout the seventeenth century. Indeed, this was unsurprising, given that it was one of the best ways for the company personnel to make a profit.⁸³¹

Under Leyel's command, the DEIC was involved in continuous and extensive raids against Bengali ships. Wellen has pointedly argued that the success of the DEIC stemmed from its technological superiority in ships and weapons. In addition, I would suggest that these raids also provided a solution to the problems that arose from the lack of support from the home country. The fact that Leyel went to such great lengths to justify his actions suggests that he was aware that many of these raids were unacceptable. Leyel claimed that the root of the problem lay with the attacks by the Mughals, and projected a direct correlation between those events and the raids. Since Leyel was appointed to represent the interest of the king, it was not difficult for him to politically justify his privateering. However, it is probable that the locals saw the latter as nothing more than piracy.

6.4 *Carloff: an act of revenge or an entrepreneurial opportunity in Western Africa?*

In February 1657, Carloff informed the directors of the Swedish Africa Company that he was leaving the company. The directors were aware that Carloff had traded for his own benefit and had thus harmed the company interest. However, they still they wanted him to continue as either co-director or governor in Africa.⁸³² Carloff was thus simultaneously a liability and an asset for the company. Even though the Swedish elite had become increasingly interested in the revenues that could be had from overseas trade, they were not willing to get their own hands dirty, and thus preferred to hire others to act on their behalf. In 1656, the president of the SAC, Christer Bonde, tried to persuade Carloff to stay, although to no avail.⁸³³

Nováky has suggested that the main reason for Carloff's departure was his weakened position within the company.⁸³⁴ In a letter to Bonde, dated 1657, Carloff protested that he had been excluded from the administration of the company, and that the directors had neither paid his dividends from past ventures nor followed his suggestions for restructuring the company.⁸³⁵ In a subsequent letter to the Danish King, Fredrik III, Carloff further elaborated on his decision to leave the SAC, stating that the directors had refused to refund his initial investments, and that he was disappointed with the restructuring of the company, which he felt had diminished the power of the de Geer family and himself. Furthermore, Carloff added that the company was now administered by incompetent men.⁸³⁶ Indeed,

⁸³⁰ Wellen, "The Danish East India", 455.

⁸³¹ Ibid, 457–459.

⁸³² RAS, H&S, vol. 42, Henrich Carloff to Christer Bonde, 21.02.1657.

⁸³³ See chapter three for further discussion on the topic. See also, Nováky, *Handelskompanier*, 201.

⁸³⁴ Ibidem.

⁸³⁵ RAS, H&S vol.42 Henrich Carloff to Christer Bonde, 21.02.1657; Nováky, *Handelskompanier*, 201.

⁸³⁶ RAC, TKIA, Diverse akter vedr. Det ostindiske kompagni og Guinea, Henrich Carloff to Fredrik III, 27.05.1657.

Nováky has noted that the influence of the de Geer family had remained untouched after the re-organisation, and that Carloff's own position had thus probably been weakened.⁸³⁷

In my opinion, this letter to the Danish king was a sort of a job application; Carloff offered the king his expertise, emphasising his proficiency in the systematic use of violence. First, Carloff explained how he had begun his career in the WIC in Brazil, and how he had participated in the endemic state of war that characterised the Dutch presence there. While still on the payroll of the WIC, he had then participated in the conquests of Angola, Luanda and São Tomé. His participation in these conquests was not described in detail, and he probably overemphasised his role, since he had still been a low-ranking company soldier, at least in Brazil. Stressing his military past, Carloff proposed sailing to Africa under a Danish commission in order to attack the Swedish possessions there. Nothing regarding the establishment of permanent Danish trade in Africa was mentioned in the letter.⁸³⁸

On 1 August 1657, Carloff and Fredrik III signed a contract.⁸³⁹ It was hardly a coincidence that Carloff had submitted his job application exactly at the moment when Denmark was once again at war with Sweden in Europe. Approaching the Danish king in such a combative manner was thus an efficient way for Carloff to win support for his plans. The commission, which Carloff received, can therefore be considered a "privateering commission". For Carloff, however, a privateering commission meant entrepreneurial opportunity, and he lost no time in turning the use of violence into an entrepreneurial strategy. For the Danish king, offering Carloff a commission was a way to attack Swedish possessions overseas. Secondly, around 1657, the Danish crown had initiated a series of attempts to establish an organised trade between Denmark and Africa, and Carloff's proposal was a necessary first step in that direction.

The contract between Carloff and Fredrik III must also be understood as a mechanism through which to challenge Swedish interests in Africa at a relatively low cost. In the contract, Carloff acknowledged that King Fredrik III had granted him a commission to attack Swedish possessions and property in Guinea, but only under six conditions. The first was that he should equip, supply and arm the ships at his own expense. He could then dispose of any seized goods and ships as he saw fit, so long as he first brought them to Glückstadt. The second condition was that if Carloff captured Fort Carolusborg, he was to be responsible for holding onto it until the negotiations between the Danish crown and himself were concluded. If the king decided to start a company, Carloff was to be allowed to invest in it, and he would also become one of the directors, receiving a fixed percentage of the dividends. If the king decided not to start a company, Carloff was to be allowed to transfer the fort to whomever he wished, so long as this was not a hostile power. The third condition was that if Carloff failed in his mission, or if he had to rely on the assistance of Africans or other powers on the coast, he would be obliged to pay the king every tenth "pfenning" of whatever he obtained during the expedition. The fourth and the fifth conditions were that Carloff committed himself to confiscating and plundering the cargoes of Swedish ships. The sixth condition was that he had to allow all ships from Denmark and its provinces to come and go freely on the Guinea coast. Georg Nørregård has

⁸³⁷ In 1654, at the meeting in Uppsala after de Geer's death, Carloff claimed that the de Geer family had too much power in the company. RAS, Kommerskollegium, Huvudarkivet (KKA), Protokoll, 1651–1654, A1 AA:1; see previous chapters 3 and 4.

⁸³⁸ RAC, TKIA, Diverse akter vdr. Det ostindiske kompagni og Guinea, Henrich Carloff to Fredrik III, 27.05.1657.

⁸³⁹ RAC, TKIA, Diverse akter vdr. Det ostindiske kompagni og Guinea, Contract: Henrich Carloff and Fredrik III, 01.08.1657; Justesen, *Danish Sources*, 1–3.

claimed that this contract placed Carloff in an unusual position, granting him something approaching sovereign independence, on a level equivalent to that of the leading Danish ministers Corfiz Ulfeldt and Hannibal Sehested.⁸⁴⁰ In my view, the contract was a way for Carloff to demonstrate that he was capable of mastering Western Africa, including through the use of violence. For Fredrik III, it was simply a means to attack the Swedes.

Carloff's unusual position and the conditions of the contract resulted from the fact that this project required a large amount of capital. As stated in the contract, Carloff had to acquire the latter; the king did not want to invest in this expedition. However, equipping a ship, purchasing the outbound cargo and paying the salaries of a crew was not cheap. In chapter four, the way in which Carloff financed the expedition was discussed. In return for investments, Carloff had promised the investors gold from Africa. The overlap between the interests of the investors in Amsterdam, Carloff's entrepreneurship, and the political tension between Sweden and Denmark had created a unique situation.

On 25 January 1658, the *Glückstadt* arrived in Western Africa. The ship first landed in Jumoree, after which it continued to Axim, where Carloff received additional support from the WIC. In particular, the Dutch officials provided Carloff with four cannons and forty-six local soldiers. A few days later, Carloff approached Elmina, and negotiated with the WIC regarding his intended attack.⁸⁴¹ Much like Leye, Carloff received additional support, and managed to take over the fort without hardly any resistance.

Our information regarding the campaign in Africa is mostly drawn from a travel journal by Johan Müller, as well as a memoir written by the SAC governor, Johan Philip Krusenstierna, who was overthrown by Carloff.⁸⁴² Müller had visited Cape Coast right after the attack, was an eye witness, and other sources largely confirm his version of events. As he put it:

One morning in 1658, between five and six o'clock, this castle was captured by stealth by Henrich Carloff; for Carloff had gone to Guinea in the service of His Royal Majesty the king of Denmark and Norway etc. in order to seize control of some Swedish places and forts, insofar as occasion arose; and his wish came true. He landed unsuspected at night with several people, and at Cape Coast he met his good friend Acrosan or Johann Classen, who had been friendly and well inclined towards Carloff when the latter was still in Swedish service. Carloff revealed his intention to Acrosan and sought his approval, which he immediately obtained.⁸⁴³

Consequently, the attack took only a few hours, and succeeded without serious resistance. This was unsurprising, since Carloff's troops far outnumbered the SAC employees of the fort. After the fort was captured, part of the garrison, consisting mostly of Germans and Dutchmen, decided to turn to Carloff for employment; the rest were imprisoned then sent to Glückstadt. Moreover, the attack on Carolusborg also resulted in the seizing of the Swedish vessel the *Stockholms Slott*, which had been anchored outside. It was loaded with gold and was taken as a prize. The rest of the Swedish possessions at Takorari, Anomabo, Jumoree and Orsu were soon seized too.⁸⁴⁴

⁸⁴⁰ Nørregård, *Danish Settlements*, 16.

⁸⁴¹ Nørregård, *Danish Settlements*, 16; Van Dantzig, *Forts and Castles*, 21.

⁸⁴² Johan Müller was the priest of Glückstadt Company. He was originally from Hamburg and had entered service in the 1660s. Travel journal by Müller in Jones, *German Sources*; RAS, H&S 42, Krusenstiernas memorial 25.06.1658.

⁸⁴³ Travel journal by Müller in, *German Sources*, 143.

⁸⁴⁴ Nováky, *Handelskompanier*, 202.

A letter from Carloff to the Dutch governor, Jan Valckenburgh, reveals how Carloff had managed to convince the caboceer: in particular, Carloff stated that he and Acrosan had a long-standing personal relationship. For the sake of their relationship, Carloff promised to forgive Acrosan's debts to the Swedish company, a promise that may have increased the caboceer's willingness to strike an agreement.⁸⁴⁵ However, Nováky has argued that forgiveness of debts was probably not a strong enough reason to bind Acrosan to Carloff, since the SAC lacked the means to collect the debts anyway. Most likely, Carloff had also promised lavish gifts and better prices for African goods.⁸⁴⁶ However, Nováky's interpretation can be further nuanced through consideration of a letter from May 1659. Here, Acrosan told the SAC directors that he had been under the impression that when Carloff had returned to the coast in 1658, he had still been in the service of the SAC. Carloff had supposedly told him that the reason for the attack was an internal struggle between the SAC officials. Acrosan further stated that he had made a personal agreement with Carloff to support and assist him when necessary, and had only later realised that Carloff had deceived him. His disappointment was such that he reaffirmed his loyalty to the SAC.⁸⁴⁷

Carloff's attack on Carolusborg also needs to be analysed from the point of view of the Fetus, since this episode relates to the importance of balancing between different local groups, as discussed in chapter four. Carloff's personal relationship with the rulers and merchants shows how crucial this network was. The Fetus supported Carloff even after the take-over of Carolusborg. In the aftermath of the conquest, two SAC ships arrived at Cape Coast. The ships attempted to attack the fort, but were repelled by Carloff's men and his Fetu allies.⁸⁴⁸ It is likely that this type of support was forthcoming because Carloff had managed to portray himself as a man who could deliver European goods, such as gunpowder, alcohol and textiles, at lower prices than others. He seemed to have connections all over Europe, and this was certainly valued by the African merchants. Conversely, he also fulfilled a function in the African market.

Carloff's entrepreneurship was equally important to the other Europeans on the coast. The success of the attack resulted from Carloff's personal connection to Acrosan, the internal struggle within the SAC and the support of the WIC. Even though the attack was carried out with both WIC and African support, it benefitted from the fact that the SAC was internally divided between those loyal to the company, such as Krusenstierna, and those loyal to Carloff, such as Samuel Smidt and Joost Cramer. In effect, this means that Carloff had supporters waiting for him on the coast. These men had been working with him for a long time, and Carloff had managed to maintain a firm relationship with them.⁸⁴⁹

After the take-over, Carloff summoned all SAC officials (with the exception of Krusenstierna, who was arrested immediately), and offered them the chance to join his service, on the condition that they swore him a personal oath. Carloff was uncertain about what to do with the Swedish employees, but most of them rejected his offer anyway. By contrast, most Dutch and German officials were willing to join Carloff. These included Samuel Smidt, who had joined the SAC in 1649, and also Abraham Heintzel, Johan Cornelesen, Sigmund Jeunisch and Johan Christiansen Canter. The rest of

⁸⁴⁵ NL-HaNA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv.nr. 12571.38.1, Henrich Carloff to Jan Valckenburgh, 15.02.1658, FC, N8, 41–43; RAS, H&S vol. 42, Krusenstiernas memorial 25.6.1658; Nováky, *Handelskompanier*, 202.

⁸⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 203.

⁸⁴⁷ NL-HaNA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv.nr. 12571.38.1, Jan Claessen (Acrosan) to the directors of the SAC, 29.05.1659; FC, N8, 215.

⁸⁴⁸ For more about the two ships, see Nováky, *Handelskompanier*, 204.

⁸⁴⁹ See chapter four on these relationships.

the personnel were arrested.⁸⁵⁰ The internal tension between the factions thus became a part of Carloff's strategy. After the conquest of the fort, he decided that he would get rid of those employees who had previously defied him. As Robert Porter argues: "Carloff's greatest asset was his knowledge of the coast and its people. He was able to use this to full advantage as he proceeded – so much that this operation may be taken as a textbook example of how Gold Coast forts could be captured with very limited resources."⁸⁵¹ Carloff's successful conquest earned him gold, and changed the balance of power between the Swedish, Dutch and Danish interests on the Gold Coast.

6.5 *From Western Africa to the Caribbean Sea*

A second set of events also illustrates Carloff's use of violence, namely his activities in the Caribbean following his return to Dutch service. In 1676, a squadron was dispatched by the Admiralty of Amsterdam, under the command of vice-admiral Jacob Binckes, who was assisted by Captains Jan Bont and Henrich Carloff. Their mission was to attack the French possessions in the Caribbean and to rebuild the Dutch settlement in Tobago. The initial attack was successful, but in 1677, the French retaliated in force, and the Dutch were forced to abandon the conquered islands and regions. This marked the end of the Dutch interest in this region, and their focus now shifted towards the island of Curaçao, to Suriname, and to Essequibo and Demerara.⁸⁵² Between 1674 and 1676, however, the Atlantic arena provided another opportunity for Carloff to use violence in furtherance of his career. While the attack of 1676 might not have brought tangible benefits, its motive, and the way in which it was performed, provide support for the argument that violence was a key means of overseas entrepreneurship.

The contract that Carloff had signed with the French West India Company in 1665 had bound him to serve his French masters for six years.⁸⁵³ In 1671, the contract expired, and Carloff's interest in French trade declined; the FWIC was no longer appealing enough, and he now looked for new opportunities. He also knew of the challenges faced by the WIC: in 1674, it was facing bankruptcy. Indeed, the early 1670s were generally challenging for the Republic, which was again at war, first with England, and then with France. For Carloff, political events such as the Third Anglo-Dutch War and the Franco-Dutch War represented a source of entrepreneurial opportunity.

In 1676, the most important overseas arena for Carloff was the Caribbean, especially the island of Tobago and the city of Cayenne (in present-day French Guiana). With regard to the latter, the French had seized Cayenne from the Dutch in 1664. Cayenne was an important port, and its possession was contested by the European powers. For its part, Tobago had been successively occupied by the English, the French, the Dutch and the Courlanders over the course of the seventeenth century. Its strategic location was important, since it offered a good anchoring point for slave-trading ships travelling from Western Africa to the Caribbean. Furthermore, its climate and soil were favourable for Europeans. In 1650, a Dutch family, the Lampsins, had received permission from the

⁸⁵⁰ RAS, H&S 42, Krusenstiernas memorial 25.06.1658; NL-HaNA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv.nr. 12571.38.1, *Henrich Carloff to Jan Valckenburgh* 15.02.1658 and 16.02.1658; Nováky, *Handelskompanier*, 202–203.

⁸⁵¹ Porter, *European Activity*, 380.

⁸⁵² The events in the Caribbean during the 1670s have been studied by Cornelis de Jonge and Cornelis Goslinga. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean*; De Jonge, *Geschiedenis van Het Nederlandsche Zeewezen*. Additionally, W. Menkman has studied the events in Tobago. See W.R. Menkman, "TOBAGO: een bijdrage tot de geschiedenis der Nederlandsche kolonisatie in tropisch Amerika IV," *De West-Indische Gids* 21 (1940): 33–46.

⁸⁵³ On the contract, see chapter five.

States General to establish a settlement on Tobago. In 1654, a large group of Zeeland settlers had arrived. The island had gradually prospered, annually harvesting crops of tobacco, dye, indigo, sugar and cotton. The Lampsins had also allowed a large number of French planters to settle on the island, and both the Dutch and the French co-operated with the Courlandian settlers. Surprisingly, and for unknown reasons, Cornelis Lampsins then approached Louis XIV to request protection for the settlement. The Dutch historian Cornelis Goslinga has suggested that Lampsins perhaps believed that French support would improve his own position on the island. In 1662, Lampsins received the requested protection, and would eventually become a member of the French aristocracy, with the title of Baron of Tobago.⁸⁵⁴ The main result was that the island now fell into both the French and the Dutch spheres of interest.

On the eve of the Second Anglo-Dutch War, the English conquered the island for a short period. It was also offered to the Courlanders, but, in the peace treaty of Breda, Tobago was restored to the Dutch. However, the French and the Courlanders remained interested in the island. In 1672, the English conquered Tobago. According to Goslinga, this was the first Caribbean action in the war between the Dutch Republic, England and France.⁸⁵⁵ James Pritchard has stated that the Caribbean wars of 1672 to 1678 made France a stronger power in the West Indies. He has further argued that it was through naval action that the French managed to exclude the Dutch from their Caribbean colonies, rather than through commercial competition.⁸⁵⁶ However, as will be demonstrated, before 1676, the French were still weaker in the West Indies than the Dutch. Due to events in Europe, the French believed that the Dutch were too tied-down to be able to act effectively in the West Indies, and Colbert therefore devised a plan to expel all Dutch forces from the region. In August 1673, the Dutch planned to conquer the French islands with the aid of their Spanish allies. In Europe, the situation for France worsened in 1674, when England ended its alliance with France, and Charles II signed a separate treaty with the Dutch at the peace of Westminster. This gave the Dutch an opportunity to expel the French from the Netherlands, since France also had to defend its Atlantic and overseas possessions.⁸⁵⁷

The Westminster treaty thus put an end to the Second Anglo-Dutch War. However, the conflict between the Dutch and the French continued. At the peace treaty, the Dutch had once again acquired Tobago. Now, the Lampsins sold the island to the states of Holland, and it was placed under the authority of the Admiralty of Amsterdam. As such, the newly founded second WIC (1674-1792) was excluded from the administration of the island.⁸⁵⁸

From 1674 to 1675, at the time when Cayenne was in French hands and Tobago offered to the states of Holland, Carloff approached Hiob de Wildt, the secretary of the Admiralty, with a new scheme. In consultation with Gaspar Fagel, the Grand pensionary (*Raadspensionaris*), an expedition to the Caribbean was planned.⁸⁵⁹ It was no coincidence that Carloff approached the Board of the Admiralty at precisely that moment. During his service in the FWIC, Carloff had already sailed to the Caribbean and had sold slaves in Cayenne and Guadeloupe.⁸⁶⁰ He had up-to-date knowledge of

⁸⁵⁴ Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean*, 447.

⁸⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 449.

⁸⁵⁶ Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 269.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 279.

⁸⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 450.

⁸⁵⁹ The Grand pensionary came from an influential political family. The position gave Fagel significant influence in the local politics and society; Cornelis De Jonge, *Geschiedenis van Het Nederlandsche Zeewezen*, pt. 2, Vol. 3, 295.

⁸⁶⁰ See the previous chapter for the slave trade voyages of Carloff.

the French colonies and trade in the Caribbean, was familiar with the region, and was thus well-equipped to take advantage of the complex political situation there. He wanted to attack the French possessions in the Caribbean, and to set about rebuilding Tobago. He had experience in the deployment of violence, and it was thus only logical that he contacted the Admiralty. Since his relationship with the WIC had deteriorated following the events of 1659, this new arrangement would give him a means to continue trading in the Atlantic while bypassing the company.

Hiob de Wildt presented Carloff's plan to the Admiralty. Such an attack in the Caribbean could potentially provide a quick source of revenue, through seizure of enemy ships and confiscation goods, and Carloff thus expected to be rewarded with a governorship or a plantation afterwards. According to Goslinga, the WIC chamber of Amsterdam was willing to support the venture, but the chamber of Zeeland protested.⁸⁶¹

The timing of Carloff's approach made sense. During the previous years, the conflicts between the French, the English and the Dutch had left the settlements in the Caribbean in a vulnerable position. Many forts had been severely damaged, and defences were in many places weak. Privateering in the archipelago had harmed shipping and trade, and previous attempts to take over the French islands, for example Martinique in 1674, had weakened the French defences.⁸⁶² At the time, France was also practically incapable of sending reinforcements to the West Indies. At the beginning of the war, one of the reasons for French weakness in the West Indies was that the French navy was relatively new compared to its English and Dutch counterparts. As such, it lacked experience. Moreover, Colbert accused the navy's captains of lacking discipline and being inept in matters of provisioning.⁸⁶³ Indeed, this was in keeping with what Carloff had experienced on the FWIC's ships.

Based on Carloff and de Wildt's proposal, the Admiralty decided to dispatch a squadron to the Caribbean, with Binckes as commodore. During the expedition, Carloff was supposed to act as "commissioner general" and "second in command in the war council", and would later be appointed "governor of the island of Tobago".⁸⁶⁴ For his part, Binckes already had considerable experience in the region. Together with Cornelis Evertsen, he had led an expedition in the Caribbean in 1673, seizing French and English ships around Guadeloupe and Cul de Sac.⁸⁶⁵ However, these attacks had been more concerned with quick revenue through plunder rather than with territorial conquest.⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁶¹ Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean*, 450.

⁸⁶² Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 280.

⁸⁶³ Ibid, 287.

⁸⁶⁴ "commissaris generaal en tweede persoon inde hooge kriegsraat ober deze expeditie, en bij nader acte tot een guverneur want Ejlandet Tabago", NL-HaNA, Raadpensionaris Fagel, 3.01.18, inv.nr. 191, Jacob Binckes to Gaspar Fagel, 27.11.1676.

⁸⁶⁵ Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean*, 469–472.

⁸⁶⁶ Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 277.

Figure 6-1 Map of the attacks in the Caribbean Sea



Map created by Henrik Pulli

6.6 The attack

The expedition of Binckes, Bont and Carloff arrived at Cayenne on 4 May 1676. The squadron landed with nine hundred men prepared to fight. The French offered no resistance and surrendered, and, within a few days, the entire settlement was under Dutch control.⁸⁶⁷

After the attack on Cayenne, the squadron sailed on to the French island of Marie Galante, which they quickly captured and pillaged. Many French planters on the island accepted Binckes' offer to join the Dutch and to settle in Tobago instead.⁸⁶⁸ The next destination was Guadeloupe, where the Dutch Squadron arrived on 16 June 1676. There, however, they had to abandon their plans of conquest, as they encountered a French squadron. Thereafter, Binckes sailed to St. Martin, an island inhabited by French and Dutch settlers, where he met with heavy French resistance, which he overcame only with great difficulty. As soon as the squadron left, the island was retaken by the French.

After departing from St. Martin, Binckes divided the squadron in two. Binckes himself led one part of it to Hispaniola and Puerto Rico. The purpose of this voyage remains unclear, but Pritchard has suggested that Binckes attempted to convince the planters of Saint-Domingue, the French part of Hispaniola, to revolt against their French masters.⁸⁶⁹ The other part of the squadron, under the

⁸⁶⁷ NL-HaNA, Raadpensionaris Fagel, 3.01.18, inv.nr. 191, Henrich Carloff to Gaspar Fagel, 12.05.1676.

⁸⁶⁸ Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 288.

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 289.

command of Bont, headed towards Tobago.⁸⁷⁰ Bont was accompanied by Carloff, more than a hundred newly recruited settlers from Marie Galante, and a few hundred slaves. However, events soon took an unexpected turn, when Bont decided to leave the rest of the squadron and disappeared.⁸⁷¹ This naturally weakened the Dutch forces, but also left Carloff in charge. After calling at Hispaniola, Binckes' part of the squadron set sail towards Tobago, arriving in September 1676.⁸⁷² They immediately began to construct defences, since they were expecting a new attack by the French, which in fact took place only one year later. The French fleet, under the command of vice-admiral Jean Désrée, defeated the Dutch at the Second Battle of Tobago in December 1677. Binckes was killed in battle.⁸⁷³ Thus, the final outcome was a failure for the Dutch: they had to settle for only Suriname and Curaçao, and the ambitious plan for Tobago was abandoned.

What happened to Carloff after the events of 1676 is unclear. A peace between the French and the Dutch was signed on 10 August 1678. This mainly concerned the war as fought in Europe, but there was also a clause that stipulated that the French would receive Tobago, Cayenne and the Island of Gorée in Western Africa. The French also signed peace treaties with Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. Collectively, these treaties are known as the peace of Nijmegen (1679).⁸⁷⁴

In the light of these events, it is clear that the Caribbean was a contested region, and a great deal is already known about the imperial competition between Europeans. However, less is known about the private motives of the individuals who participated in such expeditions. In the historiography of the events of 1676, most scholars have based their studies on the seminal research of Johannes Cornelis de Jonge (1837). De Jonge had consulted the most relevant archives regarding the Dutch activities in the Caribbean. However, it is unclear why he only made use of Binckes's letters to Grand pensionary Fagel, while ignoring the letters from Carloff to Fagel. By taking Carloff into account, it can be seen how violence also constituted an entrepreneurial opportunity.

The squadron arrived at Cayenne on 4 May 1676, a date confirmed by both Binckes and Carloff. In many other regards, however, their respective reports to the Grand pensionary diverged. According to Binckes, he sent a trumpeter to the fort to demand the French surrender. Carloff, on the other hand, states that it was he who sent the trumpeter, along with his son Andreas, to the fort to negotiate. Even prior to the landing of the troops, Carloff had stated that he had sent his son on a reconnaissance mission to investigate the conditions of the fort.⁸⁷⁵ Both men attempted to take credit for the successful attack. However, Carloff did at least acknowledge Binckes in his reports, whereas the latter completely ignored Carloff.

After the attack, Carloff reported to Grand pensionary Fagel that the fort's defences had been weak. He had found only twelve soldiers and about 300 slaves, although the fort itself was in good order, despite still bearing the marks of the previous attacks by English ships. However, Carloff explained that he had had an idea about how to improve the settlement. He requested that the Grand pensionary send two to three thousand soldiers as a deterrent against possible slave revolts, and in order to provide defence against French attacks. Carloff explained in detail the infrastructure of the settlement, and promised to provide maps and accounts from the fort. There were nineteen sugar

⁸⁷⁰ Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean*, 478–479.

⁸⁷¹ According to Goslinga, Bont set sail to Europe, and sailed first to Cadiz, from where he continued to the Republic, where he was arrested and eventually beheaded. Why the naval officer decided leave the squadron is unclear. Ibid, 451.

⁸⁷² NL-HaNA, Raadpensionaris Fagel, 3.01.18, inv.nr. 191, Henrich Carloff to Gaspar Fagel, 16.09.1676.

⁸⁷³ Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean*, 451.

⁸⁷⁴ Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 295–296.

⁸⁷⁵ NL-HaNA, Raadpensionaris Fagel, 3.01.18, inv.nr. 191, Henrich Carloff to Gaspar Fagel, 12.05.1676.

mills, producing good quantities of sugar, and cassava had also been planted. The settlement was inhabited by 400 slaves, 1,000 cattle, but only a few horses. The great strength of the settlement was its sugar production, whereas cotton, tobacco and indigo did not grow well. Towards the end of the letter, Carloff argued that the islands of Guadeloupe and Saint Christoffer (Saint Kitts) ought also to be brought under Dutch authority, something that could easily be accomplished with a little extra assistance and effort.⁸⁷⁶

The attacks offered Carloff an opportunity to envision how he would restructure the settlements. He also emphasised that further Dutch expansion was desirable, and acknowledged the importance of support from Europe, both against possible French attacks and against slave revolts. According to the initial plan, Carloff would become governor of Tobago, and it was therefore understandable that he offered his opinions regarding plantations and trade. The fact that he discussed the development of the plantations and their labour force suggests that he had developed an interest in combining slave trading with the Caribbean plantations. Carloff wanted to position himself as a person capable of taking charge, but who also cared about business. In order to achieve his goal, he was not averse to using violence.

Binckes did not share Carloff's view. In his letter to Fagel of 13 May 1676, Binckes focused on his own role in the attack on Cayenne. He described the strategy of the attack, and how he had mobilised the troops.⁸⁷⁷ In his letters, he did not mention Carloff, being more concerned with the naval side of the expedition. Binckes also wrote an instruction letter to Carloff's son, Andreas Carloff. The latter was to deliver secret missives to Grand pensionary Fagel, and to return home to The Hague. Above all else, he was to avoid all contact with the French.⁸⁷⁸ It is unclear why Binckes sent Carloff's son on this voyage. One could speculate that Binckes did not want to have father and son working together, since this might have created difficulties for Binckes himself. Hence, sending Andreas to Europe was a convenient solution.

Carloff later reported that after the attack on St Martin, Binckes had decided to send a smaller squadron to take over Tobago—the second squadron mentioned above.⁸⁷⁹ Carloff arrived on 4 August, and Binckes with his squadron on 29 September. According to Carloff, the population of the island had received them well. Having arrived, Binckes and Carloff immediately began repairing the fort, while waiting for instructions from home. Eventually, in November 1676, the tensions between the two men escalated, and Binckes had Carloff arrested, arguing that he had compromised his position. Indeed, Carloff's appointment had created problems for Binckes. According to Binckes, they were both working under the instructions and orders of the Admiralty. However, Carloff had become too confident of his own position, and had refused to follow orders from Binckes' staff. Binckes explained that he had great respect for Carloff, but that he had endangered the expedition. Furthermore, Binckes' claimed that Carloff had conspired with other captains, and had spread lies regarding Binckes' actions during the expedition. For example, Carloff had accused Binckes of plundering the island of Marie Galante for his own personal benefit. Thus, Binckes claimed that Carloff had tried to harm his reputation, and had thereby endangered the entire expedition.⁸⁸⁰ In a

⁸⁷⁶ Ibidem.

⁸⁷⁷ NL-HaNA, Raadpensionaris Fagel, 3.01.18, inv.nr. 191, Jacob Binckes to Gaspar Fagel 13.05.1676.

⁸⁷⁸ NL-HaNA, Raadpensionaris Fagel, 3.01.18, inv.nr. 191, Instructions to Andreas Carloff, 14.05.1676.

⁸⁷⁹ NL-HaNA, Raadpensionaris Fagel, 3.01.18, inv.nr. 191, Carloff to ? (Recipient unclear but it was most likely Fagel) 08.10.1676.

⁸⁸⁰ NL-HaNA, Raadpensionaris Fagel, 3.01.18, inv.nr. 191, Jacob Binckes to Gaspar Fagel, 27.11.1676.

subsequent letter, other members of the council of war (*krijgsraadt*) agreed that Carloff had tried to destroy Binckes' reputation through false accusations, and therefore ordered Carloff's arrest.⁸⁸¹

In a notarised statement from 1677, Elias Pietersen, Hendrik de Verwer and Adrian Martensen, all crewmembers of the *Poppiesbergh*, captained by Pieter Sotlwijk, declared that in June 1676, Commander Binckes sailed straight past a French fleet in the waters between Dominique and Guadeloupe, without offering resistance. Indeed, several captains complained of Binckes' passivity.⁸⁸² In November 1676, however, the same captains had testified against Carloff.

Carloff's violent displays in the Caribbean primarily served the interests of the Admiralty of Amsterdam. However, deployment of violence had opened up new opportunities for Carloff himself, especially in the slave trade, the acquisition of plantations, and the possibility of becoming governor of Tobago. The letters from Binckes and Carloff attest to the confusion that prevailed in the Caribbean. Although it is impossible to know who was telling the truth, the letters nonetheless show that attacking possessions and plundering islands was seen as an effective way to profit from expeditions. As such, these expeditions were not only a long-term attempt to establish plantations and to expand the frontiers of empire, but also a short-term quest for profit. To people like Carloff and Binckes, numerous wars and conflicts led to instability, which in turn opened up opportunities for profit.

The attacks in Western Africa and the Caribbean were similar, in the sense that in both cases, Carloff had first approached rulers or administrators in Europe who could offer support for his violence. In both cases, violence had taken on an entrepreneurial dimension – there was a prospect not only of making profit, but also of improving social status. In the attack on Carolusborg in Western Africa, Carloff took charge, while in the Caribbean, he might easily have become governor of Tobago, in charge of the sugar plantations, and having a share in the slave trade.

Carloff approached European states during times of war or political conflict. Taking prizes, confiscating ships, and handing over forts and settlements could yield a large profit, as the plundering of the SAC's ship and fort demonstrate. In both campaigns, Carloff chose locations and targets based on his own previous knowledge of a region. Hence, knowledge and violence were complementary.

The confiscation of the gold reserves from the ship and the fort yielded a quick profit. However, while Carloff thus benefitted in the short term, it is unclear whether the attacks really benefitted him in the long run. Arguably, by expanding Danish trade in Western Africa, Carloff indirectly sought to maximise the return on the bottomry loans that he had investing in this trade. Thus, there was a connection between the attack and the making of profit after the attack.

In the Caribbean context, the motive to use violence was different. From a long-term perspective, the violent attacks on Cayenne and Tobago were a way of demonstrating the capacity for using violence as a means to master the region. It seems as if Carloff's idea was to convince his patrons in Amsterdam that he would be a good choice for governor of Tobago, since he would be capable of defending the settlement. In hindsight, it is known that he did not succeed in his plans. Nonetheless, his behaviour demonstrates that there was an entrepreneurial idea behind his violent acts. From a short-term perspective, whether Carloff actually wanted to become governor is unclear – it is possible that he was more interested in the prospect of making a fortune from privateering, as Binckes had done before him. In such an uncertain world, and given his life experience, he probably

⁸⁸¹ NL-HaNA, Raadpensionaris Fagel, 3.01.18, inv.nr. 191, Declaration by the council, 18.11.1676.

⁸⁸² SAA NA: 4737, fol. 489, 17.10.1676.

hoped for both. In sum, when we study the connection between entrepreneurship and violence, we should not focus only on the value of the cargo looted or the gold stolen, but also on the usefulness of violence in developing new business.

6.7 Conclusion

Leyel and Carloff lived in a world in which violence and coercion were omnipresent; in particular, wars and conflicts between European states had repercussions overseas. While abroad, men were accustomed to interloping, piracy, competition with fellow Europeans, and violent forms of commerce such as the slave trade. In this context, it is understandable that individuals like Leyel and Carloff saw an opportunity to make profits through coercive means. Both men chose to use violence, even if they could have chosen differently (many others did not engage in violence). However, the two cases studied here demonstrate that violence was common in the Nordic overseas ventures, and highlight the fact that for men like Leyel and Carloff, violence was often a viable policy.

In the Indian Ocean, Leyel had lost contact with the rest of the administration of the company, and thus found himself in a precarious position. Lacking reinforcements from Europe and being embroiled in a dispute with his predecessor, he turned to attacking ships in the Bay of Bengal as a means to keep business afloat. Leyel often participated personally in these privateering voyages, although he also issued passports to other skippers for the same purpose. Furthermore, Leyel justified his actions through complex descriptions and arguments, which were typical of the time. In the Atlantic context, Henrich Carloff used violence in Western Africa and the Caribbean. The violent attacks on fort Carolusborg, and on Cayenne and Tobago, occurred overseas, although they stemmed from European wars on the old continent.

Violence also materialised in the form of *threats*. As the conquests of the various forts suggest, it was not always necessary to actually engage in violence in order to achieve one's goals. Indeed, the mere threat of violence was often sufficient, and this served to make threats commonplace. For Leyel and Carloff, violence and coercion had very practical aims, and were often a matter of choice. Indeed, they helped to pay salaries, to pay rents and tributes to local rulers, and to generate quick profits. Furthermore, violence could also be justified politically, which made the transition from regular methods of trade into sanctioned or unsanctioned violence easier. In this sense, violence was as much about making profit as it was a political instrument in the struggle between states and empires. For the state, deploying men like Leyel and Carloff was a way to exercise power. If an undertaking such as Carloff's attack were successful, the state could claim a share of the success and profits. If it failed, the ruler could attribute the failure to a private enterprise. Yet again, the interests of rulers and private entrepreneurs overlapped.

In contrast with the previous historiography on entrepreneurship, this chapter has underlined the importance of violence in overseas entrepreneurship. As Clulow, Glete, Wellen and many others have shown, violence did exist as a common seaborne culture in the context of maritime trade. However, this has not hitherto been observed within the framework of entrepreneurship. By studying violence in an overseas context, we can understand how violence created entrepreneurial opportunity, inasmuch as it was constantly present in business.

Because of the type of business activities in which Leyel and Carloff were engaged, the results of violence were often difficult to predict. Indeed, it is not surprising that little is known about the actual value of the goods that were plundered and confiscated. In this chapter, it has been shown that

Leyel's privateering gave him a personal advantage, in terms of both personal profit and the acquisition of means to keep the DEIC afloat. For his part, Carloff eventually obtained gold from the attack in Western Africa. In the Caribbean context, the prospect of becoming a plantation governor was reason enough to engage in violence. While striving after this goal, Carloff could at the same time carry out privateering raids against French ships. Whatever the monetary value of such entrepreneurship, it clearly demonstrates how closely connected violence and entrepreneurship were, at least in an overseas setting.

The central conclusion of this chapter is that the prospect of making a profit through coercive means was often linked to a specific political context. In other words, individuals could benefit from the competition and conflict between different political powers. Men such as Leyel and Carloff were important cogs in the machinery of violence, offering a means to convert both private and public money into violence overseas. On the ground, they attempted to appropriate as much power, money and resources as possible. In sum, by seizing ships, privateering, capturing forts, and negotiating with local rulers, such men acted as *brokers of violence*.