

# “*Ma coutume ne soit de m’adresser aux villes*”: Early Modern Amsterdam’s Dealings in City Diplomacy

*Tessa de Boer*

Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands

*t.w.m.de.boer@hum.leidenuniv.nl*

## Abstract

The historical dimensions of city diplomacy have faced neglect in diplomatic studies and diplomatic history. Historicizing the concept of city diplomacy, however, can benefit both disciplines. Through a case study on early modern Amsterdam’s considerable diplomatic ambitions, I argue that a historical case contextualizes current-day discourses in city diplomacy, and that cities must be assessed as diplomatic actors in order to further complete narratives on traditional state-driven diplomacy.

## Keywords

Amsterdam – city diplomacy – diplomatic law – diplomatic archives – Dutch Republic

In both popular and scholarly discourses, the term *city diplomacy* evokes images of modernity and contemporaneousness. One envisions global conferences, cross-stitched networks and ambitious joint strategies to combat borderless issues such as climate change and public health. There is a notable lack of reflection on historical – that is, to say, pre-World War II – city diplomacy.<sup>1</sup> This is the result of shortcomings in diplomatic studies and diplomatic history: the former due to lack of interest in the historical dimension, the latter due to a traditional over-emphasis on state-driven diplomacy. However, historicizing

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1 Acuto, M. “City Diplomacy.” In *The SAGE handbook of diplomacy*, eds. C.M. Constantinou, P. Kerr, and P. Sharp (London: SAGE, 2016), 510–19: 511–12.

city diplomacy can significantly benefit both disciplines. Diplomatic historians can add considerable episodes and actors to further complete the narrative of diplomatic history, and specialists on contemporary diplomacy can better contextualize and nuance modern-day city diplomacy through a more thorough understanding of its origins. Unfortunately, scholarly analyses of historical city diplomacy are rare. Typically, the diplomatic practices of ancient Greek *poleis* or the city states of Renaissance Italy are mentioned briefly before a quick shift to the late twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Aside from the obvious omission of the majority of historical space-time, it is also problematic to designate the Greek and Italian cases as city diplomacy, given that they were instigated by city-states first and foremost. As city diplomacy is mainly conceptualized as existing separately of, though alongside “state diplomacy,” these examples are of questionable relevancy.<sup>3</sup>

A fruitful case study to start illustrating the working of city diplomacy in history covers the diplomatic initiatives undertaken by early modern Amsterdam. At first glance, Dutch cities seem like unlikely candidates. Post-Westphalia (1648) diplomatic custom in the Dutch Republic, though rooted in several older treatises dating from the 80 Year’s War (1568–1648), forbade *most* independent diplomatic initiatives by cities.<sup>4</sup> The tenth article of the Union of Utrecht (1579) explains this explicitly:

None of the aforementioned provinces, *cities* or members are allowed to enter into any sort of cooperation or treaty with neighboring countries without the consent of the United Provinces and allies.<sup>5</sup>

2 Van der Pluijm, R., and J. Melissen. “City Diplomacy: the Expanding Role of Cities in International Politics.” *Clingendael Diplomacy Papers* 10 (2007), 1–43: 5; Chan, D. K-h. “City Diplomacy and “Global Governance: Revitalizing Cosmopolitan Democracy.” *Innovation: the European Journal of Social Science Research* 29 (2), (2016), 134–60: 140; Vos, C. “Urban Diplomacy in Europe: Mutual Engagement or Business-minded Pragmatism?” In *Urban Europe. Fifty Tales of the City*, eds. V. Mamadouh and A. van Wageningen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 333–38: 331.

3 Van der Pluijm, R., and J. Melissen. “City Diplomacy,” 8–9.

4 Franken, M.A.M. *Coenraad van Beuningen's politieke en diplomatieke activiteiten in de jaren 1667–1684* (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1966), 23–24; Fruin, R. *Geschiedenis der staatsinstellingen in Nederland tot den val der Republiek* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1901), 184–85; Thomassen, T. *Instrumenten van de macht: De Staten-Generaal en hun archieven, 1576–1796* band I (The Hague: Huygens ING, 2015) 281; Groenveld, S. “De institutionele en politieke context.” In *Van Tresorier tot Thesaurier-generaal: Zes eeuwen financieel beleid in handen van een hoge Nederlandse ambtsdrager*, ed. J.T. de Smidt (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997), 55–88: 59.

5 The integral text of the Union of Utrecht (in Dutch) can be found at <https://www.law.kuleuven.be/personal/mstorme/unievanutrecht.html>.

Thus the right to maintain foreign and diplomatic relations was beholden to the Estates General in The Hague, as the assembly was the official representative body of the Dutch Republic (the generality) at large. This was not only a political, but also a geographical mandate: high-ranking foreign envoys were expected to reside in The Hague and request special permission if they desired to visit another city in the Republic.<sup>6</sup> These arrangements, however, raise significant questions with regards to the position of Amsterdam, a city with near-unprecedented global economic resources at its disposal (especially in the 17th century). The control over these resources naturally cultivated a large amount of political and diplomatic power, which was nevertheless legally denied to the city.

Despite the most basic legislation denying Dutch cities diplomatic agency, Amsterdam was still able to create, nurture, and manipulate several diplomatic networks centered on the city. There are three identifiable underlying conditions that can help us understand why Amsterdam, despite constricting laws, was in an excellent starting position to successfully exploit its diplomatic potential.

The first condition to successfully diplomatize was the control over large amounts of resources – political, demographic, and especially economic. This aspect is well-documented in studies on (modern) non-state diplomacy, city diplomacy included: when enumerating factors that aid diplomatic potential, Hocking names resources first.<sup>7</sup> The amount of economic and financial resources gathered in early modern Amsterdam was unprecedented, particularly in the 17th century. These resources were transformed into political and diplomatic leverage by means of the taxation system in the Dutch Republic. Amsterdam raised the bulk of all tax revenue in Holland, with Holland contributing around 60% of all taxes in the Dutch Republic. Holland and Amsterdam contributed a similar share to the Dutch military budget specifically.<sup>8</sup> These

6 Early modern diplomatic ceremonial (at least in 1661) included a stipulation that foreign diplomats were to be accompanied by a court steward if they desired leave The Hague to visit another city: National Archives, The Hague (NA) 1.01.02 (Staten-Generaal) 12547:384: Extract uit de resoluties van de Staten-Generaal waarbij de instructie wordt vastgesteld voor Frederick Hessel van Dinter als hofmeester van de Staten-Generaal. 26 November 1661. The prescription for foreign envoys to reside in The Hague to be entitled to full diplomatic privileges is mentioned in the *Register van Holland en Westvriesland van den jaare 1679*, 311 (accessible at <https://tinyurl.com/yacvfgqz>), where Polish resident-to-be Francisco Mollo is denied accreditation on grounds of him refusing to move from Amsterdam to The Hague.

7 Hocking, B. *Localizing Foreign Policy: Non-central Governments and Multilayered Diplomacy* (New York: St. Martin's, 1993), 47–57; Van der Pluijm, R., and J. Melissen. “City Diplomacy,” 15–17.

8 Israel, J. *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477–1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 286; t Hart, M. *In Quest for Funds: Warfare and State Formation in the Netherlands*,

taxes were collected by city authorities or Amsterdam tax farmers<sup>9</sup> instead of representatives of the generality, meaning that executive control over taxation in the city remained in Amsterdam's hands.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, cities in the Dutch Republic (with Amsterdam as a prime example) were allowed to issue public debt in the name of the state.<sup>11</sup> As Amsterdam was nominally underrepresented in the provincial estates and the Estates General, it was this control over Holland and the Republic's taxation, debts and general finance that the city subsequently turned to in order to exert political pressure.<sup>12</sup> At various points in time, the Estates General's intended military exercises (or attempts at making peace, for that matter) were thus blocked by Amsterdam, due to the city's simple refusal to provide the necessary financial and industrial capital.<sup>13</sup> Oftentimes, this translated into either increased incorporation of Amsterdam's wishes into the state diplomacy agenda, or increased allowance of independent diplomacy by Amsterdam.

A second, related condition that facilitated city diplomacy by Amsterdam was the state structure of the Dutch Republic itself. Hocking argues that city diplomacy is more permissible in state structures wherein subordinate entities such as cities are relatively autonomous.<sup>14</sup> The political autonomy of cities in the Dutch Republic was certainly well-established, and would thus aid

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1620–1650 (unpublished dissertation Leiden University, 1989), 77; Fritschy, W. "The Efficiency of Taxation in Holland." In *The Political Economy in the Dutch Republic*, ed. O. Gelderblom (Abingdon: Routledge 2016), 55–84: 56, 58.

- 9 Tax farmers "[pay] the ruler a fixed amount (often determined by auction" for the right to collect a certain tax in a defined area. Anything the tax farmer collects above the purchase price is his or her profit, and if the tax farmer collects less, he or she takes the loss." *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Economic History vol. 5*, ed. J. Mokyr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), s.v. "Tax farming," 75–76.
- 10 't Hart, M. "Cities and Statemaking in the Dutch Republic, 1580–1680." *Theory and Society* 18 (1989), 663–87: 675.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 678–80.
- 12 't Hart, M. "Coercion and Capital Revisited. Recent Trends in the Historiography of State-formation." In *Economies, Public Finances, and the Impact of Institutional Changes in Interregional Perspective: the Low Countries and Neighbouring German Territories (14th–17th centuries)*, ed. R. van Schaik (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2015), 23–32: 29; 't Hart, M., P. Brandon, and R. Torres Sánchez. "Introduction: Maximising Revenues, Minimising Political Costs – Challenges in the History of Public Finance of the Early Modern Period." *Financial History Review* 25 (1) (2018), 1–18: 5–8, 11.
- 13 't Hart, M. "Cities and Statemaking," 674–80; Franken, M.A.M. *Coenraad van Beuningen*, 36; Frijhoff, W.M., M. Prak, and M. Hell. *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam II-2. Zelfbewuste stadsstaat 1650–1813* (Amsterdam: SUN, 2005), 153; Fritschy, W. "Efficiency of Taxation in Holland," 79–81.
- 14 Hocking, B. *Localizing Foreign Policy*, 47–57.

Amsterdam to independently diplomatize.<sup>15</sup> However, there are arguably more important aspects of the Dutch state structure at play. The financial system as described above is one; the extensive vertical linkages within the different levels of government are another. The number of official Amsterdam seats in the provincial and general assemblies was marginal, but its share in the *commissiewezen* – an oligarchic system of backdoor policy making by central committees composed mostly of prominent city regents – was considerable.<sup>16</sup> Through these committees, Amsterdam regents were able to lobby intensively for (tolerance of) near-independent diplomatic initiatives and more direct say in foreign policy decisions. Perhaps the most important thing to note is the operation of what Adams has deemed the “familial state”: within the republican and capitalist state system of the Netherlands, influential regent families successfully sought to represent themselves and their interests in the various levels of government.<sup>17</sup> This meant that an Amsterdam merchant could simultaneously be a tax farmer, belong to the regent class of the city, and serve as a delegate to the Estates General or one of its committees. Thus, ambitious regents who were planning an exercise of city diplomacy were able to employ their hard *and* soft power in higher-up political bodies to realize their ambitions.

The third and last condition that enabled Amsterdam’s diplomatic participation were its extensive international connections. Again, this was multifaceted. Amsterdam profited from a beneficial geographical location – in an absolute sense due to its central location in a highly urbanized region with easy access to sea and other established routes to European metropolises, and in a relative sense due to the fact that the city was the logical candidate to permanently take over the Low Countries’ commercial primacy after Antwerp’s fall to the Spaniards in 1585. It was largely due to this newly assigned commercial primacy that Amsterdam would become the center of the world economy during the 17th and early 18th centuries.<sup>18</sup> Globalization processes are often cited

15 Prak, M. “The Dutch Republic City-state Culture (17th–18th centuries).” In *A Comparative Study of Thirty City-State Cultures: An Investigation Conducted by the Copenhagen Policy Centre* (Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Science and Letters, 2000), 343–58.

16 de Bruin, G. *Geheimhouding en Verraad: De geheimhouding van staatszaken ten tijde van de Republiek (1600–1750)* (The Hague: SDU Uitgeverij, 1991), 138–50, 205–10, 260–72. Amsterdam had the right to dispatch 1 out of 19 delegates in the Estates of Holland, and 1 out of 24 in the Estates General (Thomassen, T. *Instrumenten van de macht*, 154–55).

17 Adams, J. “The Familial State: Elite Family Practices and State-making in the Early Modern Netherlands.” *Theory and Society* 23 (1994), 505–39; 507–8, 513, 516–23.

18 de Vries, J., and A. van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 131, 136, 147.

as increasing non-state participation and diplomacy:<sup>19</sup> there is no doubt that early modern Amsterdam was highly globalized through its dealings in trade, finance and colonial empire. Typical visual representations of Dam Square or the Beurs in the 17th and 18th centuries illustrate Amsterdam as standing at a crossroads of people and goods from all over the world.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, as argued by Acuto, Morissette, and Tsouros, it is important for the conceptualization of city diplomacy to consider mayors and municipalities as *upward* instead of downward looking.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the better term would be *outward* looking – and this was certainly the case in early modern Amsterdam.

When considering all of these aspects combined, it is hardly surprising that Amsterdam realized this diplomatic potential and sought to exploit it to the maximum extent that was nominally allowed, even occasionally crossing the judicial boundaries when it was judged necessary by the burgomasters. Amsterdam upheld extensive relations with a) Dutch envoys abroad and b) foreign parties from all over the globe: Louis XIV, low-ranking envoys representing small German principalities, newly declared Americans fighting for independence, Asian elites through control over the efforts of some Dutch East India Company merchant-diplomats, and everything in between.<sup>22</sup> The corpus of diplomatic activity centered on early modern Amsterdam was thus considerable, and fortunately, exceptionally well-documented in a wide

19 Van der Pluijm, R., and J. Melissen. "City Diplomacy," 7–8.

20 See (among others) *Het stadhuis op de Dam in Amsterdam* by Gerrit Adriaensz. Berckheyde (1672), Rijksmuseum object number SK-A-34 (<https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/SK-A-34>; accessed November 11th, 2020) and *De Beurs van Amsterdam* by Boëtius Adamsz. Bolswert (1609), Rijksmuseum object number RP-P-OB-67.488 (<https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-OB-67.488>; accessed 11 November 2020).

21 Acuto, M., M. Morissette, and A. Tsouros. "City Diplomacy: Towards More Strategic Networking? Learning with WHO Healthy Cities." *Global Policy* 8 (1) (2017), 14–22: 16.

22 Stadsarchief Amsterdam (SAA; Amsterdam City Archives) 5026 (Archief van de Burgemeesters; missiven aan burgemeesters) 27: Frankrijk. – Lodewijk XIV, koning. 1660 en 1662; SAA 5026 42 (Buitenlandse vertegenwoordigers in Amsterdam of Den Haag. 1637–1792): 133 – Hendrik Huneken to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (The Hague, 18 June 1686), 159 – Nicolaus von Deneken to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (The Hague, 22 November 1750); SAA 5028 (Archief van de burgemeesters: stukken betreffende verscheidene onderwerpen) 538: Handel I, handel op Denemarken, Zweden, Noorwegen, Groenland, Frankrijk, Italië, Zuidelijke Nederlanden, Engeland, Spanje, Portugal, Duitse Rijk, Rijnsteden, Verenigde Staten van Noord-Amerika (o.a. declaratoir van Berckel, tractaat van commercie) f. 473 and onwards; G. van Meersbergen. "The Dutch Merchant-diplomat in Comparative Perspective. Embassies to the Court of Aurangzeb, 1660–1666." In *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410–1800*, eds. T.A. Sowerby and J. Hennings (London: Routledge, 2017), 147–65.

variety of sources, which have nevertheless never been properly assessed up until recently.<sup>23</sup>

Though some instances are recorded of individual Amsterdam burghers contacting Dutch envoys abroad,<sup>24</sup> it was mostly the Amsterdam burgomasters that regularly sent diplomatic instructions or requests to these envoys.<sup>25</sup> The envoys, in turn, were highly receptive to these city-originated proposals. The mayoral archive contains the collection of diplomatic missives written to the burgomasters by "state" envoys in service of the Estates General.<sup>26</sup> These letters, numbering at minimum ten thousand (a conservative estimate) and originating from all over Europe, illustrate two major aspects of Amsterdam's involvement in diplomacy. Firstly, they attest to the perceived obligation of writing consistent reports to a city government – a curious phenomenon, because these were diplomats in the service of a state.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, they demonstrate that at times Amsterdam employed state diplomats outright to serve their own needs. This could be an innocent and ubiquitously legal request to an ambassador's address to help buy cobblestones for the paving of an Amsterdam square.<sup>28</sup> The cooperation, however, could also be much closer and appear as though Amsterdam had openly recruited and poached "state" envoys to serve them instead. Requests in envoys' missives for Amsterdam to

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- 23 The main archival collections of relevance are SAA 5024 (Archief van de burgemeesters: dagelijkse notulen, resoluties en missivenboeken), SAA 5026 (Archief van de burgemeesters; missiven aan burgemeesters), 5027 (Archief van de burgemeesters: diplomatieke missiven van ambassadeurs, gezanten en residenten in het buitenland aan de burgemeesters) and 5075 (Archief van de notarissen der standplaats Amsterdam). Of further importance are newspapers, which frequently reported on diplomatic activity in Amsterdam. There is a considerable amount of visual material on diplomacy and diplomats in Amsterdam, such as portraits, allegories or prints of festivities. Tourist guides, egodocuments, and state papers further aid reconstruction.
- 24 See, among others, SAA 5075 (Archief van de notarissen der standplaats Amsterdam) 10274: 917 – Benjamin Phaff, power of attorney, 18 December 1755; 11487A: 177 – Thierry Daniel de Marolles, power of attorney, 21 August 1770; 10236: 280 – Benjamin Phaff, power of attorney, 22 April 1746; 14448: 41 – Wessel van Kleef, power of attorney, 5 July 1764.
- 25 SAA 5024 (Archief van de burgemeesters: dagelijkse notulen, resoluties en missivenboeken), 48–97: Missivenboeken van burgemeesters, soms tezamen met schepenen of schout en schepenen, en van schout en schepenen of alleen de schepenen.
- 26 SAA 5027 (Archief van de burgemeesters: diplomatieke missiven van ambassadeurs, gezanten en residenten in het buitenland aan de burgemeesters).
- 27 See, among others, SAA 5027 205: 62 – Daniel Hogguer to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Hamburg, 1 April 1777); 57: 2 – Hendrick van Hulst to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Moscow, NS 22 March 1701); 58: 4 – Jacob de Bie to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (St. Petersburg, 16 July 1714).
- 28 SAA 5027 74: 8 – Willem van Haren to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Brussels, 23 September 1752).



pay their salaries, replace or repatriate them, or letters thanking Amsterdam for appointing them to their post, are commonly found, as are sentiments expressing loyalty and direct submission to the city and its magistrates.<sup>29</sup> This was especially (but not exclusively) the case when the envoy in question was of an Amsterdam origin: the Estates General struggled to cultivate loyalty to the generality over the envoy's hometown.<sup>30</sup> All of the above raises significant questions regarding the divide between state and city diplomacy: if a city is able to successfully employ state envoys to do their bidding (legally or not), what kind of diplomacy is being conducted?

Amsterdam was also frequently diplomatically propositioned by foreign states and foreign cities, either directly or through troupes of envoys. Amsterdam's economic and financial might made it into an essential destination to conduct (commercial) diplomacy. The benefits of good standing in Amsterdam were widely understood by foreign governments and their envoys alike.<sup>31</sup> Simultaneously, these parties were aware that Dutch diplomatic legislation referred them to the Estates General exclusively. This could be openly abused: Louis XIV attempted to destabilize the Dutch Republic by instructing his envoys to publicly negotiate with cities (with Amsterdam as the prime target), as this would provoke tensions and distrust between the different layers of government and sovereignty in the Republic.<sup>32</sup> In other instances, it was respected and recognized: in 1777, Danish authorities refused to enter into a

29 See, among others, SAA 5027 218: 3 – Willem de Bruyn to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Malaga, 26 November 1693); 223: 14 – Federico Perez to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Alicante, 27 January 1734); 23: 202 – Arend van Deurs to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Elsinore, 31 March 1744); 216: 45 – Abraham Heysterman to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Lisbon, 12 June 1731); 236: 62 – Jan Carel des Bordes to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Constantinople, 6 January 1748); 246: 11 – Zacharias Cousart to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Tripoli, 16 February 1687).

30 Franken, M.A.M. *Coenraad van Beuningen*, 41–42; Groenveld, S. *Verlopend Getij: De Nederlandse Republiek en de Engelse burgeroorlog, 1640–1648* (Dieren: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1984), 65. For concrete examples of this phenomenon in the primary sources, see SAA 5027 60: 1 – Willem de Wilde to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (St. Petersburg, NS 24 February 1721); 216: 46 – Louis Houwens to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Lisbon, 31 December 1719); 244: 89 – Johan Smits Heppendorp to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (London, NS 15 January 1692).

31 Vreede, G.W. *Inleiding tot eene geschiedenis der Nederlandsche diplomatie* (Utrecht: J.G. Broese, 1856), 28–29; Rendorp, J. *Memorien, dienende tot opheldering, van het gebeurde, gedurende den laatsten Engelschen oorlog. Tweede deel* (Amsterdam: Johannes Allart, 1792), 7, 20, 113.

32 Porta, A. *Joan en Gerrit Corver: De politieke macht van Amsterdam (1702–1748)* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975), 19, 44; Black, J. *A History of Diplomacy* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2010), 78–79; Frijhoff, W.M., M. Prak, and M. Hell, *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam II-2*, 207.



proposed toll agreement with Amsterdam because they did not want to contract it with a city instead of the Estates General.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Bevil Skelton, an English envoy in 1685, mentions apprehension at his writing to Amsterdam, since “ma coustume ne soit de m’addresser aux villes.”<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, the tangible practical benefits of maintaining direct diplomatic traffic with Amsterdam usually outweighed legal objections for foreign parties. Thus, a regular correspondence between the burgomasters of Amsterdam and foreign states and foreign cities was being upheld. Of particular note to the subject of city diplomacy are the intercity letters,<sup>35</sup> which attest to the existence of several treaties between Amsterdam and other cities (mostly on mutual *issue* or *exue* rights<sup>36</sup>), negotiations over the rights of their respective expatriate citizens, and, in an interesting parallel to contemporary themes in city diplomacy, attempts at discussing a common strategy with, among others, the Hanseatic League to combat the spread of plague between their cities, to improve urban health and to salvage the economy.<sup>37</sup> Another manifestation of Amsterdam as the receptive diplomatic party is the large community of subsidiary foreign envoys (including consuls) that had Amsterdam as their base. Amsterdam was the only city in the Dutch Republic that could even remotely approach The Hague in terms of the number of stationed envoys, signaling the widespread foreign recognition of Amsterdam’s diplomatic importance. About 200 envoys in total resided in Amsterdam between 1648–1800, with approximately two dozen simultaneously on average.<sup>38</sup> This community, and the diplomacy that they conducted *in* and *with* Amsterdam, is well-documented in the Amsterdam

33 SAA 5027 44: 14 – Charles François Bosc de la Calmette to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Copenhagen, 25 January and 29 March 1777).

34 SAA 5026 42: 68 – Bevil Skelton to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (The Hague, 20 August 1685).

35 SAA 5026 34–39: Stadsbesturen van buitenlandse steden. 1568–1794; SAA 5024 (Archief van de burgemeesters: dagelijkse notulen, resoluties en missivenboeken), 48–97: Missivenboeken van burgemeesters, soms tezamen met schepenen of schout en schepenen, en van schout en schepenen of alleen de schepenen.

36 SAA 5026 37: 318 – Burgomasters of Lingen to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Lingen, 5 April 1713); 39: 135 – Burgomasters of Schüttorf to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Schüttorf, 25 February 1768) and 274 – Burgomasters of Wesel to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Wesel, 7 January 1749).

37 SAA 5026 34: 457 – Burgomasters of Bremen to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Bremen, 12 September 1711); 37: 351: Burgomasters of Lubeck to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Lubeck, 10 September 1711) and 360: Burgomasters of Liege to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Liege, 29 November 1662); 38: 193 – Burgomasters of Nuremberg to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Nuremberg, 12 October 1700).

38 Enumerated in Schutte, O. *Repertorium der buitenlandse vertegenwoordigers, residerende in Nederland 1584–1810* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983).

notarial archives. From these deeds it can be deduced that this group mostly engaged in commercial diplomacy – illustrated, for example, by the activities of the Spanish consul-general Juan Manuel de Uriondo (served 1758–71), who visited Amsterdam notaries almost weekly to coordinate shipping enterprises between the Baltics, Amsterdam, and Spain.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, the deeds demonstrate that these low-ranked, city-bound envoys were occasionally able to attain the same level of socioeconomic and cultural prominence as regular state envoys: they even succeeded to a certain extent in promulgating “traditional” diplomatic culture, such as banquets, displays, and ceremonies.<sup>40</sup> This indicates that the sociocultural significance of city diplomacy, too, could be considerable.

All of the above poses the question of why these displays of city diplomacy were tolerated by the Estates General and other authorities in The Hague, especially because there was a constant fear in the Dutch Republic of Amsterdam dominating or subjugating its other constituents.<sup>41</sup> There were two main distinguishable causes for this, namely pragmatic benefits on the one hand and conscious strategies employed by the burgomasters of Amsterdam on the other.

There appears to have been a general tolerance of city diplomacy in the Dutch Republic, as long as its concrete aims did not interfere with those of the state. This was supported to a certain extent by the law, or rather the absence

39 See, among others, SAA 5075 11479: 82 – Thierry Daniel de Marolles, freight contract 7 October 1769; 11482: 264 – Thierry Daniel de Marolles, freight contract 22 March 1770; 11483: 345 – Thierry Daniel de Marolles, freight contract 24 April 1770; 15235: 33 – Nathanaël Wilthuijzen, freight contract 3 May 1771; 15234: 86 – Nathanaël Wilthuijzen, freight contract 11 April 1771.

40 For newspaper notices on diplomatic festivities in Amsterdam, see among others *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (1 October 1697; 10 June 1717), *Nouvelles extraordinaires de divers endroits* (27 November 1781), *Avec privilege de nos-seigneurs les Etats de Hollande et de West-Frise* (19 August 1727). The English tourist William Montague describes the Amsterdam diplomatic scene as follows: “[The envoys] receive and entertain foreign princes and ambassadors, and perform all the publick ceremonies” in his report, *The delights of Holland: or, a three months travel about that and the other provinces* (London: John Sturton, 1696), 168. The catering bill of the large public celebration in honor of the Peace of Nystad in 1721, organized by Russia’s resident in Amsterdam, is preserved in SAA 404 (Archieven van het Van Brants-Rus Hofje en van Christoffel van Brants), 190: Afschrift van de rekening van Maria de Ruijter, kasteleinsse aan Christoffel van Brants voor feestelijkheden ter gelegenheid van de vrede van Nijstad, 1721. The *Chronyk van Amsterdam Eerste Deel*, ed. J. Kok (Amsterdam: Jacobus Kok, 1765), 542–43 describes a festive banquet attended by the entire English merchant community of Amsterdam, organized by consul Joseph Kerby.

41 Franken, M.A.M. *Coenraad van Beuningen*, 7; Haitsma Mulier, E.O.G. *The Myth of Venice and Dutch Republican Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1980), 61.

of it: with the Union of Utrecht only specifically forbidding cities to negotiate on behalf of (or against) the entire Republic, it was left up to interpretation whether a city could conduct diplomacy if it only concerned their own interests and affairs.<sup>42</sup> Thus, diplomatic activity centered on Amsterdam was, simply put, mostly Amsterdam-centered content-wise. This was mirrored in all aspects: foreign envoys in The Hague wrote to Amsterdam when they wished to discuss a problem with Amsterdam shipping,<sup>43</sup> Dutch envoys abroad wrote to Amsterdam when they had helped an Amsterdam citizen in their locale,<sup>44</sup> and foreign cities wrote to Amsterdam when they suspected a new germ had originated from the Amsterdam port.<sup>45</sup> It would create unnecessary bureaucratic and practical obstacles to force parties to first pass through statewide authorities in The Hague when the diplomatic business in question concerned but a single city. With most diplomatic activity involving Amsterdam having a distinct commercial, executive, and thus arguably practical flavor, it was only logical to extend tolerance to these forms of city diplomacy.

Some diplomatic initiatives by Amsterdam were of such prominence and scale, or decidedly *not* Amsterdam-centered, that they exceeded tolerable proportions and even provoked international conflicts. A prominent example of this was when diplomatic relations were negotiated between Amsterdam and the United States in 1780 (after a threat that the Americans would find another trading partner).<sup>46</sup> Under British pressure, the Estates General had refused Dutch recognition of American independence. However, Amsterdam-United States relations were taken to recognize this independence after all. This stint

42 Vreede, G.W. *Inleiding tot eene geschiedenis*, 39; Groenveld, S. *Verlopend getij*, 67–68.

43 See, among others, SAA 5026 42: 55 – William Boswell to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (The Hague, 17 August 1745); 68 – Bevil Skelton to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (The Hague, 20 August 1685); 115 – Gabriel-Jacques de Salignac to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (The Hague, 25 April 1726); 133 – Hendrik Huneken to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (The Hague, 18 June 1686).

44 See, among others, SAA 5027 243: 23 – Christoffel Matthias to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Algiers, 13 May 1684); 232: 71 – Cornelis Calkoen to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Constantinople, 24 November 1727); 216: 76 – Jan Rochus van Til to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Lisbon, 28 October 1732); 205: 87 – Daniel Hogguer to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Hamburg, 20 October 1778).

45 SAA 5026 39: 227 – Burgomasters of Veurne to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Veurne, 26 May 1735); SAA 5027 52: 17, 19, 34, 40 – Andries van Sanden to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Stockholm, 2 December 1733; 24 February, 7 April, 12 May 1734).

46 SAA 5028 (Archief van de burgemeesters: stukken betreffende verscheidene onderwerpen), 538: Handel I, handel op Denemarken, Zweden, Noorwegen, Groenland, Frankrijk, Italië, Zuidelijke Nederlanden, Engeland, Spanje, Portugal, Duitse Rijk, Rijnsteden, Verenigde Staten van Noord-Amerika (o.a. declaratoir van Berckel, tractaat van commercie) f. 473 and onwards.

of city diplomacy enraged the British, who held the Estates General responsible, and this eventually contributed to the fourth Anglo-Dutch war (1780–84).<sup>47</sup> An overall tendency in diplomatic initiatives by Amsterdam was the burgomasters' willingness to blatantly overstep their legal diplomatic allowances whenever they felt the city's interests were acutely threatened by the directions taken in state diplomacy, as illustrated by the example above: obtaining a large trade agreement required overstepping diplomatic allowance. The burgomasters were able to anticipate fairly well whether their intended diplomatic course of action would encounter domestic or international protests. As mentioned previously, one of the most powerful weapons at Amsterdam's disposal to silence these protests were its resources. The threat to cut off the supply of capital and to deny loans was seriously intimidating to both domestic and foreign parties.<sup>48</sup> Thus, acts of city diplomacy by Amsterdam that would nominally be considered politically high-risk and legally unacceptable were at times either tactfully ignored or only weakly protested as a formality. This happened in 1780, when in the end the Estates General did not reprimand Amsterdam (as the British had requested) beyond a modest declaration of disapproval.<sup>49</sup> Even when emboldened political figures, such as Stadtholder William III in 1684 after learning of clandestine diplomatic relations between Amsterdam and France, did make large and theatrical accusations of treason at Amsterdam, there were little serious consequences apart from a pamphlet war that would soon sizzle out.<sup>50</sup>

47 Van Winter, P.J. "Onze eerste diplomatieke betrekkingen met de Vereenigde Staten." *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 38 (1923), 68–82: 70–76; Van de Pol, L. "From Doorstep to Table: Negotiating Space in Ceremonies at the Dutch Court of the Second Half of the 18th century." In *Räume des Selbst: Selbstzeugnisforschung transkulturell*, eds. A. Bähr, P. Burschel, and G. Jancke (Cologne: Böhlau Köln, 2007), 77–94: 91.

48 Franken, M.A.M. *Coenraad van Beuningen*, 36; Frijhoff, W.M., M. Prak, and M. Hell. *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam II-2*, 153; 't Hart, M. "Cities and Statemaking," 680.

49 Fruin, R. *Geschiedenis der staatsinstellingen*, 337–38.

50 Frijhoff, W.M., M. Prak, and M. Hell, *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam II-2*, 201; Franken, M.A.M. *Coenraad van Beuningen*, 229; de Bruin, G. *Geheimhouding en verraad*, 360–61, 396; Israel, J. *The Dutch Republic*, 829–36; Van Goens, R.M. *Politiek vertoog over het waar sistema van de stad Amsterdam, met relatie tot de algemeene belangens der Republiek, zo als hetzelve uit 's lands historien kan worden opgemaakt* (Amsterdam 1781), 26–27. For the pamphlets, see among others Koninklijke Bibliotheek, kw Pfl 11982: *Verhael van het geene voorgevallen is tusschen den heer ambassadeur van Vranckrijk in den Hage, ende de heeren gedeputeerden der stad Amsterdam, streckende tot verantwoordingh van dese stad, tegens het ongegrondt nabedencken over onbehoorlijke correspondentie met gedachte heer ambassadeur* (1684); kw Pfl 11978: *Copie van een missive, door de heeren burgermeesteren en raedt der stad Amsterdam, geschreven aen de andere steden* (19 February 1648); kw Pfl 12150: *Verantwoording van het beleyd der heeren van Amsterdam* (1684).

All in all, it was a combination of weaponized economic power and general tolerance motivated by pragmatism that allowed Amsterdam to exploit its diplomatic potential. What can one deduce from these extensive displays of early modern city diplomacy to aid studies into city diplomacy in general?

Firstly, it is important to nurture the conception of contemporary city diplomacy as having been built on a long historical tradition. Premodern metropolises such as Amsterdam were actively pursuing city diplomacy in a manner that highly resembles its modern counterpart. The push for pragmatism over formal geopolitics, especially, is still one of the most compelling arguments for city diplomacy in the current age. As contemporary mayors around the globe, united in the C40 Cities, exchanged ideas on how to effectively combat Covid-19 in an urban environment,<sup>51</sup> the mayors of Amsterdam and multiple Hanseatic cities attempted to negotiate a common strategy in the 1710s to reduce the spread of plague and salvage their mutual trade.<sup>52</sup> Common conflicts ensuing from city diplomacy, too, are not inherent to the modern age: tensions between powerful, diplomatically ambitious cities and central state governments have provoked discussions on sovereignty in the early modern era as well. Ultimately, this all signifies that even in purely historical case studies, valuable data on the general functionality of contemporary city diplomacy can be extracted, as the subject matter, modes of organization, motivations and tensions are often remarkably similar.

Secondly, the Amsterdam case study demonstrates that cities could be integral – indeed, even central – to early modern diplomatic networks. This strongly invites additional studies into early modern (city) diplomacy. The corpus of diplomatic activity centered on Amsterdam was of such a scale, that to omit it would render narratives on Dutch diplomacy in general incomplete. By omitting cities as actors/receptors in studies on such-and-such a state's diplomatic history, these works would present neither an accurate nor a complete overview. Additionally, the neglected diplomatic archives of Amsterdam can contribute substantially to more general studies in early modern diplomacy. Its utilization as world-class diplomatic archive on a par with state diplomacy collections is long overdue.

51 Pipa A.F., and M. Bouchet. "How to Make the Most of City Diplomacy in the COVID-19 Era," 6 August 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/08/06/how-to-make-the-most-of-city-diplomacy-in-the-covid-19-era/>.

52 See, among others, SAA 5026 34: 457 – Burgomasters of Bremen to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Bremen, 12 September 1711); 37: 351: Burgomasters of Lubeck to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Lubeck, 10 September 1711); 35: 83 – Burgomasters of Danzig to the burgomasters of Amsterdam (Danzig, 9 September 1711).