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HENRI HANNULA

# Commercial Diplomacy from Below

*Dutch Baltic Merchants as an Economic Interest Group  
in Dutch-Swedish Relations 1675–1688<sup>1</sup>*

Recently, the fields of diplomatic history and economic history have underscored the need for a deeper understanding of non-state actors, economic actors and intermediary agents of various kinds in the processes of foreign relations. This article studies the use of diplomatic institutions by the Dutch merchant firms, aiming at benefitting from the favorable turn in foreign political relations with Sweden after the Scanian War (1675–1679) and the Dutch-Swedish peace of 1679/81. The article shows that a group of Dutch merchants was able to enforce an ambitious system of debt repayments covering losses inflicted by Swedish privateering of Dutch merchant vessels during the Scanian War. The case presented in this article adds to the understanding of the role of the Dutch Baltic merchants as an interest group in the late seventeenth century Dutch-Swedish relations.

## INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of the 1680s, the Dutch Baltic merchants had good reason to feel relieved. The Dutch-Swedish peace treaty, signed at the Nijmegen conference in October 1679, officially ended the hostilities between the Dutch Republic and the Swedish kingdom. The countries had been at war with each other from 1675 to 1679, which had seriously disrupted trade because of increasing transaction costs and the exposure of Dutch merchant vessels to the manifold risks of war. The Scanian War (1675–1679) and the ensuing rapprochement between the Dutch Republic and Sweden during the brief European interbellum in the 1680s serve as a point of departure for this article. The reason for the Republic being involved in the northern conflict, fought primarily between Denmark and Sweden, was that Sweden was a political ally of France – an

1 This article is based on the research conducted as a guest researcher at the Institute for History, Leiden University, in 2019. I am deeply grateful to my hosts Maurits Ebben

and Cátia Antunes for their support and comments. I also thank Niilo Helander Foundation for the research grant which enabled the guest research period in the Netherlands.

enemy of the Dutch Republic since 1672.<sup>2</sup> After the war, the hostile political relations between the Swedish kingdom and the Dutch Republic shifted into a friendlier phase.<sup>3</sup>

Research into early modern maritime history has shown that the aftermath of the Scanian War in the 1680s coincided with a considerable peak in Dutch trade in the Baltic Sea region, with the favorable years for Dutch Baltic trade lasting until the blockage against French trade during the Nine Years War (1688–1697). Both Dutch import trade from the Southern Baltic ports and Swedish possessions revived.<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Israel argues that the Dutch-Swedish peace terms of 1679 and their ratification in 1681 (henceforth the Dutch-Swedish peace of 1679/81), was one of the key factors that ‘explains the eventual strength of the Dutch Baltic trade revival of the 1680s.’<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the Dutch-Swedish peace resulted in a setback for Swedish protectionist policies, which they had pursued from the late 1660s onward.<sup>6</sup> The Swedish had to accept a partial return to the Dutch-Swedish tariff list of 1659, and restore the status of most favored nation to Dutch merchant ships.<sup>7</sup>

Both diplomatic history and economic history have underscored the need for a deeper understanding of non-state actors and intermediary agents of various kinds in the processes of foreign relations.<sup>8</sup> The focus of this article is on the use of diplomatic institutions by the Dutch merchant firms, who aimed at benefitting from the favorable foreign political relations with Sweden after the peace of 1679/81. I suggest that by focusing on economic actors as political pressure groups will shed new light on Dutch economic influence in the Swedish kingdom in general.

The article aims to answer two specific questions. How and why did the

2 After Sweden began concentrating military troops in her Pomeranian possessions according to the French-Swedish subsidy treaties, a conflict broke out with Brandenburg. In 1675, Brandenburg, Denmark and the Dutch Republic formed an anti-Swedish military alliance.

3 Thomas Lindblad, *Sweden's Trade with the Dutch Republic 1738–1795: A Quantitative Analysis of the Relationship between Economic Growth and International Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Assen 1982) 15.

4 Thomas Lindblad, ‘Evidence of Dutch-Swedish Trade in the 17<sup>th</sup> century’ in: J.Ph.S. Lemmink and Hans van Koningsbrugge (eds.), *Baltic Affairs. Relations between the Netherlands and North-Eastern Europe 1500–1800. Essays*. (Nijmegen 1990) 213, 225–229; Milja van Tielhof, *The ‘Mother of All Trades’: The Baltic Grain Trade in Amsterdam From the Late 16th to the Early 19th Century*

(Leiden/Boston 2002) 50–58.

5 Jonathan Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585–1740* (Oxford 1989) 302.

6 Leos Müller, *The Merchant Houses of Stockholm, C. 1640–1800: A Comparative Study of Early-modern Entrepreneurial Behaviour* (Uppsala 1998) 46–47.

7 Ragnar Hoffstedt, *Sveriges Utrikespolitik Under Krigsåren 1675–1679* (Uppsala 1943) 336; Sven-Erik Åström, *From Stockholm to St. Petersburg: Commercial Factors in the Political Relations between England and Sweden 1675–1700* (Helsinki 1962) 34.

8 John Watkins, ‘Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38:1 (2008) 1–14. Maurits Ebben & Louis Sicking, ‘Introduction: maritime conflict management, diplomacy and international law, 1100–1800’, *Comparative Legal History* 5:1 (2017) 2–15.

Dutch Baltic merchants<sup>9</sup> actually involve themselves in commercial diplomacy during and after the war? What repercussions did this involvement have, and if it was successful in terms of merchant interests, why was it so?

This article offers a more comprehensive understanding of the role that small and middle-sized Dutch Baltic merchants played in Dutch-Swedish relations in 1675–1688. It shows that the corporatist intervention of the Dutch Baltic merchants was efficient. With the help of the Dutch lower-rank diplomatic network in Sweden, these merchants were able to enforce an ambitious system of debt repayments covering losses inflicted by Swedish privateering of Dutch merchant vessels during the Scanian War. The article contributes to relevant discussions in early modern Dutch diplomatic and economic history by underscoring the agency of the Dutch Baltic merchants, as well as lower ranked commercial diplomatic actors in the Baltic Sea region.

#### DUTCH MERCHANT INTERESTS IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Research into history of Dutch-Baltic relations offers a twofold picture of the place of merchants in the foreign relations. On the one hand, within the traditional diplomatic history, researchers have investigated the turbulent, yet economically entangled, political relationship between the Swedish crown and the Dutch Republic during the course of the seventeenth century.<sup>10</sup> The emphasis of the studies in diplomatic history has been on the activities of the highest-ranking state actors and diplomats, and less on economic agents such as manufacturer-industrialists and merchant houses, although economic aspects – mainly the commercial policies of the state actors – were inherently part of these classic works. On the other hand, the pioneer works of early modern Dutch economic history have enabled us to understand the entrepreneurial behavior of merchants active in the Dutch trade with the Northern Europe<sup>11</sup> and the overall view of the structural changes in Dutch Baltic trade.<sup>12</sup>

Recently, the approaches of economic history and diplomatic history have been linked in numerous novel ways. As Jari Ojala and Leos Müller show in

9 In this article, 'Baltic merchants' refers to merchants trading within the region from the east of the Sound.

10 In addition to the already mentioned work of Hoffstedt, for other traditional diplomatic history relating to Dutch-Swedish relations in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century see, G. Landberg, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia. 1648–1697* (Norstedt 1952); N.F. Noordam, *De Republiek en de Noordse oorlog (1655–1660)* (Assen 1940); Joan Römelingh, *De diplomatieke betrekkingen van de Republiek met Denemarken en Zweden 1660–1675* (Amsterdam 1969); Hans van Koningsbrugge, *Tussen*

*Rijswijk en Utrecht: de diplomatieke betrekkingen tussen Zweden en de Verenigde Nederlanden 1697–1713* (Groningen 1996).

11 Pieter Wolfgang Klein, *De Trippen in de 17e Eeuw: een studie over het ondernemersgedrag op de Hollandse stapelmarkt* (Assen 1965). Jan Willem Veluwenkamp, *Ondernemersgedrag op de Hollandse stapelmarkt in de tijd van de Republiek: de Amsterdamse handelsfirma Jan Isaac De Neufville & Comp., 1730–1764* (Meppel 1981).

12 See Lindblad, *Sweden's Trade with the Dutch Republic 1738–1795*, 136–140.

their article on the early modern Swedish consular service, the role of lower ranked diplomatic institutions could decrease transaction costs.<sup>13</sup> For his part, Maurits Ebben demonstrates in his work on seventeenth century Dutch-Spanish relations, that commercial diplomatic actors without an official ceremonial rank often played a pivotal role in intermediating the interests of the Levant merchants, Amsterdam, and the States of Holland. As a result, they were able to directly influence the foreign political decision-making of the States General.<sup>14</sup> The problems caused by Swedish privateering during the Scanian War (1675–1679) and the following period of peace in the Baltic in the 1680s provides a fruitful case to draw upon these approaches by observing the agency of the Dutch merchants involved in trade in the Baltic Sea region.<sup>15</sup>

What kind of Dutch merchant interests existed in the Baltic Sea region in the late seventeenth century? By drawing upon Jonathan Israel's conceptualization, Leos Müller divides Baltic trades in two categories, rich trades and bulk trades.<sup>16</sup> Bulk trades here refers to the traditional import products from the Southern Baltic ports, which had a relatively low resale value, especially grain and shipbuilding products such as hemp and timber. The rich trades of Northern Europe, on the other hand, were the products with higher resale value but also higher investment costs, such as iron, copper, and other manufactured metal products.<sup>17</sup> Here, the families of Dutch origins or with strong

13 Leos Müller and Jari Ojala, 'Consular Services of the Nordic Countries during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: Did they really work?' in: Gordon Boyce and Richard Gorski (eds.), *Resources and Infrastructures in the Maritime Economy, 1500–2000*. Research in Maritime History 22 (St. John's 2002) 23–41.

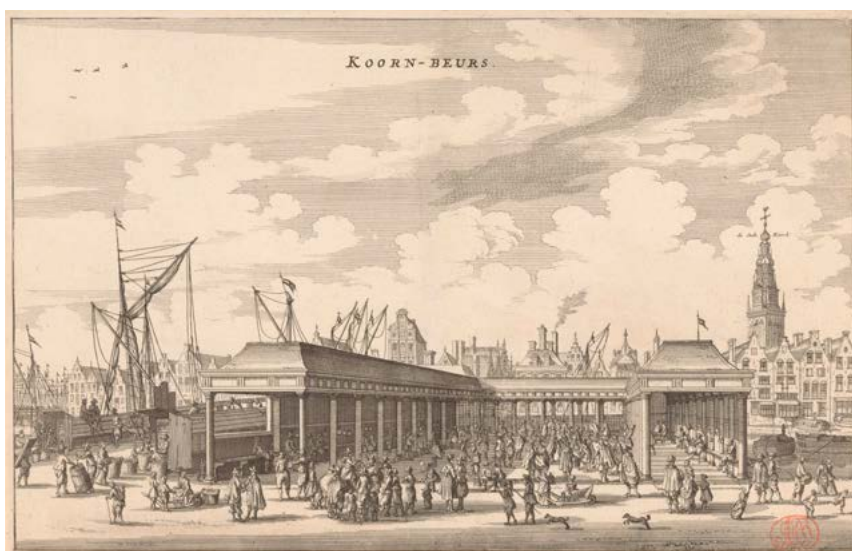
14 Maurits Ebben, 'Uwer hoog moogenden onderdaenigsten dienaers: Nederlandse consuls en Staatse diplomatie in Spanje, 1648–1661', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 127:4 (2014) 649–672; Leos Müller, 'The Swedish consular service in Southern Europe, 1720–1815', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 31:2 (2006) 186–195.

15 Recently, privateering and the role of the early modern prize courts in different countries have been explored in numerous studies. Gijs Rommelse, 'Privateering as a Language of International Politics: English and French Privateering Against the Dutch Republic, 1655–1665', *Journal for Maritime Research* 17:2 (2015) 183–194; Shavana Musa, 'Victims of Maritime Conflict, Compensation Claims and the Role of the Admiralty Court in the Early Modern Period' *Comparative Legal History: Maritime Conflict Management*,

*Diplomacy and International Law, 1100–1800* 5:1 (2017) 125–141; Steve Murdoch, 'Breaching Neutrality': English Prize-Taking and Swedish Neutrality in the First Anglo-Dutch War, 1651–1654', *The Mariner's Mirror* 105:2 (2019) 134–147; Leos Müller, 'Sweden's Early-Modern Neutrality: Neutral Vessels, Prize Cases and Diplomatic Actors in London in the Late Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Early Modern History* 23:5 (2019) 475–490. In the context of Dutch-Swedish seventeenth century relations, Hielke van Nieuwenhuizen has shown how the activities of diplomats and political developments determined the outcomes of the early seventeenth century prize cases; Hielke van Nieuwenhuizen, 'Prize law, international diplomacy and the treatment of foreign prizes in the seventeenth century: a case study', *Comparative Legal History* 5:1 (2017) 142–161 DOI: 10.1080/2049677X.2017.1311550.

16 Israel paid attention to the difference in re-sale value of the colonial goods and the bulk trades of the Northern Europe.

17 Leos Müller, 'The Dutch Entrepreneurial Networks and Sweden in the Age of Greatness' in: Hanno Brand ed., *Trade, Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange. Continuity and Change in the North Sea Area and The Baltic c.*



The grain exchange in Amsterdam in 1663, illustrated in Olfert Dapper, *Historische beschryving der stad Amsterdam*. AMSTERDAM, RIJKSMUSEUM

family links to Amsterdam (De Geer, Trips and Mommas) played a pivotal role in the creation of the Swedish fiscal-military state by running the business operations of the Northern rich trades, especially copper and iron.<sup>18</sup> Without this foreign expertise and capital, Sweden could hardly have succeeded in her efforts to dominate politically much of the Baltic Sea region. This period of early seventeenth century Swedish state building based on Dutch credit and expertise consolidated Dutch-Swedish diplomatic relations as well. The families that were involved in rich trades had direct links to the political elite and, as a result, their role as bargainers was strong.

There were, however, many more merchants or merchant houses importing bulk trades from the Baltic Sea. Van Tielhof estimates that the number of these small firms was over 100.<sup>19</sup> In the 1670s, Baltic merchants had not yet organized themselves as an official corporate institution, a development which took place only around the outbreak of the Nine Years War (*Directie der Oostersche Handel en Reederijen*).<sup>20</sup> However, before this there were already means of managing the smaller Baltic merchant's interests, most notably the organization of the *goede mannen*, which consulted with the Amsterdam *vroedschap*

1350–1750 (Hilversum 2005) 58–74. Tar trade was somewhat exceptional due to the fact that it was a finished product with a higher re-sale value, yet it was more bulky and cheaper than metal products.

18 Michiel De Jong, 'Dutch Entrepreneurs in the Swedish Crown Trade' in: Brand ed., *Trade, Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange*,

223–239.

19 Van Tielhof, *The 'Mother of All Trades'*, 122–123.

20 Jaap R. Bruijn, 'In een veranderend marietiem perspectief: het ontstaan van directies voor de vaart op de Oostzee, Noorwegen en Rusland', *Tijdschrift voor Zeegeschiedenis* 9 (1990) 15–25.

(city council) in matters relating to different occupational interests, as van Tielhof shows.<sup>21</sup> The agency of the Baltic merchants can be studied by linking the activities of the merchants to those of the diplomatic representatives striving for commercial diplomatic objectives. The agency of the Baltic merchants' *goede mannen* was evident in Dutch-Swedish foreign political relations, and was particularly notable in the 1670s and 1680s, as I will illustrate.

#### POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE SCANIAN WAR

The agency of the Dutch merchants manifested itself in two ways during and after the Scanian War. On the one hand, merchants were involved in the making of the peace terms with Sweden, which stipulated – among other favorable articles – compensations for the Dutch merchants. On the other hand, the interest group of the Dutch merchants supervised the process of repayments of the Swedish crown by using lower diplomatic actors in the Swedish staple towns.

To understand this involvement, a brief overview of the complex political context is needed. As the broad historiography shows, the Dutch position as the *entrepôt* of the world was challenged in the latter half of the seventeenth century, culminating in the Anglo-Dutch wars and the Franco-Dutch war. In terms of Dutch-Baltic relations, the Franco-Dutch war had the more severe consequences, as the Swedish kingdom joined the side of the French, disrupting Dutch-Swedish political relations. The States General declared war against Sweden in the summer of 1675, and Denmark followed suit in September. According to the Dutch-Danish-Brandenburg alliance treaty, the Dutch equipped a fleet to support the Danish war effort. In 1676–1677, the Danish-Dutch fleet was victorious in the Baltic Sea, resulting in a setback for the Swedish drive for political supremacy in the Baltic. At the same time, however, the disruption in political relations also challenged trade relations.<sup>22</sup>

The contrast with the earlier decades of Dutch-Baltic relations is great indeed. In the late 1650s, the strong Dutch influence in Swedish economic life had still ensured that trade continued even when the countries were involved in a severe political conflict.<sup>23</sup> The outbreak of the Scanian War was a crisis of a different kind that demonstrated the change in the European balance of power. It endangered both Dutch-Swedish economic relations and Baltic trade interests as a whole.

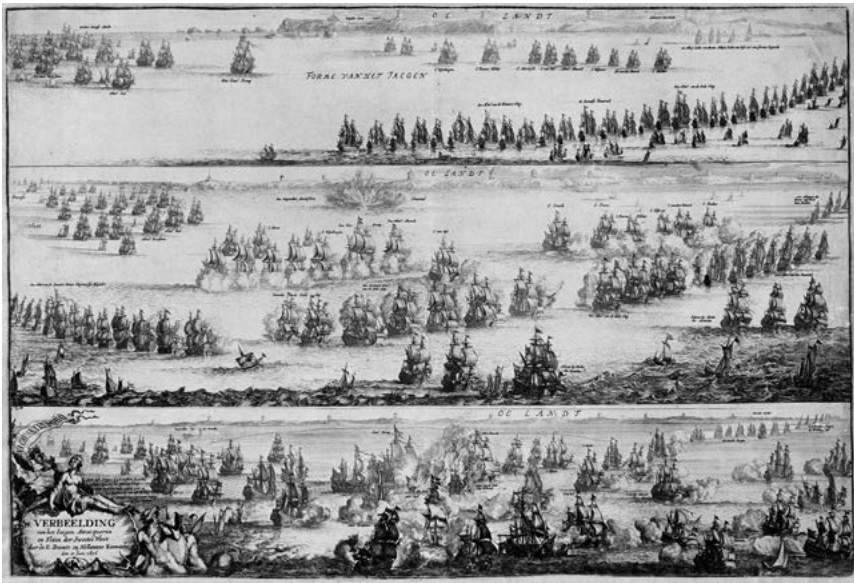
One of these new challenges was the neutrality of the English (after the Peace of Westminster, 1674), which resulted in an unprecedented peak in

21 Van Tielhof, *The 'Mother of All Trades'*, 125.

22 Israel, *Dutch Primacy in the World Trade*, 300; Jan Glete, *Swedish Naval Administration, 1521–1721: Resource Flows and Organisational*

*Capabilities. Swedish Naval Administration, 1521–1721*. Vol. 46 (Leiden 2009) 184–193.

23 Lindblad, *Sweden's Trade with the Dutch Republic*, 14.



Naval battle between the Swedish and the combined Danish-Dutch fleet in 1676. Etching by Romeyn de Hooghe. AMSTERDAM, HET SCHEEPVAARTMUSEUM

English shipping after the outbreak of the Scanian War.<sup>24</sup> The dominance of the English vessels was backed by economic historical development: there was a steady increase in bilateral trade between Sweden and England from the 1650s onwards, eventually turning England into the most important export destination for Swedish manufactured products.<sup>25</sup> Thus, it is fair to say that anti-French and anti-Swedish political alliance of the Dutch Republic and Denmark successfully coordinated the war effort against France. Nevertheless, the alliance was very problematic in terms of Dutch trade interests in the Baltic Sea region. The Dutch economic influence in the region was not the same as it had been in its heyday.

Despite the new North-European war on the horizon, the city of Amsterdam, traditionally favoring less aggressive foreign policies (since wars disrupted the maritime trade that was its lifeblood), wished to maintain normal trade relations with Sweden and the Baltic Sea region as a whole. One of the results of this approach was the clause included in the Dutch declaration of war that stated that the Dutch wished to keep trade relations intact despite the coun-

24 About the change in Dutch-English relations from being political rivals to commercial competitors see: Gijs Rommelse, 'The Role of Mercantilism in Anglo-Dutch Political Relations, 1650-74', *The Economic History Review* 63:3 (2010) 591-611.

25 Henry Roseveare, 'Stockholm - London - Amsterdam: The Triangle of Trade 1660-1680'

in: W.J. Wieringa (ed.), *The Interactions of Amsterdam and Antwerp with the Baltic region, 1400-1800: De Nederlanden en het Oostzeegebied, 1400-1800: papers presented at the third international conference of the "Association internationale d'histoire des mers nordiques de l'Europe", Utrecht, August 30th September 3rd 1982* (Leiden 1983) 85-94.

tries being at war. The text was prepared during the meeting of the *vroedschap* in July 1675.<sup>26</sup> The Swedish rejected this stance, and included a general trade embargo against the Dutch in the Swedish counter-declaration of war. As a result, Dutch subjects were banned from trading in Sweden, and all Dutch vessels in the Baltic Sea were threatened with seizure by Swedish naval officials or privateers.<sup>27</sup>

It is still, however, evident that despite the outbreak of the war the Dutch economic links were of great significance to the Swedish crown. Even though bilateral trade between Sweden and England increased and eventually overtook the volume of Swedish trade with the Republic, it was actually Dutch capital that financed this trade.<sup>28</sup> Their contested and partially weakened world trade empire notwithstanding, the Dutch diplomatic representatives sent by the Dutch States General to Sweden held potentially great bargaining power in their hands.

#### COMMERCIAL TREATIES, PRIVATEERING, AND COMPENSATION FOR THE DUTCH MERCHANTS

When it comes to political presence, the States General had a broad diplomatic representation in the Baltic Sea region. Apart from short breaks, there was a nearly continuous presence of Dutch resident ministers in Sweden, Denmark, and most notably the Southern Baltic cities in the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>29</sup> In 1674, the States General had appointed a new resident, Christiaan Constantijn Rumpf, to act as the representative in Sweden. As research has shown, his endeavors as a commercial diplomat were notable, and much of his diplomatic correspondence deals with issues of trade and commerce.<sup>30</sup>

From late 1675 onwards, Rumpf began an intensive campaign to promote the economic interests of the Republic in Sweden. The first objective was to normalize trade relations by concluding a commercial treaty with the Swedish crown as soon as possible. This was achieved for two reasons. First, the Swedish merchants who had invested in the privileged tar company wanted to open up trade again with the Dutch.<sup>31</sup> Second, normalizing commercial

26 Stadsarchief Amsterdam (SA), Archief van de Vroedschap: resoluties met munimenten of bijlagen, 5025, 31 July 1675.

27 *Manifest Ende Reenen Van Declaratie Van Oorloge, Tegens Den Koningh Van Sweeden* ('s Grav.: J. Scheltus, 1675). <https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/rug01:001730798> (checked 18.9.2020).

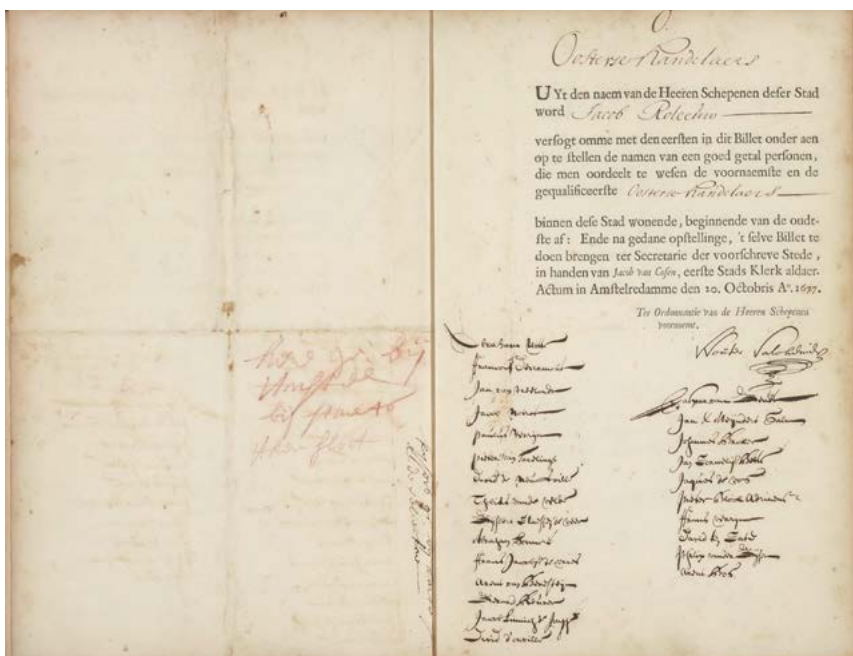
28 Henry Roseveare, *Stockholm – London – Amsterdam*, 93–94; Müller, *The Dutch entrepreneurial networks and Sweden in the Age of Greatness*, 72.

29 Jan Heringa, *De Eer en Hoogheid van de*

*Staat: over de plaats der Verenigde Nederlanden in het diplomatieke leven van de zeventiende eeuw* (Groningen 1961) 60–84.

30 Otto Schutte, *Repertorium der Nederlandse vertegenwoordigers, residerende in het buitenland, 1584–1810* ('s-Gravenhage 1976) 16–18; Tonko Ufkes, 'Nederländska skeppare på stockholmska handelsskepp, 1685–1700', *Forum navale* 56 (2001) 35–59.

31 Nationaal Archief The Hague (NL-HaNA), Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv.no. 7180, Rumpf to Griffier Hendrick Fagel 31 of August 1675;



The elite of the Baltic merchants were consulted in the disputes and matters relating to their field of expertise. Pages from the register of *goede mannen* (arbiters), Archives of the Schout and Aldermen. AMSTERDAM, STADSARCHIEF

relations with the Dutch was an opportunity promoting for and possibly even to negotiate a separate peace with the Republic. In November, Rumpf signed a commercial treaty with the Swedish councilors. The treaty, separating the political war from Dutch-Swedish commerce, was ratified in the following year.<sup>32</sup>

The essence of the commercial treaty of 1675/76 was twofold: on the one hand, it guaranteed the neutrality of mutual Dutch-Swedish trade by forbidding any hostilities against their merchant vessels. On the other hand, it secured the normal legal rights of each other's subjects in their cities, enabling merchants and factors to run their business operations freely during the war.<sup>33</sup>

Once the agreement was in effect, Rumpf eagerly supervised the observance of the commercial treaty. In fact, mediating the merchants' interests was the most visible part of his diplomatic activities, and the problems caused by the war only underlined his role as a commercial diplomat. Despite the mutual commercial treaty, Swedish attacks against Dutch mer-

Henry Roseveare, *Markets and Merchants of the Late Seventeenth Century: The Marescoe-David Letters, 1668-1680* (Oxford 1991) 154.

32 Ragnar Hoffstedt, *Sveriges Utrikespolitik under Krigsåren 1675-1679*, 95-98.

33 *Tractaet Van Navigatie En Commercie*,

*Tusschen Den Koningh Van Sweeden ... Ende De Heeren Staten Generael ... Den 26 November 1675. Tot Stockholm Gesloten* ('s Gravenhage: J. Scheltus, 1676) <https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/ggc01:407041664> (checked 18.9.2020).

chant vessels increased over the course of the war. One particularly severe clash was the capture of 23 Dutch grain ships in 1676–1678 by Otto Wilhelm von Königsmarck, a commander of the Swedish Pomeranian troops. The obvious reason for these maneuvers was a shortage of supplies, and the only possible way to prevent the starvation of the troops was to confiscate the cargoes of the neutral Dutch grain ships arriving from the Southern Baltic or Livonian ports.<sup>34</sup>

These seizures had a hard effect on the Amsterdam grain merchant firms, many of whom had less individual influence. For these merchants, the only way to influence domestic and foreign policies, and to reduce the risks of business, was to cooperate as an economic interest group. A closer look at the losses suffered by the grain merchants shows how the Swedish privateering hit some of the most influential men involved in the business. The names of the shareholders of the cargoes involved include Gerard Röver (who acted as a correspondent of the group), Frans Verreyn, and Frans Jacobse de Vries. All of these merchants were sitting in the board of the *goede mannen*, and therefore held a great deal of political capital.<sup>35</sup>

Even though there is no consistent source material surviving from their meetings, the agency of the *goede mannen* manifests itself in their protests (or petitions) to the States of Holland<sup>36</sup> and the peace negotiators in Nijmegen.<sup>37</sup> In my view, it is their direct link to the *vroedschap* that explains the further success of their endeavors. It is not a great surprise that the protests of the grain merchants were successfully channeled to the meetings of the States of Holland soon after the news about the seizures reached Amsterdam.

The role of the grain merchants in forming the foreign political decisions becomes evident in the peace conference in Nijmegen. As noted earlier, the Dutch-Swedish peace of 1679/81,<sup>38</sup> including a new and favorable commercial treaty,<sup>39</sup> guaranteed several improvements to the treatment of Dutch subjects in the Swedish realm, as well as lowering the tolls for Dutch ships in the Swedish staple towns. What matters here is that the weakened Swedish position,

34 For a detailed list of the lost ships and the shareholders of the cargoes in 1676–1678: Riksarkivet, Sweden (RA), Strödda handlingar 1575–1788 (SE/RA/2109/V11/1050), Generale Reekeningh.

35 Ibid.

36 NL-HANA, Archief van de Staten van Holland en West-Friesland, 1572–1795, 3.01.04.01, inv.no. 111, Resoluties van Holland, 17 November 1678.

37 RA, Strödda handlingar 1575 – 1788 (SE/RA/2109/V11/1050), A petition signed by grain merchants Gerard Rövers, Frans Verryn, Claes Pater and Frans Jacobsen de Vries, sent to the peace negotiators in Nijmegen, 12 of October 1679.

38 *Tractaet Van Vrede Ende Vrundschap. Gemaect Ende Gesloten Tot Nymmegen Den 2/12 October 1679 Tusschen Den Koningh Van Sweden ... Ende De Heeren Staten Generael* ('s Gravenhage: J. Scheltus, 1681). <https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/rug01:001744069> (checked 18.9.2020).

39 *Tractaet Van Commercie, Navigatie Ende Marine. Gemaect Ende Gesloten Tot Nymmegen Den 2/12 October 1679. Tusschen Den Koningh Van Sweden Ter Eenre; Ende De ... Staten Generael Der Vereenighde Nederlanden, Ter Andere Zyde* ('s Gravenhage: Jacobus Scheltus, 1681). <https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/rug01:001743981> (checked 18.9.2020).

i.e. the improved Dutch bargaining position, offered a chance for the grain merchants to push their demands into the treaty terms.

In this context, it is remarkable that amongst the more general diplomatic victories of toll reductions and improved treatment of the Dutch subjects in Sweden, the group of grain merchants actually succeeded in fully involving their detailed demands as separate articles in the peace treaty text. These separate articles involved full compensation for the 23 grain ships lost to the Königsmarck's privateers, as well as for the cargoes of the other seven ships captured by the Swedish and French privateers during the course of the war. Also, article VII of the peace treaty stipulated that these compensations were to be paid under the supervision of the resident ministers.<sup>40</sup> In total, the value of the 23 lost grain ships was set at 306 969 Polish guildens, which the negotiators accepted to be equal to 102 323 Swedish *riksdalers* or 204 646 *riksdaler silvermynts*.<sup>41</sup>

Given the uncertain nature of early modern international commitments, this did not yet signify the fulfillment of the economic claims. What mattered was that the Swedish crown carried out the most ambitious political reforms for decades, which included increasing the power of the monarch at the expense of the old noble families, fixing the state finances, and reorganizing the badly depleted military and naval forces. Politically, the Swedish crown needed security against the new France-Denmark-Brandenburg alliance formed in 1682. Thus, the Swedish state was politically vulnerable and depended on the deterrent effect of Dutch intervention in the Baltic Sea region against the Swedish political rivalries.<sup>42</sup>

The reforms of the Swedish king and his political elite dramatically increased the power of the monarch: it restored not only the fiscal capacity of the crown but also replaced the old noble elite with new trustees of King Charles XI.<sup>43</sup> The military was reorganized based partly on the system of allotment. The naval fleet was rebuilt and reorganized.<sup>44</sup> However, without the support of the Dutch Republic, Sweden was alone in European alliance policies. In order to compensate the loss of the French, the Swedish king needed the Dutch alliance. Consequently, the peace treaty between the Dutch Republic and Sweden was beneficial for the Dutch merchants, who were aware of this dependency.

40 *Tractaet Van Vrede Ende Vrundschap*, 6.

41 *Ibid.*, 15–18.

42 As Andrew Lossky has shown, the Dutch fleet that was sent into the Baltic truly prevented the political crisis from escalating into a full-scale war in between Sweden and Denmark/France/Brandenburg 1683. Andrew Lossky, *Louis XIV, William III, and the Baltic Crisis of 1683* (Los Angeles 1954) 39–43; Wouter Troost, 'William III, Brandenburg and the Construction of the anti-French Coalition,

1672–88' in: J. Israel (ed.), *The Anglo-Dutch Moment: Essays on the Glorious Revolution and Its World Impact* (New York 1991) 299–344.

43 M. Lappalainen, *Suku, valta, suurmaailma: Creutzit 1600-luvun Ruotsissa ja Suomessa* (Helsinki 2005) 312.

44 J. Glete, *Swedish Naval Administration, 1521–1721: Resource Flows and Organisational Capabilities* (Leiden/Boston 2010) 119–122, 197, 501–503.

For the Dutch merchants, the political context allowed them to put pressure on the Swedish crown to carry out the payments obliged in the Dutch-Swedish peace of 1679. Rumpf, who now enjoyed a great deal of authority amongst the Swedish political elite, began channeling different economic claims to the Swedish crown after the ratification of the Dutch-Swedish peace (1681). The letter, issued directly to the king of Sweden on 21<sup>st</sup> of February 1682, included 11 articles with different claims from the Dutch merchants. It listed both claims for compensating for the ships captured by privateers during the war as well as repayments for older debts to Dutch merchant families, sometimes dating back decades.<sup>45</sup> Among these were the sizeable debts to the families of Cletscher and Trip.<sup>46</sup> Given the fact that these merchant families played a crucial role both as creditors to the Swedish crown as well as manufacturing industrialists, intuitive reasoning would suggest that it would be precisely their claims that would have been taken seriously by the king's councilors.

Nevertheless, unlike the most influential merchant houses, the grain merchants' association was successful in implementing a plan not directly dependent on the crown's own treasury, but on a specific revenue source of the state. To summarize: the risks were decentralized. In the negotiations held between the representatives of Amsterdam and Swedish extraordinary envoy Gyldenstolpe, it was decided that the compensations would be paid from the tolls collected in Swedish staple towns. The agents of this process were to be the local toll officials, under the supervision of specially appointed Dutch commissaries residing in Sweden.<sup>47</sup>

One particular document from the Amsterdam city archives uncovers interesting details about the agency of this group. According to the mandate given by the notary Pieter de Wit, the group of grain merchants received the authority from the city of Amsterdam to appoint special commissaries to the staple towns of the Swedish Baltic Empire. These regions included not only Stockholm and Gothenburg, but also the major port in Livonia, Riga, where the traffic to and from the Netherlands was already increasing due to the lowering of the sea tolls for the Dutch skippers.<sup>48</sup>

Organizing the payments was the second major step in the process. In order to fulfill the commitments, there was an urgent need to find persons responsible for counting, supervising, and organizing the payments around the Baltic Sea region. Here, the cooperation of endogenous Dutch trading networks and

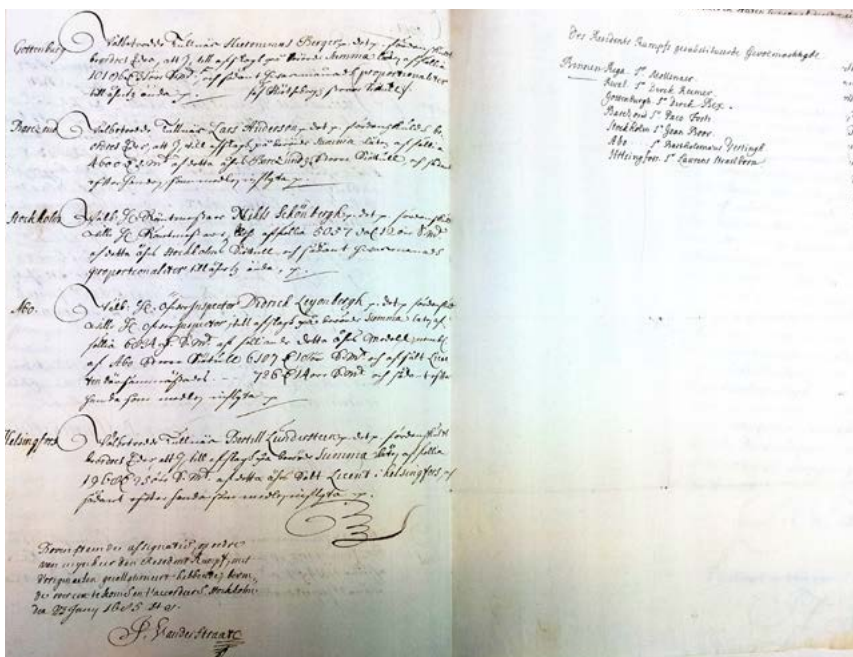
45 RA, Holländska beskickningars memorial och noter 1676–1705 (SE/RA/2109/V/1026), Memoriael Vervattende de Vorderinge en Pretensien die d'Onderdanen van den Staet der Vereenichde Nederlanden int Ryck van Sweden, 21 February 1682.

46 These debts were created when these families gave substantial credit to the Swedish crown in the first half of the seventeenth

century. See Klein, *De Trippen in de 17e eeuw*, 395–417.

47 NL-HaNa, Staten van Holland en West-Friesland, 1572–1795, 3.01.04.01, Resolutien van Holland, inv.no. 115, 1 October 1682.

48 SA, Archief van de Notarissen ter Standplaats Amsterdam, 5075, inv.no. 4961A, 1683 January 1–1683 June 30; fol.1–353, 1683 De Wit Not. Publ, 1/27 1683.



Document in the archives of C.C. Rumpf (Riksarkivet, Stockholm), listing those persons responsible for organizing payments of the debt caused by Swedish privateering during the Scanian War. PHOTO HENRI HANNULA

the diplomatic representatives in Stockholm was the key element. According to the proposition made by merchants sitting on the board of the *goede mannen*, local Dutch subjects were authorized to act as semi-official diplomatic actors supervising the process of payments in the staple towns. In Stockholm, Jean Boor became the first Dutch commissary. For his part, Dirck Bex acted as a commissary in Gothenburg (and for the surrounding Western Coast). In Livonia, Dirck Molenaar was responsible for the staple towns of Riga and Reval. Two years later, the network was expanded still further to include the Finnish coastal towns of Åbo (Turku) and Helsingfors (Helsinki), and Swedish Barösund (a toll center for ships trading in Norrköping and Söderköping). In these cities, the Dutch commissaries were Bartholomeus Vestingh (Åbo), Laurens Straelborn (Helsingfors) and Paco Fosti (Bärosund).<sup>49</sup>

The question thus arises: what was the background of these men? Why were they particularly suitable for representing the interests of the Amsterdam grain merchants? In the larger cities of Sweden, the Dutch commissaries belonged to the most influential figures in the Swedish export trade and information exchange. The families of Boor and Bex were at the heart of the Swedish iron industry in Sweden. The Dutch commissary in Stockholm, Jean

49 RA, 2109/VII/1049, Bilagor till förhandlingar med Ch.C. och H.W. Rumpf, Des Residents

Rumpfs gesubstitueerde Gevolmachtigde.

Boor, acted as an agent for Steven de Geer's Norrköping manufacture.<sup>50</sup> Dirck Bex was presumably a brother of Abraham Bex, who was a book-keeper for Louis de Geer in Stockholm.<sup>51</sup> Both of them have been identified as working as Rumpf's correspondents.<sup>52</sup> Paco Fosti, a merchant in Norrköping, was connected to the family De Besche, and thus De Geer's enterprise, by marriage.<sup>53</sup> Dirck Molenaer was a Dutch factor in Riga, the oldest of the local Dutch merchant communities.<sup>54</sup> This all demonstrates how the influence of a small business network with Dutch origins or Dutch links could be harnessed for the use of commercial diplomatic objectives. While these commissaries were officially ordered to deal with the local toll officials,<sup>55</sup> this fact offers us more information about the double role of these economic actors as semi-diplomatic agents.

In the course of the 1680s, the payment process was carried out. In 1683–1684, the toll administrators and commissaries in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Riga had the task of covering part of the expenses of the Swedish king's grain debt, in total 52 000 *riksdalers* or 105 000 *silvermunts*. According to Rumpf's memorandum from April 1685, the toll officials managed to collect 80 890 *silvermunts*, equal to 40 445 Swedish *riksdalers* – falling short by over 10 000 *riksdalers* of the assigned sum.<sup>56</sup>

Soon after the grain merchants received this news, Gerard Röver, who acted as a correspondent for their interest group, expanded the network of commissaries in Åbo and Helsingfors, and also suggested that the king's treasury should find another way to cover the rest of the sum.<sup>57</sup> Soon after, Rumpf wrote in a distinctly strict manner to the President of the King's treasury, Klaus Fleming. Despite the fact that the repayments were due to be completed in only one year according to the Nijmegen treaty, 'more than half of the whole debt' was still delinquent 'to the great displeasure and against all the expectations' in 1685.<sup>58</sup>

50 Henry Roseveare, *Markets and Merchants of the Late Seventeenth Century*, 154–155.

51 Müller, *The Merchant Houses of Stockholm*, 86.

52 Schutte, *Repertorium der Nederlandse vertegenwoordigers*, 280–281.

53 Gustaf Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor. Tillägg och rättelser ur supplementband 1 – 2. Tab 2* (Stockholm 1925–36).

54 NL-HANA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv.no. 7183, Molenaer cum suis petition to Rumpf, 14 September 1682.

55 RA, 2109/VII/1049, Bilagor till förhandlingar med Ch.C. och H.W. Rumpf, Des Residents Rumpfs gesubstitueerde Gevolmachtigde.

56 NL-HANA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv.no. 7184, Gnaedigste verordeningh, aengaende de te rugh staende schults betalinge aen der

Generale Staten van de Vereenighde Nederlanden ondersaten, voor het in den laetsten oorlogh tot Straelzondt opgebraghte koorn, gegeven binnen Stockholm de 25 April 1685.

57 RA, 2109/VII/1049, Bilagor till förhandlingar med Ch.C. och H.W. Rumpf, Extract uyt eene Missive, geschreve aen d heer Resident Rumpf; door d h Gerard Rovers, uyt Amsterdam de 10 April 1685; NL-HANA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv.no. 7184, Specificatie der Assignatien, door Syner Co Maj van Sweedens Estats Comptoir gedepescheert en verleent, ter behoeven van de Geinteresseerde in de bewuste Strealzontsche Graenschult, te betalen in desen lopenden jaere 1685, uyt de hier onder gementioneerde middele.

58 NL-HANA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv.no. 7184, Rumpf to Klaus Fleming: 'Te meerter-

From 1685 onwards, the process was indeed hastened, partly because of the expanded organization. All cities combined had paid a total of 128 131 *silvermunts* (64 065 Swedish *riksdalers*) in 1685. The share of the bigger cities of Stockholm, Göteborg, and Riga was in total 114 328 *silvermunts*, while Åbo contributed 6834 *silvermynts* and Helsingfors 1968 *silvermynts*. The Barösund toll contributed 4600 *silvermynts*, while Reval collected only 400 *silvermynts*. In total, the sum paid by these trading ports was 13 802 *silvermynts*.<sup>59</sup>

As a result, the Swedish cities still owed 23 255 *riksdalers* (69 765 *silvermynts*) to the Dutch in 1687. The last annual payment schedules were made before the outbreak of the Nine Years War in 1688,<sup>60</sup> and since there are no further complaints addressed to Rumpf after this, it seems plausible to assume that the last payments were indeed carried out. The most probable explanation of the absence of any further reports from the port cities is that the rest of the debt was paid directly from the land taxes collected by the Swedish crown.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, the question arises of who actually delivered the payments to the Dutch commissaries? Neither the specific articles of the Dutch-Swedish peace, nor the existing source material, offer a straightforward answer to this question. The peace treaty articles stipulated only the source of payments: the sea tolls from the bilateral trade between the Dutch Republic and the Swedish kingdom.

In the 1680s, Dutch traffic (vessels with shipmasters carrying Dutch passports) heading to the Swedish staple towns from the Republic, or arriving from those towns at the ports of the Republic, was increasing. However, the number of shipmasters carrying Swedish documents remained modest. It is reasonable to believe that it was mostly the Dutch merchant firms that ran the business operations of the bilateral Dutch-Swedish maritime trade. This also suggests that the actual payers of the toll sums delivered to the commissaries were the Dutch vessels.<sup>62</sup> A look at the payments made by Riga shows that the city failed to deliver approximately half of its assigned sum, or 5532 *riksdalers*

wyl by een soo solemneel Tractaet, als dat van Nijmegen is, door een separate Artyckel wel duydeleycks beloofd zynde, die geheele schult, binnen den tyt van een jaer, sint A 1681, te betalen, tot noch toe eghter, op verrenae de helft niet voldaan is, tot groot ontrief, en tegens alle verwaghtinge, der daerby geinteresseerde, die goetwilligh van haer gestipuleert Right, van dese haere betalinge op d'uytgaende coopmanschappe naer Sweden in Hollandt t assequeere, afstant gedaen hebbende, geensints vertrouwde, dat dese haere betalinge soo lange soude traineeren'.  
59 Ibid., Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv.no. 7185, Overslagh van het geene, op de Straelsontsche Graenschult, van 102323 RD Capitael, is aangewesen, betaelt, en nogh ten

aghteren staet.

60 Ibid., Balance van het geene Anno 1687 op het Restant der Straelsondsche Graenschult.

61 Ibid., Rumpf's memorandum 1687 16 Augusti. For instance, 'Ehttlantsche Reductes Renten' was ordered to deliver 6000 *silvermunts* in June 1687. Presumably, other estates were ordered to deliver similar payments as well.

62 Ibid., inv.no. 7184, Specificatie der Assignatien, door Syner Co Maj van Sweedens Estats Comptoir gedepescheert en verleent, ter behoeven van de Geinteresseerde in de bewuste Strealzontsche Graenschult, te betalen in desen lopenden jaere 1685, uyt de hier onder gementioneerde middele.

during the first years of the operation. Given the fact that there was no lack of Riga-Amsterdam trade in the 1680s,<sup>63</sup> the problems delivering the payments were presumably caused by the significant decrease in the toll levels for Dutch ships, as stipulated in the Dutch-Swedish peace of 1679/81. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that the dues that the Dutch skippers paid in the Swedish staple towns returned to the pockets of the Amsterdam grain merchants in the end.

Even if the whole debt was not repaid to the very last *riksdaler*, it is remarkable that it was this group of grain merchants that managed to receive significant amounts of compensation for their lost cargoes, whereas many other large debts listed in Rumpf's memorandum were left hanging in the air. The debts owed to the families of Cletscher and Trips, dating back to the early decades of the seventeenth century, were treated continuously as diplomatic issues in Stockholm. According to Rumpf's memorandum from 1684, the total sum owed to the Cletschers was over 90 000 *riksdalers*. For their part, the debt owed to the Trips comprised no less than 400 000 *riksdalers*.<sup>64</sup> While the debt to the Cletscher family was at least partly settled in the 1690s,<sup>65</sup> the case of the Trips was left completely open. The last attempt to reclaim the debts owed the family dates back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, after which it was abandoned.<sup>66</sup> Thus, from all the various claims made to the Swedish crown by Dutch economic agencies after 1682, the grain merchants' interest group was the most successful.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article shows that the role of the Dutch merchants and the lower ranked diplomats was of pivotal importance in the late seventeenth century Dutch-Swedish relations. The example of the lost grain ships and the compensation for their cargoes to the Dutch merchants is a crucial case demonstrating the significance of grass roots level agency in forming foreign policies and taking advantage of economic opportunities in a changing political conjuncture.

63 Sound Toll Registers Online <http://dietrich.soundtoll.nl/>. Advanced search results with standard geonames, values Riga, 1683–1686, Dutch Republic; number of passages. In 1683 in total 153 ships with Dutch documents headed to Riga. In 1684 and 1685, the number of Dutch vessels was 139 and 129, respectively. (date of search: 15.2.2020).

64 NL-HANA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv.no. 7184, Rumpf's memorandum 2/12 April 1684.

65 NL-HANA, Legaties Zweden / Pruisen / Polen / Saksen, 1.02.07, inv.no. 38, Designatie der onkosten en uitgesten, voor Reeckening

der in Hollandt voonachtige heeren Geinteresseerde in de Thomas Cletschersche schult op de Croon Sweeden en d eerste betaalinge ter somme van 7559 rdrs, gevallen.

66 SA, Archief van de Administrateurs in Nederland van de Goederen van de Familie Trip in Zweden, 533, 2: Everardus Johannes Potgieter als Zaakgelastigde in Zweden, 1831–1832 met Retroacta 1747–1828, inv.no. 193, Paspoort, rekeningen, kwitanties en brieven betreffende zijn verblijf in Zweden (grotendeels in het Zweeds, 1831–1832); Klein, *De Trippen in de 17e eeuw*, 395–417.

It shows that small merchants could rely on the existing corporative channels of the municipal administration to channel forward their economic interests in Sweden. This adds to the understanding of the connection between local economic interests and the activities of diplomats and political developments.

While the changes in Dutch-Swedish political relations mattered greatly, the eventual success of implementing the economic claims of the Dutch merchants in a country with relatively scarce monetary resources depended on the viability of the payment plan. Therefore, those who were relying solely on their personal networks amongst the Swedish political elite did not succeed as well as those who used decentralized networks of local Dutch economic agents residing in the staple towns. The network of the Dutch commissaries, diplomatic agents, and commercial representatives in Sweden turned out to be the most significant element in the faster flow of annually assigned payments.

The diplomatic intervention of the Dutch Baltic merchants demonstrates the potential power of the small merchant houses once they acted as an organized interest group with far-ranging ties to the Dutch diplomatic apparatus. It also sheds light on the origins of the influential hybrid organization of the Dutch Baltic traders, the *Directie der Oostersche Handel en Reederijen*. Since the grain merchants did not form a privileged company, or monopoly, they needed an alternative system to support their interests in times of trouble. The article shows that the political experiences during and after the Scanian War were indeed crucial for the institutional development of Dutch-Swedish economic relations.

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