

Edmond Smith¹

University of Cambridge

The Impact of Mercantile Competition in Asia on Anglo-Dutch relations, 1600-1674.

The Dutch and English East India Companies, agents of European expansion in Asia, both influenced, and were influenced by, the foreign policies of their respective states. Competition between the two, initially in the spice trade, became an increasingly important factor in interaction between England and the United Provinces. Commercial and political circles saw the East Indies trade as a source of profit, revenue, and power, but wider public attitudes were also influenced by the publication of commentaries on the trade, Anglo-Dutch relations, and specific events. Historical understanding of the relationship between competition in Asia and broader foreign policy considerations has however been complicated by the limited scope of existing research; an inevitable side effect of the separation of studies in European and extra-European history. The historiography of English and Dutch foreign policy in the seventeenth century is considerable in volume yet falls into two broad categories: monographs that focus primarily on domestic politics and the country's position within European international relations; and works that focus specifically on the actions and policies of the East India and West India Companies in Asia and America. The first category includes publications such as Price's *Holland and the Dutch Republic*, De Vries's *The First Modern Economy* and Pincus's *Patriotism and Protestantism* while the second is represented by Boxer's *The Dutch Seaborne Empire* and Chaudhuri's *The English East India Company*.²

¹ Edmond Smith's (es510@cam.ac.uk) academic interests currently centre on the economic, cultural, social and political interactions between Asia and Europe in the Early Modern period. He holds a BA (Hons.) in History from Coventry University (2006) and an MA in Early Modern History from King's College London (2010). He is currently conducting a PhD at the University of Cambridge with a thesis entitled "The Culture of Commerce: the East India Companies and Asia in Europe, c. 1600-1660".

² J. L. Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: The Politics of Particularism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: success, failure, and perseverance of the Dutch economy*,

These approaches, of course, do provide valuable insights into the projection of English and Dutch power in the seventeenth century. Both, however, are limited because they consider their topic in isolation, failing to recognise the symbiotic nature of this power in Europe and Asia, and the influence of networks between the metropole and its peripheries. This limitation is apparent, for example, in Israel's article *A Conflict of Empires* that initially identifies Spanish aims of the Spanish-Dutch war, 1621-48, as 'mostly relating to commercial and colonial matters'.³ However, it then entirely ignores the impact of the Asian sphere of operations during this conflict, and does not even attempt to offer an analysis of how colonial concerns were integrated with the European sphere. Similarly, recent accounts of Anglo-Dutch relations in the seventeenth century, such as Jones's *The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the Seventeenth Century*, are often unsuccessful at integrating Asian and European concerns, even when commercial competition in Europe is granted a position of prominence in the analysis.⁴ This limitation is equally apparent in Wilson's *Profit and Power*, a book that presents the Anglo-Dutch wars as a consequence of commercial competition without offering any interpretation of the integration of commercial, geo-political, and domestic concerns.⁵ Another well considered, but ultimately limited, monograph considering Anglo-Dutch relations is Pincus's *Protestantism and Patriotism*.⁶ The major motivation behind Anglo-Dutch relations is, according to Pincus, religious sensibility and the necessity for England to punish the Dutch for irreligion and a lack of subservience to supposed English superiority. Here, commercial concerns are dismissed due to the lack of political power held by merchants under both Charles I and the Commonwealth, and Pincus instead focuses on the motivations and actions of figures directly involved in the decision making process. While the role of religion

1500-1815 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997); Steven Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism: ideologies and the making of English Foreign Policy, 1650-1668* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Charles Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800* (England: Pelican Books, 1973 [1965]); K. N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company: The Study of an Early Joint-Stock Company, 1600-1640* (Great Britain: Franck Cass & Co. Ltd, 1965).

³ Jonathan Israel, 'A Conflict of Empires: Spain and the Netherlands, 1618-1648', *Past and Present*, 76 (1977) pp. 34-74.

⁴ J. Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Longman Group Ltd, 1996).

⁵ Charles Wilson, *Profit and Power: a study of England and the Dutch wars* (London: Longmans, 1957).

⁶ Steven Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism*.

is important in understanding English public opinion and decision-making, Pincus's argument is greatly limited by his narrow focus. As Brenner has demonstrated in *Merchant's and Revolution*, the influence of merchants, particularly stockholders in the East India and Levant Company, far outweighed their political standing.⁷ Not only were they in a position to forward money necessary for Royal and later Parliamentary endeavours, but their control of London, whether informally or formally through the Corporation, was significant. The importance of public opinion is further demonstrated in Braddick's *God's Fury, England's Fire* thanks to the proliferation of minor political roles through which as many as one in ten adult men could be expected to hold political office during this period.⁸ However, even though Brenner is able to demonstrate the importance of merchants in England's political community – their importance in Dutch politics was much more secure due to the position of representatives from the major trading provinces within the States-General – we are still left without a study integrating activities within Asia and their consequences on Anglo-Dutch relations.

Understanding the relationship between Asian and European concerns is further complicated by the almost autonomous nature of the United Dutch East India Company (VOC) and English East India Company (EIC). For example, the VOC, because of support and a charter from the States General at its inception, became 'virtually a state within a state' conducting its own foreign policy in the East Indies, sometimes to the detriment of Dutch relations with other European powers.⁹ This paper posits that the Dutch relationship with England was particularly shaken by commercial competition in Asia, with the brutality of Dutch conquests and rule serving to exacerbate tensions stimulated by mercantile competition. Considering the relationship between these two spheres of Dutch interest is essential for understanding their respective foreign policies during the seventeenth century. It highlights the changing attitudes towards foreign

⁷ Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁸ Michael Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire: a new history of the English Civil Wars* (London: Penguin Books, 2008).

⁹ Charles Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborn Empire, 1600-1800*, p. 26.

policy. In the Dutch case, this was a change from a defensive strategy designed to sustain their independence from Spain to a predatory policy aimed at establishing global Dutch trade hegemony that led it into conflict with its one-time ally, England.

Trade was the lifeblood of the Dutch state in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the sinews of war that enabled it to fight effectively the much larger power of imperial Spain to gain independence. It was trade that invigorated Dutch imperial expansion and allowed the establishment of a Dutch presence in America, Asia, and Africa, and it was trade that encouraged the development of industry, art, and the comparatively high living standards that set the United Provinces apart from its often envious contemporaries.¹⁰ The Dutch economy was largely dependent on overseas shipping - particularly the coastal provinces of Holland and Zeeland that not only contained the majority of the Dutch population but also generated most of the country's revenue - and Dutch merchants dominated the Baltic, North Sea, and Iberian trades.¹¹ Following their rise to prominence in the carrying trade in the Baltic and investment in large-scale fishing, Dutch merchants expanded their mercantile dominance in Europe. They established major operations in the import and re-export of products from across Europe and the Mediterranean, and developed a sophisticated credit market. This domination increased exponentially after the blockade of the Scheldt and the decline of Antwerp during the Dutch revolt, during which Amsterdam became the major trading entrepôt and centre of capital in Europe.¹² Dutch successes over Spain during the revolt, such as the naval victory over a Spanish fleet in the Downs in 1639, would continue to be a boost to Dutch merchants into the seventeenth century. The only major products that Amsterdam failed to gain a major stake in before 1600 were the exotic trades associated with other continents, still dominated in the sixteenth century by the Portuguese and Venetians. It was these exotic trades, which promised

¹⁰ William Temple, *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972 [1673]), Chapter 4.

¹¹ Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, p. 4.

¹² Jonathan Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 30.

massive profits, which would provide the impetus for the establishment of an overseas Dutch Empire. The English economy, although more agrarian like the rest of Europe, also had a rapidly developing overseas trade. Unable to compete effectively with the Dutch in the northern European freighting trade due to limitations in ship design and investment, English merchants interested in import trade looked further afield. Prior to 1600 therefore, the English had already begun to gain experience of exotic produce, which merchants bought in the Ottoman Empire, rather than directly from the East Indies, and in this respect they were ahead of their Dutch rivals. However, while this experience was useful when trade with native Asian rulers was established, it was not enough to guarantee any predominance in direct trade with Asia. The limitations of the English economic structure, namely investment and credit services, meant that the EIC only had a starting capital of 68,000 pounds sterling upon its establishment in 1600.¹³ When the Dutch company was formed in 1602, its starting capital was around ten times that, at 6.5 million guilders.¹⁴

However, although trade was the cause of Dutch wealth, which was to become a major source of their military and diplomatic power in Europe, it was not, at the outbreak of the Dutch revolt, their main foreign policy concern. Initially, Dutch foreign policy derived from a consideration of the geo-political weakness of the United Provinces in continental Europe, and it was designed to protect Dutch independence.¹⁵ Confronting the power of the Spanish Empire - which included Portugal and its Asian territories until 1640 - consumed much of the energy of the young republic, and the construction of fortifications, the hiring of soldiers, and the retention of large garrisons, was very expensive. These costs were partially redeemed through alliances with other European powers, including Elizabeth I's England, which had provided money and soldiers commanded by the Earl of Leicester; an invaluable source of support that strengthened the bond

¹³ William Bernstein, *A Splendid Exchange: How Trade Shaped the World* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009), p. 219.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 221, p. 224.

¹⁵ J. L. Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century* p. 221.

between the two Protestant countries at the turn of the seventeenth century. England was not however acting simply to defend its ally. There is a consensus among historians that the Dutch did not desire war with England during the later Anglo-Dutch conflicts, a consideration that is supported by contemporary opinions. English foreign policy was also a product of European concerns, and by the end of the sixteenth century, it too revolved around the threat of Spain. By seeking to support the Dutch, they hoped to weaken the Spanish to the extent that they would be unable to threaten England directly. Similarly, support for activities such as Drake's expeditions to the Caribbean and Hawkins's attempts to participate in the slave trade were, in spite of the ostensible motivation for profit, attempts to open new fronts in the war against Spain. In neither England nor the United Provinces was the desire to develop trade the predominant concern of foreign policy. At the dawn of the seventeenth century both saw Spain as the enemy, although in the English case one who could be dealt with when it was profitable, and trade was simply another weapon in their respective arsenals. Nonetheless, the bond between the two countries deteriorated in the seventeenth century as economic competition, in Europe but more violently in the East Indies, drove a wedge between the two states. There is a consensus among historians that the Dutch did not desire war with England during the later Anglo-Dutch conflicts, a consideration that is supported by contemporary opinions. However, Dutch trade policies did exacerbate tensions between the two states and influenced English political opinion in an important, yet often overlooked aspect, in the continuing debate over English foreign policy in the seventeenth century.

The Dutch aim in the East Indies was to establish a monopoly over the spice trade, which provided substantial profits when its exotic produce was sold on the European market, although these declined later in the century as the Dutch monopoly caused a glut in the European market

and a fall in price.¹⁶ Spices were prized commodities for a variety of reasons: for their uses, in food, medicine, and aromatics; as a display of wealth and status; and as tangible representations of an exotic and mysterious world that northern Europeans were experiencing in numbers for the first time. While investors focused their attentions on Asia for trade and profit, the VOC also sought ideological justifications that were of the utmost importance when seizing territory. It was offered willingly by Dutch politicians such as Oldenbarnevelt, who considered the establishment of a united trading company to be essential ‘for damaging the enemy and for security of the fatherland’.¹⁷ With this aim in mind, the VOC was designed as a trading company with a capacity to make war. Thus, the VOC was able to aggressively seize territory from the Portuguese in Asia and establish territorial dominance over important centres of production in a way that the EIC was unable to do.¹⁸ To establish and maintain a successful spice monopoly, the VOC expanded from the positions it had seized from the Portuguese and waged a series of wars against native kingdoms. One justification for this was the continuing sale of spices to the English by natives, such as those of Guammequore, which was interpreted as betrayal by the Dutch, who then found *casus belli* in the misunderstanding of monopoly agreements and seized territory.¹⁹

It has been suggested that the Dutch did not intend to colonise at first in Asia, except for the Portuguese territories that they felt ideologically obligated to seize, but this seems doubtful, as their conquests were not necessary for their survival or profit.²⁰ The EIC demonstrated the possibility of succeeding in Asia without the need to impose their rule by establishing itself in largely non-fortified trading factories, positions that only really became untenable in the Spice Islands following Dutch aggression and pursuit of a spice monopoly. Indeed, it was this desire

¹⁶ Temple, *Observations*, 124.

¹⁷ Cited in Charles Boxer, *Jan Compagnie in War and Peace 1602-1799 : A short story of the Dutch East India Company* (Hong Kong: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1979), p. 1.

¹⁸ Jan De Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, p. 383.

¹⁹ Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas his Pilgrimes* (London: printed by Fetherston, 1625), p. 86.

²⁰ Gert Oostindie and Bert Passman, ‘Dutch Attitudes towards Colonial Empires, Indigenous Cultures, and Slaves’, *Eighteenth Century Studies* 31 (1998), 351.

for monopoly that was the driving force behind the aggressive expansion of the VOC in Asia, a pragmatic policy chosen to enhance profits, or so they thought, and to magnify Dutch power. In 1687, English critics of the Dutch company, attacking their early expansionism, sought to discredit the VOC by claiming that ‘the Princes and people of those parts are a naked people, unused to fire-Armes, that live in the innocent primitive estate of Nature’ who are reduced to ‘down—right Slaves to the Dutch’ through warfare and deceit.²¹ While this picture of Dutch expansion, created by their English rivals, is not entirely accurate and does not acknowledge how the VOC tried when possible to integrate into existing commercial structures, it does reveal how the English came to view the VOC.²² Bitterness that was constructed during a long period of jealousy, competition, and discord in Asia during the first half of the seventeenth century.

Anglo-Dutch relations in Asia were initially very different from those between the VOC and the Portuguese or weaker native states, largely because England and the United Provinces were at peace in Europe and open conflict between the two newly established companies was not advisable. Of course, this did not stop the VOC’s pursuit of a spice monopoly at the expense of their English rivals, and the forceful establishment of this monopoly, once Jan Pieterszoon Coen assumed command in 1618, was rapid. The establishment of Batavia in 1621, over the ruins of Jakarta that Coen had taken in 1618 following English attempts on the same city, solidified the Dutch position, both militarily and administratively. In spite of some reservations about Coen’s grand imperial vision, the Heeren XVII – the VOC’s Board of Directors, made up of from representatives from across the United Provinces - were presented with a *fait accompli*, and were forced to accept Dutch territorial expansion due to the disjointed nature of a European empire in Asia, months away from contact with its superiors.²³ Although some criticised this policy as being detrimental to trade considering the costs of fortifying positions in Asia, the colonial policy

²¹ Anon., *An Impartial Vindication of the English East-India Company, from the Unjust and Slanderous Imputations Cast upon them in a treatise entitled A Justification of the Directors of the Netherlands East-India Company* (London, 1687), p. 91.

²² Oostindie, *Dutch Attitudes towards Colonial Empires*, 351.

²³ De Vries and Van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, p. 386.

of Coen continued unabated throughout the century.²⁴ During the first decades of the century, Dutch action against the English was not as vigorous as against the native rulers whose lands they needed to conquer. Instead, it was limited to a few attacks on English shipping, such as at Ay in 1616, and by attempts to exclude them from the spice trade through agreements with natives and the VOC's military power.²⁵ English attempts to gain trade in the Spice Islands were thus limited thanks to native fears that in response to any collusion the Dutch 'would come with a Fleete, as they had done, and take their country from them'.²⁶

Without the ability to resist Dutch advances in Asia by force of arms, the EIC, which remained largely a shipping concern at this point, turned to diplomatic channels to gain access to the valuable spices.²⁷ The Company's case was supported by the dangerous turn in European politics at this time (the outbreak of the Thirty Years War in 1618 and political schism in the United Provinces), since the States General could not risk their good relations with England to be jeopardised.²⁸ An agreement reached in 1619 granted the English a third of all spices produced in Dutch controlled islands in return for them paying a third of all military costs encountered by the Dutch. The agreement arrived in Asia in 1620, just in time to stop an English assault on the Dutch.²⁹ In principle, this accord seemed to heal the rifts between the two companies. However, European agreements often carried little weight in Asia where the VOC was beyond the controls of the States General and even their own directors, a difficulty acknowledged by the EIC.³⁰ Governor-General Coen, however, made sure that the costs demanded from the EIC for military defence outweighed the sources of capital that the EIC actually held in Asia, thus making it impossible for them to pay and thereby sustaining the Dutch monopoly. Nevertheless, the

²⁴ Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, pp. 722-3.

²⁵ Vincent Loth, 'Armed Incidents and Unpaid Bills: Anglo-Dutch rivalry in the Banda Islands in the Seventeenth Century', *Modern Asian Studies* 29 (1995), 713 & 715.

²⁶ Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, p. 244.

²⁷ Douglas Irwin, 'Mercantilism as Strategic Trade Policy: The Anglo-Dutch Rivalry for the East-India Trade', *The Journal of Political Economy* 99 (1991), 1299.

²⁸ Loth, 'Armed Incidents and Unpaid Bills', *Modern Asian Studies*, 721.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 717.

³⁰ Anon., *An Impartial Vindication*, p. 216.

Dutch enforcement of a spice monopoly, although straining the relations between the companies, did not result in constant conflict between employees of the two companies based in Asia. Edmund Scot, for example, thought ‘that though we were mortall enemies in our Trade, yet in all other matters we were friends, and would have lived and dyed one for the other.’³¹ Similarly, the English Captain Humphrey Fitz Herbert ‘having intelligence of the Generall of the Netherlands Victory in Banda, shot off Fourteene pieces of Ordinance for Joye’, suggesting that Dutch expansion at this point was not intolerable for the English.³² This strange relationship of support and conflict characterised Anglo-Dutch relations in Asia in the initial two decades of the two company’s activities in the East Indies. While the conflict in the Banda islands did come close to becoming out of control, it seemed, for a time, that the militaristic brand of Dutch imperialism in Asia would not destroy the strong bond between the Dutch and English. In 1623, on the Island of Amboyna, that changed.

The so-called Massacre of Amboyna was a flashpoint that significantly altered the dynamic of the Anglo-Dutch relationship in both Asia and Europe. Through a series of accounts in pamphlets, books, and plays, the massacre was ingrained into English seventeenth century perceptions of the Dutch and became a major source of anti-Dutch propaganda throughout the century. The republication of accounts of the massacre coincided with the later Anglo-Dutch wars in a conscious effort to use them as propaganda in support of these conflicts. Skinner’s contemporary account, the *True Relation of the unjust, cruell, and barbarous proceedings*, was reprinted in 1651, and Keymor’s *Sir Walter Raleigh’s observations touching trade and commerce with the Hollander* followed in 1653 and 1664. English accounts of the massacre were often hyperbolic, using brutal imagery to describe the torture and execution of the English and de-humanising the Dutch to an extent that they became a hated enemy of the English, rather than the close allies that they had

³¹ Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, p. 177.

³² Anon., *The Hollanders Declaration of the Affairs of the East Indies* (Amsterdam, 1622), p.10.

previously been.³³ The massacre arose from the suspicions of the Dutch governor, Harman van Speult, who believed that the English were raising rebellion against his rule and colluding with native dissenters. In response to this, the Dutch ‘proved’ their suspicions by using brutal torture to gain confessions, following which the Englishmen were executed, along with ten others. The disjointed lives that men led in the East Indies, and the sudden power granted to VOC employees who relied on brutal and savage discipline to control soldiers and sailors described as ‘wild boars’ by one employee, resulted in the Dutch authorities in Asia retaining the brutality of the legal system of Europe but without any restraint.³⁴

The event caused uproar in England, and the EIC in particular demanded action against the Dutch for the ‘odious and execrable Process.’³⁵ This complicated matters for King James I who was currently attempting to build an alliance with the United Provinces against Spain.³⁶ Conflict was averted because the European concerns of England were too great to risk them being subverted by mercantile or Asian concerns, which at this point were not considered a vitally important aspect of English foreign policy. However, the VOC defence of the torture, delivered in a pamphlet that seems to have been issued by the Company, argued that ‘to give the torture when the case so requireth, is no fault of the Judge, but is a thing customable throughout Europe.’³⁷ As can be expected, this defence did little to assuage public opinion in England, which remained vehemently anti-Dutch. The propaganda that the events on Amboyna generated continued to influence the relationship between the two states, and as late as 1712 R. Hall still considered that ‘this action [at Amboyna] made the Dutch so Odious, that they are Infamous to this very Day, among the Rude and Savage Indians, for their Barbarous Inhumanity Executed

³³ John Skinner, *A True Relation of the unjust, cruell, and barbarous proceedings against the English at Amboyna* (London: printed by H. Lownes, 1624).

³⁴ Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, p. 78.

³⁵ EIC., *A Reply to the Remonstrance of the Bewinthebbers or Directors of the Netherlands East India Company* (London: 1632), p. 47.

³⁶ Karen Chancey, ‘The Amboyna Massacre in English Politics’, *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 30 (1998), 583-4.

³⁷ Anon., *A Remonstrance of the Directors of the Netherlands East-India Company, touching the bloody proceedings against the English Merchants executed at Amboyna* (London: printed by John Dawson, 1632 [1624]), p. 12.

upon the English'.³⁸ Made almost a century after the event, this statement reveals just how deeply ingrained the event was in English public opinion, and how much it had done to sever the bonds that had previously helped sustain peace.

After the massacre at Amboyna, it was almost thirty years before major conflict broke out between the Dutch and the English, in Europe or in the East Indies. Peace was a consequence of war in Europe. The war between Spain and the United Provinces was not concluded until the 1648 Treaty of Munster, and until this time Dutch foreign policy focused on resisting the Spanish assault, which meant a neutral England was an important foreign policy objective. Similarly, the English Civil War only ended in 1651, before which the English were in no position to fight the Dutch, and during which both sides in fact tried to enlist aid from the Dutch rather than confront them. Inevitably, during this conflict non-European concerns seemed less important to both sides, in spite of the active political careers on many EIC merchants.³⁹ However, while wars in Europe negated the possibility of conflict over mercantile and East Asian concerns between these two states, their importance was becoming apparent to some merchants and politicians. For example, in 1637 Antonio van Diemen stated that 'the welfare of the company [VOC] depends solely, with God's help, on dominion of the sea, and on our upholding the same against friends and foes on all occasions', demonstrating his understanding that trading supremacy was built upon naval strength that could be turned against anyone, including the English.⁴⁰ Defences of the East India trade in England drew similar conclusions, arguing that the trade was vital for the protection of the commonwealth.⁴¹ Furthermore, this period of peace witnessed spectacular achievements and dividends for the VOC that provoked envy and jealousy among its rivals, a major factor in public opinion that

³⁸ R. Hall, *The History of Barbarous Cruelties and Massacres committed by the Dutch in the East Indies* (London: 1712), p. 75.

³⁹ Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp. 231-2, pp. 497-9.

⁴⁰ Cited in C. Boxer, *Jan Compagnie*, p. 17.

⁴¹ Thomas Mun, *A Discourse on Trade from England unto the East Indies* (London: printed by Nicholas Okes, 1621), p. 24.

encouraged the English pursuit of war in 1652 and 1664.⁴² This envy is apparent in a John Eames poem of 1666 that exhibits the English desire to capture a Dutch convoy carrying the ‘Sweet Spices, Gums, and all the sun can boast | Or the Indulgence of the Indian Coast.’⁴³ Economic rivalry between England and the United Provinces was an important cause of the conflicts after 1652. For the Dutch it was essential to protect the source of their prosperity and power, while the English had to support and encourage its growing shipping and export industries while fearing that ‘the Dutch ... like the Spanish before them, were seeking to use a trade monopoly as the foundation of a universal monarchy.’⁴⁴ Fear of the Dutch therefore created an atmosphere in England where policy shifted from a desire to retain peace for the benefits of trade to a policy where trade was thought to be served best by war.⁴⁵ Years of competition, envy, and anti-Dutch propaganda had helped sever the bonds that had previously held these two nations together, and in the space of a year Cromwell’s Republic had changed policy from trying to ally with the United Provinces, to an aggressive policy designed to right past wrongs and secure England’s primary position in the relationship.

The Maritime Act in 1651 was the first salvo of the English assault on Dutch trade, forbidding the import of goods into England on non-English ships. It was viewed as an illegal act against free trade, or *Mare Liberum*, that the Dutch had demanded as a natural right – when it suited them – since Hugo Grotius had first defended this principal in 1609.⁴⁶ However, the Dutch reaction to the Navigation Act was somewhat hypocritical, since their own fears of England centred on the belief that England was trying to encroach on their monopoly trades. The ceiling painting in the states of Holland by De Haan and Wielingh displays this fear, depicting an

⁴² Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars*, p. 32.

⁴³ John Eames, *A Poem: Being an essay upon the current war with the Dutch* (London: printed by Henry Herringham, 1666), p. 2.

⁴⁴ Steven Pincas, ‘Popery, Trade and Universal Monarchy: The Ideological Context of the Outbreak of the Second Anglo-Dutch War’, *The English Historical Review* 107 (1992), 22.

⁴⁵ J. Farnell, ‘The Navigation of 1651, the First Dutch War, and the London Merchant Company’, *The Economic History Review, New Series* 16 (1964), 450.

⁴⁶ Hugo Grotius, trans. Richard Hakluyt, *The Free Sea* (Indianapolis, 2004 [1609]), Chap. 1.

Englishmen 'endeavouring to clamber into the Dutch commonwealth, he and his confederates are shown as clumsy, larcenous [and] greedy.'⁴⁷ Nonetheless, while Dutch fears in the English aims of the wars were justifiable, as the English politician George Monck - a career soldier and royalist who would later be important in the restoration of Charles II - made clear on the eve of the second Dutch war by stating 'what matters this or that reason? What we want is more of that trade the Dutch now have', Dutch desire for war was tempered by consideration of its geo-political position and threats of invasion.⁴⁸ Pieter de la Court considered the implications of wars with England and other European powers in some detail, concluding 'in short, Holland taking care of things, is so powerful as not to be conquered by any, except perhaps the British'.⁴⁹ This was a bold claim, but one that reveals Dutch fears, why they did not try to escalate the wars with England, and why they were willing to offer compensation to the EIC in order to maintain peace. For instance, in the 1654 treaty that concluded the first Anglo-Dutch war, the VOC were forced to pay £85,000, including £3,615 to dependants of EIC servants executed at Amboyna 1623.⁵⁰ While the EIC complained that they 'could never hear or read that the Dutch Company restored to the English any place of Trade, that ever they deprived them of by fraud or violence', compensation and Dutch apologies helped ease tense relations.⁵¹ The first and second Anglo-Dutch wars were fought between England and the United Provinces in the defence of trade, with assaults on trading convoys and positions in America, Africa, and Asia. Attempts to damage Dutch trade during these conflicts was seen as a useful means of forcing them to come to terms, even if commercial concerns had not been the deciding factor at the wars beginning. These wars did not risk the independence of either state, and invasion was never seriously considered.

⁴⁷ Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: an interpretation of Dutch culture in the golden age* (London: Collins, 1987), p. 229.

⁴⁸ Cited in Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, p. 230.

⁴⁹ Pieter de la Court, *The True Interest and Political Maxims of the Republic of Holland and West-Friesland* (London, 1702 [1662]), p. 242.

⁵⁰ Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars*, p. 34.

⁵¹ Anon., *An Impartial Vindication*, p. 89.

However, the Third Anglo-Dutch war, 1672-4, had a different dynamic, resulting from an English alliance with the French and concerted attempts to invade the United Provinces themselves. Although East Asian concerns remained contentious in 1672 between England and the United Provinces, their importance was primarily as a source of propaganda to gain public support for another Dutch war. For example, Dryden's play, *Amboyna: A Tragedy*, was produced during this conflict, and condemned how 'the dotage of some Englishmen is such | to fawn on those who ruine them, the Dutch', retelling the story of the Amboyna massacre for a modern audience.⁵² The play also mocked the weakness of previous English policies towards the Dutch, who were forgiven for the Amboyna massacre thanks to a 'smooth Apology, and then a fawning letter to the King of England'.⁵³ This encouragement of stronger foreign policy in support of England's interests coincided with a growing English interest in European concerns and its self-perception as a European great power. While the war did open new opportunities for the EIC in Asia, increasing their market share of pepper to 44%, trading concerns were not paramount causes of the third war.⁵⁴ The inclusion of the French also meant that the Dutch were fighting for their very survival, a significant change from the previous wars where commerce was the main stake and a powerful demonstration of the changes in English policy towards them. However, although the third war was fought at a different level to the others, because of the French invasion, it was also the beginning of a future rapprochement between the two states. Increasing fears of growing French power, displayed primarily through their military strength but also a growing interest in overseas trade and colonisation, resulted in a collapse of support for the war effort in England, and a declared anti-French, anti-Papist sentiment in some works.⁵⁵ The common interests of the United Provinces that had helped unite them against a common enemy at the start of the century were once again starting to influence Anglo-Dutch relations.

⁵² John Dryden, *Amboyna: A Tragedy*, (London: printed by Thomas Newcomb, 1673) p. vii.

⁵³ Dryden, *Amboyna*, p. 59.

⁵⁴ De Vries and Van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, p. 433; Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars*, pp.10 & 33.

⁵⁵ George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham, *A Letter to Sir Thomas Osborne, one of his Majesties Privy Council, upon the reading of a book, called the Present interest of England stated* (London: 1672).

However, the culmination of a century of commercial confrontation between England and the United Provinces, most commonly over mercantile and colonial concerns, had by 1672 turned England from ‘a Back of Steel to Holland’ into an enemy bent on its very destruction.⁵⁶ The consequences of the change in Anglo-Dutch relations brought a lamentation from the Dutch poet Jacob Westerban in 1652 when he bemoaned that ‘we were friends and sworn allies | Neighbours, both of religion and one belief | Why, then, do you attack us... and with hostile fleets | Make war upon our commonwealth, and plunder our fleets.’⁵⁷ The impact of mercantile interests of these two nations was particularly important in producing this change. In Asia, the limited control of the VOC over its employees as difficulties in communication centralised power in the hands of men like Van Speult and Coen meant that the establishment and maintenance of monopoly trade rapidly gained brutal characteristics. However, military conflict between the VOC and EIC during the first half of the century remained limited due to other concerns for England and the United Provinces in Europe, so that before 1650 the mercantile competition was not allowed to escalate into war between the two states. Nonetheless, intense competition, and atrocities such as the Amboyna massacre, did weaken the bond of cooperation that had existed between the two states during their wars with Spain, leaving in its place English bitterness and envy of the Dutch and Dutch fears of English encroachment. Therefore, when the English Civil War ended in 1651, mercantile and colonial concerns, of increasing importance to both states, came to the fore in foreign policy, resulting in two, largely naval, wars. In 1687 the EIC claimed that ‘the encroaching, restless, covetous, humour of the Dutch Company’ had ‘imboyled the two Nations in Great Wars and Blood-shed within the space of one age’.⁵⁸ De Britaine considered the Dutch seizure of English East Indian possessions the most important

⁵⁶ William De Britaine, *The Interest of England in the Present War with Holland* (London: printed by J. Edwin, 1672), p. 25.

⁵⁷ Cited in Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, p. 236.

⁵⁸ Anon., *An Impartial Vindication*, p. 137.

cause of conflict even for the Third Anglo-Dutch war.⁵⁹ The East Indies therefore, while not always the most important foreign policy concern of either the Dutch or English, was a significant factor affecting the relationship between the two countries. It reduced the bonds between them, generated envy and fear, and ultimately provided a battleground for two states to stake their respective claims to mercantile domination.

Bibliography

Printed Primary Sources

Anon., *An Impartial Vindication of the English East-India Company, from the Unjust and Slanderous Imputations Cast upon them in a treatise entitled A Justification of the Directors of the Netherlands East-India Company* (London: 1687).

Anon., *A Remonstrance of the Directors of the Netherlands East-India Company, touching the bloody proceedings against the English Merchants executed at Amboyna* (London: printed by John Dawson, 1632 [1624]).

Anon., *The Hollanders Declaration of the Affaires of the East Indies* (Amsterdam: 1622).

De Britaine, William, *The Interest of England in the Present War with Holland* (London: printed by J. Edwin, 1672).

de le Court, Pieter, *The True Interest and Political Maxims of the Republic of Holland and West-Friesland* (London: 1702 [1662]).

Dryden, John, *Amboyna: A Tragedy* (London: printed by Thomas Newcomb 1673).

Eames, John, *A Poem: Being an essay upon the present war with the Dutch* (London: printed by Henry Herringham, 1666).

EIC, *A Reply to the Remonstrance of the Bewinthebbers or Directors of the Netherlands East India Company* (London: 1632).

⁵⁹ De Britain, *The Interest of England*, p. 10.

Grotius, Hugo, *The Free Sea*, trans. by Richard Hakluyt, ed. by David Armitage (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004 [1609]).

Keymor, John, *Sir Walter Raleigh's Observations touching trade and commerce with the Hollander and other nations; proving that our sea and land commodities enrich and strengthen other countries against our own* (London: printed by T. H., 1653).

Mun, Thomas, *A Discourse on Trade from England unto the East Indies* (London: printed by Nicholas Okes, 1621).

Purchas, Samuel, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrims* (London: printed by Fetherston, 1625).

Skinner, John, *A True Relation of the unjust, cruell, and barbarous proceedings against the English at Amboyna* (London: printed by H. Lownes 1624).

Temple, William, *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972 [1673]).

Villiers, George 2nd Duke of Buckingham, *A Letter to Sir Thomas Osborne, one of his Majesties Privy Council, upon the reading of a book, called the Present interest of England stated* (London: 1672).

Secondary Sources

Bernstein, William, *A Splendid Exchange: How Trade Shaped the World* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009).

Boxer, Charles, *Jan Compagnie in War and Peace 1602-1799: A Short History of the Dutch East India Company* (Hong Kong, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1979).

Boxer, Charles, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800* (London: Pelican Books, 1973 [1965]).

Braddick, Michael, *God's Fury, England's Fire: a new history of the English Civil Wars* (London: Penguin Books, 2008).

- Brenner, Robert, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- Chancey, Karen, 'The Amboyna Massacre in English Politics', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 30 (1998) 583-398.
- Chaudhuri, K. N., *The English East India Company: The Study of an Early Joint-Stock Company, 1600-1640* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1965).
- Coox, Alvin, 'The Dutch Invasion of England, 1667', *Military Affairs* 13 (1949) 223-233.
- Farnell, J., 'The Navigation Act of 1651, the First Dutch War, and the London Merchant Company', *The Economic History Review, New Series* 16 (1964) 439-454.
- Groenveld, Simon, 'The English Civil Wars as a Cause of the First Anglo-Dutch War, 1640-1652', *The Historical Journal* 30 (1987) 541-566.
- Hall, R., *The History of the Barbarous Cruelties and Massacres committed by the Dutch in the East Indies* (London: 1712).
- Irwin, Douglas, 'Mercantilism as Strategic Trade Policy: The Anglo-Dutch Rivalry for the East India Trade', *The Journal of Political Economy* 99 (1991) 1296-1314.
- Israel, Jonathan, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
- Israel, Jonathan, 'A Conflict of Empires: Spain and the Netherlands, 1618-1648', *Past and Present* 76 (1977) 34-74.
- Jones, J., *The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Longman Group Ltd, 1996).
- Knapp, Geritt, 'Headhunting, Carnage and Armed Peace in Amboina, 1500-1700', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 46 (2003) 165-192.
- Loth, Vincent, 'Armed Incidents and Unpaid Bills: Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Banda Islands in the Seventeenth Century', *Modern Asian Studies* 29 (1995) 705-740.
- Oostindie, Gert, and Bert Passman, 'Dutch Attitudes towards Colonial Empires, Indigenous Cultures, and Slaves', *Eighteenth Century Studies* 31 (1998) 349-355.

- Pincus, Steven, *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650-1668* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- Pincus, Steven, 'Popery, Trade and Universal Monarchy: The Ideological Context of the Outbreak of the Second Anglo-Dutch War', *The English Historical Review* 107 (1992) 1-29.
- Prak, Maarten, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. by Diane Webb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- Price, J. L., *Holland and the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: The Politics of Particularism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).
- Schama, Simon, *The Embarrassment of Riches: an interpretation of Dutch culture in the golden age* (London: Collins, 1987).
- de Vries, Jan, and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: success, failure, and perseverance of the Dutch economy, 1500-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- Wilson, Charles, *Profit and Power: a study of England and the Dutch wars* (London: Longmans, 1957).