ZESZYTY NAUKOWE UNIWERSYTETU RZESZOWSKIEGO
SERIA FILOLOGICZNA
ZESZYT 119 / 2024 STUDIA ANGLICA RESOVIENSIA 21

DOI: 10.15584/sar.2024.21.1

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The political and ideological causes of the Anglo-Dutch wars

Abstract: This paper seeks to explore and explain the causes of the first three Anglo-Dutch wars. It argues that the political and ideological causes of these wars were at least as important as the economic ones, and that they cannot be fully understood without highlighting the political and ideological differences between the regimes of England and the United Provinces at the outbreak of the conflicts. It discusses in detail the causes of the first two Anglo-Dutch wars, which are more controversial than those of the third.

Key words: the United Provinces, the Navigation Act of 1651, Charles II, Louis XIV, Anglican Royalists

Introduction

Between 1652 and 1674, the English and the Dutch fought three wars against each other. Until recently most historians have assumed that these military conflicts had economic and commercial causes.[1] However, a closer look at the political, ideological and cultural relations between the two countries at the time of the outbreak of the wars suggests a different conclusion. Contemporary pamphlets, newsletters and newsbooks tended to portray these conflicts as ideological struggles, and the main experts on the topic now agree that the Anglo-Dutch wars were not purely, or even primarily commercial wars.[2]

The purpose of this article is to shed light on the political and ideological background to the Anglo-Dutch wars. It focuses primarily on the first two military

[1] See, for example, Wilson, 1957, pp. 56-59; Farnell, 1964, pp. 439-454; Clark, 1987, p. 63; Ferguson, 2003, p. 21; Herman, 2005, p. 174.

[2] See Pincus, 2002; Jones, 2013; Seaward, 2020. The pamphlets, the *Mercurius Politicus* newsbook series and the rest of the primary sources up to 1661 are to be found among the *Thomason Tracts* (*T. T.*) in the British Museum library; the reference numbers are given in Fortescue, 1908.

conflicts, as it is well known that the third war (1672-1674) had diplomatic causes: in May 1670, Louis XIV and Charles II agreed in the secret Treaty of Dover that France and England would jointly wage war against the United Provinces.

1. Research Context and Objectives

For more than three hundred years, the three Anglo-Dutch wars of the second half of the seventeenth century (1652-54; 1665-67; 1672-74) were regarded as essentially trade wars. Since the naval and commercial rivalry between England and the United Provinces was indeed intense, it is little wonder that historians should have come to this conclusion. The struggle, as Paul Kennedy (2001) has put it, was "a quarrel about who should rule the waves and reap the commercial benefits of that privilege; as a consequence, the naval and economic aspect was the dominant one" (p. 50). Although this might be true, the political and ideological causes of the three conflicts, without which they cannot be properly understood, should not be neglected either.

Since the political circumstances at the time of the outbreak of each of the three military conflicts were completely different, they need to be treated separately. After describing the rise of England's rivals – the United Provinces and France – in the middle of the seventeenth century (Sections 3 and 4), the paper will discuss the special background causes and more immediate causes of the first Anglo-Dutch war (Sections 5). The second war started five years after the Restoration of 1660, when political life in England was dominated by Anglican Royalists instead of radical Republican Puritans. Sections 6 and 7 will seek to demonstrate that political considerations were indeed strong for those who saw the republican Dutch as their natural enemies. The last two sections wish to explain why the second war came to a sudden end in 1667, and how the changed circumstances created by it contributed to the origins of the third Anglo-Dutch military conflict.

2. The Rise of the United Provinces in the Middle of the Seventeenth Century

Throughout the seventeenth century, the English feared that one of the continental powers would become hegemonic. From the second half of Queen Elizabeth I's reign onwards, the Spanish Habsburgs were the main threat. The Peace of Westphalia (1648), which ended the Thirty Years' War, allayed these fears, but Oliver Cromwell still feared Spanish domination. In the meantime, however, a new continental rival appeared: the United Provinces, which had emerged from the Union of Utrecht during the Dutch War of Independence against the Spanish (1568-1609), and formally became an independent republic in 1648. The Dutch

took advantage of the brief period in the middle of the century when the Austrian Empire and the German principalities were suffering from exhaustion after the Thirty Years' War and England and France were weakened by their civil wars. The dizzyingly rapid economic development of the United Provinces was facilitated (at least initially) by their favourable geographical location. The two most powerful provinces of the federation – Holland and Zeeland – controlled the mouths of the Rhine, the Maas and the Scheldt rivers and benefited greatly from their position at the junction of the Baltic, North Sea and Atlantic trade routes. Dutch ships carried Baltic grain and timber, as well as iron and copper from Sweden to Mediterranean ports, where salt was taken on board to be transported to northern fishing ports for fish processing. Meanwhile, they supplied the Baltic with textiles either home-made or brought from England. But Dutch seafarers also ventured into much more remote parts of the world. They founded New Amsterdam in North America and established a foothold in the West Indies. They reached the shores of Africa, India, China, South America and even Australia. From the mid-seventeenth century to 1854, the Dutch were the only European country to maintain trade relations with Japan (Williams, 1984, pp. 42-43).[3] As Paul Kennedy (2001) observed,

> the evidence is overwhelming that many (though certainly not all) members of the mercantile community were deeply jealous of the Dutch superiority in the fields of shipping, Oriental trade, control of Baltic commerce, fisheries, and general credit and finance, and very alarmed at the recovery of the United Provinces after 1648. Some stood to gain directly from any blows to these formidable rivals; others merely resented the fact that such foreigners had achieved first place in trade, and wished to see the position reversed. (p. 48)

There is no reason to try to refute this statement, as it is also true that "motives of prestige, power and profit are hard to disentangle" (Kennedy, 2001, p. 48), but – as we shall see later on – specific political and ideological differences between the regimes of the two rival states were also important causes of the wars they fought.

3. The Rise of France under Louis XIV

France's rise as a great power began in 1661 when the young Louis XIV took over the government of his country after the death of Cardinal Mazarin. Louis was only 22 years old, but he had gained considerable experience during the turbulent years of the *Fronde* (1648-53) and inherited a well-functioning absolutist system from his first minister. He politically marginalised the old nobility and personally presided over the Council of State with only five or six ministers. The mercantilist economic policies of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the Comptroller-General of Finances,

[3] From the mid-sixteenth century to 1639, the Portuguese, the Spaniards, and the English also traded with Japan.

created the financial conditions that enabled France to become a military power. Colbert introduced uniform standards to regulate domestic industry, established manufactories and trading companies, increased exports and restricted imports of foreign goods through tariffs. The French led the way in Europe in military development and organisation. They created military academies and a ministry of war, built barracks, training grounds, military stores and hospitals for the huge standing army, and expanded the navy (Herman, 2005, pp. 198-199; Kennedy, 1989, p. 75; Kennedy, 2001, p. 62).

Oliver Cromwell contributed to the military rise of France by siding with it in the Franco-Spanish War, which continued after the Thirty Years' War. In 1655 he captured Jamaica, destroyed several Spanish fleets, and in 1658 he joined the French in an invasion of the Spanish Netherlands. After making peace in 1659, the French further weakened the declining Spain by supporting the Portuguese in their fight for independence.

The English were slow to recognise the French threat. They had fought three wars against the Dutch before the majority realised that it was not the Dutch that they had to fear, but rather the French 'universal monarchy' (to use seventeenth-century terminology). That case of political misjudgement resulted, among other factors, from the strong antipathy towards the Dutch, the reasons of which varied according to the changing internal political situation in the two countries.

4. The Background and the Immediate Political Causes of the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-54)

Prince William II, head of the House of Orange and a stadtholder of the Dutch Republic, married to Mary, the eldest daughter of King Charles I of England, died in November 1650. As multiple Dutch provinces failed to agree on a new stadtholder, this marked the beginning of the first *Stadtholderless Period* in the history of the United Provinces, which lasted until the Revolution of 1672. William II's son (the future William III of England and a key figure in the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688-89) was born a week after his father's death. The country was now lead by Grand Pensionary Johan de Witt, head of the States Party, who represented the interests of a middle-class republican oligarchy opposed to the House of Orange, although the Orangists remained influential within the navy and the majority of the provinces. De Witt's aim was to maintain a decentralised system of government and the leading role of the States General. He opposed wars because they were bad for trade, increased taxes and also strengthened the influence of the House of Orange, which enjoyed the support of the lower classes, the Calvinist clergy and the landowners.

By this time, the Rump Parliament (1649-1653) – the remnant of the English Long Parliament after a radical purge performed by the Cromwellian New Model

Army in December 1648 – had exercised power for almost two years. Its no more than sixty members were not ideologically united and many fanatical Puritans in it shared the views of the extremist Fifth Monarchy Men, who proclaimed the imminent coming of the kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth and urged preparation for it. It is, therefore, understandable that when William II died, the Rump Parliament received the news with great relief, and even attributed it to divine providence, as William had refused to recognise the English republic and would have preferred to send troops to the island to help the royalists (Pincus, 2002, 16-19; Groenveld, 1987, pp. 551-552).

The members of the Rump Parliament became so excited about the positive political turnaround in the United Provinces that they immediately opened negotiations with the new Republican leadership. In March 1651, special envoys Oliver St. John and Walter Strickland were sent to The Hague with no less than a mission to prepare the ground for political union between the two countries. To the disappointment of the Rump Parliament, the hoped-for Protestant-republican merger came to nothing. After the delegates faced a protesting "ungoverned multitude" (Nedham, 1652, p. 7), they concluded that, despite the change in leadership, the Dutch masses still strongly sympathised with the House of Orange, which supported the Stuarts and had blood ties with them. After lengthy negotiations, the small United Provinces, fearful of losing its independence, rejected the idea of union with the regicide English republic (or at least this is how the delaying tactics of the Dutch were interpreted in England), and the leaders of the Rump Parliament decided that the insolent Dutch, who betrayed the cause of Protestant unity, needed to be taught a lesson.

After the two envoys returned home in July, the English press did not comment on the situation in terms of a diplomatic failure, but interpreted it in moral and ideological terms, harshly criticising the Dutch as godless, selfish and profit-hungry. It was in this mood that the Rump Parliament passed the first *Navigation Act* in October 1651, a clear attack on the Dutch carrying trade. The Act stipulated that goods from English colonies could only be carried in English ships, or in ships of the colony, provided that three-quarters of the crew were English. Although the Navigation Act undoubtedly benefited English colonial trade in the long run, its authors were additionally motivated by their antipathy towards the irreligious Dutch who worshipped "idols of gold and silver" (*Mercurius Politicus*, E. 678, p. 1924). The Act was not the work of merchants, but fanatical Puritan politicians inspired by a desire to punish the Dutch for rejecting the idea of the Protestant and republican union. So the traditional argument of historians that the first Anglo-Dutch war was inevitable because of the Navigation Act needs to be revised. The moderate Dutch leadership did not want to go to war simply because of the provocative Navigation Act. The real tension was not caused by the Act, but the strong anti-Dutch feeling that had produced it (Pincus, 2002, pp. 555-566). Hoping to avoid the war, the Dutch started new negotiations with the English in May 1652 in London, but they were disrupted by the naval confrontation between the Orangist Vice-Admiral Van

Tromp and General at Sea Robert Blake off Dover, when the proud Dutch failed to lower the flag in salute to an English vessel in the English Channel (Groenveld, 1987, pp. 557; Jones, 2013, p. 114). The mere skirmish was thus reported by the republican propagandist Marchamont Nedham (1652): "Trump on the 19 of May 1652. with 42 ships of warre, came up to the Downs, and there assaulted our Generall Blake, who riding neer Foulstone with fourteen ships only, was enforced for some time by himself and afterwards with the rest of his Fleet, to maintain four hours sharp fight till night parted them" (p. 8).

Donald Lupton (1653) wrote about "the Dutch injustice and Ingratitude to fight against our Nation." He had no doubt that the conflict was started by the ungrateful Dutch who forgot that during the reign of Queen Elizabeth the English had fought for them against the Spaniards. "They begun the war," he claimed "and kindled the fire, and blowed the first Coal. They were the first Offenders, so 'tis just and fitting on our parts to repulse the injuries and Affronts offered us." The Dutch were also guilty of "harbouring and maintaining the publick Enemies of our State," as well as "scandalous seditious and pamphlets and books allowed to be printed in the disparagement of our State and Nation" (pp. 96-97). Thus, the English were made to believe that the Dutch wished to subvert their Puritan republic. They "would with all their hearts help you to a monarch again" (*Mercurius Politicus*, E. 674, p. 1835).

Marchamont Nedham (1652) expressed similar ideas:

> The kindness, blood, and money aforded by the Parliament of England in the days of Queen Elizabeth, put them into the condition of Liberty from the Sword of Spain: The power and interposition of England in the days of King James, caused them to be declared a Free State. The Valour and Arms of English men hath stood by them, to seucure their Freedom. Yet when the Parliament of England were enforced to contend in blood for Libertie and Religion, against the Armies of our late Tyrant, and his son, who sought to destroy both, and had the influence of the same designes, upon themselves by the Prince of Orange. Yet none contributed more assistance to that King and his son, then the United Provinces: and none more scorned, abused, and injured the Parliament and their Friends, then the Neatherlanders. (p. 30)

At the same time, Nedham did not fail to add: "Much might be also said concerning their endeavour to monopolize all Trade into their own hands." (p. 31)

It was Oliver Cromwell who ended the war in April 1654 as Lord Protector. The ending of the strife, in addition to the success of the English navy, was made possible by the dissolution of the Rump Parliament and the subsequent formation of the Barebones Parliament, in which Puritan extremists, who sympathized with the Fifth Monarchists and wanted no peace with the corrupted and godless Dutch, were marginalised.

Cromwell was widely criticized for his indulgence of the peace talks. It is certainly true that the clear victory over the Dutch was not used by the English to extort significant commercial benefits. Cromwell's primary demand was that the

Dutch recognize his Protectorate, and Johan de Witt should secure the exclusion of the House of Orange from power through the *Act of Seclusion* (Pincus, 2002, pp. 169-184; Geyl, 1969, pp. 116-125).[4] As Paul Kennedy (2001) put it:

> Although he genuinely wished to see England strong and prosperous, his motives were predominantly religious and patriotic, and he was quite willing to be conciliatory to the Dutch if this would free him for a crusade against Spain, particularly after the States of Holland had agreed to ban the House of Orange from the stadtholderate in May 1654. Yet it was the Spanish trade which had been so profitable for English merchants in the preceding period, and the Dutch who would benefit if an Anglo-Spanish war broke out. The economic arguments pointed in one direction; Cromwell marched in another. (p. 55)

What Cromwell wanted most was political security. The first half of 1653 saw Orangist riots in the United Provinces. In response to the military defeats, there was growing support for the more belligerent House of Orange. The desired political change in Dutch domestic affairs did occur after the death of the Orangist Van Tromp in August 1653. The new Vice-Admiral was a republican, the States party was able to strengthen its position, and the Dutch republicans were ready to cooperate with the Cromwellian moderates, who could now be sure "that a peace with the United Provinces would not immediately be nullified by an Orangist revolution" (Pincus, 2002, p. 156).

5. The background to the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-67)

The restoration of the monarchy in England eliminated the chaotic conditions of the Interregnum. In May 1660, after nearly ten years of exile, Charles II returned to his country from the United Provinces. In the same month, a Dutch delegation arrived in London and initiated negotiations to resolve disputes between the two countries. It soon became evident, however, that it would not be easy to make an agreement. The Dutch, who specialised in the carrying trade, were naturally offended when the new Anglican Royalist-dominated English Parliament re-enacted the Navigation Act of 1651. In September 1660 the Dutch repealed the Act of Seclusion, which had excluded the House of Orange from power, but in January 1661, when the widow of William II (Charles II's sister) died, the question of the further upbringing of the orphaned eleven-year-old Prince William led to tensions.[5] In addition, the relations between the two countries became burdened

[4] In the end, only the political body of the province of Holland out of the seven within the United Provinces accepted this demand. It was a commercial advantage that the English were able to significantly increase the size of their fleet by confiscating hundreds of Dutch vessels, and that according to the peace terms the Dutch had to pay for fishing in English waters from this time on.

[5] William was initially raised by Heer van Zuylestein, the illegitimate son of Frederick Henry (William's grandfather, Stadholder and Commander-in-Chief between 1625 and 1647) in a strict

in the summer of 1661 when Sir George Downing, who had already demonstrated his hostility to the Dutch between 1658 and 1660, was reappointed as ambassador to The Hague.

The years of negotiations did not resolve the old grievances. Under the terms of the 1654 Peace Treaty, the Dutch should have given up one of the Indonesian Maluku Islands, but this did not happen. In addition to the old grievances caused by the cruel killing of ten English merchants by the Dutch on the island of Amboyna in 1623 (Clark, 1987, p. 63), new conflicts developed in the area. The Dutch obstructed English trade off the coast of southwest India, and the English tried to break Dutch commercial hegemony in Guinea.

The Cavalier Parliament (1661-79) did not share the king's desire for religious toleration. In May 1662 it passed the *Act of Uniformity*, which deprived some two thousand Presbyterian and other dissenting clergymen of their livings. The Act was received with great disappointment and bitterness by the Protestant Nonconformists and united them against the restored royal regime. The government feared rebellion throughout the second half of 1662, but it was not until 12 October 1663 that a plot was discovered in the north of England. The authorities assumed that the supporters of 'the good old cause' had also received help from the Netherlands, so the Anglican Royalists were now determined to eliminate Nonconformity and to deal with the Dutch aspects of the problem as well (Davies, 2001, pp. 133-134).

6. A Commercial War? The Committee of Trade and Its Findings

"The Second Anglo–Dutch War was the clearest case in our history of a purely commercial war." – Sir George Clark (1987, p. 63) declared with great confidence. It "grew out of the unresolved legacy of the first, aggravated by England's accelerating colonial expansion after 1654 and Dutch efforts to obstruct it," in Jonathan Israel's view (1989, p. 271). "In contrast to the first English war" Pieter Geyl (1969) pointed out "the causes of the second were purely economic." (p. 190). Although commercial rivalry did contribute to the outbreak of the second military conflict, it is equally important to consider the ideological causes of the war, which these authors underestimate.

In April 1664, the House of Commons established a committee to investigate England's commercial problems with the clear aim of finding evidence of Dutch obstruction that could be used to provoke war. The committee asked the trading

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Calvinist spirit. In 1661 Johan de Witt himself became William's guardian, ensuring that the Prince was not exposed to Orangist influences. It was not until 1666 that Johan de Witt began to introduce William to public affairs. In August 1666, the political body of the province of Holland stated that William could not be Commander-in-Chief until he was twenty-two years old, and that he could not be Commander-in-Chief and Stadtholder at the same time. The English saw De Witt's guardianship and the Republican faction's efforts to limit William's power as a threat to their own interests.

companies to report on any interference in their activities by foreigners. On 21 April Thomas Clifford duly presented the Committee of Trade's report to the House of Commons. "The several, and respective wrongs, dishonours and indignities," said the document, "done to his Majesty by the subjects of the United Provinces, by invading his rights in India, Africa, and elsewhere; and the damages, affronts and injuries done by them to our merchants, are the greatest obstructions of foreign trade." The House adopted the report by a large majority, and by a resolution declared that, "for the prevention of the like in Future; and in prosecution thereof, this House doth resolve, they will with their lives and fortunes assist his Majesty against all opposition whatsoever" (*Journal of the House of Commons,* 1742, pp. 547-548).

In reality, the report distorted the truth. In fact, only about a third of the complaints collected referred to obstruction by the Dutch (Seaward, 1987, pp. 446-448). The majority of the English merchants did not want another war with the United Provinces. They knew that armed confrontation, even if successful, would damage trade in the short run. Although the Levant Company now mentioned some of the grievances against the Dutch, they never complained about them until 1664. Their main opponents were the Algerian pirates, against whom the English and the Dutch sometimes acted together. At the same time, the representatives of the Company felt it necessary to mention the abuses committed by the Venetian and French merchants. The first Anglo-Dutch war had seriously damaged English trade in the Mediterranean, and the Levant Company feared that it might happen again. The East India Company was strongly opposed to the war. Although the Dutch East India Company was a great rival, the English believed in fair competition and urged the government to consider the expected catastrophic consequences of the war. The representatives of the Company were in conflict not only with the Dutch, but also with the newly founded French East India Company that appeared in the region. The Portuguese refused to hand over Bombay, which was part of the dowry of Charles II's Portuguese wife. At the same time, the Spaniards prevented the East India Company from selling its products in their ports.

The Second Anglo-Dutch War was provoked by the Anglican Royalist merchants and politicians. It was the leaders of the African Company[6] who were the most eager to wage war against the Dutch. The Company appeared to have deliberately sought conflict with the United Provinces. Unlike the French, who had set foot in West African territories not yet occupied by Europeans, the English invaded Dutch Guinea (which the Dutch retook in 1664). The actions of the leaders of the African Company were motivated not so much by the desire for profit as by their hostility towards the Dutch. This was an Anglican royalist leadership, which – like the majority in the House of Commons – viewed the Dutch as representatives of the republican ideal and of religious pluralism and tolerance. These were the mainstays of the nonconformist and republican forces in England. The Anglican

[6] It was formally called the Company of Royal Adventurers.

Royalist antipathy to the Dutch was further reinforced by the mid-century idea that 'universal monarchy' could be achieved by economic rather than military force. In the eyes of the Anglican royalists, the heirs of Spanish ambitions for world domination were the Dutch, who, like their predecessors, sought to achieve their goals through a commercial monopoly (Pincus, 1992, pp. 3-26).

The Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Clarendon (Charles II's chief minister), distanced himself from the parliamentary decision. He saw it as war-mongering in the interests of certain merchants, backed by Charles' brother James Stuart, Duke of York, and the ambitious politicians who surrounded him. These included James's secretary, William Coventry, the secretary of state Sir Henry Bennet (who became the Earl of Arlington in 1663), and Sir George Downing, ambassador to The Hague. Clarendon was probably right, as the governor of the rather aggressive African Company was James himself (Seaward, 1987, pp. 437-438).[7] Among the members of the Company, in addition to Coventry and Arlington, we find Sir George Carteret, the Treasurer of the Navy, Lord Lauderdale (the Duke of Buckingham), responsible for Scottish affairs, and Lord Ashley, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The new Anglo-Dutch negotiations, which had started in September 1663, failed. Downing perceived the Dutch as being internally divided and financially unstable, and therefore keen to avoid war at all costs. No concessions could be extracted, however, because the Dutch expected the English Parliament to vote against providing the king with the necessary funds to prepare for war. There seemed to be a lack of harmony between the monarch and Parliament. In December 1662 Charles attempted to relax the strictures of the first two acts of the Clarendon Code.[8] He issued his first "Declaration of Indulgence", asking parliament to legislate for a wider use of his *dispensing power*, which allowed him to exempt some people from the law. However, the House of Commons angrily rejected the request. Parliament was also suspicious of the government's financial policy. The Earl of Bristol even accused Clarendon of treason in the House of Lords, and although the Lords found the charge to be unfounded, the case was not completely closed.

These developments filled the Dutch with optimism. Downing was convinced that the negotiations would not be taken seriously by the Dutch until they saw the determination of the English. The Committee of Trade was therefore needed to collect complaints about Dutch conduct, to whip up anti-Dutch sentiment and to put pressure on De Witt's government through a strong parliamentary resolution. Downing's expectation that the Dutch would back down and make substantial concessions on the news of the British arms raid did not materialise. De Witt had new ships built with the approval of the Estates General (Staaten Generaal) and ordered De Ruyter to recapture the Guinean territories and bases. When it

[7] Many of the members of the Committee of Trade were closely linked to Arlington and James. The chairman of the committee, Thomas Clifford, was Arlington's man.

[8] The Corporation Act excluded devout Nonconformists from the governing bodies of towns, while the Act of Uniformity targeted clergy who did not accept the Book of Common Prayer.

became clear in late October that De Ruyter had succeeded, war became inevitable. Parliament voted £2.5 million to prepare for war (Seaward, 1987, pp. 446-450). Contrary to the expectations of many, the English Parliament's resolution in April united the Dutch, and the course of the war showed that the English had seriously underestimated the strength of the United Provinces (Seaward, 1987, p. 452).

7. The Course and Outcome of the Second Anglo-Dutch War

The Second Anglo-Dutch War was fought in a much more complex international political situation than the First, one that was unfavourable to England, and the English also had serious domestic difficulties to contend with.

It was not until March 1665 that the English declared war on the United Provinces. The English fleet commanded by the Duke of York had captured New Amsterdam months earlier, but the war was fought without much success. It increasingly seemed that the English had run out of luck. In the summer of 1665, after making an agreement with the King of Denmark, the English wanted to attack the Dutch merchant fleet from the port of Bergen as it sailed home along the coast of Scotland, but in a fatal misunderstanding the Danes opened fire on the approaching English ships. The incident, which resulted in hundreds of casualties, led England to declare war on Denmark, which became an ally of the Dutch. France had been tied to the Dutch by a defensive alliance since 1662.[9] Charles II's dreams of French support were therefore in vain. England's only ally was Bernhard von Galen, Prince-bishop of Münster, but this was amply compensated by the German allies of the Dutch (Clark, 1987, pp. 64-65). A series of domestic disasters did not help the war effort either. In the spring of 1665 a plague epidemic broke out in England, claiming 68 000 lives in London alone (Ashley, 1968, p. 128; Holmes, 1995, p. 5). In September 1666 a fire destroyed much of the City of London.[10] The following month, an increasingly disgruntled Parliament voted a larger sum to cover military expenditure, but only after Charles had granted access to the navy's accounts. The winter of 1666-1667 saw riots in many parts of the country. The discontent of the masses was exacerbated by the poor harvests of the war years (Prest, 1998, p. 40). The government itself was responsible for the final defeat. In February 1667, in order to cut costs, it was decided to withhold large warships and send only cruisers to protect merchant ships. In June, with peace negotiations well under way, the Dutch sailed up the River Medway, set fire to four ships in Chatham harbour and towed away the flagship *Royal Charles* named after the king.

A rapid peace settlement was made necessary by France's aggressive foreign policy and the fact that the war had exhausted both the British and the Dutch and

[9] For Johan de Witt's States Party, this was the obvious orientation as the rival House of Orange sought a relationship with Charles II's England.

[10] For details see Davies, 2011, pp. 143-152.

was generally unfavourable to both sides. The French provided only minimal military assistance to their Dutch allies, and were secretly preparing to invade the Spanish Netherlands, which Louis XIV claimed for his wife on spurious grounds.[11] The Dutch feared that France would completely annex the Spanish Netherlands, become a direct and threatening neighbour of the United Provinces, and revive the once great rival city of Antwerp. The English, whose priority had always been to keep the continental territories closest to them in neutral or friendly hands, were also alarmed by the French ambitions. King Leopold I of Hungary and Bohemia, Holy Roman Emperor, was unable to come to the aid of the Spanish. His forces were tied down by German princes allied with the French, by the Turks, who were regaining strength after 'the Restoration' of the two Köprülüs,[12] and by the anti-Hapsburg movement of the Hungarians. Leopold therefore decided to sign a treaty with Louis XIV. They agreed not only on how much of the Spanish Netherlands France could carve out for itself, but also on the division of the Spanish Empire between them in case the ailing Charles II died without a successor. Under these circumstances, it was high time for the English and the Dutch to put aside their differences. The peace treaty was signed in July 1667 (England could keep New Amsterdam, but had to give up Suriname, Pula Run, the West African forts and Nova Scotia, and received no reparations for the English merchants). Then, in January 1668, the Triple Alliance of England, the United Provinces and Sweden was signed, in which the parties agreed to act as mediators between France and Spain and to work together to end the war. France was allowed to keep some of its 1667 conquests, but not everything. If France refused to accept this, England and the United Provinces would jointly launch a war against it to force it to restore its former borders. This was already provided for in the secret clauses annexed to the treaty (Holmes, 1995, p. 434).

8. The Road to the Third Anglo-Dutch War

The unsuccessful war against the Dutch led to a domestic crisis in England. The Crown faced a serious financial situation. In 1660 Parliament decided that the King should receive an annual income of £1,200,000. However, the revenue, which came mainly from customs and excise duties, was always £250-300,000 short of the

[11] According to the customary law of the province of Brabant, female children from a first marriage had priority in inheritance over male children from a second marriage. Louis XIV argued that under this law his wife, Maria Theresa, by Philip's first marriage, was the rightful heir to the territories of the southern Netherlands, and not Charles II, who was born to Philip's second wife. After the death of Louis' father-in-law, King Philip IV of Spain, the French launched the invasion.

[12] The twenty-year reign of the Grand Viziers Mohamed and Ahmed Köprülü (1656-1676) is known in historiography as 'the Restoration'. The two Pashas restored the former order by cracking down on anarchy and corruption, putting finances in order and leading the empire out of a military crisis. The Turkish Empire became so strong that Kara Mustafa Pasha was even planning to take Vienna.

voted amount. To make up for the shortfall, a Hearth Tax – two shillings per hearth (household) – was introduced in 1662 but this initially failed to raise even £100,000. During the war years total revenues fell to £700,000. With war debts rising to one and a half million, this meant bankruptcy (Holmes, 1995, pp. 100-103).

This explains why Charles II agreed to the secret Treaty of Dover with the Sun King in 1670, which led to the Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-1674). (Under the treaty, the main burden of the land operations was to be borne by France, and that of the naval operations by England. The three islands at the mouth of the Scheldt River would be gained by the English. Charles II promised to convert to Catholicism as soon as the affairs of his country permitted.) The King of England probably had three objectives: to stabilise his position as monarch through a successful war, to gain access to French aid and to overthrow the Dutch republican regime. Charles hoped that his young nephew, William of Orange, who was to replace Johan De Witt, would govern according to his expectations. (William of Orange did indeed come to power in the summer of 1672, although not quite in the way Charles II had imagined. There was a revolution in the United Provinces. The masses, panicked by the French invasion, overthrew the De Witt brothers and forced the oligarchies of Holland and Zeeland, the main backers of the Republican Party, to accept William as Stadholder and Commander-in-Chief of the army.)[13]

Louis XIV's intentions were also clear. The French were highly sensitive to the formation of the Triple Alliance and especially to the betrayal of Johan de Witt. Louis XIV realised not only that first he would have to break the resistance of the United Provinces if he wanted to gain the Spanish Netherlands, but also that the Triple Alliance laid the foundations for a formidable anti-French coalition. The alliance of two dominant maritime powers presented a major strategic challenge for France. It could not expect to succeed on the continent if it had to divide its forces between simultaneous land and naval campaigns (Kennedy, 1989, pp. 88-89). Louis XIV held Johan de Witt responsible for the emergence of the Triple Alliance, which he saw as a new threat. As a result, he spent the next few years preparing for a punitive campaign against the United Provinces while trying to undermine the Triple Alliance (Rowen, 1954, pp. 13-14).

9. Conclusion

While trade rivalry undoubtedly contributed to tensions between England and the United Provinces, the three Anglo-Dutch wars were equally fought for political and ideological reasons, which were different in each conflict. In 1651,

[13] Charles II pursued an irresponsible foreign policy, but there was no one to stop him. Until the Glorious Revolution (1688-1689), Parliament met infrequently and irregularly and had too little information to control foreign policy decisions. Moreover, the country's constitutional traditions gave it no right to do so.

when the moderately Protestant Dutch rejected the idea of a political union with the new English Republic for fear of becoming dominated by a much larger country controlled by radical Puritans, the English concluded that the Dutch were godless and still in favour of the House of Orange, which represented monarchical tendencies. The Rump Parliament decided to punish its main trading rival by passing the Navigation Act, which excluded foreign ships from trading with the English colonies. The Second Anglo-Dutch War was provoked by the Anglican Royalists who dominated political life in England after the Restoration of the monarchy and who saw the Calvinist Dutch, with their republican form of government, as political and ideological enemies. At the same time, the new English monarchical regime was keen to establish itself as a dominant power by defeating its main rival in trade and colonial competition. The Third Anglo-Dutch War was also driven by a combination of political, dynastic, religious and economic factors. Financial difficulties, reluctance to rely on the support of Parliament, sympathies for Catholicism and the hope of regime change in the United Provinces all led Charles II to ally with Louis XIV, who wanted to extend the frontiers of France and break the power of the United Provinces, which stood in the way of his dynastic ambitions.

The hostilities between the Dutch Republic and England were eventually resolved due to a significant shift in English public opinion. The small United Provinces, with a population of only two million, was on the verge of collapse in 1672. The Dutch were able to resist Anglo-French pressure at sea, but on land the French advanced unstoppably. Only the opening of their dikes and the flooding of their borders saved Holland and Zeeland. The majority of the English finally realised that the main threat to their country were not the Dutch, who were on the brink of disaster, but the French under the Sun King. Anti-Dutch sentiment was replaced by fear of French hegemony, closely linked to fear of Catholicism and royal despotism.[14]

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[14] For details on this, see Pincus, 1995, pp. 333-358.

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