The 350th anniversary of the 1667 Dutch Medway raid provides the context for David Ormrod and Gijs Rommelse’s important new edited volume, *War, Trade and the State: Anglo-Dutch Conflict, 1652-89*. Drawn from essays written for two separate academic conferences—one in England and another in the Netherlands—commemorating the famous Dutch raid, the book’s objective is more than to examine just the Medway raid, the Second Anglo-Dutch War, or even the Anglo-Dutch Wars in general, but rather to move beyond the reductionist view of the wars’ economic, ideological, or political underpinnings, a contest between Europe’s two dominant maritime powers. Instead, Ormrod and Rommelse see the period 1652 to 1674 as “one of low-intensity conflict between the Dutch Republic and England, punctuated by warfare,” a period of revolutionary change, in terms of naval warfare and the development of the state (p. vxiii). They remind us, however, that while the conflict may have been between European powers, the contest was global in scope, with implications for not only the Atlantic World but Asia as well, a fact frequently glossed over in the historiography.

*War, Trade and the State*’s four-block organization reflects well the objectives of the book’s editors, as well as the historiography surrounding the Anglo-Dutch relationship in the latter seventeenth century. Part 1 provides the volume’s introduction and establishes its historiographical context and underlying themes. To place the collection of essays in their larger context, Ormrod and Rommelse’s introductory chapter traces the larger economic underpinnings of European history and the Anglo-Dutch Wars’ place in those economic developments. Calling the period from 1652 to 1689 “the Anglo-Dutch moment”—a tip of the hat to Jonathan Israel and his book of the same name, *The Anglo-Dutch Moment: Essays on the Glorious Revolution and Its World Impact* (2003)—the editors argue that while much of Europe had entered a period of “general crisis” brought on by a combination of warfare, social upheaval, crop failures, and economic unrest, driven at least in part by climate change, England and the Netherlands were economic outliers, growing their domestic economies, solidifying their state administrations, and expanding their empires, and thus their domination of Europe’s overseas trade (p. 7). The editors do a good job laying the foundation for the volume’s essays by tying them to the larger themes of the book, namely, Anglo-Dutch competition’s impact beyond European waters—particularly Asia and the Atlantic World—and the consequences of that competition for the development of their respective military, naval, and administrative infrastructure, the fiscal-military (or
naval) state. That competition, the editors argue, was crucial in forging national identities for both the Dutch Republic and England.

The second section, titled “War in the North Sea,” examines Anglo-Dutch conflict from what some might call a “traditional” perspective: the European dimension of the wars. The six chapters that make up part 2 investigate various aspects of the Anglo-Dutch Wars to include their origins, the wider European context, naval developments and coastal defense, and the respective fiscal-military administrations of Britain and the Dutch Republic. The essays incorporate much of what is new in the study of the wars and range in topical scope from the broad, like Rommelse and Roger Downing’s chapter on the European context of the wars, to the very specific, like Paul Seward’s essay on “Anglican royalism.” Seward surveys Anglican royalism as an underlying cause for the Second Anglo-Dutch War, an argument posited by Steven Pincus that has gained some traction since the publication of his *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650-1688* in 1996. Seward is convincing in both exploring and ultimately refuting Pincus’s thesis while acknowledging Anglican royalism’s influence, an important challenge to an increasingly dominant thread in the wars’ historiography. Of the six chapters in part 2, only half directly address the naval/military aspects of the wars themselves, however. Nevertheless, that does not diminish the quality of the essays or of the section as a whole. John Hattendorf’s chapter analyzes Anglo-Dutch naval rivalry during the period covered in the volume, while Ann Coats and Alan Lemmers’s essay compares English and Dutch dockyards and coastal defense. Both essays are welcome additions to the literature of the Anglo-Dutch Wars. Likewise, Richard Blakemore and Pepijn Brandon’s essay comparing the Dutch and English fiscal-naval states is excellent, though I find the moniker “fiscal-naval state” somewhat belabored given that Jan Glete’s definition of the “fiscal-military state” included navies. Elizabeth Edwards’s chapter on Anglo-Dutch relations is an insightful overview of the changing Anglo-Dutch relationship and William III’s emergence as the leading political figure in the Dutch Republic. Her chapter provides the volume a useful link between the period of Anglo-Dutch antagonism and Anglo-Dutch alliance culminating in the Glorious Revolution and the Grand Alliance.

The third section, titled “Conflict in the Atlantic World and Asia,” comprises four chapters, evenly divided between the Atlantic World and Asia. In many ways, it is the most interesting section of the book because the wars’ global dimensions are so often overlooked in general surveys of the Anglo-Dutch Wars. Like in part 2, the essays in part 3 range in scope from broad to specific. For example, Nuala Zahedieh’s essay, “The Second Anglo-Dutch War in the Caribbean,” examines Anglo-Dutch competition and conflict in the Caribbean, and while Zahedieh does provide background, her excellent contribution is somewhat narrower in focus, concentrating on the Second Anglo-Dutch War in the Caribbean rather than the broader aspects of the conflict. Jaap Jacob’s essay, “Competing Claims: International Law, Diplomacy and Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in Seventeenth-Century North America,” on the other hand, examines the often-stormy Anglo-Dutch relationship in North America from its origins in 1609, to the loss of the colony during the Second Anglo-Dutch War and the confirmation of that loss with the Treaty of Westminster. Jacob’s narrative shows that Anglo-Dutch competition was driven as much or more by local rivalry than central government policy. Instead, European conflicts were used by colonial governments as an excuse to conquer rival colonial territories, a consistent theme not only in North America but in Asia as well. Erik Odegard’s “Merchant Companies at War: The Anglo-Dutch Wars in Asia” reinforces this idea. Odegard shows that the economic aims of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) often differed markedly from those of the Dutch States General. Like Jacobs, Odegard argues that the wars between the East India companies
were extensions of long-standing rivalry rather than drivers of company policy by themselves, particularly in the case of the VOC. Although the Third Anglo-Dutch War saw the English East India Company (EIC) come out second best in its contest with the VOC, neither company was happy with the outcome. At the heart of that rivalry was access to markets, a central theme in Martine van Ittersum’s contribution to the volume, “Arguing over Empire: International Law and Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Banda Islands, 1616-67.” A fascinating study of how seventeenth-century international law worked in practice, Van Ittersum’s essay explores how the EIC tried to reverse Dutch conquests in the Banda Islands and how despite diplomatic success at home, a myriad of problems—not the least of which being disagreement on the veracity of official documents—led to their loss.

The final section of the volume, “Public History,” includes two essays that examine different aspects of public history as it relates to the Anglo-Dutch Wars. Rammelt Daalder examines the changing interpretations and public history uses of Michiel de Ruyter, one of the Dutch Republic and the Netherlands’ great heroes, while Ormrod explores public commemorations in Anglo-Dutch history since 1973. Since the volume was a product of two public history events, the inclusion of a public history section makes sense and provides a logical, if somewhat unsatisfying, conclusion to the volume. Although both pieces are well written and engaging and provide important observations about the impact public history has on historiography and national identity, they nevertheless seem somewhat out of place given the essays in the rest of the volume, though I am not sure this is avoidable. Perhaps a true concluding essay—one that better ties together the volume’s themes—would have been a more satisfying and effective conclusion to the volume, though this is a relatively minor point.

Overall, Ormrod and Rommelse’s War, Trade and the State is a valuable collection of essays. The scope of topics, the authors’ arguments, the diversity of the essays themselves, and the organization of the volume make this an important and useful contribution to the Anglo-Dutch Wars’ historiography. Although economic rivalry might have been central to the outbreak of hostilities, it was much more than simply an economic conflict as this collection of essays shows. If the central theater was the North Sea and the English Channel, it was clearly a global contest that had broader implications for Britain and the Dutch Republic and their respective empires. War, Trade and the State illustrates the complexity of Anglo-Dutch conflict in the latter seventeenth century and its impact not only for the histories of England and the Dutch Republic but also for the histories of Europe and the world. Ormrod and Rommelse have assembled an impressive volume with value for both the specialist and the generalist.
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