



David Ormrod, Gijs Rommelse, eds. *War, Trade and the State: Anglo-Dutch Conflict, 1652-89*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020. 344 pp. \$39.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-78327-324-9.

Reviewed by Jeremy Black (University of Exeter)

Published on H-Albion (July, 2021)

Commissioned by Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth (Red Deer Polytechnic)

An Excellent Collection on the Seventeenth-Century Anglo-Dutch Wars

Based on 2017 conferences in Amsterdam and Chatham, this handsomely produced volume takes forward an already well-studied subject, not least by devoting due attention to “broader dimensions of the conflict” (p. xviii). Thus, we have important discussion of the situation in the Caribbean, North America, and Asia and two insightful chapters on aspects of the subsequent public history. Less satisfactorily, the treatment of the naval rivalry treads a largely familiar path, and, although Elizabeth Edwards offers much, the dimension of international relations deserves more attention, not only on the part of England and the Dutch but also of the variety of interests and attitudes involved.

Yet, any criticism needs to note the scale of the challenge. We have the need to set the scene and summarize the literature in a complex and crowded scene, as well as the desire to make a cutting-edge contribution, applying new methodologies and concepts and suggesting new insights. Inevitably, contributors, short of space, will emphasize one rather than the other. There is possibly an overuse of concepts that can do with total reconsideration, notably the military revolution and fiscal-military states, as well as, on the part of some, of a degree of progressivism or teleology that does not really aid assessment. Indeed, in

these (and other) respects, a proper inclusion of the 1688 Dutch invasion would have been appropriate, as well as comparative discussion with reference to the Anglo-Dutch wars of 1780-84, 1796-1802, and 1803-14. In looking at Anglo-Dutch naval conflict, it might in the future be useful to add some other, similar binaries, notably Denmark and Sweden, Sweden and Russia, France and Spain, and Venice and the Dutch, in order to qualify glib usage of Anglo-Dutch conflict as a norm or proof of a supposed chronology of overall developments.

Enough of limitations. Now to positives. In an important chapter on the origins of the Second Anglo-Dutch War, Paul Seaward strongly dissents from the emphasis by Steven Pincus on Anglican Royalisms, and, instead, emphasizes the intrigues of the Royal Adventurers and the adventurism of James, Duke of York. This is a powerful critique of the cultural interpretation of causes of war and a call, instead, for a focus on political specificities in particular conjunctures. The value of adopting this approach for other conflicts, notably Anglo-French ones from 1689 to 1815, is readily apparent. Offering a comparative overview of the Dutch and English “fiscal-naval states” (p. 117), Richard Blakemore and Pepijn Brandon conclude that Eng-

lish success was not inevitable. A lengthy and extensively illustrated piece by Ann Coats and Alan Lemmers on Dutch and English dockyards and coastal defense argues that English coastal defenses depended on how effectively dockyards could mobilize their workforce and materials, a system that failed in 1667 due to pay arrears. As they argue, a dissonance between national expectations and local preparedness threatened national security. Although focused on the maritime dimension, the material also offers much to those more generally interested in fortifications.

Considering the Second Anglo-Dutch War in the Caribbean, Nuala Zahedieh argues for the decisiveness of that conflict for the different trajectories of the two New World empires. Possibly, however, it was the earlier Dutch failure in Brazil at the hands of Portugal that was more significant, not least in terms of the liquidity of the Dutch New World. Looking at North America, Jaap Jacobs stresses the role of naval power as a key determinant of the differing bases for competing territorial claims. A shorter piece by Erik Odergard on Asia, notably on competition in India and Sri Lanka, whets the appetite for a lengthier treatment. The failure of the opponents of the Dutch to cooperate during the Third Anglo-Dutch War is seen as crucial. There is interesting material on Anglo-Dutch dynamics in terms of relations with Indian powers. Martin van Ittersum takes the story on into the East Indies, not least finding agency for the inhabitants of the Banda Islands.

Turning to public history, Remmelt Daalder looks at the continued use of Michiel de Ruyter, including his use by the Germans during the World War Two occupation. Valuably reminding us of the politicization of modern history as well, David Ormrod looks at Anglo-Dutch historical commemorations in 1973-2017, including an assessment of the tercentenary of the Glorious Revolution that reads as though it is a separately written piece to the section on the commemoration of the Medway Raid of 1667. At any rate, this is a good topic that

deserves more thorough assessment. It also opens up the need for extensive oral history in such cases.

I enjoyed this volume and, if I was left wanting more, that is to the credit of the contributors. In particular, I would welcome a need-response model of development with an emphasis on fitness for purpose rather than some problematic thesis of revolutionary change.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-albion>

Citation: Jeremy Black. Review of Ormrod, David; Rommelse, Gijs, eds. *War, Trade and the State: Anglo-Dutch Conflict, 1652-89*. H-Albion, H-Net Reviews. July, 2021.

URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=56697>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.