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## THE COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL RELATIONS OF THE DUTCH WITH THE BALTIC REGION IN EARLY MODERN TIMES

The Dutch first became a major factor in the life of the Baltic region during the early decades of the fifteenth century with the rise of Holland's bulk carrying fleet and deep-sea herring fishery. The full-rigged, three and four masted ships which evolved at that time provided the essential technological basis for the subsequent burgeoning of the Dutch bulk-carrying traffic.<sup>1</sup> Hence, from around 1400, Holland's ships, and especially those of Amsterdam and the West Frisian ports (Hoorn, Enkhuizen and Medemblik) began voyaging to the Baltic in impressive numbers loaded with salt, herring and wine and returning with Polish grain and timber.

At the same time there was a corresponding shift in political relations. The appearance of large numbers of Dutch vessels in Baltic waters inevitably aroused first the jealousy and, before long, the active hostility of Lübeck and the other leading shipping centres of the Hanseatic League. For the ancient hegemony of the Hansa over trade and navigation throughout the north was in every respect seriously threatened by the alarmingly rapid progress of the Hollanders. This escalating tension led to open warfare in the years 1438-41 between Holland and the Wendish towns, headed by Lübeck, a struggle in which the States of Holland, while always acting in the name of Duke Philip of Burgundy, in fact, conducted themselves almost like an independent government, raising large other sums from the province's inland towns as well as from Amsterdam and fitting out large and expensive war fleets, and becoming deeply enmeshed in the politics of Denmark-Norway.<sup>2</sup>

The first recorded Sound Dues - the toll collected by the Danish king

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<sup>1</sup>R.W. Unger, *Dutch Shipbuilding before 1800*, (Assen 1978), 33-4.

<sup>2</sup>T.S. Jansma, 'Philippe le Bon et la guerre hollando-wende (1438-1441)', *Revue du Nord* 42 (1960), 5-18.

on vessels passing in and out of the Baltic through the narrow passage between Helsingør and Hälsingborg - confirm that, by 1497, the Dutch ready had the largest share of this traffic. This undoubted fact has frequently led historians to assert, that the Dutch with their superior ships and allegedly superior 'trading techniques' became the 'undisputed masters of the Baltic's international trade during the sixteenth century'.<sup>3</sup> But the fact that the Dutch provided the majority of the ships passing between the Baltic and the North Sea at least as early as the 1490s, and continued to do so throughout the sixteenth century, does not in reality show, as it has been so often assumed, that the Dutch now dominated the commerce of the Baltic. The claim is fallacious because throughout the fifteenth, and the whole of the sixteenth century down to around 1590, Dutch trade with the Baltic was almost wholly confined to the shipping of bulky products.<sup>4</sup> These bulky commodities moreover were few in number, being largely confined to salt, herring and on the outward voyage and grain and timber for the return. Because these commodities were great in bulk but of low value, this type of trade was well suited to wide dispersal among a large number of small merchants and skippers so that no wealthy merchant elite, such as was to be found in Lübeck and other Hanseatic cities was needed.<sup>5</sup> Trade in cloth, silks, spices and other costly goods of high value but low bulk, on the other hand, was by no means suited to the same kind of dispersed participation. On the contrary, this kind of high-value commerce which was still the most important for the merchant elites of Europe continued to be concentrated in the same hands in which it had been before - Hanseatic merchants, led by those of Lübeck, trading with the merchant elites of Antwerp and London, rather than the Holland towns. Indeed, the Hansa were, for the time being, even able to tighten their control of the 'rich trades' by enhancing their political and commercial ties with Bruges and Antwerp and with the Habsburg court in Brussels.

Moreover, the Dutch-Wendish war of 1438-41 proved not to be the prelude to a decisive political and cultural influence in the Baltic region.

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<sup>3</sup>David Kirby, *Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period. The Baltic World, 1492-1772*, (London 1990), 6.

<sup>4</sup>J.I. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740*, (Oxford 1989), 12-37.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid.*, 21, 27-8.

Rather it was the kingdom of Denmark which, during the sixteenth century, expanded its political and naval influence in the Baltic while the Habsburg court in Brussels, in the period before the outbreak of the great Revolt, in 1572, made only rather ineffectual efforts to hold Danish aspirations in check and defend Holland's interest.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, because high culture, university life and learning throughout the Low Countries were, down to 1572, under the control of the Habsburgs and the Catholic Church, there was as yet, relatively little Dutch cultural penetration in the Baltic region. Rather, as a consequence of the Lutheran Reformation in Denmark-Norway and Sweden-Finland, and the decay of the university of Uppsala, cultural life tended to become even more orientated towards, and dependent on, northern Germany than it had been before.

Controlling the large accumulations of merchant capital and the importing of cloth, silks and spices from the west, it is not surprising that Lübeck and the Wendish towns continued, for the moment, also to dominate the export from the Baltic to the west of the region's high-value commodities, including most Russian products - leather, wax and furs - tar and Swedish copper.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, since the bulky commodities dominated by the Dutch were exchanged only in a few major ports of the southern Baltic - the vast bulk of the commerce being transacted in Danzig, Königsberg and Riga - the Dutch tended to sail rather infrequently into the more northerly stretches of the Baltic Sea whilst the Lübeckers and other Hanseatics continued to ply most voyages to the Gulf

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<sup>6</sup>W.J. Kolkert, *Nederland en het zweedse imperialisme*, (Deventer 1908), 7.

<sup>7</sup>A. Attman, *Dutch Enterprise in the World Bullion Trade, 1550-1800*, (Goteborg 1983) 65, 68; on the Swedish copper trade, see P.W. Klein, *De Trippen in de 17e eeuw: een studie over het ondernemersgedrag op de Hollandse stapelmarkt*, (Assen 1965), 328-9; in an interesting recent study, the Estonian scholar Jüri Kivimäe shows that in the 1550s the leading Reval trading partnership of the Honerjeger brothers with Gerdt van dem Brocke, exported grain chiefly to Amsterdam but imported spices, cloth and other valuable goods almost entirely from Lübeck, though the spices and pearls almost certainly originated in Antwerp, see Juri Kivimäe, 'Reval-Lübeck-Amsterdam: the triangle of trade on the eve of the Livonian War (1554-1557)' in W.G. Heeres et al. *From Dunkirk to Danzig. Shipping and Trade in the North Sea and the Baltic, 1350-1850*, (Hilversum 1988), 299-316.

of Finland and Sweden and to control the links with Russia.<sup>8</sup> It was only after the Revolt, and specifically in the 1590s, that the Dutch were able to break the Hanseatic stranglehold on the 'rich trades' of the Baltic.

This phased pattern in Dutch progress in northern waters is mirrored, in an interesting way, in the development of cartography. Before the Dutch began to do so in the sixteenth century no maps or charts had been published to assist navigation in the Baltic and, during the sixteenth century, it was only the Dutch, and not the Hansa, who made these charts. But, as Edwin Okhuizen has shown, the first major break-through in this field, Cornelis Anthonisz's *Caert van Oostlant*, of 1543, a woodcut chart in nine sheets, based on data gathered through observation & by Dutch seamen, commissioned by the Amsterdam city government, only provides reliable and detailed contours and information for the southern Baltic.<sup>9</sup> The east Baltic coast north of Reval (Tallinn), the Gulf of Finland, and most of the east coast of Sweden (north of Stockholm) are largely omitted, or rendered inaccurately and crudely. Plainly these areas were then little known to Dutch seamen. Much had been learnt, and many gaps filled, by the time of the appearance, in 1585, of the Baltic section of Lucas Jansz. Waghenaer's *Spiegel der Zeevaert*.<sup>10</sup> But the Dutch were still making significant corrections to their mapping of parts of the Baltic down to the early seventeenth century.

The Dutch break-through into the 'rich trades' of the Baltic, at the end of the sixteenth century, was, it needs to be emphasized, a remarkably sudden and abrupt development. It is true that E.H. Wijnroks has recently argued that the process was perhaps not so sudden and long-delayed as I have argued.<sup>11</sup> He points to the importance of the port of Narva during the

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<sup>8</sup>Israel, *Dutch Primacy*, 49-50.

<sup>9</sup>besides Okhuizen's contribution to this volume, see E. Okhuizen, 'the Dutch Contribution to the Cartography of Russia during the 16th-18th Centuries' in J. Braat et al. (eds.) *Russians and Dutchmen. Proceedings of the conference on the Relations between Russia and the Netherlands from the 16th to the 20th Century Held at the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, June 1989*, (Groningen 1993), 77-9.

<sup>10</sup>ibid., 80-1.

<sup>11</sup>see E.H. Wijnroks, 'Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in Russian Trade in the latter half of the 16th Century' in J.Ph.S. Lemmink and J.S.A.M. Koningsbrugge (eds.)

third quarter of the sixteenth century, especially the 1560s, as an outlet for high-value Russian products in transit to western Europe and as an entry-point for western cloth and silks and costly colonial commodities from the Indies. He has demonstrated that in at least a few years, notably 1565-8, appreciable numbers of Dutch ships, over twenty per year, docked at Narva, in the Gulf of Finland.

But Wijnroks' evidence notwithstanding it still seems that Dutch Baltic trade before 1590 was very limited in scope and was largely confined to bulk freightage the general significance of which, in the making of the Dutch Golden Age, though not inconsiderable has often been exaggerated. In actual fact Wijnroks' data proves only that the flow of costly commodities between the Habsburg Netherlands and Russia in the 1550s and 1560s was chiefly driven by Antwerp firms. He suggests that Amsterdam played a part but provides no evidence that this amounted to anything more than supplying the ships and crews. Indeed, the fact that much of what was supplied from the west to Russia consisted of silver and costly merchandise originating in southern Europe and the Indies proves that Amsterdam in the political circumstances prevailing down to the Spanish recovery of Antwerp in 1585, could not easily have supplanted Antwerp.

Bulk-freightage which is what Dutch Baltic trade essentially was, before 1590, implies a limited, largely passive role in trade and a limited, largely passive role also in politics and culture. The fledgling Dutch Republic, locked in a life and death struggle with Spain down to 1590, when Philip II suddenly lifted the pressure by switching his main effort to intervening in the French civil Wars was far too absorbed in what was happening in the Low Countries themselves, and adjoining parts of France and Germany, to pay much attention to Baltic affairs. If we look at political relations between the Republic and the Baltic region it was, during the 1580s, much more a question of the western Baltic's dominant power, Denmark-Norway, intervening in Dutch politics than of Dutch

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*Baltic Affairs, relations between the Netherlands and north-eastern Europe 1500-1800*, (Nijmegen 1990), 413-32; and E.H. Wijnroks, 'Jan van de Walle and the Dutch Silk Trade with Russia, 1578-1635' in J. Braat et al. (eds.) *Russians and Dutchmen*, 45-7.

initiatives in the Baltic.<sup>12</sup> Nor was there yet a major impact in the sphere of high culture. For, on the one hand, the merchant elites of Lübeck, Danzig, Reval and Narva, geared to the 'rich trades', were bound to take their cue, and follow the fashion, among equivalent merchant elites in the west, notably in Antwerp and London rather than to look to Holland where, as yet there was no real merchant elite and bulk-freightage was handled by a large mass of much more modest people, living in modest homes and with modest furnishings. Nor, on the other hand, was the Calvinist university set up by the fledgling new state at Leiden yet a attraction to the administrative and academic elites of the Baltic. Until the 1590s, and especially the decay of the German universities after the onset of the Thirty Years' War, students from Baltic lands showed little interest in attending Leiden or the other new Dutch university, at Franeker.<sup>13</sup>

The change in the relationship between the northern Netherlands and the Baltic between 1590 and 1618 when the Thirty Years' War began was indeed not just rapid and fundamental but astounding in its scope. The Dutch role was greatly extended and was now much more dynamic in character. Dutch influence, cultural as well as economic and political, was now far more widespread and went much deeper than it had before 1590. The economic aspect of this transformation can, I believe, usefully be termed the 'second Dutch conquest' of the Baltic sea. Free from the deadening pressure exerted by Spain until the army of Flanders, under its brilliant general, the duke of Parma, was sent into France, in 1590, and galvanized by the vast new opportunities which opened up for the Dutch in western and southern Europe, and the Indies, during the course of the 1590s, many key merchants and manufacturers who had been forced to

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<sup>12</sup>see, for instance, A.J. Tjaden, 'Frederick II of Denmark, lord of Holland and Zeeland?', in Lemmink and Van Koningsbrugge, *Baltic Affairs*, 355-96.

<sup>13</sup>however, it is striking, in the case of Franeker, that whilst there were virtually no Germans, Swedes, Poles or Hungarians attending the university before the second decade of the seventeenth century, substantial numbers of Danes and Norwegians were studying at the Frisian University as early as the 1590s., see H. de Ridder-Symoens, 'Buitenlandse studenten aan de Franeker universiteit 1585-1811', in G. Th. Jensma et al. (eds.) *Universiteit te Franeker 1585-1811. Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de Friese hogeschool*, (Leeuwarden 1985), 74-5.

leave the southern Netherlands, and especially Antwerp, in 1585, but had hitherto gravitated towards Cologne, Frankfurt, Hamburg or some other German city, suddenly saw in the Dutch towns, and especially Amsterdam, the place where they could most readily re-establish the businesses. Boosted by the new opportunities elsewhere, and this immigration of elite merchants with their capital and connections, Amsterdam now not only invaded, but rapidly conquered the 'rich trades' of the Baltic. Thus, during the mid 1590s Amsterdam overtook Hamburg and Lübeck to become, for the first time, the principal supplier of pepper and spices from the East Indies to the Baltic.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Amsterdam suddenly became the chief supplier of Brazilian sugar and the goods of southern Europe. At the same time, the Dutch, for the first time, began to compete with London as furnishers of woollen cloth, and with Flanders as a supplier of light 'new draperies' and linen, to the Baltic. It was also during the 1590s that the Dutch first began to mount a strong challenge, powered it has to be said chiefly with immigrant capital from Antwerp, to the English dominance of the traffic around the top of Scandinavia to the White Sea and Archangel.<sup>15</sup> Then, during the early years of the new century, the Dutch made further gains at English expense in the exporting of cloth to the Baltic while, very suddenly, in the years 1613-14, Amsterdam supplanted Lübeck in the Swedish copper trade, a classic 'rich trade' in the sense of being a business controlled by a small number of merchants deploying large capital resources.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, by stages, the Dutch were able to adopt a far more active and vigorous posture in the Baltic than had been possible before. This became especially noticeable after the signing of the Twelve Years' Truce, in 1609, for this freed the United Provinces for the moment from all entanglement with Spain so that, for the first time since the 1440s, the Dutch had the option of threatening to use force, and demonstrating their

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<sup>14</sup>H. Kellenbenz, 'Der Pfeffermarkt um 1600 und die Hansestädte', *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* 74 (1956), 28-49; for the detailed evidence, see Nina Ellinger Bang, *Tabeller over skibsfart of varetransport gennem Øresund, 1497-1660* (3 vols. Copenhagen 1906-33) ii, 138-92.

<sup>15</sup>P. Bushkovitch, *The Merchants of Moscow, 1580-1650*, (Cambridge 1980), 43-5, 61.

<sup>16</sup>Bang, *Tabeller*, ii, 165, 294, 311; Klein, *De Trippen*, 328-9.

capacity to do so, in pursuing political and economic disputes with Denmark-Norway which at that stage was still the hegemonic power of the Baltic. After Denmark's victory over Sweden in the War of Kalmar (1611-13), the Danish monarch, Christian IV (1596-1648) attempted to exploit his dominance, and control of the Sound, to regulate the flow of commerce in and out of the Baltic, and manipulate the Sound Dues at the expense of the Dutch and Hanseatics, as well as of the Swedes. Oldenbarnevelt and the States General, however, succeeded in forcing Denmark to desist from this policy, and returning to the *status quo ante*, by forming an alliance with the Hansa, and subsequently also Sweden, the hub of which was the defence of freedom of navigation through the Sound and the Elbe estuary and a refusal to accept the higher tolls.<sup>17</sup> But this success was achieved only because of the growth of the Dutch navy since the 1590s, as illustrated by its widely noticed triumph in 1607 when it had destroyed a Spanish fleet off Gibraltar, and the then availability of the Dutch fleet for service in Danish waters should it come to that.

Dutch trade with the Baltic enjoyed an extremely prosperous few years following the imposition of what was virtually a *Pax Neerlandica* on the Baltic Sea in 1614. This ended abruptly, however, with the expiry of the Truce, and the resumption of the Dutch-Spanish conflict in 1621. It was inevitable that Dutch political and naval influence in the Baltic area should be noticeably reduced, as they were, from 1621 down to the conclusion of the Eighty Years' War, in 1648. At the same time, the year 1621 marked the beginning of a less prosperous and more disturbed period for Dutch shipping and commerce in the Baltic which again continued down to the late 1640s. The Sound Toll registers make it clear that this period of disturbance and difficulty was especially acute in the 1620s when the Dutch Baltic trade experienced what amounted to severe disruption and depression.<sup>18</sup> It is obvious that one major reason for this state of affairs was the Swedish offensive against the Polish and Prussian Baltic ports in the late 1620s. But Spanish pressure on the Dutch trading system, which took several forms, also had a considerable effect. In the first place the

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<sup>17</sup>Ch. E. Hill, *The Danish Sound Dues and the Command of the Baltic*, (Durham, N. Carolina 1926), 83-4; L. Beutin and H. Entholt, *Bremen und die Niederlande*, (Weimar 1939) 8, 31-2.

<sup>18</sup>Bang, *Tabelleri*, 218-340; Israel, *Dutch Primacy*, 121-56.



Spaniards were able to prevent Dutch vessels from fetching salt from the Portuguese salt-pans and from the salt-pans of the Caribbean so that the Dutch now had insufficient pure salt even for their own fisheries let alone with which to supply the Baltic market. In the second place, Spain was able to reduce Dutch trade with the Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean areas as a whole substantially which meant that there was suddenly less demand in Amsterdam for Baltic commodities for re-export to southern Europe. And, in third place, from 1622 onwards, an increasingly effective privateering offensive was mounted from the ports of the Spanish Netherlands, especially Dunkirk, which caused serious losses to Dutch shipping and pushed up Dutch freight charges and insurance rates making them less competitive than before with respect to the Hanseatics and English.<sup>19</sup> One typical consequence of these developments, as a recent monograph on the Dutch herring fishery has shown, is that there was a marked decline in Dutch herring exports to the Baltic area during the period 1621-48, a decline in no way due to contracting demand for Dutch herring in the Baltic countries but rather exclusively due to the Spanish attacks on the Dutch herring fleets in the North Sea and the difficulties the Dutch experienced in finding sufficient pure salt with which to process the herring catch.<sup>20</sup> Seriously affected by the erosion of herring and salt exports to the Baltic, and shipments of Baltic grain and timber for southern Europe - a traffic which was now largely diverted to Hamburg, - and carried in North German ships - the West Frisian ports, the home of the *fluit* began their long-term decline at this time.<sup>21</sup> It is striking that in the case of Enkhuizen, as the baptismal records show, the structural reversal from long-term demographic growth to long-term decline took place in the year 1621 precisely.<sup>22</sup>

The combination of reduced Dutch political influence, and the difficulties now besetting Dutch shipping, as compared with the Dutch situation during the thirty years before 1621, enabled both Denmark and

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<sup>19</sup>J. Schreiner, *Nederland og Norge, 1625-1650 Trelast udførsel og handelspolitik*, (Oslo 1933), 48-50.

<sup>20</sup>A.P. Vliet, *Vissers en kapers. De zeevisserij vanuit het Maasmondgebied en de Duinkerker kapers (c. 1580-1648)*, (The Hague 1994), 166 7, 271-2.

<sup>21</sup>C. Lesger, *Hoorn als stedelijk knooppunt*, (Hilversum 1990), 61-2, 85-6.

<sup>22</sup>*ibid.*, 73; R.J. de Vries, *Enkhuizen, 1650-1850*, (Amsterdam 1987), 72.

Sweden to make some progress with their respective mercantilist aspirations. After Christian IV made peace with the Habsburg Emperor, in 1630, withdrawing from the Thirty Years' War, he followed an increasingly anti-Dutch and pro-Spanish, as well as anti-Swedish course, in his foreign and economic policies, a tendency which culminated in the Danish-Spanish treaty of co-operation of 1641.<sup>23</sup> From as early as 1631 Denmark-Norway openly collaborated with the Spanish embargoes against the Dutch which were being orchestrated in the Baltic area by the Spanish agent Gabriel de Roy who, soon after, transferred his head-quarters from the Baltic German coast, at Wismar, to the Danish port of Glückstadt on the west coast of Holstein.<sup>24</sup> It was a collaboration which caused unease in Sweden as well as steadily worsening relations between the Dutch Republic and Denmark.<sup>25</sup>

It was a further feature of the reduced Dutch maritime and commercial preponderance in the Baltic between 1621 and the late 1640s, that the Scandinavian realms now made a determined effort to by-pass the Dutch entrepot, in supplying the Baltic region with colonial products, including pepper and East India spices. The attempt to establish a viable traffic with the Indies based in the Scandinavian lands was both a symptom of political estrangement from the Republic and a sign of enhanced freedom of economic action.

It is remarkable that during the Thirty Years' War period first the Swedes and then also the Danes should have established themselves as serious rivals to the Dutch in West Africa and in the Guinea trade. Meanwhile, the first Danish East India Company sent out its first little fleet to India, in 1618, and, in 1620, Denmark acquired its trading factory at Tranquebar at the south-eastern tip of India.<sup>26</sup> Between 1623 and 1639

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<sup>23</sup>L. Laursen, *Danmark-Norges Traktater*, IV (1626-1649) (Copenhagen 1917), 87-8; J.I. Israel, *Empires and Entrepots*, (London 1990) 237-41.

<sup>24</sup>Israel, *Empires and Entrepots*, 240.

<sup>25</sup>*Rikskansleren Axel Oxenstiernas skrifter och brevvevling. Första afdelningen*, (eds.) S. Clason *et al*VI, 5,47.

<sup>26</sup>O. Feldbæk, 'The Organization and Structure of the Danish East India, West India and Guinea Companies in the 17th and 18th Centuries' in L. Blussé and F. Gaastra (eds.) *Companies and Trade. Essays on Overseas Trading Companies during the Ancien Regime*, (Leiden 1981), 139-41, 152-3; E. Gøbel,

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the Danish East India Company sent out a further thirteen vessels.

Nevertheless, despite this slippage, the fundamental change in the relationship between the Netherlands and the Baltic world which came about in the 1590s was not reversed. Dutch economic penetration, political leverage and cultural influence all remained far more extensive than they had been before 1590. Indeed, so crucial was the 'second Dutch conquest of Baltic navigation and trade as a structural change in the life of the Baltic as a whole that after 1648 when the Baltic grain trade went into decline, Dutch influence did not wane with it but, on the contrary, generally became stronger.<sup>27</sup>

Nor is there anything paradoxical in this, surprising though it may appear at first glance. For bulk-carrying in the Baltic had always been largely confined to the Polish and Prussian ports, plus Riga, so that the vicissitudes of Baltic bulk-freightage as such do not serve as any sort of guide to the ebb and flow of Dutch economic, political and cultural influence especially over the Scandinavian realms and the northern Baltic. What mattered here was precisely the vicissitudes of the 'rich trades' and, as far as these were concerned, the end of the Eighty and Thirty Years' Wars marked the commencement of a vigorous, new phase of expansion which was destined to continue, albeit twice interrupted by the first two Anglo-Dutch Wars (1652-4 and 1664-7) until the outbreak of the war of 1672-7 between the Republic and France.

It is the expansion of the Dutch cities and of Dutch industries, and the further widening of the Dutch technological lead, during the period 1647-72 which explains the remarkable fact that just when the Dutch Baltic grain trade went into long-term decline Dutch maritime, commercial, political, artistic and academic influence in the Baltic - especially on Denmark-Norway and Sweden-Finland reached its zenith. After the sending of a Dutch fleet to Copenhagen and the Sound in 1645, the Danes were compelled not just to cease their manipulation of the Sound Dues against the Dutch but all mercantilist initiatives and policies which conflicted with Dutch interests. Denmark-Norway was drawn into a close

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'Danish Companies Shipping to Asia, 1616-1807' in J.R. Bruijn and F. Gaastra (eds.) *Ships, Sailors and Spices. East India Companies and their Shipping in the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries*, (Amsterdam 1993), 99, 113.

<sup>27</sup>Israel, *Dutch Primacy*, 213-24.

strategic alliance with the Dutch Republic - aimed both against England and Sweden - which was destined to continue until after the Peace of Nijmegen (1678).<sup>28</sup> But what was collaboration with the Dutch politically and strategically amounted to little more than Danish subordination economically. Sweden, by contrast, was on hostile terms with the Republic for much of the period down to 1678 but was scarcely any more able to ward off the flood of imports of all kinds from the Republic than was Denmark. As an exporter of textiles, manufactures of all kinds, technology, and colonial products to the Baltic the Dutch were now in a stronger position than ever before or, indeed, subsequently. Simultaneously, the at times overwhelming influence of the Dutch universities on Danish and Swedish academic and intellectual life was at its peak as also was Dutch artistic influence. At the same time both Sweden and Denmark temporarily ceased to count to any significant extent as colonial powers. They simply could not compete with the Dutch East and West India Companies. Both the Swedish and Danish Guinea companies were in a decayed state at this time while the Danish East India Company sent out no ships at all to the East Indies for nearly thirty years until 1668 and it was not until Dutch commerce was heavily damaged during the Franco-Dutch War of 1672-7 - years when the Danes sent out eleven vessels to India - that the Danish East India traffic regained any vitality.<sup>29</sup>

However, even the Franco-Dutch War of 1672-7 in some respects proved only a temporary interruption and the Dutch trading system recovered most of its former preponderance in the Baltic by the mid 1680s after defeating a new Danish attempt to set up effective mercantilist barriers. It was only with the onset of the Nine Years' War (1688-97), a struggle which seriously damaged Dutch trade and shipping, and offered major new opportunities in the economic sphere to both the Danes and Swedes, that the Dutch influence in all spheres was substantially and permanently reduced. It is no accident that the 1690s were the Danish East India Company's most flourishing decade.<sup>30</sup> Dutch naval intervention in the Baltic, having resumed vigorously in

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<sup>28</sup>ibid., 211, 275-8.

<sup>29</sup>Gøbel, 'Danish Companies', 113.

<sup>30</sup>ibid.

1645 continued to be a major factor in Baltic affairs down to the 1690s.<sup>31</sup> In the late 1650s Dutch fleets were sent into the Baltic to protect Danzig and bolster the Danes against the Swedes. In the years 1675-7 Dutch squadrons were sent each year to assist the Danes against Sweden, collaboration which culminated in the victory of Oeland (June, 1676) over the Swedes. For two years, the Dutch admiral, Cornelis Tromp, served as commander of the Danish navy.

So accustomed were the Dutch to balancing Denmark-Norway against Sweden and her empire, and so tightly geared to this end was the Republic's Baltic posture, that the Dutch leadership - with the partial exception of the Amsterdam city government - was almost entirely unprepared and unequipped to deal with, and adjust to, the dramatic consequences of Sweden's shattering defeat at Poltava, and the subsequent rapid spread of Russian power through much of the region.<sup>32</sup> The Republic's weakened state after the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13) in any case left the Dutch without the means to oppose the new anti-Dutch (and anti-British) mercantilist protectionism adopted in turn by Prussia, Russia, Denmark-Norway and Sweden-Finland, after the war. If Dutch merchants hoped that their trade with the Baltic and Russia would recover to the levels achieved before 1688, after 1713, they were destined to be cruelly disappointed.

The protectionist measures taken by the northern states beginning in the closing years of the Great Northern War (1700-21), and gathering momentum in the 1720s, had by the 1740s largely shut out the flow of textiles, paper and other manufactures as well as refined sugar, processed tobacco and other processed products pouring in from the Dutch entrepot.<sup>33</sup> By that time virtually all Dutch industries and all the branches of the Dutch 'rich trades' were in full decline. As a consequence Dutch

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<sup>31</sup>J.R. Bruijn, *The Dutch Navy of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, (Columbia, South Carolina 1993), 92.

<sup>32</sup>J.S.A.M. van Koningsbrugge, 'Of diplomats, merchants and regents: Dutch-Baltic relations in the period 1697-1709' in Braat (ed.) *Russians and Dutchmen*, 160, 180.

<sup>33</sup>Israel, *Dutch Primacy*, 377-98; see also J.Th. Lindblad, 'Structure and Competition in Sweden's foreign trade 1740-1780' in Heeres et al (eds.) *From Dunkirk to Danzig*, 366-7, 372-3, 377.

trade in the north was gravely weakened and the Dutch merchant colonies rapidly lost the dominant position they had formerly enjoyed in the mechanisms of Baltic commerce, even though the overall rapid growth in Baltic shipping and commerce meant that there was as yet no great change in the numbers of Dutch vessels entering the Baltic. The greatly reduced status of the Dutch merchant colonies after around 1720 was evident in all the great maritime centres of the Baltic region and not least as Jan Veluwenkamp shows in his contribution to this volume, in the new up-and-coming metropolis of St Petersburg. By the 1740s, Dutch influence, economic as well as political and cultural, was a mere shadow of what it had been a mere half-century before.