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Being states and making diplomacy in Early Modern Europe, c. 1568-1632: The Danish Kingdom and the Dutch Republic

This article started as a lecture at the celebration in 2005 of the fourth centenary of diplomatic relations between Denmark and the Netherlands.¹ Like all jubilees, this was based on the concepts and ideas of those celebrating, not of those being celebrated. If I had been able to transport myself back to the seventeenth century to discuss my lecture with some informed person – say Dr. Jonas Charisius, the learned servant of the king of Denmark, who was a main actor in Dutch-Danish relations during the first decades of the seventeenth century – then he would pose two rather disturbing questions.

The first would be: What does it mean “to establish diplomatic relations?” This was not a concept used around 1600 and it would be difficult to explain, even to a man as learned and brilliant as Dr. Charisius. The second awkward question would be: “Why 1605?” Why not one of the several other years who do present themselves as candidates for celebration?

The second of these questions is rather trivial. Events are gener-

¹ The festive symposium was held at the University of Amsterdam on June 10, 2005, and was a joint initiative of the Royal Danish Embassy in The Hague and the Scandinavian Department of the University of Amsterdam.

ally imbedded in a process of more or less crucial steps, and 1605 is not an inappropriate selection. But why would it be challenging to explain to an expert from 1605 what it does mean to establish diplomatic relations?

In modern parlance, diplomatic relations are the practical implementation of *diplomatic recognition*. This can be defined as the reciprocal recognition by states of their sovereignty and legitimate membership of the community of sovereign states, expressed by the establishment of permanent diplomatic missions at their respective seats of government.² Most of these words would be unknown in their modern meaning, or at least not generally known, four hundred years ago. Even more important, the phenomena they describe were only emerging.

I

Most fundamental of these concepts is *the state*. This old word with many meanings acquired the sense relevant here about 1510-1550. Machiavelli seems to have been a pioneer. Around 1600 the modern concept of “the state” had spread from learned circles to a wider public.³ The word was useful when speaking about kingdoms, duchies, republics etc. in general and – even more important – when speaking about the conglomerates of kingdoms, duchies and so on which were the typical states of the age. Almost no po-

² The *Vienna Convention* (1961), which regulates modern diplomacy, explains in these terms without explaining the terms themselves. So self-evident have they become. Article 2 is: “The establishment of diplomatic relations between States, and of permanent diplomatic missions, takes place by mutual consent.”

³ The development of the term is best described for the Germanic area, even if the older stages are Latin, Italian and French. (Koselleck et al., ‘Staat und Souveränität’, 1990; *Ordbog over det danske Sprog* s. v. ‘Stat’; *Oxford English Dictionary* s. v. ‘State’.)

litical body of importance was unitary, or even made up of uniform components.⁴

The old Dutch state is a well-known example: A conglomerate of old fiefs, in theory each with its own immediate lord, owing feudal allegiance in several directions, and united by mutual agreement, eventually expressed by a formal treaty. Power was split, both on the level of the union and on the level of the individual provinces, between the representatives of feudal lordship and the much more powerful representatives of the local elites. Most provinces could even be regarded as conglomerates in their own right, due to the considerable autonomy of the individual towns and landscapes.

The old Danish state had a king, a powerful and visible single ruler. Still it was far from unitary. In short terms it could be described as the union of two unions: The union between the kingdoms of Denmark and Norway on one hand and the union between the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein on the other. Within both we find multiple divisions of law and political power. The Danish state was partly established by the person of the king-duke, partly by formal treaties of union. The most important of these (1533 with several renewals and revisions) united the kingdoms with the duchies against all foreign enemies and defined how to create a court of arbitration in case of disagreement between the princes. It speaks volumes about the nature of the state that at several of the later renewals, the treaty was co-signed on both sides by the same man, on one copy as king of Denmark, on the other as duke of Schleswig and Holstein.⁵

Both in the Netherlands and in Denmark, the distinction between foreign and domestic powers, foreign and domestic politics,

⁴ The term “conglomerate” has been introduced by Harald Gustafsson. (Gustafsson, ‘The Conglomerate State’, 1998.) The term ‘composite state’ can also be found.

⁵ See: Lind, ‘Krig, udenrigspolitik og statsdannelse’, 2000.

could be made in some contexts but was meaningless in others. Where the distinction could be made, it was not uniform in all directions. This was nothing special. In fact, few states in Europe were more uniform. The bland and abstract concept “state” was useful precisely because it did not assume much. (Consider the many meanings of “the state of the king of Denmark.”) But such states did not really possess some of the most prominent characteristic of *modern* states.

It is not surprising that in such a context the idea of *sovereign* states was recent and academic, having been introduced by Jean Bodin in 1576. The idea of a *system* of sovereign states had not been introduced at all.⁶ To Bodin, sovereignty was an abstract quality which was generally expressed in a modified and imperfect way in the real world. The concept served as the foundation of a normative theory: A world structured by sovereignty, neatly divided into sovereign states with nothing above them, each governed by a clearly paramount sovereign government, would be a better place.

This academic concept had great and rapid success among practical politicians. They needed it to express their experience that powers on different levels had vastly different degrees of freedom. And they needed it to legitimise and glorify the struggle carried out by the strongest elements in these hierarchies – the kings most of all – to free themselves from outside influence and gain better control of their subjects. In short, establishing themselves as sovereign in a way closer to Bodin’s ideal type, as powers on a separate, higher level, both in practical terms and in terms of legitimacy.

The last process is often described as the formation of the modern European state. The ascendancy of some princes and republican bodies by the establishment of permanent armies and navies, the vast expansion of taxation and bureaucracy, more lawmaking

⁶ Pioneers in developing this idea were Grotius and Pufendorf. (Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace*, 2005 [1625]; Der Derian, *On Diplomacy*, 1987, p. 109.

activity, increased juridical uniformity within states, state control of the local church (both among Protestants and Catholics) and, as a consequence, much sharper distinction between central state power and other powers, much clearer borders between the individual states, and a much clearer distinction between domestic and foreign politics. This process was rapid between 1550 and 1650. The Westphalian peace of 1648 is often seen as a turning point, marking the point in the process where the system of sovereign states became clearly visible at the first general peace congress, eclipsing pope and emperor.⁷

Diplomatic activity was the day to day practical expression of the existence of a system of states. The clearer the distinction between sovereign states and other organizations, the clearer the distinction between diplomacy and other forms of negotiation, communication and representation. The stronger the states became, the greater was the practical need for diplomatic activity, so diplomatic activity increased by leaps and bounds. As a part of this increase, permanent diplomatic missions, first established by the small Italian states during the late renaissance, spread out of Italy during the sixteenth century and became common after 1600. The permanent diplomatic mission was not only a convenient tool when contacts increased. It was also the best concrete expression of the fact that one state recognized the sovereignty, the legitimate and permanent existence, of another. (This is one reason why states today often accredit ambassadors residing in one capital at several other places, creating “virtual permanent representations”.) The concept “recognition” was not used yet in this meaning. Like the term “diplomacy” itself, “diplomatic recognition” was a creation of the eighteenth century, and first in general use after 1800.⁸ But the phe-

⁷ The broadest exploration of the state formation process can be found in Blockmans and Genet (eds.), *Origins of the Modern State in Europe*, 1995-2000.

⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary* s. v. ‘diplomacy’, ‘recognition’; *Ordbog over det danske*

nomenon was coming into existence.

II

So early Dutch-Danish relations developed within the context of a rapidly changing system, and their development were an integral part of that system change itself. Tracing the process of early Dutch-Danish relations before and after 1605 throws light on European history. The process can be described on an abstract level as a part of the development of the system of European states and on the concrete, practical level by tracing the use of the different tools of contemporary diplomacy. I will follow this process through a number of stages. Each is marked by one of the years which may be chosen as the beginning of Dutch-Danish relations. And each year represents the approximate time when one of the main tools of early modern diplomacy was applied for the first time in Dutch-Danish relations.

The first of these years is 1568. This was the first year of the revolt, long before a new state, the free Netherlands, emerged as an unintended consequence of the rebellion against the king of Spain. Before he took up arms, William of Orange and his brothers met with king Frederic 2. of Denmark and a number of his councillors. It happened in the deepest secrecy somewhere in the Danish lands. Very little is known. But it is clear that Frederic promised some kind of backing. As long as he lived, Denmark offered low key support for the revolt, even if the official policy was one of non-commitment, good relations with Spain, and support for peace initiatives.⁹

Personal meetings between rulers were a very rare tool in early modern diplomacy. The burdens and risks of travel were too great. We find it here because the two men had met in person before, at a

Sprog s. v. 'diplomati'; *Dictionnaires d'autrefois* s. v. 'diplomatie', 'reconnaissance'.

⁹ Jensen, 'Frederik II og truslen fra de katolske magter', 1993, p. 239.

German *Reichstag* in 1558, and become friends. They were not rulers then, but young, hard-drinking, hunt-loving princes. Since then they had exchanged letters on a regular basis.¹⁰

Correspondence between rulers was the basic tool of early modern diplomacy. It was uncommon that the correspondence was truly personal, as in this case; but it was standard that letters were addressed directly from one ruler to another, as there was no representative at the foreign court who might present the content of letters from home. The letters were sent by courier, as public postal service was only appearing around 1600. (And was unreliable.) Correspondence did not only link the kings with the *stadhouders* and the States General, the two central institutions of the Dutch state. The kings also received letters from other members of the house of Orange, from city governments, admiralties, courts, provincial estates, high military officers (notably count Philip von Hohenlohe), the Lutheran congregations of Amsterdam and Rotterdam and so on, including a number of petitions from private individuals. There were probably fewer correspondents on the Danish side, due to the more centralized nature of the Danish state. For archival reasons they are also more difficult to trace. But at least the two chancellors – the Danish and the German – did routinely write less official letters on behalf of the royal government, and Danish cities, local administrators and individuals might also have business to transact with Dutch authorities. Chance sometimes gives insight into official correspondence transacted on a low level, as when the customs officer in Elsinore is ordered to write to a number of Dutch cities and inform about new lighthouses and buoys in the Danish waters.¹¹

¹⁰ Fabricius, 'De politiske Forbindelser', 1945, pp. 51-57.

¹¹ TKUA Ausländisch Registrant holds copies of outgoing correspondence. TKUA Speciel Del, Nederlandene, nr. 1-28 holds the incoming letters and papers. Order to the customs officer: *Kancelliets Brevbøger 1561-1565, 1893-95*, p. 12.

III

The personal friendship between William and Frederic naturally placed the central question of early modern foreign politics on the agenda: marriage. Princes were not simply rulers: they were a hereditary social group. Their marriages were both main tools of politics, confirming or establishing friendship, and main objects of politics. Treaties on marriage and other dynastic matters were the largest group of Danish treaties until the second quarter of the seventeenth century.¹² Frederic was not married to William's sister, as had been discussed, and no other marriage between the houses of Oldenburg and Orange was realized in this period. The danger of complicating Danish relations with Spain was probably one reason. Another must have been the strange status of the house of Orange as a not really ruling dynasty within a mostly republican political construction. So, despite the promising beginning, the dynastic element in early Dutch-Danish relations was relatively inconspicuous. The most prominent expression was nothing more than Frederic's being godfather to Prince Frederik Hendrik in 1584.

Despite the absence of conspicuous dynastic relations, other Dutch-Danish relations developed apace. These many, multilevel contacts can be subsumed under three headings: Trade, Peace and Religion.¹³

Trade and shipping took up most time. The famous issue of Dutch access to the Baltic and the Danish tolls in the Sound was only one theme. Trade and shipping matters were also about markets, the Netherlands being the premier market for food exports from Denmark and Holstein and timber from Norway. Diplomatic con-

¹² Lind, '1588-1648', 2001, p. 365.

¹³ TKUA as note 10. Surveys in print of parts of the business: Anja Tjaden, 'Frederic II of Denmark', 1990; *Danmark-Norges Traktater* 2, 1912, pp. 285-287, 390-408.

tacts dealt with competition in fisheries and shipping, both everyday items like North Sea herring and grand schemes like the trade to Asia. And they dealt with a large number of what would today be called consular matters: individual complaints and concerns of Dutch or Danish traders, skippers and resident foreigners.

Peace had many aspects. Keeping the peace between the two states was not really a problem during this period, despite occasional bitter language. But the Dutch were easily troubled by conflicts between Danes, Swedes, Poles and Russians. Such conflicts inevitably interfered with trade and shipping in the Baltic. Tensions were high in the Baltic area, so Dutch diplomacy was frequently engaged in missions aimed at preserving or restoring the peace or other forms of 'damage control'. Correspondingly, the war between the Netherlands and Spain troubled Danish shipping and trade. It was also a source of insecurity for the whole of Europe. This made the Danes willing to try their hand at mediating, but with as little success as the Dutch had in the Baltic.

The peace of Northern Germany was another important issue. The ambitions of King Christian IV in this area worried the Dutch for some years around 1620. They would rather not see any strong and enterprising prince gain influence in their immediate neighbourhood. But the critical Dutch concern was to keep the Spanish enemies and their allies out of the area. Here they were in full agreement with the Danes, so in the long run the two powers generally found themselves on the same side in their attitude towards the German region between them.

The main reason for that was *Religion*. The idea that there should be a distinction between religion and politics was foreign to this age. On the contrary, as religion was the foundation of society, it ought also to be at the centre of politics. This created a foundation of sympathy between the Netherlands and Denmark. A telling example can be found far from foreign politics when a young Danish man of good family had poached deer in the royal game

preserve. He was pardoned on the condition that he left the country for three years seeking his fortune either in Hungary or the Netherlands.¹⁴ That is, fighting either for Christianity against the Turks or for Protestantism against the Spaniards.

Religious sympathies were not only expressed by such symbolic acts. The dividing line between Catholics and Protestants was still a very important constituent in European politics. Mainly because the dominant power, the house of Habsburg, and most of all, its Spanish branch, saw the preservation and extension of Catholicism as a principal object of policy. This pushed the Dutch and Danish states together, even if it did not determine all aspects of foreign politics.

IV

All of these fields of interest were touched upon in the correspondence. Most were also on the agenda when the gradual consolidation of the rebellious Dutch provinces as a state opened for the application of the second routine instrument of early modern diplomacy: *the travelling embassy*. Travelling embassies were employed when serious discussion and real agreements were required. Not much could be finalized by the use of letters alone.

Single agents travelled from an early point in time. Georg Asmus Schregel went to Denmark on behalf of William of Orange as early as 1574. He carried a letter which shows that his mission was to preserve and if possible further the good relations between William and king Frederic, despite the unwarranted (!) accusations of “all sorts of rebellion” directed by the Spanish against the former. Schregel should appeal to the king’s well known favourable disposition towards “this common Christian cause and the general welfare of these lands.” He should try to obtain a ban of Spanish recruiting in the Danish lands and argue against the Spanish desire to see the

¹⁴ *Kancelliets Brevbøger 1603-1608*, 1915, p. 268.

Sound closed to the Dutch. And other things which he would let know orally – the reason why a real political agent was dispatched, and not merely a letter-carrier.¹⁵ Schregel's mission, and others like it, was political, but the goal was informal understanding, not more complicated agreements reached by mutual concessions. So single agents were sent out, not real embassies.

1587 seems to be the year of the first true travelling embassy between the emerging free Dutch state and Denmark. It was sent out by the States General to the king and council in Denmark. Others did follow soon. Dutch emissaries were sent single or pair wise to Denmark in 1574, 1576, 1581, 1582, 1586, 1587 and 1599; but large embassies in 1587, 1588, 1594 and 1596.¹⁶

The embassy of 1587 consisted of four men: the high-ranking and well connected Baron Floris van Brederode, Dr. Leonhardt Casembroot, ordinary councillor of the province of Holland, Reinier Cant, burgomaster of Amsterdam, and Dr. Jan van Warck.¹⁷ Like in this case, embassies consisted of top people. If we use the slightly anachronistic modern terminology, they were dominated by political decision-makers rather than bureaucratic professionals. Given the means of communication, embassies had to consist of people which could be entrusted with independent negotiations. Sending out leading men with high status did also make it easier to reach the central decision-makers at the destination. In this respect the embassy of 1587 was no success. Negotiations were carried out with some of the most trusted men at court, but the Dutch lords did not obtain a direct hearing with the king. This symbolic rebuff was surely connected with the fact that the Danes were concerned

¹⁵ Instruction from William of Orange, no date [1574], in TKUA Speciel Del, Nederlandene, 70-8: Akter og Dokumenter vedr. det politiske Forhold til Nederlandene 1519-1599.

¹⁶ Papers from various missions in TKUA Speciel Del, Nederlandene, 70-8; Tjaden, 'Frederic II', 1990, pp. 363-377.

¹⁷ Credentials 19 May 1587, in TKUA Speciel Del, Nederlandene, 70-8.

about their relations to other powers in the tense situation before the venture of the great Spanish Armada. In real terms the Dutch got most of what they wanted.¹⁸

During the coming decades other embassies produced a number of Dutch-Danish agreements, mostly regarding questions of tolls and trade. Understanding was expressed orally to envoys or by letter, but no real treaties were signed. In fact, no Dutch-Danish treaties were made between 1560 – when all the Dutch provinces were represented by the Spanish government in Brussels – and 1621. The most ambitious delegations to travel this route were outright failures. These were peace mediators. Danish emissaries had no success when they tried to establish contact between the Dutch and the Spanish in 1597, and the contribution of the Danish mediation 1607-8 to the cease-fire of 1609 war negligible. Similarly, a high ranking Dutch delegation attempted in vain to settle the conflict between Denmark and Sweden in 1611.¹⁹

Even if they did not produce the intended results, such initiatives testified to the growing depth and strength of stable diplomatic interaction. Years of exchanging letters and legations had consolidated the states as actors in a system. This conditioned their behaviour. Consolidation is visible in the growing routinization of relations. The shuttle diplomacy carried out by Jonas Charisius between Denmark, the Netherlands, England and sometimes other states during the years 1607-18 is a good example of routinization. On more important occasions Charisius travelled as number two with a prominent councillor as head of legation. But this ennobled professional diplomat did also travel alone, essentially keeping his government in touch, also when it was not known in advance that

¹⁸ Tjaden, 'Frederic II', 1990, pp. 388-389.

¹⁹ Fabricius, 'De politiske Forbindelser', 1945, pp. 62, 64-66; *Danmark-Norges Traktater* 3, 1916, pp. 285-287.

important things were happening.²⁰ During the early years of the Thirty Years' War we find the Dutch diplomat Foppe van Aitzema travelling the length and breadth of Northern Europe in a similar routine manner.²¹

V

The next year to consider is 1605. In 1605 Isaac Pieterz and Hendrik van Hoorn got a commission to "have inspection with the ships in the Sound". They should stay in Elsinore as permanent agents of the Dutch States General. When they died, in 1610 and 1614 respectively, they were replaced as soon as possible by new commissioners at the Sound. In the standard work on the Dutch diplomatic service, Pieterz and van Hoorn are put at the head of the list of Dutch representatives in Denmark. This is true in the sense that they were commissioned by the central power in the Dutch state, and the commissioners in the Sound were succeeded by envoys and ambassadors. But still, what happened in 1605 did not possess all traits associated with establishing diplomatic relations in the modern sense.²²

First, it was not reciprocal. Dr. Charisius visited the Netherlands 1606, 1608, 1612 and 1618, but he travelled to other places in between. And he was not *the* Danish representative. Other Danish envoys, some of higher rank, did also visit the Netherlands during these years.²³ And lower ranking, mainly news-collecting 'agents', who were not Danish subjects and not expected to work exclu-

²⁰ Rørdam, 'Charisius, Jonas', 1889; TKUA Speciel Del Nederlandene, 70-9: Akter og Dokumenter vedr. det politiske Forhold til Nederlandene; TKUA Alm. Del 1, 113-114: Instructiones etc; DKUA 15: Instruxbog.

²¹ Das, *Foppe van Aitzema*, 1920.

²² Schutte, *Repertorium*, 1976, pp. 235-239.

²³ Rørdam, 'Charisius, Jonas', 1889, p. 438; Andersen, 'Charisius, Jonas', 1934; TKUA, Speciel Del Nederlandene, 70-9; TKUA, as note 19.

sively for the king of Denmark, were employed in the Hague from 1608.²⁴

Second, “to have inspection with the ships in the Sound” was not the same as representing one government at the seat of another. Of course the royal court was informed about the commission, and visited by the commissioners. Some of their business was carried out at the court and chancellery; but the level of formality was low, and they did surely do much more business at the custom house in Elsinore. The commissaries in the Sound served the Baltic trade rather than the relations between the states.²⁵

Third, there were the individuals, the men themselves. The background of Hendrik van Hoorn seems to be unknown, but we know that Isaac Pieterz was a merchant. He had first visited Elsinore as early as 1569. In 1577 we find him in Amsterdam serving as commercial agent for the king of Denmark. His successor as commissioner, his son Pieter Isaacs, was born in Denmark and was employed by King Christian IV as a painter along with his commission from the States General. Having two masters made him well placed for collecting information at the Danish court, but was of course incompatible with being a true political representative of the States General.²⁶

Fourth, serious business was still handled by travelling embassies. One large mission arrived at the Danish court in 1611, as described, others in 1607, 1618 and 1620; and single emissaries ar-

²⁴ TKUA, Speciel Del Nederlandene, 70-41: Gesandtskabsrelationer, Indberetninger og Breve fra forskellige. The main agent 1608-23 is Adrian Strick, but others are also employed.

²⁵ The commissaries have left absolutely no paper trail in the main political archive series, TKUA, Speciel Del Nederlandene, 70-9.

²⁶ The role of Isaacs as primarily an information collector is underlined by the fact that he did also sell information to Sweden. As a secret agent, but probably with the consent of the Danes. (Tandrup, ‘Isaacs, Pieter’, 1981, pp. 141-142.)

rived on numerous occasions. Still other important business was carried out at conferences between Danish and Dutch delegations at various places in Germany.²⁷ The permanent commissioners were not considered suitable agents in discussions of war and peace, European politics, even major settlements in the area of trade and commerce.

VI

One of the meetings in Germany took Dutch-Danish relations one step further. In 1621 the first formal treaty was made between the United Provinces and the Danish monarchy. It came after a change in Dutch policies. From 1614, the Netherlands had been connected with Lübeck and Sweden to protect the freedom of trade. This was tacitly pointed against Denmark, a counterbalance to Danish superiority in the Baltic after the victorious war against Sweden 1611-1613. But Sweden had gradually gained force and again become as least as annoying as Denmark in trade matters; and then there was the question of peace in Northern Germany, as the scene of the Thirty Years' War crept northward. Questions of great importance began to shape the Dutch-Danish relations.

The treaty of 1621 was an alliance. The object was the preservation of peace in Northern Germany and mutual support against the house of Habsburg. Two agreements were in fact reached during 1621, but the first was not accepted by the Dutch, the second not by the Danes. What took time during the negotiations was to find a fitting platform for mutual trust. This required paragraphs on trade and customs, on the relationship to older commitments, and on the limits and character of the Danish and Dutch zones of influence in Northern Germany. But it all came to nothing because the successes of the Emperor and the Catholic league made intervention

²⁷ *Danmark-Norges Traktater* 3, 1916, pp. 395-396, 399-402; TKUA, *Speciel del Nederlandene*, 70-9.

in Germany by the king of Denmark unrealistic. The king was going to lay low, and so no treaty was necessary.

The plan reappeared when further advances of the League and the Emperor had brought new supporters: Britain and France. So the pact of 1625, which was the first ratified treaty between the Netherlands and Denmark, was an agreement between four parties. The core of the arrangement was guarantees and promises of financial support for the king of Denmark's war against the Catholic League. It can be remarked that the allies lived up to their pledges in very different ways. The English paid much less and much later than they had promised; the French did not pay at all; but the Dutch sent large amounts, and commissaries to check that the money was well spent.²⁸ The wavering support was a main reason why the grand scheme ended in failure. But still it did shape the course of the great war decisively, not only by putting a great new army in the field and keeping it there for four years, but by turning the war in Germany into a European conflict, connecting it with the Spanish-Dutch war and the old French-Habsburg rivalry. So the first operative full treaty between the Dutch Republic and the kingdom of Denmark was really a debut on the grandest scale, with the states acting in the fullest sense as parts of the European state system.

The Hague treaty of 1625 did of course mark an end point of diplomatic activity. But it was even more a point of departure. This was going to be an actively cooperating alliance, and the flow of money and other mutual support required a lot of activity: discussion, decision, monitoring and accounting. Even more activity when there were breaks in the flow. Dutch and Danish agents travelled between The Hague, Copenhagen and the armies and fortresses in Germany. From the autumn of 1625 to the autumn of 1627, six envoys, a commissary, a resident and an *ambassadeur ex-*

²⁸ Lind, *Hæren og magten*, 1994, pp. 307-312.

traordinaire went to the Netherlands in the name of the king of Denmark.²⁹

VII

This was followed by the final step in the deployment of diplomatic tools. In December 1627 Axel Arenfeldt, lord of Basnæs, master of the exchequer and pay commissary at his majesty's armies in Germany, was sent to The Hague. Typical for this period of crisis, he did not receive a written instruction until 1629; but we know his title: ordinary ambassador in residence at the States General of the United Netherlands.³⁰ He combines the attributes of the two types of Danish representatives used until now: the high status and political character of the visiting ambassador, and the permanent residence of the 'agent'. Arenfeldt is explicitly and consciously sent as the permanent representative of one state at the government of another. His main task was of course to advance and facilitate the delivery of the Dutch subsidies. The agenda of 1627 made it natural to select an expert of war finances rather than a seasoned diplomat. So The Hague became the third permanent station for Danish diplomacy, 10 years after Stockholm and shortly after Paris.³¹

This was essentially a practical expedient, not part of a symbolic exchange of permanent envoys as part of a process of mutual recognition. Even if the post in The Hague was more or less permanently occupied since 1627 (but downgraded to having only a *resident*, not an ambassador, after the war), there were gaps in the succession. Still, ideas about reciprocity were creeping into the minds. In 1632, Carel van Cracauw, who was then the Dutch commissary in the Sound, was promoted to the title of resident at the court of Denmark and got a pay increase. He had been in Denmark since

²⁹ Marquard, *Danske Gesandter*, 1952, pp. 36-37.

³⁰ Marquard, *Danske Gesandter*, 1952, pp. 36-38.

³¹ Lind, '1588-1648', 2001, p. 393.

1627, and he was an experienced diplomat, having traveled to other places in Europe as representative of the States General as early as 1606.³² Moving up from having a trade representative with a merchant background to a man like van Cracauw did of course reflect the extraordinary wartime requirements. But keeping him in Denmark after the peace and promoting him to resident, matching the Danish resident in the Netherlands, did show that a change had taken place. A change in outlook linked to and expressed by a change in the diplomatic tools deployed in the Dutch-Danish relationship.

VIII

The development of the Dutch-Danish political relationship from 1568 to 1632 did indeed produce mutual recognition between states; and this was in the end expressed in the way which became standard, and is still standard today: through the exchange of permanent representatives.

Reaching this state took a long time. This was partly because of the unique situation of the United Provinces: They formed a unit which was only gradually developing political coherence and common institutions, and whose legitimacy depended on how successfully it was possible to legitimize – or doublespeak about – rebellion. And they were a republic, not ruled by a prince like most other states of importance, notably the Danish monarchy. This could confound the cultural codes during mutual interaction and made it impossible to let political relations develop from the personal and familial relations between princes in the standard way.

But the process was also long-winded for a deeper reason: there was really no such thing as diplomatic connections and mutual recognition when the Dutch-Danish interchange started. The European system of sovereign states did not exist in anything approach-

³² Schutte, *Repertorium*, 1976, p. 239.

ing the modern sense. The system was a product of the same era, reflecting both a changed distribution of power within states and a major change in the way people did look at power and at states. This major change in political culture was expressed by, and partly created by, a greater and more regulated use of diplomacy. That is by more frequent deployment of a wider selection of diplomatic tools in a gradual, and generally unplanned, process, culminating with the establishment of permanent high-level representations. The development of Dutch-Danish political relations, up to and including the establishment of permanent political representations, was a part of this major development in European history. Indeed, in world history, as the European system of sovereign but interacting states has become the template for the organization of the modern political world.

In this process, Danes and Dutch were not behind the general level in Northern Europe. Their many connections rather made them pioneers developing their mutual links with more speed and persistence than in most other directions. The process proceeded a little faster with the closest neighbours. In the Dutch case with England; in the Danish case with Sweden. But Dutch-Danish relations were only second to these.

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