3

The attempt at unification

In order to understand the ideological development of Anglo-Dutch relations 1650–1652, it is necessary to begin with the mission of Walter Strickland and Oliver St. John to the United Provinces in the spring of 1651. Why did the Council of State see fit to send the extraordinary ambassadors? What were their aims?

Despite Parliamentary professions of friendship , the Orangist-dominated States General had refused to recognize the English Republic. Although the provincial government of Holland had effectively prevented the Stadholder William II from aiding his brother-in-law Charles II, Parliament's ambassadors were refused audience by the States General, and one – Dr. Dorislaus – had been cruelly murdered in The Hague. The Rump was right to insist that "the fault hath not been in them" that closer relations had not been established.[1] In the summer and autumn William II began conducting an aggressive and largely successful campaign to compel the resistant provinces, especially Holland, to support his policies. Dutch pro-Stuart neutrality in the English war against Scotland looked as if it would soon become active hostility. In the wake of William's attack on Amsterdam, the *Mercurius Politicus* warned that it would not be long before the Dutch "show their teeth at England."[2] Fortunately for the Rump, William II suddenly died from smallpox just as he was poised to intervene in British affairs.

Immediately after William's death two Dutch pamphlets appeared in England – *A Faithfull Advertisement to all Good Patriots of the United Provinces, in the present Conjunctures Since the Death of the Prince of Orange* and *The Troubles of Amsterdam* – explaining the recent developments in the Netherlands. Dutch hostility to the English Commonwealth,

1 Stadholder in each province of the United Provinces was literally he who holds the place of the king. The constitutional role of the Stadholder was hotly contested in the period. Some saw him as akin to a monarch, others saw him as the servant of the States. Simon Groenveld, "The English Civil Wars as a Cause of the First Anglo-Dutch War, 1640," in *The Historical Journal* Vol. 30, No. 3 (1987), pp. 552–554; Rump to Gerard Schaep, 18 June 1650, Bod., Dep. C171N , Nalson Papers XVIII, f. 291.

2 *Mercurius Politicus*, 31 October–7 November 1650, p. 371.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

the pamphleteers claimed, should not be blamed upon the Dutch people, but upon the tyrannical young Stadholder. William II "hath especially set himself against all the Lords and Cities of Holland," the last opponents of his design to "make himself absolute monarch of all the United Netherlands."[3] Like Charles I, he had employed the army and the clergy "who do write, preach, pray, and run for him as his vassals" to cow the people. The Dutch clerics, "like the Bishops, *quondam*, in England," were mere "abominable flatterers" who "covet authority" at the expense of the teaching of the Bible.[4] When William made policy, the *Faithfull Advertisement* asserted, "the State's interest came not once into consideration" his interests were solely dynastic. As "Lord and Master of all the United Provinces" William II would be poised "to assist his brother in law to invade the kingdom of England by force of arms." It was William who had in fact blocked the acceptance of Parliament's ambassadors, who had prevented the punishment of Dorislaus's murderers. Indeed "What plots were there not laid? What practices remained unattempted to engage us in a war against England?"[5] All this, the pamphlets made clear, was but the design of a party – a very small party – in the Netherlands. Most Dutchmen knew "that the true, and perfect sovereignty is in the Republic, which never dies."[6]

In this context, then, the English placed a special significance on the death of the Prince of Orange. "It is very observable," Joseph Frost told William Clarke, "that no sooner had [William II] espoused the quarrel of that wicked Scotch family and set himself to help to re-set up that tyranny which the Lord in his mercy had thrown down, but the Lord cut him off."[7] "That liberty which had been won by so many years of toil and battle would now have perished from your midst," John Milton told the Dutch, "had not the most providential death of that headstrong youth allowed it to breathe again."[8] Ralph Josselin, the vicar of Earls Colne, wrote in his diary that "God taketh away our enemies abroad viz the Prince of Orange, which is a great work as things stood there and here."[9] God "in season took from thence, that rash, and over-much intrusted prince, who had almost enslaved them" proclaimed the prolific poet George Wither.[10] "The death of William

[3] *The Troubles of Amsterdam*, printed in Dutch, translated into English by L. W. (London, 1650), Thomason: 12 November 1650, pp. 7, 13.
[4] *Troubles of Amsterdam*, pp. 7–8; *A Faithfull Advertisement to all Good Patriots of the United Provinces, In the present Conjunctures Since the Death of the Prince of Orange* (London, 1650), Thomason: 18 December 1650, pp. 13–14.
[5] *Troubles of Amsterdam*, pp. 4–5; *Faithfull Advertisement*, pp. pp. 10–11.
[6] *Faithfull Advertisement*, p. 6.
[7] Joseph Frost to William Clarke, 9 November 1650, HMC, *Leyborne-Popham*, p. 77.
[8] John Milton, *A Defence of the People of England* (24 February 1651). in Don M. Wolfe (editor) *Complete Prose Works of John Milton* (New Haven, 1966), Vol. IV, pp. 311–312.
[9] Josselin, *Diary*, 17 November 1650, p. 220.
[10] George Wither, *British Appeals, with God's Mercifull Replies, On the Behalfe of the Commonwealth of England* (London, 1651), p. 40.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

the late Prince of Orange," John Moyle informed his friend Colonel Robert Bennet, was "a very great mercy to this commonwealth for he was the bitterest enemy that we had, and by reason of his nearness and power that he had got over that state, the most dangerous. I trust the Lord will in mercy look upon us, and make our work daily less difficult."[11] Even the Rump newspaper *Mercurius Politicus* later claimed that the United Provinces would have been reduced "under the yoke of kingly power" had William II not been killed by "a miracle of Providence."[12] The French agent Croullé was right to tell Mazarin that everyone in England saw William's death as a "coup du doigt de Dieu."[13]

Political developments in the United Provinces soon bore out English expectations. English newspapers informed their readers that the political dominance of the House of Orange was at an end. The States of Holland immediately decided to "assume to themselves all the power which the Pr[ince] of Orange had, as Governor of Holland, and all which did concern the civil state." By the middle of December 1650 it was well known that the States General had "resolved not to choose a State-holder in the room of the deceased Prince of Orange," his authority will instead be "divided in [the] Assembly."[14] High political maneuvers were pushed along by popular political sentiment. Political poems expressed relief at William II's "most timely death" which "hath sav'd" the United Provinces from "Royal tyranny." William's posthumous son, William III, would be "no rising sun." Few now would openly support the Orangist cause, a cause which now had precious "few worshippers." Even traditionally Orangist Zealand "seeing the ills they were formerly drawn into by the Prince of Orange, will for the future trade in the same steps with those of Holland."[15] Significantly for English audiences, the new regime appeared determined to adopt a sound religious policy. As soon as the Dutch General Assembly sat, it "unanimously agreed for the extirpation of Popery. And religion to be settled as it was determined by the Synod of Dordrecht in the year 161[8]."[16]

[11] John Moyle to Colonel Robert Bennet, 16 November 1650, Folger MSS, Xd483(71).

[12] *Mercurius Politicus*, 6–13 May 1652, pp. 1587–1588. When the Netherlands were ravaged by a series of unusually bad floods in March 1651 the English popular press was quick to proclaim it "a sad judgment" upon the Dutch for their "transgression against the Laws of God" in supporting William II. Cf. *Weekly Intelligencer*, 11–18 March 1651, p. 89; *Mercurius Politicus*, 6–13 March 1651, p. 654.

[13] Croullé to Mazarin, 21 November 1650, PRO, PRO 31/3, ff. 357–358. For Royalist despair at this development see Richard Fanshaw to Richard Brown, 9/19 November 1650, Christ Church, Richard Browne Letters, Box D–L.

[14] *Mercurius Politicus*, 5–12 December 1650, p. 451; *Mercurius Politicus*, 12–19 December 1650, p. 459; 19–26 December 1650, p. 476.

[15] *Mercurius Politicus*, 5–12 December 1650, p. 447; *Mercurius Politicus*, 16–23 January 1651, pp. 542, 545.

[16] *Weekly Intelligencer*, 28 January–4 February 1651, pp. 47–48. Clearly the Dutch were at pains to remedy the perception that "Statists were atheists," a perception based on the Orangist support of the Calvinist Synod of Dort against the republican party of Old-

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

The consequence in the realm of foreign policy was predictable. "The States of Holland; Zeeland, and Groningen, go on jointly in their resolutions to acknowledge the Parliament of England for a free State," *A Perfect Account* told its readers in January; "it's thought the rest of the seven provinces will agree upon the business." "It's most evident," wrote the Dutch correspondent to the *Politicus*, "that all things here are like to come to a nearer conjunction with you, and all men speak openly now, that they hope it will not be long before they see Strickland."[17] It was now the Royalist minister MacDowell who was left waiting at the doors of the provincial States. Indeed when the English Royalist exiles at The Hague tried to celebrate the second anniversary of Charles's martyrdom, "the great Hall sent one to command them silence, and to depart."[18]

In an important article, Dr. Blair Worden attributes the English response to this exciting news to a small group of classical republicans, both parliamentary and literary. It was one of the literary men, Marchamont Nedham, who first floated the idea of union with the Dutch. By correlating this proposal with Nedham's later encomiums of the Roman republican policy of incorporating defeated foes, Worden suggests that there was a republican impetus to union.[19] The testimony of both of the English ambassadors supports this conclusion. "It will be our interest to be fast friends with them, theirs to be so with us" now that the United Provinces are again a republic, Strickland wrote to Cromwell, "and that being, no foreign enemies could do you harm."[20] St. John told the States General that their treaty and alliance could be brought "to the nearest conjunction" because neither state "depended upon the uncertainties of the life, allegiance, change of affections, and private interest of one person."[21]

Nevertheless it would be wrong to insist on the purely secular nature of the republican language. Jonathan Scott, in his biography of Algernon

enbarnevelt. English newspapers, especially the *Mercurius Politicus*, implied that the roles had been reversed. The Orange party, so dependent on clerical flattery, allowed Catholic supporters of the regime to practice their idolatrous religion. Cf. *Mercurius Politicus*, 30 January–6 February 1651, pp. 577–579.

17 *A Perfect Account*, 22–29 January 1651, p. 19; *Mercurius Politicus*, 7–14 November 1650, p. 384. See the similar conclusion drawn by the English resident in Hamburg: Richard Bradshaw to Secretary Frost, 5 November 1650, HMC, *6th Report*, p. 433.

18 *Mercurius Politicus*, 13–20 February 1651, pp. 603–604; *Weekly Intelligencer*, 18–25 February 1651, p. 66.

19 Worden, "Classical Republicanism," pp. 198–199. Worden has since compellingly fleshed out this account in his "English Republicanism," in J. H. Burns and Mark Goldie (editors), *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 443–475.

20 Strickland to Cromwell, 14 January 1651, Nickolls, *Original Letters*, p. 51. Admittedly this letter could be read to mean that security was the motive for negotiations with the Dutch. But, in that context the proposals for union would make little sense. I think it more likely that Strickland was, in fact, motivated by the sort of ideology outlined by Worden. However, as the following will show, Strickland's case was unusual.

21 St. John's speech in PRO, SP 103/46, f. 124.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

Sidney, has claimed that many Rumpers – including Algernon Sidney and Sir Henry Vane – arrived at their republicanism through a sophisticated fusion of Platonism and Protestestantism. While Scott's reading of Sidney's thought remains controversial, there can be no question that in the early 1650s there were many who found it hard to accept the more aggressively secular philosophy of Henry Marten.[22] For these men, then, there was no contradiction between republicanism and their apocalypticism. In the heady early days of the Rump Parliament scrutiny of classical texts and eschatological readings of recent events led to similar political conclusions. Classical and apocalyptic republicans made common cause.[23]

Indeed in the wake of the victory at Dunbar it had become quite fashionable to preach an aggressive apocalyptic republicanism – a republicanism derived not only from an analysis of classical texts but from a conviction that God would replace the rule of earthly kings with that of Christ in the last days. God "is now coming to set up his prerogative kingly power," wrote Noah Banks, He "shall break in pieces the gold, silver, brass, and iron, and clay, *Dan.* 2 all former monarchical governments."[24] James Douglas argued that it was "unnatural, irrational, sinful, wicked, unjust, devilish, and tyrannical" for a king to "endeavor to appropriate and assume unto himself the office and sovereignty of God, who alone doth, and is to rule."[25] William Hughes knew that it was "natural for monarchy to degenerate into tyranny" which was why God told the people of Israel that He only gave them "a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath."[26] "Monarchs look upon all religions with love or disdain, as they

[22] Jonathan Scott, *Algernon Sidney*, pp. 15, 23–29, 51, 94. While I think Scott has made a significant contribution by identifying an apocalyptic opposition to monarchy, I am inclined to agree with Worden and Alan Houston that Sidney's republicanism was more classical than apocalyptic. For an excellent discussion of the philosophy of the Christian republicans see Mark Goldie,"The Civil Religion of James Harrington," in Anthony Pagden (editor) *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 203–204, 210.

[23] My point is that while there were profound ideological differences between the classical republicans and the apocalyptic opponents of monarchy, those differences were of little *political* significance until 1653. It was only in the context of the Nominated Parliament, under the pressures applied by the Dutch War, that the two groups could no longer make common cause.

[24] Noah Banks, *Gods Prerogative Power* (London, 1650), Thomason: 8 November 1650, pp. 10–11. Banks might well be the lay preacher, identified as Alan or Adam Banks, who appeared at the bar of the House of Commons in June 1641. See Murray Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints: The Separate Churches of London, 1616–1649* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 37, 67–68.

[25] James Douglas, *A Strange and Wonderful Prophesie* (London, 1651), Thomason: 22 January 1651, p. 4.

[26] W. Hughes, *Magistracy God's Ministry: Or, A Rule for the Rulers and Peoples due Correspondence* (London, 1652), Thomason: 17 May 1652, pp. 11–12. William Hughes was a chaplain (and perhaps a fellow) of New College during the Interregnum. He was licensed as a Presbyterian after the Restoration. He then reappeared as the Whig chaplain of St. Thomas's hospital, and came under attack from Roger L'Estrange. I owe this

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

find them suit with their worldly concernments," argued another pamphleteer, therefore "the voice of Providence," "the approbation of God himself," had spoken against monarchies. "Monarchy," this pamphleteer insisted, "is a sacrilegious overcharging of a single person with more honor and power, then so frail a creature is able to bear, without falling into the distemper of excess."[27]

These were not merely the ideas of cranks and radicals. John Evelyn, in England in the summer of 1650, heard a sermon "at the Rolls" on the republican text 1 Samuel 12.[28] Ralph Josselin, who was asked to preach at St. Paul's by the Lord Mayor in 1651, knew that "god is casting down princes." "Parliament," Josselin wrote in his diary, "declare against Popery anti-Christianity in all things, and kings whom they call tyrants, and for liberty."[29] "God hath cursed that kingly race," George Bishop wrote to Cromwell. God informed another of Cromwell's correspondents that "a free commonwealth, as it is the original and best of human associations and societies, so it is the only government ... to be well settled in."[30] All claims that monarchy was divinely instituted, Cromwell's polemicist John Hall pointed out, "proceeded from misinterpretation of Scripture."[31] "God is no more the author of such a government," the Rump's solicitor-general at the trial of Charles I, John Cook, said of monarchy, "than he is the author of sin." "The statute law concerning kings" – 1 Samuel 8 – clearly demonstrates, Cook argued, "that the first generation of monarchs and the rise of kings, was not from above, not begotten by the word and command of God, but from the people's pride & ardent importunity." So important was this text that Cook thought that "it is a chapter that deserves to be written in capital letters of gold, and if it were convenient to appoint the reading of it but once a month in the public meeting places."[32] Although 1 Samuel 8 never became compulsory reading in English pulpits, one polemicist did

information to Craig Rose. See also John Patrick Laydon, 'The Kingdom of Christ and the Powers of the Earth' (Cambridge, Ph.D. thesis, 1977), pp. 70–71.

27 *A Perswasive to A Mutuall Compliance Under the Present Government: Together with a Plea For a Free State Compared with Monarchy* (Oxford, 1652), Thomason: 18 February 1652, pp. 24, 28–30, 37–39.

28 Evelyn, *Diary*, 4 August 1650, Vol. III, p. 15.

29 Josselin, *Diary*, 17 December 1650, p. 223; Josselin, *Diary*, 31 December 1650, pp. 227–228.

30 George Bishop to Oliver Cromwell, 14 January 1651, Nickolls, *Original Letters*, p. 50; Hickman to Cromwell, 16 November 1650, Nickolls, *Original Letters*, p. 32.

31 J[ohn] H[all], *The Grounds and Reasons of Monarchy* (Edinburgh, 1651), p. 10. For Hall's long-term commitment to the cause of republicanism and his role as a Cromwellian propagandist in Scotland, see J. Davies's account in John Hall (translator), *Hierocles upon the Golden Verses of Pythagoras: Teaching a Vertuous and Worthy Life* (London, 1657), sig. B3–B4.

32 John Cook, *Monarchy No Creature of Gods Making* (Waterford, 1652), pp. 1–2, 29. Edmund Ludlow, whose views had probably not changed significantly from the 1650s, expressed similar sentiments in his memoirs: "AVoyce from the Watch Tower," Bodl., English History MSS C487, p. 1104.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

publish the popular republican tract *A Cat May Look Upon a King* so that "the common people of the kingdom" would "hereafter know for whom and for what they fight and pay."[33]

Two of the Rump's most important propagandists, Marchamont Nedham and John Milton, adopted a language which would appeal to both classical and apocalyptic republicans. Nedham for all his knowledge of Machiavelli, Tacitus, and the Roman histories justified his republicanism on religious grounds as well. "Guicciardini affirms," wrote Nedham in one of his editorials, "that Free States must needs be more pleasing to God than any other form." When the Israelites insisted on having a king, wrote Nedham citing the Christian republicans' favorite text, "God himself was displeased at it, and so was Samuel too." "My conscience tells me," the *Politicus* reported in July 1651, "being informed by those Scriptures which speak of the glorious state of believers in the last times, and by observing the passages of God's providence, in carrying on his truth through, and from form to form, that in the end he will dash all forms in pieces, that stand betwixt him and his glory. This is his great design now on foot in the world." So, when Nedham insisted that "all the western world" was "in *puris naturalibus*, in their first and foremost innocent condition, settled in the same form" previous to the establishment of monarchies, he was speaking both the language of a classical republican and that of a Christian apocalyptic.[34]

John Milton, who would play a large role in the negotiations with the Dutch in his capacity as Latin Secretary, published his *Defence of the People of England* on the eve of the departure of the English ambassadors to the United Provinces. Since the *Defence* was commissioned by the Council of State it provides a glimpse of the ideology of the Rump. John Milton, for all his classical learning, could still deploy language familiar to eschatological Protestants. The Israelites after having demanded a king, he therefore argued, "complained that it had been ruinous for them to have other kings than God." Since "Christ gave a warning to prevent a Christian people from having a master at all," Milton drew the clear inference that: "Among you there will be no haughty tyranny of kings." It was human corruption that explained the existence of kings among Christians and Israelites. They "were given a king by God in his wrath." Even now the English were not free from sin, Milton was forced to admit, but "their sins were taught them under the monarchy, like the Israelites, and have not been immediately unlearned in the desert."[35]

[33] *A Cat May Look Upon a King* (London, 1652), pp. 32–33.

[34] *Mercurius Politicus*, 24–31 July 1651, pp. 950–951; *Mercurius Politicus*, 18–25 September 1651, pp. 1078–1079; *Mercurius Politicus*, 15–22 April 1652, pp. 1538–1539.

[35] Milton, *A Defence*, pp. 370–387. The most convincing account of Milton's republicanism, a republicanism which was not apocalyptic, is that offered by Blair Worden in "Milton's Republicanism and the Tyranny of Heaven," in Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner, and

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

Of course, not all republicans rejected monarchy absolutely. John Milton was willing to accept a king so long as he "is the best of men and fully deserving of the crown."[36] Even the radical Thomas Harrison was willing to accept a godly monarchy as late as 1653.[37] Although the author of *Natures Dowrie* only claimed that "A king is not a necessary ingredient of the government of a state," he made it clear that for God's chosen people only divine government would do.[38] Consequently even those who believed that there was a proper place for monarchy could agree that absent a godly ruler – and there was no one in France, Spain, or Germany to fit that qualification – one should support republics.[39]

Significantly all republicans – whether classical or apocalyptic – advocated an aggressive foreign policy, a Protestant foreign policy.[40] Milton was careful to place his argument firmly within the traditions of the international Protestant cause. Salmasius, Milton was quick to point out, had condemned "the churches in France and Germany," in short "most Protestants," as being "hostile to kings." Milton had not lost the enthusiasm for a Protestant foreign policy which he had displayed in the early 1640s.[41] Marchamont Nedham castigated James I for neglecting the Protestant cause in Germany.[42] Ralph Josselin dreamed "that we of our nation were instrumentally employed about that work in France."[43] "The work that God hath

Maurizio Viroli (editors), *Machiavelli and Republicanism* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 225–245. Perez Zagorin has also argued that "the apocalyptic strain had vanished" from Milton's post-regicide writings in his *Milton: Aristocrat and Rebel* (Rochester NY, 1992), p. 65. For other views see Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Milton in Politics" in his *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans: Seventeeth Century Essays* (Chicago, 1987), and Jonathan Scott, *Algernon Sidney*, pp. 26–28. Richard Tuck has highlighted the anti-Orangist implications of Milton's republicanism: *Philosophy and Government 1572–1651* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 252–253.

36 Milton, *A Defence*, p. 427.

37 Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (London, 1972), p. 137.

38 L. S. [Seaman, Lazarus?], *Natures Dowrie: Or, the Peoples Nature Libertie Asserted* (London, 1652), Thomason: 29 June 1652, pp. 7–8, 40.

39 Even conservative lawyers like Oliver St. John, who was known to support some form of monarchy, would agree that absolute monarchies – like those of Charles I, Louis XIV, and Philip IV – should be opposed. For St. John's views on monarchy see Whitelocke's *Annals*, BL, Add. 37345, f. 171: "It will be found, that the government of this nation, without something of monarchical power, will be very difficult to be so settled, as not to shake the foundations of our laws, & the liberties of the people." See also Gilbert Burnet, *History of His Own Time* (Oxford, 1823), Vol. I, p. 117.

40 Groenveld has thoroughly documented the history of English relations with the United Provinces in the 1640s in his article, "English Civil Wars," pp. 544–555.

41 Milton, *A Defence*, pp. 514–515; for an interesting discussion of the context of Milton's foreign policy views in the 1630s and 1640s see Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis 1632–1642* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 34–35. At least one Anglican, Pierre du Moulin, well understood the full implication of Milton's claims. He consequently published a pamphlet in 1652 disputing that the continental Protestants supported tyrannicide. See the excellent discussion of this point in Mark Goldie's "The Huguenot experience and the problem of Toleration in Restoration England," in C. E. J. Caldicott, H. Gough, and J. P. Pittion (editors) *The Huguenots and Ireland* (Dublin, 1987), pp. 191–192.

42 *Mercurius Politicus*, 15–22 May 1651, p. 800.

43 Josselin, *Diary*, 13 November 1650, pp. 219–220.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

begun in England," Noah Banks insisted, "shall go on till he hath made all his enemies his footstool."[44] Robert Parker, the friend of William Ames, knew that the "sixth angel" which shall destroy Spain and "her ancient friend, the Beast, and his followers" would be "England, or the Low Countries, or both jointly with their friends."[45] No wonder the French agent Croullé was convinced that Cromwell and his faction, with the support of other nations which would emulate the English, wanted "to destroy all monarchies."[46]

So, when the Dutch pamphlet *A Faithfull Advertisement to all Good Patriots of Holland* proclaimed that "the Scripture is plain, that republics are more acceptable or agreeable to God, then monarchies," the English thought they had discovered kindred spirits.[47] The Dutch commissioners knew very well whom they were dealing with when they pleaded that the English ambassadors remain in the Netherlands to continue "the intended work of overthrowing Popery and tyranny."[48]

It was in this ideological context that the Rump decided to respond to the new developments in the United Provinces. Initially, to be sure, not everyone in the Council of State was convinced that the Dutch had reformed. "Some think," George Bishop informed Cromwell, "that in regard they had disowned our agent, both before and since this change of government, that Amboyna formerly, and Dorislaus was lately there assassinated, and no suitable detestation manifested by them, that they have owned MacDowell as ambassador of the king of Great Britain; that we ought not to send one thither, till they acknowledge this Commonwealth." Significantly none of the objections were economic. Indeed these arguments were all criticisms of the treatment the English had received from the Orangist regime. "Their declaring to acknowledge the Commonwealth for the supreme power," Walter Strickland insisted, "is a reparation in honor for the delay received when I was there."[49] On the night of the debate, apparently, enough of the

[44] Banks, *Gods Prerogative Power*, sig A3.

[45] Robert Parker, *The Mystery of the Vialls Opened* (London, 1650), Thomason: 21 August 1650, p. 13.

[46] Croullé to Mazarin 26 September 1650, PRO, PRO 31/3, ff. 305–306; 7 November 1650, PRO, PRO 31/3, f. 341.

[47] *A Faithfull Advertisement*, p. 13.

[48] Ambassadors' journal, 21 April 1651, Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 23.

[49] George Bishop to Oliver Cromwell, 21 January 1651, Nickolls, *Original Letters*, p. 55; Walter Strickland to Oliver Cromwell, 14 January 1651, Nickolls, *Original Letters*, p. 55. Royalist rumors, the basis for much of the evidence for the economic self-interest of the Rump, added a number of economic grievances to Council debates. See the letter from Edward Nicholas to Marquis of Ormonde, 15 January 1651, in Carte, *Collection*, Vol. I, p. 402. There is, however, no corroborating evidence for this. Edward Nicholas was in The Hague, and internal evidence suggests that he was relying on Orangist sources. Ascribing economic self-interest as the sole motivation of one's enemies was the seventeenth century's most common form of opprobrium. The East Indian Spice Island Amboyna was the site of a spectacular massacre of the English by the Dutch in February 1623.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

members of the Council of State were convinced of the reformation of the Dutch to recommend to the House that "an agent be sent to the Netherlands." On 21 January Parliament approved of the mission with no recorded opposition. The next day Bulstrode Whitelocke recorded that Holland, Zeeland, and Groningen acknowledged the English Commonwealth. Within a week the newspapers reported that the Dutch States General "have voted England a free Commonwealth, and that they will acknowledge them to be such, and receive any message from them as from a free State."[50]

The Council of State immediately formed a committee to review the history of the Rump's relations with the United Provinces and to draw up instructions for the ambassadors. Although it is true that the classical republicans Henry Martin and Thomas Challoner formed part of that committee, there is little evidence that they dominated.[51] Viscount Lisle, who inherited the Sidney family anti-Catholicism as well as its Platonism, reported to the Rump the Council of State's recommendation to send a public minister to the United Provinces. Bulstrode Whitelocke, who would later play a large role in both Rump and Protectorate relations with other Protestant powers, reported the Heads of Instructions for the ambassadors. Sir Henry Vane, perhaps the Rumper most ideologically committed to the Protestant cause, handled the Council of State's correspondence with the ambassadors once they had departed for the United Provinces.[52] Clearly those who played the largest role in formulating the Rump's foreign policy at this stage were committed to a godly and republican alliance.

Perhaps the best evidence of ideological motivation for the mission was the selection of the ambassadors. On the same day that the Council of State decided to send an embassy to the United Provinces they selected Oliver St. John and Walter Strickland to be their ambassadors extraordinary. St. John, who "was looked upon as the principal man," was perhaps an odd choice.

[50] Bishop to Cromwell, 21 January 1651, Nickolls, *Original Letters*, p. 55; *CJ*, 21 January 1651, p. 525; Whitelocke's *Annals*, BL, Add. 37345, 22 January 1651, f. 122; *Weekly Intelligencer*, 21–28 January, 1651, p. 39; *A Perfect Account* 22–29 January 1651, pp. 17–18; *Mercurius Politicus*, 16–23 January 1651, p. 549. Groenveld's claim that "it was probably the moderates who gained a majority in favour of Strickland and St. John's mission, though at 42 and 29 it was not a large one" ("English Civil Wars," p. 555), is misleading. The issue at stake was not the mission, but whether St. John – who had petitioned to be removed from the mission – should be retained as the leader of that mission. *CJ*, 28 January 1651, p. 528; *CSPD*, 1651, 28 January 1651, p. 26.

[51] *CSPD*, 1651, 22 January 1651, p. 19. The committee also included Sir Henry Vane, Bulstrode Whitelocke, John Lisle, Valentine Wauton, Oliver St. John, Sir Henry Mildmay, Viscount Lisle, William Purefoy, and Thomas Scot. Most of these men had records of commitment to the Protestant cause. English foreign policy was not being made exclusively by classical republicans. Rather it was the product of the current ideological alliance between the republicans and the apocalyptics.

[52] *CJ*, 21 January 1651, p. 525; *CJ*, 14 February 1651, p. 535; *CJ*, 1 April 1651, p. 554. Similar evidence can be found in *CSPD*.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

Whitelocke, who must have played an important role in his selection, admitted that he was "not much versed in foreign affairs or languages." But this does not seem to have been the main qualification. Valerie Pearl has shown how St. John rose to leadership of the parliamentary middle group in the 1640s largely because of his ability "to submerge minor differences for the greater good of the 'Protestant cause.'" His religious commonplace book, his patronage of Samuel Hartlib, and his letters to Oliver Cromwell leave little doubt that he was a Protestant apocalyptic. In the 1650s he was active in a circle which included James Ussher – now preacher at Lincoln's Inn – who had written more than anyone else about the importance of the Protestant cause. It was this background, no doubt, that led Whitelocke and the Council of State to conclude that "his disposition suited with such an employment." Despite some initial hesitation, St. John himself was convinced of the important role he would play in the eschatological drama, and was consequently "cheerful to undergo his embassage" on the eve of his departure.[53] Walter Strickland's selection to join St. John was less surprising; he was the Rump's expert on the United Provinces. Yet he too evinced a commitment both to the Protestant and the republican cause. Jonathan Scott has included him with Vane, Whitelocke Algernon Sidney, and Lord William Howard as men who continued the middle group political tradition into the 1650s.[54] His confidence in the new Dutch regime testifies to his republican sympathies.

The ambassadors' brief reflected the powerful and complex republican ideology of the Rump. No longer would England be satisfied with "the good correspondency that hath been anciently between the English nation

[53] Valerie Pearl, "Oliver St. John and the 'Middle Group' in the Long Parliament: August 1643–May 1644," in *English Historical Review* 81 (July 1966), pp. 500–503; Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men*, p. 40; Whitelocke's *Annals*, BL, Add. 37345, 1 February 1651, f. 122; John Harington's diary, BL, Add. 10114, *passim,* especially BL, Add. 46374 (this is the nineteenth-century transcript) 2 June 1650, f. 76; 30 October 1650, BL, Add. 10114, f. 27; 9 February 1651, BL, Add. 10114, f. 28; 11 February 1651, BL, Add. 10114, f. 28; Oliver St. John's religious commonplace book is at BL, Add. 25285. At least one Royalist observer bracketed St. John with Lord Wharton and Henry Vane as religious and political disciples of Lord Say and Sele, *Vox Veritatis*, Thomason: 16 November 1650, p. 9. This book makes clear that St. John's lingual difficulties were not in dead languages; his Latin, Greek, and Hebrew were quite up to snuff. *CSPD*, 22 January 1651, p. 19. It is very tempting to posit ties between the group surrounding Ussher at Lincoln's Inn and Hartlib's circle at this time. Certainly they were in close epistolary contact. That St. John was in control of the embassy is confirmed by Edward Hyde, who knew that St. John "had the whole trust of the embassy, being very powerful in the parliament, and the known confident of Cromwell." Edward Hyde, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* (Oxford, 1888), p. 784. Marvell in his poem "*In Legationem Domini Oliveri St. John ad Provincias Foederaratas,*" written in February 1651, claims that St. John was "cui soli voluit respublica credi." Significantly, for Marvell, the choices were already only union or war, "Foedera seu Belgis seu nova bella." Elizabeth Story Donno (editor), *Andrew Marvell: The Complete English Poems* (London, 1972), p. 61.

[54] Scott, *Algernon Sidney*, pp. 80, 89. For evidence of Strickland's interest in religious matters in 1651 see *CJ*, 4 July 1651, p. 597 where he reports about scandalous ministers.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

and the United Provinces." Instead St. John and Strickland were to seek "a more strict and intimate alliance and union with them whereby there may be a more intrinsical and mutual interest of each in other then hath hitherto been for the good of both."[55] Edward Hyde interpreted the mission as the Rump's plea for alliance with "their sister republic" hoping "to be as one commonwealth, and to have one interest."[56] The republican nature of the embassy seemed confirmed because "at the very instant" that St. John and Strickland entered "the great hall" at The Hague "the young Prince of Orange fell into shrewd convulsion fits."[57] An alliance between two republics, St. John told the Dutch in his opening speech, "would be more durable, and advantageous than formerly, when they depended upon the uncertainties of the life, alliances, change of affections, and private interest of one person."[58] The Protestant element of the proposed alliance and union was also evident from the outset. St. John and Strickland were instructed to remind the Dutch "how great an influence for good or for evil the union or disunion between them must needs have upon the true reformed religion, which this Commonwealth resolves through God's assistance to own and support by all due and just means to the utmost of their power."[59] Fully convinced that "the signal blessing of Almighty God, hath ever accompanied the actions" of both republics, St. John followed his brief, insisting upon the urgency of the mission. He told the Assembly that "the Protestant Religion was in great danger, the princes round about being enemies to it, and the peace of Germany altogether unsure, the Pope having absolved the emperor and others from what had been done therein."[60] In reemphasizing the special importance of this English embassy, St. John made clear the new ideology which underlay it. St. John distinguished between traditional Anglo-Dutch friendship which had been based on "the common interests of state" – defined as "the defense and aid against foreign enemies, and the free intercourse of trade, and traffic" – and his current hopes which were based on "the occasion sithence, of the profession of the true reformed religion, and of the just liberties, and freedoms of the people of equal concernment unto both" republics.[61] "Although their past and

[55] "Heads of Instructions for the Ambassadors going into Holland presented for the debate of the Council," 14 February 1651, Bod., Dep. C171N, Nalson Papers XVIII, f. 192. These instructions were accepted, apparently with little alteration on 18 February. Whitelocke's *Annals*, BL, Add. 37345, f. 124.

[56] Hyde, *History*, p. 784.

[57] *Mercurius Politicus*, 10–17 April 1651, p. 722.

[58] PRO, SP 103/46, f. 124.

[59] "Heads of Instruction to the Ambassadors," 14 February 1651, Bod. Dep. C171N, Nalson Papers XVIII, f. 192.

[60] PRO, SP 103/46, ff. 123, 126. St. John's speech is reprinted with slight variations in *Joyful Newes*, pp. 3–5. For more evidence of the nature of the first meetings with the Dutch see Bod., Rawl. C129, ff. 5–9.

[61] PRO, SP 103/46, f. 123. Interestingly another copy of this speech suggests that the only alteration of Anglo-Dutch relations was the "addition ... of the just liberties and freedom

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

present endeavors have not hitherto produced that happy issue," on the eve of his departure a bitterly disappointed St. John reminded the States General of his Christian republican aims: "the safety and preservation of the true reformed religion, and of the due rights and liberty of the people."[62]

Unfortunately the expected Protestant and republican union never materialized. After three months of negotiations, St. John and Strickland returned to England having achieved nothing. Why did the mission fail?

The embassy certainly began in a promising fashion. Oliver St. John and Walter Strickland were granted every formal courtesy by the States General. Indeed the young Duke of York held "in great indignation the reception of his blessed father's murderers."[63] Yet once the negotiations commenced the Dutch were surprisingly reluctant to agree to English demands that they agree in principle to a more "strict union and alliance." The Dutch did concur that the "amity and league between the two nations [should] be continued and renewed," but this was insufficient for the English who were instructed to treat "the words in the proposals" as an ideological test.[64] The Dutch "had stood all this while upon a neutrality," the ambassadors later explained to their fellow Rumpers, "the question now was, whether they would depart therefrom, and until that were known, it would be vain and to no purpose to offer the particulars of such an alliance."[65] In response to the English insistence, the States General felt compelled to refer the wording back to the provincial estates, engendering long delays. Apparently unable to achieve their goals, the ambassadors secured their recall at the end of April, without having even begun to negotiate.

Why had the Dutch refused to accept the English proposal for a more intimate union and alliance, a proposal which in no way bound them to action? The answer lies in the nature of Dutch politics; in the existence of profound ideological divisions within the United Provinces.[66] The English ambassadors very quickly learned that their image of a Dutch people united against the tyranny of the House of Orange was naive. They soon distinguished between "the bad and disaffected party" and "the honest

of the people." St. John's speech to States General, March 1651, NMM, Clifford Papers, Vol. I, Dw2.

62 "Departing Paper," 20/30 June 1651, Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 51.

63 Nicholas to Ormonde, 19 March 1651, Carte, *Collection*, Vol. I, pp. 425–426.

64 Council of State to Ambassadors, 3 April 1651, PRO, SP 25/96, f. 102; Whitelocke's *Annals*, 14 April 1651, BL, Add. 37345, f. 129; *Weekly Intelligencer*, 29 April–6 May 1651, p. 148.

65 "Ambassadors' Narrative," 17 April 1651, PRO, SP 103/46, f. 130.

66 My description of Dutch politics necessarily stresses developments in the center of a notoriously decentralized state (a word which Simon Schama has taught us to use only with great caution in describing the United Provinces). Nevertheless my view is supported by the work of Herbert Rowen, *John De Witt, Grand Pensionary of Holland 1625–1672* (Princeton, 1978), p. 65.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

party."[67] "Orange," the English learned, "(though dead) is still alive here in his faction." The Orangists, no doubt aided by the Cavalier exiles, were spreading pernicious rumors hoping "thereby to spread a mist before the eyes of the ignorant."[68] "We know who our enemies are," proclaimed the correspondent to the *Mercurius Politicus*, they are led by "the grand Architectress ... Mal. Tarquin, whom we call here by the name of the Princess Royal." Despite the death of her husband William II and the execution of her father Charles I, the Princess Royal's resources were not inconsequential. "Nothing can be said, or done, at my Lord's ambassadors," the English complained, "but it is presently known at the Queen of Bohemia and Princess Royal's courts." She maintained "a great deal of interest in some of the States General, who are her only favorites."[69]

The real strength of Orangism, however, lay in the provinces. Orangist support had always been strongest in the frontier regions, which depended for their protection upon the benevolence of one or another member of the House of Orange-Nassau. Within a week of their arrival in The Hague the ambassadors informed the Council of State that in Friesland and Zeeland "the party of the Prince of Orange will endeavor all ... to hinder this alliance with England and restore the prince to be Stadholder."[70] It soon became clear that the opponents of alliance with England were strong enough to block agreement in Gelderland, Friesland, Overijssel, and Groningen.[71] In the face of intense diplomatic pressure, the Orangist provinces felt their best hope lay in delays. "There are some that do much oppose any agreement," explained the *Mercurius Politicus*, "which is the cause why the business goes on so slowly." Though the States General might well have "inclined to make an alliance," their "knowing how much the hearts of the common people were bent to the family of the Prince of Orange," the historian Aitzema later recalled, they "durst not engage in such a treaty." The Dutch are "so chastely circumspect," commented one English correspondent, it is "as if they cared not to understand what intrinsical is, they will do nothing fully until further experience."[72]

[67] *Mercurius Politicus*, 19–26 June 1651, p. 893. The *Mercurius*'s correspondent in the United Provinces was clearly a member of the ambassadorial entourage, indeed at times it seems as if Nedham was getting information direct from Thurloe. Consequently I have, at times, used reports in the *Mercurius* to indicate the attitudes of the English embassy as a whole.

[68] *Mercurius Politicus*, 3–10 April 1651, pp. 714–715; *Mercurius Politicus*, 19–26 June 1651, pp. 892–893; *A Perfect Account*, 9–16 April 1651, pp. 108–109.

[69] *Mercurius Politicus*, 10–17 April 1651, pp. 724–726.

[70] "Ambassadors' Journal," 4 April 1651, Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 14. Zeeland had a schizophrenic relationship with England. It was the cradle of the Dutch Revolt, and hence intensely loyal to the memory of William the Silent. But it was also the most strongly Calvinist province, and the province most dependent upon trade links with England.

[71] *Mercurius Elencticus*, 10–17 June 1651, p. 13; *Mercurius Politicus*, 19–26 June 1651, p. 822.

[72] *Weekly Intelligencer*, 17–22 April 1651, p. 134; *Mercurius Politicus*, 24 April–1 May, 1651, p. 760; Aitzema, "Selections," Bod., Rawl. C734, f. 72r.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

The reports of Dutch goodwill towards the English Commonwealth were, of course, not all chimerical. Holland, the richest and most powerful province, was very much in favor of alliance with England. Indeed it was said that in Holland the people "are as much against the Prince of Orange his faction, as we against the Cavaliers."[73] Amsterdam, the city which had resisted William II with the greatest determination, was also the city which was most "affectionately inclined to a conjunction of interest with us."[74] St. John and Strickland were confident that "if the treaty might be managed according to the desires and pace of those of Holland it would be with good effect and speedy."[75] Holland was willing and able to exert pressure upon "the rest of the United Provinces to join with [them] in the desired league." Apparently the arguments of the Holland deputies, in tandem with local States party supporters, eventually persuaded the provinces of Utrecht and Zeeland to support the proposed alliance with England.[76] It was no doubt the influence which Holland could exert in The Hague, which was after all very much a Holland town, which convinced the Orangist provinces that their best policy was delay.

In addition to diplomatic obstructionism, the English ambassadors were subjected to a variety of personal affronts, both physical and verbal. "Many of our gentlemen have been affronted by the English Cavaliers, who are very numerous in this place," the *Politicus*'s correspondent soon reported, "they called us traitors, rebels, and St. John's bastards ... some spit in our faces."[77] The English "found a general disgust in the people in whose minds the blood of the late king was fresh, calling them rogues and murderers of their king as they passed through the streets."[78] The Queen of Bohemia's youngest son, Prince Edward, was unable to restrain himself from publicly confronting the ambassadors. As he passed the ambassadorial coach in one of the parks in The Hague Edward "made monkey-like mouths at them; and with a squeaking voice called them dogs, rogues,

[73] *Mercurius Politicus*, 27 March–3 April 1651, pp. 696–697.

[74] *Mercurius Politicus*, 29 May–5 June 1651, p. 834. The hostile Edward Nicholas, then at The Hague, lamented that "very many (especially those of Holland, and particularly the Amsterdammers) incline to conclude such a league with the rebels of England." Nicholas to Ormonde, 14 May 1651, Carte, *Collection*, Vol. II, pp. 1–2. Amsterdam's support suggests that the Dutch did not oppose the union for economic reasons.

[75] "Ambassadors' Journal," 11 April 1651, Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 19. see also Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 23. Rowen has shown the enthusiasm of Dordrecht for the treaty. *John De Witt*, p. 66.

[76] Nicholas to Ormonde, 21 May 1651, Carte, *Collection*, Vol. II, pp. 11–12; Gentillot to Servien, 5 June 1651, PRO, PRO 31/3/90, ff. 441–442; "Ambassadors' Journal," Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 22; Whitelocke's *Annals*, 16 June 1651, BL, Add. 37345, f. 132; *Mercurius Politicus*, 5–12 June 1651, p. 857; 12–19 June 1651, p. 872; *A Perfect Account*, 30 April–7 May 1651, p. 135.

[77] *Mercurius Politicus*, 27 March–3 April 1651, p. 696; *Weekly Intelligencer*, 1–8 April 1651, pp. 116–117.

[78] Aitzema, "Selections," Bod., Rawl C734, f. 72r. See also Roger Whitely's Notebook, Bod., English History MSS, E308, f. 9.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

traitors."[79] The insults soon turned into almost daily physical attacks on the ambassadorial train. Rumors of Cavalier plots to murder the ambassadors were confirmed when Colonel James Apsley called on St. John, and after informing him that some Scotsmen and Cavaliers "had taken a full resolution to murder" the ambassadors who had "so much strength and resolution that it would hardly be in our power to resist," proceeded to make an attempt himself.[80]

The ambassadors soon learned that the Cavaliers were not alone in their attacks. The French ambassador to the States General, Bellievre, having failed diplomatically to prevent the Anglo-Dutch negotiations had shifted his strategy. "It is known well enough that Monsieur Bellievre was one of those that set on his lackeys," wrote one correspondent clearly reflecting the views of the English ambassadors, "which is no great wonder; for, since he hath nothing to busy himself withal here, he must find work for the boys."[81] It was soon clear that an unholy alliance had been formed among "the English fugitives and malignants, the French ambassador's retinue, and other French men about this town, the Orange party, and other loose people here." The hostile Edward Nicholas concurred that the parliamentary retinue "cannot walk the streets, but they are by boys and women, as well as by men, especially Dutch, French, and Germans, affronted and railed at in the streets."[82] Orangist political power was clearly not dead.

Naturally the States General, and especially the States of Holland, did not fail to notice or act upon these affronts. But they were unable to prevent Prince Edward from fleeing to Germany or to capture those who had plotted the death of Oliver St. John. The ambassadors were furious "for the

[79] *A Perfect Account*, 9–16 April 1651, p. 108; *Mercurius Politicus*, 3–10 April 1651, p. 713. The correspondents could report with satisfaction that when Edward "with his hat strook my Lord's saddle horse on the buttock, [he] returned it again with both his heels as high as his head, and missed not much of leaving the print of his shoes on his breast."

[80] Ambassadors to States of Holland, 31 March 1651, Bod., Rawl. C129, ff. 12–13; *Weekly Intelligencer*, 8–15 April 1651, pp. 125–126; *Mercurius Politicus*, 3–10 April 1651, pp. 709, 716–717; *Mercurius Politicus*, 10–17 April 1651, pp. 725–729; *Mercurius Politicus*, 17–24 April 1651, p. 745. The miscellaneous attacks on the ambassadorial train were too frequent to be given full justice in this note. They are mentioned in all of the weekly newspapers, and in the "Ambassadors' Journal," Bod., Rawl. C129.

[81] *Mercurius Politicus*, 17–24 April 1651, p. 746; Ambassadors to Council of State, 9 April 1651, Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 16. For the failure of the French diplomatic initiative see Croullé to Mazarin, 26 December 1650, PRO, PRO 31/3/90, f. 398; *Weekly Intelligencer*, 18–25 February 1651, p. 66; *Mercurius Politicus*, 5–12 December 1650, p. 453; *Mercurius Politicus*, 27 February–6 March 1651, p. 636; *Mercurius Politicus*, 17–24 April 1651, p. 745; *Mercurius Politicus*, 22–29 May 1651, p. 828.

[82] St. John and Strickland to Council of State, 9 April 1651, Bod., Tanner MSS 54, f. 29; Nicholas to Ormonde, 19 March 1651, Carte, *Collection*, Vol. I, p. 427; Nicholas to Ormonde, 5 April 1651, Carte, *Collection*, Vol. I, p. 437; *Weekly Intelligencer*, 15–22 April 1651, p. 129; *Mercurius Politicus*, 10–17 April 1651, pp. 732–734; Edward Bill, *Certain Propositions Sent by the States of Holland to the Lords Ambassadors of the Common-wealth of England* (London, 1651), Thomason: 15 April 1651, pp. 1–2; Samuel Tuke to John Evelyn, 1651, Christ Church, Evelyn In-Letters, 1278.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

affronts and indignities ... given to the Commonwealth of England." The *Mercurius Politicus* raised the issue to the level of ideology, insisting that "a violating of Ambassadors in any kind, is *Laesa Majestas*, an injury done to the majesty of that nation which they represent. It was England that received the affront done by the petty, paltry thing, called prince." The Council of State scoffed at the Dutch "examination of inferior judicatory and not securing the offendor[s], which we conceive expressed not a sufficient sense of that affront, nor was suitable to what was held forth in their place." The *Perfect Account* demanded that the Dutch "extend themselves beyond paper protection."[83] Ominously the English ambassadors were no longer willing to distinguish between the United Provinces of William II and the current regime. "[Parliament] had wasted here six or seven years and their resident could never have audience, they sent a second and he was murdered," St. John complained to the States General, "and now they had sent two extraordinary Ambassadors about matters which equally concerned them as well as England, who had been under so many indignities that were not to be endured, and yet no justice done upon any one, as in the case of Apsley and Prince Edward."[84]

"The many indignities and insolencies" combined with a conviction that the Dutch were "deliberating how to keep the ambassadors at The Hague, without declaring any thing touching the business came about" convinced St. John that there was "little hopes of dispatching the treaty with" the Dutch "especially to his proposal of coalition." Consequently St. John mustered "his private friends in Parliament, who swayed the house" to recall the ambassadors.[85]

The news of the arrival of the English boats sent to retrieve the ambassadors "took flight immediately into the great Assembly," where it "so startled the great Assembly that they laid aside all other business, and dispatched an eminent personage to attend our Ambassadors."[86] A flurry of Dutch activity – "nothing is now debated on by the States General and Provincial, but the more near alliance with England" – persuaded the English to remain in The Hague while the Dutch sent an express to Westminster which was accompanied by Holland's agent Schaep and St.

[83] English Ambassadors to States General, 9 May 1651, in Thomas Birch (editor), *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Esq.* (London, 1742), Vol. I, pp. 181–182; *Mercurius Politicus*, 3–10 April 1651, p. 715; Council of State to Ambassadors, 4 April 1651, PRO, SP 25/96, f. 107; *A Perfect Account*, 9–16 April 1651, p. 112.

[84] "Ambassadors' Journal," 22 April 1651, Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 25.

[85] "Ambassadors' Narrative," PRO, SP 103/46, 19 April 1651, f. 131; PRO, SP 103/46, 22 April 1651, f. 134; Council of State to Ambassadors, 12 April 1651, PRO, SP 25/96, f. 121; Whitelocke's *Annals*, BL, Add. 37345, 30 April 1651, f. 128. This is yet more testimony to St. John's continuing influence in the Rump, lending further credibility to the pivotal role which I claim he played in the passage of the Navigation Act.

[86] *Mercurius Politicus*, 24 April–1 May 1651, p. 765; *Weekly Intelligencer*, 29 April–6 May 1651, p. 148.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

John's secretary John Thurloe.[87] Parliament and the Council of State were persuaded to prolong the embassy for forty days upon Dutch promises and protestations that they would act with despatch. "Now no body doubted of a full agreement between these two States," Thurloe recorded in his narrative of the embassy, "the Dutch having obtained their desire of longer time for the treaty; and given such great assurances to the Ambassadors of their full compliance with England against all people ... so that now nothing seemed to be wanting for the completing the said alliance."[88]

The Dutch did begin, at last, to negotiate. But the alliance was never concluded. St. John and Strickland left The Hague in June no more satisfied than they had been at the end of April. Why did the negotiations break down?

It was certainly not because of economic differences. The economic centers of the United Provinces, and especially Amsterdam, the home of the Dutch East India Company, were most enthusiastic for a close alliance with England. The English Commonwealth was primarily interested in alliance and union, St. John and Strickland informed the States General, in return for which they were willing to "afford proportionable advantages" to the Dutch. Thurloe was at pains to emphasize that these advantages would be "in reference to trade, which the Dutch would be desirous of." "As for terms," the *Perfect Account* correctly concluded, "it concerns them more than us."[89] The Rump was naturally deluged with economic grievances against the Dutch as soon as it became clear that serious negotiations with the States General were under way. But one should not overestimate their importance. St. John and Strickland made it clear that concerns about the Danish Sound and the East India trade would be considered only "as soon as the other parts of the treaty will give us leave."[90] Edward Hyde's Dutch correspondent was correct to predict that with respect to economic issues "in the end, I am afraid [the English and the Dutch] will prove but birds of a feather."[91]

[87] "Ambassadors' Journal," Bod., Rawl. C129, 21 April 1651, f. 24; "Ambassadors' Journal," Bod., Rawl. C129, 22 April 1651, f. 26; *Mercurius Politicus*, 24 April–1 May 1651, pp. 765–766; *Weekly Intelligencer*, 29 April–6 May 1651, pp. 148–149.

[88] "Ambassadors' Journal," Bod., Rawl. C129, 3 May 1651, f. 27; "Ambassadors' Narrative," PRO, SP 103/46, f. 136.

[89] Strickland and St. John to States General, 17 April 1651, Bod., Rawl. A2, f. 178; "Thurloe's Review," PRO, SP 103/46, f. 220; *A Perfect Account*, 7–14 May 1651, p. 141.

[90] Ambassadors to Council of State, 17 May 1651, Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 31. Petitions of economic grievances were commonplace during any diplomatic negotiations; they should not be read as attempts to block those negotiations but as efforts to procure economic restitution as part of the political settlement package. It was very much in the petitioners' economic interest for a settlement to be reached.

[91] Hugh Nathan to Edward Hyde, 12 December 1650, Bod., Clar. 41, f. 92. Nathan is suggesting that economic issues would not divide the two republics. I have found little evidence in the papers surrounding the Anglo-Dutch union proposals of 1651 to substantiate Robert Brenner's assertion that "it was apparently hoped that the threat posed by English naval power to Dutch trading operations would help to make the Dutch see the long-run economic advantages of politico-commercial cooperation." Brenner, *Merchants*

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

The failure of the negotiations must rather be attributed to Dutch reluctance to accede to English demands. After Thurloe's return to the United Provinces with the Rump's extension of the ambassadorial commission, negotiations again slowed down. St. John and Strickland proposed that "the two Comonwealths may be considered as old friends joined and allied together for the defense and preservation of the liberties and freedom of the people of each."[92] Five days later the States commissioners responded with a paper declaring the States General's "Resolution to renew all ancient treaties, and especially that fundamental and essential one, made for a perpetual confederation between the same two nations, in the year 1495" which established the principle of "mutual defense and conservation of the liberty and franchise of the two Commonwealths and of the commerce and navigation reciprocal, and of the common interests, against all that should endeavor the disturbance of either of them." This was exactly what the English wanted to hear. They quickly drew up a series of propositions, "which comprehended no new matter," and delivered them to the States commissioners.[93]

It was in the States General that the proposed treaty met with resistance. The delegates of the Orangist provinces insisted that the proposed articles be sent "down into their several provinces to have the advise, and directions of their superiors therein." The ambassadors were furious, knowing full well that the delay would be interminable. How could the Dutch "after so many professions made and assurances given" that all was well still need to appeal to the provinces? Indeed, St. John fulminated, the Dutch were merely seeking "authority to consent to the very thing that they themselves had offered."[94] As the news from the provincial debates began to filter into The Hague the results were all too predictable. "Some of the provinces" – we can only guess which ones – "will not consent."[95] The English ambassadors saw no alternative but to request that ships again be sent to bring them back across the North Sea.[96]

and Revolution, p. 601. Indeed neither the English nor the Dutch appear to have understood the proposed union in Brenner's terms; they saw the proposed union as politico-religious not politico-commercial. While Brenner's clever claim that the union proposals were seen as the only way to overcome the inexorable economic competition between the two "nations" seems initially plausible, there is no evidence to support the claim – and much to suggest otherwise – that St. John and Strickland thought in terms of a "zero-sum competitive commercial game" or that they were interested in national advantages. See Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 621.

92 Paper to the Commissioners of the States General in "Ambassadors' Journal," Bod., Rawl. C129, ff. 28–29; another copy, incorrectly transcribed, is in Thomas Birch (editor), *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Esq.* (London, 1742), p. 182.

93 Ambassadors to States General, 16 June 1651, "Ambassadors' Journal," Bod., Rawl. C129, ff. 46–47; Ambassadors to Council of State, 17 May 1651, "Ambassadors' Journal," Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 31.

94 "Ambassadors' Narrative," 15 May 1651, PRO, SP 103/46, ff. 141–142.

95 Ambassadors to Council of State, 13 June 1651, Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 37.

96 "Ambassadors' Narrative," PRO, SP 103/46, f. 144.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

Again the arrival of the Parliament ships at Goree produced an "alarm at the Hague." The Dutch commissioners reappeared on the doorsteps of the English ambassadors, prepared with thirty-six propositions which they claimed "did contain in them both an answer to those propositions which their Excellencies had delivered unto them, and likewise several things of their desire on their part."[97] After reviewing the propositions the ambassadors found that the Dutch "say nothing" to the fifth English proposition dealing with the "declared enemies to the freedom and liberty of the people." The desired confederation was to be made "only in point of trade."[98]

The English were beside themselves with rage. By June 1651 it was clear that the Dutch pipeline to the Royalists in Scotland had not been severed with the death of William II. The attacks on the English ambassadors convinced them that the Orange–Stuart alliance was still very much alive. Information from intercepted Royalist correspondence and reports from well-affected Dutch men convinced St. John and Strickland that the Scots were receiving ships and ammunition from the Dutch provincial ports.[99] The Dutch, St. John and Strickland told the Council of State "had done little less hurt to the Commonwealth of England then if they had been declared enemies thereunto."[100]

St. John and Strickland insisted upon the *Intercursus Magnus* – the 1495 commercial treaty between England and Burgundy – particularly "the articles concerning the not aiding of rebels, and fugitives with arms, [and] victuals" as a minimum basis for negotiation. They reiterated that they "asked nothing but what was in the treaty of 1495 and there is the same occasion now as was at th[at] time." This demand "was very unwelcome to the commissioners," well cognizant of the limited powers they had from the provinces. They pleaded that it was "exceeding hard to banish all persons that are banished out of England, all men have refuge to us, and must not be banished."[101] This in no way satisfied the English ambassadors. "It is no

[97] "Ambassadors' Narrative," 10 June 1651, PRO, SP 103/46, f. 144; "Ambassadors' Journal," 14 June 1651, Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 37; *Mercurius Politicus*, 5–12 June 1651, p. 857.

[98] "Ambassadors' Journal," 14 June 1651, Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 45; 19 June 1651, f. 49. This confirms Thurloe's later gloss on the negotiations which declared that "the 36 Articles composed by them were somewhat in the nature of a League Defensive, but they did most principally relate to trade & commerce." "Thurloe's Review," PRO, SP 103/46, ff. 220–221.

[99] Ambassadors to Council of State,"Ambassadors' Journal," 9 April 1651, Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 17; Bod., Rawl. C129, 18 April 1651, f. 20. Apparently the group around Christopher Love was sending their support to the Royalist cause via Holland. *Weekly Intelligencer*, 17–24 June 1651, p. 208.

[100] Ambassadors to Council of State, 18 April 1651, "Ambassadors' Journal," Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 21.

[101] "Ambassadors' Narrative," PRO, SP 103/46, ff. 156, 162; "Ambassadors' Journal," Bod., Rawl. C129, ff. 45–46.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

answer to say, that you will look hither, that they doe no wrong," they fumed, "we have had experience of that already. We know ... the Scots king, the Scots and our rebels made a treaty here, and laid the foundation of that war which now the Scots make upon us." St. John and Strickland pointed out that there were two elements of the *Intercursus*, one which granted freedom of commerce and navigation, the other which guaranteed aid against each others' rebels. "You yourselves are in possession" when it "is for your advantage." "I would fain know which right we have by the treaty of 1495 if these articles be not granted to us," St. John demanded; "is the treaty of 1495 of force or not?" "If you expect we should perform with you," he threatened ominously, "you must perform with us, either the treaty is at an end for the whole, or of force."[102] The brief granted by the provincial assemblies was not sufficiently broad to leave room for maneuver. The Dutch commissioners could only plead that "they could not treat upon the old treaty without the inclusion of their new articles." Despite a flurry of Dutch diplomatic special pleading, the negotiations were at an end.[103]

The English dream of a Protestant and republican alliance between the two maritime commonwealths had turned into a nightmare for the ambassadors. The embassy failed not because of Anglo-Dutch economic differences, but because of Dutch reluctance to ally with the regicide republic, in short because of the lingering power of the House of Orange.[104] Just as important as the reasons of the failure of the St. John/Strickland mission in explaining the course of English foreign policy is their perception of the causes of that failure. The perception of St. John and Strickland was important not only because they were themselves influential Rumpers, but because it was their reports which so heavily influenced opinion in the Rump. From the ambassadorial reports, the Council of State affirmed, "we may take an estimate of what we may expect there; and from what principles [the Dutch] are moved."[105] How, then, did the ambassadors explain their returning to England empty-handed?

[102] "Ambassadors' Journal," deals with the negotiations of 14 June 1651, Bod., Rawl. C129, ff. 45–46.

[103] "Ambassadors' Journal," Bod., Rawl. C129, ff. 48–49.

[104] Rowen, who has studied the Dutch archival material most closely, also concludes that the negotiations broke down over the English requirement that the Dutch expel the Royalists. *John De Witt*, p. 55. See also Morosini to Doge, 2 May 1651, *CSPV*, p. 180. Significantly, the Holland republican theorist Pieter de la Court also attributed the failure of the 1651 negotiations to "those that conceived themselves bound as slaves to the House of Orange." It was the Orangists who "did not only oppose the concluding of the foresaid desirable treaty, but also sent away those ambassadors with all manner of reproach and dishonour." [Pieter de la Court], *The True Interest and Political Maxims of the Republick of Holland and West-Friesland* (London, 1702), p. 458.

[105] Council of State to Ambassadors, 6 June 1651, PRO, SP 25/96, f. 221; Cromwell was kept current of all the developments in the Netherlands, receiving copies of all the despatches from St. John and Strickland, e.g. Council of State to Cromwell, 29 March 1651, PRO, SP

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

The prolongation of the ambassadorial stay in the United Provinces, in the eyes of St. John and Strickland, removed any just grounds for the Dutch to complain "for want of time and opportunity."[106] Nevertheless, even after Thurloe's return to the United Provinces, the negotiations were plagued by delay. "To break off the treaty was as much against their will, as to conclude it suddenly," the ambassadors declared, "to procrastinate was their best interest." The English were kept in play with "some courtesies and fair words to delay the business," wrote the head of the traditionally pro-Dutch Sidney family in his journal. The Dutch, of course, pleaded that their constitution made delays inevitable. But the ambassadors' stay in The Hague had given them "sufficient appearances of the delusion of that pretense."[107] The Dutch were clearly hoping to "spin out the treaty until the Scots mist was over." "Like cunning foxes," the *Mercurius Pragmaticus* explained, the Dutch stand "gazing after the negotiations in Scotland, and according to the procedure of the designs there, they will compose a return." "That they would fain see the issue of the affairs in Scotland, before they come to a conclusion with the English Ambassadors is agreed by all," noted one of the Rump's foreign-policy specialists, Bulstrode Whitelocke.[108] This reflected the persistence of Orangism: "they cannot join with you against the Scots, and forsake the king utterly."[109] Clearly the English had "wise men to deal with, that can play their own game." "They be a cunning, and a deceitful people," opined one newsletter-writer. Even the hostile Marquis of Ormonde could not but conclude that the Dutch were "entirely governed" not by "honor or gratitude which are things now wholly lost in all nations," but by "the notion of reason of state."[110]

Dutch perfidiousness was made manifest in the negotiation process. They were not interested in "a nearer union," wrote the ambassadors, "but only for such an alliance as might tend to the increase of trade." The *Mercurius Elencticus* opined that "a League of amity and commerce happily at long running may not be denyed; but for any thing else (more than what relishes of apparent advantage to them) must not be expected." The departure of the English ambassadors allowed the world to see "what juggling sharks

25/96, f. 89. The "Ambassadors Narrative" which was prepared particularly for presentation to the Rump. It was read and approved of on 2 July 1651, *CJ*, 2 July 1651, p. 595.

106 *Mercurius Politicus*, 8–15 May 1651, p. 793.

107 "Ambassadors' Narrative," PRO, SP 103/46, f. 131; "Leicester's Journal," HMC, *DeLisle*, 25–26 June 1651, p. 601; "Ambassadors' Journal," 28 June 1651, Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 59.

108 "Ambassadors' Narrative," PRO, SP 103 46, f. 142; *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, 3–10 June 1651, p. 6; Whitelocke's *Annals*, 24 June 1651, BL, Add. 37345, f. 133. This version of events was also aired in the press. *Weekly Intelligencer*, 13–20 May 1651, p. 161; 2–10 June 1651, p. 187; 8–15 May 1651, p. 792; 29 May–5 June 1651, p. 834; *Mercurius Politicus*, 19–26 June 1651, p. 893.

109 *Mercurius Politicus*, 19–26 June 1651, p. 885.

110 *Mercurius Politicus*, 10–17 April 1651, p. 732; "Intelligence from Dort," 25 July 1651, Nickolls, *Original Letters*, p. 77; Ormonde to Nicholas, 6 June 1651, BL, Egerton MSS. 2534, f. 90.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

they have met with; a pack of Machiavels which will hear of nothing but their own particular advantage."[111]

This policy of material self-interest was clearly contrary to the desires of God. Contemporary English polemics were especially virulent in their attacks on the worldly pursuit of profit. "Who'd dote on gold! a thing so strange and odd? / 'Tis most contemptible when made a God," ran one popular poem, "All sins and mischiefs thence have rise and swell: / One Indies more would make another hell."[112] It was in this context that the *Politicus*'s correspondent bemoaned Dutch policies which "take their rise and vigor only from the reflections of worldly interest, not considering the present motions of the great wheel of Providence; nor weighing the great design of God now in the world, to pull down all tyrranic-fleshly interests and principles in the kingdoms of men."[113] The English had come to the United Provinces in search of an alliance "for the good of the Protestant religion and the profession thereof against the growing interest of Popery," John Thurloe later recalled, "but without any effect, in respect the United Provinces always found it necessary to mingle therewith the considerations of trade."[114] "I fear these people could not obtain that interest and profit they looked for," concluded the *Perfect Diurnall*, "for take once away their gain, then life and religion and all is gone." Clearly the United Provinces is a place "where religion and policy, and all is servant to the great God Mammon; but there is a greater God than he will teach us better I hope."[115]

Not surprisingly a people motivated by an Orange-tinged self-interest were soon revealed to be bad Protestants. The Dutch predikants or preachers were found to be describing the English as "a company of heretics and schismatics, as the Church of Scotland styles you." "The ministers of this country are none of our friends," wrote the *Politicus*'s correspondent, "they work a world of mischief amongst the people for although they are forbidden to meddle with state affairs in their pulpits, yet they do nothing else but twaddle up and down the houses." Reports came in from all over the United Provinces, even from Holland, that the English were called "enemies to all Godliness," that "the Parliament of England are of a contrary religion."[116] These were dangerous claims, indeed, to make before

[111] "Ambassadors' Narrative," PRO, SP 103/46, f. 126; "Thurloe's Review," PRO, SP 103/46, ff. 220, 223; *Mercurius Elencticus*, 17–24 June 1651, pp. 22–23; 24 June–1 July, 1651, p. 31.

[112] *News from Newcastle* (London, 1651), Thomason: 3 February 1651, p. 1.

[113] *Mercurius Politicus*, 19–26 June 1651, p. 882.

[114] "Thurloe's Review," PRO, SP 103/46, f. 226. "The Dutch," Thurloe claimed in another retelling of these events, "had discovered in this and in other rancounters a fixed design to monpolize all trade into their own hands." "Concerning the Foreign Affairs in the Protector's Time," LRO, Finch Papers DG7/Box 4963/Folder 6, f. 13.

[115] *A Perfect Diurnall*, 7–14 July 1651, p. 1151; *Mercurius Politicus*, 24–31 July 1651, p. 960.

[116] *Mercurius Politicus*, 12–19 June 1651, pp. 870–871; *Mercurius Politicus*, 19–26 June 1651, p. 885; *Mercurius Politicus*, 26 June–3 July 1651, p. 897; *Weekly Intelligencer*, 24

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

a government convinced that the final eschatological struggle was now in progress.

Material self-interest, religious rigidity, and monarchical symapthies were a familiar set of traits to the English ambassadors. "I am confident they appear to be perfectly of the Scots mould," was how Thurloe described the Dutch to the Council of State, "by converse with whom and the French, they have learnt the art, of making huge professions ... and at the same time, intend to perform no more of them than apparently stands with their own advantage."[117] This description was ideologically charged. Oliver St. John had described the Scots as so "many doubtful persons and seeming friends" against whom God had delivered his "heavy judgment" at Dunbar. For William Hickman, another correspondent of Cromwell's, no people were "more deep in ingratitude and falsehood" than the Scots. Whitelocke noted approvingly in his *Annals* a letter which described the Scots as "a people, who delight to enslave others, yet are of a slavish and servile condition themselves ... a generation of very hypocrites and vipers, whom no oaths, or covenants can oblige, no courtesies or civilities oblige."[118] Like the Dutch the Scots were motivated only by "profit and preferment," their "own advance and private advantage," swayed only by "their own interests and ends."[119] Again like the Dutch, it was the Scots' ministers who were to be blamed for "the carrying on a worldly interest of domination and faction, to the extreme prejudice and danger of our nation."[120] It was this similarity to the Scots, then, which explained the Dutch reluctance to commit themselves to expel English enemies. "It was easy to be learnt from hence," the ambassadors informed the Rump, "what good intentions these people have to the Protestant religion."[121]

The ambassadors' experience in the Hague had shattered the English image of a United Provinces committed to the crusade against Popery and tyranny. Instead the Dutch were revealed as worshipping Mammon rather than God, as supporting the cause of Orange and Stuart rather than that of

June–1 July 1651, p. 210. These attitudes of the Dutch clergy are confirmed by the research of Keith Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism* (Leiden, 1982), p. 365.

117 John Thurloe to Council of State, 6 June 1651, Bod., Rawl. A2, p. 217a (repaginated).

118 St. John to Cromwell, 26 September 1650, Nickolls, *Original Letters*, p. 25; Hickman to Cromwell, 16 November 1650, p. 29; Whitelocke's *Annals*, BL, Add. 37345, 16 September 1650, f. 99.

119 *Mercurius Elencticus*, 17–24 June 1651, p. 19; *Mercurius Politicus*, 17–24 April 1651, p. 735; *Mercurius Politicus*, 1–8 May 1651, p. 767; *Mercurius Politicus*, 12–19 June 1651, pp. 864–865; R. F., *The Scot Arraigned, and at the Bar of Justice, Reason, and Religion, Convinced, Convicted, and Condemned of a most Horrid and Odious Conspiracy and Rebellion against the Native Liberty and Birth-right of the Church and Free State of England* (London, 1651), Thomason: 16 June 1651, pp. 4–5.

120 The literature on this topic is vast. I only cite examples here which prove that this meaning was current at the time of Thurloe's statement. *Mercurius Politicus*, 12–19 June 1651, p. 863; *A Perfect Account*, 21–28 May 1651, p. 152.

121 "Ambassadors' Narrative," PRO, SP 103/46, ff. 129–130.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003

liberty. The Dutch, in English eyes, had confounded "divine Providence" which had created this opportunity to perfect an "alliance and union," an opportunity that "hath not heretofore been administered, nor is likely hereafter to be, if this be neglected." The onus was now on the Dutch to prove the English wrong. "England was as near to the Low Countries, as the Low Countries to England," St. John told the States General on the eve of his departure, "the Parliament was done going there and it now rested with them."[122]

[122] Ambassadors to States General, 17 May 1651, Bod., Rawl. C129, f. 33; "Ambassadors' Journal," Bod., Rawl. C129, ff. 49–50.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 17 Nov 2026 at 10:16:42, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560781.003