

**Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: British and
French Relations with the Netherlands,
1785-1815**

Graeme Edward Callister

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University of York

Department of History

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the interplay of public opinion, national identity and foreign policy during the period 1785-1815, focusing on three consistently interconnected countries: the Netherlands, France and Great Britain. The Netherlands provides the centrepiece to the study, which considers how the Dutch were perceived as a nation, a people and as a political entity, at both governmental and popular levels, in the three countries throughout the period.

Public opinion is theorised as a two-part phenomenon. Active public opinion represents the collated thoughts and responses of a certain public to an event or set of circumstances. Latent public opinion represents the sum of generally-accepted underlying social norms, stereotypes or preconceptions; the perceptions and representations latently present in unconscious *mentalités*.

The thesis examines how perceptions and representations of the Netherlands in all three countries fed into public opinion and, ultimately, into national identity either of the self or the 'other'. It then investigates the extent to which the triangular policies of Britain, France and the various incarnations of the Dutch state were shaped by popular perceptions, identities and opinion. While active opinion is shown to have generally been of negligible importance to the policy-making process, it is argued that the underlying themes of latent opinion often provided the conceptual background that politicians from all three countries used to make policy. The influence of latent opinion was often as much unconscious as deliberate. Latent opinion was rarely the inspiration for foreign policy, but it frequently provided the boundaries of expectation within which policy was formed.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This thesis is entirely my own work. It has not been submitted for examination elsewhere and all references to work by any other author are clearly cited.

Some of the research from this thesis has already appeared in a different form in the following article: Graeme Callister, 'The City and the Revolutionary Dutch Nation, 1780-1800', *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies*, Volume 36, No. 3 (November 2012), 228-43.



William Faden, *A Map of the Seven United Provinces* (1789)
(Image courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal)

INTRODUCTION:

PUBLIC OPINION AND FOREIGN POLICY, 1785-1815



William Dent, *French Liberty* (1792)
 (British Museum Satires 8136: © Trustees of the British Museum)

The history of the Netherlands in the eighteenth century is tightly bound to that of France and Great Britain. The three near-neighbours had long been connected through diplomacy, trade, continental and colonial rivalries, and even through governments, a situation perhaps most clearly outlined in 1688 when a Dutchman bearing a French title ascended the throne of England.¹ A tripartite relationship that came close to equality at the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 evolved until the Netherlands ranked far below the other powers in terms of international influence as the eighteenth century drew to a close. The final year of the century saw the armies of Britain and France come to blows on the territory of their weakened neighbour.

The Netherlands had long held a place in Anglo-French rivalry. Annie Jourdan asserted that it had been the 'pomme de discorde' between France and Britain for over 150 years.² Both powers saw the Netherlands as key to their security and prosperity, and both liked to think of it metaphorically as their own. Edmund Burke called the Netherlands 'as necessary a part of this country as Kent';³ Napoleon famously announced that it was no more than 'an emanation' of France.⁴ The fate of the Netherlands was one of the major issues in the contest between Britain and France in the period 1785-1815. Britain remained committed to freeing the Netherlands from French influence, while France continued to see her presence in the Netherlands as the only way of keeping the Dutch from the British yoke. The fate of the Netherlands was among the principal causes of war in 1793 and 1803, and the settlement of the Netherlands in 1814 was a top priority to London. Britain committed substantial forces to fight in the Netherlands five times between France's declaration of war in 1793 and Battle of Waterloo in 1815. For France, the period of war with Britain was bookended by two failed invasions of the Netherlands, sandwiching the conquest of 1795 and subsequent almost continuous military occupation until the collapse of French control in 1813.

The Netherlands itself has received little attention in international histories of this period. Many narrative histories portray the Dutch as passive actors, and some barely mention the

¹ The Principality of Orange, from which the Princes of Orange got their title, is in southern France. Herbert H. Rowen, *The Princes of Orange, the Stadholders in the Dutch Republic* (Cambridge, 1988), p.8. Also James Jones, 'French Intervention in English and Dutch Politics, 1677-88', in Jeremy Black (ed.), *Knights Errant and True Englishmen: British Foreign Policy, 1660-1800* (Edinburgh, 1989), 1-23.

² Annie Jourdan, 'Les Gaulois en Batavie: des Relations Diplomatiques Machiavéliques', in Annie Jourdan & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Remous Révolutionnaires: République Batave, Armée Française* (Amsterdam, 1996), p.92.

³ Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford, 2006), p.67.

⁴ *Journal de l'Empire*, 18 June 1811.

Netherlands at all.⁵ The major characters in the drama of north-western Europe and its colonial outposts are Britain and France; the Netherlands is explored only as a backdrop, context to the situation, or a conduit for the rivalry between the two greater powers. Even the Patriot upheavals of the 1780s were for a long time interpreted as a proxy conflict between French-backed Patriots and Anglo-Prussian-backed Orangists.⁶ Although the idea of primary Dutch agency in the Patriot years has been somewhat rehabilitated,⁷ the latter two decades of this period are widely accepted as having been a time of the French, with the Dutch relegated further to a small part of a much larger whole. This is often not a conscious denigration of the Dutch, nor a complete denial of their agency. The global history of the period is generally written from the point of view of the nineteenth-century great powers, especially where international relations are concerned. The Dutch state had little direct impact on continental events in this period and, rather than being denied a place in the historiography, the Dutch state is arguably given the relatively negligible attention that its relatively negligible efforts merited.

Much of the diplomatic history of this period focuses not only on great powers but on 'great men'. Although it has long been unfashionable to write elitist histories, the fairly personal nature of power in most eighteenth-century states meant that when diplomacy is put under the microscope, the lens naturally focuses on the men at its heart. Yet if we widen our gaze somewhat, as some recent studies have done, it is easy to discern that foreign affairs in eighteenth-century Britain, France and the Netherlands excited not only the attention of those charged with its formulation, but encouraged a whole host of opinions amongst ordinary people that coalesced into something that might be considered as public opinion.

That a people should have an interest in its country's affairs is perhaps not a particularly bold claim. Popular engagement in government across the European world in the late eighteenth century has received a great deal of attention, especially in countries where revolutions replaced old regimes with something loosely approximating to representative government. One does not have to embrace a Marxist interpretation of the rising middle class or ascribe to a model of bourgeois-democrat revolution to recognise the increase in popular interest in

⁵ Philip Guedalla, *The Partition of Europe, 1715-1815* (Oxford, 1914), for example, manages to cover a century of European history virtually without mentioning the Netherlands.

⁶ The standard text being H.T. Colenbrander, *De Patriottentijd, Hoofdzakelijk naar Buitenlandsche Bescheiden* (3 vols, 'S Gravenhage, 1897-99).

⁷ The process was begun by Pieter Geyl, *De Patriottenbeweging 1780-1787* (Amsterdam, 1947).

government in many countries. Not only was public opinion increasingly perceived as a tribunal for legitimacy, but the rise in significance of the rhetoric of the political nation meant that national identity took on a far greater importance to domestic politics.⁸ Yet where popular engagement in government has been studied, the focus has tended to be on internal politics, on those things that affect people's everyday lives. Studies of foreign affairs have tended to continue to write in terms of diplomatic strategy, geo-strategic interest, and inter-state relations rather than searching for potential popular input into policy.

In broad strokes, this thesis aims to examine the interplay of public opinion, national identity and foreign policy during the period 1785-1815, focusing on three consistently interconnected countries: the Netherlands, France and Great Britain. The Netherlands will provide the centrepiece to the study, which will consider how the Dutch were perceived as a nation, a people and as a political entity, at both governmental and popular levels, in the three countries throughout the period. It will examine how perceptions and representations of the Netherlands in all three countries fed into public opinion and, ultimately, into national identity either of the self or the 'other'. It will then investigate the extent to which the triangular policies of Britain, France and the various incarnations of the Dutch state were shaped by popular perceptions, identities and opinion. By placing the policies of each country in a comparative context, this thesis aims to draw wider conclusions about the relationship of international affairs to national opinions and identities at the end of the long eighteenth century.

In searching for signs of the impact of identity and public opinion on policy, the historian is naturally drawn to episodes of obvious discord between policy and objective observation, examples of which abound in Anglo-French obsessions with outdated notions of Dutch wealth, naval prowess, and 'natural' allegiance. Simon Schama found that French policy towards the Netherlands in general was 'based on minimal understanding' of the predicament of the Dutch.⁹ Highlighting the existence of such discrepancies is nothing new, but few historians have asked why politicians and even peoples should have continued to hold these beliefs, and more importantly why they continued to act upon them. To take but one example, François Crouzet commented that in 1795 the Netherlands 'avaient en France une réputation de

⁸ Michel Vovelle, 'Entre Cosmopolitisme et Xénophobie: Patrie, Nation, République Universelle dans les Idéologues de la Révolution Française', in Michael O'Dea & Kevin Whelan (eds.), *Nations and Nationalisms: France, Britain, Ireland and the Eighteenth-Century Context* (Oxford, 1995), pp.13-15.

⁹ Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators, Revolution in the Netherlands 1780-1813* (2nd edn., London, 2005), p.xiii.

fabuleuse richesse' which greatly affected French policy, without enquiring where this reputation came from or why it should impact on foreign policy.¹⁰ Similarly, British 'public opinion' has long been accused of pushing policy this way or that, with little commentary on what public opinion was or why it should influence foreign policy.¹¹ It is the intention of this thesis to question these assumptions and to investigate why they arose, whether they truly had any significance to foreign policy, and why this should be the case.

Although this work will draw on aspects of military and commercial rivalry and geopolitical wrangling to help contextualise the complex web of interactions between the three powers, it is not intended as a diplomatic or military history of Anglo-Franco-Dutch relations of the period. This thesis does not intend to tackle the problem of 'oversimplification' of foreign policy in general,¹² or to provide a definitive analysis of the broader foreign policies of France, Britain and the Netherlands. Such works are already plentiful and it is not the intention of this piece to re-write a general narrative.¹³ This thesis is rather interested in *why* certain events occurred or decisions were taken, and seeks to tease out the influences of public opinion and national identity that may shed some light on the impulses underpinning foreign policy.

¹⁰ François Crouzet, 'Aspects Financiers de la Relation Franco-Batave', in Annie Jourdan & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Remous Révolutionnaires: République Batave, Armée Française* (Amsterdam, 1996), p.50.

¹¹ Examples include: S.T. Bindoff, *The Scheldt Question to 1839* (London, 1945), p.144; Michael Duffy, 'British Policy in the War against Revolutionary France', in Colin Jones (ed.), *Britain and Revolutionary France: Conflict, Subversion, Propaganda* (Exeter, 1983), pp.18-20 and Muriel E. Chamberlain, 'Pax Britannica'? *British Foreign Policy, 1789-1914* (London, 1988), p.47.

¹² Christopher Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy* (Basingstoke, 2003), p.2.

¹³ General accounts putting the military and diplomatic relations of the era into a wider perspective include Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers, Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London, 1989); Evan Luard, *The Balance of Power, the System of International Relations 1648-1815* (Basingstoke, 1992) & Jeremy Black, *European International Relations 1648-1815* (London, 2002). The period 1785-1815 is well covered by, for example: Tim Blanning, *The French Revolutionary Wars, 1787-1802* (London, 1996); Charles Esdaile, *The French Wars 1792-1815* (London, 2001); David Gates, *The Napoleonic Wars 1803-1815* (London, 2003); Alistair Horne, *How Far from Austerlitz? Napoleon 1805-1815* (London, 1997). Aspects of British and Dutch policy are covered in Chamberlain, 'Pax Britannica?'; A. W. Ward, & G. P. Gooch (eds.), *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy 1783-1919* (3 vols, Cambridge, 1922), vol. 1, 1783-1815; Alice Carter, *Neutrality or Commitment: The Evolution of Dutch Foreign Policy 1667-1795* (London, 1975). More specialist studies of specific military or diplomatic incidents include: Alfred Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents, The Diplomacy of the First Earl of Malmesbury at The Hague* (London, 1954); Colenbrander, *De Patriottentijd*; Jeremy Whiteman, *Reform, Revolution and French Global Policy, 1787-1791* (Aldershot, 2003); Patricia Chastain Howe, *Foreign Policy and the French Revolution: Charles-François Dumouriez, Pierre LeBrun, and the Belgian Plan, 1789-1793* (New York, 2008); G. W. Vreede (ed.), *Geschiedenis der Diplomatie van de Bataafsche Republiek* (2 vols, Utrecht, 1864); Piers Mackesy, *Statesmen at War, The Strategy of Overthrow 1798-99* (New York, 1974); A. B. Rodger, *The War of the Second Coalition, 1798-1801* (Oxford, 1964); Victor Enthoven (ed.), *Een Haven te Ver, de Britse Expeditie naar de Schelde van 1809* (Nijmegen, 2009); Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored, Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812-22* (London, 1957). This is by no means an exhaustive list.

The thesis will open with a chapter discussing the events of the period 1785-1815 and the framework of international relations in which the three powers conducted their affairs. The remainder of the thesis will be split into three main sections, each of two chapters, considering in turn the Netherlands, France and Britain. The first of these chapters will discuss the nature of Dutch national self-identity, and will examine Dutch public opinion towards the international affairs of the period. The second will then draw out any links between opinion, identity and policy in the Netherlands. The next two sections will follow a similar structure, but will analyse French and British public opinion towards the Netherlands and examine what the French and British 'publics' considered to be Dutch national identity. Both sections will then analyse the links between public opinion, identity and foreign policy for their respective countries. Before this, the rest of this introduction will discuss the concepts that will underpin much of the work of this thesis; national identity, the public sphere and public opinion, and foreign policy and international relations at the end of the long eighteenth century.

In considering national identity, the word 'national' is used deliberately to denote not only the geographical extent of identity, but to include the evolutions in understanding of the nature of the political nation. It is now generally acknowledged that nations are invented constructs rather than political expressions of a natural order. Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson all highlighted the artifice of nations and national identities.¹⁴ The idea that nations 'are there, in the very nature of things, only waiting to be "awakened" from their regrettable slumber' has been shown to be a myth.¹⁵ This is not to say, however, that the nationalists who embraced the idea thought it a myth. Most nationalists implicitly believed that nations were an inherent part of human society and that exposing or 'awakening' them was a noble task. As 'imagined communities', the sole criterion needed for a nation to exist is that a cadre of people believes that it does. As belief in the nation grew, so too did the need to codify the extent, character and identity of that nation.

Nation-building is a key concept of nationalism in its early stages.¹⁶ As Gellner argued, 'it is nationalism which engenders nations, not the other way around'.¹⁷ Early nationalists help to

¹⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983), pp.48-49 (& passim); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780, Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1990); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991).

¹⁵ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.48.

¹⁶ Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and its Alternatives* (New York, 1969); Otto Dann, 'Introduction', in Otto Dann & John Dinwiddy (eds.), *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1988), p.2.

¹⁷ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.55.

create national identity by pulling together disparate strands of a people's existence and forging them into a common form. History is embellished or invented to form myths of a national past, the idea of a national language is spread, ideals of a supposed national culture are constructed. David Bell and Linda Colley, working on France and Britain respectively, showed that throughout the eighteenth century conscious efforts were made, by both governments and private individuals or groups, to foster national spirit and identity with the aim of constructing a national community.¹⁸ The stirrings of similar processes have also been demonstrated for the Netherlands.¹⁹

The use of the terms 'nation' and 'national' can be problematic in an eighteenth-century context. As an age before mass communications, literacy and widespread industrialisation, it is easy to see the eighteenth century as a proto-modern era where such things as national movements and nationalist politics as we understand them from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries could not have existed. However, this would be to misrepresent the nature of nationalism and the nation, and to ascribe to the concepts characteristics which they do not inherently possess. As Michael O'Dea and Kevin Whelan pointed out, thinking in terms of a single overarching theory of nationalism is no longer appropriate.²⁰ It is important to acknowledge the temporal evolution of nationalism, and to acknowledge that its evolution was spatially uneven, appearing earlier in some places than others. Although the term 'nationalism' was used occasionally in the eighteenth century to denote exaggerated pride in one's nation, it was first popularly used in the late-1790s in an attempt to make sense of the events of the French Revolution.²¹ There therefore seems to be something inescapably modern about the concept. This does not, however, give modernity a monopoly on manifestations of nationalism, and since the nineteenth century, scholars have looked to push back its temporal boundaries. Historians such as Michael Clanchy and Bernard Guenée even argued that nationalism in England and France existed as far back as the Middle Ages.²²

¹⁸ David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France. Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge MA, 2003); Linda Colley, *Britons, Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London, 1996).

¹⁹ Joost Kloek & Wijnand Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective: 1800, Blueprints for a National Community* (Basingstoke, 2004).

²⁰ Michael O'Dea & Kevin Whelan, 'Introduction', in Michael O'Dea & Kevin Whelan (eds.), *Nations and Nationalisms: France, Britain, Ireland and the Eighteenth-Century Context* (Oxford, 1995), p.1.

²¹ Dann, 'Introduction', p.3; Bell, *The Cult of the Nation*, p.6.

²² Keith Stringer, 'Social and Political Communities in European History: Some Reflections on Recent Studies', in Claus Bjørn, Alexander Grant & Keith J. Stringer (eds.), *Nations, Nationalism and Patriotism in the European Past* (Copenhagen, 1994), pp.23-24; Dann, 'Introduction', p.5.

Most theorists nonetheless link nationalism to modernity and ‘a particular stage of technological and economic development’.²³ Almost all theories of modern nationalism accept that the central state had a large role to play. The importance of the state to nationalism derives partly from the fact that it was in recognised states that recognisable nations first began to appear. The term ‘nation’ in its eighteenth-century context generally meant the population of a certain territory, whether that territory was linked together by common government or was merely a geographical expression. The state provided unity for collections of historically disparate royal domains, placing them under one central administration and welding them, theoretically at least, into a recognisable single entity. In general, territorial boundaries and a common administration proved to be the most fecund ground for the creation of nations, while non-state ethnic, linguistic or cultural bases provided comparatively little impetus for eighteenth-century nation-building. Despite occasional evocations of non-state nations such as the ‘German nation’ or ‘Jewish nation’, the term was increasingly used to mean the inhabitants of a certain state.²⁴

States also provided an existing polity in which a population could engage. Politicised nations in many instances came to exist in opposition to central royal authority, making nationalism appear as a popular movement, exclusive of and inimical to royalty and aristocracy. While this was certainly the practice in some countries, most notably in France during the Revolution, nationalism is certainly not by nature exclusive of monarchy or strong central authority. A monarch or ruling house could provide a figurehead or a unifying factor for the nation. Britain’s Protestant monarchs or the Dutch House of Orange both became potent, if not uncontroversial, symbols of their respective nations in the eighteenth century. It was only when the political aspirations of the people were thought to clash with those of royalty and nobility, such as during the French Revolution, that nationalism and the language of ‘the nation’ demanded the exclusion of hereditary elites.²⁵ Nationalism did not require adherence to democratic beliefs, nor did it require rumblings of popular discontent to manifest itself. National sentiment was evident in many states in harmony with royal authority.

²³ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, p.10; Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London, 1971), p.256; John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester, 1982); Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.183.

²⁴ Jacques Godechot, ‘The New Concept of the Nation and its Diffusion in Europe’, in Otto Dann & John Dinwiddy (eds.), *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1988), p.13.

²⁵ Bell, *The Cult of the Nation* & Beatrice Hyslop, *French Nationalism in 1789 According to the General Cahiers* (New York, 1934), pp.151-55.

The degree of participation required of national movements has caused some disagreement among scholars. Hobsbawmian synonymy of nation and people demands a broadly-based nation but does not really engage with the potential for nation-building to be a minority activity. Gellner agreed that nationalism entails widespread participation, and suggested that a national community would require a high degree of social mobility to erode internal barriers that might encourage people to see the world in class or caste, rather than national, terms. For Anthony Smith, on the other hand, nationalism originates amongst the intelligentsia and 'the role of the working class must not be overestimated.'²⁶ Both recognised the importance of class dynamics, but Smith saw a strong middle class as essential to nationalism rather than inimical to it. Dror Wahrman's suggestion that the concept of 'middle class' is itself an invented construct does not necessarily undermine Smith's arguments, but it does add an extra process whereby one imagined (class-based) community would be responsible for imagining another (nation-based) community.²⁷ Smith's insistence on class is perhaps a little outdated, but his argument for elite nation building retains validity. Once even a small number of people begin to identify with the concept of a nation, national consciousness can be said to exist. It was the attempts of nationally-conscious people to promote their nations, to make others conscious of them, and to give them a unitary national identity, that constituted early nationalism.

National identity can essentially be understood as a set of characteristics which the people of a nation collectively accept as their own. A national identity traditionally contains several stock ingredients, for which many theorists have tried to write a definitive recipe. Traits often found in national identities include a sense of a shared past and common experience, a common language, culture, religion and shared political ideals, and a shared opposition to an 'oppressor', foreign other, or invader. There is also the idea of common aspirations and shared interests, by which is meant that there are political or economic outcomes which are seen to be beneficial to all members of the nation, great or small. In practice, however, each identity has slightly different characteristics – generic identity is an oxymoron – so theorists trying to apply a standard set of criteria for national identity to various real-world examples have often been confounded. Furthermore, it is a simple matter to show that some people to whom an identity is meant to belong do not exhibit its characteristics. This has led some to question the use of trying to define even a specific identity, as it 'breaks down rapidly under close

²⁶ Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* p.142.

²⁷ Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c.1780-1840* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.1-2.

investigation'.²⁸ To take this approach, however, is not especially helpful. An identity is a generalisation and as such is never going to apply to all people. Moreover, it is far less relevant for people to exhibit the characteristics of an identity than for them to believe that the identity somehow belongs to them, and they to it.

Although nationalist rhetoric often ascribes a degree of timelessness or inherency to national identity, individual national identities are rarely stable. For Sander Gilman, identities are 'an ever-fluid, yet rigid-seeming, image of who we desire to be, rooted in our sense of what we seem to have been.'²⁹ Changing social and political realities demand that identities evolve, leaving the search for national identity an ongoing process. The fact that the French Revolution is seen as a time when the French nation was built, for example, does not mean that this was the only time that the French constructed their nation or identity. The Revolution was arguably the most important period of nation building in French history – pre-Revolutionary nationalism was swamped by the new political realities of the 1790s, while the Revolution has loomed large in the thinking of subsequent nationalists³⁰ – but that does not mean that the national identity created from 1789-99 continues to define the French. It has, and will continue to, evolve to take account of changing times. Nationalists like to imbue their identity with a sense of permanence and solidity, while even objective historians employ the language of construction and building to describe the nation-forming process. But a national identity is not a monolithic structure, nor is it a building with foundations or walls that give it rigidity, strength and shape. A national identity is an idea and, if we are permitted for a moment to wax fanciful, can be compared best not to a building but to a cloud, its form constantly changing as it is blown along by the winds of time. The need to continually renew the nation and its identity can be seen as an ongoing part of nationalism. Equally, the fact that a nation and its identity already exists does not prevent a new generation of nationalists from renewing and reinventing it.

Although national identities ascribe fairly specific traits to particular national groups, they are not entirely prescriptive. Differences between disparate elements within a nation mean that identities must work within certain boundaries rather than insisting on a single, unitary definition. Stuart Hall considered uniform identities 'a fantasy', and saw identity-building as a

²⁸ Bell, *The Cult of the Nation*, p.19.

²⁹ Sander L. Gilman, *Inscribing the Other* (Lincoln, 1991), p.3.

³⁰ For the Revolution's subsequent impact on French thought see F. Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1981); Robert Gildea, *Children of the Revolution, The French 1799-1914* (London, 2009).

process to reconcile different experiences while continuing to make allowance for diversity; 'since as a process it operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries, the production of "frontier effects"'.³¹ Equally, traits of national identity do not need to be uncontested. In the eighteenth-century Netherlands, for example, the House of Orange and the States General both provided powerful yet essentially opposing symbols for national identity.³²

None of the traits accepted as part of a national identity have to objectively or quantifiably exist. What is important is that the people of a nation believe they exist, which is why myths of the past, the stereotyping of culture and the disparagement of all things foreign often play a prominent role in national identity. Furthermore, characteristics that make up part of a national identity do not have to be unique to the society in question. Catholicism, for example, would have featured in the identity of several European nations. While more universal identities can be components of a national identity, they can also exist independent of or even superior to a person's national identity. Keith Stringer acknowledged 'an individual will have plural attachments, loyalties and senses of identity', of which the national identity is just one.³³ It would be unreasonable to simply assume that national identity should take precedence in a person's mind over, say, a professional or religious identity.³⁴ While Smith asserted that national identity has become the dominant one in the modern world, it would possibly be less reasonable to assume this for the eighteenth century.³⁵

It is not the aim of this thesis to interrogate the objective reality of Dutch national identity. For this work, representation is far more important than the reality of an identity. In line with methodologies used in imagology, this thesis will work to expose cultural and national stereotypes that contemporaries believed to constitute Dutch identity, rather than attempting to retrospectively pin down what it objectively meant to be Dutch.³⁶ Reality is in any case a

³¹ Stuart Hall, 'Introduction: Who Needs "Identity"?', in Stuart Hall & Paul du Gay (eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London, 1996), p.3.

³² Henk Reitsma, 'The United Provinces', in Otto Dann & John Dinwiddy (eds.), *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1988), 171-182.

³³ Stringer, 'Social and Political Communities', p.10.

³⁴ Geoff Cubitt, 'Introduction', in Geoff Cubitt (ed.), *Imagining Nations* (Manchester, 1998), p.6.

³⁵ Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* p.3.

³⁶ Joep Leerssen, 'Imagology: History and Method', in Manfred Beller & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Imagology, The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters, a Critical Survey* (Amsterdam, 2007), p.27.

subjective term in the absence of a 'God's-eye view', which 'certainly is not available to us mere humans'.³⁷ Retrospective analyses may outline one view of reality, while to contemporaries the perceived reality may have been very different. While this thesis makes no claim to comment on theories of the relativism of truth or on the relationship of realism to relativism, it fully acknowledges that the realities retrospectively observed by historians can be far removed from those experienced by historical contemporaries.³⁸ As such it will attempt to examine identities in their own terms, rather than in a retrospectively-constructed framework of reality.

In recent decades there has been something of a transformation in how identity is considered, and in how it is seen to resonate in the historical space. Theorists have increasingly pushed the notion that identity, and especially self-identity, is not so much a canvas upon which the characteristics of a phenomenon are painted, as a mirror in which the characteristics of the self are shown and those of the 'other' are reflected. Identity only has meaning when juxtaposed with the other, when it is 'in relation to what is not'.³⁹ According to this conception, when talking of the self one is naturally talking of the other; when one speaks of the other one is naturally speaking about the self.

There are still issues to resolve with this categorisation of identity when applied to national identity at the end of the long eighteenth century. Socio-cultural relativism shows that 'there is no such thing as a culturally neutral criterion' for interpreting identity,⁴⁰ indicating the deep importance of the culture of the self to any interpretations of identity. But an individual or group does not have to ascribe to a specifically national culture, and nor is it always necessary for the other against which the self is identified to be specific or determinate. In many facets of identity a normative standard can be applied that transcends both self and specific other, embracing instead a wider and more cosmopolitan paradigm. In aspects such as national wealth, for example, the standard is consciously not taken to be the self but the aggregate of a far wider constituency, that of the international economy. The transnational nature of normative standards even moves beyond the quantifiable. Eighteenth-century fashion often demanded a more international outlook, and elite cosmopolitan consciousness led to the very

³⁷ Maria Baghramian, *Relativism* (London, 2004), p.236.

³⁸ For a discussion of these complex relationships, see Paul O'Grady, *Relativism* (Chesham, 2002), pp.54-62; Patrick J. J. Phillips, *The Challenge of Relativism* (London, 2007), pp.8-9.

³⁹ Hall, 'Introduction: Who needs "Identity"?', pp.4-5; Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Chicago, 1981).

⁴⁰ Baghramian, *Relativism*, p.7.

notion of national characters being questioned.⁴¹ Voltaire famously proclaimed in the mid-century that there were no longer different nationalities, 'only Europeans'.⁴² Many elite travellers measured the countries they visited not only against their homeland but against one another. Their interpretation was no longer a pure consideration of self and other, but of self and several different others.

All who did not fall under the umbrella of the developing (national) identity would not be considered as one homogeneous mass of 'other'. The identities that grew up around the other had their own national bases. To take William Dent's 1792 caricature *French Liberality* as an example, the peoples of Europe depicted as rejecting French advances are portrayed not as an amorphous mass but as individually defined entities, each nation with its own identity and characteristics.⁴³ Indeed, for most people cosmopolitanism did not manage to supplant the idea of national difference or of there being a unique character and identity for each different people. The idea of 'national characters' was not new – writings on the character of different peoples can be found from antiquity to modern times⁴⁴ – but with the rise of early nationalism, stereotyped character became subsumed into a greater and more complex idea of national identity. By the eighteenth century standard stereotypes, characteristics, and features of self and other could be transmitted through the medium of print across a wide geographical expanse. Whereas previously identity had been vague, and notions of the self had been parochial for the greater mass of society, by the eighteenth century national identity was taking on a more standard and discernible form.

The elaboration of identity was also helped by increasing international contact and communications. Tourism increased in the eighteenth century, albeit for only a narrow layer of society, and ever-increasing commerce brought merchants and sailors into direct contact with other nationalities, while visiting ships and their crews would give the inhabitants of port towns and cities a glimpse of the foreign. Tourism could also be inverted to increase the familiarity with the other; the tourist gaping at the sights of a country would himself become an object of curiosity to the natives. With this increasing familiarity could contempt be bred.

⁴¹ John G. Hayman, 'Notions on National Characters in the Eighteenth Century', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1971), p.2.

⁴² Godechot, 'The New Concept of the Nation', p.14.

⁴³ William Dent, *French Liberality, or, an Attempt to Conquer all the World by Being too Civil by Half* (1792), British Museum (BM) Satires 8136 (see page 8).

⁴⁴ Eugen Weber, 'Of Stereotypes and of the French', *Journal for Contemporary History*, Vol. 25, No. 2/3 (1990), pp.174-76.

More detailed notions of identity were incorporated into the other's (generally negative) image and thus naturally into the (generally positive) image of the self. While few would experience this first-hand, the penchant for print meant that impressions would often be spread further, and through repetition and plagiarism would help to create a fairly standardised view of these new facets of identity.⁴⁵

The standardisation of identities owed much to the increasingly active print culture and the increased use of standardised language. Print allowed for the expression of consistent messages 'that do not degrade with distance or the passing of time'.⁴⁶ The printing of ideas that were beginning to constitute the identity of the self and of multifarious others made them available to a relatively wide audience; by repetition across the century these views became largely standardised. Representations previously popularised through the spoken word, proverb, ballad or song were expanded into anthologies, prose texts, newspapers, pamphlets, cartoons and caricatures and could be read by any who could afford to purchase either the work itself, or a mug of coffee or jar of ale in an establishment that offered the texts to their customers. Print culture did not demand more than a rudimentary standardisation of language across countries – in the Netherlands it apparently took the rusticity of some provincial delegates to the National Assembly in 1796 to provoke a standardisation of language, despite more than two centuries of vibrant print culture⁴⁷ – but it aided the idea of there being a national language. Dialects survived but were increasingly supplemented by a standard version of a national language, which was generally employed even when writing in the vernacular. While this could lead to intolerance of linguistic minorities within a supposed nation, especially when an aggressive metropolitan view of nationalism was confronted by overt challenges from the periphery such as during the French Revolution, a standard national language was also both a conduit to and a characteristic of nascent national identity.

The elaboration of national identities owes much to rise of the public sphere. The public sphere was essentially the metaphorical space in which private individuals engaged in public conversation, interaction, discussion and debate. Any work on the eighteenth-century public sphere must give a nod of acknowledgement to Jürgen Habermas, who identified the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the time of the rise of the public sphere, when

⁴⁵ Jeremy Black, *The British Abroad, The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1992), p.4.

⁴⁶ John Markoff, 'Literacy and Revolt: Some Empirical Notes on 1789 in France', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (September 1986), p.326.

⁴⁷ Kloek & Mijndhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, pp.401-402.

widely-held notions and opinions first became commonplace and gained the authority to challenge traditional bases of power. Although Habermas was never fully happy with his conceptualisations, his theories have become the basis for most subsequent studies.⁴⁸ Habermas's work was an attempt to write a historically-rooted theory of the public sphere in Europe. Approaching the topic from a largely Marxist perspective, he saw the eighteenth-century public sphere as being bourgeois in composition and based on rational-critical debate.

Although Habermas nudged open the door to studies of the public sphere, those who followed in his footsteps have undermined much of his theory. Some have argued that the whole idea of the public sphere is little more than a 'phantom' construct, while much recent scholarship has emphasised the porosity between public and private.⁴⁹ Especial criticism of Habermas has been reserved for the concept of the bourgeois public and his disregard for gender. Angela Keane argued that in the absence of the more rigid class and gender divisions of the nineteenth century, the eighteenth-century public sphere was open to all 'owners of intellectual property'.⁵⁰ The chronology of the public sphere has also been pushed ever further back, with its birth throes now detected in the controversies of the Reformation, and Habermas has been accused of 'aggrandizing' the Enlightenment and its impact.⁵¹

The insistence on the bourgeois nature of the public sphere has been attacked at both ends of the social spectrum. The eighteenth-century public 'corresponded to none of the traditional social categories of the *ancien régime*: no *corps*, no *ordre*, no *état*.'⁵² Habermas's insistence on an oppositional bourgeois public sphere ignores the role that the elites and government played in public debate in eighteenth-century Europe, and implies a class conflict that empirical studies do not bear out.⁵³ Although those who might be retrospectively labelled as a

⁴⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 1989); Craig Calhoun, 'Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere', in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge MA, 1992), pp.4-5.

⁴⁹ Bruce Robbins, *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis, 2003); James M. Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland, 1800-1850* (Cambridge, 2007), p.5.

⁵⁰ Angela Keane, *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s* (Cambridge, 2000), pp.10-11.

⁵¹ Daniel Gordon, 'Philosophy, Sociology, and Gender in the Enlightenment Conception of Public Opinion', *French Historical Studies* Vol. 17, No. 4 (1992), p.885.

⁵² David A. Bell, 'The "Public Sphere", the State, and the World of Law in Eighteenth-Century France', *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (1992), p.914.

⁵³ James van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, 2001), pp.10-12; Kevin Gilmartin, *Print Politics: the Press and Radical Opposition in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1996), pp.3-4.

middling 'class' might have numerically dominated the eighteenth-century public, this does not mean that they were able to dominate public discourse to the detriment of traditional social elites. Popular participation in the public sphere also cannot be discounted.⁵⁴ Lawrence Klein argued that many of the lower orders actively sought to engage with the supposedly-bourgeois practice of polite sociability that characterised the public sphere.⁵⁵ The eighteenth-century public also apparently treasured the idea of inclusivity, as seen in contemporary praise of the supposedly-egalitarian coffeehouse.⁵⁶

Popular participation in the public sphere has been shown as far from uncommon. Arlette Farge demonstrated a lively popular interest in public affairs in eighteenth-century France, while Nicolas Rogers and H.T. Dickinson respectively showed the extent of popular demonstration and popular politics in eighteenth-century Britain.⁵⁷ Coffeehouses, alehouses, public meetings, open-air harangues, festivals, parades, theatres, rented newspapers, political satire set to popular music, publicly displayed caricatures, and freely distributed newssheets gave all but the most indigent the opportunity to enter into public sociability and discourse, with 'even humble tradesmen and apprentices' reading the news.⁵⁸ John Brewer suggested that the increasing use of plebeian imagery in political prints demonstrates that plebeian politics became increasingly important towards the end of the eighteenth century.⁵⁹ It is also evident that ruling elites took the opinions expressed by the lower orders seriously, as is demonstrated by the popular surveillance work of the Paris police,⁶⁰ or by the number of British journeymen or labourers tried for sedition for having uttered words against the crown

⁵⁴ Arlette Farge, *Subversive Words, Public Opinion in Eighteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, 1994), p.1.

⁵⁵ John Mee, *Conversable Worlds, Literature, Contention and Community 1762 to 1830* (Oxford, 2011), pp.27-28; Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978), pp.277-78; Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973), pp.68-70; Lawrence Klein, 'Politeness for Plebes, Consumption and Social Identity in Early Eighteenth-Century England', in Ann Bermingham & John Brewer (eds.), *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* (London, 1995), p.363.

⁵⁶ Klein, 'Politeness for Plebes'.

⁵⁷ Nicholas Rogers, *Crowd, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford, 1998); H. T. Dickinson, *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York, 1994).

⁵⁸ Dickinson, *The Politics of the People*, p.97.

⁵⁹ John Brewer, *The Common People and Politics, 1750-1790s* (Cambridge, 1986), p.15.

⁶⁰ Farge, *Subversive Words*, p.3; Charles Walton, *Policing Public Opinion in the French Revolution* (Oxford, 2009), pp.10-18.

or government in such traditional social spaces as taverns or inns.⁶¹ Eighteenth-century governments also expended relatively large amounts of money and effort on propaganda aimed at all sectors of society, indicating their recognition of the role of the lower orders of society in the public sphere.

This is not intended to indicate that the public sphere was a space of constant mass participation. For the most part those who engaged in public discourse, and especially those who did so regularly, were from the better off sections of society. Although it would be anachronistic to apply a Marxist synonymy of wealth and status to most eighteenth-century societies – legal definitions of status were more important to a person’s social identity than wealth-based notions of class⁶² – the lowest in society also tended to be the poorest and least educated, with less access to the cultural produce that allowed for interaction in the public. Nonetheless, there were opportunities for plebeian involvement in the public sphere. By its very nature the public sphere had to be open to any who wished to participate, and although those who did so against social convention would risk scorn or social ostracism, there was no glass ceiling to prevent engagement with the public. While the public sphere cannot be defined as a space of mass engagement, nor should arbitrary social barriers be erected to discount either elite or popular participation.

Another criticism of Habermas centres on his failure to engage with gender.⁶³ Joan Landes, among others, tried to rectify this omission and rehabilitate gendered nuances into the eighteenth-century public while not straying far from Habermas’s concept of the bourgeois public sphere.⁶⁴ However, Landes’s work has attracted a great deal of criticism, especially for labelling the eighteenth-century public sphere as essentially ‘masculinist’, and for linking public engagement to political rights, with the subsequent general exclusion of women from the post-Revolutionary public.⁶⁵ Landes based much of her work on the heavily critiqued ‘separate spheres’ theory, seeing men active in the public sphere and women relegated to the private. Yet, as Harriet Guest argued, not only were public and private permeable constructs, but

⁶¹ Old Bailey Online, <www.oldbaileyonline.org>, accessed 18 September 2010, trials of Jesse Hilliar, Richard Fuller & Humphrey Crawley; *St James’s Chronicle or British Evening Post*, 27 September & 14 October 1800; *Morning Post*, 16 January 1794; *Sun*, 2 May 1798.

⁶² Kloek & Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, pp.132-33.

⁶³ Keane, *Women Writers*, p.4.

⁶⁴ Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1988).

⁶⁵ Keith Baker, ‘Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France: Variations on a Theme by Habermas’, in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge MA, 1992), pp.198-206.

women's participation in the broadly-conceived public sphere was not reliant on legal political rights.⁶⁶

The idea that women were excluded from eighteenth-century public life has largely fallen victim to empiricism, with almost all studies of the public space attributing a role to women. In social surrounds such as promenades, theatres, pleasure gardens, and salons, women from a wide range of social backgrounds could, and did, take part in public activity.⁶⁷ Dena Goodman argued that both male and female roles in the fabled 'Republic of Letters' were essential and complimentary, if ultimately uneven.⁶⁸ Women were able to play a part in the burgeoning eighteenth-century print culture, as both writers and consumers of literature, though female authors of works dealing explicitly with public affairs remained a minority. Women could also play a role in politics despite the absence of any legal political rights. In Britain, for example, women were active if limited participants in the election process, and played a key role in political movements such as the campaigns to abolish the slave trade.⁶⁹ In civil disorder and public festivals – activities which took place without question in the public realm – women often played a leading part. There was also a limited degree of female participation in more formal associations such as debating or learned societies, and in certain Masonic lodges in France and the Netherlands.⁷⁰ While it is true that the expression of opinion and formal acts of public association remained largely a masculine pursuit, the participation of women in the public sphere must not be discounted.

The spaces and modes of communication of the eighteenth-century public sphere were crucial to creating a strong and inclusive sense of public. A strong print culture, areas of public

⁶⁶ Harriet Guest, *Small Change. Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago, 2000), pp.12-14.

⁶⁷ Keane, *Women Writers*, p.9; Guest, *Small Change*, p.14; Rogers, *Crowd, Culture and Politics*, p.216; Markham Ellis, 'Coffee-women, *The Spectator* and the Public Sphere in the Early Eighteenth Century', in Elizabeth Eger et al. (eds.), *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere 1700-1830* (Cambridge, 2001), p.31.

⁶⁸ Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters, A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, 1994), pp.7-9.

⁶⁹ Elaine Chalus, "'The Epidemical Madness'; Women and Electoral Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century', in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1997), 151-78; Kate Davies, 'A Moral Purchase: Femininity, Commerce and Abolition, 1788-1792', in Elizabeth Eger et al. (eds.), *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere 1700-1830* (Cambridge, 2001), 133-59; J. R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery, the Mobilisation of Public Opinion Against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807* (London, 1998), pp.133-42.

⁷⁰ Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment, Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford, 1991), p.129; Marleen de Vries, 'Dichten is Zilver, Zwijgen is Goud. Vrouwen in Letterkundige Genootschappen 1772-1800', *De Achttiende Eeuw*, 31, 2 (1999), 187-213; Dorothy Sturkenboom, 'Une Société Savante Exclusivement Féminine. Présage des Temps Modernes ou Vestige de l'Ancien Régime?', *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*, Vol. 326 (2001), 117-27.

sociability such as the coffeehouse, tavern, salon or debating society, improved transport and communications, and the increased penchant for discussion and secular debate all contributed to increasing numbers of people becoming involved in public conversation on public affairs. The Enlightenment, the century's great intellectual achievement, helped to stimulate conversation and debate in different areas. No longer was religion the major topic of controversy in many places as ideas of government, economics, and 'natural' law and rights circulated and were often discussed more freely. Print was undoubtedly a key aspect of the public, and the Netherlands, France and Britain all saw a growth in the periodical press during this period.

The privileged place of print in the public sphere meant that literacy was an important measure for the eighteenth-century public. Literacy rates varied widely across the three countries. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Netherlands led the way while France lagged behind. Surveys of signatures in eighteenth-century marriage registers indicate that by the eve of the French Revolution eighty-five percent of Dutchmen and sixty-four percent of Dutchwomen were able to sign their names, compared to less than forty percent of Frenchmen.⁷¹ Such basic literacy, however, does not imply that a person could read complex texts or would choose to read them, and Robert Gildea estimated the 1801 French reading public to number 4.6 million men and 2.7 million women.⁷² Literacy also did not indicate the wealth to afford to consume printed material. Cheap pamphlets, journals, serialisations and lending libraries could help to lower costs, but print consumption remained a relatively elite activity, albeit one whose elite should be measured by a haphazard combination of intellectual desire, disposable income, and proximity to supply, rather than by social status.

Print culture was nonetheless enormously important to the eighteenth-century public sphere. Again, the Netherlands was somewhat ahead of many of its neighbours in the volume of literature produced and consumed. By 1780 at least forty-one Dutch cities boasted booksellers and Amsterdam alone had 121 purveyors of literature – only eight less than the far more populous city of Paris.⁷³ French print culture was perhaps less developed than that of Britain

⁷¹ Simon Hart, *Geschrift en Getal, Een Keuze uit Demografisch-, Economisch- en Sociaal-historische Studiën op Grond van Amsterdamse en Zaanse Archivalia, 1600-1800* (Dordrecht, 1976), pp.130-31; Robert Darnton, 'In Search of the Enlightenment: Recent Attempts to Create a Social History of Ideas', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (1971), p.122; François Furet & Jacques Ozouf, *Reading and Writing, Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 5-57 & p.49, figure 1.2.

⁷² Gildea, *Children of the Revolution*, p.174. This is just over a quarter of the population.

⁷³ J. Popkin, 'Print Culture in the Netherlands on the Eve of the Revolution', in M. Jacob & W. Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), p.275.

and the Netherlands, but the French public was nonetheless well immersed in the world of print, and became even more so as the Revolution helped to increase both the supply and demand for news in print. Jeremy Popkin emphasised the importance of the press to public participation in the revolutionary process, seeing it as ‘the Revolution’s real “public space”’ that allowed all Frenchmen to be ‘virtually present’ in the newly-formed National Assembly.⁷⁴ The explosion of the French press between 1789 and the fall of the monarchy was built on a fairly long literary tradition, although French periodicals before the Revolution rarely dealt with specifically political topics.⁷⁵ Throughout the period Paris played a predominant role in French print culture. Many of the most nationally widely-read journals were printed in Paris, and were therefore influenced by metropolitan views and values. Some Parisian productions such as *Feuille Villageoise* and *Feuille de Correspondance* were deliberately aimed at a readership outside of the capital.

The London press was equally dominant in eighteenth-century Britain, but there was also an appreciable number of successful local newspapers throughout the century.⁷⁶ The well-established newspaper press is generally considered important to the evolving British political culture, creating a space in which readers from across the country and from all social backgrounds, including those excluded from formal processes, could engage with major political issues.⁷⁷ News reached a wider constituency than those who purchased the papers, as newspapers could be found in taverns, inns and coffeehouses, and often enjoyed public readings.⁷⁸ William Cobbett estimated that each newspaper he printed was read by at least ten people.⁷⁹ Reading was apparently a popular activity in Britain and there was a relatively high popular demand for printed material throughout the period.⁸⁰ In the mid-1790s, for example,

⁷⁴ Jeremy Popkin, *The Newspaper Press and the French Revolution* (London, 1990), p.3; & quoted in David Andress, *Massacre at the Champ de Mars, Popular Dissent and Political Culture in the French Revolution* (Woodbridge, 2009), p.13.

⁷⁵ J. Gilchrist & W. J. Murray (eds.), *The Press in the French Revolution: A Selection of Documents taken from the Press of the Revolution for the Years 1789-1794* (London, 1971), p.3; Bob Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press in Britain and France, 1620-1800* (London, 1996), pp.62-64.

⁷⁶ C. Y. Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins and the Provincial Newspaper Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1997), p.17.

⁷⁷ Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press*, p.29; Arthur Aspinall, *Politics and the Press c.1780-1850* (Brighton, 1973), p.1.

⁷⁸ Dickinson, *The Politics of the People*, p.97.

⁷⁹ Stuart Semmel, *Napoleon and the British* (New Haven, 2004), p.12.

⁸⁰ Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press*, pp.13-14.

Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts* sold over two million copies, each costing only a penny or less.⁸¹

In the Netherlands the staple of eighteenth-century public debate were political pamphlets, which varied in content from reasoned argument to rabid calumny.⁸² Pamphleteering was an established part of the Republic's popular politics, especially in times of crisis or upheaval. *Aan Het Volk van Nederland*, one of the earliest and most influential political pamphlets of the Patriot era, demanded the freedom to publish such writings as 'the only support of national liberty'.⁸³ Alongside pamphlets, the 1780s saw the rise of a new form of political publication in the shape of the periodical opinion sheet. Nicolaas van Sas argued that the periodicity of these new publications contributed greatly to the changing political culture of the 1780s, drawing people away from a haphazard immersion in politics and allowing those who wished it regular access to political news, opinion and analysis.⁸⁴ Political pamphlets were generally produced as ad hoc responses to particular crises or issues, but the periodical press offered a constant stream of political commentary and had the capacity to transform a relative trickle of political critique into a barrage.⁸⁵ There is certainly a case to be made for this during the period up to 1787, when the most popular periodicals such as *De Post van den Neder-Rhijn* ran to 3,000 copies per edition, but following the Orangist restoration the opinion press more or less vanished from Dutch political life.⁸⁶ It was resurrected to a degree after 1795, with periodical newsheets proving especially opinionated during the unitarist-federalist constitutional

⁸¹ Robert Hole, 'British Counter-Revolutionary Popular Propaganda in the 1790s', in Colin Jones (ed.), *Britain and Revolutionary France: Conflict, Subversion, Propaganda* (Exeter, 1983), p.56; Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars 1793-1815* (London, 1979), p.118.

⁸² Craig Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing and Political Culture in the Early Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht, 1987). The term 'pamphlet' is possibly misleading as some of these works were fairly weighty tomes.

⁸³ (Joan Derk van der Capellen), *Aan Het Volk van Nederland* (Ostend, 1781), p.75. 'Zorg voor de vryheid der drukpers, want zy is de eenige steun van Ulieder Nationale vryheid'. Although this pamphlet was published anonymously, it is now generally agreed to have been the work of Baron Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol, a member of the Overijssel nobility and prominent early Patriot.

⁸⁴ N. C. F. van Sas, 'Opiniepers en Politieke Cultuur', in F. Grijzenhout, W. Mijnhardt & N. van Sas (eds.), *Voor Vaderland en Vrijheid, De Revolutie van de Patriotten* (Amsterdam, 1987), p.97; N. C. F. van Sas, 'La Sociabilité Politique des Patriotes Bataves', *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*, Vol. 277 (1989), 210-24.

⁸⁵ van Sas, 'Opiniepers en Politieke Cultuur', 97-130.

⁸⁶ van Sas, 'Opiniepers en Politieke Cultuur', p.97; P. J. H. M. Theeuwen, *Pieter 'T Hoer en De Post van den Neder-Rhijn* (Hilversum, 2002).

debates of 1796-97.⁸⁷ After 1798, however, there was little movement to take advantage of the relatively free press, and increasing censorship after 1800 choked any possibility of a revival.⁸⁸

In all three countries the printed word was subject to censorship. The British and Dutch presses of the eighteenth century were free from pre-publication censorship but were subject to fairly stringent penalties should a publication offend the sensibilities of those in power.⁸⁹ Unlike in pre-Revolutionary France there was no Bastille or *lettres de cachet* for transgressing authors, but the authorities could and did prosecute those whose works they considered subversive or slanderous.⁹⁰ The early French Revolution showed a greater commitment to free expression within the limits of the law, but quickly proved more than willing to circumscribe those legal limits as circumstance dictated. All three countries introduced increasingly repressive legislation in the 1790s but a degree of press freedom remained, especially in Britain.⁹¹ Possibly more effective than prosecution in controlling the British press was bribery. For much of the Revolutionary period Secret Service funds were liberally sprinkled among the scribblers of the British press in order to encourage their loyalty and favourable opinion, though the practice diminished after 1800 as newspapers were increasingly able to sustain themselves financially without external funding. By 1815 the press had largely been able to free itself from the shackles of ministerial 'subsidy'.⁹²

While the consumption of print was important for public engagement, it was not a prerequisite. Placards, propaganda pieces, information posters, public readings, word of mouth repetition, and simple rumour – that staple of eighteenth-century plebeian sociability – could all provide free access to information. John Markoff found that literacy had little impact on where revolutionary action occurred in France in 1789, although more literate areas were

⁸⁷ Thomas Poell, 'Local Particularism Challenged, 1795-1813', in Oscar Gelderblom, *The Political Economy of the Dutch Republic* (Farnham, 2009), pp.297-98.

⁸⁸ Kloek & Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p.78.

⁸⁹ Nicolaas C. F. van Sas, 'The Patriot Revolution: New perspectives', in Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), p.104; Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic, its Rise, Greatness and Fall 1477-1806* (Oxford, 1995), p.1111.

⁹⁰ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, pp.64 & 79-80.

⁹¹ For a thorough account of censorship in France see André Cabanis, *La Presse sous le Consulat et l'Empire (1799-1814)* (Paris, 1975), pp. 165-204.

⁹² Aspinall, *Politics and the Press*, pp.66-68 & 373.

likely to echo the central revolutionary process while less literate areas were more prone to respond to hearsay and rumours of non-existent invasions.⁹³ Napoleon's government threw reams of carefully chosen information into the public sphere; bulletins, news of the armies and general state announcements were often given public readings in theatres, which were avidly attended, while posters were put up to bring news to a wider audience.⁹⁴ The *Moniteur* was routinely read aloud in lycées and until 1805 Napoleon was keen that the pulpit should also be used to spread carefully selected and tailored information.⁹⁵ In all countries the printed word could also reach the illiterate, albeit only haphazardly. In a situation familiar to all three countries, one Scottish workman recounted how he would receive old newspapers from his employer, whereupon 'the other workmen assembled in my cottage [...] and I read aloud; and we would discuss the important parts together.'⁹⁶

Spaces of public sociability were also important to the eighteenth-century public sphere. Taverns, coffeehouses, markets, theatres, pleasure gardens, festivals and even 'the street corner, [and] shop doorway'⁹⁷ provided forums for interaction with relatively few social barriers, although the reputation of coffeehouses as egalitarian 'penny universities' is something of an exaggeration of both their importance and of the social mingling that occurred.⁹⁸ More elite or socially-restricted spaces of sociability included learned societies, Masonic lodges, guilds, and the famous Parisian salons. While few of these spaces were explicitly politicised, conversation could quite easily degenerate to political topics, and festivals could easily assume political flavour. Some spaces were explicitly political, such as the Palais-Royal in Paris which became an increasing hotbed of political unrest as the 1780s drew to a close. Spaces of sociability were perhaps less prevalent in the Netherlands than in Britain or France. Outside Amsterdam and The Hague neither salons nor coffeehouses found much popularity, with the reality of both institutions in the Netherlands far removed from their

⁹³ Markoff, 'Literacy and Revolt'.

⁹⁴ Jean Tulard (ed.), *Cambacérés, Lettres Inédites à Napoléon 1802-1814* (2 vols, Paris, 1973), vol. 1, p.557; vol. 2, p.692.

⁹⁵ Martyn Lyons, *Napoleon Bonaparte and the Legacy of the French Revolution* (Basingstoke, 1994), p.182; Robert Holtman, *The Napoleonic Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1967), p.175.

⁹⁶ Roy Adkins & Lesley Adkins, *The War for all the Oceans* (London, 2007), p.116.

⁹⁷ Andress, *Massacre at the Champ de Mars*, p.14.

⁹⁸ Aytoun Ellis, *The Penny Universities: A History of Coffee-Houses* (London, 1956); Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, pp.12-13.

idealised French and English forms.⁹⁹ Tavern sociability tended to be more plebeian than socially inclusive in the Netherlands, but as in Britain taverns nonetheless afforded a space for discussion and debate.¹⁰⁰ Political violence could sometimes be attributed to men spilling from a tavern after generously sampling its wares, as many reports of unrest in the Netherlands in the 1780s testify.¹⁰¹

Public festivals also allowed a degree of popular participation in the public sphere. Festivals differed widely in form and function, from religious processions in France to secular parades for the election of municipal Regents in the Netherlands.¹⁰² Festivals in all countries could be explicitly political events, drawing people into validating or rejecting a course of action by their participation. The 1785 Franco-Dutch treaty, for example, was celebrated by a great feast thrown by the principal merchants of Amsterdam, while the celebrations of the Stadholder's birthday proved so contentious that in 1787 the Patriot-dominated States of Holland banned them altogether.¹⁰³ In France under the Revolution and empire fairs and festivals acquired a far more overtly political and propagandistic role but continued to enjoy widespread popularity.¹⁰⁴ Theatres provided a similarly popular space of sociability and offered similar opportunities for propaganda. In France the *Comédie Française* hosted over 150,000 visitors per year from the mid-eighteenth century onwards,¹⁰⁵ while the vernacular comic operas of

⁹⁹ Kloek & Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, pp.106-107.

¹⁰⁰ Geert Mak (trans. Philipp Blom), *Amsterdam, a Brief Life of the City* (London, 2001), p.185; Dickinson, *The Politics of the People*, p.37.

¹⁰¹ Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, La Courneuve, Paris (AMAE), Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 573, 'Extrait des Informations Prises sur ce qui Vient de se Passer à Amsterdam', 1 June 1787; Het Nationaal Archief, the Hague (HNA), Collectie Dumont-Pigalle (2.21.057), 25, 'Emeutes en Gueldre'.

¹⁰² Willem Frijhoff, 'Feesten in de 18^{de} Eeuw', in Willem Frijhoff, Franz Grijzenhout & Marieke Kruijt, *Een Groot Gedruis en eene Onbesuisde Vrolykheid, Feesten in de 18^{de} Eeuw* (Leyden, 1996), p.16.

¹⁰³ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 566, de Vérac to Vergennes, 31 January 1786 ; Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents*, p.126.

¹⁰⁴ Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution* (London, 1988); Holtman, *The Napoleonic Revolution*, p.170; Denise Z. Davidson, 'Women at Napoleonic Festivals: Gender and the Public Sphere During the First Empire', *French History*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (September 2002), 299-322. Mona Ozouf argued that festivals were 'anti-political' to the extent that they promoted a message of unitary values rather than allowing political pluralism, but for the sake of this argument they were political in that they contained a polemical message rather than being simply arenas of entertainment.

¹⁰⁵ John Lough, *Paris Theatre Audiences in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1957), pp.272-73, appendix 1.

fairs and Parisian boulevard theatres achieved a high degree of popularity.¹⁰⁶ The theatre was also hugely popular with all parts of British society, from the king downwards, although it was far less fashionable in the Netherlands.¹⁰⁷ Dutch theatre seems to have appealed to only a small social elite, and foreign visitors often found Dutch theatre to be of a poor standard, ill-attended, and unsatisfactory as a social experience.¹⁰⁸

Widespread social interaction would also take place in shops and markets, which could provide forums for discussing issues with political ramifications. The immediate origins of the 1789 October Days, for example, have been attributed to gatherings in the market places of Paris.¹⁰⁹ In Britain and the Netherlands marketplaces and commercial exchanges were also important areas of public sociability. Commercial exchanges were especially important for the discussion of foreign news, as trade transactions often depended on the stability or otherwise of foreign markets. Areas of commercial sociability also included guilds and unofficial *compagnonnages*, though these had less importance in Britain and largely disappeared from France during the early Revolution.¹¹⁰ Guilds were especially important in Dutch society and, to a lesser extent, in political life until the mid-1790s, affording members an arena of social interaction and playing a role in the sociability of the wider local community by organising public festivals or parades.¹¹¹ Similarly to guilds, Freemason's lodges were semi-closed institutions that gave likeminded people a chance to meet, discuss and socialise, and proved especially popular in pre-Revolutionary France, claiming approximately 210,000 members by 1780.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ Robert Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy, Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-century Paris* (Oxford, 1986), pp.33 & 167.

¹⁰⁷ Henk Gras & Harry van Vliet, 'Paradise Lost nor Regained: Social Composition of Theatre Audiences in the Long Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Winter 2004), p.475.

¹⁰⁸ Victor Delpuech de Comeiras, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages faits en Europe* (12 vols, Paris, 1803-04), vol. 8, p.111-12; P.N. Anot & F. Malfillatre, *Les Deux Voyageurs* (2 vols, Rheims, 1802), vol. 1, p.149; L. de Gou (ed.), *Dagboek van een Patriot: Journaal van Willem Hendrik Teding van Berkhout* (The Hague, 1982), p.3.

¹⁰⁹ William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1990), p.121.

¹¹⁰ Peter McPhee, *A Social History of France, 1780-1880* (London, 1993), pp.13-14.

¹¹¹ Maarten Prak, 'Corporate Politics in the Low Countries: Guilds as Institutions, 14th to 18th Centuries', in Maarten Prak et al. (ed.), *Craft Guilds in the Early Modern Low Countries, Work, Power and Representation* (Aldershot, 2006), 74-106; Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, p.1015; Frijhoff, 'Feesten in de 18^{de} Eeuw', p.16.

¹¹² Anton Van de Sande, '« Une Ambition Nationale Louable ». Les Francs-Maçons et la République Batave', *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*, Vol. 326 (2001), 79-92; Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*; McPhee, *A Social History of France*, p.27.

Learned societies also provided a major space for eighteenth-century public sociability. Societies are not necessarily indicative of a strong politicised public sphere, as many discouraged members from discussing subjects that might cause controversy in the belief that 'complete neutrality in religious and political matters' was 'the cornerstone of the ideology of sociability'.¹¹³ However, there was without doubt some direct discussion of the major issues of the day within these associations. In Britain the largest and most famous formal societies tended to be based in London but many provincial towns and cities possessed appreciable and well-attended learned societies.¹¹⁴ The Netherlands boasted a wide range of scientific or literary associations, although after the Orangist revival of 1787 many became barely concealed fronts for political activism, or made implicit political statements through their dedication to progressive reform.¹¹⁵ Margaret Jacob noted frequent links between scientific improvement and political radicalism, and the reformist *Nut* is generally considered to have strong ties to Patriotism.¹¹⁶ Patriot societies in fact formed the bulk of politicised associations in the Netherlands in the 1780s.¹¹⁷ It has been estimated that the Province of Holland alone could claim over 200 'Patriot' associations in around a hundred towns and villages.¹¹⁸ Many societies retained an exclusive membership but others were fairly broadly socially inclusive.¹¹⁹ The Batavian Republic saw a new proliferation of explicitly political clubs and societies, many of which were more radical than their 1780s counterparts, but this proved a short-lived phenomenon.¹²⁰ The constitution of 1798 saw the penchant for clubs as causing factionalism and as inimical to liberty rather than an expression of it. The circumstances in which people

¹¹³ van den Berg, 'Literary Sociability in the Netherlands', p.265.

¹¹⁴ Paul Elliott, 'The Origins of the "Creative Class": Provincial Urban Society, Scientific Culture and Socio-Political Marginality in Britain in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Social History*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (October 2003), 361-387; Lawrence E. Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (December 2002), pp.892-95.

¹¹⁵ van Sas, 'La Sociabilité Politique des Patriotes Bataves', p.222.

¹¹⁶ Margaret C. Jacob, 'Radicalism in the Dutch Enlightenment', in Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), p.237; Kloek & Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in European Perspective*, p.111.

¹¹⁷ van Sas, 'La Sociabilité Politique des Patriotes Bataves', pp.215-21.

¹¹⁸ Joost Rosendaal, 'La Liberté est une Garce! Les Bataves à Paris (1787-1795)', in Annie Jourdan & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Remous Révolutionnaires: République Batave, Armée Française* (Amsterdam, 1996), p.59.

¹¹⁹ van Sas, 'La Sociabilité Politique des Patriotes Bataves', p.220.

¹²⁰ Poell, 'Local Particularism Challenged', p.300.

might meet in societies were severely circumscribed, and clubs were forbidden from organising petitions or holding elections. As van Sas argued, the constitution of 1798 virtually put an end to explicit Dutch political sociability.¹²¹

While new and 'revolutionary' arenas of public discourse were important to the public sphere, they should not be overemphasised. Traditional spaces such as taverns remained as important as coffeehouses, for example, reaching a geographically and socially wider audience. While new forms of formal debate and increased literacy without doubt greatly enriched expression and consumption of information within the public domain, more traditional (and popular) methods, such as public display or disorder and rites such as charivari, should not be ignored. Popular disturbance, for example, was often a highly ritualised and customary method of expressing popular concerns and opinions, rather than wanton licentiousness.¹²² Even print had to compete with more traditional methods of news distribution, such as public announcements or town criers, and although some of these practices diminished considerably by the end of the century, other spoken sources of information such as the pulpit retained relevance and widespread appeal well into the nineteenth century.¹²³

The corollary to the public sphere is public opinion. The term public opinion gained currency in Britain and France during the eighteenth century, though it was not popularly used in the Netherlands until the 1820s.¹²⁴ There are two main strands to public opinion, both as it was conceived in the eighteenth century and as it has been conceived since. The first as theorised in the eighteenth century places public opinion as the ultimate tribunal of human affairs, above the influence of petty individual judgements. Although contemporaries often saw this as an intangible and pure measure of 'truth', it was (as will be shown below) more the product of underlying identities and socio-cultural norms; supposed realities that were 'latently present in unconscious mentalities'.¹²⁵ The second type of opinion was more active and responsive to

¹²¹ van Sas, 'La Sociabilité Politique des Patriotes Bataves', p.223-24.

¹²² Rogers, *Crowd, Culture and Politics*; Cynthia Bouton, *The Flour War, Gender, Class and Community in Late Ancien Régime French Society* (Pennsylvania, 1993); George Rudé, *The Crowd in History, a Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England 1730-1848* (London, 1981); W. P. Te Brake, 'Violence in the Dutch Patriot Revolution', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1988), 143-63.

¹²³ Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins*, p.8; Robert Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England, 1760-1832* (Cambridge, 1989).

¹²⁴ Kloek & Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p.117.

¹²⁵ Manfred Beller, 'Perception, Image, Imagology', in Manfred Beller & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Imagology, The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters, a Critical Survey* (Amsterdam, 2007), p.11.

events, and can be considered as the sum total of the public's reactions to and opinions on certain phenomena or issues. The latter type of opinion reflects physiocrat thinking, which considered public opinion the result of publicly-held debate and discussion, while the former idea held that opinion sprang up organically, somewhat akin to Rousseau's notion of the General Will.¹²⁶ Both types of public opinion imply 'a predominance of sentiment among the entire population', though neither should be taken to constitute a hegemonic discourse.¹²⁷ As John Mee asserted, the public sphere was less as a place where commonality was sought and found, but a 'place of collision, misunderstanding, resistance, and silence as much as recognition or communion.'¹²⁸

Keith Baker argued that eighteenth-century public opinion, especially in France, was a political invention.¹²⁹ From around the 1750s both the crown and its opponents were increasingly wont to publish their viewpoints to 'appeal to a principle of legitimacy beyond the system in order to press their competing claims.'¹³⁰ Goodman saw this as evolving from an older idea that 'posterity' would act as the ultimate judge of a person's actions; by the late eighteenth century 'men of letters had redefined public opinion to take the place of posterity as a living tribunal'.¹³¹ Daniel Gordon concurred with the political nature of public opinion in France, positing that the lack of a representative political body meant that public opinion became necessary as a counterweight to absolute monarchical authority.¹³² Although eighteenth-century Britons prided themselves on the absence of autocratic government, from the mid-century they too saw public opinion as a strong tool in tempering ministerial tyranny.¹³³

Despite the widely-held belief that actions could be vilified or vindicated in the 'tribunal' of public opinion, the public remained ill-defined and its opinion little more than an abstract notion. There was no expectation that individuals would be canvassed for their views or that

¹²⁶ Baker, 'Defining the Public Sphere', p.193.

¹²⁷ Richard Sobel, *The Impact of Public Opinion on US Foreign Policy Since Vietnam* (Oxford, 2001), p.10.

¹²⁸ Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, p.281.

¹²⁹ Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1990), p.168.

¹³⁰ Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, p.171.

¹³¹ Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, pp.236-37.

¹³² Gordon, 'Philosophy, Sociology, and Gender', p.893.

¹³³ J. A. W. Gunn, *Beyond Liberty and Property, The Process of Self-Recognition in Eighteenth-Century Political Thought* (Kingston, 1983), p.276.

any direct submission of opinion should be made. This indeterminacy has led to public opinion being called ‘the last refuge of the politician without vision or the scholar without any better explanation’, but as a practical limit on the actions of politicians or public figures it was thought to have a definite impact.¹³⁴ Even Louis XVI acknowledged its pressures, claiming ‘I must always consult public opinion; it is never wrong’.¹³⁵ This rather passive interpretation of public opinion pinpoints it as essentially the culturally-evolved boundaries of acceptability rather than a concrete expression of collected thoughts on a certain issue.

Public opinion in this conception was largely based on the sum of generally-accepted social norms, stereotypes or preconceptions, including what might be called ‘common knowledge’. This thesis will refer to these underlying understandings as latent public opinion. Although latent public opinion was largely resistant to individual input, interested parties remained keen to influence it. Walton argued that officials in *ancien-régime* Paris thought it necessary to control and police collective values in order to protect public *moeurs* from degeneracy and corrupting influence.¹³⁶ Yet for the most part the underlying understandings that made up this conception of public opinion were the work of many years of received notions and repeated conventional wisdom. Print was especially important in standardising and reinforcing stereotyped perceptions, and in facilitating their spread. Although no single work can be said to have formed or to have represented a national public opinion, each would have been produced within a ‘discursive praxis’ which both drew on and contributed to its underlying bases.¹³⁷ Through public repetition, popular reputation often became the dominant perceived reality. As the first edition of *Anti-Jacobin* complained in 1797, many (mis)representations had ‘their root and foundation in lies of older dates; which either from circumstance of their never having received a decisive contradiction, or, by dint of being impudently repeated after it, have obtained a sort of prescriptive credit, and are referred to upon all occasions, as if established beyond dispute.’¹³⁸

The perceptions, representations, and stereotypes of latent public opinion were not necessarily distortions or works of the imagination, but could be based very much on real and

¹³⁴ Gunn, *Beyond Liberty and Property*, p.260.

¹³⁵ Melton, *The Rise of the Public*, p.2.

¹³⁶ Walton, *Policing Public Opinion*, p.10.

¹³⁷ Leerssen, ‘Imagology’, p.27.

¹³⁸ *Anti-Jacobin*, 20 November 1797.

observable facts. As Ronald Schechter wrote, 'it would be naïve to draw a strict dichotomy between representations and hard facts, myths and realities, discourses and practices, history as it was imagined and *wie es eigentlich gewesen*.'¹³⁹ Public opinion was, to the people that held it, very often a form of reality. Even caricatures or stereotypes, although distorted and exaggerated, were usually seen as having a basis in reality.

Public opinion also contained a more active element. Public opinion could denote the collected articulated thoughts of a public on a certain issue. As opposed to latent opinion outlined above, this active opinion tended to pertain to individual events and specific sets of circumstance. It was much more the product of targeted debate and public discussion, relying less on stereotypes and received ideas than on individual interpretations. The collation of individual interpretations into a dominant response to events can be loosely regarded as active public opinion. Active opinion did not demand full consensus and it was perfectly possible for it to be obviously and irredeemably split. The pro- and anti-Orangist responses in the Netherlands to attacks on the Stadholder in the mid-1780s provide a clear example of split opinion, where the support of 'public opinion' for a cause could only be claimed by privileging one section of a deeply divided public over another.¹⁴⁰

Linked to this conception of opinion is that which in eighteenth-century France was called *esprit public*.¹⁴¹ This could describe both 'the mood' of a population,¹⁴² and the specific response of the public to certain news or events. As a measure of morale, *esprit public* was thought to be malleable and controllable. In daily reports to Napoleon while the emperor was away from Paris, for example, Jean-Jacques-Régis de Cambacérès often begged for news from the army so that he could counter a growing malaise in *esprit public*.¹⁴³ It is evident that French governments especially took *esprit public* seriously and were willing to consider it a full part of public opinion; in 1792 a Bureau of *esprit public* was set up in Paris expressly to monitor public

¹³⁹ Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Ewing, 2003), p.18.

¹⁴⁰ W. Ph. Te Brake, *Regents and Rebels, the Revolutionary World of an Eighteenth-Century Dutch City* (Oxford, 1989), p.168.

¹⁴¹ Although it translates directly as 'public spirit', its meaning is somewhere between public opinion and public morale. Public spirit in English tends to mean feeling the need to do something for the public good.

¹⁴² Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.18.

¹⁴³ Tulard (ed.), *Cambacérès, Lettres Inédites à Napoléon*, passim.

opinion.¹⁴⁴ This opinion did not have to be national, and was indeed often understood best in a local context. As such it did not have the legitimacy or moral authority of less tangible expressions of supposedly 'national' (or even universal) public opinion, but it was far more rooted in the genuine experience and beliefs of the people. The surveillance of *esprit public* was arguably as close as any government of the long eighteenth century came to consistently surveying the opinions of its populace.

The relationship between public opinion and nation is complex. Neither latent nor active opinion had to belong to a single national community. Some opinions could be held locally or regionally, while some people, such as Voltaire, were consciously cosmopolitan and saw themselves as existing in a transnational public, where the opinions espoused were supposedly those of all mankind.¹⁴⁵ During the French Revolution cosmopolitan universalism briefly superseded the idea of national individuality on a far grander scale. Yet this universalism was a short-lived phenomenon and did not herald the dawn of a new period of cosmopolitan consciousness; the post-1793 xenophobia was much more in keeping with eighteenth-century norms and underlines the exceptionalism of the years 1789-92.¹⁴⁶ Cosmopolitanism was in fact far less common than the 'national' experience. The obvious linguistic, cultural, social and even legal differences between different national experiences which helped to shape perceptions, representations, identity, and ultimately opinion, cannot be ignored.

Such differences could also apply at local levels, and could lead to the formation of regional rather than national publics. Supposedly-national public opinion was often dominated by a metropolitan public, while noticeably different regional opinions were dismissed as peripheral. However, the well-established eighteenth-century communications networks did allow people from across a country to engage in public debate, and did allow people from capital and provinces to believe that they were partaking in a national public discourse and contributing to national public opinion.¹⁴⁷ Growing national sentiment also meant more people felt part of a national community, and encouraged those with the means to self-consciously engage in what they believed to be specifically national, rather than parochial or transnational, debates. This is especially the case for many political issues, where the subject specifically concerned one self-

¹⁴⁴ Walton, *Policing Public Opinion*, p.206-216.

¹⁴⁵ Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism* (London, 1987), p.1.

¹⁴⁶ Vovelle, 'Entre Cosmopolitisme et Xénophobie', p.19.

¹⁴⁷ William A. MacKinnon, *On the Rise, Progress and Present State of Public Opinion in Great Britain and Other Parts of the World* (London, 1828), pp.5-6.

identified nation. Competing regional, national and cosmopolitan identities could allow individuals to divorce themselves from a supposed national opinion, but it would not prevent them from believing that a national public opinion existed.

In the most basic terms public opinion can therefore be split into two categories; latent opinion and active opinion. The two types of opinion are not mutually exclusive but they do demonstrate different characteristics and demand different responses from those interacting with them. Active opinion is a generally more short-term phenomenon, created by an event or set of circumstances which elicits a strong enough response from a cross section of society to be able to state that 'the public' had an opinion on it. This opinion is the product of deliberate debate, discussion and interaction within the public sphere. Latent public opinion, on the other hand, relates to the received world-views or schemas that can be traced across a much longer period of time, providing the background conceptual context with which people consider events. It is also the result of discursive practices in the public sphere, but it relates to *mentalités* rather than to conscious or 'rationally' debated opinion. Latent opinion was not a static phenomenon; as Eugen Weber asserted, 'images survive long after the realities that forged them, but the running commentary of experience provides the counter-point'.¹⁴⁸ Although often predicated on past realities, it did adapt to changing circumstance.

While a nebulous latent public opinion represented the tribunal before which people and governments could be judged in the eighteenth century, active public opinion was often approached with a degree of distrust. James Harris, British ambassador to the Netherlands in the mid-1780s, wrote to Foreign Secretary Lord Carmarthen in 1785 that the rampant 'passion and animosity' made it difficult to determine which opinions were the result of long-held convictions, and therefore acceptable, and which came 'solely from disappointment and resentment'.¹⁴⁹ Part of this distrust came from the fact that opinion was often suspected not to come from the 'better sort' of person but to be the product of irrational 'popular clamour', as one early nineteenth-century commentator put it.¹⁵⁰ Politicians of any stripe in all countries remained wary of supposedly illogical or 'vulgar' opinions.¹⁵¹ William Godwin eulogised public opinion – 'the most potent engine that can be brought within the sphere of political activity' –

¹⁴⁸ Weber, 'Of Stereotypes and of the French', p.198

¹⁴⁹ The National Archives, London (TNA), FO 37/6, Harris to Carmarthen, 4 January 1785.

¹⁵⁰ MacKinnon, *On the Rise, Progress and Present State of Public Opinion*, p.17.

¹⁵¹ Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People?*, pp.310-11.

while despising ‘demagogic’ politics.¹⁵² Even Charles Fox reportedly stated that he would as readily consult sheep as he would ‘the lower order of peasantry’ on matters of public importance.¹⁵³

Although popular engagement in the public sphere has been demonstrated, consistent popular input into active public opinion is less clear. Eighteenth-century writers frequently delineated between the educated classes and the ‘vile multitude’, seeing the latter as ‘base, ignorant and violent’.¹⁵⁴ Those deemed worthy of holding an opinion would be more positively described as educated, rational and intelligent.¹⁵⁵ Some acolytes of Habermas’s rational public sphere would agree, categorising public opinion not as the “‘mere opinion” (or arbitrary views) of isolated individuals taken in the aggregate [...] and the opinion of the “common” sort of people’, but rather ‘the views held by those who join in rational-critical debate on an issue.’¹⁵⁶ Such a view, however, wilfully ignores a whole range of ill-informed and irrational expression that existed in the public domain. It also unreasonably presupposes an objective delineation between ‘rational debate’ and ‘mere opinion’. In 1793 George Dyer opined that many supposedly-educated men spoke no more intelligently on public affairs than the ‘vulgar and ignorant’.¹⁵⁷ While the *philosophes* doubtless considered themselves informed and rational, Frederick II of Prussia would have considered them to be expressing ‘mere opinion’ when in 1784 he banned any private individual from passing judgement on his government, favourable or unfavourable, on the grounds that no private individual could be in possession of the full facts and was therefore incapable of making any judgement.¹⁵⁸ The subjectivity of rationality and the very real problems of accuracy of information in the eighteenth century make any division of opinion into informed-rational and uninformed-irrational largely meaningless.

¹⁵² Andrew McCann, ‘William Godwin and the Pathological Public Sphere: Theorizing Communicative Action in the 1790s’, in Paula Backscheider & Timothy Dykstal, *The Intersection of the Public and Private Spheres in Early Modern England* (London, 1996), pp.200-201.

¹⁵³ Oscar Browning (ed.), *The Political Memoranda of Francis, Fifth Duke of Leeds* (London, 1884), p.213.

¹⁵⁴ Klein, ‘Politeness for Plebes’, p.362; Harry C. Payne, *The Philosophes and the People* (New Haven, 1976), p.2.

¹⁵⁵ Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People?*, p.311.

¹⁵⁶ Calhoun, ‘Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere’, p.17.

¹⁵⁷ George Dyer, *The Complaints of the Poor People of England* (London, 1793), p.6.

¹⁵⁸ Melton, *The Rise of the Public*, p.8.

Moreover, contemporaries did periodically acknowledge ‘expansive conceptions of the public’ as a matter of expediency in ‘efforts to outflank entrenched authority or political rivals’.¹⁵⁹

Nonetheless, it can often be difficult to discern popular input into public opinion. Outside of issues of discontent or lawlessness, which often led to violence or prosecution and the corresponding paper trail for scholars to mine, the lowest orders of society tended not to leave much first-hand evidence of their thoughts on most issues. Illiteracy and the relative expense of writing material provided a practical barrier to plebeian chroniclers. Contemporary second-hand accounts or reports of the impressions of members of the lower orders of society do exist, but the historian is constrained by the recognition that the voice of the quill-wielder will inevitably if unintentionally intrude on the issue. The overwhelming weight of evidence available to the historian therefore comes from the better off members of society, those who had the time, inclination and resources to put quill to paper.

This is especially the case when it comes to the main focus of this thesis, the public’s attitudes to foreign policy. Rather than attempting to delineate between rational and irrational, Christopher Hill suggested a differentiation between mass opinion and attentive opinion.¹⁶⁰ This distinction, Hill explained, is not the same as drawing an arbitrary line between ‘the educated and the lumpen’. Mass opinion includes the whole range of opinions, including those of the educated elites, while attentive opinion refers to ‘the minority which takes a persistent and knowledgeable interest in international affairs.’ The difference here is not the strength or the volume of the opinion expressed but its persistence. Mass opinion is explicitly expressed only occasionally, while attentive opinion issues a more or less constant critique of policy. The key requirement of persistent engagement with foreign affairs – the access to news and information – placed participation in attentive opinion out of reach of all but an educated and moneyed minority. Joost Kloek and Wijnand Mijnhardt estimated that in the Netherlands in 1800 only five to seven percent of households were able to consistently engage with public opinion, though evidently this would increase in times of upheaval or excitement.¹⁶¹ This thesis will seek to discern mass opinion where possible, but it must be acknowledged that for the most part the active public opinion expressed regarding foreign policy was the attentive opinion of a well-connected and moneyed few.

¹⁵⁹ Walton, *Policing Public Opinion*, p.31.

¹⁶⁰ Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, p.262.

¹⁶¹ Kloek & Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p.119.

The impact of public opinion on foreign policy has been relatively little studied, especially in an eighteenth-century context. As the study of the system in which states operate, International Relations theory tends to focus on diplomatic, military and strategic relations between states, marginalising public opinion as an actor.¹⁶² Yet to understand the international relations of any particular period it is necessary to embrace a more holistic approach, considering not only the structured relations between states but the internal and international impulses underlying the foreign policies behind relations.¹⁶³

Foreign policy is not an unproblematic term. The term hints at a coherence and unity in intent on the part of a state that was often not evident. A state does not necessarily have a coherent sum of solutions to a certain problem that can be labelled as its 'policy', and assumptions can be complicated because different actors could have quite different agendas.¹⁶⁴ By the eighteenth century most states boasted a foreign minister or equivalent to deal with external affairs, but such is the importance of international relations that heads of government would remain intimately interested in foreign policy.¹⁶⁵ In pre-Revolution France, for example, a foreign minister might work towards one end in his routine correspondence only to be undermined or have his policy inverted by the demands of his monarch. During the Revolution foreign affairs had to run the lengthier gauntlet of interference by committees, assemblies and bureaucrats, each with a potentially separate agenda, and also contend with the desires of an increasingly politicised cadre of generals, ultimately epitomised by Napoleon Bonaparte. In Britain after the 1782 reforms the situation was equally complex. The foreign secretary reported to the monarch but also had to gain approval of Cabinet and prime minister, and was ultimately liable to parliamentary scrutiny.

In all countries, personality was important in policy formulation. Factionalism and power struggles within governments could help to push policy one way or another, and personal friendships or enmities could bolster or undermine support for a certain minister's policies. In Britain, for example, the Cabinet alliance of William Grenville, Henry Dundas and William Pitt allowed a fairly united front to be presented on policy issues for much of the 1790s. Grenville, however, later split from Pitt and then fell out with key ministers William Windham and

¹⁶² Chris Brown, *Understanding International Relations* (2nd edn., Basingstoke, 2001), p.3.

¹⁶³ Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, p.52.

¹⁶⁴ Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, pp.3-5.

¹⁶⁵ Black, *European International Relations*, ch. 3.

George Canning over minor issues of patronage.¹⁶⁶ In 1809 Canning famously fell out with Lord Castlereagh, with the two fighting a duel in the aftermath of the Walcheren debacle. In France, the fall from grace of foreign ministers from the Duc de La Vauguyon to Pierre Lebrun came about from ideology and politics rather than personality, but personal accords or disagreements could affect policy. Until May 1793, for example, support for Lebrun's foreign policy was assured by his close friendship with key Girondin leaders.¹⁶⁷ Relations between ambassadors and host governments could also help to shape foreign affairs. The poor relationship between the Dutch government and British ambassador Sir Joseph Yorke was at least partly responsible for the disputes that led to the Anglo-Dutch War of 1780-84, while the acquaintanceship of Dutch foreign minister Maarten van der Goes and British ambassador Robert Liston helped to soften relations during the brief Peace of Amiens.¹⁶⁸

It is generally in terms of such internal government struggles or in terms of international relations, rather than public input, that foreign policy is considered. The accepted view is that before the Second World War foreign policy in most countries was the preserve of the executive and its corps of professional diplomats.¹⁶⁹ The Cold War's threat of mutually assured destruction arguably brought considerations of foreign policy into the public domain as an integral part of the domestic political process in the West but, for the most part, active diplomacy has remained beyond public view. The obscurity of policy and diplomacy was even greater in the eighteenth century. By the late eighteenth century diplomacy as an art was largely codified. It was widely accepted that negotiations should be kept private so as not to harm the prospects of compromise, which was seen as the key to any meaningful diplomacy.¹⁷⁰ *Realpolitik* rather than popular input is generally considered as the primary motivator for governments and negotiators.¹⁷¹ Policy was obscurely concocted in royal cabinets or elite

¹⁶⁶ James J. Sack, *The Grenvillites 1801-29* (Urbana, 1979), pp.78, 86 & 136. Also Christopher Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War, 1803-1815* (Manchester, 1992), pp.66-68.

¹⁶⁷ Howe, *Foreign Policy and the French Revolution*, p.226, footnote 42.

¹⁶⁸ H.M. Scott, 'Sir Joseph Yorke and the Waning of the Anglo-Dutch Alliance, 1747-1788', in Bob Moore & Henk van Nierop (eds.), *Colonial Empires Compared, Britain and the Netherlands 1750-1850* (Aldershot, 2003), p.18; H. T. Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken der Algemeene Geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840* (10 vols, 'S-Gravenhage, 1905-22), vol. 4, p.383.

¹⁶⁹ Margot Light, 'Democracy, Democratisation and Foreign Policy in Post-Socialist Russia', in Hazel Smith (ed.), *Democracy and International Relations* (Basingstoke, 2000), p.98.

¹⁷⁰ G. R. Berridge, Maurice Keens-Soper & T. G. Otte, *Diplomatic Theory from Machiavelli to Kissinger* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp.1-6.

¹⁷¹ Chamberlain, '*Pax Britannica*'?, p.21.

circles with only isolated examples such as the Netherlands or Britain having even a modicum of parliamentary oversight.

Britain's eighteenth-century foreign policy has nonetheless enjoyed an almost unique reputation for its relationship with public opinion.¹⁷² By the mid-century Continental politicians and rulers came to mistrust the supposed populist influences and need to appease domestic opinion that underpinned British decision making.¹⁷³ Yet just how far opinion shaped policy, or whether it was simply used to excuse actions unpopular with foreign governments, is difficult to determine.¹⁷⁴ Even if opinion was taken into account the question arises of what politicians believed opinion was, and indeed if there even was anything that could be referred to as coherent 'public opinion'.

This issue has generally been at the crux of investigations into the relationship between opinion and policy. James Rosenau, writing on post-1945 American foreign policy, theorised a three stage interaction between opinion and policy; opinion formulation, opinion submission, and policy formulation.¹⁷⁵ The first and third phases could take place independently of one another, as policy could be made without considering public opinion, and opinion formed without policy. The middle stage of the process, opinion submission, was the most important in providing a definite link between opinion and policy. For Rosenau opinion submission was the work of lobby groups, which he considered a key cog in the workings of the twentieth-century American democratic system. Rosenau's conception largely applies only to active opinion, the concrete expression of attitudes towards a certain event or subject, rather than the sum of any underlying latent perceptions or representations.

The submission of opinion to governments was at best sporadic in the eighteenth century. Opinion was formally and directly submitted to those in authority only rarely in the form of petitions or addresses, although opinion could be informally perceived by the politicians who inhabited the public spaces of metropolitan society. In *ancien-régime* France and the

¹⁷² Jeremy Black, *Debating Foreign Policy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Farnham, 2011), pp.2-4; H.M. Scott, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of the American Revolution* (Oxford, 1990), p.20.

¹⁷³ Black, *Debating Foreign Policy*, p.2.

¹⁷⁴ Bernadette E. Schmitt, 'The Relation of Public Opinion and Foreign Affairs Before and During the First World War', in A. O. Sarkission (ed.), *Studies in Diplomatic History and Historiography* (London, 1961), p.326; Paul Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865-1980* (London, 1981), p.56.

¹⁷⁵ James Rosenau, *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy* (New York, 1961), pp.19-20.

Netherlands, where corporate groups in the shape of the *Parlements* and the Provincial States claimed to represent the people, so-called 'public opinion' could also be formally submitted to the government. Elections could be used to acquaint politicians with the views of the populace, but in Britain, France and the Netherlands the election process could not be relied upon to give a candidate a firm sense of the opinions of his electors, let alone the wider community. Less formally, guilds or other corporate lobbies could submit opinions and claim to represent a wider public constituency, though the abolition of guilds in 1791 damaged this line of communication in France.¹⁷⁶ Pitt reportedly resented the influence of corporate lobbies but still occasionally felt the need to acquiesce to their demands.¹⁷⁷ Newspapers, which could both reflect and inform opinion, could act as a means for politicians to take the pulse of popular sentiment; equally, popular sentiment could force itself into the consciousness of those in power through crowd activity such as festival, disturbance or riot.

Paul Kennedy, in a survey of British foreign policy since the mid-nineteenth century, takes a different approach to Rosenau in assessing the importance of public opinion.¹⁷⁸ For Kennedy the most important aspect is the role that latent opinion plays in keeping policy within certain bounds. Directly expressed active opinion, especially through the press, did occasionally appear to have an impact on policy, but could equally be ignored when those in power found it convenient.¹⁷⁹ Opinion submission was less important than the set of received and latent prejudices and preconceptions that existed in both the public mind and in the minds of political decision makers. Other studies have also outlined the idea of underlying opinion providing an intangible but perceptible restraint on policy. H.M. Scott found that such influences were important to British policy of the 1770s, when relatively weak governments found it necessary to ensure their policies 'did not too obviously challenge the prejudices of parliament and the political nation.'¹⁸⁰ In even the most supposedly disconnected regimes, governments have been found to keep a wary eye on public opinion. Imperial Germany's foreign policy, for example, was theoretically formulated solely by Emperor and Chancellor, but was still 'responsive to the insistent clamour' of public opinion, while Eastern-Bloc

¹⁷⁶ Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, pp.169-70.

¹⁷⁷ Dickinson, *The Politics of the People*, pp.73-74.

¹⁷⁸ Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy*.

¹⁷⁹ Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy*, pp.56-59.

¹⁸⁰ Scott, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of the American Revolution*, p.20.

governments were compelled to ensure that their policies did not stray too far from public expectation so as to retain the impression of consensual government.¹⁸¹

This thesis approaches the question of the influence of public opinion and national identity on policy on two broad fronts. Firstly, it considers whether politicians sought to incorporate, or were compelled to incorporate, active opinion into their policies. Secondly, it examines policies to see how far latent opinion and ideas of national identity appear to shape their formation, consciously or otherwise. This latter entails the examination of culturally-constructed boundaries of expectation, and an investigation of how far foreign policy was compelled to remain within these specific boundaries. It also involves considering how far stereotypes and long-standing preconceptions of a specific country – the Netherlands – appear to have been used as a basis for policy. However, the impact of public opinion on policy was not a mono-directional process. Policies and their practical outcomes were just as likely to impact upon the formation of opinion as was opinion upon policy formation.¹⁸²

Even if opinions can be shown to pre-empt policy, the issue of influence remains problematic. The fact that opinion and policy are ‘consistent and congruent’ does not indicate influence.¹⁸³ Correlation between policy and public opinion may be demonstrated but, in the words of Michael MacDonald, in marrying two concepts together in causality it not sufficient to merely ‘introduce the partners and point out the ways in which they are compatible’.¹⁸⁴ It is the aim of this thesis to show causality as well as congruence, though in many cases this is the work of inference and interpretation as politicians were not always assiduous in recording their motivations for pursuing a certain line of action. Jeremy Black noted that scholars trawling through official diplomatic papers are often confounded because ‘they tend to search for the causes of action in the very diplomatic sources that do not always contain them.’¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ Schmitt, ‘The Relation of Public Opinion and Foreign Affairs’, p.323; Anita M. Dasbach, ‘The Political Attitudes of East European Youth’, in Andrew Gyorgy, Hubert S. Gibbs & Robert S. Jordan (eds.), *Problems in International Relations* (3rd edn., Englewood Cliffs, 1970), 102-119.

¹⁸² Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, p.264.

¹⁸³ Sobel, *The Impact of Public Opinion on US Foreign Policy*, p.23.

¹⁸⁴ Michael MacDonald, ‘The Secularization of Suicide in England, 1660-1800’, *Past and Present*, No. 111 (May 1986), p.52.

¹⁸⁵ Jeremy Black, ‘Preface’, in Jeremy Black (ed.), *Knights Errant and True Englishmen: British Foreign Policy, 1660-1800* (Edinburgh, 1989), p.v.

The use of diplomatic archives is a necessary but often fruitless pursuit in a study such as this. Much of the diplomatic correspondence was routine, narrative, or subject to the narrow interpretations of envoys at foreign courts. Many of the collections sitting in modern archives are incomplete or are missing some key pieces of correspondence. The purges of the French archives committed in order to preserve Napoleon's good name are particularly grating. Moreover, highly sensitive information was likely to be conveyed in person by messenger or special envoy rather than committed to paper, especially in Britain where Parliament could demand that official correspondence be laid before it for scrutiny.¹⁸⁶ Private papers are sometimes a more fecund source of frank information regarding motivations and influences; the ten published volumes of Foreign Secretary Lord Grenville's correspondence, for example, are as valuable a resource as the dozens of volumes of official correspondence in the National Archives.¹⁸⁷ Similarly, the letters from Napoleon to his brother Louis are a more useful source for overall French policy to the Kingdom of Holland than the official correspondence between the foreign ministers and ambassadors.

A reasonable number of diplomatic sources for this period have been published. While these are of course useful, they bring their own set of problems and issues. Not least is the selective nature of some of the sources. The largest collection of published documents for the Netherlands, for example, is Herman Colenbrander's *Gedenkstukken der Algemeene Geschiedenis van Nederland*, a collection that was compiled at least partially to support Colenbrander's thesis that the internal struggles in the Netherlands were mostly the work of foreign influences.¹⁸⁸ Not only does Colenbrander begin his collection in 1789 – a year of obvious relevance to France but of little importance to the Netherlands – but he also focuses on diplomatic documents to shed light on domestic affairs. Although this is less distressing for the historian studying foreign affairs than for the historian of Dutch domestic disputes, the selection of sources remains problematic. Published collections of letters of major political actors are also subject to the whims of editors. The thirty-two volumes of the *Correspondance de Napoléon*, for example, present an extensive but not exhaustive collection of the Emperor's correspondence, and leave the reader wondering what may have been omitted. Some

¹⁸⁶ Richard Pares, *King George III and the Politicians* (Oxford, 1953), pp.200-202.

¹⁸⁷ Grenville's correspondence is published in Walter Fitzpatrick (ed.), *The Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dromore* (10 vols, London, 1892-1927).

¹⁸⁸ H. T. Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken der Algemeene Geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840* (10 vols, 'S-Gravenhage, 1905-22). Although the title dates the collection 1795-1840, volume 1 covers the period 1789-95.

omissions are accidental; F.J.L. Krämer's published correspondence of the Prince of Orange, for example, notes as missing several documents which can be found scattered amongst various files in Het Nationaal Archief in The Hague.¹⁸⁹

In trying to establish ideas of public opinion and national identity it is necessary to move away from archival sources. Surveying historical public opinion is a difficult task, the core of the problem being 'the historian's notorious inability to subject the dead to an opinion poll.'¹⁹⁰ The approach taken in this thesis is to sample a range of sources and attempt to build up a coherent picture of public opinion in the three countries over the three decades. Sources are not only textual, such as newspapers, books, novels, pamphlets, broadsides, private correspondence and diaries, but pictorial with paintings, caricatures and cartoons, and artefacts that might nebulously be considered part of material culture. Newspapers were especially thought to reflect eighteenth-century public opinion, and although the historian must use them warily, they can be a useful gauge of public sentiment.¹⁹¹ Yet this thesis does not intend to reinvent the wheel. Several studies have been produced on public opinion and national identity in the three countries during this period, and these works have been used as the foundations on which the opinions and identities used in this thesis have been built.

¹⁸⁹ F. J. L. Krämer (ed.), *Archives ou Correspondance Inédite de la Maison D'Orange-Nassau, 5th Series, Vol. III, 1782-89* (Leyden, 1915). An example of this is a proposal from Harris that Krämer notes is now missing (pp.338-39). The plan can in fact be found among Hendrik Fagel's papers; HNA, Collectie Fagel (1.10.29), 1458.

¹⁹⁰ Burke, *Political Culture in Early Modern Europe*, p.259.

¹⁹¹ Clare Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp.172-73.

CHAPTER ONE

FRANCE, BRITAIN AND THE NETHERLANDS,

1785-1815



Philip James de Loutherbourg, *The Battle of Camperdown* (1799)
(Tate Gallery, London, T01451: © Tate, London, 2013)

This chapter intends to briefly outline the tumultuous events of the years 1785-1815 from the perspective of France, Britain and the Netherlands, providing the diplomatic and Dutch domestic context for the chapters that follow. It will discuss both the internal political situation in the Netherlands, especially regarding the Patriot movement of the 1780s and the Batavian period of 1795-1806, and the relations between the Netherlands and her two larger European neighbours. Although this was also a momentous period for both Britain and, especially, France in domestic politics, the narrative of these events is beyond the scope of this thesis and will be treated only tangentially when they influence discussion of foreign policy.

The United Provinces of the Netherlands, as the country was known until 1795, was not a centralised state and did not have a single ruler. Its government was composed of a historically-evolved collection of corporate influences at municipal, provincial and national level, nominally overseen by a Stadholder. Herbert Rowen aptly described it as ‘an improvisation that lasted more than two centuries’.¹ At the top was the States General, which was composed of delegates from the States (assemblies) of the seven constituent provinces. The States General was not a sovereign body, as each province exercised its own sovereignty through its provincial States. These provincial States were themselves composed of delegates from diverse corporate influences, including municipal councils, the nobility and the Church. The dominant force amongst these, especially in the key provinces of Holland and Zeeland, were the municipalities; Montesquieu not entirely facetiously referred to the Netherlands as a Republic of fifty independent city-states.² Most of these towns were ruled by a small group of elite families, collectively known as Regents. Alongside these structures of power was the Stadholderate. Technically a servant of the States General, the Stadholder was appointed for life and held the posts of Captain-General and Admiral-General of the Republic. In practice the Stadholder was often able to direct the Republic’s affairs through a system of historically-granted rights, privileges and patronage. Since the earliest days of the Republic the position of Stadholder had belonged to the Princes of Orange, but twice – 1650-72 and 1702-47 – the States declined to appoint a new Stadholder upon the death of the incumbent. During these Stadholderless periods the States assumed primacy in the Republic, often unofficially headed by the leader of the States of Holland, the Grand Pensionary.

¹ Herbert Rowen, *The Princes of Orange, the Stadholders in the Dutch Republic* (Cambridge, 1988), p.ix.

² I.J.H. Worst, ‘Constitution, History and Natural Law: an Eighteenth-Century Political Debate in the Dutch Republic’, in Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), p.148; Maarten Prak, ‘Citizen Radicalism and Democracy in the Dutch Republic, the Patriot Movement of the 1780s’, *Theory and Society*, 20, 1 (February 1991), p.76.

France and England had showed an interest in the Dutch Republic ever since the country came into being in the sixteenth century, when the northern provinces of the Spanish Netherlands coalesced in revolt against Phillip II.³ Both powers developed diplomatic and commercial interests in the small Dutch Republic until, by the latter half of the seventeenth century, increasing rivalry between the Netherlands and her neighbours led to a series of inconclusive wars, which even saw England and France joining together to fight the Netherlands in 1672-74.⁴ Anglo-Dutch enmity effectively ended when Dutch Stadholder William III came to the throne of England in the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688.⁵ Conversely, Franco-Dutch rivalry intensified as William poured English and Dutch resources into thwarting the expansionism of Louis XIV. This anti-French 'Protestant Alliance' set the tone for relations between the three powers for much of the next century.⁶ Largely as a result of the wars against Louis XIV's France, the Netherlands became one of the major players in European diplomacy though, as E.H. Kossmann argued, the Dutch were compelled to act as a great power 'out of sheer necessity rather than because they enjoyed it'.⁷

The United Provinces stood among the strongest powers of Europe at the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, but by the mid-eighteenth century the Republic had lost much of its previous power and influence. The Anglo-Dutch alliance slowly degenerated to a point where the Netherlands was seen as a client of Britain. Frederick-the-Great dismissively described the Republic as a longboat trailing behind a British Man-of-War.⁸ This assessment was both unkind and not entirely accurate. The Dutch Republic did not simply blindly follow Britain's lead in international affairs. The Dutch remained aloof from the septennial squabble of 1756-63, deciding that profit was the better part of valour, though the continued commerce with both belligerents as Britain and France wrestled over Continent and colonies gained them little

³ Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic, its Rise, Greatness and Fall 1477-1806* (Oxford, 1995), pp.209-30; G.N. Clark, 'The Birth of the Dutch Republic', in Lucy Sutherland (ed.), *Studies in History* (London, 1966), pp.112-15.

⁴ J. R. Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1996), ch. 8.

⁵ Lisa Jardine, *Going Dutch, How England Plundered Holland's Glory* (London, 2008), argues that 1688 was neither glorious nor a revolution, and highlights subsequent Dutch influence on Britain.

⁶ Stephen B. Baxter, 'The Myth of the Grand Alliance in the Eighteenth Century', in Paul Sellin & Stephen Baxter, *Anglo-Dutch Cross Currents in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Los Angeles, 1976).

⁷ E.H. Kossmann, *The Low Countries, 1780-1940* (Oxford, 1978), p.19.

⁸ H.M. Scott, 'Sir Joseph Yorke and the Waning of the Anglo-Dutch Alliance, 1747-1788', in Bob Moore & Henk van Nierop (eds.), *Colonial Empires Compared, Britain and the Netherlands 1750-1850* (Aldershot, 2003), p.11.

goodwill on either side. Jur van Goor even accused the Dutch of 'a wilful policy of brinkmanship', although Alice Carter more charitably ascribed their descent into squalid isolation as a means of preserving prosperity by avoiding a game they could no longer realistically afford, exchanging a subordinate role in European diplomacy for the apparent security of neutrality.⁹ Whatever the merits or demerits of such a policy, it was symptomatic of the perceived decline in the power of the Netherlands. Simon Schama called the period 1747-80 'the dotage' of the Dutch Republic, which saw the country relegated to second fiddle in the orchestration of European power relations.¹⁰

Decline was a major issue of contemporary concern in the Netherlands, and has been a major issue of scholarship since. The Netherlands not only declined in international standing but entered a period of apparent economic atrophy, though the degree and timing of economic decline has caused some debate amongst historians.¹¹ Some authorities paint a dire picture of absolute decline across the eighteenth century. Jonathan Israel unequivocally labelled it 'the Age of Decline' and pointed to industrial, manufacturing and trading statistics that show signs of contraction or complete collapse.¹² This is supported by evidence that average Dutch real wages fell across the century.¹³ Other historians have emphasised the relative nature of decline and insisted that contraction in some sectors of the economy was counterbalanced by growth in others.¹⁴ The maritime sector and its ancillary services and industries survived in

⁹ Jur van Goor, 'The Colonial Factor in Anglo-Dutch Relations, 1780-1820', in Nigel Ashton & Duco Hellema (eds.), *Unspoken Allies, Anglo-Dutch Relations Since 1780* (Amsterdam, 2001), p.20; Alice Carter, *The Dutch Republic in Europe in the Seven Years War* (London, 1971); Alice Carter, *Neutrality or Commitment: the Evolution of Dutch Foreign Policy 1667-1795* (London, 1975); Scott, 'Sir Joseph Yorke and the Waning of the Anglo-Dutch Alliance', pp.20-21.

¹⁰ Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators, Revolution in the Netherlands 1780-1813* (2nd edn., London, 2005), ch. 2.

¹¹ For several different English-language interpretations see for example: Charles Wilson, *Anglo-Dutch Commerce and Finance in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1941), pp.11-20; J. L. van Zanden, 'The Dutch Economic History of the Period 1500-1940, a Review of the Present State of Affairs', *Economic and Social History in the Netherlands*, Vol.1 (1989), 9-30; J. L. van Zanden, *The Rise and Decline of Holland's Economy, Merchant Capitalism and the Labour Market* (Manchester, 1993), p.139; Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, pp.999-1014; Jan de Vries & Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy, Success, Failure and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500-1815* (Cambridge, 1997); David Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires: England and the Netherlands in the Age of Mercantilism, 1650-1770* (Cambridge, 2003).

¹² Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, p.999.

¹³ Van Zanden, *The Rise and Decline of Holland's Economy*, p.136.

¹⁴ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, pp.32-45; Kossmann, *The Low Countries*, pp.37-39; Wilson, *Anglo-Dutch Commerce and Finance*.

fairly robust health up until the Revolutionary Wars, despite the collapse of the fisheries and crises in several manufactures.¹⁵ The rise of banking, insurance and investment replaced much of the lost commerce and industry, at least in terms of contribution to the national economy. Joel Mokyr argued that the loss of some industries was potentially less a symptom of decay than 'a healthy process of elimination of inefficient activities' whose place was taken by other, more profitable, enterprises.¹⁶ Angus Maddison claimed that the Dutch economy remained the largest in the world until overtaken by Britain during the Napoleonic Wars.¹⁷

Eighteenth-century Dutchmen were less inclined to see such nuances. To them, decline was 'thought to be total, on all levels, in all human endeavour - moral, economic, social, cultural, political.'¹⁸ While overall national income may have continued to appear healthy, the new penchant of the affluent to invest in stocks, bonds and land, and thereby become *rentiers* rather than active merchants and employers, increased the imbalance of wealth and led to a rise in the number of poor and indigent.¹⁹ The predilection of the wealthy for investing abroad rather than at home exacerbated the problems of domestic industry, while the cheap capital provided by Dutch banking gave advantages to the very foreign competition that was threatening the Dutch economy.²⁰ As employment disappeared, so the population of many cities declined as the urban poor sought refuge in the countryside or, in the case of many skilled workers, emigrated.²¹

By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, decline had become a topic of fierce political debate in the Netherlands. Over the previous century, two loose political affiliations had evolved, the one supporting the power of the States General and provincial States, the other supporting the Stadholder and the House of Orange. The States faction tended to claim the support of the middle strata of urban society, including many of the Regents, and preferred

¹⁵ Joel Mokyr, *Industrialisation in the Low Countries 1795-1850* (New Haven, 1976), pp.2-3.

¹⁶ Mokyr, *Industrialisation in the Low Countries*, p.4.

¹⁷ Angus Maddison, *Dynamic Forces in Capitalist Development* (Oxford, 1991), p.30, quoted in de Vries & van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, p.2

¹⁸ E. H. Kossmann, 'The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century', in Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijnhardts (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), p.28.

¹⁹ Van Zanden, *The Rise and Decline of Holland's Economy*, p.139.

²⁰ Wilson, *Anglo-Dutch Commerce and Finance*, p.18.

²¹ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, p.1013.

the idea of powerful States and weak Stadholderate. Conversely, the Orangist faction saw a strong Stadholder as the best guarantor of individual and collective liberties. In general, the urban poor and the rural peasantry would be more likely to support the Stadholder, as would the small Dutch nobility, the regular army, and the clergy of the established Reformed Church.

The Stadholders and their partisans tended to be staunch supporters of the British alliance. In both 1672 and 1747 the Stadholderate had been restored to save the Netherlands from French invasion, positioning the House of Orange as a natural enemy of France and thus a natural ally of Britain. Princes William III and William IV married the daughters of British kings; William V was the grandson of George II and cousin of George III. Supporters of the States party did not necessarily oppose close ties with Britain but were much more likely to be critical. Some complained that the British connection and commercial treaties between the powers were at the root of the Republic's troubles, and subtly aimed to undermine relations.²²

The trigger for the collapse of Anglo-Dutch cooperation was the American Revolution. Trade between Dutch merchants and the rebellious colonists, the friendly welcome given to unofficial American representatives, and evident Dutch unwillingness to assist Britain caused a degree of ill feeling in London. Desirous of preventing Dutch commerce with France and America, and fearful of the Netherlands joining the Russian-led League of Armed Neutrality, Britain declared war in December 1780.²³ The war of 1780-84 was largely disastrous for the Netherlands. A large share of the blame was aimed at the Stadholder who, as commander-in-chief, was responsible for the war effort. The war starkly emphasised supposed Dutch decline, and helped to provoke the discontent that would eventually coalesce into the Patriot movement.

The Patriot unrest was by far the most important aspect of Dutch domestic politics of the 1780s. The Patriots were not a unitary or centrally organised political movement, but rather a coalescence of people who followed a broadly similar discourse in demanding political and social reform. Patriot clubs were formed in many towns and cities across the country, often accompanied by the formation of an independent militia, collectively called the Free Corps,

²² Eco. O. G. Haitsma Mulier, 'Between Humanism and Enlightenment: The Dutch Writing of History', in Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), p.186.

²³ Scott, 'Sir Joseph Yorke and the Waning of the Anglo-Dutch Alliance'; David Syrett, *The Royal Navy in European Waters During the American Revolutionary War* (Columbia, 1998), p.128; Peter Nicolaisen, 'John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and the Dutch Patriots', in Leonard J. Sadosky et al. (eds.), *Old World, New World, America and Europe in the Age of Jefferson* (Charlottesville, 2010), p.111.

which were outside the control of both municipal authorities and Stadholder. Patriot clubs corresponded with each other and, eventually, organised national gatherings, but they were never able to adopt a central leadership or even agree on a detailed programme for reform.

The Patriots were largely driven by opposition to the Prince of Orange and the inefficiencies of Stadholderian government, but moved away from traditional States-faction discourse. The Patriots critiqued the oligarchic political system in general, demanding a return to principles of individual liberties, civic virtues and more open and democratic government, which they claimed had been the basis for the Revolt against Spain and the constitution of the supposed ancient ancestors of the Dutch, the Batavians.²⁴ Although Patriotism was largely an urban phenomenon, it was not firmly associated with any one social group. Patriot politics were embraced by people from across the social scale, from the nobility to the rural peasantry. Equally, rejection of Patriot politics can also be found across the whole social spectrum.²⁵ Many anti-Orangist Regents aligned themselves with the Patriots, but others strongly resisted the new ideologies and preferred to support the Stadholder. The Orangists were not simply conservatives or anti-reformers. Orangism as much as Patriotism sought to restore the old glory and prosperity of the Dutch Republic, but the two philosophies fundamentally disagreed not only on how to do this but even on the meaning of concepts such as popular sovereignty or national representation.²⁶

Although the Patriot unrest has naturally been included in the 'constellation' of revolutions in the late-eighteenth-century European world,²⁷ the Patriots were in many ways reformers rather than revolutionaries. Compared to the great Revolution that would shake France from 1789, the stated aims and actions of the Patriots of the early 1780s were almost timidly moderate. The Patriots sought to remove or restrain the arbitrary powers of the Stadholder,

²⁴ N.C.F. van Sas, 'Opiniepers en Politieke Cultuur', in F. Grijzenhout, W. Mijnhardt & N. van Sas (eds.), *Voor Vaderland en Vrijheid, De Revolutie van de Patriotten* (Amsterdam, 1987), pp.114-21.

²⁵ Wyger Velema, *Republicans, Essays on Eighteenth-Century Dutch Political Thought* (Leiden, 2007), p.120.

²⁶ Velema, *Republicans*, pp.122-23; I. L. Leeb, *The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution; History and Politics in the Dutch Republic 1747-1800* (The Hague, 1973); Wyger Velema, 'Elie Luzac and Two Dutch Revolutions; the Evolution of Orangist Political Thought', in Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), 123-46; Graeme Callister, 'The City and the Revolutionary Dutch Nation, 1780-1800', *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies*, Volume 36, No. 3 (November 2012), p.232; Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, p.1104.

²⁷ Annie Jourdan, 'The Netherlands in the Constellation of the Eighteenth-Century Western Revolutions', *European Review of History*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (April 2011), 199-225.

and to open up government beyond the narrow cadre of Regents and tame electors who had achieved almost unchallenged primacy in the Republic, but in the early years at least there was little demand for a fundamental change of governmental structures and institutions. Kossmann accused Patriotism of attempting 'to replace stone after stone in the decrepit building of the Republic without changing its basic construction.'²⁸ However, as Wyger Velema argued, the Patriot agenda 'clearly went beyond the call for a return to an idealised ancient constitution.'²⁹ The language of the Patriots may have echoed sixteenth-century calls for government through popular sovereignty and natural law, but the eighteenth-century meaning of these concepts was very different to that of two centuries previously.³⁰

The Patriots aimed most of their efforts for reform at municipal councils, as control of the Republic could effectively be achieved by taking over sufficient municipalities to gain a majority of representatives in each provincial States and, through them, the States General. It remains a subject of contention as to whether this decentralisation helped or hindered the Patriot movement. Kossmann believed that the decentralised nature of the Republic made the Patriots' task more problematic – 'it is difficult to make a revolution in a state without a centre' – but W. Ph. Te Brake asserted that it aided the movement by providing a 'conveniently incremental path to power'.³¹

Although the Patriot Revolution has achieved neither the fame of the French Revolution, nor seen as much ink spilt in fierce battles for its memory, its study has provoked its own mild controversies. For almost half a century before the Second World War scholarship on the Patriot years was dominated by the work of Herman Colenbrander, whose main contention was that the Patriot upheavals were part of an international conflict in which the Dutch had little role to play.³² Colenbrander questioned the originality and revolutionary credentials of the Patriots, condemning them as little more than French surrogates. His work largely denied Dutch agency and portrayed them as passive players in the seismic events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This assessment went largely unchallenged until

²⁸ Kossmann, *The Low Countries*, p.44.

²⁹ Velema, *Republicans*, p.122.

³⁰ E. H. Kossmann, *Political Thought in the Dutch Republic; Three Studies* (Amsterdam, 2000), p.133.

³¹ Kossmann, *The Low Countries*, p.44; Wayne Ph. Te Brake, 'Provincial Histories and National Revolution in the Dutch Republic', in Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijndardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), pp.86-87.

³² H. T. Colenbrander, *De Patriottentijd, Hoofdzakelijk naar Buitenlandsche Bescheiden* (3 vols, 'S Gravenhage, 1897-99).

shortly after another period of Dutch foreign occupation, that of 1940-45. In 1947 Pieter Geyl published *De Patriottenbeweging*,³³ which was a vindication of his forefathers against both the charge of passivity in the 1780s, and the idea that they may have in some way been akin to the collaborators who had helped the Nazi occupiers in his own time.³⁴ Geyl saw the Patriot unrest as an essentially domestic affair and downplayed the role and influence of foreign powers. To Geyl, the Patriot movement was a politically-inspired event in the tradition of previous Dutch political disturbances, such as those of 1672, 1702 or 1747.³⁵

In 1965 C.H.E. de Wit published his liberal Marxist social re-interpretation of the era. To de Wit, the roots of the Patriot struggles were social rather than political, and he positioned the events of the 1780s firmly within a dynamic of a struggle between aristocrats and bourgeois democrats.³⁶ However, unlike in France, a Marxist explanation for revolution never really took hold in the Netherlands. Just over a decade after de Wit, Schama added his interpretation to the debate. In something of a synthesis of the respective 'internationalist', 'nationalist' and 'social' theses of Colenbrander, Geyl and de Wit,³⁷ Schama acknowledged the international pressures on the Dutch Republic and its political actors, but he also emphasised the domestic dynamics, both political and social, that led to the troubles of the 1780s.³⁸ Yet Schama, like de Wit and other historians such as I.L. Leeb,³⁹ was drawn to R.R. Palmer's internationalist conception of democratic revolution, and has been criticised for straying too far towards explaining the Patriot movement through the bourgeois-democrat model of revolution.⁴⁰

³³ Pieter Geyl, *De Patriottenbeweging 1780-1787* (Amsterdam, 1947).

³⁴ For example C. Smit, *Diplomatieke Geschiedenis van Nederland, Inzonderheid Sedert de Vestiging van het Koninkrijk* (The Hague, 1950), p.111, who accuses the pro-French Patriots ('Deze minnaren der Franse democratie') of being as blinkered as the Dutch admirers of Nazism in 1940.

³⁵ Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijnhardt, 'Introduction', in Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), pp.2-3.

³⁶ C. H. E. de Wit, *De Strijd Tussen Aristocratie en Democratie in Nederland 1780-1848* (Heerlen, 1965).

³⁷ N.C.F. van Sas, 'The Patriot Revolution: New Perspectives', in Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), pp.91-93.

³⁸ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*. The first edition was published in 1977.

³⁹ Leeb, *The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution*, p.1.

⁴⁰ Joost Kloek & Wijnand Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective: 1800, Blueprints for a National Community* (Basingstoke, 2004), p.16.

The idea of bourgeois-democrat revolution has come under assault in recent years. Following on from methodologies used to attack the previously dominant social interpretations of the French Revolution, notably from scholars such as François Furet and Lynn Hunt, historians such as N.C.F. van Sas and Brake have sought to re-evaluate the Patriot unrest. Brake began with a 'bottom-up' approach, examining the Patriots through the scope of municipal revolution in the town of Deventer. He believed that Hunt's insistence on the importance of municipal revolution in France was amplified in the decentralised United Provinces, and sought to 'put politics and struggle back into the centre' of the revolutionary process.⁴¹ Van Sas similarly looked for political rather than social explanations for the Patriot unrest, but focused on the shifting political culture of the later-eighteenth century.⁴² Van Sas asserted that the period 1780-87 saw a radical change in political culture with the rise of the opinion press, which provided regular, affordable and opinionated political news, and which in turn helped to cement the concept of the political nation.⁴³ He also insisted, along with Wijnand Mijnhardt, that new ideas of freedom, citizenship and the nation were more pertinent than ideas of socio-economic class dynamics to eighteenth-century revolution.⁴⁴ However, van Sas's ideas of evolving political culture have come under criticism, not least because of the transitory nature of the opinion press, which more or less failed after 1787, and the potential over-emphasis on political citizenship, which Mijnhardt and Joost Kloek argued reflects post-1848 realities rather than those of the eighteenth century.⁴⁵

However the Patriot unrest is interpreted, it is during this period that the narrative of this thesis begins. Although the Netherlands's unhappy war with Britain ended in 1784, criticism of the domestic status quo intensified rather than diminished. The Netherlands ended the war relatively isolated. France, Spain and the newly-independent United States signed a peace treaty with Britain in September 1783, but the Dutch Republic had to wait until the following

⁴¹ W. Ph. Te Brake, *Regents and Rebels, the Revolutionary World of an Eighteenth-Century Dutch City* (Oxford, 1989), p.5.

⁴² van Sas, 'Opiniepers en Politieke Cultuur'; van Sas, 'The Patriot Revolution: New Perspectives'; N.C.F. van Sas, *De Metamorfose van Nederland: van Oude Orde naar Moderniteit 1750-1900* (Amsterdam, 2005).

⁴³ van Sas, 'Opiniepers en Politieke Cultuur', pp.97-99.

⁴⁴ Thomas Poell, 'Local Particularism Challenged, 1795-1813', in Oscar Gelderblom (ed.), *The Political Economy of the Dutch Republic* (Farnham, 2009), p.292.

⁴⁵ Kloek & Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p.16.

year.⁴⁶ Dutch attempts to use French influence to demand restitution of seized colonies angered some in Britain, while many in the Netherlands were frustrated by Britain's apparent desire to present humiliating terms.⁴⁷ The peace treaty finally agreed in 1784 was not a humiliation – all Dutch colonial possessions were returned with the exception of Negapatem – but the Netherlands did not appear to have made peace as a member of a victorious coalition. The Netherlands also faced the prospect of further conflict as the Emperor, Joseph II, appeared bent on bullying the Dutch into opening the River Scheldt.⁴⁸

The American War left Britain even more isolated, with only Denmark seemingly inclined to friendliness.⁴⁹ France and Spain were hostile, the northern powers wary, and Russia and Austria indifferent. Frederick II of Prussia believed that Britain was reduced to a second-rate power and had little interest in rekindling a relationship.⁵⁰ The vaguely anti-Austrian 'Fürstenbund' that George III as Elector of Hanover entered with Prussia and Saxony in 1785 proved of little use to Britain, but did serve to irritate the Emperor who assumed that George's Hanoverian policy was also that of the British government.⁵¹

France, on the other hand, was possibly suffering from a surfeit of friends and allies, several of whom appeared unable to get along. Austria and Russia glowered predatorily towards the Ottoman Empire, providing the potentially embarrassing prospect of three friendly powers coming to blows. Meanwhile, the Emperor's sabre-rattling over the Scheldt complicated relations with the Netherlands. French Foreign Minister the Comte de Vergennes was eager to use lingering Dutch antipathy towards Britain to draw the Netherlands into a French orbit, but had no intention of coming to blows with the Emperor, despite his unease at Joseph II's desire to exchange Bavaria for the Austrian Netherlands.

⁴⁶ Charles Jenkinson, *A Collection of All the Treaties of Peace, Alliance and Commerce Between Great Britain and the Other Powers* (3 vols, London, 1785), vol. 3, pp.334-410.

⁴⁷ The National Archives, London (TNA), FO 37/5, letters 9 and 14 January 1783; British Library, London (BL), Add MSS, 28059, Minute of conversation between Carmarthen and Yorke, 7 February 1783.

⁴⁸ S.T. Bindoff, *The Scheldt Question to 1839* (London, 1945), p.140.

⁴⁹ BL, Add MSS, 28059, passim for 1785.

⁵⁰ Alfred Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents, the Diplomacy of the First Earl of Malmesbury at the Hague* (London, 1954), p.53.

⁵¹ Jennifer Mori, *William Pitt and the French Revolution, 1785-1795* (Edinburgh, 1997), p.54; Tim Blanning, "'That Horrid Electorate' or 'Ma Patrie Germanique'? George III, Hanover, and the Fürstenbund of 1785", *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (June 1977), 311-44.

Although it was not at this point the major foreign policy concern of either power, both Britain and France wished to develop closer ties with the Netherlands. Both countries believed that a stronger Dutch connection offered very real material benefits. The Dutch had long been accused, not entirely unfairly, of financing Britain's war efforts; in 1782 Laurens van de Spiegel estimated that the Netherlands had 280 million guilders invested in Britain, and only twenty-five million in France.⁵² Dutch merchants had also been crucial in supplying France with naval stores throughout the eighteenth century, which had indeed been one of Britain's main complaints against the Netherlands in the run up to war in 1780.⁵³ Both Britain and France also feared allowing the other to control the Netherlands for strategic reasons. For Britain, the deep water ports of the Netherlands undermined the Royal Navy's 'Western Approaches' defensive strategy and left Britain seemingly vulnerable to invasion.⁵⁴ For France, the Dutch-controlled mouths of the Rivers Scheldt, Maas and Rhine formed both a formidable defence for France's northern border and the closest waterborne access from the coast to the heart of Europe.

The Netherlands was split over whether to embrace a French alliance, to seek to revert to a British connection, or to attempt to maintain independent neutrality. The question of international alignment was heavily linked to domestic political dynamics. The traditional oligarchy of Stadholder and Orangist Regents largely preferred to look for either neutrality or a closer understanding with Britain, while the anti-Stadholder Patriots largely saw a French alliance as the most beneficial. However, not all Patriots were blindly Francophile or all Orangists devotees of Britain. All remained first and foremost Dutchmen, and their international allegiances contingent on the connection being beneficial to the Netherlands. The stance of the internal factions in the Netherlands was mirrored in the attitudes of France and Britain. Britain supported the Stadholder, seeing him as the best guarantor of a strong but malleable Netherlands, while France was content to see the powers of the notoriously

⁵² Wilson, *Anglo-Dutch Commerce and Finance*, pp.65 & 72; H.H. Rowen (ed.), *The Low Countries in Early Modern Times* (London, 1972), pp.246-47. Also H.V. Bowen, 'From Supranational to National: Changing Patterns of Investment in the British East India Company, 1750-1820', in Bob Moore & Henk van Nierop (eds.), *Colonial Empires Compared, Britain and the Netherlands 1750-1850* (Aldershot, 2003), 131-44; J. C. Riley, 'Dutch Investment in France, 1781-1787', *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (December 1973), 732-760.

⁵³ N.A.M. Rodger, 'The Continental Commitment in the Eighteenth Century', in L. Freedman, P. Hayes & R. O'Neill (eds.), *War Strategy and International Politics* (Oxford, 1992), p.48.

⁵⁴ N.A.M. Rodger, 'Seapower and Empire; Cause and Effect', in Bob Moore & Henk van Nierop (eds.), *Colonial Empires Compared, Britain and the Netherlands 1750-1850* (Aldershot, 2003), p.110.

Anglophile Orangists diminished, and so offered her diplomatic support to the largely pro-French Patriots.

By late 1785 it seemed that the Netherlands had sided firmly with France as the States General, at the instigation of the Province of Utrecht, declared in favour of a French alliance. The dispute with Joseph II was settled through the good offices of Louis XVI, despite the best efforts of Sir James Harris, Britain's representative in The Hague, to undermine Dutch confidence in France.⁵⁵ An indemnity of ten million guilders was demanded by the Emperor, to which the Dutch representatives agreed only when France eventually offered to pay the sum on their behalf.⁵⁶ The day after an understanding was reached between the Netherlands and the Emperor, France and the Netherlands signed a treaty of alliance.

Some members of the British government were unhappy with the loss of influence in the Netherlands but there was little that could be done to alter the situation. Harris was instructed to offer support to the Orangists in their struggles against the Patriots but to avoid committing Britain to any course of action that might bring about a disagreement with France. Prime Minister William Pitt was committed to rebuilding Britain's finances after the American War and was involved in the negotiations for a Franco-British commercial treaty, which took precedence over supporting the Orangist regime. Although Prussia was seen as a potential ally in assisting the Prince of Orange, Frederick II was uninterested in a rapprochement with Britain and preferred to work towards using French influence to support the Stadholder.⁵⁷

By late 1785 Stadholder William V's position was becoming precarious. The States of Holland, led by Amsterdam, was becoming increasingly hostile, and a riot in The Hague in September 1785 was blamed on Orangist partisans, leading to a clampdown on public displays of Orangism, with even the colour orange declared a 'colour of sedition'.⁵⁸ In July 1786 the States of Holland took the step of removing the Prince from the command of the garrison of The Hague. This materially altered very little, but represented a stinging symbolic slap to the Princely face, as command of the garrison meant a lot to William personally.⁵⁹ William responded by removing himself from The Hague and vowing not to return until his command

⁵⁵ Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents*, pp.65-66.

⁵⁶ Bindoff, *The Scheldt Question*, p.141; Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents*, p.67.

⁵⁷ Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents*, p.56.

⁵⁸ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, pp.104-105.

⁵⁹ P.J.H.M. Theeuwen, *Pieter 't Hoen en de Post van den Neder-Rhijn (1781-1787)* (Hilversum, 2002), p.417.

was restored. In September 1786 the Prince's position deteriorated further. In response to a request from the States of Gelderland, William ordered troops to enter the towns of Hattem and Elburg to restore the Regents recently overthrown by Patriot Free Corps. Despite the technical legality of the move, William was denounced by Patriots across the country as a despot bent on using military force to re-establish his tyranny. The States of Holland suspended him from his post of Captain-General and ordered troops in their pay to no longer obey him.⁶⁰

In Britain, Foreign Secretary Lord Carmarthen was still eager to support the Prince, but the government was unwilling to offer help until William took a firm lead in trying to re-establish his powers.⁶¹ George III nonetheless praised William for his conduct and encouraged him to stand firm against his opponents.⁶² The British desire to intercede in the internal affairs of the Netherlands and restore the powers of the Stadholder should not be understood as a precocious example of reactionary intervention. The increasing polarisation of politics within the Netherlands and its consequences for Dutch foreign policy left Britain with little choice but to back the Orangist party or relinquish hopes for an Anglo-Dutch reconciliation at France's expense. Although the death of Frederick II in August 1786 raised hopes of resurrecting an Anglo-Prussian alliance, Prussia remained unwilling to become embroiled in Dutch affairs and advised the Prince of Orange to appease his opponents through compromise and concession.⁶³ The French government continued to offer vague support to the Patriots although Charles de Vêrac, France's representative in The Hague, gave the Patriots the impression that Versailles was far more supportive than was actually the case. Louis XVI and Vergennes remained committed to the Dutch connection but, from the autumn of 1786, the king and his trusted minister focused their attention more on the creeping financial crisis in France than the events in the Netherlands.⁶⁴

By mid-1787 the divisions within the Netherlands had worsened. The States General was evenly split between supporters of the Prince and supporters of the Patriots. The balance of

⁶⁰ Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents*, pp.76-77.

⁶¹ F. J. L. Krämer (ed.), *Archives ou Correspondance Inédite de la Maison D'Orange-Nassau, 5th Series, Vol. III, 1782-89* (Leyden, 1915), pp.374-75, Harris to Prince of Orange, 23 June 1786, letter MCLI.

⁶² TNA, FO 90/34, f.262, George III to Prince of Orange.

⁶³ Krämer (ed.), *Archives ou Correspondance Inédite*, p.442, Frederick-William II to Prince of Orange, 6 January 1787, letter MCXCVII.

⁶⁴ Jean Egret, *The French Pre-Revolution 1787-88* (Chicago, 1977), pp.1-4.

power was held by the Province of Utrecht, which was itself in turmoil with two separate bodies each claiming to be the legitimate Provincial States. An attempt by Orangist troops to retake the city of Utrecht was humiliatingly checked at Vreeswijk in May 1787, leaving the Patriots in possession of the city and raising the confidence of the Free Corps in their martial prowess.⁶⁵ The Prince of Orange was by this stage convinced that ‘a cabal’ was bent on undermining the Union and destroying the Stadholderate, and saw it as his duty to stop them.⁶⁶ For their part, the Patriots were convinced that William intended to re-establish oligarchic tyranny by force of arms, and were determined to prevent this. With both sides commanding sizable military forces, civil war seemed a very real possibility. The British government, urged on by Harris, decided to offer a subsidy of £70,000 to the Province of Gelderland to pay for Orangist troops, and succeeded in seducing three regular regiments to defect from the Province of Holland to the Stadholder.⁶⁷ France, concerned that the Patriots may be going too far, advised restraint but continued to supply the Free Corps with money and promises of support.⁶⁸

The crisis in Dutch affairs came in the summer of 1787, though it took a Prussian army to eventually ‘cut the Gordian knot’ of Anglo-French manoeuvring.⁶⁹ The trigger for Prussian intervention came from a rather spurious source. Princess Wilhelmina of Orange, sister of new Prussian King Frederick-William II, was stopped at the provincial border of Holland by a Free Corps unit, whose high-handed treatment of her was interpreted as constituting a grave insult. The Prince of Orange appealed to George III and Frederick-William not to allow this outrage towards his wife to pass unpunished.⁷⁰ Frederick-William, with a little financial nudge from Britain, declared himself enraged and demanded satisfaction. Pitt and George III were both unwilling to risk war with France, but Pitt sided with Carmarthen in Cabinet in seeing the crisis as a golden opportunity to restore British influence in the Netherlands, and pushed the king to

⁶⁵ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, pp.109-10.

⁶⁶ F. J. L. Krämer (ed.), *Archives ou Correspondance Inédite de la Maison D’Orange-Nassau, 5th Series, Vol. III, 1782-89* (Leyden, 1915), p.469, Prince of Orange to George III, 14 May 1787, letter MCCXIX.

⁶⁷ A. Aspinall (ed.), *The Later Correspondence of George III* (5 vols, Cambridge, 1962-70), vol. 1, p.296; Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents*, pp.133-38.

⁶⁸ Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents*, pp.140-45.

⁶⁹ Pierre de Witt, *Une Invasion Prussienne en Hollande en 1787* (Paris, 1886), p.x.

⁷⁰ Krämer (ed.), *Archives ou Correspondance Inédite de la Maison D’Orange-Nassau*, pp.498-99, Prince of Orange to George III and Frederick-William II, 29 June 1787, letters MCCLXII and MCCLXIV.

agree to a partial mobilisation of the fleet in order to check any French response. At Versailles Armand de Montmorin, foreign minister since the death of Vergennes earlier in the year, wished to offer practical support to the Patriots, but his desire to establish a camp of 20,000 troops at Givet to counter any Prussian intervention was blocked by Loménie de Brienne, now controller of the royal purse-strings, who insisted that France could not afford such a move. Faced with Prussian mobilisation on one side and British on the other, France was forced to abandon any hope of a military defence of the Netherlands.

Reassured that the camp at Givet was a fiction, and with Austria occupied by a recent outbreak of war against Turkey in the Balkans, in September 1787 Frederick-William launched 25,000 men across the Dutch border under the Duke of Brunswick to avenge his sister's honour and restore his brother-in-law's power. A 30,000-strong Patriot force assembled to face the Prussian advance, but the Free Corps' half-decade of pretentious parading and sociable drilling was little match for the professional Prussian soldiery. The Patriots' defensive cordon dissipated with barely a skirmish as Prussian forces hove into view. Amsterdam held out briefly but once it became clear that French support would not be forthcoming, it too surrendered. Protected by 25,000 Prussian bayonets, the Prince of Orange returned to The Hague in triumph, and proceeded to remove Patriot councils and replace them with previously-deposed Regents or loyal Orangists. Many non-Regent Orangist partisans who had taken advantage of the unrest to seize power in their municipalities were also removed, provoking some disillusionment at the Prince's apparent disavowal of their support.⁷¹ William wished only to return to the *status quo ante*, but some of his followers whipped up a vicious reaction against those identified as the main Patriot agitators. Up to 40,000 people fled from Orangist vengeance.⁷² Louis XVI's government showed its sympathy by allowing refugees to settle in northern France, and offered pensions to some to relieve their plight. Many Patriot refugees eventually showed their appreciation for Louis's assistance by siding firmly with the revolutionaries after 1789 and applauding loudly half-a-decade later as the guillotine came down abruptly on Louis's reign.

The restoration of the Stadholder in 1787 provoked a sea-change in international relations. For France the failure to support the Dutch Patriots was the 'terminal humiliation' of her foreign

⁷¹ Brake, *Regents and Rebels*, p.171-73.

⁷² Joost Rosendaal, 'La Liberté est une Garce! Les Bataves à Paris (1787-1795)', in Annie Jourdan & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Remous Révolutionnaires: République Batave, Armée Française* (Amsterdam, 1996), p.60.

policy.⁷³ Anglo-Prussian cooperation solidified into a formal alliance which guaranteed the Stadholderate and Dutch constitution. The reformed States General also acceded to this alliance, though it did not officially renounce the French treaty of 1785.⁷⁴ France appeared marginalised, reduced to impotence by her financial difficulties, and unable to muster a coalition to counter Anglo-Prussian influence since Austria and Russia were occupied with their war against the Ottomans.⁷⁵ Yet within a year the Anglo-Prussian accord began to unravel. The war in the east spread to the Baltic when Sweden declared war on Russia, and Denmark, sensing Swedish weakness, then invaded her neighbour. Prussia wished to mobilise to force the parties to the negotiating table but Pitt and Carmarthen, now the Duke of Leeds, did not want to be a party to what they saw as Prussian self-aggrandisement. Leeds was also unhappy that Prussia wished to take advantage of unrest in the Austrian Netherlands to gain concessions from the Emperor, while Britain and the Netherlands wished only to see stability restored through the Emperor's acceptance of the traditional constitutional liberties of the Belgians.⁷⁶

Britain herself became embroiled in a dispute with Spain in May 1790 over the issue of trading rights on America's Pacific coastline. When Spain attempted to enforce her self-proclaimed monopoly of trade in the Nootka Sound, Leeds objected strongly and persuaded the Cabinet to oppose the Spanish actions. Britain requested, and received, promises of support from the Netherlands and Prussia, but Spain's attempts to get France to honour the 'family compact' of the Bourbons had no effect other than to provoke the National Assembly to assert its rights over French foreign policy and refuse to involve France in the petty disputes of others.⁷⁷ Unsupported, Spain agreed to make concessions and the threat of war was averted, although the incident indirectly almost led to Britain being dragged into conflict with Russia the following year. As a *quid pro quo* for Prussian support in 1790, Britain stood with her ally to oppose Russia's designs on the Ottoman-held city of Ochakov, going so far as to threaten

⁷³ Tim Blanning, *The French Revolutionary Wars, 1787-1802* (London, 1996), p.26.

⁷⁴ TNA, FO 95/5/2, Treaty of Alliance, 15 April 1788; Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, La Courneuve, Paris (AMAE), Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 576, Caillard to Montmorin, 1 April & 29 April 1788, & Montmorin to Caillard, 20 April 1788.

⁷⁵ Mori, *William Pitt and the French Revolution*, p.60.

⁷⁶ TNA, FO 37/28, Leeds to Auckland, 16 March 1790; Patricia Chastain Howe, *Foreign Policy and the French Revolution: Charles-François Dumouriez, Pierre LeBrun, and the Belgian Plan, 1789-1793* (New York, 2008), p.30.

⁷⁷ Howard V. Evans, 'The Nootka Sound Controversy in Anglo-French Diplomacy, 1790', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (December 1974), pp.614-15.

war.⁷⁸ The wholly negative reaction of king, Parliament and public to the prospect of a war over an object so seemingly irrelevant to British interests eventually persuaded Pitt to negotiate, but at the cost of the resignation of the hawkish Leeds.⁷⁹ Britain's soft stance also alienated Prussia who abandoned the triple alliance to align herself instead with Austria.

By late 1791 European affairs were in any case becoming increasingly dominated by the question of the Revolution in France. Louis XVI's flight to Varennes in June 1791, and his subsequent detainment and return to Paris, gave credence to the idea that Louis was essentially a prisoner. Austria and Prussia hardened their stance towards the Revolution and in the Padua Circular and later Declaration of Pillnitz invited other powers to join with them to 're-establish order' in France.⁸⁰ Britain and the Netherlands, however, while keen to express concern for the person of Louis and for the fate of the French monarchy, wished to remain uninvolved in the affairs of France.⁸¹ Pitt even declared in the Commons in February 1792 that there had never been a time when 'we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace'.⁸² In France, meanwhile, the aloof attitude to foreign affairs of 1790 had been replaced by growing support for armed intervention against the German princes who were sheltering counter-revolutionary émigré forces. New Emperor Leopold II's declaration that the Empire would defend the princes against French military action did nothing to appease the belligerent faction in Paris, instead drawing their ire towards Austria.⁸³

The exact reasons for France declaring war on Austria in 1792 have been covered in too much depth elsewhere to need mentioning here.⁸⁴ Britain and the Netherlands both chose to remain neutral as the conflict expanded but in late 1792, as the Revolution marched towards republicanism and the French armies marched towards the Dutch border, tensions between France and the 'maritime powers' grew. Diplomatic relations with France were officially

⁷⁸ Allan Cunningham, 'The Oczakov Debate', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (April 1965), 209-237; Paul Webb, 'Sea Power in the Oczakov Affair of 1791', *The International History Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (January 1980), 13-33.

⁷⁹ Mori, *William Pitt and the French Revolution*, p.96.

⁸⁰ Alan Forrest, *The French Revolution* (Oxford, 1995), pp.111-12.

⁸¹ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 582, States General to Louis XVI, 4 October 1791.

⁸² Blanning, *The French Revolutionary Wars*, p.93.

⁸³ Howe, *Foreign Policy and the French Revolution*, pp.53-55.

⁸⁴ Tim Blanning, *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars* (London, 1986); William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1990), pp.197-201.

suspended following Louis XVI's removal from the throne and became even more strained in November 1792, as France decreed first the opening of the River Scheldt and then openly offered to help 'oppressed' peoples to recover their liberty. The British government saw this as a clear threat to the Netherlands and, despite an evident reluctance to go to war, the Dutch government backed a hard-line response.⁸⁵ The negotiations that followed were abruptly ended by the execution of King Louis on 21 January 1793, and on 1 February the French Convention, basking in the audacity of their recent regicide, declared war on King George III and Prince William V.

Britain moved immediately to deploy forces to help to defend the Netherlands. An attempted French invasion of the Netherlands in the first weeks of the war proved a dismal failure but the allies proved equally unable to drive French forces much beyond their own frontier. During 1793-94 Dutch, British, Hanoverian, Austrian and Prussian troops fought a desultory campaign against French forces in the Austrian Netherlands. By mid-1794, however, the French began to push the allied armies back and by November had driven them behind the river lines of the Dutch border. These protective barriers proved of little use, as the unusually cold winter of 1794-95 froze them solid, permitting French troops to cross at will. Resistance collapsed, and as British and Prussian soldiers beat a precipitate retreat eastwards, the Stadholder fled to England aboard a simple fishing vessel. City after city fell to the relentless French advance and the Dutch fleet was captured in its entirety, not by naval forces but by a division of French cavalry that charged across the frozen Texel to take at sword point the remnants of a once mighty force.

For Dutch Patriots the French invasion of 1795 was a liberation rather than a conquest. The French certainly tried to portray themselves as liberators, proclaiming that they came only to break the shackles which fettered the Dutch people.⁸⁶ Some preferred to see the events of early 1795 as a Dutch revolution. Patriots in a few municipalities, crucially including Amsterdam, rose up in advance of the arrival of French troops and proclaimed a provisional government to supplant the recently-decamped Stadholder and Regents. Colenbrander questioned whether 1795 can be called a revolution at all, and even sympathetic historians have taken to terming it a 'velvet revolution'. Many of the revolutionaries were members of societies within the Netherlands that had been planning to overthrow the Stadholderate for

⁸⁵ Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel, *Brieven en Negotiatien van Mr. L. P. van de Spiegel* (3 vols, Amsterdam, 1803), vol. 1, pp.3-5, L. van de Spiegel to Baron Rhede, 24 December 1792.

⁸⁶ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 586, 'Avis au Peuple Batave/Aan Het Volk van Nederland'.

some time, but they had needed French intervention to loosen the Stadholder's grip on power.⁸⁷ Others were exiles of 1787 who now returned with the French army.

The overthrow of the Stadholderate was not expected to breathe new life into the 'corpse' of the United Provinces, but to create a new state with all the strengths and none of the failings of the old.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, the 'Batavian Revolution' of 1795 was relatively limited in scope. The experiences of 1789, and even more those of 1793-94, had taught the exiled Patriots the benefits of moderation. The Stadholderate was abolished, the Reformed Church disestablished, suffrage widened and, in many municipalities, the ruling Regents deposed. Yet there were very few other immediate institutional changes. Reform was to come not from the dictation of self-appointed revolutionary committees but from a properly constituted national assembly, and until that body convened the old system was to remain in place.⁸⁹ There was no attempt to repeat the iconoclastic anti-religious violence that had characterised the radical brand of French Jacobinism, nor any awkward Robespierre-esque effort to replace the Christian deity with an ill-defined 'Supreme Being'. The Dutch revolutionaries were by no means anti-religious, and the disestablishment of the Reformed Church reflected only the non-denominational basis of Patriotism, rather than any anti-Christian feelings. There was also little violence against the persons of senior Orangists. Grand Pensionary van de Spiegel was promptly prodded into prison but was not ill-treated, let alone sent to the scaffold, and judgement was only passed on the absent Stadholder after painstaking legal procedure.⁹⁰ Some Orangists felt the need to flee into exile but the idea of mass desertions of Orangist army officers has been called into question.⁹¹ The overall spirit of 1795 was one of moderation rather than violence.

⁸⁷ N. C. F. van Sas, 'La Sociabilité Politique des Patriotes Bataves', *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*, Vol. 277 (1989), p.222.

⁸⁸ In the mid-eighteenth century John Bedford had claimed that an alliance with the Netherlands was like being tied to a corpse. D. B. Horn, *The British Diplomatic Service 1689-1789* (Oxford, 1961), p.19.

⁸⁹ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, p.1121.

⁹⁰ Het Nationaal Archief, The Hague (HNA), Collectie Bicker (3.20.04.01), 10, 'Avis des Juriconsultes B. Voorda et J. Valckenaer, dans la Cause du Ci-Devant Stadhouder Guillaume V...', 7 January 1796.

⁹¹ Mark Van Hattem, Mariska Pool & Mathieu Willemsen (eds.), *In the Wake of Napoleon, the Dutch in Time of War 1792-1815* (Bussum, 2005), p.11. This information comes from Batavian Regimental registers, but in September 1795 Henry Dundas recommended taking 600 Dutch officers currently residing in Hanover into British service; TNA, FO 37/57, Dundas to Duke of York, 20 September 1795. The distinction may possibly rest on the arbitrary level at which one considers desertions to be 'mass'.

While the Dutch may have seen 1795 as a revolution, the ever-pragmatic French government saw it differently. Realising the propaganda value of being allies rather than conquerors the French publicly encouraged the idea of a Dutch revolution, but in the treaty of The Hague (16 May 1795) privately imposed harsh terms on the Netherlands. In return for recognising the new Batavian Republic, France demanded an indemnity of 100 million guilders and annexed States Flanders, Venlo, Roermond and Maastricht. In addition the Netherlands was to open the Scheldt, join France in the war against Britain, provide a fleet of forty ships and a 30,000-strong army, and pay for the upkeep of 25,000 French troops stationed in the Netherlands.⁹² With the average annual revenues of the Netherlands in 1795-1803 standing at 34.5 million guilders, and with the maintenance of French troops alone costing ten million annually, the financial implications of the treaty were crippling.⁹³

Britain, meanwhile, adopted a somewhat ambiguous attitude to the Netherlands after 1795. Although the Batavian Republic was at war with Britain, there was a belief in London that it was against the will of the majority of Dutchmen. Britain's stated desire was to restore the Stadholderate and thereby return a greater degree of security and prosperity to the Netherlands. Yet this did not prevent Britain from enthusiastically prosecuting the war against the Dutch. In February 1795 the Stadholder issued the Kew Circular, inviting all Dutch ships and colonial possessions to place themselves at Britain's disposal for the duration of hostilities,⁹⁴ but key colonies which ignored this invitation, such as the Cape of Good Hope, were seized by force. Dutch fleets or ships caught at sea or in British harbours were treated as enemies if they did not immediately declare for the Stadholder. When a Dutch fleet ventured into the North Sea in late 1797 it was given a thorough beating by Admiral Adam Duncan's squadron at Camperdown, and despite fighting bravely for much of the day lost nine of its sixteen ships-of-the-line.⁹⁵ Plans to land British soldiers in the Netherlands in 1796-97 were intended only as

⁹² H. A. van Dijk (ed.), *Répertoire Historique et Chronologique des Traités Conclus par la Hollande Depuis 1789 jusqu'à nos Jours* (Utrecht, 1846), pp.14-16.

⁹³ de Vries & van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, p.97, table 4.3; Simon Schama, 'The Exigencies of War and the Politics of Taxation in the Netherlands 1795-1810', in J. M. Winter, *War and Economic Development* (Cambridge, 1975), p.112. One Dutch guilder equalled approximately 2.27 French francs - François Crouzet, 'Aspects Financiers de la Relation Franco-Batave', in Annie Jourdan & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Remous Révolutionnaires: République Batave, Armée Française* (Amsterdam, 1996), p.52, footnote 1.

⁹⁴ TNA, FO 37/57.

⁹⁵ C. Northcote Parkinson, *Britannia Rules, the Classic Age of Naval History, 1793-1815* (Gloucester, 1987), pp.50-53.

spoiling attacks.⁹⁶ Not until 1799 would Britain envisage committing sufficient forces to liberate the Netherlands.

The Batavian Republic thus suffered from both the assaults of her enemy and the exactions of her ally. Nor was the process of domestic reform immediately able to offer the vision of a brighter future. In 1796, in one of the most democratic elections of its era, a National Assembly was selected to decide the future constitution of the Republic.⁹⁷ The main issue to arise was whether to continue with loosely-controlled provincial governments or to reduce the power of the provinces and accept a strong central state. The issue was complex; unitarists argued for full political unity, others preferred financial unity but administrative provincial autonomy, while federalists campaigned to retain the old provincial structures.⁹⁸ An unwieldy compromise draft constitution was rejected in a referendum in late 1797 and a new Assembly was duly elected to restart the constitutional process. Debate came to an untimely end in January 1798, when radical unitarists with French support purged the Assembly and set about drafting a constitution for a unitary state. The new constitutional project provided for a centralised state, unified national finances, and, as in France, an Executive Directory and separate ministers. In a plebiscite from which federalist and Orangist voters were excluded the constitution was predictably approved by a large majority.⁹⁹ Yet the constitution was not immediately implemented. Rather than holding elections that they risked losing, the constitution's authors declared that two-thirds of the new Representative Assembly would be composed of members of the Constituent, and only one-third elected. The five temporary Directors were also confirmed in their positions. This alarmed both Dutch moderates and the French foreign minister, Charles Maurice Talleyrand, who feared a radical dictatorship. While the French representative in The Hague, Charles Delacroix, continued to offer support to the radicals, the French government secretly negotiated with disenchanted Dutch revolutionaries, headed by Herman Daendels, and in June 1798 launched another coup. The radicals were removed from government and a subsequent election returned a large moderate majority.

⁹⁶ TNA, WO 1/178, 'Projected expedition to destroy the Dutch fleet in the Texel, 1796'.

⁹⁷ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, p.1123.

⁹⁸ E.H. Kossmann, 'The Crisis of the Dutch State 1780-1813: Nationalism, Federalism, Unitarism', in J.S. Bromley & E.H. Kossmann (eds.), *Britain and the Netherlands* (The Hague, 1971), Vol. 4, 156-75.

⁹⁹ Kossmann, *The Low Countries*, p.91; D. R. C. Verhagen, *L'Influence de la Révolution Française sur la Première Constitution Hollandaise du 23 Avril 1798* (Utrecht, 1949), p.29.

The degree of French influence on the Batavian constitution remains debatable.¹⁰⁰ It is, however, certain that the Batavian constitutional process was able to take place behind the shield of the French army. Although Britain and Prussia had both guaranteed the Stadholderate in 1788, Britain was unable to dislodge France from the Netherlands, while Prussia made peace with France at Basel in April 1795 and had no intention of returning to the fray. Prussia, Austria, and Russia were in any case more concerned with annexing a respectable chunk of Poland than with fighting to restore the Stadholder.¹⁰¹ The Emperor had withdrawn entirely from Belgium after 1794 and focused instead on the Rhine and, from 1796-97, Italy, where General Bonaparte was wreaking havoc with every army sent against him. So troublesome was the young Corsican that Austria was forced to negotiate for peace, and in October 1797 the Continental war was largely brought to a conclusion with the Treaty of Campo-Formio.

The peace was of short duration. France's German policy brought her into renewed disagreement with Austria, while Napoleon's expedition to Egypt pushed the Ottomans to declare war and made Russia uneasy. Britain took advantage of these discords to assemble a Second Coalition against France, to which she earnestly hoped to add Prussia.¹⁰² Britain also hoped to take this opportunity to liberate the Netherlands. Convinced that the country was ripe for counter-revolution, Foreign Secretary Lord Grenville pushed for the Netherlands to become the pivot of Britain's military strategy. When Prussia finally declined to be drawn into the war, Britain negotiated to take a 45,000-strong Russian contingent into her pay and decided to use them against the Batavian Republic.¹⁰³

In August 1799 an Anglo-Russian force landed at the Helder as part of the Second Coalition's Europe-wide offensive against France. The plan was to neutralise the Texel fleet and then march south, gathering local support and driving the French out of the major cities of Holland and, eventually, the entire country. The campaign began well enough. The Dutch fleet, painstakingly rebuilt after Camperdown, mutinied in the name of the Prince of Orange and

¹⁰⁰ Arthur Elias, 'La Néerlandicité de la Constitution de 1798', *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*, Vol. 326 (2001), 43-52; Verhagen, *L'Influence de la Révolution Française sur la Première Constitution Hollandaise*; Annie Jourdan, *La Révolution Batave: Entre la France et L'Amérique (1795-1806)* (Rennes, 2008), pp.176-79.

¹⁰¹ Blanning, *The French Revolutionary Wars*, pp.134-37.

¹⁰² Piers Mackesy, *Statesmen at War, the Strategy of Overthrow 1798-99* (New York, 1974).

¹⁰³ Mackesy, *Statesmen at War*, pp.66 & 76.

turned their ships over to the British. Yet the Prince's eldest son, the Hereditary Prince of Orange, was received with something less than enthusiasm by the Dutch people. No uprising occurred and whatever goodwill was held towards the allies evaporated once the armies began to requisition food, transport and firewood. Lacking resources and firm leadership, the expedition soon became bogged down. The allies became penned into an area with sea or floodwaters on three sides, with Franco-Dutch forces on the other, and with a populace which seemed at best ambivalent to their presence. After a series of unsuccessful attempts to break out from their small bridgehead, the dispirited allies negotiated terms which allowed them to evacuate unmolested.¹⁰⁴ Russian and British commanders blamed each other for the expedition's failure, which added to tensions over Malta and Britain's maritime hegemony to push Tsar Paul into hostility towards Britain by the summer of 1800.¹⁰⁵ For France the campaign reinforced the necessity of keeping strong forces in the Netherlands to protect the country from invasion. The Batavian army had not disgraced itself but had also been unequal to the task of defending the country unaided.

Franco-Batavian relations soon altered to the further detriment of the Dutch following the coup in Paris in November 1799 which saw Napoleon seize the reins of French government. The Dutch initially welcomed the Consulate as a happy contrast to the instability of the Directory, but within months it became apparent that Napoleon would prove much more direct in his attempts to influence his allies. Having been refused a loan by the Dutch to pay for the Italian campaign of 1800, Napoleon decided the Batavian government was ripe for reform. In 1801 he encouraged the Batavians to abandon the Constitution of 1798 and adopt a less centralised government. The new constitution was largely of Dutch design but Napoleon kept a close eye on proceedings to ensure they produced the form of government he believed was necessary.¹⁰⁶ The new constitution was unpopular and represented a regression from the liberties gained in 1798, but it was received largely with resignation. Many Dutchmen seemed to have lost their enthusiasm for revolutionary politics, which had failed just as much as

¹⁰⁴ For a full account of the campaign of 1799 see A. B. Rodger, *The War of the Second Coalition, 1798-1801* (Oxford, 1964), pp.176-94; Mackesy, *Statesmen at War*, passim.

¹⁰⁵ J. Holland Rose, 'The Struggle with Revolutionary France, 1792-1802', in A. W. Ward, & G. P. Gooch (eds.), *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy 1783-1919* (3 vols, Cambridge, 1922), vol. 1, pp.299-300.

¹⁰⁶ L. de Gou (ed.), *De Staatsregeling van 1801, Bronnen voor de Totstandkoming* (The Hague, 1995), passim; Martijn van der Burg, *Nederland Onder Franse Invloed, Cultuurtransfer en Staatsvorming in de Napoleontische Tijd, 1799-1813* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2007), pp.38-44.

Orangist and Statist politics to re-conjure prosperity. As one narrator quipped, 'the trees of liberty had long since been cut into firewood by shivering citizens'.¹⁰⁷

The Peace of Amiens in 1802 brought an end to the war in Europe. Most Dutch colonies were returned, with the notable exception of Ceylon, and the people of the Netherlands looked forward to a desperately needed period of peace to rebuild the shattered economy. French exactions had drained some 229 million guilders from the Netherlands since 1795, which on top of servicing the debt inherited from the United Provinces had bled Dutch finances dry.¹⁰⁸ Yet within sixteen months France and the Netherlands were again at war with Britain. The roots of the conflict lay in the mutual suspicion that the British and French governments harboured towards one another. Britain viewed Napoleon's interventions in Switzerland and Italy and his refusal to evacuate French troops from the Netherlands as aggressive expansionism. Napoleon considered Britain's refusal to evacuate Malta as a breach of treaties and an attempt to expand her maritime hegemony, and was riled by unfounded rumours that Britain had refused to return certain colonial possessions.¹⁰⁹ Amid prevailing mutual distrust and open rearmament, Britain declared war on France on 18 May 1803.

The declaration of war did not initially include the Netherlands. Britain was content to allow Dutch neutrality, but only if Napoleon removed his troops from Dutch territory, renounced control of Dutch ports, and allowed Britain to prohibit trade in military stores between the Netherlands and France. Napoleon, unsurprisingly, rejected the demands. The Netherlands was at the heart of Napoleon's grand strategy in the early years of the war. Dutch harbours and ships were essential to plans to invade Britain, although the Dutch government bore the expense of military preparations only grudgingly. The war quickly degenerated into a standoff as Napoleon did not have the strength to force a crossing of the Channel, and Britain did not have the strength to strike at France. By late 1804 Napoleon had grown impatient with what he perceived as the lack of Dutch contribution to the communal war effort, and decided that the Netherlands needed reform if they were to contribute properly to his great campaign. In August 1804 the Prince of Orange formally renounced the Stadholderate, supposedly ending the threat of a return to arbitrary government, but Napoleon wished to create a central

¹⁰⁷ Hendrik Willem Van Loon, *The Rise of the Dutch Kingdom, 1795-1813; A Short Account of the Early Development of the Modern Kingdom of the Netherlands* (New York, 1915), pp.98-99.

¹⁰⁸ Schama, 'The Exigencies of War', p.117.

¹⁰⁹ H. T. Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken der Algemeene Geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840* (10 vols, 'S-Gravenhage, 1905-22), vol. 4, p.411 Sémonville to Van der Goes, 7 Germinal an XI (28 March 1803).

authority in the Netherlands with 'more absolute power than any Stadholder'.¹¹⁰ The resulting constitutional change of 1805 was heavily influenced by Napoleon and gave most of the executive and legislative powers of the country to one man, Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck, with the resurrected title of Grand Pensionary.¹¹¹

Napoleon intended Schimmelpenninck to play the same role in the Netherlands that Francesco Melzi d'Eril had played in Italy since 1800.¹¹² Yet pliant to Napoleon as he may have been, Schimmelpenninck's governance in the Netherlands ultimately made no difference to the war. Britain had begun the conflict somewhat isolated, but steady diplomatic pressure and offers of subsidy, combined with Napoleon's heavy-handedness, allowed Pitt to coax Austria, Russia and eventually Sweden into a coalition. The Austro-Russian manoeuvres that led to Napoleon's great victories of Ulm and Austerlitz drew the focus of war away from the Netherlands, while Horatio Nelson's victory at Trafalgar ended immediate Napoleonic designs on invading Britain. As part of the coalition's grand strategy Britain had made tentative plans to land an army in northern Germany with the intention of threatening the Netherlands and even France itself, but the news of Napoleon's victories saw this project quickly curtailed.¹¹³

Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz on 2 December 1805 underlined his dominant status in Western Europe. In a move largely unthinkable a year previously, Napoleon began to redistribute pockets of occupied satellite states to followers and family, with his brother Joseph taking the throne of Naples in March 1806. With Schimmelpenninck's rule in the Netherlands evidently difficult – many of Schimmelpenninck's Dutch peers thought him too subservient to France, Napoleon thought him not useful enough for France¹¹⁴ – Napoleon suggested that the Batavian Republic might like to invite Louis Bonaparte to become their

¹¹⁰ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, p.464. For the Prince's renunciation of the Stadholderate; van Dijk (ed.), *Répertoire Historique et Chronologique des Traités*, pp.50-51, Convention between Batavian Republic and Prince of Orange, 1 August 1804.

¹¹¹ L. de Gou (ed.), *De Staatsregeling van 1805 en de Constitutie van 1806, Bronnen voor de Totstandkoming* (The Hague, 1997).

¹¹² Michael Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon, 1799-1815* (London, 1996), p.80.

¹¹³ Richard Glover, *Peninsular Preparations, the Reform of the British Army 1795-1809* (Cambridge, 1963), p.253; Christopher Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War, 1803-1815* (Manchester, 1992), pp.119-21; Jeremy Black, *Debating Foreign Policy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Farnham, 2011), pp.210-11.

¹¹⁴ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, p.580, Elias Canneman to Gogel, 22 Jan 1805 & pp.625-27 'Verbaal van Verhuell'.

king.¹¹⁵ The alternative, they were told, was annexation. With little apparent choice a Dutch deputation went to Paris to request the favour of allowing Louis to become the sovereign king of the Netherlands, in exchange for guarantees of government by natives, religious freedoms, the inviolability of the public debt, and the territorial integrity of the Netherlands.¹¹⁶ To this Napoleon fairly gracelessly agreed, and in June 1806 the Batavian Republic was laid to rest and Louis announced as monarch of the new Kingdom of Holland.

Louis's reign in the Netherlands was intended by Napoleon to end any vestiges of independence and to bring the country firmly within his imperial orbit. Louis, however, was a man of somewhat naive integrity who believed that, as King of Holland, his duty was to the Dutch people and not to the French Empire. Urged by his brother to 'never cease to be French', Louis instead proclaimed upon arriving in the Netherlands that 'I have changed my nationality...I shall always remain Dutch'.¹¹⁷ Surrounding himself with Dutch advisors, Louis made honest and not altogether futile efforts to reform the country, improve its economy and ameliorate the plight of 'his' people. Demands from Paris to institute conscription were rejected as contrary to Dutch custom and Napoleon's fabled Continental System was deliberately flouted by Louis and his officials, who saw it as a road to certain ruin. Yet Louis was unable to rule as a truly Dutch king. He oscillated between responding to the demands of his subjects and the bullying of his brother, gaining little credit from either. A constant complaint was that he could not find enough reliable Dutchmen to work in his administration, as many prominent figures turned down offers of titles or positions.¹¹⁸ Although personally not unpopular, Louis was tolerated rather than desired by his subjects. He never became fully comfortable with the Dutch language and could not get used to the eternal slowness of Dutch political procedure. His reform proposals often had the stamp of the French political system in which he had been schooled and had to be moulded into the Dutch political tradition, while his obvious connections to Paris and the stream of legislation introduced at the behest of Napoleon made his regime seem uncomfortably like a government of occupation. Although Louis's refusal to allow himself to be completely ruled from Paris gained him some credit from

¹¹⁵ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, p.620, Brantsen to Van der Goes, 15 April 1806.

¹¹⁶ Owen Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms* (New York, 1965), pp.132-33.

¹¹⁷ Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, p.127.

¹¹⁸ Archives Nationales, Paris (AN), AF IV 1721, letter no.33; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 5, pp.639-43, letters from Van Swinden, J.W. Hope and A.A. Deutz van Assendelft, 9 January and 14 February 1807.

his subjects,¹¹⁹ his desire to please everyone meant that he was unable to become an effective king. Gijsbert van Hogendorp summed Louis up; 'Il ignorait qu'un prince doit être moins bon, que juste'.¹²⁰

Despite Louis's best intentions he was unable to return prosperity to the Netherlands. The war, the Continental System, and Britain's counter-blockade hit Dutch industry and commerce hard, while the burden of Napoleonic demands for men and material stretched public funds to breaking point. A series of floods, including two enormous inundations in 1808 and 1809, also caused millions of guilders' worth of damage.¹²¹ The natural disasters were exacerbated by man-made ones. In 1809 a British expedition invaded the Kingdom of Holland and captured the island of Walcheren, and only the ineptitude of the British commanders and the debilitating fevers of the island prevented a more dangerous incursion. Although this expedition has often been considered a sideshow by historians,¹²² it was in fact intended to be the main thrust of Britain's war-effort on the Continent. The more famous war in the Iberian Peninsula was still very much a secondary theatre in 1809.¹²³ The Walcheren campaign achieved nothing of military note, although the fallout from its failure helped to doom the ailing Duke of Portland's government and drove ministers George Canning and Lord Castlereagh to fight a duel.

Napoleon was furious that British forces had been able to land in the Netherlands with such ease. The invasion had caused a minor panic in Paris and Napoleon placed the blame firmly on Louis.¹²⁴ From the outset he had been unhappy with Louis's lack of Francophile zeal, and Napoleon now decided that direct French control of the Netherlands was necessary. In March 1810, in a calculated insult that Napoleon hoped would induce Louis to abdicate, the Kingdom of Holland was compelled to cede Zeeland, Brabant and southern Gelderland to France. When this did not work, Napoleon dispensed with the pretence of finesse and ordered Louis to

¹¹⁹ G. K. van Hogendorp (ed. J. Haak), *Journal d'Adrichem (1806-1809) en Journal de la Haye (1810-1813)* (The Hague, 1981), p.122-144.

¹²⁰ Van Hogendorp, *Journal*, p.307.

¹²¹ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, pp.556-60.

¹²² For example Muriel E. Chamberlain, *'Pax Britannica'? British Foreign Policy, 1789-1914* (London, 1988), pp.36-37.

¹²³ Hall, *British Strategy*, p.117; for more on the expedition see Victor Enthoven (ed.), *Een Haven te Ver, de Britse Expeditie naar de Schelde van 1809* (Nijmegen, 2009).

¹²⁴ Jean Tulard (ed.), *Cambacérès, Lettres Inédites à Napoléon 1802-1814* (2 vols, Paris, 1973), vol. 2, p.704, letter no.888; AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 13 August 1809.

renounce the throne. After briefly contemplating leading his adopted country in armed resistance against his brother, Louis bowed to the inevitable and ended his brief career in monarchy.¹²⁵ The Kingdom of Holland followed in the footsteps of the Batavian Republic, disappearing into the history books as Napoleon unilaterally annexed the remainder of the country.

Annexation proved more than just a cosmetic change. The Netherlands was still administered as a separate entity, with Charles-François Lebrun as Governor-General, but in many respects the country was brought into line with France. Lebrun centralised administration within the Netherlands and introduced the bureaucratic obsession with record-keeping that characterised Napoleonic France. Conscription was introduced and French soldiers sent out on Dutch ships to enforce the Continental System. The Dutch tax system was also replaced in 1812 by the French system of taxation which was less burdensome on the individual.¹²⁶ Although many of these reforms ultimately proved beneficial to the Netherlands, annexation was nonetheless unpopular. Johan Joor argued that the reputation of resigned Dutch acceptance of French rule in 1810-13 is incorrect, and showed that discontent with the regime was widespread and often violent.¹²⁷ Conscription, which Isser Woloch called the 'battleground' between the French people and the Napoleonic state, met with some resistance, although compliance rates were on the whole fairly high.¹²⁸ Few incidents of unrest required the deployment of more than local National Guard units to disperse irate crowds, but Napoleon felt it necessary to keep large contingents of French troops in the Dutch departments to guard against both foreign incursion and potential domestic upheaval.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, pp.609-10.

¹²⁶ Schama, 'The Exigencies of War', p.117-19. It was estimated in 1803 that the Dutch paid four times the amount of tax as the French per capita.

¹²⁷ Johan Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam: Onrust, Opruiing en Onwillingheid in Nederland ten tijde van het Koninkrijk Holland en de Inlijving bij het Franse Keizerrijk (1806-1813)* (Amsterdam, 2000); Johan Joor, 'Les Pays-Bas Contre l'Impérialisme Napoléonien: les Soulèvements Anti-Français entre 1806 et 1813', *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*, Vol. 326 (2001), 161-71; Johan Joor, 'History and Myth of Dutch Popular Protest in the Napoleonic Period (1806-1813)', in Laura Cruz & Willem Frijhoff, *Myth in History, History in Myth* (Boston, 2009), 175-99; Johan Joor, "'A Very Rebellious Disposition": Dutch Experience and Popular Protest under the Napoleonic Regime (1806-13)', in Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann & Jane Rendall (eds.), *Soldiers, Citizens and Civilians, Experiences and Perceptions of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1790-1820* (Basingstoke, 2009), 181-204.

¹²⁸ Isser Woloch, 'Napoleonic Conscription: State Power and Civil Society', *Past and Present*, No. 111 (1986), p.101; Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, p.342-79.

¹²⁹ Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, pp.626-27; Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon*, p.68.

After 1809 British interest in the Netherlands faded briefly, as the Peninsular War and then the irritation of conflict with America took precedence. French interest was obviously greater. Napoleon spent several weeks in 1810 organising the administration of his newly-annexed territories and briefly visited in 1811, but by 1812 his mind was preparing for that grandest exhibition of Napoleonic hubris, the invasion of Russia. As an integral part of the empire, the Dutch played their part in the debacle. Fifteen-thousand Dutchmen marched with the *Grande Armée* in 1812, though only a few hundred returned to their native land.¹³⁰ Yet the disasters of the Russian campaign changed little for the Netherlands. It was not until after Napoleon's defeat Battle of Leipzig in October 1813 that people began to seriously consider the possibility of the imminent collapse of the French imperium.

The fall of Napoleon's empire provided the backdrop to the last act of revolution in this period of turmoil for the Netherlands. The defeats of 1812-13 denuded the Netherlands of French troops and by November 1813 had forced the abandonment of the garrisons of several major towns. In many areas there was popular unrest and celebration at the French retreat, but these were localised incidents without central leadership. French authority was evidently on the wane but nobody was sure with what it could be replaced. Into the power-vacuum stepped Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp. He and a small committee of acquaintances decided to declare Dutch independence before the arrival of the allied armies in the hope that they would treat the Netherlands as a friend rather than a foe. Playing on popular identities which still considered Orange as a powerful symbol of national unity, van Hogendorp and his fellows proclaimed the Prince of Orange to be the sovereign prince of the Netherlands and offered him the reins of government.¹³¹ The recall of the Prince to the head of the Dutch state was enough to persuade the allies, and particularly Britain, that the Netherlands was a friendly power and should be given support instead of occupation. A British expedition under Sir Thomas Graham was despatched to aid the Orangists and to secure Antwerp and the Scheldt estuary, while Gebhard von Blücher's multi-national army drove the last French garrisons back across the frontier. By the time of Napoleon's abdication in early April 1814 the Netherlands was largely free of French troops and under the control of the restored Orangist government.

Despite this apparent self-liberation from Napoleonic occupation, the Dutch were not permitted to unilaterally decide their fate after the fall of Napoleon. The four victorious 'great powers' took the role of arbiters of Europe into their own hands, and in exchange for

¹³⁰ Gerlof D. Homan, *Nederland in de Napoleontische Tijd, 1795-1815* (Haarlem, 1978), p.143.

¹³¹ E. J. Vles, *Twee Weken in November, de Omwenteling van 1813* (Amsterdam, 2006).

concessions elsewhere Britain was given a more-or-less free hand to determine the future of the Netherlands. The result of this was not unhappy for the Dutch. Britain, keen to have in the Netherlands both an ally and a buffer against any future French aggression, returned most Dutch colonies seized over the course of the wars, with the exception of Ceylon and the Cape of Good Hope, and more importantly agreed to a union between the Netherlands and Belgium. The Dutch and Belgians were permitted to draw up their own constitution for the unified state, though Britain stipulated that this new country should be ruled by the Prince of Orange, who was raised to the dignity of king and given sovereignty over the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. Unlike many other former French allies and client states, the Netherlands did not lose out in the politicking of the Congress of Vienna or the settlement that eventually followed.¹³²

The Kingdom of the Netherlands was from the start a British ally, and in January 1815 also briefly enjoyed an accord with Louis XVIII's France as the latter joined with Britain, Austria, and several middling states to limit the demands of Russia and Prussia.¹³³ Yet when news broke of Napoleon's return from exile in March 1815 the Netherlands immediately joined the coalition of powers opposed to Napoleon. It is a measure of Britain's continued commitment to their policy of defending the Low Countries that all available British forces were concentrated in Belgium under their most able commander, the Duke of Wellington. Britain also arranged for the concentration in the Netherlands of contingents from several German states, as well as a strong Prussian and Saxon army under the command of Blücher.¹³⁴ The Netherlands played its part in full, fielding a contingent of 30,000 men as part of the Wellington's army.¹³⁵ Despite the disparagement of many English-language commentators, evidence suggests that the Dutch troops performed well during the Battle of Quatre Bras and on the field of Waterloo itself. After the famous battle was won the Dutch contingent advanced with Wellington in pursuit of their fleeing foes, and it was thus as victors that the Dutch troops were able to enter France in late June 1815, effectively bringing the curtain down on three decades of Anglo-Franco-Dutch strife.

¹³² Adam Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace, The Fall of Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna* (London, 2007).

¹³³ Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, p.401; TNA, FO 94/82, 'France Additional articles, inviting Bavaria, Holland, and Hanover to join the alliance, 3 January 1815'.

¹³⁴ Peter Hofschröer, *1815 the Waterloo Campaign; Wellington, his German Allies and the Battles of Ligny and Quatre Bras* (London, 1998), pp.44-46.

¹³⁵ David Chandler, *Waterloo, the Hundred Days* (London, 1980), p.63. Van Loon, *Rise of the Dutch Kingdom*, p.246, gives a figure of 50,000 but this does not tally with other sources.

CHAPTER TWO

PUBLIC OPINION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE NETHERLANDS



Anon., *Dumouriez and the Hollander* (1793)
(British Museum Satires 8314: © Trustees of the British Museum)

This chapter examines public opinion and national identity in the Netherlands during the fraught years of revolution, war, and foreign occupation of 1785-1815. As this thesis focuses mainly on attitudes towards the Netherlands, this chapter will look mostly at Dutch self-perception, outlining the major themes of Dutch national identity. These include feelings of shared territory, history, culture and language, and ideas of republicanism, Orangism and Protestantism that provided a bond for the conceptual nation. The meaning of the nation will also be discussed, as the semantic value of the concept heavily influenced how the Dutch interacted with their supposedly-national identity. As explained in the introduction, this work does not seek to uncover an objective 'truth' about Dutch national identity in the late eighteenth century, but rather to outline identity as it would have appeared to and impacted on Dutchmen of the period. Building on the framework of the eighteenth-century public sphere that was discussed in the introduction, this chapter will also discuss aspects of Dutch public opinion towards foreign affairs. The two main aspects of public opinion that will be examined are the attitudes of the Dutch people to the country's two major foreign bugbears, Britain and France, and the Dutch public's impressions of the standing of the Netherlands as an international power, which at the end of the eighteenth century was suffused with narratives of decline and atrophy.

The particular conditions enjoyed and endured in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Netherlands gave the country its own determined flavour. The Netherlands had a relatively small population of around two million, but had a relatively high population density and was heavily urbanised. The Dutch urban population remained largely stagnant across the eighteenth century but by 1800 one in three Dutchmen could still be found living in municipalities of over 5,000 inhabitants.¹ Due to the confederate nature of the Dutch Republic up to 1795, these municipalities often had a strong tradition of semi-independent self rule and many had a corporate seat in their sovereign provincial States. Although by the mid-eighteenth century politics was becoming dominated by a small Regent oligarchy, there was a deeper tradition of popular political participation in the Netherlands than in either Britain or France.

The Netherlands was not a closed society, and was in fact one of the most visited countries of eighteenth-century Europe. Most visitors were not inspired by the cosmopolitan 'veneer of

¹ E. Anthony Wrigley, 'Urban Growth and Agricultural Change: England and the Continent in the Early Modern Period', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Spring 1985), p.714, Table 8, gives Dutch population figures: 1750 - 1,925,000, (675,000 urban - 35%); 1800 - 2,100,000, (700,000 urban - 33%).

aristocratic pretensions' that led the cultured and curious to traverse the continent.² A wide range of people found their way to the Netherlands, from imperial autocrats like Peter-the-Great to impoverished authors like Alexandre Dumont-Pigalle or Antoine Cerisier, but most who visited the country were simple merchants, mariners or moneymen. Rotterdam, for example, was the chief port in the trade with Britain and boasted a sizable community of semi-permanently resident Britons, giving visitors like Ann Radcliffe the impression of an English provincial town rather than a major foreign city.³ Amsterdam lay across the trade routes for both northern and southern Europe and the Indies and was also well known for its multinational community.⁴

Despite its relative openness, there was a definite sense of national self-identity in the eighteenth-century Netherlands. At its most basic, it involved a feeling that there *was* a nation to be part of. The glue that bound this conceptual nation together involved a mixture of shared culture, language and political institutions, a delineated territory, and broadly shared legal and religion practices. The most important institutions were the Dutch Reformed Church, the States and the House of Orange. Less concrete but just as important were myths of the national past, both ancient and more recent, the idea of a shared history or experience, and the presence of a foreign 'other' against whom the Dutch nation could be pitted and measured. However, the recognition of a nation also demanded the recognition of an internalised polity. The meaning of the term 'nation' altered dramatically over the last decades of the eighteenth century, as the confederal and corporate nation created after the Union of Utrecht in 1579 increasingly came under attack from ideas of universal natural rights, the sovereignty of the people, and finally from the French-influenced notion of the nation one and indivisible.

The awareness of the nation inevitably entailed a territorial aspect. Indeed, the word *vaderland*, with its obvious territorial connotations, was sometimes used synonymously with the word *natie*. Although the experience of life in the Dutch Republic varied depending on province, town or village, living in the lands of the Republic gave the inhabitants the idea of a common experience and the enjoyment of certain rights and privileges that applied only within the borders of the Netherlands. Only perhaps the disenfranchised regions of States-Brabant

² Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe* (London, 1991), p.5.

³ Ann Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794 Through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return Down the Rhine* (London, 1795), p.69.

⁴ Geert Mak (trans. Philipp Blom), *Amsterdam, a Brief Life of the City* (London, 2001), p.99.

did not share in this idea of a common experience.⁵ This is not to say that nationality or identity depended entirely upon a territorial affiliation with the Netherlands. Patriots such as Dumont-Pigalle or Cerisier were born in France, while a man such as Lambert de Stuers could be born in the Austrian Netherlands, grow up in the Netherlands, serve for a decade in the French army and still count himself Dutch.⁶ It is clear, however, that the idea of the Netherlands as a territorial entity was a source of pride to the Dutch people and attempts to remove land from any province or territory were fiercely resisted. Simon Schama's claim that after 1789 'the treaties which had marked off traditional boundaries could be dismissed as mere parchment, the feudal scrolls of an international seigniorial regime' may have some relevance to France, but in the Netherlands these boundaries remained sacrosanct.⁷ In popular culture the land of the Netherlands was sacred; Jan Frederik Helmers's 1812 epic poem *De Hollandsche Natie* saw the very soil of the Netherlands as a crucial part of its identity.⁸ Threats to seize Dutch territory were sure to arouse the ire of the Dutch people. Gijsbert van Hogendorp was of the opinion that the British may have been better received in 1799 if they had explicitly promised that they would not demand to keep any Dutch territory.⁹ Equally, attempts by Napoleon in 1808 to alter the borders of the Kingdom of Holland provoked an angry response in the Netherlands despite it offering a substantial net gain of territory.¹⁰

Despite the vague territorial identity, the federated nature of the United Provinces led to some fundamental differences in how the nation was perceived when compared to Britain or France.¹¹ The meaning of the nation in the early-modern Netherlands was tied up in the

⁵ C. O. Van der Meij, 'Divided Loyalties, States-Brabant as a Border Country', in Benjamin Kaplan, Marybeth Carlson & Laura Cruz (eds.), *Boundaries and their Meanings in the History of the Netherlands* (Leiden, 2009), 15-34.

⁶ Ronald Pawly & Patrice Courcelle, *Les Frères De Stuers au Service de Napoléon* (Brussels, 2004).

⁷ Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators, Revolution in the Netherlands 1780-1813* (2nd edn., London, 2005), p.6.

⁸ J. F. Helmers (ed. Lotte Jensen), *De Hollandsche Natie* (Nijmegen, 2009), p.107.

⁹ G. K. van Hogendorp (ed. J. Haak), *Journal d'Adrichem (1806-1809) en Journal de la Haye (1810-1813)* (The Hague, 1981), p.166.

¹⁰ H. T. Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken der Algemeene Geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840* (10 vols, 'S-Gravenhage, 1905-22), vol. 5, pp.428-29, Röell to Louis, 5 August 1808.

¹¹ Eke Poortinga, 'Fédéralisme et Centralisation autour des Révolutions Batave et Française', in Annie Jourdan & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Remous Révolutionnaires: République Batave, Armée Française* (Amsterdam, 1996), p.35, argues that the United Provinces were confederal rather than federal but acknowledges that very few writers in the eighteenth century made a distinction between the two.

complex concepts of municipal citizenship and corporate rights. Politics was very much a corporate affair, and when rights and privileges were evoked they were the rights of collectives rather than of individuals. Citizenship was experienced through membership of municipality and province and the eighteenth-century meaning of the word *burger* – citizen – was linked to the urban political and judicial context.¹² The nation was conceived as sovereign, and sovereignty as popular, but the Dutch nation was not conceived as a central body to which all men belonged as individuals. Instead the nation was embodied by the assemblies of the seven provincial States, in which individuals would be stakeholders through their corporate membership of a municipality or social order. As E.H. Kossmann explained, ‘sovereignty belongs not to people, but to *the* people’, and the people ‘comprised a network of ancient institutions, of councils, parliaments, colleges and estates, and, secondarily, those who have a place in them.’¹³ The idea that all inhabitants of a place might, by natural law, be entitled to an equal share of the sovereignty held no currency in the early-modern Netherlands. As in France, the concept of corporate and collective rights retained primacy until the revolutionary upheavals at the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁴

This federal nation was not just theoretical. Many in the Netherlands shared a deep sense of attachment to their province and to the system of provincial autonomy; for many Dutchmen, it was quite possible to assimilate both a provincial and a national identity without conflict. The sovereign provinces represented a guarantee of Dutch liberties while centralisation was traditionally seen as an authoritarian policy of the Stadholders.¹⁵ To both the States party and the later Patriots provincial sovereign autonomy was a way of guaranteeing national rights and was not thought to undermine the idea of a Dutch nation. Although the Patriots of the 1780s began to move towards seeing citizenship as an individual rather than corporate practice there were few advocates of abandoning the federal idea of the nation.¹⁶ Indeed, some Patriot

¹² Joost Kloek & Wijnand Mijnhardt, ‘De Verlichte Burger’, in Joost Kloek & Karin Tilmans (eds.), *Burger, een Geschiedenis van het Begrip ‘Burger’ in de Nederlanden van de Middeleeuwen tot de 21ste Eeuw* (Amsterdam, 2002), pp.155 & 167.

¹³ E. H. Kossmann, *Political Thought in the Dutch Republic; Three Studies* (Amsterdam, 2000), p.137.

¹⁴ Ellen Meiksins Wood, ‘The State and Popular Sovereignty in French Political Thought: A Genealogy of Rousseau’s “General Will”’, in Frederick Krantz (ed.), *History From Below* (Oxford, 1988), p.87.

¹⁵ Thomas Poell, ‘Local Particularism Challenged, 1795-1813’, in Oscar Gelderblom (ed.), *The Political Economy of the Dutch Republic* (Farnham, 2009), p.294.

¹⁶ Poortinga, ‘Fédéralisme et Centralisation’; E. H. Kossmann, ‘The Crisis of the Dutch State 1780-1813: Nationalism, Federalism, Unitarism’, in J. S. Bromley & E. H. Kossmann (eds.), *Britain and the Netherlands* (The Hague, 1971), vol. 4, 156-175.

groups took to demanding an extension of corporate privileges in order to better secure their rights and liberties.¹⁷ Dumont-Pigalle saw a Patriot revival after 1787 as unlikely precisely because of the fragmentary nature of the nation and the consequent competing demands on legitimacy, as 'égoïsme de ville, égoïsme de province, égoïsme d'état ou de profession' were too entrenched in the national mindset.¹⁸

Nonetheless, there had already been some unifying impulses evident during the eighteenth century, and some tentative moves towards standardisation of administration.¹⁹ In 1781, J.H. Swildens declared 'the *United Netherlands* is my fatherland, and not only one or another province.'²⁰ Many other Dutchmen perhaps held a stronger provincial identity than Swildens, but even those arguing for political federalism in the 1790s spoke in terms of a unified national character. The constitutional committee of the National Assembly saw no contradiction in justifying their initially federalist proposals by claiming that 'un état fédéral conviendrait mieux au caractère national néerlandais'.²¹ The Patriots of the 1780s had opened the door to a unitary conception of the political nation, even if most steadfastly refused to walk through it. One of the most significant aspects of the Free Corps was the fact that the disunited groups showed a desire to coalesce and move towards a more central – and national – body. From December 1784, a series of 'assemblies' were held for Free Corps from across the Netherlands.²² In June 1785 the Free Corps assembly at Utrecht saw members swear the Act of Association, which provided for the first time a common statement of political intent, demanding representative government, freedom from tyranny, and a 'true Republican Constitution'.²³ It was not a detailed programme of action, nor was it even prescriptive in suggesting how its aims might be achieved, but it did show a degree of desire for more

¹⁷ Maarten Prak, 'Corporate Politics in the Low Countries: Guilds as Institutions, 14th to 18th Centuries', in Maarten Prak et al. (eds.), *Craft Guilds in the Early Modern Low Countries, Work, Power and Representation* (Aldershot, 2006), pp.88-99.

¹⁸ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 1, p.19, Dumont Pigalle to Etienne Luzac, 18 May 1790.

¹⁹ Kossmann, 'The Crisis of the Dutch State', p.158.

²⁰ N. C. F. van Sas, *De Metamorfose van Nederland: van Oude Orde naar Moderniteit 1750-1900* (Amsterdam, 2005), p.75. 'Het Vereenigde Nederland is myn Vaderland, en niet slechts de eene of ander provincie.'

²¹ Poortinga, 'Fédéralisme et Centralisation', p.45.

²² N. C. F. van Sas, 'La Sociabilité Politique des Patriotes Bataves', *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*, Vol. 277 (1989), pp.217-18.

²³ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, pp.94-95. 'Acte der Verbintenis'.

national unity amongst the Patriots. By demanding the rights of citizens as individuals the Patriots also undermined the corporate basis for the sovereign nation, although this distinction is perhaps clearer with hindsight than it was to contemporaries.²⁴

It was, ultimately, the influence of post-1789 French re-conceptualisations of the nation that legitimised the shift towards the idea of a central and unitary nation.²⁵ In revolutionary France the nation became the key basis for all political legitimacy. The principle of national sovereignty, especially after the declaration of the republic in 1792, demanded a unitary consensus; the fabled nation One and Indivisible. Corporatism became inimical to the nation, whether it took the form of nobility, the church, or federalist provincial assemblies. French flirtations with federalism in the early 1790s were abandoned as the war and threat of invasion demanded national unity, and the Federalist Revolt of 1793 left the notion of provincial or municipal autonomy irredeemably tainted with connotations of counter-revolution.²⁶ The Patriot exiles in France absorbed these new meanings, aping not only the concept but also the language of the French nation. Their project for a revolutionised Netherlands stated that henceforth 'the Republic must be one and indivisible' and that provinces should lose their sovereignty, while citizens were to derive their status, rights and liberties from universal principles upheld by the unitary nation.²⁷ In this new ideal of the Dutch nation there would no longer be Hollanders or Zeelanders or Frieslanders, but only Dutchmen. The struggle between unitarism and federalism shows that this idea was not immediately universally accepted,²⁸ but by the time the Kingdom of the Netherlands was created in 1814 unitary conceptualisations of the nation had clearly become entrenched.

The Dutch sense of collective identity went far beyond abstract conceptions of the nation. Not least in creating a sense of common identity were myths and tales of a collective past. The

²⁴ Wyger Velema, *Republicans, Essays on Eighteenth-Century Dutch Political Thought* (Leyden, 2007), pp.124-26.

²⁵ I. Leonard Leeb, *The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution, History and Politics in the Dutch Republic 1747-1800* (The Hague, 1973), p.281; Graeme Callister, 'The City and the Revolutionary Dutch Nation, 1780-1800', *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies*, Volume 36, No. 3 (November 2012), p.241; Poortinga, 'Fédéralisme et Centralisation'.

²⁶ D. Sutherland, *France 1789-1815, Revolution and Counterrevolution* (London, 1985), pp.175-82; J. Godechot, *La Contre-Révolution, Doctrine et Action 1789-1804* (Paris, 1961), pp.232-41 & ch.12.

²⁷ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 1, pp.106-07, 'Schets tot Grondslag eener Nieuwe Constitutie voor de Republiek der Bataven' article 2; 'De Republiek moet één en ondeelbaar zijn'. Also H. H. Rowen (ed.), *The Low Countries in Early Modern Times* (London, 1972), p.254.

²⁸ Poortinga, 'Fédéralisme et Centralisation', pp.45-46.

crucible of war and revolt that had forged the United Provinces into being in the sixteenth century had created a precocious sense of national consciousness. To justify their Revolt, Dutch intellectuals sought to give it a firm basis in the past and to present it as a continuation of ancient and therefore legitimate practice. It was from amongst this welter of works that the ultimate myth of Dutch origin, the Batavian myth, arose. The Batavians were a tribe contemporaneous to the Romans who were believed to have lived in the territory of the Netherlands, and so to have been the direct ancestors of the Dutch people. This belief was first bruited in print in the early sixteenth century but it was the 1610 writings of Grotius that popularised the idea of the Batavian past.²⁹ As in all such myths of ancient lineage, the Batavians were painted by their self-appointed successors as virtuous and brave, freedom-loving and independent. Analogies were drawn between the Batavian revolt against Roman governor Vitellius and the Dutch Revolt against Phillip II of Spain. Grotius claimed legitimacy by linking Dutch political institutions back through 1700 years of history to the Batavians, thereby 'proving' that the rights of free Dutchmen were the established order of things.³⁰ Grotius's work is now seen as a transparent (if earnest) attempt to justify the Revolt, but it was certainly no call to revolution. Grotius claimed no universal inalienable rights for mankind, but rather the freedoms and privileges due to the Dutch as the descendants of the Batavian nation.

Grotius's work did more than simply justify revolt. The seven provinces of the Netherlands had never been unified except as part of a greater whole, and thus the new Republic had no independent historical basis. By introducing the Batavians as a tribe which had previously occupied the territory of the Republic, Grotius gave the Netherlands at least part of the historical basis it needed. The myth by no means went unquestioned; in 1748 Gerard van Loon set about debunking it as a work of fiction, but the ferocity of the response to his work indicates that the myth retained widespread support.³¹ Van Loon's work certainly did not damage later Patriot belief in the myth. Many of the major works of Patriot literature referred to their countrymen as Batavians and, inspired by the studied revival of classicism of the French revolutionaries, the Patriots gave the ultimate endorsement to the myth by renaming

²⁹ I. Schöffer, 'The Batavian Myth During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in J.S. Bromley & E.H. Kossman (eds.), *Britain and the Netherlands* (The Hague, 1975), vol. 5, 78-101.

³⁰ I.J.H. Worst, 'Constitution, History and Natural Law: an Eighteenth-Century Political Debate in the Dutch Republic', in Margaret C. Jacobs & Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century; Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), pp.155-56.

³¹ Eco. O. G. Haitsma Mulier, 'Between Humanism and Enlightenment: The Dutch Writing of History', in Margaret Jacobs & Wijnand Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century; Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), p.180; Joost Kloek & Wijnand Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in European Perspective: 1800, Blueprints for a National Community* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp.193-95.

their country the Batavian Republic in 1795.³² Nor did the myth's potency diminish when that Republic went the way of the Helvetic, Cisalpine or Ligurian Republics. Helmers's panegyric poem to all things Dutch, for example, began by tracing the roots of the Netherlands back to the free and brave Batavians, setting the scene for the great triumphs of the Dutch people that were to come.³³

The Batavian myth was supplemented by more modern historical bases for the Dutch nation. By the 1700s the Revolt against Spain had itself achieved legendary status, and the seventeenth-century wars that the Republic had fought against England and France helped to solidify the sense of national community. Heroes from these wars such as Admirals Tromp or De Ruyter enjoyed widespread posthumous adulation. However, these episodes functioned somewhat differently from the Batavian myth. The latter was a positive statement of shared origin, an inclusive rather than exclusive basis for the nation. The wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, on the other hand, relied on opposition to an external foe to provide a rallying point for the nation. This process of 'othering' began with Spain but by the eighteenth century centred more on France and, to a lesser extent, Great Britain; more of which anon.

Along with unity through history was a sense of common cause and common purpose. Trade, commerce and maritime activity were chief among these common causes.³⁴ The Dutch saw themselves as prosperous but more importantly believed that, as they lacked an appreciable agriculture or large-scale industry, the backbone of their prosperity came from trade or seafaring. Since the inception of the Republic, the sea had been hugely important to the Dutch.³⁵ For those actively involved in seafaring, national identity could potentially be subordinated to a professional identity that saw the need to exploit the sea as more important than country or politics, as shown by the informal agreements between British, French and Dutch fishermen and Channel pilots to respect each other even when their countries were at war.³⁶ Yet the perceived importance of trade in Dutch identity remained enormous, helping to

³² (Joan Derk Van der Capellen), *Aan Het Volk van Nederland* (Ostend, 1781), pp.3, 15 & 21.

³³ Helmers, *De Hollandsche Natie*, p.97.

³⁴ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, pp.29-30; E. H. Kossmann, *The Low Countries 1780-1940* (Oxford, 1978), p.84; Helmers, *De Hollandsche Natie*, p.107; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, p.543.

³⁵ G. N. Clark, 'The Birth of the Dutch Republic', in Lucy Sutherland (ed.), *Studies in History* (London, 1966), p.138.

³⁶ Renaud Morieux, 'Diplomacy from Below and Belonging: Fishermen and Cross-Channel Relations in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, No. 202 (February 2009), 83-125; The National Archives, London (TNA), WO1/911, the pilots of Dover and Deal to Admiral Duncan, 3 June 1796.

reinforce the notion of the Dutch as a separate and distinct people, and giving the country a sense of common purpose. The decline of seafaring industries, and of the spirit of commerce that was seen as so important to Dutch identity, was widely mourned by Dutch commentators. In 1790 Laurens van de Spiegel lamented his fellow Dutchmen's growing indifference to the spirit of commerce, but thirteen years later J.A. Tinne held out hope that the Peace of Amiens would last long enough to see the reawakening of 'l'esprit mercantil'.³⁷ Although decline was a common concern, the Dutch maritime self-identity endured throughout the period.

Linked to a sense of common purpose in Dutch identity was the collective ideal of republicanism. The exact nature of Dutch republican identity has been debated by historians, sometimes fiercely,³⁸ but there is little doubt that republicanism played a prominent role in eighteenth-century Dutch identity.³⁹ Dutch republican sentiment was wrapped up in a particular conception of Dutch liberty, in which the absence of a sovereign monarch allowed Dutch citizens to think of themselves as a free-born people, answerable only to themselves. For much of the Dutch Republic's existence the anti-Orangist Regents provided a focal point of republican identity. It was a fear of the encroaching power of the Stadholders, and their supposed pretensions to monarchical power, that provided the basis for much of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century opposition to the House of Orange. Republican identity did not preclude support for the Stadholder but it did expect him to be subordinate to the States, and saw the States as the only legitimate basis for power in the Republic.⁴⁰ By the late-eighteenth century corruption and nepotism amongst the Regents had eroded public confidence to the extent that the Patriots were able to take over the mantle of republican identity. The Dutch were seen as particularly suited to republican government, something that the country's political leaders claimed almost up until the eve of the appointment of Louis

³⁷ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 1, p.171-72; vol. 4, p.408-09.

³⁸ For example the acrimonious spat (it is difficult to dignify it with the term debate) on the subject between Wijnand Mijnhardt and Wyger Velema in the pages of *De Achttiende Eeuw* journal: Wijnand Mijnhardt, 'The Limits of Present-day Historiography of Republicanism', *De Achttiende Eeuw*, 37, 1 (2005), 75-89; Wyger Velema, 'Wijnand Mijnhardt on the Historiography of Republicanism: A Reply', *De Achttiende Eeuw*, 37, 2 (2005), 193-202; W. Mijnhardt, 'A Reply to Wyger Velema', *De Achttiende Eeuw*, 37, 2 (2005), 203-205.

³⁹ Stefan Klein, 'L'Elément Français dans la Crise Républicaine en Hollande (1780-1787)', in Annie Jourdan & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Remous Révolutionnaires: République Batave, Armée Française* (Amsterdam, 1996), p.26; Velema, *Republicans*, p.2.

⁴⁰ Henk Reitsma, 'The United Provinces', in Otto Dann & John Dinwiddy (eds.), *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1988), p.171.

Bonaparte as the Netherlands's first king.⁴¹ For those steeped in classical republican tradition, monarchies were corrupt and inefficient, while republicanism was seen as a positive trait, evoking a sense of communal unity and individual virtue.

One clear expression of popular republicanism was participation in the Patriot Free Corps.⁴² The right of republican citizens to bear arms was a central tenet of Patriotism, as an armed citizenry, independent of the Stadholder in his capacity of Captain-General, was seen as the only guarantee against the tyrannical pretensions of foreign powers and domestic despots.⁴³ Participating in the Free Corps was therefore an aggressive statement of republican identity. It is difficult to estimate the exact numerical extent of Free Corps membership. In summer 1786 a total of 13,517 men assembled at Utrecht, but they represented members from only four provinces, and Jonathan Israel estimated that the total countrywide Free Corps membership may have been double this.⁴⁴ Certainly participation was uneven. The Province of Overijssel alone claimed to have 3,500 Free Corps members, while the slightly larger population of the City of Amsterdam boasted only 2,500.⁴⁵ Participation remained a minority activity but the appeal of the Free Corps was certainly wider than a 'factious few', as the Prince of Orange was wont to dismiss them.⁴⁶

Free Corps membership provides an insight into concepts of republican citizenship as envisaged by the Patriots who became their active members. Although republican identity was shared by both genders and at all levels of society, republican citizenship clearly did not belong to everyone. Participation was heavily gendered as only men were permitted to arm themselves in these units. Some women soldiers had served openly in the Dutch Revolt but by

⁴¹ Het Nationaal Archief, The Hague (HNA), Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 54, Schimmelpenninck to Committee, 2 May 1804.

⁴² H. L. Zwitser, 'De Militaire Dimensie van de Patriottenbeweging', in F. Grijzenhout, W. Mijnhardt & N. van Sas (eds.), *Voor Vaderland en Vrijheid, De Revolutie van de Patriotten* (Amsterdam, 1987), 27-51; Maarten Prak, 'Citizen Radicalism and Democracy in the Dutch Republic: The Patriot Movement of the 1780s', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (February 1991), p.78.

⁴³ (Van der Capellen), *Aan Het Volk van Nederland*, p.20.

⁴⁴ Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic, its Rise, Greatness and Fall 1477-1806* (Oxford, 1995), p.1107; Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, p.102.

⁴⁵ Wayne P. Te Brake, 'Violence in the Dutch Patriot Revolution', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (January 1988), p.150; Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, p.102.

⁴⁶ F. J. L. Krämer (ed.), *Archives ou Correspondance Inédite de la Maison D'Orange-Nassau, 5th Series, Vol. III, 1782-89* (Leyden, 1915), pp.460-61 & pp.482-84; HNA, Stadhoudelijke Secretaire (1.01.50), 124, Prince of Orange to George III, 24 July 1789.

the eighteenth century the idea that women might have a military role had been lost.⁴⁷ Women could claim a peripheral engagement in Free Corps by sewing banners, contributing to collections for weapons, or simply offering their encouragement at drill sessions and parades, but they were expected to remain only passive or marginal participants and were unable to lay claim to the rights of republican citizenship that allowed, and indeed demanded, the arming of their menfolk.⁴⁸ Equally, this expression of citizenship was not open to all men. In a similar fashion to the National Guard of the Revolution still a few years off in France, the Free Corps were socially exclusive entities. Membership was aimed firmly at the middling and lower-middling orders in society, and the bulk of the rank and file were made up of artisans, tradesmen and shopkeepers. There was certainly a tradition in the Netherlands of seeing the poor as ignorant, easily stirred up, and potential tools of Orangist (and therefore anti-republican) tyrants. Schama considered that one of the main reasons that some municipal Regents tacitly condoned the Free Corps was that they provided a bulwark against the threat of the Orangist 'mob'.⁴⁹

While it is clear that republican identity was important, it is also necessary to acknowledge its limits. Those steeped in classical republicanism were but a small minority of the Republic's population. If the strength of an identity can in part be measured by the reaction to its suppression, it can be surmised that for the majority of Dutchmen republicanism was peripheral or at least subordinate to other facets of identity. The demise of the Batavian Republic in 1806 did not leave the country facing an overwhelming crisis of identity, nor did it prevent widespread cooperation with the royal regime. Equally, the decision to form the post-1813 state into a kingdom rather than return to an Orange-led republic caused little in the way of resistance. This can possibly be explained by circumstance – in neither 1806 nor 1813 did the Dutch people actually have a say in the form of their new government – but it does not necessarily explain the facility with which the Dutch adopted their new monarchical identity. Instead, it could perhaps be suggested that another political tradition, that of Orangism, may have accounted for the acceptance of these forms of government so diametrically opposed to republicanism.

⁴⁷ Rudolf M. Dekker & Lotte C. van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1997), pp.9-10 (& passim).

⁴⁸ Brake, 'Violence in the Dutch Patriot Revolution', pp.150-51; Kloek & Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p.219; Stefan Dudink, 'In the Shadow of the Citizen-Soldier: Politics and Gender in Dutch Officers' Careers, 1780-1815', in Karen Hagemann, Gisela Mettele & Jane Rendall (eds.), *Gender, War and Politics; Transatlantic Perspectives, 1775-1830* (Basingstoke, 2010), pp.111-13.

⁴⁹ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, pp.86-88.

This is not to suggest that Orangism was a decisive factor in deciding political loyalties in the years of French control; as Johan Joor observed, Orangism featured little in popular unrest in the period.⁵⁰ Rather, it could be seen that the tradition of support for a noble house at the head of a constitutional state may have led to the acceptance of regimes that did not conform to the supposed republican identity of the Netherlands. This was certainly the case for men such as van Hogendorp, a staunch Orangist who refused to deal with the Patriots but who nonetheless sought office and patronage at the court of King Louis, or Willem Bilderdijk, a former Orangist exile who agreed to teach the king Dutch.⁵¹ This trend was also recognised by contemporaries. A report on Dutch public opinion early in Louis's reign commented that although many Orangists had not abandoned their former allegiance, they were now happy to accept posts in the new royal administration.⁵²

While Orangism was not anti-republican – Prince William V was among the staunchest supporters of Dutch-style republicanism – the Stadholderate was the closest institution the Netherlands had to a monarchy, and provided something of a figurehead for the nation. The Stadholder's main support traditionally came from the small Dutch nobility, the officers of the army, the clergy of the Reformed Church and from the lower sections of urban society, who, in the words of Joachim van Rendorp, 'learned devotion to the House of Orange from childhood', and to whom the Prince represented a protector from the ravages of the Regents.⁵³ In this the Stadholder was not far removed from the popular imagination of a European monarch as the defender of the people from the depredations of their social superiors.⁵⁴ Nor was it only individuals who sought Stadholderly protection. It has been suggested that some of the Province of Zeeland's enthusiasm for Orangism, for example, may have been part of a strategy to help keep the influence of anti-Orangist Holland in check.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Johan Joor, 'History and Myth of Dutch Popular Protest in the Napoleonic Period (1806–1813)', in Laura Cruz & Willem Frijhoff, *Myth in History, History in Myth* (Boston, 2009), p.195.

⁵¹ Van Hogendorp, *Journal*, pp.2-4 ; Marnius van Hattum, *Mr. W. Bilderdijk's Briefwisseling 1798-1806* ('t Goy-Houten, 2007), p.970.

⁵² Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 5, pp.264-66.

⁵³ Herbert H. Rowen, *The Princes of Orange, the Stadholders in the Dutch Republic* (Cambridge, 1988), pp.208, 216-17 and 226; Rowen (ed.), *The Low Countries in Early Modern Times*, p.253.

⁵⁴ E. J. Hobsbawm, 'History from Below - Some Reflections', in Frederick Krantz (ed.), *History from Below, Studies in Popular Protest and Popular Ideology* (Oxford, 1988), p.14.

⁵⁵ Kloek & Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p.49.

The symbolic value of the House of Orange changed during these years of revolutionary unrest. Many Regents had long been suspicious of the Stadholder but during the Patriot unrest of the 1780s anti-Orange animosity reached new levels. Although Patriot attacks largely failed to strip the Prince of popular support – Greffier Hendrik Fagel assured William in 1785 that ‘the nation has a natural desire and affection for the House of Orange’, while Sir James Harris believed that the people would rally to the Prince if only they knew the insults he was suffering⁵⁶ – the forcible loss of the supposed figurehead of the nation after the French invasion in 1795 caused little unrest. The expected 1799 counter-revolution in the name of Orange failed to ignite, the navy’s defection notwithstanding, despite proclamations from both the Prince of Orange and his eldest son inviting the loyal Dutch to rise on their behalf. The claims of Orangist agents such as Charles Bentinck, who told the British Foreign Office that he had a list of 18,705 names who would join an Orangist uprising, seem at best optimistic and at worst a fantastical invention.⁵⁷ Some renowned Orangists were even willing to cooperate with the Batavian administration; the finance houses of Braunsberg and Muylman, for example, both contributed hefty loans to the new government.⁵⁸ Many more joined the Batavian administration after 1801 when William V wrote an open letter absolving his supporters of any further loyalty to his House, while others remained loyal until William’s death in 1806.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, popular Orangism never really disappeared and successive Batavian governments continued to be nervous of its influence.⁶⁰

The enduring appeal of the House of Orange came from what it represented rather than what it had done. As had been shown by two previous Stadholderless periods, absence apparently made the heart grow fonder. The continual erosion of Dutch independence in the years after 1795 meant that the leader-in-exile became seen as a symbol of national independence and of potential deliverance from the French Imperial yoke; the ‘myth’ of Orange, as Herbert Rowen

⁵⁶ Krämer (ed.), *Archives ou Correspondance Inédite de la Maison D’Orange-Nassau*, pp.347-49 – ‘de Natie een natuurlijke zugt en geneegendheit heeft voor het Huis van Orange’; HNA, Collectie Fagel (1.10.29), 1458, note from Harris, 16 October 1785.

⁵⁷ HNA, Collectie Fagel (1.10.29), 1859 & 1860, Proclamations of the Prince and Hereditary Prince of Orange; TNA, FO 38/4, ‘Dénombrement de bien-intentionnées’, enclosed in Bentinck’s letter of 18 September 1799.

⁵⁸ J. B. Manger, *Recherches sur les Relations Economiques de la France et de la Hollande Pendant la Révolution Française (1785-1795)* (Paris, 1923), p.121.

⁵⁹ G. J. Renier, *Great Britain and the Establishment of the Kingdom of The Netherlands 1813-1815* (The Hague, 1930), pp.48-49.

⁶⁰ HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 121, van der Goes to Grasveld and Bourdeaux, 23 & 27 August 1799 respectively; Van Hogendorp, *Journal*, p.83.

called it.⁶¹ Even the embarrassing spectacle of the new Prince grovelling around the courts of Europe after unwisely siding with Prussia against Napoleon did not diminish the regard for the House of Orange.⁶² If the Orangist restoration in 1813 was not popularly effected, it did at least prove popularly accepted. There is evidence of popular support for Orangism even before the so-called revolution of mid-November. The British Foreign Office received information in early November 1813 that 'there no longer exists any party spirit – all are united in a wish to expel the French and restore the Orange family.'⁶³ Moreover, the men and women who took to the streets in a practical demonstration of the loss of control by French troops did so to cries of '*Oranje Boven!*', the traditional battle cry of Orangism.⁶⁴ There was also a degree of enthusiasm shown to join the forces of the newly returned Prince; by 27 December 1813 a reported 5,741 officers and men were under arms, somewhat giving lie to the claim of historian Sir John Fortescue that 'there was much shouting of "Oranje Boven", and nothing more'.⁶⁵

Although the House of Orange managed to inspire a sense of national identity, its Bonapartist successors had less joy. The tradition of Orangism may have made the Kingdom of Holland conceptually less unpalatable, but Louis never managed to make his regime a symbol for national identity. Only a small cadre of Francophile Dutchmen truly desired his accession to the throne while the majority of the population sought solace in the idea that the brother of the French emperor might at least temper the demands made on the country. Crowds assembled to witness Louis's arrival in the Netherlands, with newspapers reporting this as unequivocal proof of their attachment to their new sovereign, but Louis was more pragmatic, reflecting that the people showed more curiosity than interest.⁶⁶ Louis fully intended to do his best for

⁶¹ Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, p.230.

⁶² Van Hogendorp, *Journal*, pp.173-75, 22 August 1808. The new Prince fought in the Prussian army in 1806 but then fell out with King Frederick-William; he lost his lands in Germany but begged Napoleon for patronage and was finally promised a pension. He then abandoned Napoleon and fought for Austria in 1809. See Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, Vol. 5, pp.761-75. Throughout this period he was apparently out of favour with the British court – Hogendorp (p.174) gives the novel explanation that it was because he had refused to drink with the Prince of Wales.

⁶³ TNA, FO 37/64, Foreign Office memorandum of 13 November 1813.

⁶⁴ E. J. Vles, *Twee Weken in November, de Omwenteling van 1813* (Amsterdam, 2006), p.47.

⁶⁵ TNA, FO 37/65, 'Etat et situation des différents corps de Troupes au service de son altesse royale Le prince d'Orange Nassau, souverain des Provinces Unies', 27 December 1813.

⁶⁶ *Journal Politique*, 8 July 1806; Louis Bonaparte, *Documens Historiques et Réflexions sur le Gouvernement de la Hollande* (3 vols, Paris, 1820), vol. 1, p.140.

his adopted kingdom and given more time and a less demanding elder sibling he may well have made some progress. However, he never managed to escape from the idea that he and his regime were foreign. Despite the public tears of the president of the Dutch Assembly upon annexation in 1810, which Governor-General Lebrun assured Napoleon was occasioned by the president's attachment to Louis, the king's departure caused little grief among the Dutch.⁶⁷ Even less a symbol for the Dutch nation was the Emperor Napoleon, who became the sovereign of the Netherlands from 1810. There is some evidence of admiration or even affection for Napoleon from individuals in the Netherlands, most notably in the form of published verse or public festival commemorating his victories martial and marital.⁶⁸ However, there is very little evidence that many Dutchmen ever felt part of the French Empire, and even less that Napoleon might have been a symbol for national unity or consciousness; quite the opposite in fact, as Napoleonic France proved the ultimate other against which the Dutch people were to push for their independence.

It is clear then that while both Republic and Stadholderate could provide symbols of national unity, they could also prove divisive, providing differing or even opposing rallying points for the nation. This potential to both unite and divide was also shared by religion. As with much of Europe, the experiences of the Netherlands during the Reformation had left an established church and a good deal of religious animosity. Dutch Calvinism was at least as important in the United Provinces as Anglican Protestantism was in England. Philip Gorski even argued that the disciplinary values of 'ascetic' Calvinism were crucial to early-modern Dutch state formation.⁶⁹ During the years of the revolt against Spain Calvinism had become one of the driving forces of resistance and laid the foundation for two centuries of suspicion towards religious minorities, above all Catholics.⁷⁰ By the eighteenth century the Dutch Reformed Church was a symbol of an independent Netherlands and enjoyed a privileged place in Dutch identity.

The strength of popular adherence to the Reformed Church is sometimes obscured by the general tolerance shown to religious minorities, who certainly enjoyed more tranquillity in the

⁶⁷ Archives Nationales, Paris (AN), AF IV 1721, Lebrun to Napoleon, 15 July 1810.

⁶⁸ *Journal Politique*, 4 August 1807, 'chant de la paix de Tilsit' by Edmund Borel; *Gazette Royale*, July 1806, poems by Emma P. Van Acker praising the Bonaparte brothers & 20 December 1806, an ode by Mr. Bilderdyk; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 5, p.518, for the celebrations of Napoleon's marriage to Marie-Louise.

⁶⁹ Philip Gorski, 'The Protestant Ethic Revisited: Disciplinary Revolution and State Formation in Holland and Prussia', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 99, No. 2 (September 1993), p.266.

⁷⁰ Clark, 'The Birth of the Dutch Republic', pp.132-133.

Netherlands than in many neighbouring countries. The Dutch Jewish population was relatively high and, although not enjoying full civic rights, Jews could practice business and some trades with few restrictions by the late eighteenth century.⁷¹ Catholics, who made up maybe one-third of the Republic's population, were also generally left unmolested by the authorities.⁷² Yet Dutch society was by no means egalitarian. The Reformed Church was established across all seven provinces, and while some Protestant dissenters were permitted to hold public office, nowhere were the major 'others' of Catholics or Jews openly allowed to do so.⁷³ The lack of official persecution also did not mean that tensions were absent, as popular anti-Catholicism was wont to flare up throughout the century.

The privileged place of the Reformed Church came under fire during the 1780s. One of the main areas of support for the Patriots was from amongst the disenfranchised Catholic and dissenter populations who embraced the message of political inclusivity and demanded rights equal to their Calvinist countrymen. Patriot philosophy was by no means atheistic – the influential Patriot text *Aan Het Volk van Nederland* even concluded with an appeal for divine assistance – but it often opposed the dominance of the Reformed Church as much as it did the dominance of the Stadholder. Many Free Corps units allowed membership regardless of religious affiliation and sought to shrug off the confessional shackles that disbarred a large section of the population from political citizenship. By allowing dissenters and Catholics to join without prejudice, the Free Corps were able imply a non-confessional nature of citizenship and allow non-Reformed men into an explicitly political arena. Not all Patriots accepted the need to take up cudgels against the Reformed Church, and indeed the issue pushed some to abandon the Patriot cause. The guilds of Deventer, for example, switched allegiance to the Stadholder once it became clear that local Patriots were planning to insist on political rights for Catholics.⁷⁴

Despite instances such as this the Calvinist basis for Dutch identity was being undermined. Animosity between Catholics and Protestants had lost some of the sting of the earlier eighteenth century, and revolutionary France's rejection of Catholicism removed some of the latent Calvinist fears that Dutch Catholics were traitors within and closet Francophiles. Religious affiliation was increasingly suborned to political philosophy. In the face of the 1795

⁷¹ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, pp.1026-27.

⁷² Pieter Geyl, *History of the Low Countries* (London, 1964), p.191.

⁷³ Kloek & Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p.54.

⁷⁴ Prak, 'Corporate Politics in the Low Countries', p.99.

French invasion the Reformed Church proved unable to rally anti-French resistance, despite the delivery of many a fiery sermon, and numerous Reformed clergymen followed the States General's lead in proclaiming the French armies as welcome liberators, implicitly trusting the judgement of their political leaders.⁷⁵ Religion as an official measure of citizenship dissipated after 1795 as Catholics and Dissenters were brought, albeit sometimes grudgingly and imperfectly, into the national community.⁷⁶ Individuals remained strongly attached to their confessional identity, with the Reformed Church predominant among these, but the religious basis for the nation was slowly becoming less mono-denominational. Religious prejudice now often contained political undertones. The Patriot Isaac Gogel, for example, advised against Jewish political rights in 1794 because he saw the Dutch Jewish community as staunchly Orangist.⁷⁷ The arrival of Louis in 1806 reignited anxieties over the fate of the Reformed Church and initially led to demands that Louis be forced to conform to the Reformed religion, though this soon mellowed into more general demands for freedom of worship.⁷⁸ Popular religious prejudice never entirely died away, but by the time of the annexation by France in 1810 only an estimated four percent of public disturbances could be attributed to religion, indicating at the very least that a sense of tolerance prevailed.⁷⁹

Religion, States-republicanism and Orangism have been identified as the three main traditions of eighteenth-century Dutch national consciousness.⁸⁰ As has been seen, all three of these identities had their limits and were forced to evolve as established religion fell away, republic became monarchy, and the House of Orange wallowed in exile. Religion survived as a binding feature of Dutch identity well into the nineteenth century, albeit in a slightly more religiously

⁷⁵ Horst Carl, 'Religion and the Experience of War: A Comparative Approach to Belgium, The Netherlands and the Rhineland', in Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann & Jane Rendall (eds.), *Soldiers, Citizens and Civilians, Experiences and Perceptions of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1790-1820* (Basingstoke, 2009), p.225.

⁷⁶ Theo Clemens, 'Het Vuur van de Revolutie en de Rooms-Katholieke Kerk in de Noordelijke Nederlanden', *De Achttiende Eeuw*, 28, 1-2 (1996), 75-86. Clemens argues essentially that 1795 was not an *annus mirabilis* that saw Catholics fully emancipated but the first step on a long journey to full acceptance.

⁷⁷ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 1, p.378.

⁷⁸ Owen Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms* (New York, 1965), pp.132-33; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 1, pp.106-07; vol. 4, p.627 'aanteekening van van der Goes', 2 April 1806.

⁷⁹ Johan Joor, "'A Very Rebellious Disposition": Dutch Experience and Popular Protest under the Napoleonic Regime (1806-13)', in Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann & Jane Rendall (eds.), *Soldiers, Citizens and Civilians, Experiences and Perceptions of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1790-1820* (Basingstoke, 2009), p.191-92.

⁸⁰ Reitsma, 'The United Provinces', *passim*.

permissive atmosphere. Orangism revived after 1813 as the newly-sovereign House of Orange became a national symbol that endures to this day. Yet the strong republican identity of the eighteenth century was, by 1815, largely moribund, although its echoes can arguably be found in the liberal constitutional monarchism that finally prevailed after 1848.⁸¹

One aspect perhaps missing from Dutch national identity in this period was a spirit of militarism or military service. Although the Dutch tradition of vibrant republican citizenship demanded a certain level of armed participation, militarism never featured heavily in Dutch identity. Even the Free Corps of the 1780s were more expressions of citizenship than of militaristic desire. Certainly there was some warmth shown to the military, and heroes such as Tromp and De Ruyter remained symbols of Dutch pride even under French occupation.⁸² In times of war defeats were lamented and victories lauded, but the Dutch had no equivalent to either the sense of service of the Prussian Junkers or the French tradition of *la gloire*. The Dutch public was largely indifferent to military service but was actively hostile to conscription, although conscription-related unrest was no more prevalent than in other recalcitrant parts of the empire and should not necessarily be taken as proof of opposition to the Napoleonic regime.⁸³ Van Hogendorp considered the Netherlands too modern to resort to conscription and believed that the Dutch tradition of free volunteering underpinned the widespread distaste for compulsory service.⁸⁴

An enduring element to Dutch national identity was the sense of a Dutch national culture. The Dutch certainly saw themselves as having distinctive cultural traits from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, a period especially famed for the prodigious works of Dutch artists and

⁸¹ van Sas, *De Metamorfose van Nederland*.

⁸² Helmers, *De Hollandsche Natie*, p.168.

⁸³ AN, F/1^E/53, reports from D'Alphonse 1 May, 17 May & 31 October 1811, & 29 February 1812; Johan Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam: Onrust, Opruiing en Onwillingheid in Nederland ten Tijde van het Koninkrijk Holland en de Inlijving bij het Franse Keizerrijk (1806-1813)* (Amsterdam, 2000), pp.342-79; For French conscription see Alan Forrest, *Conscripts and Deserters, the Army and French Society during the Revolution and Empire* (Oxford, 1989); Alain Pigeard, *La Conscription au Temps de Napoléon 1798-1814* (Paris, 2003); Eric A. Arnold, Jr., 'Some Observations on the French Opposition to Napoleonic Conscription, 1804-1806', *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Autumn 1966), 452-462; Isser Woloch, 'Napoleonic Conscription: State Power and Civil Society', *Past & Present*, No. 111 (May, 1986), 101-129. For conscription in the wider Empire see, for example; E. Cruyplants, *Les Conscrits de 1813 Dans les Ci-devant Pays-Bas Autrichiens* (Brussels, 1901); Alexander Grab, 'Army, State, and Society: Conscription and Desertion in Napoleonic Italy (1802-1814)', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (March 1995), 25-54.

⁸⁴ van Hogendorp, *Journal*, pp.190-91, 23 September 1808.

artisans.⁸⁵ By the eighteenth century the notion of this common culture still existed, although it was pervaded by a sense of decline.⁸⁶ There were of course great regional differences in culture, but with the majority of the population concentrated in the coastal provinces, the culture of these areas came to dominate ideas of 'Dutchness'. Amsterdam especially came to exemplify Dutch culture and set the fashion for others to follow, just as Paris and London were to do in France and Britain respectively. For the population in general, the relatively frugal lifestyle approved of by the Calvinist church came to be accepted as stereotypically Dutch. Despite the inhabitants of the Netherlands being generally better fed than their European contemporaries,⁸⁷ the Dutch perceived themselves as moderate in consumption. The typical Dutchman of domestic caricature was portrayed as relatively thin and sober, unlike British caricature which portrayed 'mynheer' as a dour, overweight drunkard.⁸⁸

Dutch cultural identity included a pride in achievements in art and literature, though much of this pride related to the great painters, writers and thinkers of the seventeenth century rather than contemporary output.⁸⁹ By the late-eighteenth century Dutch poetry and literature was not considered to be of a particularly high standard – Bilderdijk complained in 1802 that barely anyone was able to write well in Dutch⁹⁰ – but the relatively robust book market kept domestic demand alive. There was an appreciable corpus of Dutch fiction, which was for the most part purely intended as entertainment and rarely strayed into politics or contemporary issues of importance, even if the authors themselves were often quite political.⁹¹ The domestic arts received a boost after 1806 from the court of King Louis, who preferred to promote Dutch

⁸⁵ Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches, an Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London, 2004).

⁸⁶ E. H. Kossmann, 'The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century', in Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), p.28.

⁸⁷ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, p.42. Schama's summation of Dutch consumption as 'hoggish gluttony' is amusing but somewhat exaggerated.

⁸⁸ Anon., *Dumouriez and the Hollander* (1793), British Museum (BM) Satires 8314, (see page 80).

⁸⁹ Frans Grijzenhout, 'A Myth of Decline', in Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), pp.327-30.

⁹⁰ van Hattum, *Mr. W. Bilderdijk's Briefwisseling*, p.601.

⁹¹ Christine van Boheemen-Saaf, 'The Fiction of (National) Identity: Literature and Ideology in the Dutch Republic', in Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), pp.241-43.

culture above the 'European-French' model endorsed by his brother.⁹² This patronage disappeared with the Empire but Frans Grijzenhout argued that the subsequent marginalisation of Dutch culture by the new rulers of the country led eventually to a nationalist reaction that ultimately served to boost Dutch culture.⁹³

Opposition to foreign cultural influence often provides some of the firmest evidence for Dutch pride in their supposed national culture. In 1763 a pamphlet entitled *Verdediging van der Eer der Hollandsche Natie*, published to refute aspersions cast on Dutch character, complained that the Dutch were 'far too indulgent toward foreign influence'.⁹⁴ The rise of the Spectatorial press in the mid-century was a reaction against the perceived growing influence of French culture in the Netherlands although, as Charles Wilson wryly noted, this attack on the French devil came at the cost of admitting the English.⁹⁵ Criticism of foreign influence centred mostly on the upper echelons of society who decorated their houses *à la française*, indulged in French mannerisms, or took to socialising with French or English-style dances.⁹⁶ Attempts to introduce foreign culture to a wider audience in the Netherlands often failed, as evidenced by the continued insipidity of Dutch theatre. Some criticism of foreign influence centred on the use of foreign language, above all French, which after 1795 could no longer be a simple cultural choice but inevitably acquired political connotations.⁹⁷

Language was one of the less ambiguous factors of Dutch identity. The Dutch language was spoken by the vast majority of the inhabitants of the Netherlands, and by the eighteenth century was becoming distinct from the language spoken in the Southern Netherlands. Dutch was also increasingly replacing Latin as the language of academia and publication, although the

⁹² Frans Grijzenhout, 'La Patrie Réinventée: L'Art Hollandais dans la Période Française (1795-1813)', in Annie Jourdan & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Remous Révolutionnaires: République Batave, Armée Française* (Amsterdam, 1996), p.141; Kloek & Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p.506.

⁹³ Grijzenhout, 'La Patrie Réinventée', p.158.

⁹⁴ Reitsma, 'The United Provinces', p.173. The title translates as 'Defence of the Honour of the Nation of Holland'. Although the pamphlet addressed itself to the nation of Holland, a reprinted edition in 1776 made it clear that it applied to all seven provinces equally.

⁹⁵ Charles Wilson, *The Dutch Republic* (London, 1968), p.160.

⁹⁶ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, p.1064; Alice Carter, *Neutrality or Commitment: the Evolution of Dutch Foreign Policy 1667-1795* (London, 1975), pp.90-91; Lynn Matluck Brooks, 'Court, Church, and Province: Dancing in the Netherlands, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (summer 1988), 19-27.

⁹⁷ Marie-Christine Kok-Escalte, 'La Langue Française et son Rôle Culturel dans les Relations Franco-Néerlandaises: l'Exemple de Deventer', in Annie Jourdan & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Remous Révolutionnaires: République Batave, Armée Française* (Amsterdam, 1996), p.237.

use of Latin was never entirely supplanted.⁹⁸ The proliferation of literary and poetic societies in the latter half of the century was, to some, proof of a popular pride in the language and a desire to embellish and improve it.⁹⁹ It has been estimated that during the 1770s-80s there were approximately forty Dutch literary societies actively involved in producing literature, with total membership estimated at around 2,000, though if membership of societies who consumed but did not produce literature is counted the figure would be much higher.¹⁰⁰ Although many societies bore Greek, Latin or French names, their publications tended to be in Dutch.¹⁰¹ From 1766 there was a national society for Dutch literature, the *Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde*, which provided a focus for Dutch-language writings. The late-eighteenth century also saw the beginning of the serious study of Dutch linguistics and the appointment of the first university Chairs of Dutch. Ellen Sjoer posited that the appointment of Matthijs Siegenbeek to the Chair of Dutch at Leiden in 1796 was specifically intended to strengthen 'the nationalistic feelings of unity and independence of the Dutch nation.'¹⁰²

Despite a healthy interest in the Dutch language, the Netherlands was not immune to the Europe-wide phenomenon of the increasing use of French among the higher echelons of society; 'learning French and a good education are nowadays thought to be synonymous', claimed an anonymous Dutch translator of Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois*.¹⁰³ William V habitually communicated with some of his Dutch followers and even his son in French, while Patriots such as Lestevenon, Valckenaer and van Leyden were all wont to communicate with one another indiscriminately in French or Dutch.¹⁰⁴ French schools were relatively popular in

⁹⁸ Klein, 'L'Elément Français dans la Crise Républicaine en Hollande', p.30; *Journal Politique*, 10 February 1807 reports that the outgoing rector of the university of Leiden made his valedictory address in Latin.

⁹⁹ *Journal Politique*, 2 July 1805.

¹⁰⁰ W. van den Berg, 'Literary Sociability in the Netherlands, 1750-1840', in Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), p.256; Marleen de Vries, 'Dichten is Zilver, Zwijgen is Goud. Vrouwen in Letterkundige Genootschappen 1772-1800', *De Achttiende Eeuw*, 31, 2 (1999), 187-213.

¹⁰¹ J. J. Kloek et al., 'Literaire Genootschappen, 1748-1800', *Documentatieblad Werkgroep Achttiende Eeuw*, XV/1 (1983), pp.49-64.

¹⁰² Ellen Sjoer, 'Barthold H. Lulofs and "The New Rhetorics", the Influence of Eighteenth-Century British Rhetoric in The Netherlands', in Roland de Bonth & Jan Noordegraaf (eds.), *Linguistics in the Low Countries in the Eighteenth Century* (Amsterdam, 1996), p.175.

¹⁰³ Velema, *Republicans*, p.95.

¹⁰⁴ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 2; Kramer (ed.) *Archives ou Correspondance Inédite de la Maison D'Orange-Nassau*, correspondence with G. Ch. de Lynden.

the Netherlands and this popularity only increased after 1795; by 1799 some seventeen percent of schoolchildren in Deventer, for example, were educated in French schools.¹⁰⁵ Yet the use of French did not necessarily denote indifference to the Dutch language. The Leiden-based French-language *Journal Politique* sprang to the defence of Dutch in response to an article in the Parisian *Moniteur* which claimed that French was virtually the first language of the Netherlands. The *Journal* labelled this assertion absurd, boasting that 'notre langue belle et riche est de plus en plus cultivée et épurée'.¹⁰⁶ Even after the annexation of 1810 the Dutch people were keen to emphasise pride in their language, and to highlight the inadequacy of French as a replacement. In August 1810 Lebrun wrote to Napoleon to explain that the Dutch believed that their language had its own particular character and was culturally rich, that the understanding and teaching of their language was being perfected, and that they would consider its loss to be something of a calamity.¹⁰⁷

The reaction to foreign culture and foreign language was part of a wider process of 'othering', which for the most part took the form of a reaction against Anglo-French influences. Opposition to the foreign other played an important role in Dutch identity. On occasion there was a foreign other against whom Dutchmen of any political viewpoint could unite, such as in 1784 when the Emperor threatened to force open the Scheldt.¹⁰⁸ More often, however, either Britain or France played the role of foreign bugbear. Traditionally the primary enemy of the United Provinces was monarchical, Catholic France. Since the late seventeenth century the Netherlands had enjoyed a close alliance with Britain, an alliance thought to be underpinned by the fundamental similarities between the two peoples. In religion and culture the British and Dutch saw similarities in one another, while the common interest in commerce and finance forged some very tangible links.¹⁰⁹ Many Dutchmen also agreed with and approved of Montesquieu's assessment that Britain's government was little more than a republic hidden in monarchical form.¹¹⁰ Eighteenth-century Dutch views of France, on the other hand, were far

¹⁰⁵ Kok-Escalte, 'La Langue Française', pp.221-23.

¹⁰⁶ *Journal Politique*, 2 July 1805; *Moniteur*, 17 June 1805.

¹⁰⁷ AN, AF IV 1721, Lebrun to Napoleon, 24 August 1810, no. 364.

¹⁰⁸ S.T. Bindoff, *The Scheldt Question to 1839* (London, 1945), p.140.

¹⁰⁹ David Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires: England and the Netherlands in the Age of Mercantilism, 1650-1770* (Cambridge, 2003), p.1; Nigel Ashton & Duco Hellema (eds.), *Unspoken Allies, Anglo-Dutch Relations Since 1780* (Amsterdam, 2001).

¹¹⁰ Velema, *Republican*, p.2.

less complimentary, with Louis XIV an especial target for Dutch ire.¹¹¹ French government, religion and military power all provoked mistrust in the Netherlands.

This easy Anglo-French othering began to unravel in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Commercial similarity to Britain inevitably encompassed a degree of commercial rivalry, and the close threads linking the House of Orange to the British court became increasingly seen as shackles. When war broke out in 1780 the complacent view of the British ally was shattered and replaced in some quarters by an image of Britain as the faithless and perfidious foe.¹¹² Much of this was linked to the internal politicking of the Republic, as the anti-Orangist Patriots appeared especially opposed to Britain. Nicolaas van Sas posited that Patriot nationalism of the 1780s was negatively defined, with the Stadholder and Britain as the internal and external others respectively, although this possibly does not do justice to some of the more positive aspects of Patriot thinking.¹¹³ Yet the resentment of Britain was by no means universal in the Netherlands. Many staunch Orangists continued to see France as the enemy, while others considered both countries as unwelcome influences on the Netherlands.¹¹⁴ Rather than proving a force to unite the nation, by the 1780s the other provided by Britain and France served as much to polarise opinion as to create national consensus.

The issue of whether Dutch public opinion favoured Britain or France proved hugely contentious in the period 1785-1815. The public was often deeply and irredeemably divided into different camps, and each could only claim to represent public opinion by privileging one 'public' over another. In 1785 there was genuine popular support for a French alliance; the alliance was popularly instigated, a section of the press was vocal in its support, and its conclusion in November 1785 provoked joyous celebration in some Patriot associations.¹¹⁵ Yet in 1787 there were equally genuine outpourings of joy at the restoration of the Stadholder and

¹¹¹ P. J. W. Malssen, *Louis XIV d'Après les Pamphlets Répandus en Hollande* (Amsterdam, 1936).

¹¹² (Van der Capellen), *Aan Het Volk van Nederland*, p.11.

¹¹³ N.C.F. van Sas, 'Opiniepers en Politieke Cultuur', in Frans Grijzenhout, Wijnand Mijnhardt & N.C.F. van Sas (eds.), *Voor Vaderland en Vrijheid, De Revolutie van de Patriotten* (Amsterdam, 1987), p.115.

¹¹⁴ Rowen (ed.), *The Low Countries in Early Modern Times*, pp.250-51; Piers Mackesy, *Statesmen at War, The Strategy of Overthrow 1798-99* (New York, 1974), p.125.

¹¹⁵ *Oprechte Nederlandsche Courant*, 28 January 1786; *Hollandsche Historische Courant*, 10 September 1785; van Sas, *De Metamorfose van Nederland*, p.240; P. J. H. M. Theeuwen, *Pieter 't Hoen en de Post van den Neder-Rhijn (1781-1787)* (Hilversum, 2002), pp.410 & 656; van Sas, 'La Sociabilité Politique des Patriotes Bataves', p.222.

the British alliance.¹¹⁶ Both Patriots and Orangists claimed public opinion for themselves, and both used often strikingly similar language to do so. The Patriots were eager to portray supporters of the Prince as either arrogant aristocrats or an ignorant rabble, while reserving for themselves the respectable, thinking portion of the population.¹¹⁷ A letter written to the *Nederlandsche Courant* in March 1785 rejoiced at the reduced powers of the Prince who had supported only a few elites and the 'rabble', thereby arrogating to the Patriot cause the middling sorts excluded from the Stadholder's favour.¹¹⁸ For their part, the supporters of the House of Orange tended to view Patriotism as a dangerous enthusiasm while claiming the continued support of the sober or 'thinking' part of the population.¹¹⁹

With public opinion in the 1780s and 1790s apparently split between Francophiles, Anglophiles and the indifferent, neither Britain nor France was able to provide a comprehensive other to rally Dutch national sentiment. The evident animosity that France and Britain bore each other largely prevented them from being used as simultaneous objects for Dutch othering. Although both countries boasted a number of partisans within the Netherlands, both nonetheless managed to make themselves disliked. Britain's apparent coaxing of the Netherlands into a war against France in 1793 and its ensuing failure to defend the country reignited claims of treachery, and the murder, rape and pillage carried out by British troops in their retreat across Gelderland in 1794 left lasting resentments.¹²⁰ The subsequent seizure of Dutch shipping and colonies did little to improve the general opinion. France was equally distrusted, first as a potential invader and then as a foreign occupier. Unlike in the Rhineland, where many saw the arrival of the French army as a herald of progress, in the Netherlands French influence was perceived as regressive rather than progressive.¹²¹ The evident drain on the country caused by

¹¹⁶ W. Ph. Te Brake, *Regents and Rebels: The Revolutionary World of an Eighteenth-Century Dutch City* (Cambridge MA, 1989), p.168.

¹¹⁷ Alfred Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents, The Diplomacy of the First Earl of Malmesbury at The Hague* (London, 1954), p.72; van Sas, *De Metamorfose van Nederland*, p.185.

¹¹⁸ *Nederlandsche Courant*, 28 March 1785, 'Extract een Briefs uit Leiden van den 26 Maart'.

¹¹⁹ Krämer (ed.), *Archives ou Correspondance Inédite de la Maison D'Orange Nassau*, pp.348-49; TNA, FO 37/9, Harris to Carmarthen 15 November 1785.

¹²⁰ HNA, Collectie Fagel (1.10.29), 1854, 11 November 1794, States General to Fagel; Extract from States General 11 November 1794; extract from States of Gelderland, 8 November 1794; Robert Brown (ed. Frederick Llewellyn), *Corporal Brown's Campaigns in the Low Countries; Recollections of a Coldstream Guard in the Early Campaigns Against Revolutionary France 1793-95* (Driffield, 2008), pp.142-43, 162-63.

¹²¹ Michael Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon, 1799-1815* (London, 1996), pp.130-31.

the French army of occupation and the constant frictions between the inhabitants and the French troops were other constant sources of discontent.

It is sometimes suggested that the reasonably calm and even supportive reaction to France's invasion of the Netherlands in 1795 should be taken as proof of relatively widespread support for Patriot-French ideas and ideals. However, another explanation can be found in the work of Wolfgang Schivelbusch, whose research into the culture of defeat and national trauma may offer some explanations for the apparent *volte face* of much of the Dutch population in choosing to support the French invader.¹²² Schivelbusch proposed that a national defeat encompassing the overthrow of a government becomes seen by the defeated populace as something of a cleansing; the previous government is portrayed as corrupt, lazy, or even treacherous, having led the country unwittingly to defeat, and a new, supposedly strong and efficient administration put in its place. 'For a moment, the external enemy is no longer an adversary but something of an ally, with whose help the previous regime and now deposed system has been driven from power'.¹²³ This liberation rhetoric sees the invaders as friends, previous allies as foes, and the new government as the guarantor of national revival. A spirit of optimism prevails that Schivelbusch calls 'dreamland', a spirit only broken when the reality of military occupation, reparations and despoliation by the victors hits home. Schivelbusch's book discusses the situation in post-First World War Germany, but it could just as easily apply to the Netherlands of 1795. The complex shift of attitudes towards Britain and France can be interpreted in the context of the shock of national defeat, mourning and recovery.

Throughout the period of French occupation the othering of Britain and France remained a divisive issue as much as a unifying one. While overt French control over the Netherlands riled some, others were more concerned by the continued contraband trade with Britain or the depredations of the Royal Navy and British privateers on Dutch colonies and shipping.¹²⁴ Anti-French feeling is easier to discern simply because of the proximity of the Dutch people to agents of the French state. Joor counted over 500 cases of popular riot in the years 1806-13, at least a quarter of which resulted from direct dissatisfaction with one or other of the Bonaparte

¹²² Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat, on National Trauma, Mourning and Recovery* (London, 2004).

¹²³ Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat*, p.11.

¹²⁴ Van Hogendorp, *Journal*, p.29, 25 March 07; *Delftsche Courant* 26 March 1805; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 5, p.395-96, 403-05.

regimes.¹²⁵ Although the idea of the Napoleonic period seeing the ‘awakening of nations’ in opposition to France has been refuted by historians such as Charles Esdaile and Michael Broers, it seems that the very tangible evidence of discontent with the French regime in the Netherlands should not be ignored or dismissed as simply anti-enlightened reform sentiment.¹²⁶ It was certainly in opposition to specifically French control that the people of the Netherlands rioted in 1813 before rallying to the House of Orange. None of the rioting Dutch demanded revolution or regime change within the Empire, but instead sought freedom from Napoleonic control through demands for national independence. The fact that the post-1814 regime successfully kept many of the innovations in administration that the French had introduced indicates that it was more than simple anti-reform sentiment that motivated anti-French protests.

Linked to the hostility shown towards France and Britain was the idea that the Netherlands was in decline. Decline was a pervasive theme during the latter half of the eighteenth century, though it was more a matter of latent public opinion than of identity. The Dutch evidently did not absorb narratives of decadence into their national identity, but they did believe that their country was on a downward trajectory and sought to reverse this.¹²⁷ David Ormrod pointed out that historians often use the language of rise and decline in national contexts while ignoring enormous regional differences, and warned against the tendency to impose anachronistic national delineations onto such narratives,¹²⁸ but in the Netherlands the belief in decline transcended its realities, spreading to all corners of the Republic and encompassing almost all areas of human activity.¹²⁹

In the 1780s there was a tendency in Dutch opinion to unfavourably compare the present to an indeterminate and semi-mythologized past. This past was a country of republican virtues, religious fortitude, morality, and prosperity; a country whose ‘fleets once covered the seas’.¹³⁰ The present was by contrast squalid, immoral and impoverished. The idea of moral decline was

¹²⁵ Joor, “‘A Very Rebellious Disposition’”, p.191.

¹²⁶ Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon*, p.3.

¹²⁷ van Sas, *De Metamorfose van Nederland*, p.120.

¹²⁸ Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires*, p.334.

¹²⁹ Kossmann, ‘The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century’, p.28.

¹³⁰ HNA, *Buitenlandse Zaken 1795-1813* (2.01.08), 120, ‘Rapport over het Staat der Buitenlandsche Zaken’ 28 February 1799, ‘welks vlooten eertyds de zee bedekten’.

linked to a rise in Deism and atheism, which had been attacked by many mainstream Dutch Enlightenment thinkers in the early century as being dangerous and damaging to society.¹³¹ Yet while narratives of decline were fairly ubiquitous, so were attempts to assuage its impact. The Patriot movement and improvement societies such as the *Nut* were a reaction to this supposed decline, while the Free Corps represented an attempt to reclaim lost civic republicanism. Perhaps inspired by the tales and myths of the national past which spoke of hardiness in adversity, the late eighteenth-century Dutchmen were determined to arrest the decline of their times. They were simply undecided on how this could be done.

The narrative of decline continued to hold a key place in Dutch public opinion after the French invasion of 1795. French exactions drained the country of resources while the disruption of payments from Britain drove many who had invested in British stock into penury. The idea of decline was temporarily balanced by the hope that the French alliance might finally revive the country's fortunes, but the counterpoint of lived experience soon undermined this optimism. The Peace of Amiens gave some hope that a period of calm and constitutional government might at least stabilise the country, but the renewal of war in 1803 dashed these hopes. In 1806 a Dutch correspondent of Charles Fox summed up the country's general mood; 'the general discourse is, the country is ruined, and we shall soon have nothing left.'¹³² This general spirit of pessimism prevailed until the renewal of peace and the reestablishment of the Netherlands as an independent power in 1814 reignited a degree of optimism for the future.

The conception and identity of the Dutch nation in the period 1785-1815 underwent profound and long-lasting changes. The idea of the nation as a federal entity that had prevailed throughout the eighteenth century was first undermined by Patriot conceptions of citizenship and then consigned to the dustbin of history by the adoption of the French-born concept of the nation one and indivisible. The nation of 1785 was corporate, federal and narrow; that of 1815 was a broader unitary community of individuals. The bases of identity of the Dutch nation also underwent some changes. Pride in Dutch language, culture, commerce and history emerged unscathed, but the effects of the Reformed Church in unifying a religiously exclusive idea of the nation were largely overthrown. The spirit of republicanism that had been the source of great pride in the United Provinces was also lost, to be replaced by the acceptance of constitutional monarchical government. The traditional support for the House of Orange remained but, in 1815 as in 1785, this had as much potential to polarise opinion as it did to

¹³¹ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, pp.1040-41.

¹³² British Library, London (BL), Add MSS 51460, letter 14 March 1806.

unify, with a resultant wedge driven between those who did or did not feel part of an Orangist-led nation. The role of the other in uniting the Dutch nation was important but should also not be overemphasised. Certainly opposition to Britain and France caused a good deal of resentment and stirred up fierce opposition, but for most of the period neither managed to comprehensively alienate the Dutch people enough to form a consensus of 'othering'.

CHAPTER THREE

DEFENDING THE NATION:

PUBLIC OPINION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN

DUTCH FOREIGN POLICY



J. A. le Campion, *Action Entre les Patriotes et les Prussiens* (c.1788)
(British Museum Collection, Image 1917,1208.1583: © Trustees of the British Museum)

Dutch foreign policy in the period 1785-1815 was less straightforward than that of her two larger neighbours and periodic rivals, Britain and France. The bilateral ties between the Netherlands and each of these neighbours were inevitably tied up in the Anglo-French conflict that provided the backdrop for much of the period; it was a conflict that the Netherlands could not avoid but over which she had little influence. Dutch policies were restricted by the need to engage with these realities. If French and British policies were constrained by strategic necessities or circumstantial considerations, the Netherlands bore the added burden of having to act in accordance with the desires of a far stronger ally, while often suffering her own concerns to be ignored. Both Britain and France were strong enough to enjoy the option of withdrawing from any alliance if they felt the need. For most of this period the Netherlands enjoyed no such luxury. The armies of France and the wooden walls of Britannia gave weight to their diplomacy that only a few other powers could aspire to equal. The Netherlands, on the other hand, lacked either the military might of France or the protective moat of England. The position of the Netherlands in the mesh that made up eighteenth-century international relations was, partly by choice and partly by necessity, more reactive than proactive. The French alliance of 1785-87 and the subsequent British alliance of 1788-95 both allowed the Netherlands a degree of freedom of action in the international arena, but from 1795, and increasingly after Napoleon's accession to power in France, Dutch policy was limited by the need to placate Parisian powerbrokers.

It was never the case, however, that Dutch policy was entirely dictated from London or Paris. This chapter will analyse the impact of domestic public opinion and national identity on Dutch foreign policy. It will look to determine whether the main themes of Dutch public opinion were able to make themselves felt in the process of policy formulation, and will then consider some of the major facets of Dutch national identity, examining how far such ideas of identity underpinned the country's generally defensive and reactive policies in response to foreign influence, pressure and occupation. However, before delving into an analysis of Dutch policy, this chapter will briefly discuss the structures of power within the Netherlands that contributed to policy formulation.

The Dutch Republic's system of foreign affairs was, as with much else cobbled together in the sixteenth century and left largely intact since, vaguely shambolic.¹ The States General was responsible for diplomacy but each of the seven sovereign provinces had the right to an equal

¹ E.H. Kossmann, 'The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century', in M.C. Jacob & W.W. Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), p.22; Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic, its Rise, Greatness and Fall 1477-1806* (Oxford, 1995).

say in foreign policy through its provincial States. Some provinces felt obliged to consult their corporate constituents before any decision could be made and in theory up to 2,000 men could be called upon for their two florins-worth of opinion on even the weightiest matters, leading to inevitable and potentially crippling delays.² Treaties or international agreements were as a matter of course distributed to provinces and towns for consideration.³ In practice, however, even the most cautious of provincial Dutchmen found this system unwieldy, and the delegates to the States General were often given free rein to pronounce on behalf of their province as they saw fit. The most cautious of Dutchmen would in any case most likely find himself ignored unless he happened to hail from the Province of Holland. Holland provided over half of the revenue of the Generality and used this fact to impose its own agenda, although other provinces could dig in their heels if they thought any policy specifically to their own detriment. On occasion the process of consultation could be deployed as a delaying tactic, usually to the considerable but impotent irritation of the negotiating partner.⁴

While ultimate responsibility for foreign affairs lay with the States General, several other bodies or individuals had a role in policy formulation. The greffier – the man responsible for keeping an account of the proceedings of the States General – often fulfilled the role of foreign secretary, in that it was he who communicated with foreign ministers on behalf of the States. As such, the greffier had significant influence on policy. The greffier was generally appointed for life. From 1785 until its abolition in 1795, the post was held by two men, both named Hendrik Fagel. The elder of the duo held the role from 1744 until his death in 1790 and proved a competent if not outstanding character.⁵ The second Hendrik Fagel was the great-nephew of the first and came to the position at a relatively young age. He was generally well thought of but was never able to take a strong lead in foreign affairs in a country riven by underlying factionalism and, from 1793, embroiled in an increasingly unpopular war. The Fagel family from which both men came was loosely linked to the British establishment by marriage and tended to be partisans of the House of Orange. Nonetheless, both Hendrik Fagels were able to

² Wayne Ph. Te Brake, 'Provincial Histories and National Revolution in the Dutch Republic', in Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijndhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century, Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca, 1992), p.73.

³ *Hollandsche Historische Courant*, 24 July 1784.

⁴ Het Nationaal Archief, The Hague (HNA), Collectie Fagel (1.10.29), 1458, Fagel to Feronce de Rotencreutz, 15 May 1788.

⁵ Alice Carter, *The Dutch Republic in the Seven Years War* (London, 1971), p.25. This Hendrik Fagel is known as 'the Old' to distinguish him from his great-grandfather (Hendrik Fagel 'the Oldest') and his great-nephew, Hendrik Fagel 'the young'.

work with men of all political stripes, although Alice Carter pointed to a long-standing antagonism between the elder Fagel and William V's advisor, Duke Louis of Brunswick.⁶

The Council of State was another influence on the Republic's policies. Officially subordinate to the States General, it was a body of a dozen men responsible for the Generality's finances and for the army. Throughout the history of the Republic, proponents of centralisation who did not support the Stadholder had seen the Council of State as a vehicle through which more central control might be gained.⁷ The secretary of the Council was, like the greffier, appointed for life, and acted as a sort of finance minister for the Republic. Control of the purse strings meant that the Council could attempt to steer foreign policy in one direction or another, but in the final years of the United Provinces its influence was marginal.

Also sitting in the Council of State was the Stadholder. The Stadholder had no formal control over foreign policy, but had a great capacity to manipulate policies through the extensive patronage available to him. The influence of the Stadholder depended very much on his personality and the personalities of his placemen. Strong Stadholders had been able to direct policy as if by right but William V found the task somewhat daunting. William was by all accounts a pleasant man, but his utter reliance on the advice and leadership of the Duke of Brunswick until the latter's expulsion from the Netherlands in the early 1780s meant that William was simply unsure how to wield the power at his disposal.⁸ As an administrator he tended to spend his time dealing with the irrelevant, and despite his best efforts had little grasp of what his position really required. From 1785-87 the Stadholder proved a marginal force in the Republic's foreign policy, kept carefully at arm's length by a coalition of anti-Orange Regents and Patriots and by his own sulky intransigence in refusing to return to The Hague.⁹ Following the defeat of the Patriots in 1787, the Stadholder and his close advisers

⁶ Carter, *The Dutch Republic in the Seven Years War*, p.25. This refers to Duke Louis of Brunswick (advisor to William V), who should not be confused with his nephew, Duke Charles William Frederick of Brunswick, the man who led Prussian forces in 1787 against the Netherlands, in 1792 against revolutionary France and in 1806 against Napoleon.

⁷ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, p.987. The Council of State was called the *Raad van State* in Dutch.

⁸ Herbert H. Rowen, *The Princes of Orange, the Stadholders in the Dutch Republic* (Cambridge, 1988), p.220; Alfred Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents, the Diplomacy of the First Earl of Malmesbury at the Hague* (London, 1954), p.23.

⁹ F. J. L. Krämer (ed.), *Archives ou Correspondance Inédite de la Maison D'Orange-Nassau, 5th Series, Vol. III, 1782-89* (Leyden, 1915), pp.338-39 ; Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators, Revolution in the Netherlands 1780-1813* (2nd edn., London, 2005), pp.104-05, 110; HNA, Collectie Fagel (1.10.29), 1458, Harris to the Prince of Orange, 16 October 1785, and enclosed attachment; Harris to Prince of Orange, 23 June and 3 July 1786.

were able to regain a firm grip on the direction of the Republic's policies both internal and external. However, they were now constrained by the evident reality that they were beholden to the Anglo-Prussian alliance, which had guaranteed the constitution of the United Provinces against further domestic turmoil by treaty in 1788.

The final major influence on the United Provinces' foreign policy was the person of the Grand Pensionary.¹⁰ Like the Stadholder, his influence was informal and relied on patronage and pressure, but it was nonetheless very real. As the most important member of the States of Holland, the Grand Pensionary could often direct the attitudes of the largest and richest province, and thus of the entire Republic. Traditionally the Grand Pensionary had provided the counterpoint to the Stadholder around which the 'States' party rallied, and during the two Stadholderless periods the Grand Pensionary had wielded almost prime ministerial power. Pieter van Bleiswijk, who held the post from 1772-87, was very much of this States persuasion and bore a mild animosity to the Stadholderate and a heavier animosity to the Duke of Brunswick. Van Bleiswijk has gone down in history as a man of mediocre talent, a man 'blown along by the political winds' as one authority put it, who gave little strong leadership in the tumultuous events of the mid-1780s.¹¹ After the Orangist revival in 1787 van Bleiswijk was replaced with Laurens van de Spiegel, the Orangist Pensionary of Zeeland. Van de Spiegel was more talented than his predecessor and had some sympathy for the reformist cause, albeit within a framework of moderation and Orangism.¹² From 1787 he became one of the key figures in Dutch foreign relations, corresponding and meeting regularly with the foreign ministers in The Hague. Van de Spiegel also played a role in the tentative negotiations between the Netherlands and the Belgian revolutionaries in 1789, although they eventually came to nothing.¹³

¹⁰ Technically the position in Dutch was simply *Raadpensionaris* (Pensionary) of Holland but the English appellation 'Grand Pensionary' reflects his predominance over the Pensionaries of other provinces.

¹¹ P. J. H. M. Theeuwen, *Pieter 't Hoen en de Post van den Neder-Rhijn (1781-1787)* (Hilversum, 2002), p.27; 'woei met alle politieke winden mee'.

¹² Joost Kloek & Wijnand Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective: 1800, Blueprints for a National Community* (Basingstoke, 2004), p.286; Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents*, p.82.

¹³ The National Archives, London (TNA), FO 37/26, Alleyne Fitzherbert to Duke of Leeds, 10 July 1789. See also FO 37/18 – FO 37/57 for details Van de Spiegel's correspondence with the British ministers, and Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, La Courneuve, Paris (AMAE), Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 575 – 584 for the periodic communication of Van de Spiegel with French representatives from 1788 until the declaration of war in 1793. Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel, *Brieven en Negotiatien van Mr. L. P. van de Spiegel* (3 vols, Amsterdam, 1803) gives details of van de Spiegel's correspondence, much of it dealing with foreign affairs, from December 1792 until his removal in January 1795.

This elaborate system of unofficial influence and power by patronage collapsed after the French invasion of 1795. The foreign affairs of the Batavian Republic were, like much else, rationalised by the revolutionaries. In April 1795 care for foreign affairs was provisionally placed in the hands of a Committee of Foreign Affairs, superseded a year later by the Commission of Foreign Affairs.¹⁴ The Commission consisted initially of twelve men, although the membership changed during the two years of its existence, with the presidency rotating on a regular basis. These early years of the Batavian Republic also saw the creation of a permanent staff for foreign affairs, and many of those who took posts in 1795-96 retained them until annexation in 1810.¹⁵ After the promulgation of the constitution in 1798, foreign affairs passed to a newly created department under the supervision of the Executive Directory. Echoing France in this regard, the Batavian Republic endured similar problems of divided responsibility between the titular head of the department of foreign affairs and the Directors.

The man at the head of the department through its various guises until 1808 was Maarten van der Goes van Dirxland, a fairly moderate post-1795 Patriot from an old Regent family.¹⁶ He was personally acquainted with several British diplomats, including Robert Liston who represented Britain in The Hague 1802-03, and more than once fell into disfavour in Paris for his lack of anti-British fervour.¹⁷ He was nonetheless devoted to his country and largely faithful to the French alliance, taking up a post in the French *Corps Legislatif* after 1810. Despite being the titular head of foreign affairs, van der Goes and his successor Willem Röell often played little role in formulating policy. Always there was a higher authority; Directory, Grand Pensionary, or King. Always in the foreground was the anchor of the French alliance, which proved a huge practical restriction on the freedom of action of the Netherlands.

¹⁴ *Decreeten der Nationale Vergadering, Repreterende het Volk van Nederland* (22 vols, The Hague, 1796-98), vol. 1, p.455. Decree 24 March 1796.

¹⁵ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande Supplément 23, table entitled 'Ministère des Relations Extérieures en Hollande'.

¹⁶ These various guises were: Department of Foreign Affairs in 1798, Agency for Foreign Relations 1798-1801, Secretariat for Foreign Affairs 1801-06, Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1806-10. Alexander Gogel was provisional Agent of Foreign Affairs from June to October 1798 with van der Goes as his secretary, but Gogel's preoccupation with his full time role as Agent of Finance meant that van der Goes virtually controlled foreign affairs during these months. See HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813; (2.01.08); 119, passim, for van der Goes's influence on even the secret and delicate issues.

¹⁷ TNA, FO 37/61, Liston to Hawksbury, 2 October 1802; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken der Algemeene Geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840* (10 vols, 'S-Gravenhage, 1905-22), vol. 4, p.383, van der Goes to Schimmelpenninck, 25 September 1802; André-François Miot de Melito (ed. & trans. Wilhelm Fleischmann et al.), *Memoirs of Count Miot de Melito* (2 vols, London, 1881), vol. 1, p.292.

While debate on the precise impact of France on Dutch internal politics has rumbled on since Pieter Geyl's spirited rebuttal of Herman Colenbrander, there is little debate to be had on the overwhelming impact of France on Dutch foreign affairs. French dominance did not extinguish independent Batavian foreign relations as the Netherlands continued to send out representative to courts large and small across Europe, and also maintained their own foreign intelligence network.¹⁸ Yet independence of action in the international arena after 1795 was often only possible when France neglected to interfere. Whether in decisions of war or peace, trade or embargo, Paris reserved the unofficial right to set the agenda for the Netherlands. From 1795-1800 Dutch governments found themselves with a fair degree of latitude, but following Napoleon's rise to power French intervention became increasingly frequent. Once Louis Bonaparte became King of Holland he could do little independently without arousing the ire of his imperial brother.

The royal constitution also restricted the freedom of action of Louis's government. Napoleon intended that Louis would rule in Holland as he did in France. Policy was made by the head of state and executed by his ministers.¹⁹ There was no collective cabinet responsibility as ministers were forbidden from meeting to discuss affairs of state without the king's express instructions.²⁰ From the outset they avoided making decisions on a whole range of issues by passing them on to the king, from enquiring what should be done with small quantities of seized contraband to asking for clarification of which flags Dutch officers should treat as friendly and which enemy.²¹ Louis's reign in Holland was a time of centralisation of internal government and administration, with Louis able to wield more power than any previous head of government. In external affairs, however, Louis was able only to show sporadic bouts of independence or subtly undermine his brother's control.

It is in the context of these structures of power, both internal and in wider European diplomacy, that the impact of public opinion and national identity on policy will be assessed. In a most basic sense, the issue will be approached with two broad queries: whether Dutch politicians were compelled or deliberately sought to apply active public opinion to their

¹⁸ HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 1-3, passim; 56, Minute of 23 January 1796; 343, 'Engeland, Correspondent van Breukelman, 1796'.

¹⁹ Thierry Lentz, *Dictionnaire des Ministres de Napoléon* (Paris, 1999), p.35.

²⁰ Martijn van der Burg, 'Transforming the Dutch Republic into the Kingdom of Holland: the Netherlands between Republicanism and Monarchy (1795-1815)', *European Review of History*, Vol. 7, 2 (2010), p.160.

²¹ AN, AF IV 1745, Rapports du Ministre de la Justice et de la Police.

policies; and whether the perceptions and preconceptions of latent public opinion and ideas of national identity can be seen to have influenced policy decisions. The delineations between active and latent opinion, and between opinion and aspects of identity, are not discrete and the issues do not always have defined boundaries from one to the next. The questions will be approached from a broad basis, seeking trends that might indicate correlation as well as examining individual actions and actors in more detail. As it is often impossible to say with certainty the factors that pushed an individual to act this way or that – and often the individual themselves would struggle to put the impulse into words – it is more worthwhile to draw general trends from which influences can be inferred.

The mercurial swings between pro-French and pro-British policies in the period 1785-1815 provide one viewpoint to measure public opinion against policy. In considering whether these re-alignments of policy echoed, followed or even preceded similar changes in the public mood, one might be able to point to a concrete correlation between the preferences of the people for one power or another and the actions of politicians. Unfortunately, a simple direct comparison is almost impossible. Not only did the about-faces in policy in 1787-88 and 1795 come in the wake of the almost wholesale overthrow of a Dutch government with the help of an outside army, but the measure of what was meant by ‘the people’ proved a fluid concept for almost all who used it. In 1785, for example, there is plenty of evidence to support the idea that a French alliance was widely desired. It can be argued that public opinion played a part in the inception of the Franco-Dutch treaty, as its proposal by the States of Utrecht in early 1784 was inspired by a petition submitted by 2,243 burgers of that province demanding a French alliance.²² The treaty was certainly concluded against the inclinations of the Stadholder, who agreed not to oppose it but proved so underwhelmed by the development that he contemplated withdrawing from public affairs.²³ Equally, the Orangist revival of 1787 and the Anglo-Dutch-Prussian treaty of the following year were achieved to a backdrop of popular approval or even jubilation, with Britain’s representative Sir James Harris feted and praised by what he considered a grateful population.²⁴ Although the Stadholder was at pains to downplay popular involvement in the counter-revolutionary purges of Patriots, the reaction of 1787 was not simply an elitist reassertion of power or the dying thrashings of a doomed oligarchy. By all

²² Theeuwen, *Pieter ‘t Hoen en de Post van den Neder-Rhijn*, p.312.

²³ Krämer (ed.), *Archives ou Correspondance Inédite de la Maison D’Orange Nassau*, pp.347-48, Prince of Orange to Fagel, 22 November 1785; Theeuwen, *Pieter ‘t Hoen en de Post van den Neder-Rhijn*, p.314.

²⁴ TNA, FO 37/18; Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents*, pp.188 & 197-98; W. Ph. Te Brake, *Regents and Rebels: The Revolutionary World of an Eighteenth-Century Dutch City* (Cambridge MA, 1989), p.168.

appearances, the diplomatic *volte face* of 1787-88 was as popular in the Netherlands as the French alliance had been in 1785.

Yet in neither case can public opinion be said to have proved a predominant factor in determining whether the Netherlands linked itself to France or Britain. Rather, the authors of these events could claim public support only by privileging one public over another. As Wayne Ph. Te Brake explained of the internal settlement of 1787, this was ‘the victory of one segment of a newly politicised and activated “people” over another’.²⁵ Similarly, the diplomatic shifts merely represented the internal victory of one set of sympathies over another. In both 1785 and 1787 the dominant political faction could use publicly-expressed support to claim the backing of public opinion, but in both cases this involved the wilful exclusion of a vocal section of the population from what might be classed as the ‘public’. Neither Orangist nor Patriot sought to engage with a counter-opinion, unless to deride it, and instead simply excluded opponents from their public by disparaging their motives, respectability, or intelligence. It is therefore possible to see the foreign policy manoeuvres of both 1784-85 and 1787-88 as engaging with a public opinion, but it was a public carefully chosen to reflect the opinions of the dominant party. At no point was there a holistic consideration of ‘public opinion’. The correlation of public opinion to diplomatic alignment reflects what the upheavals in government meant to a politicised but deeply divided Dutch public, rather than implying any public impetus towards policy formulation.

The two other abrupt changes of alliance, in 1795 and 1813, were even more reflective of the victory of one political force over another, rather than the incarnation of popular desire at a political level. Although both ‘revolutions’ saw a degree of popular support and some direct popular action in helping to dismantle the apparatus of the previous regime, both subsequent alliances came about through force of circumstance and external intervention rather than a wish to reflect public opinion or popular desire. In 1795 the Netherlands was overrun by a French army and faced the stark choice of alliance or annihilation.²⁶ Any consideration of whether the Dutch people would prefer a British or French alliance or neutrality was completely irrelevant. Similarly in 1813 the fact that the French were in full retreat from allied forces made the choice of the self-proclaimed provisional government particularly easy. Political pragmatism far outweighed any sense of public preference. Both about-faces in

²⁵ Brake, *Regents and Rebels*, p.168.

²⁶ AN, 284 AP 10, ‘Instructions pour les représentants du peuple, membres du Comité de Salut Public envoyés dans les Provinces Unies’, 15 floréal an III.

alliance had some public support, but neither could claim to have been provoked by public opinion.

Politicians were equally unlikely to be swayed by active public opinion when formulating other aspects of policy. Policies would certainly be publicly explained in an attempt to gain popular approval, but at no point was popular approval a prerequisite for policy. Under the Orangist government of 1787-95 popular input of any form was limited by the oligarchic nature of power, as the restored Orangists sought to remove populist elements from government wherever they could.²⁷ Foreign policy was firmly grasped by a collective of William V, Fagel, van de Spiegel and, unofficially, the British ambassador. Patricia Howe overstates the case a little when she claims that ambassador Lord Auckland determined Dutch foreign policy in the early 1790s, but the limits placed on policy by a close and cloying British connection certainly restricted Dutch freedom of action.²⁸ The decisions to offer assistance to Britain in the Nootka Sound incident in 1790 and in the less successful Ochakov negotiations a year later, for example, were the result of treaty obligation and British pressure, rather than any public desire to deprive Spain of Canada's Pacific coast or Russia of a small Ukrainian city.²⁹ In 1794 there was an acknowledgement of the public's increasing war-weariness and lack of commitment to the allied war effort, but even here policy-makers were not driven by public opinion. It was the seemingly relentless advance of French forces through the Low Countries after their victory at Fleurus in June 1794 rather than the public's apparent war-weariness that drove Stadholder, Greffier and States General to seek an exit from the war, as all concurrently expressed the wish to fight on should Britain guarantee their defence.³⁰

The more democratic Batavian administrations after 1795 gave equally little explicit thought to public opinion when formulating foreign policy. The constitutional referenda of the 1790s show that the Batavian government did care about popular legitimacy, although the purges of the electorate and blatant vote rigging demonstrate that by the early 1800s they were more concerned with the appearance of legitimacy than with legitimacy itself. In foreign policy, however, popular input and approval were secondary to the overwhelming need to placate

²⁷ Brake, *Regents and Rebels*, pp.171-73.

²⁸ Patricia Chastain Howe, *Foreign Policy and the French Revolution: Charles-François Dumouriez, Pierre LeBrun, and the Belgian Plan, 1789-1793* (New York, 2008), p.133.

²⁹ HNA, *Stadhouderlijke Secretaire* (1.01.50), 65, States General to Prince of Orange, 12 May 1790.

³⁰ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 1, p.490, 'Ridderschapvergadering', 15 October 1794; HNA, *Collectie Fagel* (1.10.29), 1854; HNA, *Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813* (2.01.08), 343; TNA, FO 37/56.

France. Although there was a strong section of opinion in favour of entirely disengaging from the European conflict in 1795, the presence of tens of thousands of French troops in the Netherlands meant that the new Dutch government had little choice but to acquiesce to the punitive treaty of alliance proposed by Paris. Attempts were made by the Batavian government in subsequent years to secure a peace with Britain, but the only significant factor taken into consideration in the deliberations by the Commission for Foreign Affairs was under what terms France might allow this.³¹

Most of the Batavian Republic's foreign relations were subject to French surveillance and approval, for both good and ill. A minor dispute between the Netherlands and Sweden in 1796 over the issue of access to the Scheldt, for example, was resolved when Paris sent curt orders to the Batavian government to open the river to all neutral shipping.³² France also brokered alliances and treaties with other powers on behalf of the Netherlands, from peace with Bavaria and the Palatinate, to commercial accords with the Italian Republics, to an alliance with Spain in 1797.³³ The major treaties of Campo Formio, Lunéville and Amiens, and the fruitless Congress of Rastatt, were negotiated by France, although Batavian representatives were permitted to attend the talks. Treaties were also ruptured at France's behest; the decades-old accord between the Netherlands and Bern was cancelled, according to French diplomat François Barthélemy, because the Dutch blindly followed France's lead in their relations with this state.³⁴

In none of these matters was active public opinion able to influence policy. Even had the political will to actively consult the public existed – and there is virtually no evidence in either the correspondence of the major decision-makers or the minutes of committee meetings to suggest that it did – the practical problem of French interference and control would have taken precedence over the desires of public opinion. Political figures were often well aware of public

³¹ HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 55B, minutes of meeting 4 May 1796; Instructions for Lestevenon, Pasteur and Meyer, 2 November 1796.

³² HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 55B, minute of letter from Blauw & Meyer, 6 May 1796; AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 593, 'Rapport au Directoire Executif', 9 vendémiaire an V.

³³ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 593, Dutch Ambassador to French Foreign Minister, 3 October 1796; HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 120, 'Rapport over het Staat der Buitenlandsche Zaken', 28 February 1799; HNA, Collectie Van der Goes van Dirxland (2.21.073), 51, Note Secrète et Confidentielle, 19 March 1801; H. A. van Dijk (ed.), *Répertoire Historique et Chronologique des Traités Conclus par la Hollande Depuis 1789 jusqu'à nos Jours* (Utrecht, 1846), p.26.

³⁴ François Barthélemy, *Mémoires de Barthélemy, 1768-1819* (Paris, 1914), p.121.

opinion but had little opportunity to engage with it. This situation was exacerbated after Napoleon came to power in France and slowly but inexorably began to mould the Batavian Republic into a pliant client state. From 1800 the Batavian government struggled to exert a degree of independence and to temper the incessant Napoleonic demands, going so far in 1802 as to instruct the Batavian envoys at foreign courts that their official policy was to seek national independence and neutrality.³⁵ At the same time, however, they were faced with an increasingly intransigent French foreign policy and by Napoleon's refusal to remove his soldiers from Dutch territory.³⁶

The Batavian government tried hard in 1803 to avoid the coming Anglo-French conflict. This attempt was in sympathy with the majority of Dutch opinion which wanted, above all, a period of peace to recover from the heavy exactions and losses of the 1790s. Although most of the reasoning for such a policy showed it was driven by practicalities there was also an acknowledgement that public opinion could not be ignored. In late March J.A. Tinne, an official in the Secretariat for Foreign Affairs, wrote a long memorandum to ambassadors Schimmelpenninck and de Vos van Steenkamp in London and Paris suggesting a project for neutrality. Most of the document was couched in very practical terms, largely regarding the impact of war on fragile Dutch prosperity. Yet in conclusion Tinne argued that attempting to remain neutral would placate the public, remarking that if Britain rejected the proposal then no Dutchman would be able to deny the necessity of fighting.³⁷ Evidently public opinion was not the primary motivator for the desired policy of neutrality, but the Batavian government was equally eager placate the public wherever possible.

The foreign policy pursued in the dying years of the Batavian government was in large measure controlled from Paris. Odd spasms of independent thinking or action would inevitably be crushed by Napoleon should he disapprove of them. The proposal for neutrality in May and June 1803 was brushed aside by Napoleon, who simply lectured the Dutch deputation sent to Paris about the need for a strong government in the Netherlands and greater cooperation in

³⁵ HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 122, Van der Goes to the Executive Directory, 19 June 1800; HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 61, instructions to G.C. van Spaen van Voorstonden, minister to the Emperor, 1 July 1802, instructions to Pieter van Westvenen van Themaat, minister appointed to Sweden, 26 July 1802, and instructions to Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck, minister appointed to Britain, 29 October 1802.

³⁶ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande Supplément, 23, Executive Directory to First Consul, 1 August 1801; HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 124, note to French ambassador 1 February 1803; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, pp.397-98.

³⁷ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, pp.408-09.

the mutual war effort.³⁸ Yet the Batavian government was aware that public opinion, such as it could be measured, disapproved of the war, disliked the high-handedness of French officials on Dutch territory, and despaired of the demands placed upon the Netherlands by France. While working reasonably hard to ensure that Napoleon's demands were met, the Batavian government jealously guarded its sovereignty and, where it could, insisted that France kept to the letter of treaties or offered recompense for breaching them.³⁹ The government certainly fell on the side of public opinion in failing to execute with vigour any of the ill-concealed orders from Paris to prevent all communication with Britain, leading to French military intervention in mid-1805 to see the orders enacted.⁴⁰ In actuality, however, the impact of public opinion on foreign policy in the final years of the Batavian Republic was negligible. Van der Goes's attempts to soften Napoleonic demands even led to him being labelled an enemy of the Franco-Dutch alliance by the French, which possibly further undermined the Republic's ability to act independently.⁴¹

Perhaps ironically it was the French King of Holland, Louis Bonaparte, who most sought to incorporate a degree of public opinion into his policies. Louis was warned from the beginning that the Dutch public had a tradition of involvement in government, and it was a tradition that the new king was keen to continue.⁴² Louis liked to believe that his role in government was 'de prendre à cœur les intérêts de la Hollande et des Hollandais; qui le fera si ce n'est moi?'⁴³ The King sought, albeit inconsistently and sporadically, to uncover the state of public opinion to help him in his endeavours, even claiming in later years that public opinion was the 'principal agent' of his government.⁴⁴ Louis's concern for what the public thought was certainly a charge levelled at him by his detractors, who saw him as too susceptible to pressure and too desirous of being liked. Napoleon scolded 'vous attachera trop de prix à la popularité en Hollande. Il

³⁸ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, pp.436-37.

³⁹ *Nouvelles Politiques*, 10 & 17 January 1804; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, p.361, Van der Goes to Schimmelpenninck, 9 July 1802 & pp.504-506, Gogel to Marmont, 13 May 1804.

⁴⁰ Archives Nationales, Paris (AN), 215 AP 1, Napoleon to Talleyrand, 5 brumaire an XIII, 10 & 30 floréal an XIII; AN, AE B^{III} 421, Arrêté 31 May 1805 & letter from General Vignolle 24 prarial an XIII.

⁴¹ AN, AF IV 1682. A list (untitled) of Dutch government personnel listed Van der Goes as a one-time Orangist, later Patriot, and a hater of the French alliance.

⁴² AN, AF IV 1820, 'Observations relatives au nouveau Gouvernement de Hollande', M. Gallet to Louis, 19 July 1806.

⁴³ Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 5, p.501 Louis to Röell, 14 June 1809.

⁴⁴ Louis Bonaparte, *Documens Historiques et Réflexions sur le Gouvernement de la Hollande* (3 vols, Paris, 1820), vol. 1, p.172.

faut avant d'être bon être le maître'.⁴⁵ Louis's efforts to embrace public opinion often consisted of consulting the few Dutch elites gathered around his court, rather than encompassing any survey of what the public as a whole thought, but there is no doubt that Louis earnestly attempted to incorporate what he believed to be Dutch public opinion into his policies.

For all Louis's concern for public opinion, in foreign policy its impact continued to be limited by the overwhelming shadow of the French alliance. Louis's foreign relations relied largely on the whims of his brother. Nonetheless, issues such as the Continental blockade, conscription and the adoption of the *Code Napoléon* provoked a series of disputes between the Bonaparte siblings, severely impacting on Holland's relationship with France and therefore with the other powers of Europe. Napoleon's French-universalist approach to affairs clashed strongly with Louis's attempts to follow what he considered more traditionally Dutch policies. Although the blockade, conscription and the *Code* were not foreign policy issues per se, Napoleonic interest in them meant that Louis did not have the freedom to make decisions in these domains without considering the impact on Holland's relationship with France. Ultimately, Louis's subtle resistance to France was drawn directly from what he considered to be Dutch public opinion.

Louis believed that Dutch public opinion was strongly in favour of peace and the restoration of commercial relations with the colonies and Britain, and this provided him with one of the major (if largely unofficial) policies of his reign; to promote commerce by all means possible. In his memoirs Louis wrote that Dutch commerce 'était encore vivant en 1806, plus que le roi ne se l'était imaginé, et il se promit bien de tout entreprendre pour l'encourager'.⁴⁶ Despite the displeasure of his brother, Louis turned a deliberately blind eye to continued commerce with Britain throughout his reign.⁴⁷ Within months of taking the throne he managed to wrest control of Dutch customs posts from the hands of the French police and *douaniers*, though Louis neglected to put in place any effective system to replace them.⁴⁸ Louis was compelled to

⁴⁵ AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 3 December 1806.

⁴⁶ Bonaparte, *Documens Historiques*, vol. 1, pp.195-96.

⁴⁷ AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 12 October 1808 & 17 July 1809; AN, AF IV 1730, Verhuell to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 13 November 1808; AN, AF IV 1745, Report from Gogel, 10 December 1806; Bonaparte, *Documens Historiques*, vol. 2, p.2; Johan Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam: Onrust, Opruiing en Onwillingheid in Nederland ten Tijde van het Koninkrijk Holland en de Inlijving bij het Franse Keizerrijk (1806-1813)* (Amsterdam, 2000), pp.413-33.

⁴⁸ AN, AF IV 1745, Van Hooff to Louis, 22 September 1806.

enact the Berlin and Milan Decrees of 1806 and 1807 in their entirety, despite public disapproval, but he mitigated their impact by largely omitting to enforce them. He even went so far as to agree to the clandestine opening of a 'useful correspondence' with Britain in late 1807, though little came of this.⁴⁹

The desire to encourage trade was not necessarily an anti-French policy. Some attempts were made to realign the Dutch economy towards the French Empire but Louis was undermined at every turn by Napoleon's intransigence. Initially Louis sought to quench Dutch thirst for trade with a new commercial treaty with France, as indeed had been promised when the Dutch agreed to accept Louis as king, but Napoleon first equivocated and then quashed the idea.⁵⁰ Napoleon also continued to enforce a strict customs border with the Netherlands, even at one point closing the border entirely in response to perceived Dutch failures to exclude British produce.⁵¹ The evident unwillingness of Napoleon to come to the commercial aid of the Netherlands led to Louis's efforts to squirm quietly away from Napoleonic strictures. Continued permission of sea-borne trade, smuggling and deliberate failures to enforce anti-trade edicts became the order of the day.⁵² Most of the country's commerce was carried in ships flying neutral flags of convenience – notably of America, Sweden and the small German states of Papenburg, Varel and Kniphauer – and false papers were ubiquitous.⁵³ Napoleon's rebukes of his brother's laxity had little effect, and even provoked some support for Louis. G.K. van Hogendorp, an otherwise petulant critic of Louis, wrote 'Il parait donc que le roi veut le bien public, et sait faire valoir cette volonté.'⁵⁴

Although continued commerce with Britain was never an official or openly-admitted policy, the clear privileging of the public's desire for trade above the demands of Napoleon shows its importance to Louis's government. Louis did not push resistance to an extreme – in 1808 he

⁴⁹ AN, AF IV 1745, M. Cambier to Louis, 2 November 1807.

⁵⁰ Owen Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms* (New York, 1965), pp.132-33; AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 30 June 1806; Bonaparte, *Documens Historiques*, vol. 1, pp.224-25.

⁵¹ François Crouzet, 'Aspects Financiers de la Relation Franco-Batave', in Annie Jourdan & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Remous Révolutionnaires: République Batave, Armée Française* (Amsterdam, 1996), p.56; Bonaparte, *Documens Historiques*, vol. 2, p.2; AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 12 October 1808; *Journal de l'Empire*, 23 February 1810.

⁵² Gavin Daly, 'English Smugglers, the Channel, and the Napoleonic Wars, 1800–1814', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (January 2007), p.39.

⁵³ Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, pp.428-29; AN, AF IV 1745, Van Hooff to Louis, 15 December 1806.

⁵⁴ G. K. van Hogendorp, (ed. J. Haak), *Journal d'Adrichem (1806-1809) en Journal de la Haye (1810-1813)* (The Hague, 1981), p.49 (20 September 1807).

bowed to pressure and banned trade completely, if only temporarily – but by 1810 this constant flouting of Napoleonic desires was partially responsible for Napoleon's decision to remove Louis from his throne. It is clear that the path pursued by Louis regarding trade was one that he perceived to be in line with Dutch public opinion, and that he wilfully endangered relations with France in order to take this unofficial stance.

Louis's defiance of Napoleon extended to several other areas of administration, most notably the imposition of conscription and the introduction of the *Code Napoléon*. In these matters Louis preferred to consult Dutch opinion rather than blindly obey Napoleonic commands. In opposing the wholesale imposition of the *Code*, Louis complained to his brother that certain sections were incompatible with Dutch character and sought to have them reformed. Napoleon retorted that Louis was being misled by the 'contes' of his Dutch advisors and insisted that the *Code* must be adopted in its entirety or else it would lose its effect.⁵⁵ Louis's introduction of a slightly modified version of the *Code* in 1807 did ultimately receive Napoleon's grudging approval, but the incident demonstrated the conflict between Louis's attempts to incorporate Dutch opinion into his policy and continued good relations with France. Similarly, Louis found his subjects so opposed to conscription that he refused to resort to it; a tentative attempt to forcibly recruit orphans in 1808 led to rioting and convinced Louis of the futility of conscription.⁵⁶ In Napoleon's view the lack of conscription contributed to the enfeeblement of the Dutch army, and was another major factor in the increasingly frosty relations between the Netherlands and Napoleon.⁵⁷

Louis's attempts to play both sides by enacting French-inspired legislation and failing to enforce it, or by adopting French laws with a local Dutch flavour, ultimately pleased nobody. Public opinion was never able to come close to being the 'principal agent' of Louis's foreign policy as this was entirely subordinated to Napoleonic hegemony. On the other hand, Louis's attempts to resist French encroachment on Dutch internal policies and align them with his subjects' opinions rather than his brother's orders severely impacted on Franco-Dutch relations. It was rarely Louis's policy to openly resist France; rather, he hoped to be able to persuade his brother of the justice of the complaints raised by his Dutch subjects. Louis's

⁵⁵ AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 13 November 1807.

⁵⁶ Johan Joor, "'A Very Rebellious Disposition': Dutch Experience and Popular Protest under the Napoleonic Regime (1806-13)", in Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann & Jane Rendall (eds.), *Soldiers, Citizens and Civilians, Experiences and Perceptions of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1790-1820* (Basingstoke, 2009), p.186.

⁵⁷ Bonaparte, *Documens Historiques*, vol. 1, pp.203 & 233; AN, 400 AP 25, correspondence in 1809-10.

official commitment to the French alliance did not waver until the very end, but his desire to conform to the opinion of his subjects meant that in practice the Kingdom of Holland began to drift from the French orbit. The impact of Dutch public opinion on Louis's relationship with France is clear; just as clear is the fact that it did little but undermine Napoleon's confidence in Louis, and contributed to the deterioration of relations to the point where Napoleon saw direct French control as the most desirable solution.

In general those charged with formulating Dutch policy in this period looked only sporadically to active public opinion for inspiration or validation. Even when they did, this was seemingly on a whim rather than through any sustained pressure or generally accepted 'right' of the public to have a voice. Even Louis, who demonstrated a genuine if naive desire to incorporate public opinion into government, made no effort to arrange for the systematic submission of opinion, gauging it instead from those with whom he happened to come into contact. Appeals to public opinion, especially in the Patriot years, were made by deliberately privileging one public over another. Governments often found their policies coinciding with public opinion but rarely expressed any intention of tailoring policies to match it. However, public opinion could have a more subtle impact through the themes of latent public opinion which provided the background information for politicians to interpret the world. Also important in influencing the interpretive schemas of policy makers were questions of identity of the self and the other. These underlying beliefs and prejudices provide a richer seam of reasoning to mine for explanations of why Dutch policy followed certain general trends during this period.

In considering the importance of underlying identities and opinions, it is possibly useful to begin nearer the end of our period, in the year 1806 with the negotiations which led to Louis becoming King of Holland. By March 1806 Napoleon's desire to euthanize the ailing Batavian Republic was known in broad outline, and the Republic's imminent demise forced an introspective consideration of the importance of identity on the part of the Batavian government. The relative strength of France and the Netherlands, and the antipathy that many influential Dutchmen felt towards their own government, meant that any idea of resistance was stillborn.⁵⁸ Yet the Republic's leaders still believed that they could influence the terms of any change, to which end five men were deputed to negotiate with Napoleon on behalf of the Republic.⁵⁹ Although ultimately Napoleon essentially presented the Dutch with a *fait accompli*,

⁵⁸ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, p.620, Brantsen to van der Goes, 15 March 1806 & pp.625-27 'Verbaal van Verhuell'

⁵⁹ The five were Willem Six, Carel Verhuell, Gerard Brantsen, Isaac Gogel and Jan van Stirum.

and refused to deal directly with any but Carel Verhuell, the prospect of negotiating for their country's future forced the Batavian representatives to consider what they believed their nation would accept and, more importantly, why.

The stipulations agreed upon by the Dutch negotiators give a good idea of the aspects of opinion and identity that they believed the nation held most dear. The most important demands were for national independence, a guarantee of Dutch territorial integrity, respect of Dutch laws and language, domestic government by natives, the protection of religion, a commercial treaty, and the inviolability of the national debt.⁶⁰ The demands taken as a whole are a product of the historical moment in which they were created, but each also has a place in a wider narrative. These demands are not simply items of transitory importance but were seen as fundamental to the continued existence of the Netherlands, and had been so over a much longer period. Each of these aspects – independence, government by natives, territorial integrity, language, religion, and commerce – will now be considered in turn not just for its importance to policy in 1806, but for its wider significance to Dutch policy throughout the period. To choose 1806 as a starting point for analysing the impact of identity beginning in 1785 may appear to risk adopting teleological arguments, but each of these demands had long held a place in Dutch identity. To these themes should also be added some others; Orangism, military identity, and the concept of decline, which was one of the major unspoken motivations that ultimately underpinned almost every political evolution or act in this period.

The notion of decline was one of the most oft-repeated themes in Dutch opinion, deeply affecting Dutchmen of all political persuasions.⁶¹ This belief was not unique to the Netherlands and nor to the eighteenth century as narratives of decline, whether justified or not, pervade human history and historiography. Paul Kennedy, for example, argued that for much of the twentieth century British narratives of decline provided a major 'conditioning element in the formulation of the country's external policy', even though some aspects of that decline can be objectively questioned.⁶² In a similar fashion, decline in the eighteenth-century Netherlands

⁶⁰ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, pp.620-27; AN, AF IV 1820, 'Réponse de W. Six à plusieurs questions de l'Amiral Verhuell', 26 March 1806; Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, pp.132-33; Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, p.483.

⁶¹ Kossmann, 'The Dutch Republic', p.28.

⁶² Paul Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865-1980* (London, 1981), p.21; the economic decline of Britain has been questioned for example in Jim Tomlinson, 'Inventing "Decline": the Falling Behind of the British Economy in the Post-War Years', *Economic History Review*, XLIX, 4 (1996), 731-57.

appears concurrently as both public belief and as political motivator, regardless of the result of more recent objective scholarship.

The desire to formally align the Netherlands with France in the mid-1780s was a consequence of both the recent experience of defeat and of pervasive narratives of decline in Dutch public thought. Decline was thought to be rooted in internal decadence and external pressure. The growing loose alliance of anti-Orangist Regents and Patriots was beginning, in its view, to put the brakes on the internal rot. The external causes of decline, many believed, stemmed from Britain and her attempts to derail the Republic's prosperity.⁶³ A French alliance was the logical response to check Britain's ambitions, and also those of the notoriously Anglophile Dutch Orangists. Leading Patriot Joan Derk van der Capellen believed a French alliance to be vital for Dutch regeneration, claiming that 'without them we can do nothing, with them everything.'⁶⁴ The apparent need for an alliance indicates that the mid-century self-confidence that the Netherlands was strong enough to stand apart from cross-Channel rivalry had largely disappeared.⁶⁵ The experience of the Anglo-Dutch War had undermined Dutch faith in the security of self-imposed neutrality. Combined with the ubiquitous desire to arrest universally-acknowledged decline, it was felt by the mid-1780s that the Netherlands needed an alliance to fix her place in the European system. Rather than seeing the re-entry of the Netherlands into European politics from the mid-1780s as an affirmation of Dutch power or a vain desire to dine once more at the top table of European diplomacy, it should be seen as an expression of insecurity.

The French alliance of 1785 and the triple alliance of 1788 were not deliberate abdications of agency or tacit acknowledgements that decline had become definitive regression, but they do show that the rhetoric of decline had become important to Dutch policy. The alliances cannot of course be taken out of the context of the domestic struggle for supremacy, but nor can that struggle be divorced from the underlying narratives of atrophy and decline. The alliances of the 1780s mark the step from self-confident neutrality to a policy of alignment with one or other of the rival powers. The alliance of 1785 marked a shift in attitudes towards foreign

⁶³ Annie Jourdan, 'Les Gaulois en Batavie: des Relations Diplomatiques Machiavéliques', in Annie Jourdan & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Remous Révolutionnaires: République Batave, Armée Française* (Amsterdam, 1996), p.99.

⁶⁴ N. C. F. van Sas, *De Metamorfose van Nederland: van Oude Orde naar Moderniteit 1750-1900* (Amsterdam, 2005), p.240; Theeuwes, *Pieter 't Hoen en de Post van den Neder-Rhijn*, p.656. 'Zonder dezelve kunnen wij niets, met dezelve alles'.

⁶⁵ Carter, *The Dutch Republic in Europe in the Seven Years War*.

relations as it was an explicit acceptance of the Republic's need for a foreign connection; a need informed by the narrative of decline. The inversion of 1787-88 to an Anglo-Prussian alliance, radical as it may have seemed, was in fact a continuation of this same trend. The Orangists as much as the Patriots wanted to end the decline of the Netherlands, but in their interpretation Britain and Prussia rather than the apparently enfeebled France offered the best support for the Republic. France, in the opinion of the Orangists, wanted little more than to make the Republic subservient and was a factor in the country's decline rather than a solution.⁶⁶

This point must not be taken too far. The narrative of decline and the reaction to it was not, in itself, enough to create a foreign policy. Yet the concept clearly informed the world view of decision makers of all political persuasions and created a situation where foreign policy became an integral part of the overall programme of reform and regeneration. Both Patriot and Orangist sought not only alliance with their favoured power but preferential commercial relations, which for many formed an integral part of any regeneration and therefore of any diplomatic connections. Although both J.C. Riley and Charles Wilson concluded that the vast increase in Dutch investment in France in the 1780s contained no implication of political sympathy,⁶⁷ the desire for a commercial treaty and the status of France as favoured trading partner certainly did. Equally, the ill-feeling caused by delays in agreeing an Anglo-Dutch commercial treaty after 1788 shows the importance of commercial ties to the restored Orangist leadership of the Republic.⁶⁸

The idea of a foreign alliance as part of an overarching programme to combat the Republic's decline is evident until at least 1800. Although the Dutch essentially had little choice in acquiescing to the French alliance of 1795, the ubiquitous desire to finally end decades of supposed decline aided its acceptance. The enthusiastic response in some quarters to the French invasion of 1795, and the acceptance of the subsequent occupation, was occasioned by the idea that the French connection would aid Dutch regeneration, rather than by any hidden Dutch penchant for French military victory. For some this reform was to be essentially political

⁶⁶ HNA, Collectie Fagel (1.10.29), 1458, S. Malmorts to van der Spiegel, 1785.

⁶⁷ J. C. Riley, 'Dutch Investment in France, 1781-1787', *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (December 1973), p.760; Charles Wilson, *Anglo-Dutch Commerce and Finance in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1941), p.201.

⁶⁸ Walter Fitzpatrick (ed.), *The Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore* (10 vols, London, 1892-1927), vol. 1, pp.588-90; TNA, FO 37/28, Auckland to Leeds, 13 March 1790; British Library, London (BL), Add MSS 36814, Auckland to Grenville 6 January 1792; Nicholas Tarling, *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Malay World 1780-1824* (St. Lucia, 1962), pp.23-46.

and internal. The Patriot J.B. Bicker insisted in late 1795 that the French army would provide the shield behind which institutional reform could be carried out and begged the French foreign minister, Charles Delacroix, to use his influence to ensure this happened.⁶⁹ A year later, a member of the Commission of Foreign Affairs, J.G.H. Hahn, insisted that only through a close relationship with France could the Netherlands be saved from anarchy.⁷⁰ Others thought that the country's regeneration must be led by the economy, which for many Patriots entailed the defeat of the great commercial rival across the North Sea. Immediately after the successful French invasion of the Netherlands, Tinne urged France and her allies to build a strong naval presence in the North Sea to lay the foundations for the commercial defeat of Britain, after which Dutch rebuilding could begin.⁷¹ Jacob Blauw argued that the French connection was most important to combat the 'maritime tyranny' of Britain and to help restore the commerce which had historically provided the backbone of Dutch strength.⁷² Whether the accent of reform was placed on politics or economics, the Patriot leadership of the mid-1790s remained convinced of the utility of the French alliance.

Although decline remained an important background interpretive tool for policy-makers, by the early 1800s faith in the French connection as a remedy had begun to fade. A report of the state of foreign affairs of the Batavian Republic in February 1799 lamented the continued 'vicissitudes of national happiness and prosperity' but claimed that the future could now be looked to with optimism.⁷³ The French alliance, it said, had brought many benefits, from constitutional government to commercial understandings with much of Europe. All that remained was to restore peace and good relations with the other powers, most notably Britain, and the road to recovery would be well and truly open. The document struck a tone of cautious optimism but the problem facing the Batavian government in 1799 was that the French alliance was beginning to close more doors than it was opening. Relations with Austria, Russia and the Ottoman Porte had soured because of French actions. The Anglo-Russian

⁶⁹ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 2, pp.487 & 495.

⁷⁰ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 2, p.512. 'Buiten onze betrekking met de Fransche Republiek is de redding van het vaderland onmogelijk', Hahn to J.D. Pasteur, 2 December 1796.

⁷¹ HNA, Collectie Bicker (3.20.04.01), 9, J. A. Tinne, 'Mémoire pour prouver combien il est de l'intérêt de la République Française de Créer et d'établir une Marine dans la mer du Nord, et sur les moyens de la faire a peu de frais et sans danger' (1795).

⁷² HNA, Collectie Hahn (2.21.008.83), 7, 'De la paix générale et de l'intérêt de l'Europe relativement aux Pays Bas', 25 February 1797; Collectie Hahn (2.21.008.83), 8, Blauw to Hahn 7 April 1797.

⁷³ HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 120, 'Rapport over het Staat der Buitenlandsche Zaken', 28 February 1799. 'der wisselvalligheid van nationaal geluk en voorspoed'.

invasion of North Holland in 1799 had shaken the faith of some of the Republic's leadership in the protection afforded by the French alliance. Neutrality, an idea that had persisted in sections of the public but had rarely been seriously considered by the political leadership, was once more tentatively evoked in the corridors of power and in semi-official documents.⁷⁴

The first thoughts of neutrality in 1799 stemmed from an impulse for self-preservation; with French armies in apparent disarray on all fronts, the Dutch government optimistically hoped to prevent their country becoming a warzone.⁷⁵ Yet within a year Batavian politicians were hesitantly proposing to France that Dutch neutrality might be necessary to rekindle prosperity.⁷⁶ By the time of the Peace of Amiens in 1802, the desire for disengagement from wider European conflicts had become almost universal amongst the Republic's political leadership. What Dutch politicians of all political convictions now wanted was a period of peace in which they could come to a definitive internal settlement and reignite the dimming flames of the Dutch economy.⁷⁷ Far from being part of the solution to decline, France was now perceived to be part of the problem. Napoleon's increasing intervention in Dutch domestic affairs and his increasingly dictatorial rule elsewhere in Europe conjured images of a Sword of Damocles hanging over the Republic.⁷⁸ Van der Goes confessed to Liston in early 1803 that although Napoleon's refusal to remove French garrisons in the Netherlands was vexing, it was preferable to accept it than to resist and risk suffering the fate of Switzerland.⁷⁹ Although Dutch attempts to avoid becoming embroiled when war broke out between France and Britain in 1803 were unsuccessful, there is no doubt that the Dutch government's preference was for neutrality rather than war.⁸⁰

The attempt of the Netherlands to remain neutral in the renewed Anglo-French conflict cannot be put down to narratives of decline per se. It was, rather, a result of the diminution of any

⁷⁴ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 3, pp.530-536, Schimmelpenninck, 'Projet de Neutralité'; HNA, Collectie Fagel (1.10.29), 1858, Grenville to Prince of Orange, 5 August 1799.

⁷⁵ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 3, p.530-36, 'Projet de Convention' & 'Projet de Neutralité'.

⁷⁶ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 604, 'Rapport au Premier Consul de la République'.

⁷⁷ Kloek & Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p.212.

⁷⁸ L. de Gou (ed.), *De Staatsregeling van 1801, Bronnen voor de Totstandkoming* (The Hague, 1995).

⁷⁹ TNA, FO 37/61, Liston to Hawkesbury, 11 January 1803.

⁸⁰ HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 124, dispatches to Dutch representatives in Vienna, St Petersburg and Berlin, 24 May 1803 & to de Vos van Steenwyk in Paris, 25 May 1803; Van der Goes to Sémonville, 2 June 1803; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, pp.406-409; TNA, FO 37/61, Liston to Hawkesbury, 15 March 1803.

motivation to retain a foreign connection. The decline narrative persisted – and had even been invigorated by the losses of the recent war – but the desire shown through the 1780s and 1790s to use foreign alliances as part of an overall programme of restoration and regeneration no longer existed. Unlike the France of 1795, that of 1803 offered neither a shield for internal reform nor a sword to smite the Batavian Republic's foes. Instead the French alliance was considered a millstone around the Dutch neck, dragging her into a conflict that jeopardised commerce, colonies and capital. Many Dutch Patriots still vehemently mistrusted Britain and the House of Orange and were happy to use France as a guarantor that Britain would keep out of Dutch affairs, but few were keen to actually go to war.⁸¹ The Batavian government's reluctance to second Napoleon's crusade against the island nation of shopkeepers stemmed less from perfidy or arrant Anglophilia than from a sense that the war, and the connection with France, was simply of little benefit to the exhausted Batavian Republic – and that the exhausted Republic was of little use to the war.

Once war broke out again in 1803 narratives of decline were giving way to stark examples of poverty. The misery of the present seemed obvious without reference to a semi-mythologized past. Public expenditure consistently exceeded income while recipients of poor relief in Amsterdam rose from fifteen percent of the population in 1795 to 37.5 percent by 1800.⁸² In 1804 Isaac Gogel lamented that almost the entire wealth of the country had bled away since 1795.⁸³ The failure to deal with the continued descent into internal poverty and international obscurity contributed to the widespread, if grudging, acceptance of the French-inspired constitutional reforms of 1805 and 1806. Willem Six was even convinced by 1806 that the Dutch people would be willing to trade a degree of independence for the guarantee of security and prosperity.⁸⁴

The issue of independence was of great importance in both Dutch identity and in Dutch policy throughout the period. The clearest of the demands made in 1806 was that the Netherlands be allowed to enjoy independence and all of the actors in the mini-drama, Napoleon ultimately included, were eager to stress its importance. Once Louis was on the throne, he and his Dutch officials were careful to proclaim the new regime's dedication to ensuring Dutch

⁸¹ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, pp.408-09.

⁸² Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, p.145; Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, p.1017; Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, p.372.

⁸³ AN, AF IV 1682, Gogel to Marmont, 8 September 1804.

⁸⁴ AN, AF IV 1820, 'Réponse de W. Six à plusieurs questions de l'Amiral Verhuell', 26 March 1806.

independence, and to returning the Netherlands to its rightful place among the powers of Europe.⁸⁵ Upholding national independence and territorial integrity is clearly a major underlying theme of all countries' foreign policies and the Netherlands was no different. Independence is also a *leitmotiv* of virtually every national identity in any period and was by no means unique to the Netherlands of 1785-1815. The Revolt against Spain, the resistance to Louis XIV, or the later opposition to Nazi occupation immediately spring to mind as examples highlighting the importance of Dutch self-determination. Yet in a period which saw the relatively widespread acceptance of philosophies of revolutionary universalism, combined with an aggressively expansionist and annexationist neighbour, the simple but deeply-treasured idea that the Dutch were a nation and should therefore be independent was a crucial basis for Dutch policy.

From the beginning of the Patriot unrest in the 1780s the idea of independence was an important consideration. The desire of the Patriots to lean on France was at least partly motivated by the fear that the House of Orange was in London's thrall; conversely, much of the anti-Patriot rhetoric was based on opposition to their supposed subordination to France. As previously argued, the alliances of 1785 and 1788 should be seen as two sides of the same coin. Both had the same general objectives in seeking to provide a means for Dutch regeneration while shielding the country from the unwelcome influences of a foreign power; both represented the triumph of one politicised public over another. The fears of foreign domination were not necessarily unfounded. Although the French alliance of 1785 did not make the Republic a 'vassal' of her neighbour as has sometimes been claimed,⁸⁶ France was certainly the senior partner. Equally, the 1788 alliance explicitly guaranteed the constitution of the United Provinces and invited – indeed, obliged – Britain and Prussia to interfere in the Republic's internal affairs should the prospect of radical reform reoccur.⁸⁷ Yet, in the opinion of those responsible for concluding the treaties, these alliances did more to secure than to undermine Dutch independence.

Independence as a theme returns periodically during the 1790s. The war of 1793-95 was evidently fought with the preservation of independence in mind, though it was the physical

⁸⁵ AN, AF IV 1744, 'Discours prononcé par le ministre de l'intérieur', 24 July 1806; Bonaparte, *Documens Historiques*, vol. 1, pp.160-61.

⁸⁶ C. Smit, *Diplomatieke Geschiedenis van Nederland, Inzonderheid Sedert de Vestiging van het Koninkrijk* (The Hague, 1950), p.102.

⁸⁷ HNA, Collectie Bicker (3.20.04.01), 7, 'Project d'une alliance défensive entre Sa Maj. le Roi de la Grande Bretagne et LLHPP les Etats Généraux' March 1788, article 3.

threat of a French invasion rather than abstract considerations of national independence that forced the Netherlands into war. The identity of independence clearly played a large role in the reaction to the French invasion of 1795 and the subsequent peace negotiations. While many of the post-1795 Republic's leaders had learned the blessings of cosmopolitanism and universal rights in the French school of revolution,⁸⁸ there were few who advocated federating with France or shared Anacharsis Cloots's vision of a greater transnational republic.⁸⁹ The revolutionaries of 1795 continued to consider the Netherlands as an independent nation. With the recent experiences of Belgium and parts of the Rhineland in mind, Patriots inside and outside of the Republic worked to forestall any French moves towards despoliation or annexation.⁹⁰ In early January the Batavian representatives in Paris wrote a pamphlet aiming to show that the Dutch people had done all they could to aid France in the recent war, in the hope of persuading Paris to treat the Netherlands favourably; later the same month they petitioned the French government for a written assurance that Dutch sovereignty and independence would be respected.⁹¹ Once French victory became apparent, the revolutionised States of Holland proclaimed the French forces welcome in the Netherlands but also reasserted its own claim as the legitimate provincial government.⁹²

Concerns over Dutch independence were shown in the contradictory attitudes towards French intervention in Dutch domestic affairs after 1795. Some men remained averse to all French influence but others, most notably the more radical Patriots, wavered between favouring French support for their cause and fearing that it might lead to more direct control from Paris. In December 1797, for example, Jan Eykenbroek wrote with apparently genuine concern that the Netherlands risked sharing the fate of the Cisalpine Republic in having a constitution dictated by France. Yet Eykenbroek had been part of a deputation sent to Paris only two months earlier to solicit French help to 'imitate the *journée* of 18 Fructidor' – in other words to

⁸⁸ Joost Rosendaal, *Bataven! Nederlandse Vluchtelingen in Frankrijk 1787-1795* (Nijmegen, 2003).

⁸⁹ Florence Gauthier, 'Universal Rights and National Interest in the French Revolution', in Otto Dann & John Dinwiddy (eds.), *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1988), p.30.

⁹⁰ Tim Blanning, *The French Revolution in Germany, Occupation and Resistance in the Rhineland 1792-1802* (Oxford, 1983), p.69.

⁹¹ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 586, J. Blauw & W. van Irhoven van Dam, 'Exposé Historique de la Conduite de la Nation Batave...', 15 nivôse; Blauw & van Dam to CPS, 1 pluviôse an III.

⁹² van de Spiegel, *Brieven en Negotiatien*, vol. 3, pp.329-30.

engineer a coup.⁹³ Clearly Eykenbroek and his colleagues sought French assistance and active intervention in Dutch affairs, but they also believed that the Netherlands had the right to give herself a constitution and thought, possibly naively, that French intervention would not impinge on Dutch independence.

The belief that the Netherlands should be independent was not shaken by the French-backed coups of 1798, but there was increasing anxiety over the reality of independence. The panicked reaction to the possibility that France might try to install a military government in the Netherlands following the 1799 Anglo-Russian invasion betrays a deep-seated Dutch feeling of insecurity.⁹⁴ Napoleon's rise to power in France initially gave some hope that a purer spirit of fraternal respect might ensue but Napoleon soon proved even more eager to meddle in the affairs of the Republic than the Directory had been.⁹⁵ The Batavian government was increasingly compelled to surrender certain rights in order to safeguard the independence of the country. The fate of Switzerland in 1803, like that of the Cisalpine Republic a few years previously, served as a salutary example to those tempted to resist Napoleonic demands.⁹⁶ The Batavians were compelled to accede not only to the presence of French troops in the Netherlands, but to the command of all Dutch troops by French generals. An attempt to flex the muscles of national independence in 1804 by ordering Batavian forces not to obey General Auguste Marmont ended in humiliation; four members of the Dutch government were forced to resign and a grovelling public apology was offered to the offended French general.⁹⁷

The constitutional changes of 1805 and 1806 are even more illustrative of the Dutch surrender of certain rights to safeguard others. In 1805 the Netherlands accepted a foreign constitution in exchange for continued domestic leadership under Schimmelpenninck. In 1806 the Batavian government agreed to a foreign ruler in exchange for domestic laws, administrators, and language and religious freedoms. Given the choice, Dutch politicians would undoubtedly have preferred not to sacrifice any of their rights or accept any foreign influence but in the absence

⁹³ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 2, pp.545-50, 'Verslag van Bode', 27 October & Eykenbroek, Bode & Eberstein to Directory, 15 October 1797; pp.562-63 Eykenbroek to Vreede, 13 December 1797.

⁹⁴ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 3, p.561 van der Goes to Valckenaer, 18 October 1799.

⁹⁵ de Gou (ed.), *De Staatsregeling van 1801*; L. de Gou (ed.), *De Staatsregeling van 1805 en de Constitutie van 1806, Bronnen voor de Totstandkoming* (The Hague, 1997); Martijn van der Burg, *Nederland Onder Franse Invloed, Cultuurtransfer en Staatsvorming in de Napoleontische Tijd, 1799-1813* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2007), pp.38-44.

⁹⁶ TNA, FO 37/61, Liston to Hawkesbury, 11 January 1803.

⁹⁷ *Journal Politique*, 25 December 1804.

of such choice they were compelled to fight a rearguard action to entrench the remaining aspects of independent identity in a treaty with France.⁹⁸ However, the Kingdom of Holland ultimately failed to embody the ideal of Dutch independence. While Louis's recalcitrance in obeying Napoleon's orders was enough to infuriate the emperor, it was not enough to persuade the Dutch that they had a truly independent nation. When Louis contemplated armed resistance in the face of Napoleon's decision to annex the country in 1810, few rallied to his cause. Only Cornelius Kraijenhoff and Nicholas Lemmers favoured resistance; de Winter and Dumonceau, as heads of the military, simply pronounced the country indefensible without substantial foreign help.⁹⁹ The identity of independence that had sustained the Netherlands for over two centuries was not extinguished in 1810, but it did nothing to prevent the extinction of the Netherlands as an independent power.

Heavily linked to traditions of independence and self-governance were the demands for Dutch laws, customs and 'government by natives', which all held some importance in Dutch national identity. It was again only when rights and institutions were perceived to be under threat from a foreign power they became an important foreign policy issue. For Napoleon the most important symbols of his allies' independence were external, such as a strong military and a diplomatic service, but for the Dutch independence was contingent upon the enjoyment of internal autonomy and of native rights and liberties. Although much of the Orangist-Patriot discord in the 1780s revolved around the exact nature of these rights, both groups held their defence to be of paramount importance. The French alliance of 1785 and the Anglo-Prussian alliance of 1788 were, for their respective authors, partly motivated by the desire to acquire a powerful supporter against the perceived encroachment on these historical rights. Similarly, the unwillingness of Batavian governments to sweep away vestiges of the old system such as certain municipal privileges, guild monopolies, and even the provincial States, despite French admonishments to do so, stemmed from the key part such traditions played in Dutch identity.¹⁰⁰

The protection of domestic rights and institutions was never likely to be the ultimate foundation of a foreign policy, but formed more of a holistic policy of defending the country from undue international interference. The importance of institutions to Dutch politicians also clearly had limits. While governments consistently sought to defend domestic institutions from

⁹⁸ Van Dijk (ed.), *Répertoire Historique et Chronologique des Traités*, p.55.

⁹⁹ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, pp.609-10.

¹⁰⁰ Kloek & Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in European Perspective*, p.165.

French meddling before 1810, this defence was not repeated upon annexation, and nor did the government of the newly-liberated Netherlands in 1813-14 seek to exchange the more practical French-style administration they inherited for an immediate return to traditional Dutch institutions.¹⁰¹ Evidently the importance of domestic institutions to Dutch identity did have some impact on the country's foreign policy, especially when tied into wider considerations of national independence, but it was not something that drove policy in anything other than a reactive and defensive manner.

Similarly to institutions, the territorial identity of the Dutch nation was most important to foreign policy when it came under threat. In this regard the Dutch acted little differently to any other government. Despite the confederate nature of the United Provinces, the Dutch developed quite a fondness for their territory and, unsurprisingly, reacted badly to those who menaced it. Joseph II's pretensions to Dutch territory in 1784 caused Orangist and Patriot to unite for once in pledging resistance to the foreign foe, but the issue fizzled out when the Emperor was encouraged to turn his eye elsewhere.¹⁰² Following the French invasion of 1795, however, defending Dutch territory became a more pressing issue. France demanded indemnity, including lands in Zeeland and Flanders. Despite the continued threat of the occupying French army, and the CPS's insistence that the Batavian Republic would not be recognised without a treaty, the States General stood firm in refusing the demands.¹⁰³ They would not, declared representatives Blauw and Meyer, betray the Dutch people by agreeing to cede territory.¹⁰⁴ The rigid stance of the Dutch negotiators is perhaps demonstrative of the importance of the territorial integrity of the Republic, yet equally demonstrative is the fact that, faced with an ultimatum between ceding parts of Flanders, Venlo and Maastricht or suffering the fate of a conquered province, the Netherlands chose the former.¹⁰⁵ The territorial integrity of the Netherlands was clearly important, but would not be maintained at all costs.

¹⁰¹ de Gou (ed.), *De Staatsregeling van 1801*, p.422 & p.655; de Gou (ed.), *De Staatsregeling van 1805 en de Constitutie van 1806*, p.199; H. W. Van Loon, *The Rise of the Dutch Kingdom 1795-1815, A Short Account of the Early Development of the Modern Kingdom of the Netherlands* (New York, 1915), p.244.

¹⁰² S.T. Bindoff, *The Scheldt Question to 1839* (London, 1945), pp.140-41; Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents*, pp.49-50.

¹⁰³ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 587, Richard to CPS, 10 floréal an III.

¹⁰⁴ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 587, Blauw and Meyer to CPS, 26 April 1795.

¹⁰⁵ AN, 284 AP 10, 'Instructions pour les représentants du peuple', 15 floréal an III.

The identification of territory and nation also did not stop Dutch politicians from seeking to alter the territory through expansion. Antwerp was a favourite target for Batavian expansionists, though at the Congress of Rastatt the Dutch Directory was content to simply request that the French plenipotentiaries negotiate the best territorial settlement they could.¹⁰⁶ Louis also accepted the expansion of his domains when several pieces of territory were added to his kingdom in 1807.¹⁰⁷ The willingness to cede peripheral territory, albeit under pressure, and the covetousness shown towards some adjacent lands indicates that Dutch territorial identity was not immune to some liminal flexibility. Yet the core lands of the Netherlands were much more readily defined and defended. France was forced to drop its claim for lands in Zeeland in 1795 in the face of Dutch intransigence. Similarly, when the French ambassador, Alexandre de Larochefoucauld, unofficially approached Röell in 1808 concerning the potential exchange of Zeeland and Brabant for some German territories that would have greatly expanded the Kingdom of Holland, he was immediately rebuffed.¹⁰⁸ An offended Röell informed Larochefoucauld that no matter the reward, the Dutch would never consider ceding such an integral part of their territory.

Overall, however, the territorial aspect of Dutch identity had little impact on foreign policy. Dutch governments, especially those after 1795, sought like any other to defend or expand their territory as the need and opportunity arose. If Napoleonic-scale annexations or exchanges of territory were unthinkable in the Netherlands, this was more down to circumstance than to the influence of territory as identity. Considerable territory was ceded under duress in 1795 and in March 1810 – the latter possibly demanded by Napoleon in an attempt to force Louis to abdicate.¹⁰⁹ Dutch territorial identity was not considered at all when the union of the Netherlands and Belgium was agreed following the fall of Napoleon, but nor did this create a great outcry that the Dutch territorial nation was being subverted. Successive Dutch governments did prove willing to negotiate over peripheral territories while staunchly resisting pretensions on their core lands, but in this they acted little differently to any other government.

¹⁰⁶ HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 119, letter 23 July 1798; HNA, Collectie Hahn (2.21.008.83), 8, letter from Blauw 7 April 1797; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 3, pp.652-56 Gogel to Uitvoerend Bewind, 18 February 1801.

¹⁰⁷ Van Dijk (ed.), *Répertoire Historique et Chronologique des Traités*, p.57, treaty between France and Holland, 11 November 1807.

¹⁰⁸ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 5, pp.428-29.

¹⁰⁹ Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*; Van Dijk (ed.), *Répertoire Historique et Chronologique des Traités*, pp.59-61, treaty between France and Holland, 16 March 1810.

Another aspect of Dutch identity to crop up in 1806 was the Dutch language. Again, the idea of a national language was not to have much of an impact on foreign policy beyond its vague defence against French encroachments. Although most of the political classes spoke French with a degree of fluency, many were unhappy with its increasing use in administration after 1795. Proclamations were often published in French and Dutch, or else had to be translated for the benefit of the French civil and military agents in the Netherlands. One of the requests made by the Patriots seeking French help for a coup in late 1797 was for 'un général qui connaisse la langue, les usages et la localité du pays'.¹¹⁰ More important though was the demand in 1806 that Dutch be retained as the language of government. This demand stemmed from the same impulse that insisted on the preservation of national independence, Dutch laws and administration by Dutchmen; if the Netherlands was to exist as anything more than a hollow mockery of itself, it had to incorporate at least the basic aspects of Dutch identity.¹¹¹

While the Batavians gained concession on the principle of administration in Dutch, they were unable to enforce its practice. Louis attempted to learn Dutch but never managed to acquire a working knowledge. Out of necessity much of the Kingdom of Holland's domestic affairs were transacted in French, often to the detriment of mutual understanding. In 1806 for example Louis harangued the Texel squadron, upbraiding them for poor behaviour, invoking the memory of Tromp and de Ruyter, and appealing to them in the name of nation and fatherland. This stirring piece of national rhetoric was spoilt only by being delivered entirely in French.¹¹² Similarly, in 1807 Valckenaer congratulated Louis on a fine speech regarding the nation's finances, but apologised that it had been 'massacred' in Dutch translation.¹¹³ If the Batavian government set out to defend the Dutch language in 1806, its efforts were only partially successful.

The final major demand made of Napoleon in 1806 was that freedom of worship in the Netherlands should be respected. The Dutch Reformed Church formed the basis of Dutch religious identity, and Catholics largely remained marginalised from public life; even Napoleon

¹¹⁰ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 2, pp.545-50.

¹¹¹ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, p.484.

¹¹² Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 5, p.227.

¹¹³ AN, AF IV 1820, Valckenaer to Louis, 3 December 1807.

complained in 1804 that there was not a single influential Catholic in the Netherlands.¹¹⁴ Religion had been an enormous factor in the Dutch Revolt and in the Franco-Dutch wars of the late seventeenth century, and was even accused of stirring up anti-French passions under the Empire,¹¹⁵ but in the foreign policy of the period 1785-1815 virtually no trace is found. The decision to enter the alliances of the 1780s took little account of Catholic France or Protestant Britain, although the Catholic stick was still used to beat France by its detractors. By the time of the French conquest in early 1795 the rabid de-Christianisation of the French Revolution had ended and France forbore from interfering in Dutch religious affairs. The sudden concern for religion in 1806 seemingly stemmed from the fact that Napoleon was imposing a foreign, and Catholic, ruler on the Netherlands. In April 1806 van der Goes proposed that the Batavian representatives should demand guarantees that the Reformed religion would be maintained, and that the new Prince and his successors would conform to that religion.¹¹⁶ Yet even Napoleon was not cynical enough to demand the apostasy of his brother, and the Dutch had to be content with Napoleon's assurances that their religion would be respected. Once Louis was on the throne some in the Netherlands held his Catholicism against him, but religion was not to appear again as a consideration in foreign policy.¹¹⁷

An aspect of Dutch identity that did consistently impact on foreign policy across the period was the widespread belief that the Netherlands was a commercial nation. Trade was an integral part of Dutch self-identity and was seen as necessary for even modest prosperity. The supposed diminution of trade formed part of the narratives of decline but the desire for trade existed independently from that narrative. Finance and banking were often portrayed as a drain rather than a boost to the economy, while manufacture and commerce were often seen as opposing rather than mutually beneficial activities.¹¹⁸ The privileging of trade was not necessarily unjustified as in the last decades of the eighteenth century the maritime sector made up a large part of the Dutch economy, and the most successful industries were those that relied on raw materials from overseas rather than domestic produce.¹¹⁹ Yet by the late

¹¹⁴ Napoleon Bonaparte, *Correspondance de Napoléon I^{er}* (32 vols, Paris, 1858-70), vol. 9, p.344.

¹¹⁵ AN, AF IV 1721, P.-F. Réal, 'Voyage en Hollande', p.38.

¹¹⁶ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, p.627, 'Aanteekening van van der Goes', 2 April 1806.

¹¹⁷ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 5, pp.264-66, 'Rapport sur l'Etat de l'Opinion Publique' by Gateau.

¹¹⁸ AN, AF IV 1820, Valckenaer to Louis Bonaparte, 17 February 1808.

¹¹⁹ Joel Mokyr, *Industrialisation in the Low Countries 1795-1850* (New Haven, 1976), pp.1-3.

eighteenth century the importance of trade to the identity of the Netherlands had become so entrenched that few saw any other reality as possible, a fact which heavily informed policy decisions.

This aim here is not to argue for the relative importance of Dutch trade to the economy, but rather to point out the importance to policy of this key facet of Dutch identity. The influence of trade on Dutch policy was nothing new. The States General's defence of the rights of Dutch merchants to trade with the American colonists and France in the late 1770s was a major contributory factor in the deterioration of relations with Britain.¹²⁰ A similar privileging of trade to the ultimate detriment of other aspects of policy appears at times in the years 1785-1815. The arrangement of commercial treaties was a major part of Dutch diplomatic efforts of the 1780s and 1790s although, as previously seen, the alliances of those years can be viewed more as a result of the perceived need for a holistic programme of regeneration than a simple desire for economic improvement. The alliances of 1785, 1788 and 1795 were valued in themselves, independently of their importance to commerce. The damage done by Britain's seizures of Dutch shipping and colonies in the aftermath of the French alliance in 1795 was widely lamented, but was a price the new Patriot rulers were willing to pay, especially as they hoped to regain much of the colonial wealth when peace was finally negotiated. Moreover, the French alliance opened up new markets to partially replace those lost, and after a brief hiatus some trade with Britain resumed by 1797 in neutral bottoms or under flags of convenience.¹²¹

As the desire to disengage from the Anglo-French struggle increased from around 1800, however, Dutch politicians began to concentrate more on how to wring advantage from their international position. Stimulating trade became an important part of foreign policy. Although fairly widespread financial reform had been achieved by Gogel since 1798,¹²² Dutch politicians continued to interpret the economic needs of the country in terms of the commerce that was so vital in Dutch self-identity, rather than looking to new industries or services. In 1801 van der Goes put the renegotiation of commercial relations with France at the top of a four point plan

¹²⁰ H. M. Scott, 'Sir Joseph Yorke and the Waning of the Anglo-Dutch Alliance, 1747-1788', in Bob Moore & Henk van Nierop (eds.), *Colonial Empires Compared, Britain and the Netherlands 1750-1850* (Aldershot, 2003), pp.20-23.

¹²¹ Crouzet, 'Aspects Financiers de la Relation Franco-Batave', p.51; Wilson, *Anglo-Dutch Commerce and Finance*, p.193; TNA, PC 1/32/81; PC 1/83/33; PC 1/35/99; PC 1/40/133 give details of continued trade with the Netherlands 1795-99. For seizures of British goods: TNA, FO 38/1, 6 & 28 October 1796; AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 593, list of seized goods, messidor an IV to vendémiaire an V.

¹²² Simon Schama, 'The Exigencies of War and the Politics of Taxation in the Netherlands 1795-1810', in J.M. Winter, *War and Economic Development* (Cambridge, 1975), p.116.

of action that he hoped to agree with Napoleon for the improvement of the Netherlands's lot.¹²³ At the same time the Batavian Republic was casting around for other commercial partners and took especial note of the opportunities offered by Russia and the newly coalescing League of Armed Neutrality in the Baltic.¹²⁴ Unfortunately, the murder of Tsar Paul in March 1801 and the British attack on Copenhagen a month later brought the League to a somewhat messy end, scuppering Dutch hopes for a strong commercial union in this area.¹²⁵ As soon as diplomatic relations were restored with Britain after Amiens, the two governments sought to rebuild commercial ties.¹²⁶ Out of respect for France van der Goes declined the offer of a formal agreement, but claimed that unofficially British ships would be welcome in Dutch ports as before the war.¹²⁷

All of these acts show the perceived importance of the idea of trade to the Dutch political leadership, but none of these acts necessarily privileged trade to the detriment of other policies. Once war was renewed after 1803, however, the obsession with trying to protect and privilege trade brought the Dutch into almost perpetual conflict with Napoleon and his minions. Immediately Anglo-French hostilities began Napoleon gave orders for an embargo on shipping in Dutch ports, which the Dutch government refused on the grounds that they were not yet at war with Britain, even supporting British protests against seizures made by French troops in Dutch ports.¹²⁸ Once war was certain the Batavian government wished to dispatch a fleet to the Indies to secure the colonies and protect the precious colonial trade but Napoleon refused (despite having previously informed the Dutch they should do more to protect their

¹²³ HNA, Collectie Van der Goes van Dirxland (2.21.073), 51, Note Secrète et Confidentielle, 19 March 1801; AMAE, Mémoires et Documents 71, 'Projet d'une Convention Commerciale'.

¹²⁴ HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 123, Van der Goes to Bourdeaux (Dutch representative in Berlin) 20 January 1801; Instructions for Buys, 2 February 1801.

¹²⁵ Michael Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon, 1799-1815* (London, 1996), p.30.

¹²⁶ HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 61, Instructions for Schimmelpenninck, 29 October 1802; TNA, FO 37/61, Instructions for Liston no.2, 16 August 1803.

¹²⁷ TNA, FO 37/61, Liston to Hawkesbury, 31 December 1802. Clive Emsley's claim (in *British Society and the French Wars 1793-1815* (London, 1979), p.97) that during the Peace of Amiens Napoleon kept Dutch ports shut to British shipping is not entirely accurate.

¹²⁸ HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 124, Van der Goes to A.B.G. van Dedem, 20 May 1803, Van der Goes to Schimmelpenninck, 24 May 1803 & Van der Goes to Liston, 31 May 1803; TNA, FO 37/60, Schimmelpenninck to Hawkesbury, 30 May 1803; TNA, FO 37/61, Liston to Hawkesbury, 25 May 1803.

colonies) telling them that it was in England that the war would be won.¹²⁹ Napoleon demanded that the Netherlands cease all commercial relations with Britain while the Batavian Directory was just as adamant that trade should not be obstructed more than necessary. Ports were officially closed to British ships but there was little initiative to ensure that British manufactures were excluded. Napoleonic policies of economic isolation and concentration of forces evidently did not sit well with the Batavian leadership, though they had little choice but to acquiesce.

For Owen Connelly the closure of Dutch ports to British goods at Napoleon's behest was a clear indication of the satellite status of the Netherlands in the French orbit.¹³⁰ But while the Dutch authorities were forced to enact the correct legislation, they often wilfully neglected to enforce it. Direct trade continued, though at less than half of peacetime capacity, while a flourishing indirect trade grew up via the port of Emden.¹³¹ While it would be difficult to maintain that official Dutch policy was to promote trade with Britain, it is clear that the Batavian government's actions (or inaction) stemmed from their perception of trade as vital to national prosperity. In 1804 Napoleon protested strongly about the Netherlands' laxity in stopping trade with Britain and threatened to close Dutch ports entirely if his demands were not met.¹³² By 1805 he had forced a change in the Batavian constitution and persuaded the country's new leaders, Grand Pensionary Schimmelpenninck and finance minister Gogel, to pass new legislation and to allow French troops to enforce it.¹³³ The French-led crackdown was initially reasonably successful but by autumn 1805 trade had begun to revive.¹³⁴

The general failure to eradicate cross-Channel commerce was largely down to a lack of political will. The privileged place of trade in Dutch identity, which fed into the widespread belief that

¹²⁹ Jaap R. Bruijn, 'Facing a New World; the Dutch Navy goes Overseas (c.1750-c.1850)', in Bob Moore & Henk van Nierop (eds.), *Colonial Empires Compared, Britain and the Netherlands 1750-1850* (Aldershot, 2003), 113-128; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 3, p.725, 'Journaal van het Congres te Amiens'; vol. 4, pp.436-37 De Vos van Steenwijk, Six, Jacobson & Blanken to Van der Goes, 15 June 1803.

¹³⁰ Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, p.4.

¹³¹ François Crouzet, *L'Economie Britannique et le Blocus Continental (1806-1813)* (2 vols, Paris, 1958), vol. 1, pp.136-39; Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, p.442.

¹³² AN, 215 AP 1, Napoleon to Talleyrand, 5 brumaire an XIII, 10 floréal an XIII & 30 floréal an XIII; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, pp.528-29.

¹³³ AN, AE B^{III} 421, law of 31 May 1805; Général de Division Vignolle to 'l'officier détaché à Delfzyl' 24 prairial an XIII; 'Renseignements sur les Exportations et Importations en Hollande', 20 August 1807.

¹³⁴ Crouzet, *L'Economie Britannique*, vol. 1, p.138; AN, AE B^{III} 421, 'Renseignements sur les Exportations et Importations en Hollande', 20 August 1807.

commerce was the only key to prosperity, prevented successive governments from enforcing what they considered to be a self-destructive blockade against Britain. A French report of May 1806 complained bitterly that the Dutch government was too obsessed with commerce as a source of wealth and preferred to permit trade with Britain to building up domestic industry.¹³⁵ Before 1806 the Batavian government had to balance their desire for trade with the need to avoid provoking Napoleon; after 1806 King Louis, and from 1810 the French administration of Charles-François Lebrun, were subjected to constant lobbying for the relaxation of restrictions on trade. As has been shown, Louis often took lobbying at face value as the expression of Dutch public opinion and used whatever influence he could muster to deflect the Napoleonic gaze from his subjects' trading habits. Lebrun became equally persuaded of the necessity of overseas trade to the Dutch economy. In a report of 1811, P.-F. Réal claimed that Lebrun's administration had been seduced into believing the false idea that the only barrier to cordial Franco-Dutch relations was trade, and that trade was the only way to recover prosperity.¹³⁶ Réal believed that the Dutch should look to the empire for wealth, and that wishing to pursue the old sources of prosperity of the carrying or colonial trades was anti-French. For Réal as an outsider there were many routes to Dutch prosperity; for the Dutch elites with any authority or influence over the Governor-General's regime, commercial self-identity meant that trade continued to hold the prized place that it had in years gone by.

Aside from the aspects of identity discussed above there are two more that merit brief attention; Orangism and the military. The first was an important strand of Dutch national identity that proved durable enough to survive almost two decades of the exile of its principles and principals. The second was a more peripheral aspect of Dutch identity but proved enormously important to Napoleon and, ultimately, could not fail to impact on Dutch policy. To begin with Orangism, it is evident that the power and position of the Prince of Orange was a major issue in the Patriot upheavals of the 1780s and played a large part in the decisions to engage in formal French and Anglo-Prussian alliances. The concern for this chapter, however, is how the identity of Orangism, rather than the fact of the Prince's authority, impacted on Dutch foreign policy. Before the overthrow of the Stadholderate in 1795 there was little room for Orangism as an aspect of Dutch identity to have an impact on foreign policy. Orangist identity undoubtedly helped to secure support for the Stadholderate but had little influence on policy. After 1795, however, with the Prince languishing in exile and the new governments

¹³⁵ AN, AF IV 1820, 'Quelques Observations sur la Hollande', May 1806.

¹³⁶ AN, AF IV 1721, 'Première et Seconde Partie du Rapport du Conseiller d'Etat Réal sur sa Mission en Hollande, Mai 1811', pp.38-40.

hostile to the House of Orange, the enduring appeal of Orangism and the rise of the 'Orange myth' had some discernible impact on the country's policies.

That impact was generally a negative one, in that successive Dutch governments tailored their policies to attempt to negate the continued effect of Orangism. At their most basic, Batavian policies sought to physically distance the House of Orange and its representatives from Batavian territory. In part this stemmed from the eminently practical wish to forestall the possibility of an Orangist restoration and the consequent loss of the many perceived gains made since 1795. Yet it also reflected the Batavians' recognition of the symbolic power of the House of Orange and its potential to provide an alternative basis for national identity, thereby undermining revolutionary national unity. Even when the prospect of peace transformed British support for restoration into demands for compensation for the House of Orange, the Batavian government made it their policy to insist that any territorial indemnity should be as far from the Netherlands as possible.¹³⁷ This policy did not come from some petty desire for vengeance or a wish to humiliate the Princes of Orange. Many of the anti-Orangists in government retained a degree of respect for the Prince and his family even if they could not abide by his politics;¹³⁸ yet they also understood the continued symbolic power of Orangism and its resonance to Dutch identity, and sought to distance the embodiments of Orangism from the new Batavian nation.

The relationship of Batavian governments to Orangist identity was complicated by a degree of international interference. Until the period of the Peace of Amiens, Britain and to a lesser extent Prussia saw the House of Orange as the legitimate rulers of the Netherlands and sought to engineer a restoration. Republican France, on the other hand, sought to permanently exclude the *ci-devant* Stadholder from Dutch politics.¹³⁹ The Batavian government gained definitive recognition of the abolition of the Stadholderate in 1804 but were undermined in their efforts to consign Orangist identity to the pages of history by Napoleon's new-found

¹³⁷ HNA, *Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813* (2.01.08), 55B, 2 November 1796, Instructions for Lestevenon, Pasteur and Meyer, Commissionaires for Batavian Republic at peace negotiations with Britain, item 5; Also HNA, *Collectie Van der Goes van Dirxland* (2.21.073), 51, Note Secrète et Confidentielle, 19 March 1801; HNA, *Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813* (2.01.08); 61, Minutes of 21 January and 11 February 1802; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 3, p.657, 'Aperçu sur les Rapports Respectifs des Deux Républiques'.

¹³⁸ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, p.365 Schimmelpenninck to the Erfprins, 14 July 1802.

¹³⁹ de Gou (ed.), *De Staatsregeling van 1801*, p.513, Talleyrand to Sémonville, 17 pluviôse an IX.

interest in princely legitimacy.¹⁴⁰ Napoleon never seriously wished to restore the traditionally Anglophile House of Orange, but he did hope to harness the Orangist tradition to give legitimacy to his brother's regime. He was even prepared to give Louis the title of Stadholder if it made him more acceptable to the Dutch.¹⁴¹ The desire to forestall an Orangist restoration certainly played a role in the decision in 1806 to accept Louis as king; Gerard Brantsen wrote in March 1806 that accepting a French prince would at least forever end Orangist pretensions.¹⁴² From 1806, however, foreign policy paid little heed to Orangism. Complaints abounded that Orangists were dominating government and administrative posts, and even that they were responsible for the continued intercourse with Britain, but in terms of formulation of foreign policy Orangist identity had little impact.

As with Orangism, the relationship between military identity and policy was generally negative. Dutch identity had never embraced aggressive militarism and provided no incentive for the government to seek war, conquest or military victory for its own sake. The impulse to create large military and naval forces came from French pressure rather than from any Dutch military identity. No Dutch government was ever compelled, as Napoleon claimed he was, to win battles to slake the appetite of a victory-hungry public. Napoleon's claim that he needed continual victories to prove legitimacy may well be simply part of his post-defeat apologia – one biographer called it an 'exercise in self-pity'¹⁴³ – but the Netherlands lacked even the basic military identity that could have made such claims plausible. Louis Bonaparte asserted that 'incessant victory' was the only thing that prevented France from overthrowing Napoleon after 1805; there is not even the faintest of indications that this could have been the case for Louis in Holland.¹⁴⁴

This absence of incentive for military glory did not, in itself, constitute a foreign policy. Yet it helps to explain why a series of otherwise well-intentioned Dutch governments found it so difficult to contribute satisfactorily to the joint Franco-Dutch war effort, especially after 1803. Financial difficulties naturally put a brake on military investment, but equally important is the attitude of Dutch politicians to the military and to warfare. There was simply not the will in the

¹⁴⁰ van Dijk (ed.), *Répertoire Historique et Chronologique des Traités*, pp.50-51.

¹⁴¹ AN, 215 AP 1, Napoleon to Talleyrand, 14 March 1806.

¹⁴² Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, p.620, Brantsen to Van der Goes, 15 March 1806.

¹⁴³ Steve Englund, *Napoleon, a Political Life* (New York, 2004), p.250.

¹⁴⁴ AN, 400 AP 36, 'Réflexions Historiques de Louis Napoléon Bonaparte'.

Netherlands to pursue war à l'outrance. While Napoleon knowingly risked internal unrest and popular discontent to conscript men into his armies, successive Dutch governments refused to do likewise. The Dutch leadership also showed absolutely no inclination to embrace a militarisation of state or society. In contrast to the more militarised Prussia after 1807, for example, military reform in the Netherlands after 1795 had no significance outside martial circles.¹⁴⁵ Unlike in Napoleonic France, the Dutch military was not privileged above other arms of state administration. This apparent indifference to the military, which brought the Netherlands into repeated conflict with Napoleon, can possibly be explained by the ambivalence to the military in Dutch identity.

The interaction of public opinion, identity and foreign policy in the Netherlands in this period is complex. Few political leaders sought out active public opinion, and those who did omitted to devise any systematic manner of gathering or surveying it. The greatest direct impact of public opinion came in the early Patriot years, when the revolutionised burgers of Utrecht were able to push the Netherlands towards an alliance with France, and during the Kingdom of Holland, when Louis haphazardly sought to align his policies to the public mind. For all the Patriots' concern with popular sovereignty and representative government, the years 1795-1806 saw little in the way of popular input into government and almost nothing of popular input into foreign policy.

In terms of latent opinion and identity, however, the story is a little different. A series of assumptions and aspects of identity underpinned much of the Netherlands's policy across this period. These identities were rarely the primary motivation behind policy; they were influences rather than imperatives, and were usually inspired by the need to defend the self-identified nation from foreign encroachment. The concept of decline was undoubtedly of enormous importance as an interpretive tool, even if it alone did not lead to the construction of a coherent foreign policy. The idea that the Netherlands was, and should be, an independent nation was also important, although rather ironically it took the annexation of 1810-13 to prove the ultimate endurance of that ideal. The identity of the Netherlands as a trading nation equally had an impact on policy, if only to cause the Netherlands to come into conflict with her French ally. Other aspects of identity, notably domestic institutions, Orangism, and the military, had a lesser but noticeable impact in shaping policy. Neither

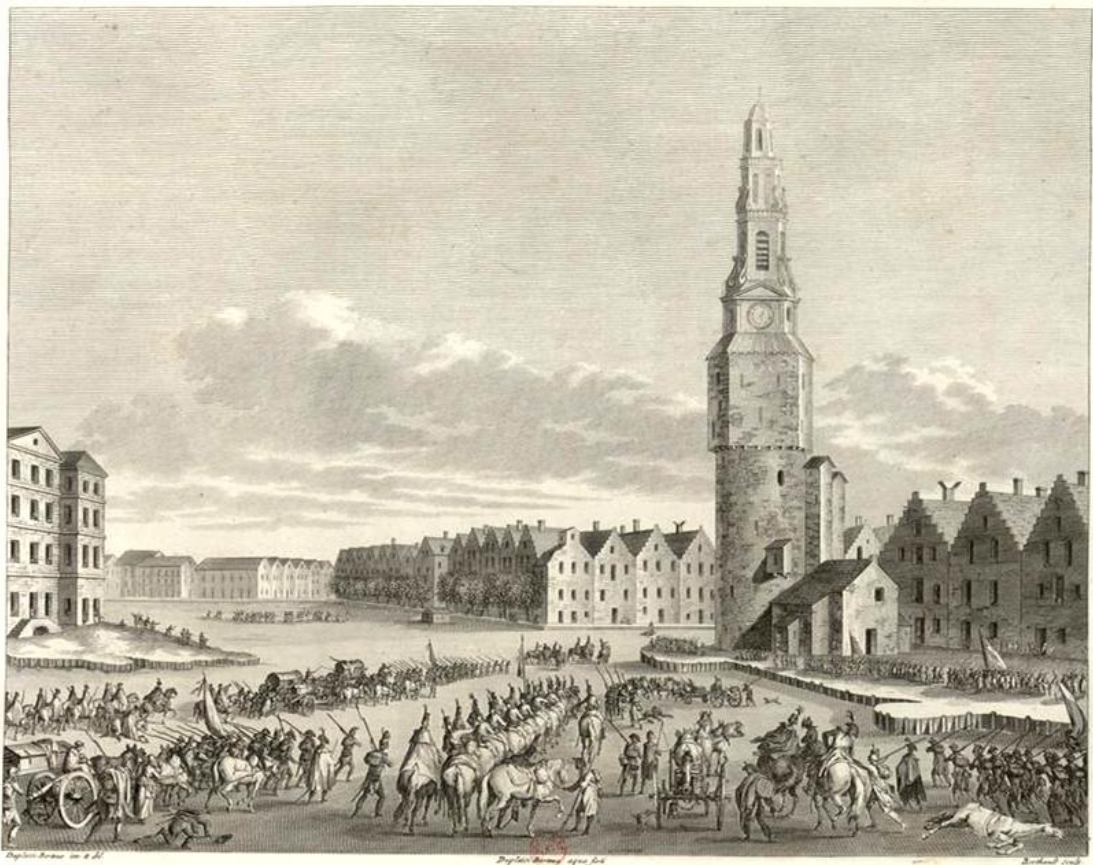
¹⁴⁵ Heinz Stübig, *Armee und Nation, die Pädagogisch-Politischen Motive der Preußischen Heeresreform 1807-1814* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1971) investigates the relationship between Prussian army reforms at the state. To balance this with an account that leaves aside military reforms entirely see Marion Gray, 'Prussia in Transition: Society and Politics under the Stein Reform Ministry of 1808', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series, Vol. 76, No. 1 (1986), 1-175.

identity nor latent opinion can be said to have been the guiding hand building foreign policy, but taken together and as a whole, they can be seen to have contributed to the foundations and mortar cementing the edifice of an ultimately defensive foreign policy in place.

CHAPTER FOUR

‘CANAUX, CANARDS, CANAILLE’?

FRENCH PUBLIC OPINION AND THE NETHERLANDS



ENTRÉE DES FRANÇAIS DANS LA HOLLANDE, LE 21 JANVIER 1795;
ou 2 Pluviose, An 3^{me} de la République.

Pierre-Gabriel Berthault, *Entrée des Français dans la Hollande, le 21 Janvier 1795* (1802)
(Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Collection de Vinck 4704)

The last decades of the eighteenth century cemented the place of public opinion and the nation in French political discourse. The Revolution played a huge role in promoting and reshaping concepts of opinion and nation, but both were also evident long before the Bastille's unfortunate governor Bernard-René de Launay found his head atop a pike in the summer of 1789. In the decades before the Revolution, public opinion had become the grand tribunal before which all public acts could be measured, but the Revolution seemed to fix the place of public opinion and the rights of the collective nation in the political landscape. For the revolutionaries political legitimacy henceforth required the backing of both public opinion and national will. The revolutionary journal *Père Duchesne* elevated opinion to a place of unquestionable authority, stating in 1791 that 'la Révolution est achevée, parce qu'elle est faite dans l'opinion.'¹ This sentiment was echoed by Gracchus Babeuf; 'C'est par l'opinion qu'on peut tout faire, [...] l'opinion du peuple est sa force, et la force du peuple est tout.'² Yet as Babeuf's words hint, the legitimacy of opinion and of the nation increasingly came to rest upon them appearing as single, unitary entities. The perceived threat to the nation following Louis XVI's execution demanded national unity and, during the Terror, national consensus. Legitimate public opinion became conflated with Rousseauian ideas of a general national Will, with any counter-opinion represented as illegitimate, threatening and potentially counter-revolutionary. A degree of pluralism returned post-Thermidor but the optimistic early-revolutionary aspiration of freedom of expression was never fully rehabilitated. When Napoleon came to power his administration proved more interested in surveillance of *esprit public* than in surveying public opinion.

Most expressions of public opinion in France of this period quite naturally concerned the enormous domestic problems, challenges and changes facing the royal and then revolutionary states. Yet even in the midst of painful introspection the French still naturally expressed opinions about foreign powers, and especially about the relations of those powers to France. As the Revolution gathered pace and new interpretations of public and nation gained currency, so the lens through which the French public peered at the outside world changed focus. Perhaps more than any other country at this time, shifting perceptions of the French self impacted enormously on French perceptions of the other. Although the major others of French imagination remained France's largest enemies and rivals – notably Britain and Austria – the Dutch were seen to be both close enough and powerful enough to merit periodic attention.

¹ *Père Duchesne*, no. 65, p.6.

² Claude Mazauric (ed.), *Babeuf, Textes Choisis* (Paris, 1965), p.163.

This chapter will examine French public opinion towards the Netherlands in the years 1785-1815, and will examine French national identity and the significance of national discourses in a French context. Public opinion towards the Netherlands will be discussed in terms of both active opinion, which saw the Dutch alternately respected or reviled depending on their most recent activities, and latent opinion which comprised the preconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices that pervaded French representations of the Dutch. The constructed realities that existed in latent public opinion covered almost every facet of Dutch cultural, political and social existence, from impressions of the place of the Netherlands within a European political system, to the character of the Dutch people, their wealth and their 'natural' predilection for certain types of rule and government. However, building on the theoretical background outlined in the introduction to the thesis, this chapter will first look at the nature of French national identity and discourses of the nation, which naturally impacted on how France viewed the 'other'.

The sheer size of France means that speaking of a late eighteenth-century national public remains problematic. France boasted twenty-eight million inhabitants with the vast majority of these people – approximately four-fifths – living in rural communities.³ Improvements to communications networks during the eighteenth century meant that people and news could travel farther and faster than before. Nor was travel within France reserved for the rich, as itinerant labourers or young men 'en voyage' were a feature of eighteenth-century life.⁴ Most major routes ran arterially from Paris to provinces, and the improvement of roads resulted in travelling time between Paris and other major cities being halved between 1650 and the Revolution.⁵ The development of the optical telegraph also enabled Paris to communicate with important provincial centres in a matter of hours.⁶

Despite these improvements there remained a general urban-rural divide in the regularity with which information was received and consumed, and in the degree of engagement in the supposed national public. Pronounced differences have been observed in the reactions of town and country to phenomena as diverse as religious enthusiasm, revolutionary activity, and

³ Peter McPhee, *A Social History of France 1780-1880* (London, 1993), p.7.

⁴ William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1990), p.12; Albert Soboul & Georges Lefebvre, 'Urban Society in the Orléanais in the Late Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, No. 19 (April 1961), pp.66-67.

⁵ Tim Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory, Europe 1648-1815* (London, 2007), p.7.

⁶ Alexander J. Field, 'French Optical Telegraphy, 1793-1855: Hardware, Software, Administration', *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (April 1994), p.320.

military conscription.⁷ Some areas remained remote from much of the rest of the country for reasons of geography, language or politics. There were also many divisions between the major provincial towns, and between the provinces and Paris. Many aspects of public sociability and national sentiment were essentially metropolitan, with provincial towns and cities often imitating Paris on a smaller scale. In a consideration of French public opinion, the attitudes of the capital are disproportionately important. Parisian dominance exhibited itself in the sheer size of metropolitan sociability and print culture when compared to those of the provinces, as Paris was the main hub for collecting and disseminating information nationally.

In few countries was the conceptual nation more explicitly important in this period than it was in France. The nation became an integral part of domestic political discourse during the Revolution and its rhetoric spilled over into almost every area of governance. For some historians French nationalism first appeared with the French Revolution, and certainly this period saw thorough attempts to define and explain the concept and supposed reality of the nation. But this interpretation needs to be contextualised with the discernible and growing national consciousness in the decades prior to 1789, which saw the use of many of the themes of revolutionary nationalism in France, albeit in weaker and less self-conscious forms. David Bell convincingly demonstrated the existence of a movement of French national consciousness during the eighteenth century, with attempts to create a French identity and to promote the French language.⁸ As elsewhere, the foreign other was used to try to inspire a kind of national unity. There were some pre-Revolution attempts, often government-sponsored, to whip up anti-British sentiment, especially during the Seven Years War, but the scale and scope of the vilification was limited.⁹ Although the Revolution was without doubt the most prolific period of nation-building in French history, it is incontestable that a French identity was already reasonably well developed by the time the Estates General assembled in 1789. What is more, many facets of that identity were deeply enough ingrained to survive the attempts by revolutionaries to mould Frenchmen in their own image.

The meaning of the nation was hugely important to French national identity. Pre-Revolutionary national sentiment often focused on the traditional concept of fealty to the monarch who, as the supposed unbiased arbiter of society, provided a symbolic figurehead for the nation.

⁷ Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, pp.16-18; Alan Forrest, *Conscripts and Deserters, the Army and French Society during the Revolution and Empire* (Oxford, 1989), pp.78-79.

⁸ David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France, Inventing Nationalism 1680-1800* (Cambridge MA, 2003).

⁹ Bell, *The Cult of the Nation*, pp.78-106.

Eighteenth-century justifications of monarchy held that 'a single, superior *will* was required to bind together the particular interests in the polity and produce a common good', a will embodied by the monarch.¹⁰ Fealty to such a king was also therefore fealty to the nation. However, as the century progressed the monarchy became construed less as the arbiter of society and more as simply another active and interested participant. As such, the interests of king and nation ceased to be synonymous. The opposition of nation to monarch had been a popular belief in certain intellectual circles before 1789, but it was unequivocally demonstrated by the Estates General's declaration of a National Assembly without royal authority on 17 June 1789. Sovereignty, previously the preserve of the monarch, was now arrogated to the nation, with the Assembly as its representatives. Royalism and nationalism became essentially contrary concepts.¹¹ Although the constitutional monarchy saw an attempt to bridge the gap between monarch and nation, the experiment with the king as first citizen of France proved nothing but an uncomfortable and short-lived compromise.

Although ill-defined eighteenth-century conceptions of the French nation allowed corporate bodies such as the Parlements or even the nobility to consider themselves national representatives,¹² the revolutionary nation developed in opposition to corporate political and social structures. The spirit of equality prevalent in 1789 required not only the dissolution of nobility and Church privilege, but of guilds, chambers of commerce, individual municipal rights and trading monopolies. This did not mean that pluralism was entirely deplored. The departments created in December 1789 were given their own locally-elected administrations, providing a small degree of local autonomy, and events such as the *Fête de la Fédération* in 1790 show that federalism was not considered contrary to the nation. Even until 1792-93 significant players in the Revolution continued to believe that a federal nation was possible.¹³ Yet as the Revolution progressed so the creed of a nation 'one and indivisible' became more common. As the king's role faded and his aims became seen as actively conflicting with those of the nation, the latter became the only form of legitimacy, and the national will as expressed by the nation's representatives in the Assembly or Convention the only legitimate discourse.

¹⁰ Ellen M. Wood, 'The State and Popular Sovereignty in French Political Thought: a Genealogy of Rousseau's "General Will"', in Frederick Krantz (ed.), *History from Below, Studies in Popular Protest and Popular Ideology* (Oxford, 1988), p.87.

¹¹ Jacques Godechot, 'The New Concept of the Nation and its Diffusion in Europe', in Otto Dann & John Dinwiddy (eds.), *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1988), pp.14-15.

¹² Bell, *The Cult of the Nation*, p.25.

¹³ See Bertrand Barère (trans. De V. Payen-Payne), *Memoirs of Bertrand Barère* (4 vols, London, 1896), vol. 2, pp.33, 64 & 83 for a first-hand account of the Brissotin plans for a federal republic in 1792-93.

The war further imposed a need for national consensus, as debate and dissention became associated with subversion and sedition. Jacques Hébert's *Père Duchesne* asserted that war would unite true Frenchmen while exposing 'aristocrats' and traitors.¹⁴ The Terror was the logical outcome of a philosophy where opposition to government policy was seen as *lèse nation*. The Federalist Revolt inevitably only added to this view.¹⁵ Although the right of oppositional opinion was somewhat rehabilitated after Thermidor, federal and corporate pluralism remained largely anathematic to the French nation.

The political nation of the early Revolution did not include all Frenchmen, but was instead quickly limited to the approximately four million men who paid the equivalent of three days' wages in annual direct taxation.¹⁶ This move towards a propertied conception of the nation can be interpreted as a continuation of already evolving notions of citizenship.¹⁷ The early Republic saw a democratisation of ideas of the nation as the war demanded the mobilisation of the whole of France to face the external threat. Republican rhetoric became intimately bound up in the war effort as the conflict was increasingly portrayed as a struggle between the aristocratic courts of old Europe and the new French Republic. In the early days of the Republic 'civisme' and patriotism replaced any social or economic criteria as the basis of membership of the nation. Although women remained formally barred from political assemblies, they too were able to claim membership of this nation. The government officially invited women to partake in the defence of French territory by supporting the *Levée-en-Masse*, a call that was also echoed more popularly; in August 1792, for example, the *Feuille Villageoise* went so far as to demand that women be allowed to form military units if they so wished, to better serve the nation.¹⁸ However, the democratic constitution of 1793 was never enacted and the post-Thermidor regimes reverted to narrower definitions of propertied citizenship.

The early Revolution also saw a debate between conceptions of the universalist or 'anti-universalist' nation.¹⁹ Proponents of a universalist nation held that sovereignty belonged to the

¹⁴ *Père Duchesne*, no. 113.

¹⁵ Godechot, 'The New Concept of the Nation', p.18.

¹⁶ Gwynne Lewis, *The French Revolution, Rethinking the Debate* (London, 1993), p.31.

¹⁷ Jeffrey Merrick, 'Subjects and Citizens in the Remonstrances of the Parlement of Paris in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (1990), 453-60.

¹⁸ *Feuille Villageoise*, no. 45, 9 August 1792.

¹⁹ Chimène I. Keitner, *The Paradoxes of Nationalism; the French Revolution and its Meaning for Contemporary Nation Building* (Albany, 2007), pp.113-14.

whole of mankind, but that as France was the only free nation, all men who wished to be part of this sovereignty must be French. Representatives of political exiles from across Europe, Dutch Patriots prominent amongst them, quickly identified themselves with this new ideal.²⁰ As late as September 1792 the largely-Jacobin *Feuille Villageoise* declared; ‘Quiconque a servi la cause de la liberté, sous quelque ciel qu’il soit né, quelque terre qu’il habite, aura le titre de citoyen français’, listing William Wilberforce, Joseph Priestly, Thomas Paine and Anacharsis Cloots as French citizens.²¹ The anti-universalist view, espoused by Lazare Carnot amongst others, argued that universal sovereignty would situate France as only a small part of a wider sovereign body, and would thus remove her right to unilateral action. They argued that nations were distinct entities, each having the absolute right to act according to its own sovereignty.²² For a short time universalism was very much in vogue, but by mid-1793 it had fallen into disfavour. With France at war with much of Europe, and with the nation supposedly fighting for survival against enemies foreign and domestic, foreignness as much as aristocracy became cause for suspicion. Paine was imprisoned in December 1793 and Cloots was executed in March 1794 after being falsely accused of involvement in a foreign plot. The French nation after 1793 largely reverted to eighteenth-century norms in restricting citizenship to those within the French state’s borders.²³

This debate between universalist and anti-universalist was not simply a philosophical point of order affecting only France. The conduct of the war depended in part upon French interpretations of the nation. Cloots argued that France had a duty to liberate and annex neighbouring territories in order to give them enlightened and free government, forming a ‘universal republic’ with France at its centre and all mankind as its citizens.²⁴ Maximilien Robespierre, although a proponent of universal natural rights, disagreed with Cloots for the purely pragmatic reason that liberty cannot be enforced at the point of a bayonet.²⁵ Others

²⁰ Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, pp.172-73; Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators, Revolution in the Netherlands 1780-1813* (2nd edn, London, 2005), pp.6-7.

²¹ *Feuille Villageoise*, no. 49, 6 September 1792.

²² Florence Gauthier, ‘Universal Rights and National Interest in the French Revolution’, in Otto Dann & John Dinwiddy (eds.), *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1988), pp. 34-35.

²³ Michel Vovelle, ‘Entre Cosmopolitisme et Xénophobie: Patrie, Nation, République Universelle dans les Idéologues de la Révolution Française’, in Michael O’Dea & Kevin Whelan (eds.), *Nations and Nationalisms: France, Britain, Ireland and the Eighteenth-Century Context* (Oxford, 1995), p.19.

²⁴ Gauthier, ‘Universal Rights and National Interest’, p.30; Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, p.7.

²⁵ Keitner, *The Paradoxes of Nationalism*, p.113.

believed that France should extend a fraternal armed hand to neighbouring peoples, but should allow them to determine their own fate rather than absorbing them into a universal French nation. This problem was to beset the expansionist liberal nation. The war polarised opinion between those who believed that it was the duty of French armies to liberate their enslaved fellow men, and those who believed it was the right of French armies to dispose of conquered territories as they saw fit. It was a debate that reached no satisfactory conclusion by the time of Napoleon's coup in 1799, and was a debate that France's new ruler seemed disinclined to engage in as it encroached on his own ability to dispose of peoples and territories as expediency demanded. As emperor, Napoleon followed Cloots's belief in 'one universal standard' – a standard that was set by France.²⁶ However, this is probably more of an indictment of the barely-concealed aggressive expansionism inherent in Cloots's arguments than an indication that Napoleon secretly harboured a belief in the universal sovereignty of mankind.

Although French conceptions of national sovereignty proved novel and contested, notions of national identity continued to follow many forms familiar to other self-identified nations. This changed little with the Revolution. Many of the features that had been used to encourage national sentiment in the *ancien régime* – the French language, a sense of common history and common destiny, a supposed national culture – were appropriated by the revolutionaries and, with suitable adjustments, used to promote the republican nation. Other aspects of identity such as religion and monarchy fell away as kingdom became republic, only to achieve partial rehabilitation as republic became empire and empire steadily reacquired the trappings of monarchy.

French language and culture both provided foundations for ideas of French national identity. French had become the legal language of France in the 1500s, while the *Académie Française*, founded in 1634, hints that the standardisation of language was already underway by the eighteenth century. France continued to enjoy wide linguistic and cultural diversity, especially on the peripheries, and in several regions the use of the French language remained limited to the educated elite into the nineteenth century.²⁷ The unitary identity of the nation during the Revolution gave the impression of a ubiquitous national language, but this was more aspiration than reality. A prefectural survey of France during the empire concluded that linguistically and

²⁶ Robert Holtman, *The Napoleonic Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1967), p.182.

²⁷ McPhee, *A Social History of France*, p.8.

culturally 'France scarcely existed'.²⁸ Instead of uniformity it emphasised 'geographical micro-climates', localism, and regional dialects. Yet the surprise that administrators evidently felt at their findings indicates that they had expected to find a much more unitary national identity. Their discomfort at the results of the survey also led to a determination 'to impose a uniform culture on a population they perceived as backward'.²⁹

Regional diversity is not necessarily inimical to national sentiment and does not need to be denied in order to claim the presence of a national identity. Fernand Braudel happily devoted part one of the first volume of *The Identity of France* to a celebration of 'the diversity of France' without believing that this exposed his native country to a conceptual existential crisis.³⁰ Alongside regional or local identities there was a sense that it meant something to be French. There was certainly a belief that there was something that could be labelled 'French culture' before the Revolution. Culture inspired a sense of unity but also a sense of pride. Jean-Jacques Rousseau recounted in his *Confessions* that Parisian society flew into uproar at a perceived slur on France in his 1753 *Letter on French Music*, demonstrating an evident link between national cultural output and national honour.³¹ The obvious pride in French cultural achievement was intensified by the fact that most of the educated elites of Europe saw French culture as the benchmark, while by the eighteenth century French was the lingua franca of the cosmopolitan European elite.³²

Religion also played a prominent role in eighteenth-century French identity, though it largely diminished after the Revolution. Bell saw the void caused by the retreat of religious certainties as the key factor in the rise of national sentiment, but the persisting idea of Roman Catholicism as a unifying faith to all Frenchmen also helped to forge a sense of community.³³ Catholicism held a similar predominance in France to Anglicanism in Britain or Calvinism in the Netherlands. Protestants were legally excluded from public positions until 1787, although tolerance became more prevalent from the mid-century and Protestants such as the Swiss financier Jacques Necker were eventually able to rise to the very top posts in the king's

²⁸ Michael Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon, 1799-1815* (London, 1996), pp.59-60.

²⁹ Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon*, p.60.

³⁰ Fernand Braudel (trans. Siân Reynolds), *The Identity of France* (2 vols, London, 1989-91), vol. 1, pt 1.

³¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau (trans. J. M. Cohen), *The Confessions* (London, 1953), p.358.

³² *Feuille Villageoise*, no. 47; *Moniteur*, no.268, 17 June 1805.

³³ Bell, *Cult of the Nation in France*, p.18.

government.³⁴ Catholicism was not a national religion in the sense that it did not belong to France alone, but the Gallican Church established by the Concordat of 1516 enjoyed a reasonable degree of autonomy from Rome. While the universal character of Catholicism could work to the detriment of national feelings, it could also increase perceptions of national strength from being part of an international Catholic community.

The nation of 1789 largely removed the religious bases for citizenship, and an attempt to declare Catholicism the national religion in 1790 was headed off by the National Assembly.³⁵ Religious animosity between Protestants and Catholics continued – the 1790 ‘bagarre’ of Nîmes is a stark example of continued tension³⁶ – but no longer did the nation exclude one denomination or the other. Catholicism remained part of personal identity for much of the population without managing to impose itself on the post-1789 nation. Catholicism in fact became increasingly seen as antithetical to nationalism, as a pronounced schism developed between revolutionaries and religious leaders concerning secular state control over the French Catholic Church. By 1793-94 the rhetoric of a unitary national will placed the reluctantly revolutionary Catholic Church in opposition to the Convention and therefore to the nation. Anti-Catholicism evidently did not take popular root as a counter-identity, as shown by the patchy and short-term success of attempts at de-Christianization and awkward efforts to create a cult of the Supreme Being, while Napoleon’s Concordat was widely welcomed. Yet religion was never to regain primacy as an aspect of identity for the French nation. From the Revolution onwards, self-consciously nationalist expressions of French identity often continued to ignore or even show hostility to religion.

Like most national identities, that of France was supplied with myths and tales of a heroic past. Heroes and great kings were extolled in literature, sculpture, painting and theatre to inspire the next generation of Frenchmen.³⁷ Such images frequently portrayed the fighting traditions and heroic sacrifices of historical French soldiers, but scholars, statesmen and clerics were also subjects of admiring studies.³⁸ While the Revolution saw many such myths and tales of past glories discarded, it also created a new set of heroes, martyrs and histories of national struggle

³⁴ M. Vovelle (trans. S.Burke), *The Fall of the French Monarchy 1787-1792* (Cambridge, 1984), pp.18-19.

³⁵ Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, pp.137-38.

³⁶ Gwynne Lewis, *The Second Vendée, the Continuity of Counter-revolution in the Department of the Gard, 1789-1815* (Oxford, 1978), ch. 1.

³⁷ Bell, *The Cult of the Nation*, p.107.

³⁸ Bell, *The Cult of the Nation*, pp.111-112.

and survival, with the Panthéon in Paris becoming the cathedral of the cult of civic heroes. Borrowing heavily from antiquity, the revolutionaries also sought to root French republicanism in a glorious past before kings had corrupted the nation.³⁹ A belief in the virtue of republicanism became a common theme, playing on previous conceptions of the opposition between monarchy and nation. The revolutionaries went to great lengths to show republicanism as not only the best of all possible governments, but as the most French of all possible governments. Yet each successive constitution redefined the republic and so necessarily redefined what it meant to be republican, leading to a degree of incoherence and instability in the term. This lack of consensus allowed Napoleon to declare his empire in 1804 while claiming not to be attacking either the rights of the nation or, bizarrely, to be undermining the principles of the republic.⁴⁰ Republican nationalism did not immediately disappear and Napoleon took care to adopt the trappings of monarchy only gradually so as not to offend his more strident republican critics, but in general French identity adapted to imperialism as easily as it had to republicanism.

The 'other' was also inevitably prominent in French national identity. The use of the other as a tool for national discourse can be exaggerated, but many of the ideas of the superiority of French national identity could only exist if contextualised against a lesser other. The other was usually foreign, although during the Revolution internal enemies also provided others against which the nation could rally. In general the portrayal of others was highly unfavourable; cultural or military inferiority was often underlined, as was supposed barbarism, enslavement, incivility or perfidiousness. Allegory was commonly used to show the faults of the foreign, while implicitly reflecting the righteousness of the French nation. Britain was an especial target of French ire. During the Revolution Britain was derided time and again as the 'new Carthage', the clear implication being that France was the new Rome and that she would eventually emerge victorious, bringing universal peace through her imperium.⁴¹

The Dutch featured as only a relatively minor other in French identity. Much of the anti-Dutch rhetoric was aimed at their devotion to the perfidious British and their dominance of seaborne commerce. As a rival the Netherlands never threatened France to the extent that Austria or

³⁹ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1984); Bell, *The Cult of the Nation*, p.152.

⁴⁰ I. Woloch, *Napoleon and his Collaborators, the Making of a Dictatorship* (New York, 2002), pp.100-04.

⁴¹ Archives Nationales, Paris (AN), AF IV 1598; H. Morse Stephens (ed.), *The Principal Speeches of the Statesmen and Orators of the French Revolution, 1789-1795* (2 vols, Oxford, 1892); Piers Mackesy, *Statesmen at War, the Strategy of Overthrow 1798-99* (New York, 1974), p.36.

Britain were able to, and so never excited the same level of animosity in the public imagination. The Dutch occasionally rose to prominence in French public debate, most notably as France failed to intervene to save the Patriots in 1787, as war approached in 1792-93, and as the country was conquered in 1795. More consistently, latent French opinion saw stereotyped portrayals of the Dutch repeated across the period. As works such as those by Roelof Murriss and Jean-Marie Goulemot show, many French representations of the Netherlands had been popular throughout the eighteenth century.⁴² Representations were not always consistent, often reflecting the individual motives and understandings of the author. Yet there were some representations and stereotypes that were repeated time and again, showing a high degree of coherence in how the French viewed their northern neighbours. The rest of this chapter will work towards constructing an impression of French opinion towards the Netherlands at the end of the long eighteenth century.

The Netherlands was generally well known in France. Respectable reading audiences were assumed to be familiar with the country's past, both recent and distant.⁴³ Although foreign travel was not as popular amongst the French elites as it was amongst well off Britons, the Netherlands was still a frequent destination for French travellers who visited for 'leurs affaires personnelles, la curiosité, ou d'autres raisons', and travel accounts were by no means uncommon.⁴⁴ Despite the ubiquitous problems of plagiarism, foreign inspiration and simple untruth that beset travel literature – problems acknowledged by some contemporaries⁴⁵ – a generally stereotyped view of the Dutch emerged through both travel writing and from the wider world of print which included works of fiction, science, geography and politics, as well as in plays, poems, caricature and art.

The Dutchman of French imagination was stereotyped across a range of visual, textual and performance media. French stereotypes of the Dutch were not always complimentary – Voltaire famously but possibly apocryphally dismissed the Netherlands as a land of 'canaux,

⁴² Roelof Murriss, *La Hollande et les Hollandais au XVII^e et au XVIII^e Siècles Vus par les Français* (Paris, 1925); Jean-Marie Goulemot, 'Images de la Hollande dans le XVIII^eme Siècle Français', in Annie Jourdan & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Remous Révolutionnaires: République Batave, Armée Française* (Amsterdam, 1996), 5-13.

⁴³ J. de la Roche, *Voyage d'un Amateur des Arts en Flandre, dans les Pays-Bas, en Hollande, en France, en Savoye, en Italie, en Suisse, Fait dans les Années 1775-76-77-78* (4 vols, Amsterdam, 1783), vol. 1, p.36.

⁴⁴ Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, La Courneuve, Paris (AMAE), Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 574, instructions for Saint Priest, September 1787.

⁴⁵ de La Roche, *Voyage d'un Amateur des Arts*, vol. 1, p.31; Murriss, *La Hollande et les Hollandais*, p.9.

canards, canaille' – but nor were they universally disparaging. In terms of Dutch culture, French commentators spoke with respect of the artistic masters, great thinkers and writers of the seventeenth century, but appeared wholly unimpressed by recent Dutch achievements in the arts, literature and theatre.⁴⁶ There was also a great deal of respect in France for the historical achievements of the Dutch in throwing off the Spanish yoke and in fighting a series of successful seventeenth-century wars against England and France.⁴⁷ The vaunted liberties of the Netherlands were widely known in France, especially the freedom of the press which saw many French manuscripts being written or published in the Netherlands to be clandestinely exported into France.⁴⁸ Even when France went to war with the Netherlands from 1793, the Dutch of the seventeenth century were often held up in literature, newspapers, political journals and plays as examples of good republican and libertarian virtue.⁴⁹

A favourable narrative of the republican history of the Dutch nation was generally accepted in French opinion. There was also a degree of awareness of the Batavian myth of origin that had been popular in the Netherlands since the time of Grotius.⁵⁰ During the eighteenth century the term 'Batave' was occasionally used to refer to the Dutch, evoking similar ideas of ancient liberty in France as it did in the Netherlands. In Voltaire's *Princesse de Babylone*, for example, the protagonist Amazan finds liberty when arriving in the land of 'Batavie'.⁵¹ Mirabeau addressed his lament at the demise of the Patriots in 1787 to the Batavians, lauding their

⁴⁶ de La Roche, *Voyage d'un Amateur des Arts*, vol. 1, passim; P. N. Anot & F. Malfillatre, *Les Deux Voyageurs* (2 vols, Rheims, 1802), vol. 1, p.141.

⁴⁷ Victor Delpuech de Comeiras, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages faits en Europe* (12 vols, Paris, 1803-04), vol. 8, pp.128-29; Ambroise-Marie Arnould, *De la Balance du Commerce et des Relations Commerciales Extérieures de la France dans Toutes les Parties du Monde* (Paris, 1791), p.184; Victor-Donatien de Musset, *Souvenirs Historiques, ou Coup d'Œil sur les Monarchies de l'Europe et sur les Causes de Leur Grandeur ou de Leur Décadence* (Paris, 1810), pp.41-42.

⁴⁸ Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *Les Charlatans Démasqués, ou Pluton Vengeur de la Société de Médecine, Comédie Ironique en 3 Actes, en Prose* (Paris, 1762), p.viii.

⁴⁹ *Feuille Villageoise*, no. 22, 28 February 93; *Père Duchesne* nos. 36 & 226; Comeiras, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages*, vol. 8, pp.106-07; Bulard, *Brutus, ou Tableau Historique des Républiques tant Anciennes que Modernes, où l'on Voit leur Origine et leur Établissement, ainsi que les Causes de leur Décadence et de leur Ruine* (Paris, c.1794), pp.111-14.

⁵⁰ Ambroise-Marie Arnould, *Système Maritime et Politique des Européens pendant le XVIIIe Siècle, Fondé sur leurs Traités de Paix, de Commerce et de Navigation* (Paris, 1797), p.112; Comeiras, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages*, vol. 8, pp.217-19; J. B. Rougier-Labergerie, *Essai Politique et Philosophique sur le Commerce et la Paix* (Paris, 1797), pp.407, 410-11; L'Abbé Féraud, *Dictionnaire Critique de la Langue Française* (3 vols, Marseille, 1787), vol. 1, p.253.

⁵¹ Murrin, *La Hollande et les Hollandais*, p.77.

'antique vaillance', honour and liberty.⁵² From the early days of the French Revolution the name was increasingly applied to Dutch revolutionaries who had thrown their lot in with France in the hope of overthrowing the Orangist state.⁵³ It eventually became the name behind which the anti-Stadholder party would rally, and the name that they would give to their new French-backed Republic.

The glories of the Dutch past could be used to comparatively critique the contemporary Dutch state, and historical constitutional struggles between the Stadholders and Regents could be used as unsubtle allegory to criticise William V's supposed pretensions to greater power.⁵⁴ The idea that the Dutch were no longer what they had once been was ubiquitous in French writings. Sometimes the notion of decadence was implicit, but some writers explicitly accused the late eighteenth-century Dutch of living off former glories.⁵⁵ The administration of the United Provinces in general was not particularly well thought of, being seen as inefficient and fragmented, but particular criticism was reserved for the Orangist regime. In 1785, the Dutch were still widely thought to be republicans, lightly disrespectful towards royalty, and to have mildly democratic tendencies.⁵⁶ Some, however, believed that they had lost the republican public spiritedness that had made their ancestors great.⁵⁷ As French ideas of republicanism took a radical turn during the Revolution, the Dutch were increasingly portrayed as having strayed from their own republican traditions and as having quasi-royalist sympathies.⁵⁸

The French generally mistrusted the Stadholder and, especially from the early Revolution, portrayed him as a tyrant bent on oppression.⁵⁹ The restoration of the House of Orange in

⁵² Honoré-Gabriel de Riquetti de Mirabeau, *Aux Bataves sur le Stathoudérat* (Brussels, 1830), p.2.

⁵³ Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Condorcet, *Adresse aux Bataves* (Paris, 1790); Pierre David, *Histoire Chronologique des Operations de l'Armée du Nord et Celle de Sambre et Meuse* (Paris, 1795), p.145; Bulard, *Brutus, ou Tableau Historique des Républiques*, p.110.

⁵⁴ Nicolas Fallet, *Barneveldt, ou le Stathoudérat Aboli, Tragédie en 3 Actes* (Paris, 1795).

⁵⁵ Arnould, *Système Maritime et Politique*, p.119.

⁵⁶ Anot & Malfillatre, *Les Deux Voyageurs*, vol. 1, p.135; Comeiras, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages*, vol. 8, pp.110-11.

⁵⁷ Charles Walton, *Policing Public Opinion in the French Revolution* (Oxford, 2009), pp.23-24.

⁵⁸ David, *Histoire Chronologique*, pp.162-63; Rougier-Laberge, *Essai Politique*, pp.205-206.

⁵⁹ *Feuille Villageoise*, no. 15, 3 January 1793; *Père Duchesne* nos. 127, 172, 174 & 191; Bulard, *Brutus, ou Tableau Historique des Républiques* pp.110-17; David, *Histoire Chronologique*, p.144; Comeiras, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages*, vol. 8, pp.184-85; J. Gorani, *Lettre au Roi d'Angleterre sur les Affaires de France* (Paris, 1793), p.32.

1747 was often pinpointed in French histories of the Netherlands as the moment that the Dutch Republic turned from liberty to tyranny. The Stadholder was often compared to a king, which during the Revolution reinforced suspicions of tyranny.⁶⁰ Yet no lesser a republican than Jean-Paul Marat defended the Stadholder in print, echoing Orangist discourse in claiming that the Stadholder was the protector of the people from the ravages of the oligarchs, who he portrayed as the real enemies of liberty.⁶¹ Despite Marat's standing, his opinions remained a minority view. Most French journals continued to print the time-honoured view that the Stadholder was a tyrant, not necessarily from any evidence or even conviction that this was correct, but because they routinely shamelessly plagiarised their information from other sources. In responding to criticism that his interpretation of the Patriot struggles of the 1780s was incorrect, Elysée Loustalot, editor of *Révolutions de Paris*, admitted that he knew of the Dutch unrest only from other French gazettes, and that he had simply copied their impressions.⁶² The fact that he freely acknowledged that his information could be wrong did not prevent him from printing it and reinforcing the already-established stereotype.

A major source of French discontent with the Stadholderate was the long-established idea that the House of Orange held a deep affection for Prussia and more especially for Britain. Some believed that the influence of William V's British mother and Prussian wife allowed London and Berlin to rule the Netherlands by proxy.⁶³ The restoration of the Stadholder to his full privileges by Prussian troops and British politicking in 1787 simply appeared to confirm this. The *Feuille de Correspondance* told its readers in 1791 that the Netherlands would be dragged into conflict at the whim of the English ministry, while the *Feuille Villageoise* went further and denounced the Dutch in January 1793 as slaves of the British-ruled Stadholder.⁶⁴ The flight of the Stadholder to Britain in 1795 did nothing to change the French view that he was a puppet of London.⁶⁵ In 1814, when the House of Orange returned to the Netherlands as sovereign kings, it was still thought that Britain and Prussia were the powers behind the throne. French

⁶⁰ Maximilien Robespierre, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 5, ed. Gustave Laurent (Gap, 1961), p.272.

⁶¹ *Ami du Peuple*, nos. 123-25, 4-6 June 1790; *Journal de la République Française*, 3 March 1793.

⁶² H. T. Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken der Algemeene Geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840* (10 vols, 'S-Gravenhage, 1905-22), vol. 1, p.170, Loustalot to Etta Palm D'Aelders, 3 June 1790.

⁶³ Rougier-Labergerie, *Essai Politique*, p.406 ; Maximilien Robespierre, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 10, ed. Marc Bouloiseau & Albert Soboul (Paris, 1967), p.176.

⁶⁴ *Feuille Villageoise*, no.15, 3 January 1793; *Feuille de Correspondance*, no.16.

⁶⁵ Rougier-Labergerie, *Essai Politique*, p.410; Arnould, *Système Maritime et Politique*.

diplomat Louis Bignon claimed that France could form no relationship with the new kingdom without the agreement of the other powers.⁶⁶

The Dutch people were also widely considered to be predisposed to prefer Britain to France. One writer commented that from their earliest years Dutch children were taught of Louis XIV's attempts to invade the country, and put on guard against future French aggression.⁶⁷ The supposed 'Anglomanie' of the merchant classes served to arouse popular and political French ire, and the unenthusiastic Dutch response to the overthrow of Louis XVI was blamed in some circles on an anti-French mindset.⁶⁸ French public opinion perceived the lowest classes of the Dutch population, often referred to as the 'canaille' or 'petit peuple', as particularly anti-French because of their adherence to the House of Orange, and their supposed use by the Stadholder to repress 'honnêtes gens' and pro-French Patriots.⁶⁹

The short period of Franco-Dutch alliance in 1785-87 gave the impression that it was the Orangist regime rather than the Dutch people that held a pro-British stance. The 'canaille' may have supported the Orangist position but the 'thinking part' of the nation were widely thought to be against the Stadholder and the British alliance, and thus pro-French.⁷⁰ Support for the Stadholder was ascribed to the arrogance of petty aristocrats and the ignorance of the 'petit peuple'. The French abandonment of the Patriots in 1787 caused a degree of anguish in public opinion. Active opinion was briefly stirred as those in France who took an interest in international events expected French military intervention, and the subsequent failure of Versailles to oppose the Prussian invasion of the Netherlands was largely ill received in France. François Barthélemy lamented that 'Jamais une grande nation n'éprouva une plus humiliante condition. Ce cruel événement révolta la France entière'.⁷¹ The episode certainly very publicly drilled home the message that France was in crisis and underlined the necessity for domestic

⁶⁶ Louis-Pierre-Édouard Bignon, *Exposé Comparatif de l'Etat Financier, Militaire, Politique et Morale de la France et des Principal Puissances de l'Europe* (Paris, 1814), p.289.

⁶⁷ Comeiras, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages*, vol. 8, p.191.

⁶⁸ *Feuille Villageoise*, no. 50, 13 September 1792 ; AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 561, Bérenger to Vergennes, 11 January 1785.

⁶⁹ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 573, 'Notes Sur l'Etat des Troubles en Hollande', 22 June 1787.

⁷⁰ *Feuille de Correspondance*, no. 28; Francisco de Miranda, *Original Correspondence Between Generals Dumourier, Miranda, Pache and Beurnonville, Ministers of War since January 1793* (London, 1794), pp. 41-43, 95, 99; AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 575, Caillard to Montmorin, 7 October 1787.

⁷¹ François Barthélemy, *Mémoires de Barthélemy 1768-1819* (Paris, 1914), p.61.

financial reform.⁷² However, after the outbreak of the Revolution the failures of 1787 were laid at the door of the *ancien régime* and its general ambivalence to the cause of liberty.⁷³ In 1793 the National Convention declared 'La France esclave vous laissa opprimer par des Prussiens [...]; la France libre vient vous délivrer de vos oppresseurs'.⁷⁴

After 1789, criticism of the Netherlands tended to focus on the government rather than the people, though some despised the country as a whole. In a debate at the Jacobin Club over whether Louis XVI could stand trial in July 1791, one member declared that France had nothing to fear from the Netherlands;

Est-ce que la Hollande qu'on redoute? Une femme impérieuse et déhontée, un prince imbécile et méprisé, des Etats Généraux esclaves, une aristocratie magistrale odieuse, deux factions aristocratiques prêtes à se déchirer, une canaille séditeuse aux ordres du Prince, point d'argent, point de crédit, point de vaisseaux, point de troupes, deux compagnies banqueroutières et une banque ébranlée: voilà le gouvernement hollandais et ses moyens.⁷⁵

Such views however remained a minority in public opinion, and when the French armies advanced towards the Netherlands in February 1793 it was widely assumed that they would be welcomed by a sizable Francophile presence within the country.⁷⁶ The *Décade Philosophique, Littéraire et Politique* declared in 1794 that the Dutch now saw the British as 'leurs ennemis naturels et d'insatiables rivaux de leur commerce'.⁷⁷ Yet the failure of the Dutch to throw off the Anglo-Stadholderian yoke stood in stark contrast to France's own revolutionary pedigree, leading to repeated denunciations of the Dutch nation as nothing more than slaves of tyrants.⁷⁸

⁷² Jean Egret, *The French Pre-revolution 1787-88* (Chicago, 1977), pp.41-42.

⁷³ Anon., *Olimpiade Politique et Militaire ou Mémoires et Observations sur les Affaires de la République de Hollande en Particulier et sur celles de l'Europe en Général Pendant les Quatres Années 1784, 1785, 1786 et 1787* (Paris, 1788); Stephens, *The Principal Speeches of the Statesmen and Orators of the French Revolution*, vol. 1; Rougier-Labergerie, *Essai Politique*, pp.410-11.

⁷⁴ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 585, 'Adresse de la Convention Nationale de France aux Bataves', 2 March 1793.

⁷⁵ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 1, pp.115-24. Debate of 10 July 1791.

⁷⁶ Miranda, *Original Correspondence*, pp.5 & 31; Père Duchesne, no.174 and no.191.

⁷⁷ *Décade Philosophique, Littéraire et Politique*, no. 22, 10 frimaire an III.

⁷⁸ *Feuille Villageoise*, no. 15, 3 January 1793; Ernest Picard (ed.), *Au Service de la Nation, Lettres des Volontaires (1792-1798)* (Paris, 1914), pp.159-61.

The solidarity felt between the French revolutionaries and their Dutch Patriot counterparts allowed some to claim that the Netherlands was in need of fraternal liberation, but there are indications that a fair slice of French public opinion thought otherwise. Robespierre proclaimed that ‘les Hollandais ne sont qu’un instrument passif entre les mains des tyrans conjurés’, and asked why one should spare the valet when punishing the master.⁷⁹ In July 1794, a French volunteer with the *Armée du Nord*, Alexandre Brault, anticipated the fall of the Netherlands with relish, writing to his parents that French troops would soon force a passage of the Rhine at bayonet point, and compel the conquered Dutch territories give up food, goods and money to France.⁸⁰ The popular revolutionary newspapers *Feuille Villageoise* and *Père Duchesne* also both anticipated that the conquest of the Netherlands would furnish great riches. The latter boldly exhorted France’s armies to take ‘fer et feu’ into the Netherlands, claiming that France was invading ‘pour faire payer les frais de la guerre à ces accapareurs d’Amsterdam, et leur faire échanger tous nos assignats contre leurs tonnes d’or’.⁸¹ Such language hardly portrays the Dutch as allies to be liberated.

When the Netherlands did finally fall to French arms in early 1795 it was widely reported as a conquest rather than a liberation, with the Dutch at the mercy of France rather than being brothers in revolution.⁸² Theatres and public festivals saw performances of hastily composed songs commemorating the event and praising it as a conquest.⁸³ One author was even moved to declare that the Netherlands no longer existed, though for him it was a cause for regret and he hoped that the country could soon be re-established as an ally useful to France.⁸⁴ From 1795 the Netherlands was widely considered as ‘chained to the destiny of France’.⁸⁵ The respect accorded to the Dutch nation tended to be closely linked to the efforts of the Dutch

⁷⁹ Robespierre, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 10, p.156.

⁸⁰ Picard (ed.), *Au Service de la Nation*, pp.164-65, Brault to his family, 30 July 1794.

⁸¹ *Père Duchesne*, no. 274, no. 337, and no. 344; *Feuille Villageoise*, no. 23, 7 March 1793.

⁸² Anon., *Tactique des Cannibales, ou des Jacobins, Comédie en un Acte et en Prose: Précédée et Suivie de Quelques Morceaux ayant Trait à la Révolution* (2nd edn., Paris, 1795), p.18; Gassicourt, *Discours Prononcé par le Citoyen Cadet-Gassicourt dans l’Assemblée Générale de la Section du Mont Blanc, le 20 Pluviôse l’an 3 de la République Française, Une et Indivisible* (Paris, 1795); David, *Histoire Chronologique*.

⁸³ Constant Pierre, *Les Hymnes et Chansons de la Révolution* (Paris, 1904), songs 1278, 1659-64, 1728, 1728*, 1730 ; Michel de Cubières-Palmézeaux, *Le Calendrier Républicain, Poème* (Paris, 1795), pp.21-25 ; *Journal des Théâtres*, no. 6, 19 ventôse An III.

⁸⁴ Rougier-Labergerie, *Essai Politique*, pp.197 & 412.

⁸⁵ Jean Joseph Derché, *Discours de J. J. Derché des Vosges, sur la Rive Gauche du Rhin, Limite de la République Française* (Paris, 1795), p.6.

state in supporting France in the war. The decidedly secondary role that the Dutch state seemed content to take led to a view in France that the Dutch nation had lost the fiery independent spirit that had once made it great.

French public opinion clearly expected that the Netherlands had the capacity to second France with significant military, and especially naval, forces. French opinion believed that the Netherlands was awash with good sailors, a profession for which the dogged Dutch character was thought to be particularly suited.⁸⁶ This trait could be invoked as a slight as much as a compliment; a common casual insult was that the Dutch were a nation of 'misérables pêcheurs', in reference to the once-sizable Dutch fishing industry.⁸⁷ There is no doubt that in the late eighteenth century the Netherlands was seen as one of the major maritime powers of Europe, in terms of both merchant marine and fighting forces. Most French writers agreed that the navy was powerful in size and expertise.⁸⁸ The capture of the ice-locked Dutch fleet by the invading French in 1795 did not diminish French faith in Dutch naval strength, although the surrender without a shot being fired of a squadron at the Cape of Good Hope in 1796 and of the Texel fleet in 1799 led to accusations of treachery, while the virtual destruction of another at the hard-fought encounter of Camperdown in 1797 led to questions asked about the Dutch navy's fighting efficiency.⁸⁹ The renewed efforts of the constitutional government after 1798 revived some French hopes in the ability of the Dutch to contribute to the war effort.⁹⁰ Early in the Napoleonic Wars there was still a belief in France that the Netherlands could be a major naval power. In January 1804 the *Journal des Débats* reported that 'la marine hollandaise est impatiente de se signaler contre l'ennemi commun, et de retracer aux yeux de l'Europe ces temps glorieux [de] les Ruyter et les Tromp'.⁹¹ However, the failure of the Dutch alliance to challenge British naval superiority and the atrophy of both ships and crews during the long

⁸⁶ Miranda, *Original Correspondence*, pp.13-14; Comeiras, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages*, vol. 8, pp.85, 103, 128.

⁸⁷ Père Duchesne, no. 283; Arnould, *De la Balance du Commerce* p.184. Anot & Malfillatre, *Les Deux Voyageurs*, vol. 1, p.166 & Comeiras, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages*, vol. 8, p.85, describe in more neutral terms the importance of fishing to the Netherlands.

⁸⁸ Anot & Malfillatre, *Les Deux Voyageurs*, Vol. 1, p.166; Arnould, *Système Maritime et Politique*, p.128.

⁸⁹ *Décade Philosophique, Littéraire et Politique*, 30 brumaire an V, 20 brumaire an VI, 30 fructidor an VII; Xavier Audouin, *Du Commerce Maritime, de son Influence sur la Richesse et la Force des États, Démontrée par l'Histoire des Nations Anciennes et Modernes* (2 vols, Paris, 1800), vol. 1, p.256

⁹⁰ Raymond Kubben, *Regeneration and Hegemony: Franco-Batavian Relations in the Revolutionary Era* (Leiden, 2011), p.261.

⁹¹ *Journal des Débats*, 6 January 1804.

years of blockade meant that by the end of the period French commentators were more likely to see Dutch naval power as a thing of the past.⁹²

In opposition to their sailing proficiency, the Dutch were generally portrayed by the French as bad soldiers, a consistent theme whether the Netherlands was in enmity or alliance with France.⁹³ In part this was built on the widely-held idea – not entirely without justice – that the Dutch army was composed of mercenaries and that the Dutch themselves did not much wish to be soldiers.⁹⁴ Another part was based on experience; the uninspiring collapse of the Patriots in 1787, the Stadholder's army in 1794-95, and the Batavian forces in 1799 left French commentators with little positive to say about the Dutch army. Letters home from soldiers with the conquering armies of 1794-95 tended to portray the Dutch as inferior soldiers to the hordes of French republican citizens.⁹⁵ When it suited French propaganda the Dutch could be portrayed as sturdy and steady allies – reports of their opposition to the British incursions of 1799 and 1809 being the most notable examples – though the fact that they were always portrayed as auxiliaries to the French forces contained an implicit degree of criticism of the Dutch army's inability to operate independently.⁹⁶

Dutch national character also came into French stereotypes of her neighbour. At its crudest, the stereotype of the Dutch showed them as generally civilised, industrious but dull people for whom pleasure was largely alien.⁹⁷ The Dutch were thought to be reserved, phlegmatic, slow and mistrustful, but generally polite and hospitable, provided one did not expect the same standards as in France.⁹⁸ French travellers' general impressions were that Dutch men tended to be of robust physique and that while Dutch women could be of fine appearance, they lacked

⁹² *Journal de l'Empire*, 23 July 1805; Bignon, *Exposé Comparatif*, p.116.

⁹³ Gorani, *Lettre au Roi d'Angleterre*, p.41; David, *Histoire Chronologique*, pp.145, 162 ; Jean Tulard (ed.), *Cambacérès, Lettres Inédites à Napoléon 1802-1814* (2 vols, Paris, 1973), vol.1, p.504 ; Miranda, *Original Correspondence*, p.61, pp.70-86; Anot & Malfillatre, *Les Deux Voyageurs*, vol. 1, p.164.

⁹⁴ David, *Histoire Chronologique*, p.145.

⁹⁵ Picard (ed.), *Au Service de la Nation*, pp.164 & 172, Alexandre Brault to his family, 30 July 1794 & 15 frimaire an III (5 December 1794).

⁹⁶ *Journal de l'Empire*, August 1809.

⁹⁷ David, *Histoire Chronologique*, p.174; de La Roche, *Voyage d'un Amateur des Arts*, vol. 1, p.52; Comeiras, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages*, vol. 8, p.71.

⁹⁸ Anot & Malfillatre, *Les Deux Voyageurs*, vol. 1, pp.122 & 149; Comeiras, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages*, vol. 8, pp.72 & 103 ; Murriss, *La Hollande et les Hollandais*, pp.72-76.

the vivacity and delicacy of their French counterparts.⁹⁹ This impression spread to popular culture. In Jean-Henri-Ferdinand Delamartelière's comedy *Pierre et Paul*, for example, the Dutch sea captain Paul is characterised as irascible and belligerent while several other male characters find his wife Gertrude desirable if somewhat rustic.¹⁰⁰ The Dutch character imagined in French public discourse also contained a streak of selfishness, greed and cruelty. French condemnation of the vicious cruelty and volatility of the Dutch mob was echoed by the disgust expressed at the system of *zielverkopers*, literally soul sellers, which was used to recruit men for the eastern outposts of the VOC by means of trickery and violence.¹⁰¹ This system was supposedly symptomatic of the careless cruelty of the Dutch character. Yet in spite of the negativity of many representations of the Dutch, there was an underlying respect for the developed civilisation of the country. The Netherlands was seen as part of civilised Europe, especially when compared to territories in Italy, Spain or Eastern Europe that French administrators found themselves in during the early 1800s. Aside from occasional vitriolic denunciations of the Dutch 'canaille', portrayals of barbarism, excessive superstition and backwardness were largely absent from French representations of the Dutch.

Many of the stereotyped characteristics of the Dutch were ascribed to the physical geography of the country they inhabited. The Netherlands was dismissively described as 'plus propre à nourrir des grenouilles que des hommes', made bearable only through the hard work of its people.¹⁰² The theory that climate should affect national characters had been popularised in France in the mid-eighteenth century by Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des Lois*, and some French writers adopted this to explain what they saw as Dutch character.¹⁰³ Pierre David, for example, ascribed what he saw as the miserable and mercantile Dutch national character to the climate above all other causes.¹⁰⁴ The widely observed habit of Dutch householders insisting upon cleanliness and spending a great deal of time washing houses and possessions was put down

⁹⁹ Anot & Malfillatre, *Les Deux Voyageurs*, vol. 1, p.149; Comeiras, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages*, vol. 8, p.112.

¹⁰⁰ Jean-Henri-Ferdinand Delamartelière, *Pierre et Paul, ou, une Journée de Pierre-le-Grand, Comédie en Trois Actes* (Paris, 1814), passim.

¹⁰¹ *Feuille de Correspondance* no. 28; Anot & Malfillatre, *Les Deux Voyageurs*, vol. 1, p.123; *Feuille Villageoise*, No. 29, 12 April 92.

¹⁰² David, *Histoire Chronologique*, p.156.

¹⁰³ John G. Hayman, 'Notions on National Characters in the Eighteenth Century', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1971), pp.12-13.

¹⁰⁴ David, *Histoire Chronologique*, p.175.

to the dampness of the country and to the nature of the people, whose concern was to preserve their material possessions rather than a concern for aesthetics.¹⁰⁵

Material greed was a prominent theme in French stereotypes of the Dutch.¹⁰⁶ The Dutch were considered to have an over-fondness for money and wealth, and to be dull and uncreative except where money was concerned. The charity shown in Dutch cities sometimes drew favourable comment from French visitors, though Voltaire briefly satirised Dutch views on the 'deserving poor' in his 1759 work *Candide*.¹⁰⁷ This work also mocked Dutch attitudes to money by portraying Dutch mariners and magistrates as duplicitous, greedy, and exploitative.¹⁰⁸ This view was certainly still in vogue during the Revolution. Robespierre echoed popular stereotypes when he accused the Dutch of harbouring 'l'aristocratie des richesses, le culte d'or et l'esprit mercantile.'¹⁰⁹ The proverbial greed of the Dutch was usually for money rather than overindulgence in food or drink, though frugality in this regard was often ascribed to miserliness rather than asceticism. Stereotypes of Dutch consumption habits also tended to be mocking. Excessive tobacco smoking and tea drinking were widely noted traits.¹¹⁰ One French play gave a typically exaggerated account of the Dutch fondness for tea; as a punishment a character is exiled to the Netherlands to 'boire trente tasses de thé par jour, avec un petit morceau de sucre candi noir, dans la coin de la joue'.¹¹¹ Yet within this mockery there is also an implicit recognition of the widespread availability of such products as tea and tobacco, an unspoken acknowledgement of the fact that the Netherlands was a hub of international and colonial trade.

It was widely believed in late eighteenth-century France that the Dutch were among the wealthiest people in Europe. French public opinion was fully aware of the Netherlands's

¹⁰⁵ Comeiras, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages*, vol. 8; Anot & Malfillatre, *Les Deux Voyageurs*, vol. 1; de La Roche, *Voyage d'un Amateur des Arts*, vol. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Goulemot, 'Images de la Hollande', p.9.

¹⁰⁷ de La Roche, *Voyage d'un Amateur des Arts*, vol. 1, pp.71 & 75-77; Anot & Malfillatre, *Les Deux Voyageurs*, vol. 1, p.122; Comeiras, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages*, vol. 8, pp.131-32; J. Patrat, *La Vengeance, Comédie en un Acte et en Vers* (Paris, 1798), p.7; Voltaire, *Candide* (London, 1997), pp.7-8.

¹⁰⁸ Voltaire, *Candide*, pp.56-58.

¹⁰⁹ Robespierre, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 5, p.272.

¹¹⁰ David, *Histoire Chronologique*, p.174; Anot & Malfillatre, *Les Deux Voyageurs*, vol. 1, p.121; Comeiras, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages*, vol. 8, p.176.

¹¹¹ La Mettrie, *Les Charlatans Démasqués*, p.169.

reputation as a centre of banking, money lending and exchange, and the wealth of the country had achieved almost mythical status – ‘leurs tonnes d’or’, as Hébert’s *Père Duchesne* had put it.¹¹² Although Dutch commerce was widely acknowledged to have declined in importance since the mid-eighteenth century, it was still seen as flourishing.¹¹³ Dutch trade was greatly admired by almost all who took an interest. In serious works of economics the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Dutch commercial system was lauded as something worthy of emulation.¹¹⁴ It was commented that only the strength of Dutch commerce allowed them to avoid food shortages due to the lack of fertile land by importing a steady supply of grain from abroad.¹¹⁵ Even after the conquest of the Netherlands in 1795 there were French writers who believed the Dutch system of commerce to be of international benefit.¹¹⁶ Trade was thought to be well suited to the Dutch character, though the supposed commercial nature of Dutch character was not always admired.¹¹⁷ One French writer warned against emulating Dutch success too closely, observing that ‘Si les mœurs des Hollandais sont les seuls compatibles avec le grand commerce, Dieu préserve les Français de devenir jamais grands négociants!’¹¹⁸

An aspect of Dutch identity that is rarely touched on in French texts is religion. Dutch religious policy had been an odd mixture of toleration and persecution of dissenters and Catholics, yet neither aspect seemed particularly important or interesting to late eighteenth-century French writers. Religious freedom and toleration was believed to exist more widely in the Netherlands than in many other parts of Europe but only a few commentators writing about the Netherlands saw fit to mention it.¹¹⁹ French exiles or wanderers such as Voltaire were especially influential in sealing the reputation of the Netherlands as a haven of free discourse

¹¹² *Père Duchesne*, no. 274.

¹¹³ Girard de Villemain, *Considérations sur les Différents Evénemens qui ont Contribué aux Progrès de la Civilisation en Europe, Depuis le XIIe Siècle Jusqu’au XIXe* (Paris, 1810), pp.106-107.

¹¹⁴ Erik S. Reinert, ‘Emulating Success: Contemporary Views of the Dutch Economy Before 1800’, in Oscar Gelderblom, *The Political Economy of the Dutch Republic* (Farnham, 2009), pp.31-32; Rougier-Labergerie, *Essai Politique*.

¹¹⁵ Rougier-Labergerie, *Essai Politique*, p.183; Comeiras, *Abrégé de l’Histoire Générale des Voyages*, vol. 8, p.85.

¹¹⁶ Rougier-Labergerie, *Essai Politique*; Arnould, *Système Maritime et Politique*.

¹¹⁷ Bignon, *Exposé Comparatif*, p.293; David, *Histoire Chronologique*, pp.155-61; Anot & Malfillatre, *Les Deux Voyageurs*, vol. 1, pp.127-33; Comeiras, *Abrégé de l’Histoire Générale des Voyages*, vol. 8, p.197; Villemain, *Considérations sur les Différents Evénemens*, p.80.

¹¹⁸ David, *Histoire Chronologique*, p.175.

¹¹⁹ Rougier-Labergerie, *Essai Politique*, p.413; La Mettrie, *Les Charlatans Démasqués*, p. viii.

and republican virtue, a trait that generally excited admiration and was seen as precocious in its origins; 'l'esprit de tolérance éclaira bientôt les gouvernements', declared one French report approvingly.¹²⁰ Writers aiming at an audience in Catholic France did not tend to criticise the anti-Catholic Dutch past and indeed rarely seemed to consider Dutch religion a topic worthy of mention at all. The few times that it did appear in print the mention was usually in passing, possibly indicating that the writers assumed some sort of base knowledge from their French audience, and almost certainly indicating a general indifference.¹²¹ Certainly the Dutch were not scorned for their religion. Robespierre commented that one was less likely to encounter superstition in the Netherlands than in Belgium, although he went on to accuse the Dutch of worshipping a 'culte d'or'.¹²² Revolutionary and Napoleonic France seems to have taken equally little notice of religion in conceptions of Dutch identity. The insistence on freedom of worship made by the Dutch delegation that 'invited' Louis Bonaparte to take the throne in 1806, for example, drew little commentary in France. The ambiguous attitude of French identity towards religion was seemingly echoed in French indifference to religion in Dutch national identity.

The view of the Netherlands in French public opinion was multi-faceted, occasionally contradictory, but often highly stereotyped. Active opinion towards the Netherlands rarely made itself known. In 1787 there was a minor outcry demanding that France intervene to prevent the Prussian invasion of the Netherlands, but the failure of this enterprise was lamented more for the impressions it gave of faded French strength than for the implications it had for the Dutch Patriots. In 1792-93 there was a degree of enthusiasm in the revolutionary journals and in the Convention to invade the Netherlands, but the question of the Netherlands was largely buried beneath the debates surrounding the creation of the republic and the fate of the king. In the later Revolution and empire the Netherlands tended to inspire little debate in France.

The popular representations of latent public opinion proved more persistent and more enduring. There were several recurrent themes in French latent public opinion, such as the belief in the wealth of the Dutch people, the commercial and maritime nature of Dutch

¹²⁰ J. Vercruyse, *Voltaire et la Hollande* (Geneva, 1966), p.32; AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande Supplément, 22, 'Observations sur les Provinces Unies'; AMAE, Mémoires et Documents, Hollande, 48.

¹²¹ *Feuille Villageoise*, no. 50, 4 October 1792; Bulard, *Brutus, ou Tableau Historique des Républiques*, p.111.

¹²² Robespierre, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 5, p.272.

character, the strength of the Netherlands as a seafaring power, and the weak and semi-tyrannical nature of the pre-revolutionary Dutch state. The Dutch were relatively well known in France, especially amongst the literate elite, but portrayals and perceptions can also be found in popular media such as plays, songs and vaudeville. Perceptions evolved to meet changing circumstance but some of the major interpretations – that the Dutch were generally civilised, that they possessed a glorious past, and that they were a wealthy, maritime people – remained largely constant. The Patriot unrest of the 1780s and the alliance of the mid-1790s threw into question the French stereotype of the Dutch as slavishly Orangist Anglophiles, but the lack of enthusiasm for the French connection saw representations of the Dutch revert back to older interpretations.

CHAPTER FIVE

ARISTOCRATS, DEMOCRATS, AUTOCRATS:

PUBLIC OPINION, NATIONAL IDENTITY AND

FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY



J. Kuyper, *Feest der Alliantie/ Fête de l'Alliance* (1796)
(Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Collection de Vinck 4707)

In discussing the nature of information in reports that Emperor Napoleon received from his subordinates, Stuart Woolf posed the following question:

one is forced to ask to what extent the socio-cultural filter operated throughout the system, constructing those very realities that Napoleon and his servants expected to find, whether about the nature of the territories under French control, the functioning of the economy, social behaviour, or any other aspect of the organisation of society. It is a problem of considerable significance (and not only for the Napoleonic regime), as such information contributed in the process of decision making¹

As Woolf outlined, information and interpretation were both key to decision-making processes. All political actors – as Woolf says, not just Napoleon – based decisions on realities as they perceived them. That these realities were malleable and open to influence and interpretation is not in doubt. Just what factors shaped those influences and interpretations, and where those ‘expected realities’ evoked by Woolf came from, remains less clear.

This chapter will examine the correlation between French public opinion, national sentiment, and French foreign policy towards the Netherlands in the years 1785-1815. It will consider three general strands; firstly, whether French politicians sought to incorporate active public opinion into their Dutch policies; secondly to what extent the representations of latent public opinion impacted, consciously or unconsciously, on those policies; and thirdly whether ideas of the nation or national identity influenced the decisions of French politicians. Potential influence of active opinion can be seen through an examination of single events, actors or actions, but the influence of latent opinion is perhaps easier to trace through general traits and trends. Correlation of perception and policy is often fairly easy to determine, but proving or even inferring causality is generally more difficult. By taking an overview of the period, and by examining which perceptions coincide most freely with policies, it will be possible to demonstrate the relevance of public opinion to foreign policy.

French foreign policy in this period must inevitably be interpreted in light of the evolving political situation within France. Responsibility for foreign affairs shifted quite dramatically from the personal domain of the king, where ‘family compacts’ such as that with Bourbon Spain were accepted policies, to policy run by committee in an aggressively nationalist and republican government. In the years before 1789, and under the brief constitutional monarchy, foreign policy was in the hands of the king and his minister. Armand de Montmorin, who became foreign minister upon the death of Charles de Vergennes in 1787, remained in

¹ Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe* (London, 1991), p.220.

position until November 1791, providing strong continuity between the old and new regimes. His successor, Jean de Lessart, came from a similar *ancien-régime* background and did little to lead foreign affairs into a new age. Most of the foreign ministry's staff also remained in place until Charles Dumouriez replaced Lessart in March 1792 and 'revolutionised' the department.² But if the constitution of 1791 envisaged leaving control of foreign policy to the king, the realities of 'national government' and exigencies of working on behalf of the sovereign people meant that by 1792 effective control of foreign affairs passed to the Legislative Assembly.³ The spur was the Nootka Sound crisis and the Assembly's rejection of the Bourbon 'family compact' in 1790. A Diplomatic Committee was established to oversee the work of the foreign minister, although this did not in itself ensure a coherent policy. Membership of the Committee changed several times and the politics of its members came frequently into question. Of thirty-five men who served on the Committee, eight were eventually executed, a further seven imprisoned, and five forced to flee after becoming politically suspect.⁴

From mid-1793, and especially after the suppression of the ministries in 1794, policy was largely in the hands of the Committee of Public Safety (CPS) but, in truth, little foreign policy was required. France was fighting for her young republican life against much of Europe and had few resources to commit to any policy other than ensuring internal stability and winning the war. After mid-1794, the post-Thermidorian governments moderated their internal politics and were able to pursue a more active foreign policy, including making peace with Prussia and Spain and entering into an alliance with the 'revolutionised' Netherlands. The French constitution of 1795 re-established a foreign ministry but authority for foreign affairs was shared between the minister and the five-man Directory, leading to inevitable tensions. Charles Delacroix was appointed minister in 1795 because the Directors, and especially Jean-François Reubell, considered him controllable, but other ministers, notably Charles Maurice Talleyrand, were to have more of an influence on policy.⁵ After Napoleon's Coup of Brumaire, the First Consul took foreign policy as his own personal privilege, placing the foreign minister

² Patricia Chastain Howe, 'Charles-François Dumouriez and the Revolutionising of French Foreign Affairs in 1792', *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Spring 1986), 367-90; R. Mowat, *The Diplomacy of Napoleon* (London, 1924), pp.4-6.

³ Howe, 'Charles-François Dumouriez and the Revolutionising of French Foreign Affairs'.

⁴ Linda Frey & Marsha Frey, *"Proven Patriots": The French Diplomatic Corps, 1789-1799* (St Andrews, 2011), pp.46-47.

⁵ Frey & Frey, *"Proven Patriots"*, p.91; Sydney Seymour Biro, *The German Policy of Revolutionary France* (2 vols, Cambridge MA, 1957), vol. 2, pp.510-11.

in an essentially advisory and executive role; as Consulate turned into Empire and Empire into Continental hegemony, French foreign policy became ever more concentrated in the hands of one man.

If *ancien-régime* foreign policy tended to follow the rules of diplomatic dressage, the diplomacy of the Revolution and Empire was often more akin to a cavalry charge. From 1793, self-righteous brute force became the favoured negotiating tactic of a series of French governments. Napoleon used the same tactics in diplomacy as he did on the battlefield. In a position of uncertainty or weakness he would make tactical withdrawals while mustering his forces for a devastating counter-thrust. In positions of strength Napoleon deployed threats and invective in the same manner as he might his grand batteries of artillery and massed ranks of infantry. As France's grip over the Continent extended, so Napoleon's position in foreign affairs became more and more dictatorial. His ultimate fall arguably owed as much to the failings of his diplomacy as to the defeats of his armies.

These structures provide the context in which the influence of public opinion on policy will be analysed. The question of whether active opinion was able to influence the French government's Dutch policy can be dealt with in fairly short order. There is very little evidence that French governments of any ideological bent sought to, or were compelled to, incorporate active public opinion into their policies. Political ideology made little difference to whether politicians attempted to take public opinion into account, as neither *ancien-régime* nobles nor democratic revolutionaries allowed themselves to be pushed into action by the public's demands. The widespread desire for France to support the Patriots against Prussia in 1787, and the widespread scorn that followed when France failed to do so, did not spur the court into action. Conversely, although the invasion of the Netherlands in 1793 enjoyed public support, it was instigated by Dumouriez, foreign minister Pierre Lebrun, and their confederates in the Convention rather than being inspired by the public's demands.⁶ Similarly, the CPS did not seek to engage with public opinion when deciding how to deal with the conquered Netherlands in 1795, nor did the Directory in the years thereafter. Napoleon barely cared about the opinions of his foreign ministers and certainly did not deliberately consult public opinion.⁷ When informed by the Governor-General of the recently annexed Netherlands, Charles-François Lebrun, that some of his new imperial subjects wished to make

⁶ Patricia Chastain Howe, *Foreign Policy and the French Revolution: Charles-François Dumouriez, Pierre LeBrun, and the Belgian Plan, 1789-1793* (New York, 2008), pp.119-20.

⁷ Thierry Lentz, *Dictionnaire des Ministres de Napoléon* (Paris, 1999), pp.58-59.

representations, Napoleon bluntly refused to listen to their opinions, decrying them as 'les clameurs des hommes insensés'.⁸ 'I did not take over the government of Holland', he declared, 'to consult the common people of Amsterdam, or to do what other people want'.⁹

While active opinion was thus either ignored or actively spurned by politicians of all persuasions, latent public opinion had much more success in subtly influencing policy. There were three major perceptions in latent public opinion that had a bearing on policy towards the Netherlands; the importance of the Netherlands as a European power, the supposed wealth of the Netherlands, and national character of the Dutch people, including their attitudes to their European neighbours. The three were often not discrete considerations but part of a holistic representation of the Netherlands built up in public opinion and echoed in foreign policy. Nor were all three equally evident at all times across the period. Some French politicians seemed more inclined to lean on preconceived ideas as a basis for their policies, while others were more adept at leaving their preconceptions behind. These representations of the Dutch in public opinion were often interpreted in terms of French self-identity, but there was also one other major part of self-identity that, for a time during the Revolution, intruded on French policy; the idea of the nation. By seeing France as the only model for a truly free nation, politicians of the Directory allowed French self-identity to intrude heavily onto policies towards her 'sister' Batavian Republic.

The degree of influence of public opinion on political attitudes is not always clear, and was certainly not the only factor in policy calculations. Most politicians enjoyed regular reports and intelligence from the Netherlands and so attempted to base their opinions on hard evidence rather than received assumptions. Yet whether Paris truly knew what was going on in the Netherlands is highly debatable. Florent Guiot, appointed minister plenipotentiary to the Netherlands in 1799, believed not. He complained to the foreign minister that France had 'que des notions très imparfaits' of the Netherlands.¹⁰ He continued 'nous connaissons peu et nous connaissons mal ses mœurs, ses préjugés, ses habitudes, les principes de son gouvernement.' He believed that this was because French politicians and diplomats habitually interpreted everything through their own national prejudices, and in terms of their own habits, without

⁸ Napoleon Bonaparte, *Correspondance de Napoléon I^{er}* (32 vols, Paris, 1858-70), vol. 21, p.143, 16974, Napoleon to Lebrun, 25 September 1810.

⁹ J. M. Thompson (ed.), *Napoleon's Letters* (London, 1998), p.240.

¹⁰ Archives de la Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, La Courneuve, Paris (AMAE), Mémoires et Documents, Hollande, 48, Guiot, 'Mémoire sur la situation morale, politique, industrielle et commerciale de la Batavie', 17 ventôse an VIII.

properly considering local conditions. This issue is at the heart of the argument of this chapter. Received notions arising from latent public opinion inevitably intruded upon the interpretation of intelligence and therefore influenced the decision-making process. Some decision makers, Napoleon chief amongst them, repeatedly refused to believe reports that did not tally with what they already 'knew' about the Netherlands.

A consideration that naturally entered foreign policy calculations across all regimes was the place of the Netherlands within the European diplomatic system, and the strength of the Netherlands as a military and naval power. Calculating the relative strength of states is self-evidently subjective, involving balancing different impressions and interpretations as much as measuring hard facts against one another. Echoing the impressions shown in public opinion since before the American Revolution, French politicians tended to view the Netherlands as a diminished but still important force in the European balance of power, especially in maritime affairs. This idea persisted through several changes of regime, in both France and the Netherlands, and even survived Dutch military defeat, invasion, and occupation. French politicians did not always believe that the Netherlands *was* an important power, but most were convinced that this small corner of Europe with a population of barely two million souls had the potential to be a powerful state, or to at least provide resources and military forces greater than its size and population might imply. The idea that with the right inspiration the Netherlands could return to its former strength became an integral part of French diplomatic discourse. It will be argued that this persistent belief in the strength of the Netherlands, despite all evidence to the contrary, stemmed partly from the expectations of the Netherlands that had been created and perpetuated in latent French public opinion.

Although latent opinion was by no means the driving force of policy in the dying years of the *ancien régime*, the French court clearly shared the long-standing popular representation of the Netherlands as an important power, despite recent Dutch experiences of mid-century disengagement and subsequent defeat in the Anglo-Dutch War. The desire to bring the Netherlands into a French orbit in 1785 stemmed primarily from the belief that Dutch commercial and naval forces would be a great boon to France both in peace and in any future conflict, and that a Franco-Dutch alliance would prove damaging to British prestige, commerce, and strategic security.¹¹ For Louis XVI and Foreign Minister the Comte de Vergennes the subversion of the supposedly long-standing anti-French Anglo-Dutch alliance was also a goal in

¹¹ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 561, de Vêrac's instructions, 4 January 1785; N.A.M. Rodger, 'Seapower and Empire; Cause and Effect', in Bob Moore & Henk van Nierop (eds.), *Colonial Empires Compared, Britain and the Netherlands 1750-1850* (Aldershot, 2003), p.110.

itself.¹² Vergennes's hesitation when confronted with the Austro-Dutch contretemps in 1784-85 shows that he was not willing to privilege the Netherlands above all others, but the offer of ten million guilders to the Emperor to settle the dispute demonstrates that France was prepared to make significant sacrifices to secure a Dutch alliance. Even the two large ships-of-the-line offered by the Netherlands in gratitude for French help did not justify the outlay of ten million by a near-bankrupt state.¹³

The failure of the Franco-Dutch alliance in 1787 did not cause a reappraisal of the French government's attitude to the Netherlands. Some officials denounced the apparent decline in martial prowess and ardour for liberty of the Dutch people, with one foreign office memorialist claiming 'la conquête aisée des Prussiens a dévoilé le secret de sa faiblesse.'¹⁴ Yet for this writer the military weakness of the Netherlands was an object of hope, as he believed that French influence could thereby soon be restored, leading once more to the enjoyment of a productive alliance. Others warned darkly of the consequences of Dutch enmity. One political memoir readopted an earlier eighteenth-century rhetoric by bitterly proclaiming that France was now as interested in the destruction of the Netherlands as it was in the humbling of Britain, as these two 'republics' were and always had been the natural enemies of the French monarchy.¹⁵ Montmorin's refusal to officially abandon the alliance in 1788 and his subsequent spirited attempts to insist on Dutch neutrality in any future Anglo-French conflict show that the French court continued to perceive the Netherlands as a potential thorn in France's side.¹⁶

A similar pattern emerged during the short-lived constitutional monarchy, even after the department of foreign affairs had been 'revolutionised' by Dumouriez. As foreign minister in

¹² AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 573, 'Mémoire concernant les Provinces-Unies', June 1787.

¹³ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 566, de Vérac to Vergennes, 6 January 1786; S.T. Bindoff, *The Scheldt Question to 1839* (London, 1945), p.141; F. J. L. Krämer (ed.), *Archives ou Correspondance Inédite de la Maison D'Orange-Nassau, 5th Series, Vol. III, 1782-89* (Leyden, 1915), pp.327-28, letter MCIX, 'Pro-Memoria de l'Ambassadeur Français, la Haye', 26 September 1785; Alfred Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents, The Diplomacy of the First Earl of Malmesbury at The Hague* (London, 1954), p.67. A 70-gun ship-of-the-line cost only around 800,000 guilders to build – Simon Schama, 'The Exigencies of War and the Politics of Taxation in the Netherlands 1795-1810', in J. M. Winter (ed.), *War and Economic Development* (Cambridge, 1975), p.112.

¹⁴ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 575, 'Mémoire sur la manière d'envisager les affaires de hollande et d'y rétablir les intérêts de la France'.

¹⁵ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 574, 'Vue sur les affaires de la Hollande', September 1787.

¹⁶ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 576, Caillard to Montmorin, 1 April & 29 April 1788, & Montmorin to Caillard, 20 April 1788.

April 1792, Dumouriez was determined to keep the Netherlands neutral from the Austro-French war.¹⁷ The slightly cavalier attitude that a series of French ministers, Convention members and military officers took to Franco-Dutch relations later in 1792 might indicate that respect for the Dutch diminished as politics in France became more popular, but it was symptomatic of a wider belligerency that crept into French government and eventually led the new republic into war with most of Europe, including Austria, Prussia, Britain and Spain as well as the Netherlands.

As France moved from constitutional monarchy to republic, politicians' opinions of Dutch capabilities became even more heavily based on latent public representations of the Netherlands. The incoming French leadership, often inexperienced in foreign affairs, had expectations that the Netherlands should be a power of a certain stature and strength, and tailored policies to these assumptions. French representative in the Netherlands, Emmanuel de Maulde, blithely assured Dumouriez that the Netherlands's 'natural state' was a strong, democratically-minded power, preferably allied to France.¹⁸ Evidence that the Netherlands neither possessed nor aspired to the power expected of it was ascribed by those who cared to contemplate Dutch affairs to the fact that the Netherlands laboured under inefficient and tyrannical government, under which the true spirit and genius of the Dutch people could not hope to prosper.¹⁹ Part of the reason for this belief was the close connection of the Girondin leadership to the exiled Dutch Patriots.²⁰ Patricia Howe suggested that Dumouriez's only political concern for the Netherlands in 1792-93 was to create a buffer for an independent Belgium, but this almost certainly underestimates the perceived importance of the Netherlands itself.²¹ Dumouriez and Lebrun, his successor as foreign minister, became convinced that the Netherlands was a powder keg awaiting a French spark to unleash a revolutionary explosion which would realign the Netherlands with France, and radically alter the balance of power in any future struggle with Britain. France might be outmatched by Britain at sea but once the Netherlands had fallen, 'alors combien notre position deviendrait

¹⁷ H. T. Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken der Algemeene Geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840* (10 vols, 'S-Gravenhage, 1905-22), vol. 1, p.175, instructions for de Maulde, 25 April 1792.

¹⁸ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 1, pp.245-46, de Maulde to Dumouriez, 19 December 1792.

¹⁹ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 585, declaration of Dumouriez, 27 February 1793.

²⁰ Joost Rosendaal, *Bataven! Nederlandse Vluchtelingen in Frankrijk 1787-1795* (Nijmegen, 2003); AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 584-85; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 1, passim; Annie Jourdan, *La Révolution Batave: Entre la France et L'Amérique (1795-1806)* (Rennes, 2008), pp.64-72.

²¹ Howe, *Foreign Policy and the French Revolution*, p.119.

différente!²² The claws of the English leopard would be clipped and, it was forecast, the combined Franco-Dutch fleets would sweep Britain from the seas.²³ The most optimistic assessments predicted that once the Netherlands fell the conquest of Britain would be only a matter of time.²⁴ Anacharsis Cloots, echoing Danton, proclaimed to the Convention ‘c’est en Hollande que nous détruirons Carthage’.²⁵ Emmanuel Sieyès believed that encouraging the Patriots would turn the Netherlands – ‘tributaire, facteur et prêteur de l’Angleterre’ – into a valuable French ally.²⁶

During the early months of the French Republic the Netherlands was viewed as at once enfeebled and as a potentially important cog in the balance of Europe. In December 1793 foreign minister François Deforgues laid out his overall foreign policy as ‘*guerre aux grands et ambitieux, paix et fraternité aux faibles*’ but even he seemed unsure of where the Netherlands would fit into this scheme.²⁷ Yet the consensus among French leaders remained that the Netherlands could be of use to France. Philibert Buchot, *Commissaire des Relations Extérieures* from April 1794, implicitly believed that a ‘free’ Netherlands could recapture its former glories, and attributed the obvious current failings of the Dutch military to dissatisfaction with the Stadholderate and the malign influence of Britain.²⁸ A report from October 1794 claimed that conquering the Netherlands would ‘avoir une influence décisive sur le sort de l’Europe et en changer la face politique au grand avantage de la République Française’.²⁹ This interpretation

²² AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 585, Thianville (secretary of the embassy) to Lebrun, 7 January 1793.

²³ AMAE, Mémoires et Documents: Hollande, 71, Sauchaman to CPS, 6 vendémiaire an III; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 1, pp.42-46, ‘Notules des Délibérations et Arrêtés de la Société des Amis du Rétablissement de la Liberté Batave’, & pp.237-38, de Maulde to Lebrun 30 November 1792.

²⁴ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol.1, pp.245-46, de Maulde to Dumouriez, 19 December 1792.

²⁵ N. C. F. van Sas, *De Metamorfose van Nederland: van Oude Orde naar Moderniteit 1750-1900* (Amsterdam, 2005), p.331; Piers Mackesy, *Statesmen at War, the Strategy of Overthrow 1798-99* (New York, 1974), p.36; H. Morse Stephens, (ed.), *The Principal Speeches of the Statesmen and Orators of the French Revolution, 1789-1795* (2 vols, Oxford, 1892), vol. 2, p.193; André Fribourg (ed.), *Discours de Danton* (Paris, 1910), pp.284-87.

²⁶ Les Archives Nationales, Paris (AN), 284 AP 10, dossier 1, ‘Aperçu des rapports de la République Française avec les Puissances de l’Europe, fructidor an II avec notes de nivôse an III’.

²⁷ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande Supplément, 22, 7 nivôse an II, Deforgues to Caillard.

²⁸ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 586, ‘Aperçu de Quelques Considérations Utiles à Observer Lors d’une Invasion Effective dans la République de Hollande’, 2^{ème} jour complémentaire, an II.

²⁹ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 586, ‘Aperçu sur les Relations extérieures de la République Française avec les Puissances de l’Europe’, 26 vendémiaire an III.

was not unique to France – British politicians continued to believe this for another decade or more³⁰ – but it nonetheless shows the correlation between French policy and conceptions of Dutch strength in latent public opinion. The triumphalism expressed in both public opinion and political circles when the news broke of the capitulation of the Netherlands and the capture of the Dutch fleet indicates that all in France believed they had conquered something of value.³¹

After 1795, French politicians largely viewed the Netherlands as a valuable and independent, if subordinate, ally. Unlike Belgium, the Rhineland or Italy, Dutch independence and right to self-determination were not seriously threatened by the French conquest.³² The French refusal to recognise the Batavian Republic until a treaty had been signed was a crude negotiating tactic rather than a serious threat to Dutch independence.³³ Although the Batavian Republic became the first of the fabled ‘sister republics’, the degree of artifice and French control that came to characterise some of the later creations was not evident in the Netherlands. Until late 1797 the French government refrained from taking a direct role in Dutch constitutional developments, although fear of an Orangist revival, the inefficiencies of the Dutch government, and a desire to speed the return of the Batavian Republic ‘au rang qui lui convient dans le système de l’Europe comme premier auxiliaire de la République française’ eventually pushed Paris to intervene.³⁴ Noting that the hands-off approach of France’s previous representative François Noël had failed – ‘l’influence du gouvernement français a été stérile, ses efforts perdus, son but manqué’ – the Directory sent Delacroix to the Netherlands to urge the Dutch to accept proposals for a constitution based on that of France.³⁵ As the Dutch alliance was not delivering the benefits that latent public opinion had led the Directory to expect, they wished to provoke reforms that they hoped would turn expectations into reality.

Despite the drawn out constitutional process and continued failure to fully overhaul the old regime in the Netherlands, the French Directory expected the newly-christened Batavian

³⁰ E.H. Kossmann, *The Low Countries, 1780-1940* (Oxford, 1978), p.36 and chapter 7 of this thesis.

³¹ Gassicourt, *Discours Prononcé par le Citoyen Cadet-Gassicourt dans l’Assemblée Générale de la Section du Mont Blanc, le 20 Pluviôse l’an 3 de la République Française, Une et Indivisible* (Paris, 1795).

³² AN, 284 AP 10, dossier 6, ‘La Réunion considérée dans ses avantages pour les bataves’ & ‘la réunion considérée dans ses effets contre l’Angleterre, et pour la France’.

³³ Het Nationaal Archief, The Hague (HNA), Collectie Hahn (2.21.008.83), 2; AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 587, letter and attached memorandum from Meyer and Blauw to CPS, 12 germinal an III; AN, 284 AP 10, dossier 6.

³⁴ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande Supplément 22, Delacroix’s Instructions, 12 frimaire an VI.

³⁵ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande Supplément 22, Delacroix’s Instructions, 12 frimaire an VI.

Republic to play a full and active role in joint military undertakings. French leaders continued to treasure inflated expectations of Dutch military strength. In line with the popular French perception of the Dutch as seafarers, the Batavians were expected to second France more by sea than by land. The Treaty of The Hague required the Dutch to provide a minimum of twelve ships-of-the-line and eighteen frigates, and to loan another three of-the-line and four frigates to France for the duration of hostilities.³⁶ It also compelled the Batavian Republic to place its naval forces under French command, thus assuring France of the full advantages of Dutch sea power. To put French demands in perspective, the Franco-Spanish alliance of the following year required Spain to supply only fifteen ships-of-the-line, six frigates and four lighter vessels; a somewhat smaller burden than that demanded of the Netherlands.³⁷ Despite decades of evidence to the contrary, French policy followed the persistent impressions of latent public opinion in treating the Netherlands as a naval power ranking as high as any after Britain and France.

The exaggerated demands of Dutch naval power made by French politicians from the early Revolution to the end of the empire show that their expectations were based on received ideas of what the Netherlands should be capable of, rather than objective analyses of its current capabilities. An objective appreciation of a country's naval capacity might cite the number of sailors available for service, the number of dockyards and shipbuilders available to construct ships, the availability of naval stores and armaments, and the habitude for naval warfare and fleet movements of the officer corps. By the late eighteenth century, Dutch leadership in each of these aspects had become a matter of memory rather than reality. Dutch merchant shipping still thrived, though to a lesser extent than in the mid-eighteenth century, and it provided few advantages to the navy. The ship-building industry had been in decline throughout the previous century, mostly as a result of decline in other areas of manufacture and commerce.³⁸ Although the officers and sailors of the Dutch fleets in this period proved competent, the lack of practice and time at sea inevitably rendered the crews less efficient than their Royal Navy counterparts.

³⁶ H. A. van Dijk (ed.), *Répertoire Historique et Chronologique des Traités Conclus par la Hollande Depuis 1789 jusqu'à nos Jours* (Utrecht, 1846), pp.14-15; AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 587, instructions for Sieyès and Reubell & project of treaty, both 15 floréal an III.

³⁷ Van Dijk (ed.), *Répertoire Historique et Chronologique des Traités*, pp.21-22.

³⁸ Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic, Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford, 1995), pp.1001-1002.

Despite these issues, the French government was confident that Dutch naval forces were strong enough to help them dispute Britannia's control of the waves.³⁹ They expected the Netherlands to provide most of the forces and finances for a proposed expedition to retake the Cape of Good Hope and demanded a strong naval diversion for a planned expedition against Ireland.⁴⁰ For a time it appeared that expectations were justified. In summer 1797 French ambassador Noël reported that the Dutch Texel fleet numbered sixteen ships-of-the-line and a dozen frigates, with crews high on confidence and enthusiasm.⁴¹ The defeat at Camperdown on 11 October 1797 dampened French hopes of a general naval revival, but Noël attempted to draw consolation from the fact that 'les Bataves n'ont pas perdu leur ancienne bravoure sur mer et sont encore capable de tenir tête aux anglais, lorsqu'un gouvernement vigoureux leur permettra de concentrer et d'activer toutes leurs ressources.'⁴² The Batavian government also reacted surprisingly quickly to the defeat. Within a month new taxes were being proposed to fund the construction of a new fleet, while wealthy individuals and consortia provided funds to construct and equip vessels on behalf of the state.⁴³

The talk of ancient bravery and the apparent willingness of the Batavian government to face adversity head-on merely deflected attention from serious deficiencies in the Dutch navy. Camperdown caused even French Minister of Marine Georges-René Pléville Le Pelley to lament 'l'infériorité des vaisseaux hollandais'.⁴⁴ While the two fleets at Camperdown were evenly matched in numbers, the Royal Navy held almost all other advantages. Dutch ships were by-and-large outmatched by their British counterparts. Only three Batavian ships carried seventy-four guns, as opposed to seven of the British fleet, while the two smallest line vessels in the Dutch squadron would not have rated as ships-of-the-line in the Royal Navy. In terms of the tactical and technical ability of the crews and commanders of the fleet, the British force also

³⁹ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 593, Noël to Delacroix, 22 vendémiaire an V.

⁴⁰ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 590, Blauw and Meyer to Delacroix, 4 January 1796; Noël to Delacroix 18 nivôse an IV; HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 57, Secret Minutes from 26 January 1797.

⁴¹ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 596, Noël to Delacroix 22 messidor an V; 28 messidor an V; & 2 thermidor an V.

⁴² AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 596, Noël to Talleyrand, 26 vendémiaire an VI.

⁴³ Schama, 'The Exigencies of War', p.114; AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 596, Schimmelpenninck to Talleyrand, 13 August 1798 [file 596 is for the last six months of 1797; this letter probably appears in this file by mistake].

⁴⁴ AN, AF IV 1598, Plaq. 1¹, 'Exposé du Ministre de la Marine', 10 pluviôse an VI.

held considerable advantages.⁴⁵ To say that Camperdown marked the end of the era of Dutch naval power would be an overstatement; that power had objectively long since faded. The victory of a mediocre British fleet over the best the Batavian Republic had to offer merely underlined that fact that the Netherlands could no longer challenge for maritime supremacy. Nonetheless, the idea that the Netherlands should be a major naval power, so long entrenched in French public opinion, continued to inform French policy for the next fifteen years.

The French Directory's expectations of a sizable Dutch maritime contribution to the war effort did not diminish after Camperdown.⁴⁶ In early 1798 Napoleon Bonaparte, newly-appointed commander of the 'Army of England', demanded five divisions of fifty fishing vessels, twenty or thirty cannon boats, and diverse naval munitions to complete the armament of the invasion flotilla.⁴⁷ Up until the Anglo-Russian invasion and subsequent defection of the Texel fleet in August 1799, the French Directory and its agents continued to be convinced of the primary importance of the Batavian Republic as an ally in the naval struggle against Britain. However, it was becoming increasingly clear that the French government's belief in the importance of the Batavian Republic now stretched little further than the resources and forces that the Dutch could provide.

If the French Directory had laboured under unrealistic expectations of the power and military capabilities of the Batavian Republic, the Consulate and Empire saw policy towards the Netherlands sometimes regress to a series of assumptions and received notions that simply ignored evolving realities. Napoleon's foreign policies were predicated on doing what best suited him at any particular moment rather than being based on bilateral relations or meaningful negotiation.⁴⁸ His engagement with preconceptions and received stereotypes was equally pragmatic. When they suited the Napoleonic will they were deployed with venom and fury to demand that the Netherlands live up to expectations. When they failed to fit into Napoleon's schemes they were set aside in favour of the new realities ushered in by his empire.

⁴⁵ Christopher Lloyd, *St Vincent and Camperdown* (London, 1963); Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators, Revolution in the Netherlands 1780-1813* (2nd edn., London, 2005), p.282.

⁴⁶ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 598, Delacroix to Talleyrand, 16 nivôse an VI and Delacroix to the Commissie tot de Buitenlandse Zaken, 29 nivôse an VI.

⁴⁷ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 598, Delacroix to Talleyrand, 6 ventôse an VI ; John E. Howard (ed.), *Letters and Documents of Napoleon* (London, 1961), pp.222-23.

⁴⁸ Paul W. Schroeder, 'Napoleon's Foreign Policy: A Criminal Enterprise', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (April 1990), p.148.

Napoleon had little respect for the place of the Netherlands within the European balance of power. Doubtless the experience of creating sister republics across Italy in the 1790s had coloured Napoleon's view of the status of allied states. In July 1803, Napoleon surprised a deputation of Dutch politicians by declaring 'vous n'avez pas d'indépendance politique si longtemps que je posséderai la Belgique: vous pouvez prétendre une indépendance civile, municipale et commerciale, mais le reste est une chimère'.⁴⁹ Three years later, Talleyrand informed Grand Pensionary Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck that the Netherlands 'n'a ni une existence déterminée, ni une position précise qu'on puisse apprécier', a situation that he claimed must effectively spell the end of the Netherlands as an independent state.⁵⁰ The experiment of the Kingdom of Holland, 1806-10, perhaps showed that Napoleon retained some vestige of the idea that the Netherlands should be independent, but also indicates that he valued the appearance of independence more than the fact. In early 1806 Napoleon wrote to his brother Joseph that he considered the Netherlands, along with Italy, Switzerland, parts of Germany and Naples, to be 'mes Etats fédératifs, ou véritablement l'Empire français'.⁵¹ Napoleon expected that under a French prince the Netherlands would provide the military resources that the Dutch alone had been loath to produce.⁵² Louis's enthronement was meant to introduce efficient administration, tackle the debt crisis and provide men and ships for Napoleon's military machine, all within the framework of the greater good of the French Empire. Napoleon wrote to Louis in 1806 that the Dutch were surely too proud of their independence to not see the necessity of possessing a large fleet and army, which would naturally be put at the emperor's disposal.⁵³

This somewhat set the tone for relations between Napoleon and the Kingdom of Holland. Fraternal letters to Louis degenerated into a litany of complaints, abuse and bullying, with no pretence of concealing orders as requests or suggestions. Napoleon's attitude to the Netherlands was hardened by the increasing power he was able to wield over Continental Europe. While the CPS had thought that any move towards annexing the Netherlands in 1795

⁴⁹ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, pp.451-52; HNA, Collectie Van der Goes van Dirxland (2.21.073), 55, 'Rapport verbaal van eene Buitengewoone bezending naar Brussels'.

⁵⁰ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, p.622, Talleyrand to Schimmelpenninck, 17 March 1806.

⁵¹ Bonaparte, *Correspondance de Napoléon 1^{er}*, vol. 11, p.560, 9713, Napoleon to Joseph, 27 January 1806.

⁵² Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, p.1129.

⁵³ AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 13 August 1806.

would 'shock the opinion of Europe', Napoleon had few such qualms.⁵⁴ When powers such as Austria, Prussia and even Russia could no longer aspire to a relationship of equals there was little chance that Napoleon would allow the Kingdom of Holland that status, brother as monarch or not. The new Napoleonic attitude was summed up in a letter written to Louis some months after the Treaty of Tilsit, at the height of Napoleonic hegemony, when the Emperor instructed his brother to introduce the *Code Napoléon* in Holland; 'les Romains donneraient leurs lois à leurs alliés. Pourquoi la France ne ferait elle pas adopter les siennes à la Hollande?'⁵⁵ In the changed reality of European politics Holland was, along with all others, at the feet of France. This attitude permeated throughout the French government. In December 1809 the Minister of the Interior dismissively stated that 'la Hollande n'est réellement qu'une portion de la France.'⁵⁶ The final annexation of the Netherlands in 1810 was simply additional proof that Napoleon and his regime no longer had any respect for the Netherlands as an independent country.

If, in disposing with the Netherlands as a political entity, Napoleon was content to overturn received notions, the military contribution that he expected from the Netherlands shows that he was equally willing to embrace latent public opinion when it suited him. Napoleon consistently maintained that the Netherlands, whatever its politics, could and should provide strong naval forces to assist France. In June 1803 Talleyrand was happy to agree to the Netherlands contributing five ships-of-the-line and five frigates to the allied war effort, reflecting the limited resources and reduced stature of the Batavian Republic.⁵⁷ A month later, however, the First Consul complained that the Dutch were capable of greater efforts and lambasted his Batavian interlocutors for their country's lack of activity.⁵⁸ Napoleonic demands only increased in the coming years. In October 1804 French ambassador Charles de Sémonville passed on orders, undisguised by the usual polite diplomatic terminology, that two warships in Amsterdam be immediately kitted out, crewed by press gang if necessary, and that all Dutch

⁵⁴ AN, 284 AP 10, dossier 6, 'Hollande (bases convenues au comité)', no date.

⁵⁵ AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 13 November 1807.

⁵⁶ *Recueil des Lettres Circulaires, Instructions, Programmes, Discours et Autres Actes Publics, Ministère de l'Intérieur* (15 vols, Paris, 1798-1815), vol. 9, p.244.

⁵⁷ Van Dijk (ed.), *Répertoire Historique et Chronologique des Traités*, pp.48-49; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, pp.441, Convention of 25 June 1803.

⁵⁸ HNA, Collectie Van der Goes van Dirxland (2.21.073), 55, 'Rapport verbaal van eene Buitengewoone bezending naar Brussels'. This was in the same interview as mentioned in note 42.

ports be closed to British shipping.⁵⁹ A year later Napoleon wrote to Schimmelpenninck that five ships-of-the-line was not enough for a country of the Batavian Republic's stature, suggesting that their numbers be augmented to eight within a couple of months and to eleven or twelve within another year.⁶⁰ The King of Spain had already begun to enlarge his fleet, said Napoleon, and it was time that the Netherlands did likewise. Like his countrymen a decade earlier, Napoleon was explicitly insisting that Dutch naval power was expected to approach, if not match, that of a power such as Spain.

Although Napoleon's appreciation of naval capacity came almost exclusively from received expectations and historical precedent, this did not mean that his expectations were impossible to fulfil; in 1809 Napoleon proclaimed himself retrospectively content with Schimmelpenninck's efforts to expand the Dutch fleet four years earlier, though this possibly stemmed more from a desire to rebuke Louis than from any genuine satisfaction.⁶¹ It did, however, mean that Napoleon brooked no excuse for any diminution in naval forces. In his memoirs, Louis reported that when he came to power the fleet stood at fourteen ships-of-the-line, six frigates, and 200 gunboats.⁶² Napoleon came to consider this the minimum benchmark of what the Kingdom of Holland should provide and at times demanded much more. In 1807 French foreign minister Jean-Baptiste Champagny demanded that the Netherlands should provide eighteen ships of seventy-four guns ready for service, effectively demanding a navy larger than any other than Britain, France, Russia and Spain, and larger than any the Netherlands had possessed since well into the previous century.⁶³ Louis believed that these demands were wholly unreasonable for a country of Holland's size and resources but Napoleon was undeterred, again issuing commands in 1808 that Louis augment his navy.⁶⁴ In the aftermath of the Walcheren invasion in 1809 Napoleon threatened that the Netherlands

⁵⁹ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, p.528, Sémonville to Van der Goes, 9 vendémiaire an XIII.

⁶⁰ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, p.598.

⁶¹ AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 22 October 1809.

⁶² Louis Bonaparte, *Documens Historiques et Réflexions sur le Gouvernement de la Hollande* (3 vols, Paris, 1820), vol. 1, pp.188-89. Napoleon in 1809 said that the Netherlands had possessed ten ships-of-the-line – AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis 13 August 1809 & 22 October 1809.

⁶³ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 5, pp.23-24, Champagny to Brantsen, 12 November 1807. Denmark had boasted a similar-sized fleet until two months previously, when Britain had forcibly confiscated sixteen ships-of-the-line.

⁶⁴ Bonaparte, *Documens Historiques*, vol. 2, pp.1-5; the demands from 1808 are in Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 5, pp.391-92, report from Brantsen to Louis, 17 January 1808, & pp.400-01, Louis to Roëll, 10 February 1808.

must either provide fifteen ships-of-the-line and 200 cannon boats ready for immediate service or become a province of France.⁶⁵ Napoleon was clearly basing his attitudes to the naval resources that the Netherlands could provide on received notions and historical realities.

The Dutch army was a somewhat different matter. Napoleon had a clear, almost mathematical view of the army units that a country should furnish – even conscription in France ran along such lines⁶⁶ – to which he also expected the Netherlands to adhere. Napoleon did not intend for the Dutch army to become a focus of national pride or to allow the Netherlands greater independence of action in the international sphere, but simply to act as auxiliaries to the French military machine. In 1809 Napoleon angrily compared Louis to the King of Württemberg, who managed to keep a 25,000-strong army from a population of one million. Holland, the Emperor declared, should therefore have at least 40,000 soldiers.⁶⁷ Napoleon saw the Dutch army in the same light as any other satellite or vassal state, and had the same expectations. When lambasting Louis for being less use than the Grand Duke of Baden or the King of Württemberg, he was entirely neglecting the longer, if not entirely unproblematic, traditions of military service in those territories.⁶⁸ Napoleon's attitude often showed indifference to anything other than numbers, but he also occasionally gave an indication that he, like many in France, held the Dutch army in low regard. Shortly after Louis's accession, Napoleon wrote to give advice on how to raise an army 'de manière que vous avez des soldats et non de la canaille.'⁶⁹ Napoleon certainly never understood Louis's reluctance to introduce conscription into the Netherlands.⁷⁰ French public opinion might have portrayed the Dutch as reluctant soldiers but Napoleon paid little heed to this in his thirst for manpower.

The second common representation of the Dutch in French public opinion that influenced French policy was the idea that the Netherlands was rich. The constant French demands for money and credit from an almost insolvent ally would appear largely baseless, were it not for a

⁶⁵ AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 22 October 1809.

⁶⁶ Alain Pigeard, *La Conscription au Temps de Napoléon 1798-1814* (Paris, 2003); Alan Forrest, *Conscripts and Deserters, the Army and French Society during the Revolution and Empire* (Oxford, 1989).

⁶⁷ AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 12 August 1809.

⁶⁸ AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis 3 December 1806 & 12 August 1809; Peter Wilson, *War, State and Society in Württemberg, 1677-1793* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.79-84.

⁶⁹ AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 5 August 1806.

⁷⁰ Owen Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms* (New York, 1965), p.165; Bonaparte, *Documens Historiques*, vol. 1, pp.203-05.

foreknowledge of these representations and the historical trajectory in which they appear. Ostensibly, the financial situation of the Netherlands should have been easier to gauge and quantify than nebulous ideas of the strength or power of the Dutch state. Yet it appears that many French politicians and diplomats simply did not believe the figures they saw. A series of politicians of all political persuasions, but most especially during the Revolution and empire, chose to base their policies on what they believed they knew about the Netherlands – that it was rich – rather than what their informants told them. Annie Jourdan claimed that men such as Napoleon and Sieyès, who was largely responsible for the indemnity of 1795, did not care how the Netherlands became rich, only that France had captured a rich possession.⁷¹ The fact that their ‘possession’ may not have been as rich as their lazy assumptions led them to believe apparently did not cross their minds. Rumours of Dutch wealth were not entirely without basis and were certainly not simple works of fantasy. The Netherlands remained a commercial and banking centre for much of the period, despite the long years of decline, war and blockade. But the largely shambolic system of taxation meant that private wealth did not equate to government wealth, leaving the state and provinces perennially short of money.⁷² Moreover, the increasing importance of the *rentier* economy meant that a sizable proportion of Dutch wealth was intangible rather than being based on property or precious metals.⁷³

Some French governments were more pragmatic than others when considering Dutch wealth. Louis XVI and Vergennes ignored latent representations when they accepted Dutch pleas of poverty and agreed to indemnify the Emperor on behalf of the Netherlands in 1785.⁷⁴ At the other end of the spectrum, Napoleon repeatedly refused to accept that Dutch financial resources were exhausted, no matter what proof was provided to him, and continued to insist until the fall of the empire that the Dutch were the richest people in Europe. In some ways, Napoleon’s mindset was also based on pragmatism, as he extracted all that he could from regions under his control and the Netherlands was no different. However, Napoleon’s attitude to the Netherlands correlated so closely to common representations in French public opinion, and seemed to be based so little on any evidence other than his own intuition, that it can be

⁷¹ Annie Jourdan, ‘Les Gaulois en Batavie: des Relations Diplomatiques Machiavéliques’, in Annie Jourdan & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Remous Révolutionnaires: République Batave, Armée Française* (Amsterdam, 1996), p.101.

⁷² Schama, ‘The Exigencies of War’, p.103.

⁷³ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, p.1006; J. B. Manger, *Recherches sur les Relations Economiques de la France et de la Hollande Pendant la Révolution Française (1785-1795)* (Paris, 1923), p.60.

⁷⁴ Bindoff, *The Scheldt Question*, p.141; AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 566, dispatch to Vergennes, 6 January 1786 & note of January 1786.

suggested that received notions and public representations of the Netherlands directly influenced Napoleonic policy.

The influence on policy of perceptions of Dutch wealth was most obvious at times when France was in a position to take advantage of it. By 1793 France's republican government saw the supposed riches of the Netherlands as an attractive proposition. Despite a report from Noël in early 1793 stressing the severe Dutch financial problems, politicians in Paris remained eager to conquer the Netherlands because of the advantages they imagined this would bring.⁷⁵ It would be overstating the case to claim that France went to war with the Netherlands in 1793 simply to get her hands on Dutch wealth, despite Jourdan's assertion that 'commerce, crédit, banque, marine' were major driving factors, but the supposed wealth of the Dutch people certainly provided some incentives to French strategy.⁷⁶ Danton certainly hoped that France could benefit from the Netherlands, excitedly proclaiming in the Convention that 'nous trouverons en Hollande des magasins immenses'.⁷⁷ These representations of Dutch wealth made in the Convention and the CPS generally came directly from stereotypes of the Netherlands in latent public opinion.

The conquest of the Netherlands in 1795 pushed Dutch finances to the forefront of French thinking. There was a general consensus that tapping into the fabled wealth of the Netherlands was one of the fruits of victory. The French treasury was in dire straits, facing inflation and the devaluation of the *assignat* in the wake of the repeal of the Maximum laws. The CPS, urged on by Carnot, was eager that France reap the rewards of her martial labours.⁷⁸ Sieyès noted a basic statement of intent for the CPS; 'il faut que la Hollande fasse désormais autant de bien à la France que par la passé elle lui a fait ou voulu fait du mal.'⁷⁹ Charles Cochon and François Ramel were ordered to the Netherlands to investigate what advantages France might draw from her conquest, and their reports provide clear evidence that the policies ultimately adopted by the CPS owed more to the representations of the Netherlands in public opinion

⁷⁵ Stephens (ed.), *The Principal Speeches of the Statesmen and Orators of the French Revolution*, vol. 2, p.193; AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 585, Noël to Lebrun, 18 January 1793.

⁷⁶ Jourdan, 'Les Gaulois en Batavie', p.99.

⁷⁷ Fribourg (ed.), *Discours de Danton*, p.276, speech in convention, 8 March 1793.

⁷⁸ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, p.201; HNA, Collectie Hahn (2.21.008.83), 2, CPS to colleagues in The Hague, 29 germinal an III.

⁷⁹ AN, 284 AP 10, dossier 6, note 25 ventôse an III.

than to any objective analysis of Dutch wealth.⁸⁰ Both Cochon and Ramel thought Dutch finances too unstable to afford the shock of a heavy exaction. Ramel explicitly informed his masters that 'on s'est formé dans la Convention et dans le public de bien fausses idées de ce pays où l'on a cru trouver toutes les richesses de l'Europe accumulées.'⁸¹ Ramel clearly believed that his political masters were being influenced by public representations of Dutch wealth, and that they were forming their policies on false bases.

The CPS disagreed, claiming that the natural propensity for the Dutch was to emphasise their poverty and commenting that 'c'est à nous à réduire à sa juste valeur ce qui peut être exagéré' and to determine the limits of what the Netherlands could afford.⁸² Even Carnot, a man who 'set great store by the accumulation of data', ignored reports of Dutch poverty to insist that France benefit fully from her military triumphs.⁸³ Latent public opinion was not the inspiration for policy, as it was France's perilous financial position that drove the CPS to demand 'les frais de la guerre' from the Netherlands, but it certainly helped to determine the form that French policy took. Despite the collapse of Dutch credit in the years 1793-95, the French government obstinately clung to the idea that the Netherlands could borrow money with ease.⁸⁴ No amount of facts, figures, or pleading could sway the certainty of the CPS that the Netherlands could afford hefty contributions to the French treasury, because their received ideas of the Netherlands told them that it was a rich country, and their idea of the mercantile character of the Dutch people told them that any losses could be made good. By explicitly rejecting reports that contradicted its preconceived ideas of Dutch wealth, the CPS underlined its reliance on well-known impressions of the Netherlands prevalent in latent opinion.

The indemnity that the CPS eventually demanded – one hundred million guilders, to be paid in instalments, plus a forced loan of the same amount⁸⁵ – was a huge sum for a small country to provide, and certainly would not have been considered viable had it not been for the perception of the Dutch as wealthy, and their credit as healthy. Annual tax revenues were less

⁸⁰ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 1, pp.601-619; Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, pp.201-02.

⁸¹ Manger, *Recherches sur les Relations Economiques*, pp.91-92 & p.110.

⁸² AN, 284 AP 10, dossier 6, 'Hollande (bases convenues au Comité)', no date.

⁸³ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, p.201.

⁸⁴ Tom Pfiel, 'La Hantise de la Banqueroute: les Finances Publiques dans la Période Franco-Batave (1795-1810)', *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*, Vol. 326 (2001), p.54; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 2, p.17, Noël to CPS, 15 brumaire an IV.

⁸⁵ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 587, minutes of CPS, 14 germinal & 13 floréal an III.

than thirty-five million guilders, twenty-five million of which were needed to service enormous provincial debts.⁸⁶ Added to the indemnity, the Dutch would have to find money to maintain their military forces on a wartime footing – costing seven million annually for the army alone – plus pay for the upkeep of 25,000 French troops at a further cost of ten to thirteen million per year.⁸⁷ They were also expected to meet extraordinary military expenses, such as for proposed expeditions against Ireland and the Cape in 1796.⁸⁸ Tom Pfiel argued that many Batavian domestic reforms were driven by the need to meet these huge French financial impositions.⁸⁹ Several provinces and the VOC were already nigh-on bankrupt but this was not taken into account in Paris, nor was the fact that many merchants had lost money when Britain retaliated to the French conquest of the Netherlands by seizing Dutch shipping estimated to be worth over twenty-three million guilders.⁹⁰

Jacob Blauw and Caspar Meyer, the Dutch representatives in Paris, protested on behalf of their government that they had welcomed the French as liberators and should not have to pay for their friendship, but the CPS remained unmoved.⁹¹ In 1796 and 1797 the Batavian government repeatedly requested a diminution of French forces in the Netherlands to reduce Dutch expenses, but Delacroix repeatedly refused.⁹² Officially he announced that this was because the Directory did not have the power to alter the terms of the treaty that specified the subsidy, but he admitted to his masters that the state of French finances simply did not allow a reduction in the Dutch contribution.⁹³ Yet it was never France's intention to bankrupt or cripple the Netherlands. Indeed, the CPS specifically offered the indemnity and associated

⁸⁶ Jan de Vries & Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy, Success, Failure and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500-1815* (Cambridge, 1997), p.97, table 3.4, and p.126; Pfiel, 'La Hantise de la Banqueroute', p.55, table 2.

⁸⁷ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 595, Meyer to Delacroix, 13 January 1797; Schama, 'The Exigencies of War', p.112.

⁸⁸ HNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08), 55B, Minutes of 8 April and 9 May 1796.

⁸⁹ Pfiel, 'La Hantise de la Banqueroute', 53-64.

⁹⁰ AN, A E B^{III} 464, Noël to Delacroix, 8 germinal an IV. The estimate claimed 'le total des pertes suivant les calculs les plus rigoureux et les plus modérés se monte donc à 23,144,000 florins' (one florin = one guilder).

⁹¹ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 586, Blauw and Meyer to CPS, 26 April 1795.

⁹² AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 595, Meyer to Delacroix, 13 January 1797; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 2, pp.535-36, Comité te Lande to Dejean, 6 December 1796.

⁹³ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 595, 'Rapport au Directoire Exécutif' by Delacroix, 16 pluviôse an V & Delacroix to Meyer, 27 pluviôse an V.

clauses as an alternative to the asset stripping perpetrated in Belgium and the Rhineland in 1793.⁹⁴ The Directory did, however, threaten Dutch politicians with wholesale plunder as late as December 1797 to dissuade them from renegeing on previous agreements.⁹⁵

To exacerbate matters from a Dutch point of view, France compelled the Netherlands to accept the devalued *assignats* as legal tender, ultimately obliging the provincial States to soften the blow by compensating Dutch tradesmen at a cost of several million guilders.⁹⁶ France's *assignat* policy was based on two considerations. First was the eminently practical consideration that French troops were often paid in *assignats* rather than coin and thus had no other form of currency available to them. Second was the theory that introducing *assignats* into such a rich country as the Netherlands would naturally shore up confidence in the failing system. Veteran French diplomat Antoine Caillard, believed by the CPS to be intimately familiar with the Netherlands and her resources, thought that the introduction of *assignats* into the Netherlands would operate a 'great revolution' in European exchanges in favour of French finances.⁹⁷ The bulk purchase of *assignats* by the States and the agreement to pay French troops in the Netherlands in Dutch coin from August 1795 meant that the introduction of *assignats* into the Netherlands was never fully achieved. Nor did their brief use in the Netherlands prevent their continued plummet in value.⁹⁸ Yet the decision to force *assignats* onto the Netherlands nonetheless reflects the widespread political belief that the Dutch economy was strong enough to help revive the fortunes of France's paper currency.

France's exploitation of the Netherlands was, in some ways, similar to that of other conquered territories or sister republics. The 'rich provinces' and 'fertile plains' of Northern Italy were rapaciously stripped of wealth by Napoleon's army in the 1796-97 campaigns, with an estimated fifty million livres extorted.⁹⁹ This was, however, less than one-quarter of the

⁹⁴ Biro, *The German Policy of Revolutionary France*, vol. 1, pp.204-206.

⁹⁵ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 2, p.140 ; HNA, Collectie Hahn (2.21.008.83), 2, Sieyès to Representatives of the People, 11 germinal an III.

⁹⁶ Manger, *Recherches sur les Relations Economiques*, pp.102-109 ; AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 589, f.241, 'Précis du Rapport de Ramel'.

⁹⁷ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 1, p.347; AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 587, French Representatives to CPS, 6 floréal an III; Manger, *Recherches sur les Relations Economiques*, p.102.

⁹⁸ R. G. Hawtrey, 'The Collapse of the French Assignats', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 111 (September 1918), p.304.

⁹⁹ M. J. Sydenham, *The First French Republic, 1792-1804* (London, 1974), p.117; David Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (14th edn., London, 1998), p.85; Michael Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy, 1796-1814* (New York, 2004).

hundred million guilder indemnity demanded of the Netherlands, and was often exacted in a highly irregular manner.¹⁰⁰ Georges Lefebvre estimated that only one-fifth of the Italian wealth was paid over to the French government.¹⁰¹ As in the Netherlands, French *commissaries* came to entrust the new 'patriot' governments with the task of exactions, but unlike the Netherlands none of the Italian Republics were taken seriously as an independent state, even by France. The sheer scale of exactions from the Netherlands dwarfed those of Italy, and the contribution that the Dutch state was expected to continue to make to the war against Britain was far greater than any of the Italian puppet republics. It is true that the Netherlands was wealthier per capita than Italy, but the scale of the systemised exploitation by France indicates that French officials had expectations of Dutch wealth that went beyond objectively measured reality.¹⁰²

The Consulate and Empire saw the continuation of French attempts to exploit the supposed wealth and resources of the Netherlands, though Napoleon often proved even less sympathetic than the Directory in his demands. Napoleon remained convinced throughout his reign that the Netherlands was a land of riches that could be exploited to France's advantage. Simon Schama argued that Napoleon's motivation for allowing the Batavian Republic to stumble onwards and fold into the Kingdom of Holland in 1806 rather than annexing it to France was financial, as he wanted to tap Dutch wealth without taking over their debts.¹⁰³ Dutch leaders were convinced that Napoleon and his officials were basing their expectations on false premises. Writing to the First Consul in June 1800, the Dutch Executive Directory complained that 'On s'obstine à croire des ressources à un pays qui n'en a plus aucune; [...] on suppose des richesses où il n'y a que de beaux restes d'une prospérité et d'une aisance jadis généralement répandues'.¹⁰⁴ The letter protested that French officials under the Directory had treated the Netherlands like 'un bien rural' to be exploited for their benefit, and that French privateers preyed unchecked on Dutch shipping, helping to destroy the country's commerce. It also laid out the statistics to prove the Batavian Republic's plight; ordinary revenues were only

¹⁰⁰ Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy*, p.34.

¹⁰¹ G. Lefebvre (trans. R. Baldick), *The Directory* (London, 1965), p.75, quoted in Sydenham, *The First French Republic*, p.117.

¹⁰² Italy's GDP per-capita has been estimated at approximately two-thirds that of the Netherlands in the second half of the eighteenth century; J. L. Van Zanden & E. Horlings, 'The Rise of the European Economy, 1500-2000', in D. Aldcroft & A. Sutcliffe (eds.), *Europe in the International Economy, 1500-2000* (Cheltenham, 1999), p.38, table 1.5.

¹⁰³ Schama, 'The Exigencies of War', pp.118-19.

¹⁰⁴ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 3, pp.622-23.

sixty million francs per year, whereas in the past year ordinary and extraordinary impositions had reached 160 million. Almost 80,000 people in Amsterdam were receiving poor relief while the wealthy had seen twenty-seven percent of their capital expropriated by the government in the past four years.

This clamorous plea of poverty fell on deaf ears. Napoleon had already insisted that the Dutch fund the full quota of troops specified in the Treaty of The Hague, compounding this by sending 10,000 new conscripts to the Netherlands to be clothed, fed and paid.¹⁰⁵ In March 1800 Napoleon also approached the merchants of Amsterdam for a loan of ten to twelve million francs to ease France's financial difficulties, but was informed in no uncertain terms that in the present state of affairs Dutch merchants did not have money to lend.¹⁰⁶ Napoleon nonetheless continued to seek contributions from the Netherlands. Sémonville and Talleyrand both tried to leverage millions of guilders from the Dutch in exchange for promises of territorial indemnity or a reduction in the number of French troops.¹⁰⁷ In July 1801 Napoleon himself proposed reducing the number of French troops in the Netherlands to 10,000 in exchange for an immediate payment of ten million guilders.¹⁰⁸ The continued efforts to draw large sums of money from a country repeatedly pleading insolvency shows that the French government, and most especially Napoleon, continued to be convinced of the vast wealth of the Netherlands long after it had, in practice, disappeared.

It should not be thought, however, that Napoleon was simply ignorant of the financial straits of the Netherlands. Aside from the lengthy exposé provided by the Dutch government in June 1800, Napoleon received several other detailed reports about the country. Some were from Dutch sources; in March 1803 Dutch merchant J.F. Pontoi was sent to Paris to explain to the First Consul that the Republic's annual peacetime deficit ran to fifty million francs, and that a mere 150 million francs in coin remained in the country.¹⁰⁹ His bleak picture was reiterated in

¹⁰⁵ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 3, pp.602, Schimmelpenninck to Gogel, 7 March 1800; AMAE, *Correspondance Politique, Hollande*, 604, Schimmelpenninck to Talleyrand, 17 April 1800.

¹⁰⁶ Bonaparte, *Correspondance de Napoléon 1^{er}*, vol. 6, pp.218-19, 4652; *Binnelandsche Bataafsche Courant*, 1 April 1800; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 3, pp.603, Schimmelpenninck to Gogel, 8 March 1800; pp.606-09, 'Aanteekening over het bezoek van Marmont', March 1800.

¹⁰⁷ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 3, pp.667-69 & 673-74.

¹⁰⁸ Bonaparte, *Correspondance de Napoléon 1^{er}*, vol. 7, pp.206-207, 5654, Napoleon to Augereau, 25 July 1801.

¹⁰⁹ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, p.406, Van der Goes, 'Instructie voor Pontoi', 22 March 1803 & p.415, Pontoi to First Consul, 22 germinal an XI.

person by four commissioners appointed to attempt to persuade Napoleon to grant the Netherlands neutrality when war resumed in 1803. Napoleon replied that he was well aware of the difficulties facing the Netherlands, but he ignored their pleas for neutrality and insisted upon a contribution in men, ships and material for the renewed conflict.¹¹⁰ Only two months later Napoleon bluntly told Schimmelpenninck that ‘les Hollandais sont si riches; ils doivent un peu vider leurs tonneaux’, and shrugged off Schimmelpenninck’s denials.¹¹¹ Reports from French observers had equally little impact unless they told Napoleon what he wanted to hear. In July 1804 Napoleon dispatched Senator Dominique-Joseph Garat to the Netherlands on a fact-finding mission to ascertain the agricultural, commercial, and military resources of the country.¹¹² Garat’s findings proved generally sympathetic to the political and financial plight of the Batavian Republic, but they had no tempering influence on Napoleonic demands.¹¹³ On the other hand, the reports of Dutch wealth of several Frenchmen who moved to the Netherlands with King Louis in 1806 were readily believed by Napoleon, despite Louis’s (not necessarily unbiased) insistence that the reports were ‘faux et exagérés’.¹¹⁴

Napoleon’s belief that the Netherlands possessed great wealth and resources was a factor in the creation of the Kingdom of Holland. In March 1806 Napoleon openly announced that the Franco-Dutch alliance could only be useful if the Netherlands was fully integrated into the French Empire.¹¹⁵ As Louis would later claim, Napoleon essentially desired ‘que les peuples étrangers sacrifiassent tout à la France.’¹¹⁶ Napoleon continued to believe that the private wealth of the Netherlands was more than enough to fulfil his demands and refused to believe the ‘prétendu misère des hollandais; ils ont tous l’argent.’¹¹⁷ In December 1806 Napoleon wrote to his brother that the Dutch were the richest people in Europe and that vigorous

¹¹⁰ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, pp.436-41.

¹¹¹ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, pp.453-56, ‘Gesprek van Schimmelpenninck met den Eersten Consul’, 24 July 1803.

¹¹² Bonaparte, *Correspondance de Napoléon 1^{er}*, vol. 9, pp.431-32, 7873.

¹¹³ Dominique-Joseph Garat, *Mémoire sur la Hollande, sur sa Population, son Commerce, son Esprit Public: et sur les Moyens, soit de la Maintenir dans son Indépendance comme Etat, soit de lui Rendre ses Anciennes Prospérités comme Nation Commerçante* (Paris, 1805).

¹¹⁴ Bonaparte, *Documens Historiques*, vol. 1, p.136.

¹¹⁵ AN, 215 AP 1, Napoleon to Talleyrand, 14 March 1806; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, pp.625-27, ‘Verbaal van Verhuell’.

¹¹⁶ AN, 400 AP 36, ‘Réflexions historiques de Louis Napoléon Bonaparte’.

¹¹⁷ AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 16 November 1806.

measures were required to oblige them to contribute to the public purse.¹¹⁸ Louis's administration increased annual tax revenues from an average of 34.5 million guilders under the Batavian Republic to an average of 46.6 million in 1807-08, but almost two-thirds of this was required to pay the national debt.¹¹⁹ Despite the best efforts of Louis and his ministers the budget remained unbalanced, with debt increasing from 1,163 million to 1,475 million guilders between 1806 and 1810.¹²⁰ Louis's failure to provide the resources demanded by Napoleon – 'vous avez trahi ma confiance', berated the emperor in one particularly scolding letter¹²¹ – was a large part of the reason that the Kingdom of Holland was extinguished and the Dutch departments annexed to France in 1810.

Even if a degree of mendacity and defensiveness of bureaucratic failings on the part of the Dutch government is assumed, Napoleon's decision to continue to make heavy demands of the Netherlands over more than a decade clearly rested upon received ideas of Dutch wealth, rather than on any objective analysis. Napoleon simply did not believe stories of poverty, either from the Dutch government or from his own representatives, because their claims did not tally with what he already 'knew' about the country. Napoleon was at least consistent in demanding too much from all of his allies – and eventually from France herself¹²² – but the level of expectation of what the Dutch could afford was far higher than it might have been had the Netherlands not had a reputation as a country of great riches.

Napoleon's mistrust of the Dutch possibly came from another tradition embedded in French public discourse; that of seeing Dutch national character as somehow opposed to France. National character is the third area where policy frequently coincided with opinion. The entire concept of national character was an invention of popular representation, and when French politicians took character into account they were, however unconsciously, allowing themselves to be led by latent public opinion. Throughout the period, irrespective of regime, national character was invoked to explain, mock or chastise the actions of the Dutch government. Occasionally positive aspects of national character – supposed civilisation, love of liberty, or

¹¹⁸ AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 3 December 1806.

¹¹⁹ Tax figures are from de Vries & van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, p.97; the annual cost of the national debt was estimated at 60 million francs (≈ 27.5 million florins) in Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 5, pp.23-24, Champagny to Brantsen, 12 November 1807.

¹²⁰ Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, p.173.

¹²¹ AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 22 October 1809.

¹²² Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, pp.172-74.

stubborn bravery – appeared in French reports. Even after annexation national character was still taken into account. Baron d'Alphonse, a leading French administrator under Lebrun, believed that it was not possible to rule a people without an intimate knowledge of their national character and culture; he and other French officials continued to consider the Dutch a separate people, not merely a society of 'clogged Gauls'.¹²³

Ideas of national character were for the most part invoked as explanation for Dutch actions rather than imperative for French policy. The tortuous progress of the Batavian constitutional process in the mid-1790s, for example, was explained by a series of French agents as being the result of natural Dutch lethargy and 'phlegm'.¹²⁴ Sémonville also admitted that the celerity of constitutional reform in 1801 was incompatible with Dutch national character.¹²⁵ Yet in neither instance did the French government make any provision for the supposed slothfulness of the Dutch when laying down their initial policies. Similarly, in 1807 Napoleon railed against the miserliness of Dutch 'esprit national', blaming it (rather than his brother, for once) for the feebleness of the country's economy, but expected Dutch national character to evolve to suit his policies rather than vice versa.¹²⁶

Despite being ostensibly allied for almost two decades, it is clear that a succession of French governments never fully trusted the Netherlands. However, it was largely only after 1795 that French policy-makers became overtly concerned with the international sympathies of the Dutch people. The popular conception of a pro-British Dutch populace certainly pushed the CPS to seek to place limits on the right of the Dutch people to choose their own constitution, as Carnot was forced to assure the Convention that partisans of Britain would not be considered part of the Dutch people and could not take part in the constitutional process.¹²⁷ Cochon arrived in the Netherlands in 1795 expecting to find widespread Anglophilia, but was pleasantly surprised to find a strong Patriot presence in the supposedly notoriously Anglophile Province of Zeeland.¹²⁸ Under the Batavian Republic anti-French unrest was a relatively rare

¹²³ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, pp.616-18.

¹²⁴ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 587, Cochon to CPS, 15 germinal an III & Cochon to Merlin de Douai, 21 germinal an III; 595, Delacroix to Meyer, 14 nivôse an V.

¹²⁵ L. de Gou (ed.), *De Staatsregeling van 1801, Bronnen voor de Totstandkoming* (The Hague, 1995), p.521.

¹²⁶ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 5, pp.23-24, Champagny to Brantsen, 12 November 1807.

¹²⁷ Albert Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française* (8 vols, Paris, 1905), vol. 4, pp.241-42.

¹²⁸ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 587, Cochon to CPS, 15 germinal an III.

occurrence and was seldom extrapolated into wider issues of latent Anglophile or Francophobe tendencies. Noël, for example, blamed supposedly Orangist violence in Friesland in 1797 on Patriot provocation, and while Delacroix disagreed he still saw the unrest as the work of a few extremists rather than a result of widespread Orangism or Anglophilia.¹²⁹ However, during his time as French representative in the Netherlands, Sémonville was wont to blame any act of resistance to France on supposedly rampant 'Anglomanie', to the intense irritation of Dutch foreign minister Maarten van der Goes.¹³⁰

The assumption that the Dutch disliked France persisted under the empire, and was even bolstered by the increase in incidents of anti-French unrest after 1806. Johan Joor demonstrated the depth of anti-French unrest during the period 1806-13, much of which can be attributed to the foreign regimes foisted upon the Netherlands.¹³¹ It has been argued that this unrest was primarily in response to centralising reforms rather than to anti-French sympathies.¹³² Many contemporary observers did not see it this way. Pierre-François Réal, in a report to Napoleon shortly after annexation, argued that 'cet esprit anti-française est depuis plus de 150 ans enraciné dans la Hollande', and had largely been inspired by Britain.¹³³ Réal preferred to explain the Dutch dislike of France in terms of long-standing representations rather than to place the emphasis on more recent events.

French politicians were also almost obsessively worried about continued commercial intercourse between the Netherlands and Britain, which public and political opinion had long portrayed as a strong basis for their political allegiance. Representative-on-mission Joseph-Etienne Richard wrote to the CPS in late April 1795 to caution that the Netherlands drew great revenues from investments in Britain, while the French alliance offered little other than

¹²⁹ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 595, Noël to Delacroix, 1 ventôse an V & Delacroix to Noël, 17 ventôse an V.

¹³⁰ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, p.396, Van der Goes to Schimmelpenninck, 14 December 1802; The National Archives, London (TNA), FO 37/61, 31 December 1802, Liston to Hawkesbury.

¹³¹ Johan Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam: Onrust, Opruiing en Onwillingheid in Nederland ten Tijde van het Koninkrijk Holland en de Inlijving bij het Franse Keizerrijk (1806-1813)* (Amsterdam, 2000); Johan Joor, "'A Very Rebellious Disposition": Dutch Experience and Popular Protest under the Napoleonic Regime (1806-13)', in Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann & Jane Rendall (eds.), *Soldiers, Citizens and Civilians, Experiences and Perceptions of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1790-1820* (Basingstoke, 2009), 181-204; Johan Joor, 'History and Myth of Dutch Popular Protest in the Napoleonic Period (1806-1813)' in Laura Cruz & Willem Frijhoff (eds.), *Myth in History, History in Myth* (Boston, 2009), 175-99.

¹³² Joost Kloek & Wijnand Mijnhardt, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective: 1800, Blueprints for a National Community* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp.216-17.

¹³³ AN, AF IV 1721, Réal, 'Voyage en Hollande', p.37.

onerous debts for years to come.¹³⁴ He warned that the Dutch love of money meant that France should be vigilant of the Dutch and take precautionary measures. Delacroix complained later the same year that the conduct of Dutch merchants was not what should be expected of a 'friendly nation', a complaint reiterated by Talleyrand two years later.¹³⁵ For Napoleon, Anglo-Dutch commerce was a sore point even before the fabled Continental System was imposed from 1806.

French public opinion might have considered close Anglo-Dutch commercial links as proof of a mutual respect, possibly even of affection, but Napoleon also considered it a direct challenge to his authority. From the renewal of war in 1803, Napoleon viewed the Dutch government's failure to prevent cross-Channel trade as a quasi-hostile act.¹³⁶ Trade meant communications, and Napoleon accused the Netherlands and Hamburg of directly aiding Britain's intelligence-gathering.¹³⁷ Typically, however, he was not above using this to his advantage, ordering the Dutch press in 1805 to spread deliberate disinformation about his military plans.¹³⁸ Napoleon clearly considered trade an indication of loyalties. In 1808 he told the Dutch ambassador in Paris that trade with Britain was a political act, and that those who engaged in it were enemies of France.¹³⁹ Napoleon could never understand that Louis's generally apathetic approach to preventing British contraband was intended to benefit his Dutch subjects, instead bitterly berating Louis for being an Anglophile and acting more like 'the brother of the King of England' than a brother of Napoleon.¹⁴⁰ As for the Dutch, the emperor mocked, it was well known that they would welcome none but Englishmen of the Windham faction as rulers of their country.¹⁴¹ One reason for the decision to impose direct French control over the Netherlands in 1810 was Napoleon's anger at flourishing Anglo-Dutch trade and the open flouting of the Berlin and

¹³⁴ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 586, Richard to CPS, 10 floréal an III.

¹³⁵ AN, A E B^{III} 464, Delacroix to Noël, 25 frimaire an IV; AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 598, Talleyrand to Delacroix, 13 pluviôse an VI.

¹³⁶ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 4, pp.528-29, Sémonville to Van der Goes, 1 October 1804.

¹³⁷ AN, 215 AP 1, Napoleon to Talleyrand, 5 brumaire an XIII, 10 floréal an XIII & 30 floréal an XIII; J. Gallagher, *The Iron Marshal, a Biography of Louis N. Davout* (London, 2000), p.82.

¹³⁸ Martyn Lyons, *Napoleon Bonaparte and the Legacy of the French Revolution* (Basingstoke, 1994), p.178.

¹³⁹ AN, AF IV 1730, Verhuell to Roëll, 24 October 1808.

¹⁴⁰ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 5, pp.391-92, Brantsen to Louis, 17 January 1808; Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, pp.553-54.

¹⁴¹ AN, 400 AP 25, Napoleon to Louis, 12 October 1808.

Milan Decrees. Napoleon's attitude echoed public opinion insofar as both ascribed political motivations and sympathies to Anglo-Dutch trade, but whether Napoleon was influenced by received perceptions or simply by his desire to dominate and his obsession with humbling 'perfidious Albion' is a moot point. The fact that infractions in the Continental System helped to undermine relations with Portugal in 1807 and Russia in 1812 indicates that Napoleon's concerns applied far wider than the Netherlands.

The idea that the Dutch were a commercial nation often informed French policy independently of the supposed Anglophilia that it evoked. French politicians of all regimes believed that the way to a Dutchman's heart was through his wallet. In September 1792 Lebrun placed 200,000 francs at the disposal of de Maulde in The Hague, claiming that the Netherlands was 'un pays où l'on trouve toutes les espèces de marchandises, et où tous est marchandise: les hommes, les moyens de les nourrir et ceux de les détruire, les vertus et les vices, les secrets d'état et l'influence des individus sur les gouvernements'.¹⁴² Lebrun clearly associated Dutch mercantilism with mercenary practices, and wished to use the Netherlands to acquire arms, information and influence to help France's war effort. In a similar vein, Robespierre advised against attacking Dutch shipping in 1793, as he believed one could not attract a commercial nation to the cause of liberty by striking at its pecuniary interests.¹⁴³

The offer of commercial treaties was an oft-used tool for French politicians to attempt to curry favour with the Dutch. When Montmorin became foreign minister in early 1787 he was advised by under-secretary Joseph Rayneval that a commercial treaty with the Netherlands would bind them to France more tightly than the treaty of alliance already in place.¹⁴⁴ In 1799 the Directory also tried to dangle the prospect of a commercial treaty to entice the Dutch into closer relations, and in 1806 Napoleon openly offered a new commercial treaty as a 'concession' for accepting Louis as king.¹⁴⁵ The supposed commercial character of the Dutch did not direct French policy, but it is evident that French politicians of all regimes thought it possible to use commerce as a carrot to tempt the Dutch into bending to French will. The supposedly commercial nature of the Dutch could also have a less positive impact. Napoleon

¹⁴² AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 584, note from ministry, 4 September 1792.

¹⁴³ Maximilien Robespierre, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 5, ed. Gustave Laurent (Gap, 1961), p.273.

¹⁴⁴ Jeremy Whiteman, *Reform, Revolution and French Global Policy, 1787-1791* (Aldershot, 2003), p.51.

¹⁴⁵ François Crouzet, 'Aspects Financiers de la Relation Franco-Batave', in Annie Jourdan & Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Remous Révolutionnaires: République Batave, Armée Française* (Amsterdam, 1996), p.56; Bonaparte, *Documens Historiques*, pp.224-25.

refused to countenance the creation of a nobility in the Kingdom of Holland because of the perceived Dutch preference for business over battles, raving at Louis that ‘an order of nobility is bearable in a military country; in a commercial one it is intolerable.’¹⁴⁶

The French idea of Dutch national character also had some impact on policies towards constitutional formation and reform. The general belief that the Dutch should be left to formulate their own constitution after 1795 showed that the French had far more faith in the republican credentials of the Dutch than in those of most other client states. The eventual intervention in 1798 stemmed from a desire to preclude anarchy and enforce stable government rather than from a wish to dictate to the Dutch.¹⁴⁷ The Dutch were certainly seen as capable of civilised self-government, and their national character a suitable basis for a constitution. In 1801, Napoleon desired that the Dutch reform their constitution to be ‘parfaitement analogue à leur position, à leurs intérêts et aux habitudes de leur caractère national.’¹⁴⁸ This included a degree of federalism, a respect for religious freedoms, and a ruling council. Despite the efforts of the Dutch constitutional committee and the input of the French government, the constitution of 1801 proved universally unpopular. A major problem, Napoleon was told, was that it was still ‘trop éloignée du caractère de ce peuple’, and reforms planned in 1804-05 were again intended to mould a new constitution to reflect Dutch national character.¹⁴⁹

The creation of the Kingdom of Holland, however, stemmed mostly from Napoleon’s desire for control and showed a general disregard for Dutch national character. Napoleon acknowledged the importance of Dutch self-identity when he agreed to allow administration by natives, the use of the Dutch language, to respect religious freedoms, and to maintain the territorial integrity of the Batavian Republic – all conditions demanded by Dutch negotiators in exchange for accepting a foreign king.¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, Napoleon reprised the idea of the early French Revolution that there could be a universal standard for all mankind, and that the French standard offered the best of all possible worlds. The enthronement of an imperial prince, centralised royal government, and the later insistence that the *Code Napoléon* replace

¹⁴⁶ Thompson (ed.), *Napoleon’s Letters*, p.149, Napoleon to Louis, 30 March 1807.

¹⁴⁷ AMAE, Mémoires et Documents: Hollande, 71, Instructions for Delacroix, 12 frimaire an VI.

¹⁴⁸ de Gou, *De Staatsregeling van 1801*, p.583, Talleyrand to Sémonville, floréal an IX.

¹⁴⁹ AN, AF IV 1682, undated memorandum; L. de Gou (ed.), *De Staatsregeling van 1805 en de Constitutie van 1806, Bronnen voor de Totstandkoming* (The Hague, 1997).

¹⁵⁰ Connolly, *Napoleon’s Satellite Kingdoms*, pp.132-33.

Dutch legal codes, demonstrated a move towards a more universal standard that demanded uniformity of administration and assumed a degree of transnational homogeneity. Yet however constrictive indirect Napoleonic rule may have been to national individualism, the Netherlands often benefited from wider freedoms than the domains of Napoleon's other siblings. Joseph in Naples was kept on a far tighter leash and could not give his reforms the local flavour that Louis was often able to infuse. Jerome in Westphalia was simply presented with constitutional and legal packages to enact lock, stock and barrel.¹⁵¹ In Michael Broers's conception of the Napoleonic Empire as divided into inner and outer regions, the Netherlands belonged firmly in the inner, civilised zone.¹⁵²

The final idea that had an impact on foreign policy was the concept of the nation. As shown in the previous chapter, the meaning of the nation in France evolved during the Revolution. A nation in the French sense was sovereign, unitary ('one and indivisible'), and free from tyranny, foreign or domestic. These principles, which became entrenched in nationalist rhetoric over the short lifetime of the French Republic, came to heavily influence French attempts to shape the Batavian Republic's constitution. For French politicians, diplomats, generals, and for French public opinion, the Netherlands was beyond question a nation. Unlike some German or Italian states overrun by French armies, the Netherlands was not carved up or arbitrarily formed into a new state. Not even the fabled policy of 'natural frontiers' tempted French policy makers to dismember the Netherlands in order to claim the full left bank of the Rhine, although it should be noted that the significance of 'natural frontiers' has sometimes been overstated by historians and the policy had largely been dropped by mid-1794.¹⁵³ Cochon told Merlin de Douai in 1795 that the Rhine barrier was a dream only of those who understood nothing, and that no intelligent military man had ever desired it as a frontier.¹⁵⁴ Although some of the more hard-faced realists and cynics in the French government proposed that France had an absolute right to dispose of conquered territories as she saw fit,¹⁵⁵ the prevailing view was that the Netherlands was a nation, with all the implications of sovereignty, self-determination and indivisibility.

¹⁵¹ Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, p.117.

¹⁵² Michael Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon, 1799-1815* (London, 1996), p.69.

¹⁵³ Biro, *The German Policy of Revolutionary France*, vol. 1, pp.234-35; Tim Blanning, *The French Revolutionary Wars, 1787-1802* (London, 1996), pp.91-92. Sorel is particularly guilty of overemphasising natural frontiers, even giving the name to volume four of his *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*.

¹⁵⁴ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 587, Cochon to Merlin de Douai, 21 germinal an III.

¹⁵⁵ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 586, 'Aperçu...' by Buchot, 2^e jour complémentaire, an II.

From a revolutionary Frenchman's perspective, the constitution of the United Provinces represented fragmentary, unequal and illiberal government. It was certainly not a national government. Social, political and geographical inequalities were rife. The Stadholderate was seen in a similar light to the French monarchy, while the federalism and provincialism at the heart of Dutch government were inimical to all concepts of the revolutionary French nation. Federalism was next to factionalism in French eyes, and both should be avoided, whether the division was ideological or geographical. Although the French experiment of trying to create a society based on absolute unity, equality and virtue had obviously failed during the Terror, the Thermidorians and the Directory were still committed to a version of the principles of 1789.¹⁵⁶ Delacroix reported that the Dutch alliance would be worthless unless the Batavian Republic had a government which was 'analogue aux principes sur lesquelles la Révolution Française est fondée'.¹⁵⁷ These principles demanded liberty, equality before the law, and a unitary state and central government established by the will of the people.

French policy after 1795 was to push the Netherlands to adopt these principles of French national government. In a long and detailed instruction in early 1796, the Directory ordered Noël to inform influential Dutch politicians that the only defence against tyranny, internal anarchy, and foreign subversion was a strong, unitary government. France, they declared, would support any Dutch government that was appointed by the 'general will', but such a will could not be expressed by intermediary bodies such as provincial assemblies.¹⁵⁸ The example of France should be followed. Likening dissidence in Friesland, Zeeland and Groningen to the Federalist Revolt of 1793, the instructions asked rhetorically 'N'a-t-on pas vu à son aurore des provinces entières préparer une scission désastreuse? N'a-t-on pas vu le premier corps constituant se diviser en deux partis, dont l'un opposait de ridicules protestations à la volonté du peuple qui reprenait nos droits?' Only through bloodshed had France ensured that liberty and equality could prevail; only by abandoning federalist pretensions could the Netherlands avoid bloodshed and join France in the enjoyment of true republicanism.

There is no doubt as to where France stood in the constitutional debates over provincial autonomy of 1795-97. The Batavian Republic was a nation, and must therefore be governed nationally. When Noël reported that Zeeland was considering withdrawing from the Union of

¹⁵⁶ William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1990), pp.318-19.

¹⁵⁷ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 590, 'Rapport au Directoire Exécutif', 12 nivôse an IV.

¹⁵⁸ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 590, 'Instructions adressés par le Directoire Exécutif au Citoyen Noël, Ministre Plénipotentiaire de la République Française à la Haye', 12 nivôse an IV.

Utrecht in late 1795, Delacroix demanded that the plan be immediately quashed.¹⁵⁹ For a man of mild Jacobin principles such as Delacroix opting out of a nation was simply not possible. He considered the Union of Utrecht nothing but a 200 year-old legal nicety, superseded by the indivisibility of the sovereign nation. The continued legal existence of provincial administrations while the new constitution was being drawn up was, in French eyes, simply an administrative tool. The provinces had no right of autonomous action outside of their frontiers, nor any corporate share of the national sovereignty.

The French government's desire for a unitary Dutch government is repeated time and again in the correspondence with Noël, but the Directory and Delacroix also insisted that France should not be seen to be interfering in the constitutional process once the Batavian National Assembly had opened in March 1796.¹⁶⁰ The French endorsement of the awkward compromise constitutional draft of May 1797 should not be considered as France reneging on the principles of unitary national government, but rather as an acknowledgement of the right of self-determination of a free and sovereign people and a pragmatic acknowledgement that a working government, however flawed, was better than no government at all. By early 1797 the French Directory desperately wanted constitutional government in the Netherlands, fearing unrest and a revival of Orangism if uncertainty continued, and was even willing to endorse a project that did not follow its long-declared principles.¹⁶¹ Overt French support for the constitutional proposal did not, however, prevent its rejection by an enormous margin, and may even have worked to its detriment.¹⁶² Dutch unitarists, whose conception of the nation generally matched that of France, were jubilant. 'Elle appelle *suffrage du peuple et volonté générale* le rejet de la constitution dont elle se donne tout l'honneur, et désigne les acceptants comme ennemis du peuple', reported Noël.¹⁶³ The very principles that Delacroix and the Directory had so enthusiastically championed were now the source of some discomfort for the French government, not because of what they represented in an abstract sense but for the very practical reason that their proponents had prevented the establishment of a government useful to France.

¹⁵⁹ AN, AE B^{III} 464, Delacroix to Noël, 17 nivôse an IV.

¹⁶⁰ Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 2, pp.46-48, Delacroix to Noël, 26 ventôse an IV.

¹⁶¹ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 595, Noël to Delacroix, 1 ventôse an V, Delacroix to Noël, 5 ventôse an V and 17 ventôse an V.

¹⁶² Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, p.269.

¹⁶³ AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Hollande, 596, Noël to Talleyrand, 30 fructidor an V.

For all that French ideas of national sovereignty shaped French policies to the Netherlands in 1795, the belief that the Netherlands was an independent sovereign power ultimately did not prevent direct intervention in the Dutch constitutional process. Following the leftward lurch occasioned by the Coup of Fructidor in September 1797, the French government took a more proactive stance to Dutch affairs, replacing (at the behest of a deputation of Dutch unitarists) Noël and General Pierre Beurnonville, commander of the *Armée du Nord*, for demonstrating 'aristocratic' tendencies.¹⁶⁴ The coup of 22 January 1798 that purged federalist elements from the National Assembly took place with the full support of Delacroix, then French ambassador in The Hague, and the tacit approval of Paris. Six months later Herman Daendels's counter-coup was also launched with the full accord of the now more moderate Parisian Directory. National sovereignty and control over domestic government may have been key elements of French national discourse in 1798, but were eventually cast aside for the sake of pragmatism.

French foreign policy in general during this period was driven by a combination of *realpolitik*, necessity, expansionism, or, under Napoleon, an apparently insatiable desire for control. Active public opinion was generally ignored by politicians of all regimes and ideologies, but some aspects of latent public opinion did influence policy. The prevalent representations and characterisations of the Dutch provided the conceptual background which informed the decisions of a succession of politicians and ministers. Latent public opinion considered the Netherlands an important power in Europe, possessing a navy to be reckoned with and the wealth, resources and credit to sustain military forces beyond the reach of other similarly modestly-sized states. French political expectations of the Netherlands, especially during the Revolution and empire, were also generally based on these assumptions, despite sometimes overwhelming evidence that they were ill founded. Ministers from Vergennes to Talleyrand considered the Dutch navy a key ally if France aspired to wrest the trident from Britannia's grasp. Napoleon may have treated the Netherlands more like a vassal state but he too believed in the importance of the Dutch fleet. After 1795, every French government looked for ways to extract the fabled wealth of the Netherlands, ignoring any suggestion that this wealth may be diminished or exhausted.

Ideas of national identity and the nation also had an impact on foreign policy. In the most basic sense, the Netherlands was thought to be a nation and was treated as such, which included being afforded the right of national self-determination and independence. The idea that the Dutch had a national identity and a national character led Napoleon and his subordinates to

¹⁶⁴ Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, pp.330-32; Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 2, pp.545-50, Bode, Eykenbroek and Eberstein to the Directory, 15 October 1797.

attempt to mould successive Dutch constitutions to fit these characteristics. That these attempts mostly failed does not detract from the intent that was shown to engage with notions of national identity. Even after the annexation of 1810 the Netherlands was administered apart from the rest of the empire, with French officials seeking to tailor their control to local conditions. However, abstract notions of the nation could not ultimately prevent practical necessity from reasserting control over policy in the constitutional struggles of 1798, nor did it encourage any French government to give up the strategic benefits of militarily occupying Dutch territory. The relatively-frequent invocation of national identity and national character by French politicians and diplomats also did not always indicate an impact on policy. Aspects of what French public opinion believed to be Dutch national character – greed, phlegm, sluggishness – were often invoked in exasperation by French diplomats to explain or simply insult the behaviour of the Dutch people or government, but policy was not tailored to take such supposed national characteristics into account.

CHAPTER SIX

ANOTHER 'OTHER':

BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION, NATIONAL IDENTITY

AND THE NETHERLANDS



Isaac Cruikshank, *A New Dutch Exercise* (1793)
(British Museum Satires 8633: © Trustees of the British Museum)

On 22 November 1813 the *Morning Chronicle* newspaper joyously reported an anti-French uprising in the Netherlands, telling readers that several thousand British troops were to be embarked at once to aid 'our ancient friend', and that the Park and Tower guns were to be fired in celebration of this event of 'utmost importance'.¹ Two days later the *Morning Post* reported that the uprising had led to the 'deliverance of the Dutch', and had been 'effected with all the steadiness and resolution of the Dutch character'.² Britons of all stations rejoiced at this supposed liberation, yet for most of the previous two decades Britain and the Netherlands had been at war, fighting bitter battles by land and sea, with the Dutch a source of fear and scorn for their enemies across the North Sea. The evident question, therefore, is how and why should Britons of 1813 have considered the Dutch as their 'ancient friend' and have celebrated their 'deliverance'. It is this question that this chapter in part aims to answer.

This chapter examines British perceptions of the Netherlands and of the Dutch during the period 1785-1815, outlining what British public opinion thought of their near neighbour and commercial and colonial rival, as well as examining the place of the Dutch as an 'other' in the British national psyche. Building on concepts of the public outlined in the introduction, this chapter will seek to highlight active opinion concerning the Netherlands and to pick out the main themes in the prevalent public perceptions, prejudices and representations of underlying latent opinion. It will consider British views of the Dutch as a people, of the supposed Dutch national character, and of the Dutch state. First, however, it will briefly outline the ideas of British self-identity that informed and ultimately inevitably underpinned Britons' views of the Netherlands.

The eighteenth century saw the beginnings of the creation of a British national identity. Gerald Newman believed that the search for such an identity began somewhere around the mid-century, while for Linda Colley the Act of Union of 1707 began the process of 'forging' a coherent nation.³ Colley's imagery of forging the nation deliberately evokes not only the laborious difficulty of the task of hammering a national bond, but also the degree of artifice involved in nation building. Despite Britain's geographical unity making it easy to define who was British and who was not – as an island it had definite boundaries – defining what being British meant was much more difficult. Not only did England, Scotland and Wales all form

¹ *Morning Chronicle*, 22 November 1813.

² *Morning Post*, 24 November 1813.

³ Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism, A Cultural History 1740-1830* (London, 1987), p.127; Linda Colley, *Britons, Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London, 1996).

separate entities in the popular mind, but within each of these areas great regional and local differences could also be found.

At the broadest level the shared institutions of government and the supposed freedoms that accrued from the British constitution gave Britons a sense of belonging to a national community. Parliament provided a symbol for the nation, representing the protection of Britons' rights from government tyranny, but with the fading of disputes over succession by the late eighteenth century the monarchy had also become a symbol of unity. Expressions of national sentiment often involved expressions of loyalty to the crown, especially during the instability of the 1790s.⁴ As both head of state and head of the Church of England the monarch fulfilled a crucial role, ensuring political stability and Protestant superiority, though in practice the Hanoverian dynasty gradually relinquished a great deal of power in both roles. The relatively weak nature of royal authority, limited by Parliament, meant that the British monarchy was not perceived in opposition to the nation, unlike the monarchy in France, and nor was the monarch necessarily blamed for failings in government, as was the Stadholder in the Netherlands. Loyalty to the king was never popularly considered contrary to loyalty to the nation, and although the person of the monarch was not always universally esteemed, the institution of monarchy provided a vital symbol of unity.

Although Britain was something of a culturally disparate entity, there were aspects of culture that were adopted to symbolise 'Britishness'. The majority of Britons spoke English, despite fairly sizable populations in Wales and northern Scotland, the so-called 'Celtic fringe', who spoke Welsh and Gaelic respectively. The supposed eighteenth-century British culture was heavily Anglophone, and was also heavily influenced by London and the urban gentry.⁵ The British Enlightenment, involving thinkers from all across the United Kingdom, played a role in the acceptance of the idea of a British culture but reached only a relatively narrow band of society. Dror Wahrman drew attention to the choice increasingly facing the 'middling sorts' of eighteenth-century Britain between engaging in a national-genteel culture or more traditional (and plebeian) local cultures.⁶ Wahrman indeed showed the eighteenth century to be the beginning of the rise of a self-identifying middling class, when cultural consumption rather

⁴ Matthew McCormack, 'Rethinking "Loyalty" in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (2012), pp.416-17.

⁵ Alexander Murdoch, *British History 1660-1832, National Identity and Local Culture* (London, 1998), pp.88-105.

⁶ Dror Wahrman, 'National Society, Communal Culture: An Argument about the Recent Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Social History*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (January 1992), pp.45-46.

than 'functional consumption' became the norm for an increasing portion of the British population.⁷ Over the course of the century a degree of conspicuous cultural consumption came to hold a relatively important place in the British self image. Britons liked to imagine themselves as straightforward, sturdy and free, epitomising their self-identity in the comforting image of the roast beef-eating, ale-swilling, independent-minded figure of John Bull.⁸ The hearty eating was of course not meant as a literal portrayal of the British populace. In terms of wealth and resulting consumption patterns the majority were not particularly well off, with provincial incomes considerably lower than in the capital.⁹ Luxury consumption among the gentry or urban middling classes was by no means typical for the whole country.

The pride in wealth and consumption was linked to Britons' pride in trade, which was important to British identity even amongst non-commercial communities.¹⁰ Trade was seen as a pursuit for which the British were especially suited and the defence of British trade was thought to be of vital importance to the country. In 1797, Reverend Charles Church preached that the government was fighting the current war 'to defend their country's trade, which is *your* support' and went on to directly link trade to 'your country's honour and national character'.¹¹ This perceived national reliance on trade was part of a more general maritime identity of the British nation. Britons firmly believed that, as their popular song demanded, Britannia should rule the waves. Any notion of a maritime balance of power was eschewed as control over the seas was considered something that was British by right.¹² The primacy of the Royal Navy was a point of pride for all in Britain, providing not only security but a sense that Britain's true place in the world lay with the sea.¹³ Even eighteenth-century Continental

⁷ Wahrman, 'National Society, Communal Culture', p.46; Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c.1780-1840* (Cambridge, 1995).

⁸ Tamara Hunt, *Defining John Bull: Political Caricature and National Identity in late Georgian England* (Aldershot, 2003); Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature, Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (London, 1996), pp.158-59.

⁹ G.D.H. Cole & Raymond Postgate, *The Common People, 1746-1938* (London, 1938), pp.68-73.

¹⁰ Colley, *Britons*, p.64.

¹¹ Charles Cobbe Church, *The Duty of the Laborious Classes in Times of Alarm* (Whitehaven, 1797), p.9.

¹² Daniel A. Baugh, 'Withdrawing from Europe: Anglo-French Maritime Geopolitics, 1750-1800', *The International History Review*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (March 1998), p.10.

¹³ Geoff Quilley, "'All the Ocean is her Own": the Image of the Sea and the Identity of the Maritime Nation in Eighteenth Century British Art', in Geoff Cubitt (ed.), *Imagining Nations* (Manchester, 1998), 132-52.

military commitments were often dressed up as attempts to divert France from a naval strategy, such was the perceived importance of the sea to British opinion and identity.¹⁴

The fact that Britain boasted the military, and especially naval, strength to allow her to compete with foreign rivals also helped to foster a sense of national community. The Battles of Cape St Vincent, Camperdown and Trafalgar, for example, were hailed as British victories; Admirals John Jervis, Adam Duncan and Horatio Nelson were celebrated as British commanders; and the sailors who fought and died were lauded as British heroes.¹⁵ A degree of militarism would especially have fostered national feeling during the sporadic invasion scares to which Britain was subject. The militias and volunteer organisations that provided men of all social ranks with a forum to show their loyalty held appeal not for their parochial nature, and certainly not for their role in local policing, but because they were part of a much larger, national, defensive effort.¹⁶ The regular army did little to inculcate national feelings within its soldiery, but its victories were widely celebrated and added to a popular sense of national pride.¹⁷

Religion provided another rock on which British identity was built. The majority of Britons were Protestant and the confessional nature of the state reinforced the shared ideal that bonded Britons together. The Church of England's primacy meant that the relationship to the nation of some Protestant denominations remained ambiguous, as nonconformists were often treated as second class citizens, if not actively persecuted.¹⁸ All Protestants nonetheless banded together in an intense distrust and dislike of Roman Catholicism. Catholics were popularly widely mistrusted in British society and could hold no public office until well into the

¹⁴ N. A. M. Rodger, 'The Continental Commitment in the Eighteenth Century', in L. Freedman, P. Hayes & R. O'Neill (eds.), *War Strategy and International Politics* (Oxford, 1992), 39-55; Jeremy Black, *Debating Foreign Policy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Farnham, 2011), p.80.

¹⁵ Christopher Lloyd, *St Vincent and Camperdown* (London, 1963); Roy Adkins & Lesley Adkins, *The War for all the Oceans* (London, 2007), pp.164-68.

¹⁶ Linda Colley, 'Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain 1750-1830', *Past and Present*, No. 113 (November 1986), p.114; Jon Newman, "'An Insurrection of Loyalty": The London Volunteer Regiments' Response to the Invasion Threat', in Mark Philp (ed.), *Resisting Napoleon, the British Response to the Threat of Invasion, 1797-1815* (Aldershot, 2006), p.77.

¹⁷ John E. Cookson, 'Regimental Worlds: Interpreting the Experience of British Soldiers during the Napoleonic Wars', in Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann & Jane Rendall (eds.), *Soldiers, Citizens and Civilians, Experiences and Perceptions of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1790-1820* (Basingstoke, 2009), 23-42.

¹⁸ John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London, 1994), p.339; J.E. Thomas, *Britain's Last Invasion, Fishguard 1797* (Stroud, 2007). The prosecution of several men of Pembrokeshire following the French invasion of 1797 is often put down to the fact they were nonconformists.

nineteenth century. Whether in times of peace or war Catholicism was perceived as an omnipresent danger, an enemy within yet one with powerful continental allies in France and Spain. Widespread and sometimes militant suspicion of Catholics throughout society led more than once to anti-Catholic violence, most notoriously the Gordon Riots of 1780. Such 'othering' is generally seen to have been crucial to the formation of a British identity. Colley and Newman emphasised the importance of the other to eighteenth-century British identity, with Colley observing that 'we usually decide who we are by reference to who and what we are not'.¹⁹ Such arguments do not fully explain why people chose a British national identity over any of the other identities open to them, but there is no doubt that opposition to the other helped to create a sense of community among eighteenth-century Britons. The other of the British imagination was primarily Catholic and usually French, the dual threats that had haunted England since the Reformation, and whose presence supposedly threatened the peace of the Revolutionary Settlement of 1688.²⁰

The centrality of anti-Catholicism to British national identity should not, however, be overstated. Although its role in drawing Britons together is undeniable, by the latter years of the eighteenth century cracks were appearing. In 1790 Charles James Fox derided concerns about the Catholic threat as 'childish fears' and mockingly asked fellow parliamentarians whether they believed the Pope would 'invade the West Indies, by sending out his warlike myrmidons from the Civita Vecchia?'²¹ The increasing sympathy for demands for Catholic relief by 1800 and the continued marginalisation of nonconformists contributed to a diminution of Protestant solidarity, while the post-1792 threat of atheistic revolutionary values undermined the idea of a Catholic threat. Hannah More's popular *Cheap Repository Tracts* of the mid-1790s railed against atheism rather than Catholicism, arguing that religion brought peace and civilisation while Godlessness led to unrest and revolution.²² When revolutionaries ransacked the French Catholic Church in the 1790s Britons' reaction was more disgust than delight.²³

¹⁹ Linda Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness, an Argument', in Michael O'Dea & Kevin Whelan (eds.), *Nations and Nationalisms; France, Britain and Ireland and the Eighteenth-Century Context* (Oxford, 1995), p.63; also Colley, *Britons*; Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*.

²⁰ Colley, *Britons*, pp.18-19.

²¹ House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP), <<http://parlipapers.chadwick.co.uk>>, accessed 16 June 2011, debate 9 February 1790.

²² Robert Hole, 'British Counter-Revolutionary Popular Propaganda in the 1790s', in Colin Jones (ed.), *Britain and Revolutionary France: Conflict, Subversion, Propaganda* (Exeter, 1983), p.65.

²³ Stuart Semmel, *Napoleon and the British* (New Haven, 2004), p.75.

Equally, the overtly Catholic undertones to some of the Spanish uprisings against Napoleon from 1808 did nothing to deter British support. Popular anti-Catholicism by no means disappeared with the turn of the nineteenth century, but Catholicism's standing in the pantheon of British bugbears was certainly diminished.

A more effective unifying factor was the menace of the foreign other. Insulting caricatures, uncomplimentary ditties, unflattering portrayals in literature and on stage, and the occasional burning in effigy were tactics commonly used to whip up an anti-foreign sentiment. Internal divisions within Britain were put aside, especially during wartime, as the populace united in opposition to a foreign threat. It is notable that by far the least popular (and least successful) war of the eighteenth century was the American War (1775-1783), where the initial opponents were seen not as a foreign other but as fellow Britons, albeit geographically distant.²⁴ Although xenophobia was general and mistrust of all things foreign was ubiquitous, the foreign other of the British imagination was not a collective, nebulous and ill-defined bogeyman on the border. Specific countries were singled out to be abhorred, with each enemy having a special portion of abuse reserved for it, and each threat individually enumerated.

France was the main object of opprobrium, being England's traditional enemy, a major economic and colonial rival, and being a Catholic power to boot, though Spain could also fulfil the role of foreign other with considerable aplomb. At a pinch Russia, the German states or the Netherlands could be used and abused in aid of patriotic unity, but the vitriol periodically hurled at these countries was nowhere near as vicious or voluminous as that produced against the traditional Catholic enemies. While it has been pointed out that Britain and France shared a great deal in common and were far more similar than is sometimes credited, this did not detract from Britons' almost universally unfavourable view of the French; Freud's narcissism of small differences perhaps being felt to full effect. The supposed threat posed by France was cultural as much as religious or military. A successful French invasion would self-evidently lead to the end of British liberties and freedoms, but the British people were also constantly reminded that should John Bull allow his head to be turned by degenerate French mores and manners, his hale and hearty way of life would be equally doomed.²⁵

Another of those foreign others in the late eighteenth century was the Netherlands. Although the trading, religious and military connections of the earlier eighteenth century were

²⁴ Colley, *Britons*, pp.140-50.

²⁵ Colley, *Britons*, p.96.

weakened, their vestiges still left a strong impression on Britain.²⁶ Commerce between the two countries remained strong and throughout the eighteenth century Dutch mail boats brought regular news to Britain, making the reprinting of the Dutch papers in the British press a major window into the affairs of the wider Continent. Some Britons experienced the Netherlands first-hand. Although it lacked either the classicism of Italy or the exoticism of farther climes, Jeremy Black noted that the Netherlands was the most visited area of Europe after Paris and Italy for eighteenth-century British tourists.²⁷ Commercial visitors and tourists became markedly less common after the French conquest of 1795, as the war largely made the Netherlands inaccessible to British travel and trade. The brief Peace of Amiens saw some visitors return but the outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars further closed the Continent to all but a handful of Britons until the downfall of Napoleon in 1814.²⁸

Those who travelled to the Netherlands produced an abundance of travel literature of widely varying quality for their less intrepid countrymen to consume. Many travel writers were incidental authors who simply aped the style and content of others. Plagiarism and repetition of anecdotes, experiences and stereotypes were rife, and by the end of the century many authors appeared to be repeating received notions because that was what they believed readers expected.²⁹ This led to the emergence of a fairly consistent and stereotyped view of the Dutch across the genre. Although the works on which the most easily-influenced travel writers based their accounts were not always of British origin,³⁰ many of the stereotypes portrayed in British travel literature also appeared in a far wider context.

A fairly standard stereotyped view of the Dutch can certainly be found in British opinion by the latter decades of the eighteenth century. Certain aphorisms in the English language showed a mild animosity to the Dutch – to refer to something as ‘Dutch’ was to insult it, and phrases

²⁶ Kees Van Strien, *Touring the Low Countries, Accounts of British Travellers 1660-1720* (Amsterdam, 1998), p.1.

²⁷ Jeremy Black, *The British Abroad, the Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1992), p.56.

²⁸ Renaud Morieux, “‘An Inundation from Our Shores’: Travelling Across the Channel around the Peace of Amiens”, in Mark Philp (ed.), *Resisting Napoleon, the British Response to the Threat of Invasion, 1797-1815* (Aldershot, 2006), 217-40; Tsai-Yeh Wang, *British Women’s Travel Writing in the Era of the French Revolution* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2010), p.258. *The Times*, 26 August 1802, mentions that Charles Fox visited the Netherlands around this time.

²⁹ Black, *The British Abroad*, p.4; Hugh Dunthorne, ‘British Travellers in Eighteenth-Century Holland: Tourism and the Appreciation of Dutch Culture’, *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 5 (1982), 77-84.

³⁰ Van Strien, *Touring the Low Countries*, p.2.

such as 'High Dutch' ('double Dutch' in modern parlance) were in common usage by this time – but the overall British view of the Netherlands was generally positive. Most accounts of the foreign were tinged with a sense of xenophobia, but young traveller William Beckford's moody summation of the Dutch as 'the most uncouth bipeds in the universe', and 'muddy-souled inhabitants' with 'a total stagnation of wit and genius' was far from the norm.³¹ Most writers were more favourable, especially when commenting on Dutch trade and industry, though few showed great affection towards the Dutch. 'The Dutch, *as Dutch*, have neither the respect or pity of any nation in Europe', declared the otherwise generally positive *Times* in 1787.³² Novelist and traveller Ann Radcliffe believed it difficult to like the Dutch, as a general self-centredness meant 'they will seldom step one inch out of their way' to save others from inconvenience.³³

In caricature, on stage, in popular jokes and in literature, British public opinion attributed several standard traits to the Dutch. In caricature, the Dutch were generally portrayed as a simple and portly man, plainly dressed, with a conical hat and a pipe. While vaguely mocking, this caricatured portrayal is not wholly unfavourable. Archetypal Briton John Bull was similarly rotund, a representation that suggested wealth and prosperity shown through hearty eating. The simplicity of the caricatured Dutchman was also sometimes portrayed on John Bull's visage and could suggest honesty and naivety in the face of the machinations of a duplicitous other. There was no suggestion of degenerate traits such as the priest-ridden foppishness that characterised the Spanish and nothing of the supposed effeminacy of the French, with its corollaries of cowardice or weakness. Nonetheless, the Dutch could also be less flatteringly depicted. Drunkenness, greed and laziness all appear as repeated themes in hostile caricature. Occasionally the Dutch were portrayed as frogs, a reference to both the damp nature of the Netherlands and to Nic Frog, the Dutch character in John Arbuthnot's *History of John Bull*, with the hunched posture of the frog suggesting bowing servility.

Supposed Dutch national character was equally stereotyped in British literature. The Dutch were portrayed as dull, serious and glum, virtual strangers to amusement or festivities, and as ponderously slow by nature, whether in commerce, politics, personal movement, or public

³¹ William Beckford (ed. Elizabeth Mavor), *The Grand Tour of William Beckford* (London, 1986), pp.28-29.

³² *The Times*, 6 June 1787.

³³ Ann Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794 Through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return down the Rhine* (London, 1795), p.60.

transportation.³⁴ Before British reactions to the French Revolution turned democracy and republicanism into subversive concepts, they were thought to be well suited to the Dutch character. 'Democracy requires a sedateness and regularity in its citizens, and suits the steady conduct and phlegmatic temper of the Dutch,' claimed one British writer.³⁵ Yet visitors were rarely impressed by demonstrations of steady, ponderous phlegmatism. William van Mildert, an Englishman of distant Dutch descent, found the Dutch full of 'coldness and insipidity', and Radcliffe believed that 'there are more occasions to celebrate, and fewer celebrations, than in most European countries'.³⁶ James Boswell, completing his education at Utrecht, fell into a depression of homesickness after failing to make friends in the city.³⁷ However, many visitors tempered their criticism with notes of individual kindness or occasions of bonhomie. Young English student Henry Woollcombe managed much better than Boswell to make friends,³⁸ while another author believed the Dutch friendly enough to 'people of an industrious turn'.³⁹ Even Radcliffe found the Dutch, for all their lack of festivities, friendlier than the Germans she later encountered.⁴⁰ Although individual instances of rudeness frequently appeared in travel writing, the Dutch were in general considered polite, and their dullness and glumness to come from a Calvinist respectability that made them honest, bluff, and essentially good.

Honesty and goodness were reasonably frequently invoked but not uncontested Dutch characteristics in the British imagination.⁴¹ Several writers were impressed by the rarity of capital punishment in the Netherlands, especially when compared to the noose-happy English

³⁴ Dunthorne, 'British Travellers in Eighteenth-Century Holland'; Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794*; Harry Peckham, *A Tour Through Holland, Dutch Brabant, the Austrian Netherlands, and Part of France* (4th edn., London, 1788); Anon., *A Trip to Holland, Containing Sketches of Characters: Together with Cursory Observations on the Manner and Customs of the Dutch* (2 vols, London, 1786), vol. 1, pp.35-36; vol. 2, p.29; Anon., *An Accurate and Impartial Narrative of the War, by an Officer of the Guards* (2 vols, London, 1796), vol. 1, pp.117-18; Samuel Ireland, *A Picturesque Tour Through Holland, Brabant and Part of France Made in the Autumn of 1789* (2 vols, London, 1790), vol. 1, p.19.

³⁵ Anon., *An Essay on the Origin, Character and Views of the Protestant Dissenters* (Oxford, 1790), p.12.

³⁶ Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794*, p.76; Arnold Bradshaw, 'William van Mildert's Visit to the Netherlands in 1792', *Durham University Journal*, Vol. 71 (1978), p.50.

³⁷ James Boswell (ed. F. A. Pottle), *Boswell in Holland 1763-64* (London, 1952).

³⁸ Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Plymouth (PWDRO), 710/485, Henry Woollcombe to his brother, 7 September 1792.

³⁹ Anon., *A Summary and Philosophic View of the Genius, Character, Manner, Government and Politics of the Dutch* (London, 1788), pp.87-90.

⁴⁰ Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794*.

⁴¹ Anon., *A Summary and Philosophic View*, pp.89 & 104-05.

'Bloody Code'.⁴² George Dyer estimated that while there were approximately thirty executions annually in London alone, the whole of the Netherlands rarely saw more than six.⁴³ The safety and lack of crime in Dutch cities was widely admired. Travellers were known to leave luggage unattended with 'no fear it would be stolen, knowing the infrequency of robberies in Holland'.⁴⁴ Yet Dutch goodness and honesty did not go unquestioned. A common view lingering from the seventeenth century was that the Dutch were at heart a cruel and rapacious people. The Amboina incident of 1623, when several Englishmen were executed by the Dutch, was invoked both popularly and in Parliament at least as late as the 1780s as proof of Dutch duplicity.⁴⁵ The use of judicial torture was frequently discussed with a mixture of fascination and disgust, and many soldiers who took part in the retreat through the Netherlands in 1794-95 considered their treatment at the hands of their supposed allies to have been brutal and barbarous.⁴⁶ Charles Gordon, sometime army officer and in 1806 an agent for the British Foreign Office, complained that Dutchmen acted 'without other principle but sordid self-interest; [they] know nothing of generosity and gratitude for past favours'.⁴⁷ Less barbarous but more dishonest was the proverbial penchant for trickery and overcharging reported by travellers.⁴⁸ The natural distrust that Britons often felt for the foreigner could quite quickly lead these experiences to be equated to general Dutch cruelty, greed and mendacity.

More positive was the British view of Dutch religious and commercial practices. More so than in any other facets of identity, the Dutch seemed to reflect the British 'vernacular culture of

⁴² V.A.C. Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People, 1770-1868* (Oxford, 1994), ch. 1.

⁴³ George Dyer, *The Complaints of the Poor People of England* (London, 1793), pp.79-80; Anon., *A Hasty Sketch of a Tour Through Part of the Austrian Netherlands and Great Part of Holland Made in the Year 1785* (London, 1787), p.199 also estimated that the country saw no more than six executions per year.

⁴⁴ Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794*, p.11; Anon., *A Hasty Sketch*, p.158.

⁴⁵ Anon., *A Trip to Holland*, vol. 2, p.64; HCPP, <<http://parlipapers.chadwick.co.uk>>, accessed 17 September 2012, speech by Henry Flood in debate 15 February 1787. It was also spelt Amboyna.

⁴⁶ Anon., *A Hasty Sketch*, p.196; Robert Walker, *Observations on the National Character of the Dutch and the Family Character of the House of Orange* (Edinburgh, 1794), p.23 footnote; L. T. Jones, *An Historical Journal of the British Campaign on the Continent in the Year 1794* (Birmingham, 1797), pp.175-76; E. Walsh, *A Narrative of the Expedition to Holland in the Autumn of 1799* (2nd edn., London, 1800), p.16; Robert Brown (ed. F. Llewellyn), *Corporal Brown's Campaigns in the Low Countries; Recollections of a Coldstream Guard in the Early Campaigns Against Revolutionary France 1793-95* (Driffield, 2008), p.165. The last was originally published in 1795 under the title *An Impartial Journal of a Detachment from the Brigade of Foot Guards, Commencing 20th February 1793 and Ending 9th May 1795*.

⁴⁷ The National Archives, London (TNA), FO 38/9, Gordon to Foreign Office, 28 March 1806.

⁴⁸ Anon., *A Trip to Holland*, pp.120-21; Bradshaw, 'William Van Mildert's visit to the Netherlands', p.51.

Protestantism and the world of goods.⁴⁹ The historical Dutch commitment to Protestantism was well respected in Britain and the Protestant alliance of William III was still popularly commemorated.⁵⁰ Stephen Conway suggested that 'Protestant solidarity' was partly responsible for British bitterness when the Dutch appeared to turn against Britain in the American War.⁵¹ By the late eighteenth century, however, the Dutch connection was rarely discussed in terms of religion, although there were occasional references to the 'Protestant Alliance' of Britain, the Netherlands and Prussia in the late 1780s, and in 1795 the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* lambasted the Dutch for not considering 'the Protestant interest' when making peace with France.⁵² The Dutch were known to be strictly Calvinist – during her visit to Amsterdam Radcliffe expressed surprise that the supposedly dour Dutch had permitted a festival to take place on a Sunday – but the relative toleration shown to Catholics and Jews was generally admired.⁵³ The Dutch propensity for Christian charity was also much praised, although the praise was sometimes tempered by criticism of the lack of an equivalent to the English poor-rates and of Dutch views on the 'deserving' poor.⁵⁴

In opposition to religious devotion was the supposed Dutch attachment to material wealth. Upon visiting the Netherlands in the 1770s clergyman Cornelius Cayley complained that 'money is the God that is worshipped at Amsterdam', while a 1797 sermon criticised 'the unchristian selfishness of Dutch avarice'.⁵⁵ The words were echoed in a popular song that crooned 'wealth, sordid wealth is an Hollander's god'.⁵⁶ Parsimony and greed were proverbial

⁴⁹ John Mee, *Conversable Worlds, Literature, Contention and Community 1762 to 1830* (Oxford, 2011), p.17; David Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires: England and the Netherlands in the Age of Mercantilism, 1650-1770* (Cambridge, 2003), p.1.

⁵⁰ Anon., *A Collection of Constitutional Songs* (2 vols, Cork, 1799-1800), vol. 2, pp.15 & 20, songs XI & XIV.

⁵¹ Stephen Conway, 'Continental Connections: Britain and Europe in the Eighteenth Century', *History*, Vol. 90, No. 299 (2005), p.363.

⁵² *Oracle Bell's New World*, 18 November 1789; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 14 January 1795.

⁵³ Anon., *A Summary and Philosophic View*, pp.29-30; Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794*, p.70; Cornelius Cayley, *A Tour Through Holland, Flanders and Part of France* (2nd edn., Leeds, 1777), p.11.

⁵⁴ Anon., *A Hasty Sketch*, p.279; Anon., *Letters Addressed to Mrs Peter la Touche by Melantius, Containing a State of Orphan Houses in England, Ireland, Zealand and Holland* (Dublin, 1793), pp.20-21; Anon., *A Summary and Philosophic View*, pp.91-92.

⁵⁵ Cayley, *A Tour Through Holland*, p.8; William Magee, *A Sermon Preached in the Chapel of Trinity College, Dublin, on Thursday the 16th of February, 1797* (Dublin, 1797), p.28.

⁵⁶ John Freeth, *The Political Songster or, a Touch on the Times, on Various Subjects, and Adapted to Common Tunes* (6th edn., Birmingham, 1790), p.106 (in the song 'Dutch Patriotism, or, Castles in Air').

traits that appeared in almost all representations of the Dutch, from travel accounts to collections of popular witticisms.⁵⁷ In caricature and on the stage Dutch greed was occasionally depicted through over-indulgence in food and drink, though this was little borne out by other sources and seems to have been intended to insult rather than portray stereotypical traits. Parsimony rather than excessive consumption was a more common theme, and Dutch sobriety was often praised.⁵⁸ Greed was nonetheless a prevalent portrayal of the Dutch. It was often the factor that, in the British mind at least, distinguished Dutch from British character. While British identity saw trade and commerce as unequivocally desirable, Dutch merchants were often portrayed as greedy and motivated by nothing but the prospect of filthy lucre. By depicting the Dutch as driven by greed, British public opinion negated the obvious similarities between the two countries and could claim the honour of the world's primary righteous trading nation for Britain. Nonetheless, Dutch trade itself was rarely criticised and the supposedly industrious nature of the Dutch people often drew praise.⁵⁹

Commercial prosperity was mentioned by all who wrote about the Netherlands, though by the late eighteenth century it was becoming increasingly common for writers to question prosperity and to comment on the decline of trade and industry. The seventeenth-century views expressed in the popular work of William Temple, which proclaimed the Netherlands a place of great wealth and the Dutch as a highly industrious people, still held some sway, and there was certainly enough affluence evident in the Netherlands for visitors to consider the country extremely well off.⁶⁰ One commentator claimed that the Netherlands remained the most prosperous country in Europe, Britain apart, and the *World* newspaper declared in 1792 that 'the English, like the Dutch, rest on a pinnacle of strength, prosperity, peace and happiness'.⁶¹ Some noted a discord between urban wealth and rural poverty, especially in the inland provinces, while others noted that trade rather than industry was the basis for Dutch prosperity.⁶² A memorandum from 1780 admitted that manufactures had seen a great decline

⁵⁷ Anon., *A Trip to Holland*; Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794*; Beckford, *The Grand Tour*; Bradshaw, 'William van Mildert's Visit to the Netherlands'; Anon., *Old Joe Miller* (London, 1800); Tim Gape, *The Comical Fellow, Or, Wit and Humour for Town and Country* (London, n.d.).

⁵⁸ Anon., *Letters Addressed to Mrs Peter de la Touche*, p.9; Peckham, *A Tour Through Holland*, p.13.

⁵⁹ Cayley, *A Tour Through Holland*, p.7; *The Times*, 6 September 1804; Anon., *Letters Addressed to Mrs Peter la Touche*, p.5; Anon., *A Summary and Philosophic View*, pp.49-52.

⁶⁰ William Temple, *Observations Upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands* (London, 1673).

⁶¹ Anon., *A Summary and Philosophic View*, p.21; *World*, 3 November 1792.

⁶² Anon., *A Hasty Sketch*, pp.173-74.

but refuted the assertion that Dutch trade was weaker than formerly, asserting that 'it was never better than at present'.⁶³

Unlike the continued portrayal in French latent opinion of the Dutch as wealthy, decline became an increasingly prevalent narrative in British opinion of the Netherlands. Few went so far as the *Morning Post* which in January 1785 informed readers that, since the Dutch had lost primacy in the carrying trade and banking services, they were now akin to 'day-labourers beginning to want employment; they have no estate to cultivate'.⁶⁴ Harry Peckham and Radcliffe both noticed the decline of shipping and industry on their respective tours, though Radcliffe was quick to point out that despite this 'there was no symptoms of decay or poverty'.⁶⁵ The view of Dutch decline became much more prevalent following the French conquest in 1795. In January 1795 it was widely reported that the reserves of the Bank of Amsterdam had been removed to Britain for safekeeping, with a mere £200,000 said to be left, which, whether accurate or not, painted a popular picture of national insolvency.⁶⁶ Much of the decline from 1795 was put down to exactions by the French, and there was often something triumphant in the tone with which this was reported; 'their wealth and moveable property at home have fallen prey to the requisitional plunder of their new friends', gloated one embittered commentator.⁶⁷ In 1800 Henry Dundas told Parliament that the Dutch had little reason to be enamoured with the French, as 'a Dutchman's last shilling has been sweated down almost to a sixpence'.⁶⁸ By the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars British opinion widely considered that Dutch wealth was exhausted and the Dutch people lived under a burden of excessive taxation and impoverishment. By 1804 newspapers were almost universally reporting the utter 'misery and poverty' in which the Dutch found themselves.⁶⁹

For much of this period the major British concern from the Netherlands was not her wealth or commerce, but her navy. The country of Admirals Tromp and de Ruyter, whose navy had

⁶³ Hull University Archives, Hull (HUA), DDWA/x1/13/70, Memorandum: *State of Holland*.

⁶⁴ *Morning Post*, 12 January 1785.

⁶⁵ Peckham, *A Tour Through Holland*, p.55; Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794*, p.56.

⁶⁶ *The Times*, 24 January 1795; Anon., *An Accurate and Impartial Narrative of the War*, vol. 2, p.118.

⁶⁷ Walsh, *A Narrative of the Expedition to Holland*, p.18; Anon., *The Sweets of Dutch Liberty, or, the First Fruits of French Fraternity in Holland* (2nd edn., Leominster, 1795).

⁶⁸ Henry Dundas, *Substance of the Speeches of the Right Honourable Henry Dundas* (London, 1800), p.34.

⁶⁹ *The Times*, 6 September 1804; *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 7 February 1805; *Morning Chronicle*, 2 February 1805; *Morning Post*, 28 April 1803.

fought a British fleet to a standstill at the Battle of Dogger Bank in the recent American War, was seen as a strong maritime rival and, from 1795, a dangerous foe. Concern over 'the maritime influence of Holland' was partly responsible for the British public's support of Prussia's invasion of the Netherlands in 1787.⁷⁰ The Bishop of Llandaff claimed that should France add the Dutch fleet to her own, 'there would be an entire end to our history as a great, a wealthy, and [...] a free people.'⁷¹ The fear of the Netherlands was mostly for its potential to provide a powerful fleet. Although the Dutch navy was modest, the seafaring population of the Netherlands could, by one estimate, provide sailors enough to man seventy ships-of-the-line.⁷² There was a great deal of popular anxiety about the implications of French control of Dutch maritime resources after 1795.⁷³ The Marquis of Lansdowne, who had lauded the Netherlands a year earlier as 'so formidable a maritime power', lamented the French acquisition of Dutch assistance; 'The shop of all Europe! – The depot, in particular, of all warlike stores! – it has been the opinion of the wisest Dutchmen, confirmed by the wisest men of other nations, that whoever possesses their force and influence in addition to their own – well governed, must rule the world.'⁷⁴ A sermon by clergyman N. Nisbett two years later struck a similar tone. If France continued to control the Netherlands, he railed, 'they would soon be able to rival our naval superiority, to which we have hitherto been indebted for our political existence!'⁷⁵ Less hysterically, Elizabeth Heber worried to her brother Reverend Reginald Heber that the Dutch fleet falling into French hands was 'a great acquisition to their navy', although the Reverend bullishly predicted Britain's sailors would be able to defeat 'the combined Naval Powers of Holland, France and Spain'.⁷⁶ This self-assured attitude was as much a reflection of the confidence that late eighteenth-century Britons had in their 'wooden walls' as a judgement on the strength of their rivals.

⁷⁰ William A. MacKinnon, *On the Rise, Progress and Present State of Public Opinion in Great Britain and Other Parts of the World* (London, 1828), p.123, footnote.

⁷¹ HCPP, <<http://parlipapers.chadwick.co.uk>>, accessed 17 September 2012, speech by Bishop of Llandaff, Richard Watson, 28 February 1787.

⁷² HUA, DDWA/x1/13/70, Memorandum: *State of Holland*.

⁷³ R. H. Cholmondeley (ed.), *The Heber Letters 1783-1832* (London, 1950), pp.87-88; Anon., *Our Last Resource! Or, the Only Means Left to Obtain an Honourable Peace* (London, 1795), p.11

⁷⁴ HCPP, <<http://parlipapers.chadwick.co.uk>>, accessed 17 September 2012, speeches by Marquis of Lansdowne, 17 February 1794 and 27 January 1795.

⁷⁵ N. Nisbett, *Ezekial's warning to the Jews, Applied to the Threatened Invasion of Great Britain. A Sermon, Delivered at Ash, March the 8th, 1797* (Canterbury, 1797), p.25.

⁷⁶ Cholmondeley (ed.), *The Heber Letters*, pp.87-88.

Fear of Dutch naval capabilities meant that triumphs over Dutch fleets were celebrated as major victories. The capture of a Dutch flotilla off the Cape of Good Hope in 1796 drew some public approbation but this was nothing to the nationwide joy exhibited when the news of Camperdown broke in late 1797.⁷⁷ The capture of Admiral de Winter and nine ships-of-the-line came at a perfect time to raise the flagging spirits of the British population, and victorious Admiral Duncan became a national hero.⁷⁸ Songs and poems were written to commemorate the occasion as towns and cities across the country celebrated.⁷⁹ In Plymouth 'there was a fine quantity of powder wasted on the occasion' as the garrison fired *feux de joie*, and the whole town was illuminated with lights and bonfires as the celebration continued into the night.⁸⁰ Such was the reputation of the Dutch fleet that Dundas was incredulous when the news was first brought to him, thinking the scale of the victory exaggerated.⁸¹ Reverend Heber triumphantly wrote of the victory to his sister Elizabeth, while his son Richard was among the many excited Britons who visited the victorious fleet upon its return.⁸² The mutiny and capture of the Texel fleet in 1799 was celebrated a little less spectacularly, though as King George commiserated to First Lord of the Admiralty George Spencer, bloodless victories were more 'agreeable to upright conduct' but far less 'brilliant'.⁸³

After 1799 there is less evidence that British opinion feared the Dutch naval threat, but Britons continued to be respectful of Dutch naval capacity. Informed commentators noted that the Dutch fleet possessed few ships of a size to take a place in a line of battle, and some sounded a note of optimism when expressing the belief that the Dutch would have the greatest difficulty

⁷⁷ James Woodforde (ed. John Beresforde), *Diary of a Country Parson 1758-1802* (Oxford, 1978), p.537; Anon., *An Authentic Account of the Capture of the Dutch Fleet, Consisting of Nine Sail of Men of War, Frigates, &c. at Saldanha Bay* (London, 1796).

⁷⁸ Lloyd, *St Vincent and Camperdown*, p.160; Piers Mackesy, *Statesmen at War, the Strategy of Overthrow 1798-99* (New York, 1974), pp.2-3; George Spencer (ed. Julian Corbett & H. W. Richmond), *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty 1794-1801* (4 vols, London, 1913-1924), vol. 2, p.196, Lord Grenville to Spencer, 13 October 1797.

⁷⁹ Edward Mussenden, *An Ode, The Glorious Defeat of the Dutch Fleet* (London, 1798); Anon., *A New Song, Called, the Brave Tars of Old England, or, Duncan's Victory Over the Dutch Fleet* (Limerick, n.d.); John Gorton, *Britannia: A Poem Dedicated to the Right Honourable Lord Camperdown* (London, 1797); *True Briton*, 7 November 1797.

⁸⁰ PWDRO, 1259/2/343, letter to Mrs Robinson, 17 October 1797.

⁸¹ Mackesy, *Statesmen at War*, p.2.

⁸² Cholmondeley (ed.), *The Heber Letters*, p.104.

⁸³ Spencer, *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer*, vol. 3, p.183; *The Times*, 26 September 1799.

in augmenting the size of their fleet.⁸⁴ Invasion rumours from 1801 reported earnest Franco-Dutch preparations but, as the *Morning Post* commented, 'it might be fatal to despise the danger; it would be silly to dread it.'⁸⁵ *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* reported to readers of 'the great improbability' that the Dutch squadrons would be able to slip the British blockade, but warned that the Dutch did still possess considerable naval forces at both Goree and the Texel.⁸⁶ The invasion scare of 1803-05 led to renewed worry concerning the combined navies of France, Spain and the Netherlands, though by 1805 *The Times* felt confident enough to mock enemy plans that required several fleets to converge in total disregard of wind and tide.⁸⁷ The Netherlands was increasingly reported simply in the context of an auxiliary to France rather than a threat in its own right, although as late as 1810 *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* warned that the Dutch menace necessitated the maintenance of a large fleet off the Downs, and a large army in the Home Counties.⁸⁸ Clearly the vestiges of Dutch naval might continued to linger in collective British consciousness, but the mystique and reputation that surrounded the Dutch fleet had been largely broken by the events of the 1790s.

The reputation that led Britons to fear the Dutch navy did not extend to her land forces. The general British view was that 'the Dutch have not of a long time been famed for furnishing enterprising land troops'.⁸⁹ Even when in alliance with the Netherlands Britons were routinely uncomplimentary towards the Dutch army. In September 1793 the *Morning Chronicle* mockingly announced 'the Dutch, we are told, mean to vindicate their courage in the journals: this, probably, they consider the safest mode of acquiring military fame.'⁹⁰ British soldiers, infused with a mixture of xenophobia and professional rivalry, were especially uncomplimentary towards the Dutch soldiery during the campaigns of 1793-95. One officer's account of the campaign denounced Dutch cowardice or corruption in surrendering fortifications to the French without a fight, and concluded 'thus ended the military operations of the year 1794, in which the British lost numbers of their best troops, in defending a country

⁸⁴ Walker, *Observations on the National Character of the Dutch*, p.27.

⁸⁵ Woodforde, *Diary of a Country Parson*, p.606; *The Times*, 17 August 1801; *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, 18 May 1801. Quotation from *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, 1 June 1801.

⁸⁶ *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 23 July 1801.

⁸⁷ *The Times*, 6 August 1805.

⁸⁸ *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 1 September 1810.

⁸⁹ Walker, *Observations on the National Character of the Dutch*, p.24.

⁹⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, 13 September 1793.

for a worthless set of people who had not the courage to defend themselves'.⁹¹ The part-time citizen-soldiers of the town guards, militias or Free Corps were equally generally disparaged. Town guards, in which every citizen was obliged to serve unless they paid for a replacement, were dismissively described by Peckham as a combination of 'penury and parsimony'.⁹² A tourist who was persuaded by his innkeeper to attend a parade of Free Corps decided that they made 'very sorry soldiers', while another described the Amsterdam town guard as 'truly whimsical and ludicrous'.⁹³ Yet the fighting capacity of these part-time forces was not always belittled. The resistance put up by the city militia at Flushing in 1809, for example, was generously reported in some British newspapers, and in 1813 armed citizens and newly-formed Orangist militias were widely reported as helping to drive the French from the Netherlands.⁹⁴ The reports of 1813, however, can be seen as originating in a different narrative to that of the ineffective Dutch soldiery. Long-standing latent British opinion believed that the Dutch people were, at heart, enemies of France and allies of Britain. That the Dutch should wish to rise up to throw off French domination was perceived as a reflection of their natural allegiance rather than a corollary of Dutch martial character.

By the late-eighteenth century latent British public opinion had long portrayed the Netherlands as a natural ally. The two countries had been in alliance for almost a century and the Anglo-Dutch War of 1780-84 was considered an aberration caused by the intriguing of France and a small faction within the Netherlands; 'a concussion of nature', as MP Isaac Barré proclaimed.⁹⁵ It was widely acknowledged that the Dutch had fallen from the first rate of powers, but the Dutch alliance was still seen as useful, if not crucial, to Britain. The House of Orange was firmly linked to the British connection, and the last Stadholder, William V, was well known to the British public.⁹⁶ William was generally portrayed as an honourable, hardworking, if not especially gifted man, and British travellers to the Netherlands in the 1780s invariably

⁹¹ Jones, *An Historical Journal of the British Campaign*, pp.146-51.

⁹² Peckham, *A Tour Through Holland*, p.66.

⁹³ Anon., *A Trip to Holland*, p.29; Bradshaw, 'William Van Mildert's Visit to the Netherlands', p.50.

⁹⁴ *Caledonian Mercury*, 2 September 1809; *Morning Chronicle*, 22 November 1813; *Morning Post*, 24 November 1813; *Caledonian Mercury*, 31 December 1813.

⁹⁵ HCPP, <<http://parlipapers.chadwick.co.uk>>, accessed 17 September 2012, speech by Colonel Isaac Barré, 14 March 1785; Anon., *A Summary and Philosophic View*, p.vii.

⁹⁶ *London Chronicle*, 11 January 1785; *General Evening Post*, 13 January 1785.

expressed shock at his treatment at the hands of the Patriots.⁹⁷ There was ample proof of British affection for the House of Orange when the Prince and Princess fled to England in 1795. The Prince was received as a royal in exile and proved a popular guest of the British establishment.⁹⁸ Upon arrival in Yarmouth, the Princess had the horses removed from her carriage and was drawn through the streets by a cheering crowd, though *The Times* reported that the Princess, unaware of this English custom, was terrified that some awful insult was being offered.⁹⁹ Popular British interest in the *ci-devant* Stadholder and the House of Orange gradually faded, especially following William's departure to Nassau in 1801 and death in 1806, although his grandson regained some popularity when serving on Lord Wellington's staff during the Peninsular War.¹⁰⁰

The Orangist restoration in 1787 was celebrated by all parties because it was believed that Britain had regained a crucial ally against France.¹⁰¹ The need to keep the Netherlands from French influence had been a key aspect of British policy for a century and by the late 1700s had become firmly entrenched in latent public opinion.¹⁰² *True Briton*, for example, boldly declared that 'to preserve Holland from the power of France must ever be the true policy of Great Britain'.¹⁰³ British opinion also believed that the Dutch would be more than willing accomplices in this effort. Histories of the Netherlands gave pride of place to narratives of resistance to Louis XIV's France and took Anglo-Dutch cooperation as the natural order of things. When France declared war on Britain and the Netherlands in 1793 the Dutch were thought to be as committed as ever to the British cause.¹⁰⁴ The Parliamentary debates on

⁹⁷ Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794*, pp.42-43; Anon., *A Trip to Holland*, pp.75-77; Anon., *A Hasty Sketch*, p.178.

⁹⁸ Cholmondeley (ed.), *The Heber Letters*, p.97; Oscar Browning (ed.), *The Political Memoranda of Francis, Fifth Duke of Leeds* (London, 1884), p.218.

⁹⁹ *The Times*, 24 January 1795.

¹⁰⁰ G. J. Renier, *Great Britain and the Establishment of the Kingdom of The Netherlands 1813-1815* (The Hague, 1930), pp.48-56.

¹⁰¹ Alfred Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents, the Diplomacy of the First Earl of Malmesbury at The Hague* (London, 1954), p.204; *Bath Chronicle*, 6 December 1787.

¹⁰² George Hill, *Instructions Afforded by the Present War, to the People of Great-Britain. A Sermon Preached at St. Andrew's, on Thursday the 18th of April 1793* (Edinburgh, 1793), p.11.

¹⁰³ *True Briton*, 15 July 1794.

¹⁰⁴ *World*, 3 November 1792; *London Chronicle*, 4 December 1792; *The Times*, 17 January 1793; *General Evening Post*, 23 February 1793.

whether to support the Netherlands against France were widely reported in the British press and gave a strong impression of a widespread public and political desire to preserve the Dutch alliance. The evident lack of Dutch enthusiasm for the war was derided in Britain – ‘the motions of the Dutch in the present war are very few, and what they are amount to nothing’, reported one newspaper,¹⁰⁵ – but the belief persisted that the Dutch people were largely behind the allied cause. As late as 1794 Robert Walker wrote that the Dutch were ‘unanimous in their determination to resist French invasion, or to perish in the struggle’, while *The Times* claimed in August of that year that ‘each class of citizens’ was vying to help in the struggle against the French.¹⁰⁶

The apparent welcome given by the Dutch to the invading French armies in early 1795 came as a shock to British opinion. Active opinion turned viciously against the Dutch who were derided as traitors, cowards, and worse. British soldiers who had served in the campaign wrote bitterly of Dutch treachery and some politicians openly questioned the value of fighting for a country that wanted to be conquered.¹⁰⁷ Some writers, such as Corporal Robert Brown of the Coldstream Guards, acknowledged that the depredations and ‘acts of outrage’ perpetrated by British forces on their retreat through the Netherlands had turned many Dutch people against Britain, but such balanced reporting was rare.¹⁰⁸ Newspapers railed against ‘our cowardly, useless, worse than useless allies’ and ascribed the success of the French invasion to Dutch perfidy.¹⁰⁹ The *Oracle* was typical in blaming the defeat of British arms on ‘base and degenerate Hollanders’ who failed to provide adequate assistance.¹¹⁰

The public outrage at the Dutch defection turned to vindictive amusement as the price of French friendship became apparent.¹¹¹ Isaac Cruikshank’s caricature ‘The Coalition’ mocked the idea that the French invaded as friends, depicting a Dutchman embracing a French soldier who was picking his pocket, as another Frenchman crept up to stab him in the back; a sequel

¹⁰⁵ *Diary, Or, Woodfall’s Register*, 20 August 1793.

¹⁰⁶ Walker, *Observations on the National Character of the Dutch*, p.18; *The Times*, 27 August 1794.

¹⁰⁷ Jones, *An Historical Journal of the British Campaign*, p.151; Anon., *An Accurate and Impartial Narrative of the War*, vol. 2; Charles Fox (ed. Irene Cooper), *Charles James Fox, Speeches During the Revolutionary Period* (London, 1924), p.282.

¹⁰⁸ Brown, *Corporal Brown’s Campaigns*, pp.162-65.

¹⁰⁹ *Star*, 21 January 1795.

¹¹⁰ *Oracle or Public Advertiser*, 17 January 1795.

¹¹¹ Anon, *The Sweets of Dutch Liberty*.

caricature two weeks later showed a series of Dutchmen scurrying around with bare legs once the French soldiers had stolen their money-filled trousers.¹¹² As news of the terms of the Treaty of The Hague filtered into Britain, *St James's Chronicle* gloated that 'the Dutch will indeed severely repent their revolutionary mania', while the *Sun* happily declared in October that the Dutch were now heartily regretting the French connection.¹¹³ The burst of anger at the Netherlands gradually deflated as British opinion increasingly came to consider the Dutch as victims of French oppression, rather than willing French allies. The fate of the Netherlands became something of a moral lesson to the people of Britain to resist French encroachments.¹¹⁴ The *Telegraph* even went so far as to deny Franco-Dutch amity entirely, claiming that 'the severest winter of the present century had rather, than the goodwill of the inhabitants, thrown the country into the hands of the French.'¹¹⁵

British public opinion soon developed the idea that the defeat of 1795 had, like the troubles of the 1780s, been down to a small Francophile faction and that the majority of the Dutch people secretly continued to favour Britain over France. This view became a tenet of British opinion for the next two decades. Dutch dissatisfaction with the French or Batavian governments was extrapolated in British opinion into wider narratives of latent Anglophilia and desire to be free of the French connection. Herman Daendels's moderate coup in June 1798, for example, was widely reported as a counter-revolution, and it was predicted that the French alliance would soon be severed.¹¹⁶ Although it quickly transpired that the coup had been carried out in collusion with the French Directory, newspapers such as *The Times* remained convinced that the Dutch were heartily sick of the French and wished to restore the Stadholder and the British alliance.¹¹⁷ Even a popular song dedicated to the British naval victory over the Dutch at Camperdown portrayed their defeated foes as unwilling allies of France; 'Then the French cramm'd their principles down the Dutch throats/ And Mynheers were compell'd for ter their

¹¹² Isaac Cruikshank, *The Coalition, a Scene on the Continent* (1795), British Museum (BM) Satires, 8608; Isaac Cruikshank, *The First Articles in Requisition at Amsterdam or the Sans Culotts become Touts Culotts* (1795), BM Satires 8613 (see p.233).

¹¹³ *St James's Chronicle*, 23 April 1795; *Sun*, 9 October 1795.

¹¹⁴ Richard Graves, *A Sermon on the Deliverance of the Kingdom of Ireland from the Invasion Lately Attempted by the French* (Bath, 1797), pp.18-21; Anon., *Invasion of Britain, An Address to the People of Great Britain on the Subject of a French Invasion* (London, 1798), p.11.

¹¹⁵ *Telegraph*, 11 July 1795.

¹¹⁶ Cholmondeley (ed.), *The Heber Letters*, p.107; *The Times*, 23 June 1798.

¹¹⁷ *The Times*, 19 December 1798.

notes/ To doff all their breeches and turn *sans culottes*.¹¹⁸ This belief was almost universal by the time Britain sent an expedition to the Netherlands in 1799. *Lloyd's Evening Post* commented 'It is impossible for the public mind to be more confident of any success than that which is generally presumed upon the present occasion' as the Dutch people were believed to be set to rise up en masse in the name of Orange.¹¹⁹ Countess Bessborough wrote that she believed British troops would have no difficulty in re-conquering the Netherlands; 'I imagined *tout simplement* they were going over to make bonfires and rejoicings without further ado.'¹²⁰ The ultimate failure of the expedition dented British certainty in the commitment of the Dutch to the Anglo-Orangist cause, especially among the Opposition in Parliament, but did little to undermine the public perception of the Dutch as essentially oppressed allies.¹²¹

This view persisted through the early years of the Napoleonic Wars. The Dutch were popularly portrayed in Britain as reluctant participants in the renewed war, and as willing trading partners with Britain despite the restrictions foisted upon them by Napoleon. Although a group of merchants headed by John Turnbull lobbied the government to blockade Dutch ports in 1805, the rationale was purely commercial and aimed to prevent neutrals from taking over previously British-dominated markets.¹²² Presumably the merchants envisaged one day reviving their Dutch commerce. Newspaper reports on the Netherlands emphasised Dutch discontentment and dismissed assistance offered to France as involuntary.¹²³ *The Times* assured readers that 'the inhabitants are indignant under the oppression of those their good allies', but were kept in check by the occupying 'legions' of General Marmont.¹²⁴ Caricatures of the time reflected this general feeling. The 1804 print 'Dutch Embarkation', for example, mocked both the strength of the Franco-Dutch invasion flotilla and the Dutch reluctance to

¹¹⁸ Anon., *A New Song, Called, the Brave Tars of Old England*, p.4.

¹¹⁹ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 12 August 1799.

¹²⁰ Castalia Countess Granville (ed.), *Lord Granville Leveson Gower, Private Correspondence 1781-1821* (2 vols, London, 1916), vol. 1, p.265. Bessborough to Gower, 30 September 1799.

¹²¹ HCPP, <<http://parlipapers.chadwick.co.uk>>, accessed 16 September 2012, speech by Charles Fox, debate 10 February 1798; *St James's Chronicle*, 8 February 1800. Dundas, *Substance of the Speeches of the Right Honourable Henry Dundas*, p.33; Ernest Rhys (ed.), *Orations on the French War by William Pitt* (London, n.d.), p.372.

¹²² TNA, FO 95/5/4, letters from John Turnbull, 5 August & 15 August 1805, and F. Christin to Turnbull, 14 August 1805.

¹²³ *Morning Post*, 28 April 1803; *Morning Chronicle*, 5 February 1805; *Aberdeen Journal*, 26 October 1803; *Bury and Norwich Post*, 17 August 1808.

¹²⁴ *The Times*, 6 September 1804 & 20 February 1805.

attempt the enterprise, portraying an angry Napoleon prodding a series of unwilling, portly Dutchmen into diminutive cannon boats.¹²⁵ Caricatures, as with many news reports, often presented a slightly mocking take on Dutch distress. The 1805 print 'The Dutch in the Dumps' showed seven Dutchmen caught in a net held by a demon, laying down their beloved tobacco pipes in protest at their treatment, with an attached verse proclaiming their desire to 'Abjure at once; – FRATERNIZAT'ON/ with Belzebub, and the French NAT'ON/ if JOHNNY BULL, will once more save 'em'.¹²⁶ However, the Walcheren Campaign of 1809 somewhat dampened the ardour of those in Britain who professed the Dutch to be allies, and the loyal address sent by the Dutch to Napoleon on the occasion of his birthday shortly after the Netherlands's annexation in 1810 elicited a volley of abuse from British newspapers.¹²⁷

The generally favourable view of the Netherlands nonetheless lingered even after annexation. When the country was struck by a series of conscription riots in April 1811 *The Times*, ever optimistic, reported an attempted revolution against French oppression, only to revise their opinion two days later when the limited scope of the unrest became evident.¹²⁸ The eventual overthrow of the French in the Netherlands in October 1813 was triumphantly reported in Britain as a vindication of the view, held by that stage through almost two decades of French presence in the Netherlands, that the Dutch favoured Britain over France. London society responded with excitement at the news of Dutch 'liberation' and crowds gathered to cheer the Prince of Orange as his carriage drove through the streets.¹²⁹ Katherine Robinson, sister of British diplomat Lord Malmesbury, wrote that the liberation of Hannover and 'emancipation of Holland were assuredly the two most important events to this country, and most nearly connected with its dearest interests.'¹³⁰ In Liverpool, the Concentric Society drank toasts to 'the Dutch Nation' second only to the loyal toasts to the royal family, government and armed forces.¹³¹ The news of the revolution was celebrated with the firing of the Park and Tower guns in London and the *Morning Chronicle* was able to report that 2000 troops were being sent to

¹²⁵ William Holland, *Dutch Embarkation, or, Needs Must When the Devil Drives!!* (1804), BM Satires 10223 (also printed under the same title by William McCleary, BM Satires 10223.A). See p.234.

¹²⁶ James Hill, *The Dutch in the Dumps* (1805), BM Satires 10412 (see p.234).

¹²⁷ *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 1 September 1810; *Morning Post*, 27 August 1810.

¹²⁸ *The Times*, 24 April 1811 & 26 April 1811.

¹²⁹ TNA, PRO 30/43/25/7, 'Events in London on the Restoration of Holland, 1813'.

¹³⁰ TNA, PRO 30/43/25/7, 'Events in London on the Restoration of Holland, 1813'.

¹³¹ *Liverpool Mercury*, 3 December 1813.

aid 'our ancient friend'.¹³² The widely-held latent British view of the Dutch as an ally, albeit weak and oppressed, seemed finally to have been borne out.

Across the period 1785-1815 representations of the Netherlands and its people in British public opinion tended to be generally positive, though punctuated with bouts of distrust and distaste. British latent opinion retained a long-term view of Dutch national character, with the major characteristics of ponderous phlegmatic solemnity, strict Calvinism, and a penchant for commerce. Most accounts depicted the Dutch to be essentially honest and upstanding but there were also fairly popular counter-narratives of greed, cruelty and mendacity. Latent opinion across the period saw the Dutch as natural allies of Britain and natural enemies of France. This conviction was sometimes shaken by circumstance but was ultimately never lost, although there was a degree of scorn in the British view as their supposed allies were often portrayed as apathetic, cowardly, and as driven only by material desires. The general narrative of Dutch predilection for Britain was interrupted on the occasions of the Franco-Dutch alliance of 1785, the French invasion of 1795, and to a lesser extent after the failed British invasions of the Netherlands in 1799 and 1809. In times of crisis or defeat active public opinion was often virulently hostile towards the Dutch, who were denounced as cowards, traitors and general scoundrels, the vitriol exacerbated by previous assumptions of amity and alliance.

Britons maintained a healthy respect for Dutch naval capacity over the period, although the victories over Dutch fleets in the 1790s and the self-confident control of the seas by the Royal Navy after 1805 diminished the perceived threat. Nonetheless it was not until it became clear after 1814 that the Netherlands would be unable to aspire to her old naval capacity that the idea of Dutch naval strength disappeared. Of more lasting duration was the perceived decline of Dutch prosperity, which reached a crescendo after the French conquest of 1795, and the supposed impoverishment of the Dutch under French occupation. The view of decline also spread to the standing of the Netherlands in Europe, as by 1815 the Quadruple Alliance had largely replaced the once-crucial Dutch alliance in the popular mindset.

¹³² *Morning Chronicle*, 22 November 1813.



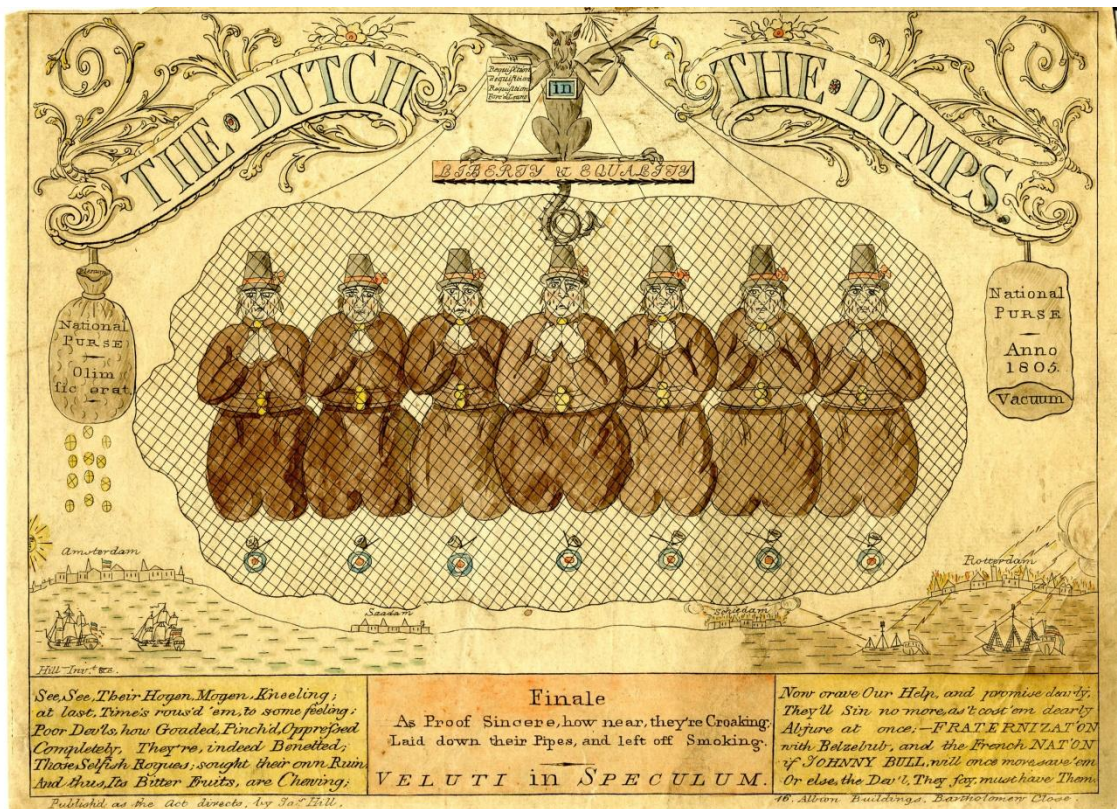
Isaac Cruikshank, *The Coalition, a Scene on the Continent* (1795),
 (British Museum Satires 8608: © Trustees of the British Museum)



Isaac Cruikshank, *The First Articles in Requisition at Amsterdam or the Sans Culotts become Touts Culotts* (1795)
 (British Museum Satires 8613: © Trustees of the British Museum)



William Holland, *Dutch Embarkation, or, Needs Must When the Devil Drives!!* (1804)
 (British Museum Satires 10223: © Trustees of the British Museum)



James Hill, *The Dutch in the Dumps* (1805)
 (British Museum Satires 10412: © Trustees of the British Museum)

CHAPTER SEVEN

BEHIND BRITANNIA'S TRIDENT:

PUBLIC OPINION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY



Thomas Rowlandson, *A Long Pull A Strong Pull and a Pull Altogether* (1813)
(British Museum Satires 12102: © Trustees of the British Museum)

Throughout the eighteenth century the Netherlands loomed large in British foreign policy. For reasons of geographical proximity and similarity of maritime endeavour, the Netherlands was at once a useful ally and a dangerous rival. As British ambassador Lord Auckland averred, the Netherlands 'has great means either of aggravating our embarrassments or of promoting our security and exertions'.¹ For most of the century, Britain's policy towards the Netherlands had been to cultivate friendly relations and to attempt to ensure the stability of the Dutch government, so as to retain the country as a useful collaborator against potential French aggression.

The Netherlands continued to figure prominently in British foreign policy in the period 1785-1815. While it is obvious with the benefit of hindsight that the international power and influence of the Netherlands was embedded on a steep downwards trajectory from the mid-eighteenth century, this was by no means obvious to contemporaries, who saw the Netherlands's dip in fortunes as no more a sign of ultimate decline than was Prussia's following the Seven Years War or Britain's following the American Revolution.² Even once the Netherlands was occupied by French armies after 1795, the Netherlands retained a high degree of importance in British thinking due to its location and the implications that enemy possession of its territory would have for British defence. The British government believed that it could not indefinitely allow a potentially hostile power to command such a strategically sensitive area as the Dutch coast without leaving the door open to the prospect of invasion, and with the Jacobite troubles of 1745-46 only four decades past, enemy incursions into Britain remained a very real fear.

The power most likely to attack Britain was France. The influence of France dominated Anglo-Dutch relations, physically and conceptually. In a physical sense the presence of French soldiers and administrators in the Netherlands after 1795, and the pressure that the French government was therefore able to exert in the country, made a strictly bipartite Anglo-Dutch relationship impossible. Conceptually France dominated the landscape of British foreign policy; in the years 1793-1801 and again 1803-1814 all of Britain's foreign policy efforts were put into defeating France. The general aim of Britain's policy towards the Netherlands in these years was to reclaim the country from the grasp of France and set the Netherlands up as an independent, if British-dominated, state. Relations with the Netherlands came as a something

¹ British Library, London (BL), Add MSS 36814, Auckland to Lord Grenville, 6 January 1792.

² E.H. Kossmann, 'The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century', in Margaret C. Jacobs & Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century; Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (London, 1992), pp.29-30.

of a corollary to those between Britain and France, and it is in the context of the overwhelming need to defeat the old enemy from across the Channel that British policy towards the Netherlands must be analysed.

This chapter will examine the links between British public opinion, ideas of national identity, and policy towards the Netherlands in the period 1785-1815. After briefly discussing the mechanics of late-eighteenth-century British foreign policy formulation, the chapter will go on to examine whether active public opinion was able to shape or influence foreign policy, before considering whether the received notions, popular stereotyping and common memory of latent opinion appeared to impact on the decisions of policy makers. One problem of analysing British foreign policy, identified by Muriel Chamberlain, is that 'the basic assumptions upon which it was based are almost never discussed by those who made it'.³ It is the aim of this chapter to seek out some of those basic assumptions. By thematically examining Britain's policies towards the Netherlands through the lens of some of the main issues in British latent public opinion and identity, such as Dutch strength, wealth, naval capacity, religion and supposed 'natural allegiance', this chapter will show the extent to which, if any, such latent impressions were taken into account in the decision-making process.

Late-eighteenth-century British foreign policy was officially dependent on very few individuals. The king was formally responsible for the country's external relations but the 1782 reforms had in practice split the direction of foreign policy between the Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister and the king.⁴ The Foreign Secretary and his under-secretaries, whose role was largely administrative, dealt with everyday diplomacy and correspondence but overall policy was set in consultation with monarch and Prime Minister. The monarch was, however, becoming generally less active in directing foreign affairs during this period, and ultimately George III's failing health and growing ministerial control meant that the king's role in policy formulation diminished.⁵ Ministers naturally sought advice from their political peers, but only on an ad hoc and often personal basis. Prime Minister William Pitt and Foreign Secretary Lord William Grenville, for example, were prone to consult privately rather than in Cabinet. During the Revolutionary Wars they, along with Secretary of State for War and the Colonies Henry Dundas, formed an unofficial inner cabinet and fixed policy between them, often marginalising

³ Muriel E. Chamberlain, *'Pax Britannica'? British Foreign Policy, 1789-1914* (London, 1988), p.8.

⁴ R. W. Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe 1789-1914, a Survey of Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, 1945), p.9.

⁵ Jennifer Mori, *William Pitt and the French Revolution, 1785-1795* (Edinburgh, 1997), pp.270-71; Donald Barnes, *George III and William Pitt, 1783-1806* (New York, 1965).

their other colleagues.⁶ The Cabinet and Privy Council could collectively discuss policy, but their influence was heavily dependent on the willingness of monarch or ministers to seek their advice, and to listen to it. Although Cabinet did not formally have the final say on policy, collective Cabinet decisions were an especially useful tool for ministers who wished to pursue policies against the king's reservations.⁷ In times of prospective or actual conflict, the opinions of the Secretary of War and the First Lord of the Admiralty increased in importance due to their significant role in arranging for the continuation of policy by other means.

The exact balance of power between king, Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary was somewhat vague and depended largely on the personalities involved. George III took a keen interest in foreign policy, especially during the 1780s, but he rarely overruled ministers once they were fixed upon a course of action.⁸ Pitt, despite his reputation as a statesman, largely left foreign policy in his first administration to Foreign Secretaries Lords Carmarthen and Grenville, though the former resigned in 1791 when Pitt moved to temper his hawkish instincts and overruled him on military intervention in the Ochakov incident. Pitt's interest in foreign affairs evidently increased during the fraught years of conflict in the 1790s, but Grenville continued to guide policy more than he is perhaps given credit for.⁹ Only once, in pushing for peace negotiations with France in 1797, did Pitt undermine the policies of the Foreign Secretary.¹⁰ Pitt took more control of continental diplomacy in his second stint at the helm in 1804-06 when Foreign Secretaries Lords Harrowby and Mulgrave were political appointees less suited to directing policy.¹¹ Grenville, as Prime Minister in 1806-07, continued to take a keen interest in foreign policy but he did not prevent Foreign Secretary Charles Fox from investigating the possibility of peace, despite it being against his general inclinations.¹² Lord Hawkesbury served as Foreign Secretary under Henry Addington (1801-04) and was influential in policy making at the time of the Peace of Amiens and subsequent slide into war, despite

⁶ M. Duffy, 'Pitt, Grenville and the Control of British Foreign Policy in the 1790s', in Jeremy Black (ed.), *Knights Errant and True Englishmen: British Foreign Policy 1660-1800* (Edinburgh, 1989), p.155.

⁷ Richard Pares, *King George III and the Politicians* (Oxford, 1953), p.149.

⁸ Barnes, *George III and William Pitt*, pp.152-53.

⁹ Ephraim Douglass Adams, *The Influence of Grenville on Pitt's Foreign Policy, 1787-1798* (Washington, 1904); Duffy, 'Pitt, Grenville and the Control of British Foreign Policy'.

¹⁰ Duffy, 'Pitt, Grenville and the Control of British Foreign Policy', p.164.

¹¹ Edward Ingram, 'Lord Mulgrave's Plan for the Reconstruction of Europe in 1804', *The Historical Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1976).

¹² Christopher Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War 1803-15* (Manchester, 1992), pp.59-61.

being considered by both Addington and George III as 'utterly unfit for the situation'.¹³ Yet as Prime Minister from 1812 Hawkesbury, now Earl Liverpool, was content to allow Lord Castlereagh wide-ranging powers. The Duke of Portland's ministry (1807-09) saw the energetic George Canning as Foreign Secretary, but was also characterised by the greater involvement of the Cabinet in decisions, especially regarding military intervention. Spencer Perceval's preoccupation with holding together his weak ministry (1809-12) in the face of parliamentary opposition and the Regency crisis allowed Foreign Secretary Richard Wellesley fairly wide freedom in foreign affairs, though he was largely too indolent to attempt a great deal.

While British foreign policy was highly susceptible to the personalities involved in its formulation, it was not simply the disconnected work of a series of individuals. Changes in ministry did not necessarily entail changes in policy, and nor did the plans of departed ministers simply fall into abeyance. Castlereagh, for example, used elements of Pitt's 1805 blueprint for a European settlement in his post-1813 peace proposals, while Pitt in turn had used ideas put forward by Grenville in 1798 when devising his plan.¹⁴ Ministers were also all aware of the general framework of British policy that had existed since the late seventeenth century and lingered into the nineteenth. Based largely on the idea of the balance of power, Britain's primary concern, after assuring her own defence, was to prevent any European state, and especially France, from gaining predominance over the Continent. This usually required supporting one power against another in a Continental war, only to withdraw from the coalition if their ally appeared likely to gain too dominant a position.¹⁵ The presence of a long-ruling monarch added a degree of stability to foreign policy, although it could be somewhat complicated by George III's role as Elector of Hannover. As Elector, George could pursue policies in Germany without consultation or consent of his British ministers, which on occasion riled the other powers of Europe and worked to the detriment of Britain, as few other states distinguished between George's personal policies and those of the British government.¹⁶

¹³ L. V. Harcourt (ed.), *The Diaries and Correspondence of the Right Hon. George Rose* (2 vols, London, 1860), vol. 2, p.157. Hawkesbury became Earl of Liverpool on the death of his father in 1808.

¹⁴ Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored, Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812-22* (London, 1957), p.40; John Sherwig, 'Grenville's Plan for a Concert of Europe, 1797-99', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (1962), 284-93; John W. Derry, *Castlereagh* (London, 1976), p.153.

¹⁵ Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p.3.

¹⁶ Tim Blanning, "'That Horrid Electorate' or 'Ma Patrie Germanique'? George III, Hanover, and the Fürstenbund of 1785', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (June 1977), 311-44; Mori, *William Pitt and the French Revolution*, p.54.

There is no immediately obvious place in these political structures for the influence of public opinion. No formal mechanism existed to submit public opinion to the government and there was no official accountability of ministers to the public, other than perhaps the limited system of parliamentary elections, and thus ostensibly little incentive for any government to concern itself with popular opinion. Petitioning, personal connection and patronage provided informal and irregular methods for putting pressure on ministers, but they were often more reflective of particular interests than public opinion. Richard Pares even claimed that before the 1770s 'the phrase "public opinion" meant so little as to be hardly worth using at all, except at those crises in war-time when explosions of almost universal anger could have made themselves felt even in an absolute monarchy.'¹⁷ Pares did concede that by 1800 the rise of political reporting in the press meant that it was possible to speak of public opinion, but he still restricted its influence to campaigning and outbreaks of unrest.¹⁸

As has been previously outlined, this thesis takes a different approach to Pares's interpretation of public opinion. Nor does it accept that ministers were necessarily divorced from the public. Most members of government belonged to the political class that produced and consumed much of the information that made its way into the creation of public opinion, and most enjoyed a relatively high degree of social integration in the public arena. British politicians were therefore informally constantly exposed to public opinion. They were often able to interact with and absorb opinion directly, without recourse to the opinion polls or think tanks that are used to tell modern citizens what they ought to be thinking. At the very least the direction and nuances of elite-metropolitan public opinion would have been evident to decision makers, certainly while they were in the capital. Moreover, the subconscious prejudices and predilections emanating from latent public opinion were evident across social strata and would have been shared by politicians with those of their compatriots involved in the nascent but growing national community. Even the most informed statesmen would not have been immune from the structures of latent opinion, as 'experience was perceived through the perspective of collective (and contentious) public myths'.¹⁹

Despite the privileged position that public opinion supposedly had as a moderator of political conduct, there is very little evidence in either the official diplomatic archives or the private papers of major political actors that active public opinion was able to shape British policy

¹⁷ Pares, *King George III and the Politicians*, p.198.

¹⁸ Pares, *King George III and the Politicians*, p.199.

¹⁹ Jeremy Black, *Debating Foreign Policy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Farnham, 2011), p.200.

towards the Netherlands. In this regard it is difficult to disagree with Jeremy Black that public opinion was 'of questionable importance in the formulation of foreign policy' in eighteenth-century Britain.²⁰ Most administrations went to some lengths to avoid offending public sensibilities but did not seek to tailor their policies to public demands. Ministers often tended to view the public as malleable and sought to influence opinion to support their policies. Some Foreign Secretaries, such as Castlereagh, were hostile to the idea of explaining themselves in public, but most recognised the value of popularly supported policies.²¹ Public approbation could certainly make policies easier to execute, or could soften the blow if success proved elusive. Indeed, public opinion was often roused by political action or rhetoric rather than the other way around. In 1787, for example, the triumphalism of the public's reaction to the restoration of the Stadholder brought plaudits to the government but had provided no incentive for its actions. Similarly, in the run-up to war in 1792-93, Grenville strung out negotiations with France 'with a view to the benefit of standing on the most advantageous ground with respect to public opinion' without altering the ultimate aims of his policy.²² As well as buying time to begin re-armament, Grenville's temporisation allowed him to prepare public opinion by portraying France as the aggressor and the Netherlands as the innocent ally in need of succour.

In general policy probably shaped active public opinion more than opinion was able to shape ministerial intentions. Occasionally public opinion swung dramatically against the government and caused a change of course. The Ochakov affair of 1791 was a prime example of wider policy being altered in the face of public discontent, but policies towards the Netherlands saw no such effective public outcries.²³ The initially hostile public reaction to the Netherlands upon its apparent defection in 1795, for example, was not met with any corresponding firmness on the part of the government as British ministers continued to offer friendship and protection to any Dutchmen who wished to abandon the Franco-Batavian cause.²⁴ A degree of wariness

²⁰ Jeremy Black, 'British Foreign Policy in the Eighteenth Century: A Survey', *Journal of British Studies*, 26 (1987), p.47; H.M. Scott, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of the American Revolution* (Oxford, 1990), p.22.

²¹ Chamberlain, '*Pax Britannica*'?, p.43.

²² The National Archives, London (TNA), FO 37/41, Grenville to Auckland, 26 November 1792.

²³ Michael Duffy, 'British Policy in the War Against Revolutionary France', in Colin Jones (ed.), *Britain and Revolutionary France: Conflict, Subversion, Propaganda* (Exeter, 1983), p.13; Mori, *William Pitt and the French Revolution*, p.96; Black, *Debating Foreign Policy*, p.198.

²⁴ *The Statutes at Large, From the Thirty-Fifth Year of the Reign of King George the Third, to the Thirty-Eighth Year of the Reign Of King George the Third Inclusive* (London, 1798), p.140, Act 35, Geo. 3, Cap. 80 (22 May 1795). This made law the Orders in Council of 16 and 21 January 1795.

incrementally crept into the British government's thinking as many Dutchmen refused to take advantage of British offers, with increasing numbers of ships declared hostile or placed under embargo, but it was not until mid-September 1795 that the Privy Council issued an Order allowing 'general reprisals against the ships, goods and subjects' of the Netherlands and not until October that letters of marque were issued to privateers to prey on Dutch shipping.²⁵ The eventual hostile approach of Britain to the Netherlands was driven by the realities of being at war with the new Batavian Republic rather than by a desire to respond to the demands of a vengeful public.

Active public opinion had equally little impact on the decisions to send expeditions to the Netherlands in 1799, 1809 and 1813. Public pressure played no role in either the conception or execution of military expeditions, although the universally negative public reaction to the Walcheren debacle did publicly shame many of the members of Portland's ailing government and, indirectly, contributed to the Burdett Riots of 1810.²⁶ In 1813 the government's precipitate response to the news of the Dutch uprising possibly anticipated the general feeling that aid should be sent to the Netherlands, but the demands of the people did not feature in Castlereagh's thinking. The one area that the government perhaps did respond to public pressure, or at least to the pressure of some members of the public, was in trade. The petitioning of merchants in 1796-97 successfully pushed the Privy Council to amend its Orders so as to allow the export of 'innocent' goods to the Netherlands and allowed a degree of trade to continue in spite of the war between the two countries.²⁷ However, even these petitions were unable to shape ministerial thinking beyond the realm of commerce.

While active public opinion rarely imposed itself on ministerial thinking, it will be argued that the representations and perceptions of latent public opinion were more influential. Policy towards the Netherlands was shaped by a loose set of expectations and beliefs that were shared by politicians of all parties. Such expectations could provide the inspiration for a specific policy, but more often they provided the parameters within which policy was formulated. Several major themes that appeared in British public opinion of the Netherlands can be seen as underpinning the thinking of ministers, from Pitt and Carmarthen in 1785 to Castlereagh and Liverpool in 1815. The most important of these were that the Netherlands

²⁵ TNA, ADM 7/321, 'Dutch Letters of Marque ending 26 September 1801'; WO 1/911, correspondence concerning ships Zephyr, Overijssel and de Brakt, March-June 1795; Sheffield Archives, Sheffield (SA), WWM/F/5/53-57, Earl Fitzwilliam to Duke of Portland, 12 February 1795.

²⁶ Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars 1793-1815* (London, 1979), p.149.

²⁷ TNA, PC 1/40/133; PC 1/35/98; PC 1/33/83; PC 1/32/81.

was a key power in the balance of Europe, that the country valued its independence but was essentially a natural ally of Britain, and that the Netherlands represented a strong maritime and colonial power. In addition, British politicians often assimilated factors of supposed Dutch identity into their thinking, basing policies on supposed Dutch predilection for Protestantism, Orangism and commerce.

Throughout the period of this study British politicians continued to persevere with the notion that the Netherlands was, or at least could be, a strong and important power, what Sir James Harris called a 'weight in the balance of Europe'.²⁸ In the aftermath of the American War Britain's major aim was to end her less-than-splendid isolation and to restore something of a balance of power by breaking up the block of states seemingly coalesced around France. For Britain, the Netherlands still possessed 'un rang si distingué parmi les puissances de l'Europe' and the spectre of a Franco-Dutch alliance genuinely worried politicians in London.²⁹ To say that the Netherlands was the lynchpin of British diplomatic strategy at this point would be an exaggeration – Foreign Secretary Lord Carmarthen's correspondence indicates that the greater immediate concern was to preserve the alliance of Denmark and attempt a courtship of Prussia, rather than to throw all efforts into regaining Dutch confidence³⁰ – but it is clear that Britain eventually placed a great deal of significance on recovering the Dutch alliance. Harris, friend and advisor to Carmarthen as well as minister plenipotentiary to the Netherlands,³¹ spelt out the aims of British policy in a memorandum to the Cabinet in 1785, saying that Britain needed 'to separate Russia from the Emperor, to preserve Denmark, to neutralise Sweden [...] and what is still more essential, to reclaim Holland', which could be done by entering into an alliance with Prussia.³² For Harris, the Dutch alliance was crucial in demonstrating Britain's resurgence from the nadir that followed the loss of the American colonies.

Despite the unrest that gripped the Netherlands in the mid-1780s, the idea that the Netherlands was a strong and important power was accepted as an article of faith by British ministers. The determination of Pitt and Carmarthen to go to the point of military mobilisation against France in 1787, despite George III's serious misgivings, demonstrates the perceived

²⁸ TNA, FO 37/6, Harris to Carmarthen, 18 March 1785.

²⁹ TNA, FO 90/34, ff.267-68, George III to William V of Orange, July 1787.

³⁰ BL, Add MSS 28059.

³¹ Alfred Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents, the Diplomacy of the First Earl of Malmesbury at The Hague* (London, 1954), p.18.

³² BL, Add MSS 28059, Memorandum for Cabinet, Sir James Harris, 9 May 1785.

importance of the Netherlands to Britain's foreign policy and security.³³ Ministers did not necessarily privilege the Netherlands above other allies; the Prussian connection established in the aftermath of the Stadholder's restoration in 1787 was clearly important, to the extent that Carmarthen was willing to risk war with Russia in 1791 in pursuing Prussian interests.³⁴ Yet British policy in general was based on the widely-held belief that the Netherlands continued to possess the same power and influence that she had earlier in the eighteenth century.

Although the treaty of 1788 showed the inequality in the Anglo-Dutch alliance, establishing Britain as guarantor of the Dutch constitution and demanding a far greater military commitment from London than from The Hague, it is clear that Britain had more confidence in Dutch strength than did the Stadholder's government.³⁵ William V sat uneasily on his Stadholderly seat, and in 1790 even appealed to King George for the loan of two or three Hanoverian regiments to keep internal order in the Netherlands.³⁶ His plea was rejected, with Carmarthen, now Duke of Leeds, writing tersely that William was foolishly seeing danger where there was none.³⁷ Despite some frank assessments of the deficiencies of the Dutch system of government and the weakness of the Stadholder – 'His Serene Highness possesses so little energy and steadiness of mind that it is impossible to rely on him in any measure from one day to the next'³⁸ – London continued to hold Dutch influence in high regard. In 1790 Britain paid the Netherlands the unwelcome compliment of requesting the assistance of a Dutch squadron when conflict with Spain loomed over the Nootka Sound controversy, and showed little sympathy with Dutch protestations that such mobilisation was beyond them.³⁹

A similar pattern followed in the build-up to war in 1792-93. Britain fully expected the Netherlands to be able to resist French encroachments, and claimed to be prepared to back them with necessary force should there be any threat to Dutch security.⁴⁰ The regular

³³ A. Aspinall (ed.), *The Later Correspondence of George III* (5 vols, Cambridge, 1962-70), vol. 1, pp.321, 340-41.

³⁴ Allan Cunningham, 'The Oczakov Debate', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (April 1965), 209-237.

³⁵ TNA, FO 95/5/2, Treaty of Defensive Alliance signed 15 April 1788.

³⁶ TNA, FO 37/28, Auckland to Leeds (Carmarthen), March 1790.

³⁷ TNA, FO 37/28, Leeds to Auckland, 23 March 1790.

³⁸ Walter Fitzpatrick (ed.), *The Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore* (10 vols, London, 1892-1927), vol. 2, p.270, Auckland to Grenville, 15 May 1792.

³⁹ TNA, FO 37/29, f.21, Auckland to Leeds, May 1790.

⁴⁰ TNA, FO 37/41, Grenville to Auckland, 13 November 1792.

correspondence of the British ambassador, Lord Auckland, contained repeated condemnations of the organisation and capacity of the Dutch government and armed forces and should possibly have suggested to Grenville and Pitt that there was something rotten in the States General of the Netherlands, but Britain's leaders continued to believe that the alliance that had stood so strong against Louis XIV could do the same against the forces of the new French Republic.⁴¹ Of course Britain and the Netherlands would not have to fight alone, as Prussia and Austria were already committed to the fray, but ministers seemed to share the confident popular opinion that 'the British and Hanoverian troops in conjunction with the Hollanders will repulse the sans culottes and drive them back in their own country.'⁴²

The assumption of Dutch strength could also go some way to explain the total failure of Britain to offer adequate support to the Netherlands in 1794-95. In January 1794 Grenville delivered a stern diplomatic finger wagging to The Hague, complaining of 'how disproportionate the exertions hitherto made by the Republic have been to those of Great Britain and Austria' and demanding efforts more in keeping with the Netherlands's supposed status.⁴³ Grenville thought Dutch pleas of exhaustion were disingenuous and ignored them, claiming that 'any tolerable exertions' on the part of the Netherlands would see the country saved.⁴⁴ He continued to insist that the British commitment to the Netherlands was sufficient if the Dutch adopted similar measures in their defence that they had done in the past.⁴⁵ That the Netherlands might not be the same power as in the past did not enter into his calculations.

Even the French conquest of 1795 and subsequent French influence on the internal workings of the Batavian Republic did little to dissuade British ministers from considering the Netherlands as an important European power. The Netherlands featured prominently in Grenville's proposals for the post-war settlement of Europe at the time of negotiations for the Second Coalition in 1798-99.⁴⁶ Grenville intended the post-war Netherlands to provide a large buffer state to block French northwards expansion, and thus reprise her early eighteenth-century role as a key player in the 'balance' of Europe. Although the defeat of the coalition

⁴¹ TNA, FO 37/40 – 37/42 contains repeated complaints from Auckland about the inefficiencies of the Dutch government, the Admiralties and the army.

⁴² R.H. Cholmondeley (ed.), *The Heber Letters 1783-1832* (London, 1950), p.82.

⁴³ TNA, FO 37/51, Grenville to William Elliot, 28 January 1794.

⁴⁴ TNA, FO 37/55, Grenville to St Helens, 3 October 1794.

⁴⁵ TNA, FO 37/56, Grenville to St Helens, 24 November 1794.

⁴⁶ Piers Mackesy, *Statesmen at War, The Strategy of Overthrow 1798-99* (New York, 1974), p.32.

meant that these policies could not be put into practice, Grenville's thinking clearly continued to be shaped by the expectations of the Netherlands that had long been a feature of British public opinion.

If Grenville and Pitt were largely in agreement on the importance of the Netherlands throughout the 1790s, some other British politicians showed less inclination to be guided by historical realities. Lord Mulgrave, Foreign Secretary from January 1805 until Pitt's death a year later, held the Dutch in a degree of contempt and even tentatively suggested offering the Netherlands to Prussia, as he saw Prussian military might as the only method of keeping France from threatening the Rivers Scheldt and Texel.⁴⁷ Yet Mulgrave's proposal was itself based on memories of the strength of the 'clockwork infantry' of Frederick-the-Great that were proved so shatteringly wrong at Jena-Auerstädt in October 1806. The proposal was in any case vetoed by Pitt, who saw a future for the Netherlands and feared encouraging Prussian maritime pretensions. By 1805 Pitt had largely reprised Grenville's plans for a post-war settlement, which he had agreed to in 1798, and gave pride of place in the north-western European balance of power to a restored and revitalised Netherlands.⁴⁸ Like Grenville, Pitt still envisaged the Netherlands as an 'effectual barrier in future against encroachments on the part of France' and contemplated bolstering the country with extra territory and returned colonial possessions.⁴⁹

The idea that the Netherlands remained an important European power was reprised for the final time in late 1813, as the prospect of dictating a peace to France became a more realistic possibility. The British proposals for post-Napoleonic Europe were mostly drawn up by Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh, who took the momentous step of going in person to the Allied headquarters to negotiate on behalf of Britain. Castlereagh's intention was to lobby for the creation of a series of buffer states around a reduced France, with the Netherlands being united to Belgium under the House of Orange to guard France from the north. According to Adam Zamoyski, 'Holland was to be the lynchpin of Britain's rearrangement of Europe'.⁵⁰ Castlereagh's decision to push for the Netherlands as one of the primary buffers against future

⁴⁷ Ingram, 'Lord Mulgrave's Plan for the Reconstruction of Europe', p.515.

⁴⁸ Harold Temperley & Lillian M. Penson (eds.), *Foundations of British Foreign Policy from Pitt (1792) to Salisbury (1902), or, Documents Old and New* (Cambridge, 1938), pp.10-21, 'Memorandum on the deliverance and security of Europe, 19 January 1805'.

⁴⁹ Temperley & Penson (eds.), *Foundations of British Foreign Policy*, p.12.

⁵⁰ Adam Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace, the Fall of Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna* (London, 2007), p.138.

French expansionism was doubtless helped by the timing of the Dutch uprising against French rule, which came only weeks before Castlereagh set off for the Continent, but it was also influenced by the idea that the Netherlands should be an important power. Castlereagh's project of 1813 shared many similarities with that of Pitt of 1805, and even that of Grenville of 1798. All assumed that, in spite of recent upheavals, the Netherlands had the capacity to reclaim her place as an important power in Europe. The major difference between the plans of Castlereagh and those of his predecessors was the fate of Belgium. The idea of uniting Belgium and the Netherlands had been considered and rejected by Carmarthen in 1790, Grenville in 1798, and Pitt in 1805.⁵¹ For Castlereagh in 1813, uniting the northern and southern Netherlands seemed the most practical way of defending them from French influence and of making the country an effective barrier against France. In the settlement of 1814 Britain also decided to restore most Dutch colonies and paid £2,000,000 to help the Dutch fortify their southern frontier, with a further £3,000,000 pledged to ease the extension of Orangist rule into Belgium.⁵²

That British politicians should hold the Netherlands in such high regard even in 1813 can also be explained by the impression of the Netherlands as a fiercely independent power. It is axiomatic that all states should wish to preserve their independence, but latent British views of the Dutch love of liberty, fed by tales of the Revolt against Spain and desperate defence against Louis XIV's pretensions, had gained almost mythical status. This impression would of course have been shaken by the years of occupation and eventual annexation by France, but it lingered in British public opinion and is reflected in the political belief that the Netherlands should continue to provide a willing confederate to resist French encroachments. The British government's faith in the Dutch love of independence in fact led them more than once to overestimate the capacity of the Netherlands to defend herself, most notably during the French invasion of 1794-95. Despite the constant string of complaints since 1793 that the Netherlands was not fully contributing to the alliance, British politicians seemed certain that should a credible threat materialise the whole Dutch nation would rise to defend themselves. Auckland's opinion was that necessity would be the spur for action, as in early 1793 when, in direct response to French threats, the Dutch army was rapidly increased to 50,000 men.⁵³

⁵¹ G. J. Renier, *Great Britain and the Establishment of the Kingdom of The Netherlands 1813-1815* (The Hague, 1930), pp.11 & 34-37; Temperley & Penson (eds.), *Foundations of British Foreign Policy*, p.12.

⁵² TNA, FO 95/522/3, additional articles to Treaty between Britain and the Netherlands, 13 August 1813.

⁵³ TNA, FO 37/44, Auckland to Grenville, 8 February 1793.

The decision not to throw all available forces into the defence of Netherlands in 1794-95 was predicated, as argued above, on the notion that the Dutch possessed sufficient strength to defend themselves, but also on the calculation that they possessed the will to do so. New British ambassador Lord St Helens certainly gave his political masters reason for complacency with a stream of reports in early autumn 1794 describing the 'zeal and public spirit' which pervaded efforts to prepare the country's defences.⁵⁴ Neither Pitt, nor Grenville, nor Dundas saw it necessary to take drastic steps to succour their soon-to-be-beleaguered ally, relying instead on the Dutch defences and the remaining allied forces in the Low Countries to hold back the French tide. The ultimate failure of British policy in the Netherlands in 1794-95 was military, and can at least in part be laid at the feet of the shambolic allied strategy, inept leadership, and ill-fortune with Mother Nature. Yet political complacency also played its part. By late October 1794 St Helens's optimism had transformed into despondency that described the Dutch as unwilling and disaffected confederates.⁵⁵ Yet Grenville's response was simply to reiterate Britain's expectations of its allies.⁵⁶ To the Dutch ambassador in London, Baron Nagell, he wrote that he fully expected the Dutch people to rise to the challenge; 'leur amour pour la Patrie, leur zèle pour les intérêts de la liberté [...] doit contribuer à écarter ce danger.'⁵⁷ There is absolutely no doubt that Pitt and Grenville considered the Netherlands as crucial to Britain's war effort and wished to see her defended, and their relative inaction in the face of defeat and Dutch dejection stemmed primarily from a belief that the Dutch would ultimately be able and willing to defend themselves.

The belief in the Dutch love of independence did, however, have its limits. While French encroachments were expected to be rebuffed, the British government saw no contradiction in expecting the Netherlands to be subservient to Britain. In mid-1792 Grenville became alarmed at reports that the Netherlands may be unilaterally seduced into the war against France, and sought to ensure Dutch commitment to the agreed-upon Anglo-Dutch policy of neutrality.⁵⁸ When the prospect of Dutch action receded, Britain was further alarmed that the States

⁵⁴ TNA, FO 37/55, St Helens to Grenville, 30 September 1794.

⁵⁵ TNA, FO 37/55, FO 37/56, St Helens to Grenville, 11 November 1794.

⁵⁶ TNA, FO 37/56, Grenville to St Helens, 25 November 1794.

⁵⁷ Het Nationaal Archief, The Hague (HNA), Collectie Fagel (1.10.29), 1854, Grenville to Nagell, 30 October 1794.

⁵⁸ Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue*, vol. 2, p.274, Auckland to Grenville, 26 May 1792 & vol. 2, p.281, Grenville to Auckland, 19 June 1792; TNA, FO 37/40, Auckland to Grenville, 28 September 1792; BL, Add MSS 57366, Chauvelin to Grenville, 18 June 1792 & Grenville to Chauvelin, 8 July 1792.

General may be pressured into acceding to French demands to open the Scheldt without offering resistance.⁵⁹ Grenville made considerable diplomatic efforts in the latter months of 1792 to ensure that Britain's foremost ally should not be drawn into war without British agreement, nor fail to defend herself should aggressive French proclamations be turned into action. In this Grenville had some success, writing with satisfaction in November to his brother the Marquis of Buckingham that 'Holland will do what we please.'⁶⁰

Grenville's confidence that the Netherlands would do what Britain pleased was not based solely on the belief that he could cajole or bully the Dutch government into compliance, but also on the widespread British opinion that the Dutch were natural enemies of France and natural allies of Britain. This idea proved one of the major factors underlying British foreign policy across this period, proving as tenacious as objective proof of it was tenuous. Evidence to the contrary was routinely dismissed as the work of intriguers and Francophile mischief makers. The belief was almost as strong in 1813, after nigh-on two decades of French dominance of the Netherlands, as it had been in 1784 when Britain and the Netherlands concluded a peace treaty to end the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War.

Carmarthen and Harris's confidence that they could wrest the Netherlands from her French allegiance in the mid-1780s stemmed largely from the belief that the Dutch were natural friends of Britain who had been duped by France into abandoning their historical allegiance. Britain had declared war on the Netherlands in 1780 with the encouragement of their ambassador in The Hague, Sir Joseph Yorke, who bizarrely believed that a short, sharp war would remind the Dutch of the value of the British alliance.⁶¹ From early 1781 intelligence from the Netherlands suggested that only fear of France was preventing a swift Anglo-Dutch reconciliation.⁶² When the two powers finally made peace in 1784 the States General was already drifting towards a French alliance, but the attitude of Harris and Carmarthen was that only a small cabal of Francophiles was forcing the country into a 'French yoke.'⁶³

⁵⁹ TNA, FO 37/41, Auckland to Grenville 16 and 20 November 1792.

⁶⁰ Duke of Buckingham, *Memoirs of Court and Cabinets of George III* (2nd edn., 2 vols, London, 1853), vol. 2, p.223, Grenville to Buckingham, 7 November 1792.

⁶¹ H.M. Scott, 'Sir Joseph Yorke and the Waning of the Anglo-Dutch Alliance, 1747-1788', in Bob Moore & Henk van Nierop (ed.), *Colonial Empires Compared, Britain and the Netherlands 1750-1850* (Aldershot, 2003), p.31; H.M. Scott, 'Sir Joseph Yorke, Dutch Politics and the Origins of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (September 1988), 571-89.

⁶² TNA, FO 37/1, letter 20 March 1781.

⁶³ TNA, FO 37/7, Harris to Carmarthen, 12 August 1785.

British policy was not entirely dictated by the feeling that the Dutch should be British allies, and nor did Pitt, Carmarthen or George III intend to base British policy solely on a desire to liberate the Netherlands from their supposed bondage. The policy of neutralising the Franco-Dutch alliance made objective strategic and even commercial sense, while the underlying desire to see the Stadholder restored to his 'rightful' privileges had little to do with supposed Anglo-Dutch amity. Yet the unmistakable assumption pervaded the correspondence of British politicians and diplomats that the Franco-Dutch alliance was somehow an unnatural state of affairs, and this undoubtedly shaped the execution of British policy. Carmarthen understood the animosity that many in the Netherlands bore towards Britain in the aftermath of the recent war, but he and Harris were keen to balance this by provoking what they, and British public opinion, considered to be latent Dutch Francophobia. For Harris neutrality was 'by far the most advantageous ground in which we can stand', as he believed that once the French alliance was ruptured the Netherlands would naturally gravitate back into a British orbit from self-interest.⁶⁴ Harris's first task on arriving in The Hague was to counter the idea that 'we entertain the most inimical sentiments for this country' and to remind the Dutch people of the manifold benefits of the old British connection.⁶⁵ To London, many of the more moderate Patriots and anti-Orangist Regents were pro-French from convenience rather than conviction, and could be swayed from 'this unnatural connection'.⁶⁶

By December 1785 Harris and Carmarthen had become convinced that restoring the Stadholder to his traditional rights and privileges was key to ridding the country of the pernicious influence of France. Early flirtations with the Patriots were largely abandoned as Harris became a leading figure in the Orangist revival.⁶⁷ Yet without any means of immediately restoring Orangist-British fortunes, Harris was reduced to continuing to play on what he saw as traditional Dutch sympathies. His primary aim was to stir up dissatisfaction with the French alliance and to attempt to awaken a sense of national indignation at the supposed subjugation to France.⁶⁸ Harris was convinced that this strategy was helping to further British policy but believed that those with anti-French sympathies dared not speak out from fear of pro-French

⁶⁴ TNA, FO 37/9, Harris to Carmarthen, 17 November and 25 November 1785.

⁶⁵ TNA, FO 37/5, Harris to Carmarthen, 7 December 1784

⁶⁶ TNA, FO 37/9, Harris to Carmarthen, 15 November 1785.

⁶⁷ BL, Add MSS 28059, Memorandum dated 20 April 1785; TNA, FO 37/5, Instructions for Harris; Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents*.

⁶⁸ TNA, FO 37/8, Harris to Carmarthen, 27 September 1785, & FO 37/9, Harris to Carmarthen, 25 November 1785.

Free Corps, who 'are become absolute master of this province and they exercise their authority with the despotism and cruelty inseparable from fanatics and mercenaries'.⁶⁹ The eventual decision to encourage Prussian intervention to decide the contest in Britain's favour stemmed from the desire to fight fire with fire, and to counter the military threat of France, rather than from any loss of faith in the natural Anglophilia of the Dutch people. The success of Britain's policy of regaining the Dutch alliance in 1787 was ascribed in no small part to this supposed natural Anglophilia. The ease of the Prussian victory – especially over what Britain considered a relatively strong and fiercely independent power – convinced London that the Dutch had welcomed the Prussian conquest and restoration of the British alliance. Lord Chancellor Edward Thurlow rejoiced 'resistance is so practicable on their part, and so hardly surmountable on the other, that nothing but the great concurrence of the people [...] could have brought us so forward'.⁷⁰

Even after the French conquest of the Netherlands in early 1795 the British government continued to base policies on the premise that the Dutch people were friends to Britain. In opposition to Thurlow's assessment for the reasons of Anglo-Prussian success in 1787, blame for the ease of the French conquest in 1795 fell squarely on the 'shameful conduct' of the Dutch army and on the treachery of a cabal of Francophile revolutionaries who had supposedly undermined national resistance.⁷¹ From 1795 British policies to the Dutch state were unequivocally hostile, with shipping, colonies, goods and property of the Batavian Republic and its partisans all subject to seizure. Yet ministers continued to treat the Dutch generally with a consideration not afforded to other enemy peoples. Dutch refugees were invited to bring their goods to Britain without taxation, Dutch fishing boats that wished to use British ports were offered the same bounties as British vessels, and trade with the Netherlands continued unabated, with only military stores considered contraband.⁷² The Dutch armed forces and colonies were treated with circumspection in early 1795 in the hope that they would declare themselves for Britain, while Dutch ships, trading posts and forts were told that they would be left undisturbed if they proclaimed themselves for the Stadholder and placed

⁶⁹ TNA, FO 37/16, Harris to Carmarthen, 17 July 1787.

⁷⁰ TNA, PRO 30/29/1/15, letter from Lord Thurlow 1 October 1787.

⁷¹ Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue*, vol. 3, p.6.

⁷² *The Statutes at Large, From the Thirty-fifth Year of the Reign of King George the Third, to the Thirty-eighth Year of the Reign of King George the Third Inclusive* (London, 1798), p.140, Act 35 Geo 3 Cap. LXXX & LVI; Herbert Rowan, *The Princes of Orange, the Stadholders in the Dutch Republic* (Cambridge, 1988); TNA, FO 37/57 passim; TNA, PC 1/40/133, Order in Council, 10 January 1798.

themselves under British protection.⁷³ Permission was granted on several occasions for corps to be raised from Dutch deserters or prisoners of war, as they were assumed to be more loyal to the British cause than to that of France.⁷⁴ This forbearance was tempered by the fear that Dutch armaments and outposts could be used against Britain if they adhered to the new revolutionary regime, and action was taken against Dutch warships and colonies that refused to declare for the Stadholder, but the British government proved generally reluctant to see the Dutch as enemies.⁷⁵

After 1795 British policy to the Netherlands seemingly developed in two separate and sometimes contradictory directions. London pursued a policy of hostility to the Batavian government and its agents, while at the same time espousing the aim of 'liberating' the Dutch people and restoring the Orangist regime; the former a policy towards the de facto Dutch state, the latter perhaps more a policy towards the Dutch nation as Britain's leaders understood it. In an unconscious echoing of the revolutionary sentiments of 1793, when France had declared war on the crowned heads of Europe while offering fraternity to its peoples, Britain's policy towards the Netherlands was predicated on the understanding that the Batavian government was the enemy, rather than the Dutch people. If the French *Levée-en-Masse* of 1793 showed the powers of Europe that they fought the French people as a whole, the lethargy-en-masse in the Netherlands after 1795 was taken by Pitt and Grenville as proof that they faced little more than a small cadre of Dutch revolutionaries backed up by the bayonets of the French occupiers.

British ministers' belief that the Dutch were friends labouring under a 'system of French tyranny and oppression' was fed by the correspondence of British agents in the Netherlands.⁷⁶ Charles Bentinck, an Orangist Dutch nobleman, was employed to run the network of agents on Britain's behalf, and Grenville corresponded with several Britons with close Dutch connections,

⁷³ Jonathon Israel, *The Dutch Republic, its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford, 1995), p.1127; TNA, FO 37/57 & FO 37/58, governor of Cape Coast to governor of Elmina, 7 December 1795; SA, WWM/F/5/54-57, Earl Fitzwilliam to Duke of Portland, 12 February 1795; Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue*, vol. 3, p.26.

⁷⁴ TNA, WO 1/911, Evan Nepean to William Huskisson, 3 April 1795 & Colonel Robert Brownrigg to Nepean, 8 November 1796; WO 1/912; FO 37/57, Dundas to Duke of York, 20 September 1795.

⁷⁵ TNA, WO 1/178; Julian Corbett & H. W. Richmond (eds.), *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty 1794-1801* (4 vols, London, 1913-1924), vol. 1, pp.302-09; Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue*, vol. 3, p.35.

⁷⁶ TNA, FO 38/3, the phrase appears on the contemporary title page for the file.

such as the merchant Robert Barclay.⁷⁷ Both Bentinck and Barclay painted a picture of the Dutch populace groaning under the yoke of merciless French exactions, and both emphasised the Dutch people's desire to return to the old system of government. The immediate credence that Grenville gave to their reports indicates that he was at least partially influenced by the preconception of the Dutch as well disposed. Secretary at War William Windham,⁷⁸ a vociferous advocate of military support for French émigrés, noticed that ministers were far more willing to believe the reports of Dutch émigrés than the reports of their French counterparts, complaining bitterly that 'those who were full of distrust of Frenchmen had the most perfect reliance on the zeal and energy of Dutchmen'.⁷⁹ Pitt and Grenville certainly appeared to implicitly have greater faith in the émigré cause in the Netherlands than they did in France.

The invasion of the Netherlands in 1799 was based on the premise that the Dutch people continued to favour Britain over France. The expedition was largely the brainchild of Grenville and was intended to demonstrate Britain's firm commitment to the Second Coalition while inflicting real damage on the French war effort.⁸⁰ Of the Cabinet, only Windham sounded a note of caution, arguing that liberating the Netherlands was of little use in persuading Austria of Britain's commitment to the struggle. 'We shall be doing, I conceive, with forty thousand men, what may be done, as well, by four lines in a dispatch', he wrote to Grenville.⁸¹ Even Dundas, whose experiences of the American War had left him wary of putting faith in promises of popular support, was won over by Pitt and Grenville's arguments that the Dutch could be relied upon as friends.⁸² This faith in widespread support in the Netherlands for a pro-British uprising did not simply arise from assumptions of natural Dutch sympathies prevalent in latent public opinion, but was backed up by the intelligence reports received by Grenville and the

⁷⁷ TNA, FO 38/1 – 38/4; FO 37/59 passim.

⁷⁸ Secretary at War was a very different position to Secretary for War and the Colonies. The latter was a Cabinet minister charged with running the war, the former a non-Cabinet post charged with Parliamentary oversight of the army and with running the War Office. Richard Glover, *Peninsular Preparation: the Reform of the British Army 1795-1809* (Cambridge, 1963), p.35.

⁷⁹ J. W. Fortescue, *British Statesmen of the Great War 1793-1814* (Oxford, 1911), p.143.

⁸⁰ Mackesy, *Statesmen at War*; A. B. Rodger, *The War of the Second Coalition, 1798-1801* (Oxford, 1964), pp.176-94. Also Fitzpatrick (ed.), *The Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue*, vol. 5; TNA, FO 37/59.

⁸¹ BL, Add MSS 37846, Windham to Grenville 10 August 1799.

⁸² J. W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army* (20 vols, London, 1899-1930), vol. 4, p.645.

Prince of Orange.⁸³ With hindsight it is easy to appreciate that Grenville's informants were viewing the country through firmly Orange-tinted glasses, but their reports tallied so precisely with what was expected of a Dutch population that Grenville had little reason to doubt them.

The pro-Orange mutiny and surrender of the Dutch fleet was a notable success of the 1799 campaign, but the invading forces received little other Dutch assistance. The failure of the campaign and of the Dutch to show any inclination to help Britain led to some awkward questions from the Opposition in Parliament. Richard Sheridan led the attacks, explicitly accusing Pitt of basing his support for the invasion on his own appreciation of human nature rather than 'the actual state and disposition of the Dutch people', and denouncing the ministry for assuming that the Dutch were friends of Britain.⁸⁴ 'The only thing secret in the expedition was the favourable disposition of the Dutch people to our cause; a secret so well kept to be sure, that to this hour it has never been discovered', he mocked. Sheridan acknowledged that it was widely assumed that the Dutch would support a British invasion, but was 'at a loss to discover upon what ministers could have formed this supposition'. Yet Dundas, speaking for the government, responded that it was an entirely reasonable assumption. 'I leave the House to consider this question of presumption, that the Dutch would, if they had an opportunity, have every disposition to shake off the yoke of France; and then to determine whether His Majesty's ministers are to be censured for presuming thus far upon the Dutch character'.⁸⁵ Dutch inaction did not mean their sympathies were not with Britain, argued Dundas, but was the natural reaction of a people who had lived under an occupying government and feared committing themselves until they knew which side would emerge victorious. That Dundas felt little need to defend himself or his colleagues for 'presuming upon Dutch character' shows just how far the impression of the Dutch as naturally disposed against France permeated into political thinking.

The British government's assumption that the Dutch were ready to rise in their favour did not survive the 1799 campaign, but latent opinion that Dutch were natural friends of Britain

⁸³ Fitzpatrick (ed.), *The Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue*, vol. 5, p.3. Hereditary Prince to Prince of Orange, 9 April 1799; TNA, FO 95/6/3 (& copy in HNA, Collectie Fagel (1.10.29), 1857), 'Précis d'une Conférence entre S.A.S. le Prince Héritaire d'Orange et Lord Grenville, le 27 Novembre 1798'; FO 37/59, Dundas to Lt Col. Malcolm, 4 August 1799; HNA, Collectie Fagel (1.10.29), 1862, Grenville to Fagel, 4 July 1799.

⁸⁴ House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP), <<http://parlipapers.chadwick.co.uk>>, accessed 18 September 2012, Sheridan in debate, 10 February 1800 [this was incorrectly dated as 10 February 1799 on the website at the time of consultation].

⁸⁵ HCPP, <<http://parlipapers.chadwick.co.uk>>, accessed 18 September 2012, Dundas in debate, 10 February 1800; Henry Dundas, *Substance of the Speeches of the Right Honourable Henry Dundas* (London, 1800), pp.32-33.

continued to inform policy. It can even be argued that this assumption was partly responsible for the apparent British disinterest in the Netherlands at the Peace of Amiens. On the surface Amiens may appear to be an admission of defeat in the face of insurmountable French domination and intractable French negotiation over the Low Countries. David Gates claimed that Britain had to 'acquiesce in France's virtual control of Holland'⁸⁶ and Paul Kennedy stated that at Amiens 'London was firmly told to keep out' of Dutch affairs.⁸⁷ Yet there is possibly more subtlety to Britain's Dutch policy than simply waving a white flag. While it could be argued that Pitt's resignation may have led to a de-emphasis on the importance of the Netherlands by Henry Addington's incoming administration – Pitt had 'a craze for operations in Holland', according to John Fortescue⁸⁸ – it is more likely that the tactic of leaving the Dutch question open was quite deliberate. The events of 1799 may have shown that the Netherlands could not be won by force of arms, but the events of 1785-87 had shown the possibility that the country could be brought back into the British orbit by dint of diplomacy.

Given the strategic importance of the Netherlands, this last assessment possibly makes more sense than accusing Addington, new Foreign Secretary Lord Hawkesbury, or the chief peace negotiator Lord Cornwallis of either gross oversight or lamentable weakness in having failed to provide for Britain's security at Amiens. The failure to enshrine the diplomatic alignment of the Netherlands in treaty allowed the British government to portray themselves as defenders of the Netherlands against French encroachments once the peace had been signed. Writing in August 1802 to Britain's newly appointed minister plenipotentiary to the Netherlands, Robert Liston, Hawkesbury confided that Liston should seek to give the impression that Britain had no interest in the internal politics of the Republic and wished only to resume the former friendship, and to see the withdrawal of the French troops still in the country. 'It is HM's anxious desire', wrote the Foreign Secretary, 'to see the Batavian Republic in fact what it is in name – independent', going on to say that the removal of French troops must be a gradual process that would 'require great prudence and circumspection'.⁸⁹ This was not the language of a man who had accepted French control over the Netherlands as a foregone conclusion. Carmarthen and Harris's logic of 1785 that coaxing the Netherlands into neutrality would see them naturally gravitate towards a British orbit continued to apply in 1802. Ostensibly Britain

⁸⁶ David Gates, *The Napoleonic Wars, 1803-15* (London, 2003), p.15.

⁸⁷ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (London, 1989), p.163.

⁸⁸ Fortescue, *British Statesmen of the Great War 1793-1814*, p.180.

⁸⁹ TNA, FO 37/61, Instruction no. 1 from Hawkesbury to Liston, 16 August 1802.

was leaving Franco-Dutch relations to be regulated by the treaties of 1795 and 1801 which stipulated that France would withdraw her troops once a general peace had been agreed, but the government hoped that an independent Netherlands may prove strong enough to break away from her supposed tormentor.⁹⁰ With these considerations in mind, it is possible to question the traditional view that Britain surrendered on the Dutch issue at Amiens, and see it instead as a tactical withdrawal.

British governments throughout the Napoleonic Wars tended to retain the conviction that the Dutch remained allied to France under protest rather than from preference. The Netherlands was not included in the declaration of war on France in May 1803, although Hawkesbury had no realistic expectations of securing Dutch neutrality. Britain would not consider the Netherlands as neutral unless Napoleon withdrew French troops and agreed to respect Dutch independence, which it was fairly obvious he would refuse to do.⁹¹ Yet even while the Dutch were seen to be wholly subjugated to France, Dutch subjects were not always regarded as enemies. The recruitment of Dutch soldiers and sailors into the Royal Navy and the army's Foreign Regiments recommenced at the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars, despite other enemy prisoners or deserters from France, Spain and Italy being explicitly excluded from serving in Britain's armed forces.⁹² As in 1799, the supposed sympathies of the Dutch to the British cause made the area appear as a weak link in the French-controlled territories of northern Europe. The army sent to Hanover in 1805-06 as part of the Third Coalition's grand plans was intended to help to drive the French from the Netherlands, although the project was abandoned following Austerlitz and Prussia's diplomatic *volte face*.⁹³

Overall, however, the belief that the Dutch were natural allies of Britain had little impact on British policy of the Napoleonic Wars. Charles Gordon, the British agent charged with gathering information on the Netherlands after the renewal of war, wrote in May 1806 to warn that many well-disposed Dutchmen feared British indifference to their plight, and were making peace with the Batavian government.⁹⁴ Unlike the 1799 expedition, the Walcheren campaign of 1809 was not motivated by a desire to liberate the Netherlands, and was not based on the

⁹⁰ Renier, *Great Britain and the Establishment of the Kingdom of the Netherlands*, p.24.

⁹¹ TNA, FO 37/61, Hawkesbury to Liston, 20 May 1803.

⁹² TNA, WO 1/912, William Eliot and John Turnbull to Lord Hobart, 8 August 1803.

⁹³ Hall, *British Strategy*, pp.119-21; Glover, *Peninsular Preparation*, p.253; Black, *Debating Foreign Policy*, pp.210-11.

⁹⁴ TNA, FO 38/9, 22 May 1806.

idea that the Dutch were friends to Britain. Its aims were mostly military and political; to destroy enemy shipping on the Scheldt and prevent future enemy use of the river, and to provide a diversion that might convince Austria to continue the war against Napoleon.⁹⁵ In 1813 London did expect that the recently-restored Orangist government would be happy to follow Britain's lead in foreign affairs, but this stemmed as much from the fact that the regime was clearly anti-French and required allied support to consolidate its power.

Part of the reason for public opinion's belief in the supposed 'natural' Anglo-Dutch connection was religious, but religion played only a very peripheral role in influencing policy. This was not confined to the Netherlands, as religion played little role in British foreign policy in general in these years. Castlereagh even described the post-1815 Holy Alliance as 'a piece of sublime mysticism and nonsense'.⁹⁶ The thinking that had led to the Protestant Alliance of the seventeenth century was largely dead, although the belief that the Dutch were staunchly committed to Protestantism still occasionally influenced how ministers attempted to execute policy. This was especially the case in 1785-87, when Britain sought to emphasise links of Protestantism in opposition to Catholic France,⁹⁷ and in 1799 when the invading Anglo-Russian forces sought to rally resistance to the French around the twin platforms of Orangism and the Protestant faith.⁹⁸ Sheridan criticised the government in Parliament for their over-reliance on religion when appealing to the Dutch people, stating that 'we address the Dutch, a people cold, considerate, phlegmatic, as if they were a nation of religious fanatics', and professing not to understand why religion was mentioned, as the French had done nothing to prevent religious worship.⁹⁹ Yet the religious aspect of public opinion does not seem to have been particularly important to policy. Britain's proclaimed desire to defend Dutch faith was often mentioned in the same breath as commerce or Orangism, and was an attempt to secure Dutch goodwill by pointing out British sympathies for supposed facets of Dutch identity that were harmed by the French alliance, rather than a commitment to actively undertake any religious policy.

⁹⁵ TNA, WO 6/26, Castlereagh to First Lord of Admiralty, 11 July 1809, & Orders for Lord Chatham, 16 July 1809.

⁹⁶ Derry, *Castlereagh*, p.14.

⁹⁷ HNA, Collectie Fagel (1.10.29), 1458, George III to States General, 5 July 1786.

⁹⁸ HNA, Collectie Fagel (1.10.29), 1859-61, proclamations of Prince of Orange, Hereditary Prince, and Gen. Abercromby; TNA, FO 95/5/4, 'Aan Het Volk van Nederland', 29 August 1799.

⁹⁹ HCPP, <<http://parlipapers.chadwick.co.uk>>, accessed 18 September 2012, Sheridan in debate, 10 February 1800.

Another important factor underpinning Anglo-Dutch amity was trade, and the British belief in Dutch predilection for commerce was an important influence on policy. In British opinion the Dutch were a great trading nation whose allegiance to Britain came in part from the manifold commercial advantages that this brought. The importance attached to the notion that commercial prosperity was a shared Anglo-Dutch trait meant that trade was seen by successive governments as a lever that could be used to prise the Netherlands from a French alliance. Trade was not the only drum used to beat a pro-British rhythm, but it was an important part of Britain's diplomatic efforts. In November 1785 Harris reported that he believed the greater part of the Dutch people 'consider the importance of this country to consist not in its political but in its commercial consequence'.¹⁰⁰ Trade was key to the 'character of the Dutch nation', Harris believed, and he pushed an agenda of undermining confidence in the benefits of a commercial and colonial accord with France, while highlighting the advantages of closer ties with Britain, whose self-identity as a great trading power made her, in Harris's eyes at least, a more attractive option.¹⁰¹ British financial assistance for the ailing VOC was mooted as a tactic of securing both Dutch friendship and colonial cooperation, although it was recognised that such assistance would bring little reward without first overthrowing the Franco-Dutch alliance.¹⁰²

Trade was also used as a tool to cement ties of friendship between Britain and the Netherlands after the Orangist restoration of 1787. The treaty of alliance of 1788 demanded the immediate negotiation of a commercial treaty and interim measures for Britain and the Netherlands to consider each other as 'the most favoured nation' for trade.¹⁰³ Pitt agreed to the proposed VOC loan, despite the misgivings of Dundas (at this time Pitt's confidant and Treasurer of the Navy) who believed the VOC's failure would be advantageous to Britain. Pitt insisted that the goodwill gained by keeping the VOC afloat would be worth far more to British policy than the financial benefits that would accrue from its failure.¹⁰⁴ Britain was clearly using financial and commercial measures to forge a closer relationship with the Netherlands, and clearly attached

¹⁰⁰ TNA, FO 37/9, Harris to Carmarthen, 25 November 1785.

¹⁰¹ TNA, FO 37/7, Harris to Carmarthen, 19 August 1785; FO 37/9, Harris to Carmarthen, 25 November 1785.

¹⁰² TNA, FO 37/10, Harris to Carmarthen, 27 January 1786; Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue*, vol. 1, pp.278-80, Grenville to Dundas, 6 August 1787.

¹⁰³ TNA, FO 95/5/2, Defensive Treaty signed 15 April 1788 at The Hague, Article 10.

¹⁰⁴ TNA, FO 37/10, Harris to Carmarthen, 27 January 1786; Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents*, p.201.

more importance to commerce as a unifying factor for the Netherlands than she had done for the commercial treaty with France. However, the influence of past experience also tempered the lengths to which Britain was willing to go in granting commercial concessions. Despite the Dutch government's desire that the commercial treaty be quickly finalised, agreement proved elusive due to disputes over the right of the Netherlands to trade with Britain's enemies in times of conflict, which had been a source of friction between the two countries since the treaty of 1674 had conceded to the Dutch the right to do so.¹⁰⁵ Pitt and Grenville simply did not trust the Dutch not to renew past trading practices, and demanded that they be forbidden by treaty. By 1792 an impasse had been reached, but Auckland worried that 'we cannot now abandon the negotiation without abandoning every advantage of cordial friendship and concert with the United Provinces'.¹⁰⁶

The hostilities of 1795-1802 brought an end to commercial accords but the Peace of Amiens saw the British government once more attempt to woo their Dutch counterparts by dangling the carrot of commerce before them. Hawkesbury's tactics in many ways mirrored those of 1785, and much of the reasoning remained the same. In the absence of the Stadholder, Hawkesbury wished for restored relations to be 'national, founded solely on mutual interests', of which commerce was one.¹⁰⁷ Hawkesbury acknowledged that agreeing a commercial treaty would prove difficult but instructed Liston to seek the resurrection of the favourable trading status granted by the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1788.¹⁰⁸ This was not simply a measure to stimulate British trade; much of the Dutch trade disrupted by the war had in any case redirected to Hamburg, which by 1800 had become the main conduit for British goods into the continent.¹⁰⁹ Instead it was a way of linking the Dutch commercial classes – which in British eyes meant the essential part of the Dutch nation – to British interests, and reminding them of the benefits of a closer understanding.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, FO 95/5/2, 'Letter from Lord Hawkesbury on the Subject of the Commercial Treaty with Holland'; FO 37/28, Auckland to Leeds, 13 March 1790; Alice Carter, *Neutrality or Commitment: the Evolution of Dutch Foreign Policy, 1667-1795* (London, 1975); Charles Wilson, *Anglo-Dutch Commerce and Finance in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1941), pp.23 & 189; Scott, 'Sir Joseph Yorke and the Waning of the Anglo-Dutch Alliance', *passim*.

¹⁰⁶ BL Add MSS 36814, Auckland to Grenville, 6 January 1792.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, FO 37/61, Instruction no. 1 from Hawkesbury to Liston, 16 August 1802.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, FO 37/61, Instruction no. 2 from Hawkesbury to Liston, 16 August 1802.

¹⁰⁹ BL, Add MSS 38239, Memorandum for Lord Hawkesbury, 1803. The document states that the Hamburg trade had grown from 6,039 tons in 1789 to 62,441 tons by 1800.

Despite goodwill on both sides of the North Sea, the commercial project was delayed while the Dutch negotiated with Napoleon for the removal of French troops, and forcibly abandoned when the fragile peace was ruptured in late spring 1803.¹¹⁰ On the outbreak of war Britain reprised its strategy from 1795, preying on Dutch shipping and strategic colonies to deny their resources to the enemy. The reasoning for this was generally pragmatic and driven by Britain's own interests, rather than by any appreciation for public opinion's commercial impressions of the Dutch.¹¹¹ The Privy Council did, on occasion, sanction continued trade with the Netherlands, but the treatment that the Dutch received in this regard was little different to France and Spain.¹¹²

Latent opinion of the Netherlands as a commercial nation did not really impact on Britain's policies again until the peace settlement of 1814-15. As part of the attempt to re-establish Dutch power in Europe, Britain offered to return many colonies captured since 1803.¹¹³ The belief that the Netherlands was a commercial nation, and would therefore need the colonies to re-establish the national wealth required to provide an effectual barrier to France, played a large role in this decision. Britain was to retain strategic colonies such as the Cape of Good Hope and parts of the East Indies, but Liverpool and Castlereagh were much more willing to return the 'purely commercial' colonies of the West Indies. 'I can hardly see any arrangement by which the independence of Holland, under the Prince of Orange, could even be inadequately secured, in which it would not be proper to act liberally with respect to those colonies', wrote the Prime Minister.¹¹⁴

The supposed wealth of the Netherlands was another consideration that crept into British policy. Neither public opinion nor politicians in Britain gave as much credence to myths of Dutch wealth as the French seemed to, and British policy was certainly never driven by a desire to extort money and material from the Netherlands. In fact, Britain was much more likely to offer subsidy and financial assistance to the Dutch, rather than considering them as a rich cow to be milked. Harris and Pitt used the prospect of loans to try to draw the Dutch back towards a British alliance during the Patriot struggles of the 1780s, and in 1790 Britain offered a sizable

¹¹⁰ TNA, FO 37/61, Liston to Hawkesbury, 31 December 1802.

¹¹¹ Hall, *British Strategy*, p.96.

¹¹² Hall, *British Strategy*, p.17; Gates, *The Napoleonic Wars*, p.160; TNA, PC 1/4471; FO 37/63, Order in Council, 10 May 1809.

¹¹³ TNA, FO 95/522/3, Treaty between Britain and the Netherlands, additional articles 13 August 1814.

¹¹⁴ Nicolas Tarling, *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Malay World 1780-1824* (St. Lucia, 1962), p.72.

subsidy to encourage Dutch naval mobilisation.¹¹⁵ These offers of financial assistance were predicated on the understanding that the wealth of the Netherlands lay in private hands beyond the reach of the public purse, rather than a belief that the country had fallen on to hard times, and British ministers still expected the Netherlands to be able to raise money in times of crisis.¹¹⁶ The Dutch government's repeated declarations of poverty and their inability to pay for the war 1793-95 were received with initial scepticism and increasing irritation in London. When the Dutch government claimed that it would be impossible to raise the money for a proposed subsidy to Prussia in early 1794, Grenville angrily insisted that 'in a country abounding with specie, as is the case Holland, a loan might easily be raised on the security of the Dutch government'.¹¹⁷ Two months later, an exasperated William Eliot wrote to the Foreign Secretary to complain that the allies were being held up due to 'the failure of a trifling sum of money on the part of the Republic'.¹¹⁸ The 'trifling sum' was said to be less than one million guilders (£90,000), and to British eyes the inability of the supposedly-wealthy Netherlands to raise such a sum was inexplicable.

By October 1794 British politicians had apparently come to terms with the shambolic nature of Dutch public finance and offered to guarantee loans on behalf of the Dutch government, but Amsterdam financiers, alarmed at the progress of the war and fearful for their investments, refused to lend on the grounds that 'the fate of the British government [is] so intimately involved in that of the government of this country, that should the latter be subverted, the former cannot long continue to exist'.¹¹⁹ The States General claimed that the country's financial exhaustion demanded that peace negotiations be opened with France, to which Grenville seemingly agreed in mid-November, but four days later he insisted that Britain would not permit a separate peace unless she was party to the negotiations, and railed against the lack of Dutch commitment to the allied cause. Denying that the Dutch were incapable of defending themselves, he claimed that the idea 'that the means of the Republic or her resources of any kind are exhausted, is a position that cannot be admitted by anyone who knows what those resources were at the commencement of this contest, and what has been done in the course of it', and stated his belief that neither manpower nor wealth could be

¹¹⁵ TNA, FO 37/29, Auckland to Leeds, 25 May 1790.

¹¹⁶ TNA, FO 37/29, Auckland to Leeds, no date (f.21).

¹¹⁷ TNA, FO 37/51, Grenville to William Eliot, 28 January 1794.

¹¹⁸ TNA, FO 37/52, Eliot to Grenville, 4 March 1794.

¹¹⁹ TNA, FO 37/55, Lord St Helens to Grenville, 31 October 1794.

exhausted as both had been employed sparingly compared to previous wars.¹²⁰ Grenville was once again measuring the efforts of the Netherlands against what he expected to find, and clearly believed that resources and finances were more readily available than the Dutch claimed.

Despite the failure of the Netherlands to supply anywhere near the expected resources to the allied cause in 1793-94, ministers continued to base policies on the perceptions of Dutch wealth prevalent in the British public imagination. A prominent fear of British politicians was that the fabled wealth of the Netherlands would fall into French hands and be used against Britain. In February 1794 Grenville argued in Parliament that the defence of the Netherlands was necessary to prevent France from using Dutch 'wealth and fleets as the instrument of descent on Great Britain'.¹²¹ When it appeared that France may drive the allies from Belgium, the Duke of Leeds suggested that it might be advantageous to allow the Netherlands to negotiate with France on the principle of *status quo ante bellum* to stop France from acquiring Dutch wealth by force.¹²² Once French armies had successfully overrun the Netherlands, the spectral image of Dutch wealth in latent opinion haunted British policy.¹²³ As previously seen, Britain invited Dutch ships and colonies to place themselves under British rather than Batavian protection, and sought to forcibly seize them if they refused.¹²⁴ As late as 1800, Pitt continued to justify this on the ground that it was to 'prevent the wealth and resources of the Dutch, the means of feeding their riches, of being transferred to the enemy by whom they were oppressed'.¹²⁵

While this might seem a very pragmatic policy, the exaggerated interest that British politicians apparently took in Dutch wealth indicates that their impressions were based on received ideas as much as recent intelligence. It is also likely that Pitt was at least in part using the spectre of Dutch wealth as a rhetorical device to convince the public of the merits of his government's

¹²⁰ TNA, FO 37/56, Grenville to St Helens, 25 November 1794.

¹²¹ HCPP, <<http://parlipapers.chadwick.co.uk>>, accessed 16 September 2012, Grenville in debate on 17 February 1794.

¹²² Oscar Browning (ed.), *The Political Memoranda of Francis, Fifth Duke of Leeds* (London, 1884), pp.211-12. Duke of Leeds was the new title of former Foreign Secretary Lord Carmarthen.

¹²³ Ernest Rhys (ed.), *Orations on the French War by William Pitt* (London, n.d.), pp.213-33.

¹²⁴ Jur van Goor, 'The Colonial Factor in Anglo-Dutch Relations', in Nigel Ashton & Duco Hellema (ed.), *Unspoken Allies, Anglo-Dutch Relations Since 1780* (Amsterdam, 2001), p.22; Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, p.1127.

¹²⁵ Rhys (ed.), *Orations on the French War*, p.376.

colonial policies. Intelligence from the Netherlands after 1795 emphasised impoverishment rather than wealth, and while the desire to seize Dutch riches to prevent France from benefiting from them was genuine, it does not necessarily explain the gusto with which Pitt and Dundas engaged in colonial adventures. The fear of Dutch wealth and resources being extorted for French use was also noticeably absent from British planning post-1803. Public opinion by this time generally believed that poverty and paucity pervaded the Netherlands, a view which British politicians were liable to share.

A consideration heavily linked to Dutch wealth in public opinion was the idea that the Dutch were frugal and motivated by greed and gain. This impression can also be faintly traced in the attitudes of British policy makers. It could be speculatively argued that the offer of monetary aid in 1790 was in part provoked by a desire to forestall the inevitable pecuniary objections to Dutch mobilisation, although neither Leeds nor Auckland gave Dutch greed or frugality as the reason for a subsidy in their correspondence. Auckland did complain that the expenses the Dutch were claiming for their fleet were excessive, and Grand Pensionary Laurens van de Spiegel's objections were certainly primarily financial, but the City of Amsterdam belied notions of greed by declining the subsidy because 'they did not think it either just or becoming for these provinces which certainly possess some degree of opulence to be a charge on their allies, or to be subsidised'.¹²⁶

More noticeably, Auckland warned in January 1793 that if war came Britain would have to work hard on the Netherlands's behalf, as the Dutch 'mercantile spirit' – which might be interpreted by an unkind reader as a diplomatic way of indicating financial self-interest as well as trading prowess – would prevent preparations unless the danger was 'apparent to all eyes and palpable at the moment'.¹²⁷ For Auckland, Dutch opinion could be swayed in favour of a policy if it could be made to appeal to some form of self-interest, an idea fully in keeping with general British prejudices. In 1794, St Helens similarly warned that increased British commitment to the war would simply lead to decreased efforts from the Dutch, telling Grenville 'in the proportion that we add to our share of the joint-stock of ways and means, their pedlar-like spirit leads them, instead of doing the like, to subduct from theirs, so as to leave the sum total nearly as before.'¹²⁸ In both of these cases, however, Dutch character was

¹²⁶ TNA, FO 37/29, Auckland to Leeds, 2 June 1790.

¹²⁷ TNA, FO 37/43, Auckland to Grenville, 11 January 1793.

¹²⁸ H. T. Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken der Algemeene Geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840* (10 vols, 'S-Gravenhage, 1905-22), vol. 1, p.476, St Helens to Grenville, 13 August 1794.

used to explain the apparent failings of the Dutch state rather than providing an incentive for British policy. No British politician explicitly set out policies towards the Netherlands which adopted latent public opinion's image of the Dutch as selfish, greedy and frugal.

A much more prominent influence on policy was latent opinion's impression of the Dutch navy. One of the strongest tenets of the British public imagination was that the Netherlands was, or had the capacity to be, a major naval power, and was therefore a useful ally or dangerous threat to British security. Naturally, Dutch naval prowess was also an obsession with every British administration. The British policy to secure a Dutch alliance was based on wider concerns than naval strategy, but naval considerations certainly played their part. British maritime defensive strategy was to cover the Western Approaches – the direction of Spain and France – and foreign policy aimed to assist this approach by keeping the fleets of northern Europe and the Baltic on friendly terms.¹²⁹ Despite receiving regular and relatively accurate intelligence concerning the Dutch fleets, the government consistently overestimated the size and strength of the Dutch navy, and became almost obsessive about the threat that might be posed from the ports of the Netherlands.¹³⁰ Destroying Dutch fleets or dockyards was an objective of the invasion of 1799, a primary aim of the expedition of 1809, and a crucial factor in deploying troops to the Netherlands in 1813. Throughout the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars the Royal Navy kept a strong squadron stationed off the Dutch coast, with the Baltic squadron always ready to assist if reinforcements were needed to fend off any sortie from the Scheldt or Texel.¹³¹

Britain was understandably most concerned about the Dutch navy in times of discord with the Netherlands. In 1785 Harris and Carmarthen feared the French alliance was tantamount to the subjugation of the Netherlands and saw the wealth, trade, colonies, and crucially the navy of that country as being available for French use.¹³² Concern over the Dutch navy did not inspire Britain to seek to restore the Anglo-Dutch alliance, and nor did it shape their methods of attempting to do so, but the importance of the Netherlands as a naval power would certainly

¹²⁹ N.A.M. Rodger, 'Seapower and Empire; Cause and Effect', in Bob Moore & Henk van Nierop (eds.), *Colonial Empires Compared, Britain and the Netherlands 1750-1850* (Aldershot, 2003), p.110; Hall, *British Strategy*, p.81.

¹³⁰ TNA, FO 38/7; FO 38/8; ADM 1/5121/6; Charles Esdaile, *The French Wars 1792-1815* (London, 2001), p.151.

¹³¹ A.N. Ryan (ed.), *The Saumarez Papers, Selections from the Baltic Correspondence of Vice-Admiral Sir James Saumarez 1808-1812* (London, 1968).

¹³² TNA, FO 37/7 – 37/9, *passim*.

have been a factor in convincing Pitt and, eventually, George III to risk conflict with France while supporting Prussian military action. The request for Dutch assistance during the Nootka Sound dispute with Spain can also be interpreted as having been driven by the idea that the Netherlands was a strong naval power. The Royal Navy was, by 1790, capable of handling a conflict with Spain without the assistance of a Dutch fleet, yet for Britain to be able to present a united front with another supposedly major naval power boosted British morale and gave Spain pause for thought.

It was arguably concern over the fearsome Dutch navy of British imagination that drove Britain to act with such hostility towards a people that London consistently proclaimed was still friendly after 1795. Despite the supposed continued sympathies of the Dutch people, the government took reports of invasion preparations seriously and in 1796 drew up detailed plans for an assault on the Texel to destroy Dutch shipping, though the plan was eventually abandoned.¹³³ The relatively weak Dutch mobilisations in 1790 and 1793 should possibly have indicated the enfeebled nature of the Dutch fleet, but Dundas's ecstatic reaction to the news of Camperdown shows just how much of a threat even the most informed members of the British government still perceived it to be.¹³⁴ The threat from the Netherlands was by no means illusory, as was proved by the complete rebuilding of the fleet in the two years after Camperdown, but the attention given to it was consistently greater than the Dutch capacity to build, equip and competently crew sufficient ships-of-the-line merited. Although the expedition of 1799 was intended to liberate the Netherlands, the neutralising of the rebuilt Texel fleet was a secondary objective and provided a crumb of comfort in the face of defeat. In response to criticism in Parliament by Sheridan of the expedition, Dundas argued that nobody other than Sheridan doubted the Dutch threat to Britain and Ireland, and that despite the Royal Navy's dominance, nipping the problem in the bud was no bad thing.¹³⁵

The British government's wariness of the Dutch fleet, ports, and shipbuilding capabilities continued into the Napoleonic Wars. It was partly this fear that provoked the Walcheren expedition in 1809. A Foreign Office report in 1809 stated plainly that piercing France's hold on

¹³³ TNA, WO 1/178, 'Remarks and Suggestions on the Probability of Capturing the Dutch Fleet by Attacking it at anchor in the Texel', 24 September 1796; WO 1/178, War Office to Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, 10 October 1796; Corbett & Richmond (eds.), *The Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer*, vol. 1, pp.302-309.

¹³⁴ Mackesy, *Statesmen at War*, p.2.

¹³⁵ HCPP, <<http://parlipapers.chadwick.co.uk>>, accessed 16 September 2012, speech by Dundas, 10 February 1800.

Europe through the Netherlands and, most crucially, destroying the shipping and docks at Antwerp was the most important object for Britain, and 'the whole disposable forces of the empire, both military and naval, have therefore been appropriated for this service'.¹³⁶ Lord Chatham's orders clearly instructed him that the expedition's aims were 'the capture or destruction of the enemy's ships, either building at Antwerp and Flushing or afloat in the Scheldt; the destruction of the arsenals and dockyards at Antwerp, Terneuzen and Flushing; the reduction of the island of Walcheren, and the rendering, if possible, the Scheldt no longer navigable for ships of war'.¹³⁷ The choice of Walcheren was far from arbitrary as the island had been previously discussed as a possible British beachhead, and a potential 'second Gibraltar', in 1794, 1799 and 1800.¹³⁸ In 1801 Horatio Nelson also considered an attack on Flushing to neutralise the threat from that quarter.¹³⁹ The force sent to Walcheren – 39,143 soldiers supported by dozens of men-of-war and their Royal Marine contingents¹⁴⁰ – was the largest single deployment of British troops anywhere during the Napoleonic Wars. In 1809, British forces in the entire Iberian Peninsula numbered only 35,000, while Arthur Wellesley could deploy little over 20,000 British troops at the Battle of Talavera.¹⁴¹ Walcheren undoubtedly detracted from operations in Iberia and the Mediterranean, and it is testament to the enduring apprehension of Franco-Dutch naval cooperation in the British public mind that the expedition should have been dispatched.¹⁴²

That the government prioritised the Netherlands over the Mediterranean was largely due to its geographical proximity and strategic importance. Throughout the period, and especially at times of French control, the coastal littoral of the Netherlands was an area of acute strategic sensitivity, or what Christopher Hall termed 'obsessive worry', to British foreign policy.¹⁴³

¹³⁶ TNA, FO 37/63, 'Report upon the Intended Expedition under Lord Chatham', 20 July 1809.

¹³⁷ TNA, WO 6/26, Chatham's orders, 16 July 1809.

¹³⁸ TNA, FO 37/56; FO 37/59, Memorandum from Abercrombie, 20 July 1799; E. Walsh, *A Narrative of the Expedition to Holland in the Autumn of 1799* (2nd edn, London, 1800), p.26; Mackesy, *Statesmen at War*, p.3; Corbett & Richmond (eds.), *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer*, vol. 4, p.286.

¹³⁹ David Bonner Smith (ed.), *Letters of Admiral of the Fleet the Earl of St Vincent Whilst First Lord of the Admiralty 1801-04* (London, 1922), p.139.

¹⁴⁰ TNA, WO 6/26, Lord Castlereagh to Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, 16 July 1809.

¹⁴¹ Hall, *British Strategy*, p.9; Michael Glover, *The Peninsular War 1807-1814, a Concise Military History* (London, 1974), pp.374-75.

¹⁴² Piers Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean 1803-1810* (London, 1957), pp.306 & 356.

¹⁴³ Hall, *British Strategy*, p.86.

British policy across the period was clear and consistent; no enemy force should be allowed to enjoy undisputed possession of the Low Countries, and especially of the Netherlands. Even colonially-minded Dundas admitted in July 1793 that the safety of the Netherlands was the 'most prominent object of the war'.¹⁴⁴ The same year, Pitt told Auckland that 'we consider the cause of Holland so much our own, that we are ready to fight the battle there as we should be at our own doors' and announced in Parliament that a French threat to the Low Countries was a threat to Britain herself.¹⁴⁵

Unlike the assumptions of the Netherlands as a strong, independent, commercial and naval power, all of which were to a degree flexible and open to differences of interpretation, the geographical proximity of the Netherlands to Britain's shores and the several deep-water ports that the country possessed were matters of fact. The danger that the proximity and the ports posed was perhaps more a matter of interpretation, but the idea that in enemy hands the Netherlands was a serious strategic threat was deeply ingrained in public opinion. For those in doubt of this received wisdom, Dundas recited in Parliament in 1800 the 'creed of this country with regards its connection with Holland', citing examples stretching back to 1585 to show that Britain had been ever-interested in keeping a friendly government in the Netherlands.¹⁴⁶ Whether these strategic realities should be termed public opinion or simply long-standing political opinion is unclear, as they were as well established in political tradition as they were in the public mind. Nonetheless, widespread understanding of these strategic ideas imposed expectations on the government to act in the interests of British security, and the policy of removing hostile control from the Low Countries remained strong throughout the period. Repeated defeats notwithstanding, the readiness to campaign in the Netherlands in 1793-95, 1799, 1809, 1813-14 and 1815, not to mention the diplomatic brinkmanship of 1787, clearly shows Britain's consistent commitment to attempting to ensure a friendly government in the Netherlands.

British interest in Dutch colonies was also largely driven by strategic concerns, though there was far less interest in this in public opinion. As previously shown, even after 1795 British politicians did not necessarily consider the Dutch people as enemies, but they feared the French use of Dutch resources. British concerns about strategic Dutch colonies thus tended to

¹⁴⁴ Duffy, 'British Policy in the War against Revolutionary France', p.13.

¹⁴⁵ BL, Add MSS 46519, Pitt to Auckland, 2 March 1793; Rhys (ed.), *Orations on the French War*, pp.3-14.

¹⁴⁶ HCPP, <<http://parlipapers.chadwick.co.uk>>, accessed 16 September 2012, speech by Dundas, 10 February 1800.

revolve around the potential of France to use them to cause mischief. Certain Dutch operations briefly worried the British military hierarchy – the capture of a Dutch flotilla at Saldanha Bay in 1796 was hailed as having secured India, for example – but the government generally believed that Dutch possession of the colonies would not present a significant threat to British interests.¹⁴⁷ The Cape of Good Hope and Ceylon were seen as the most strategically important areas and expeditions were dispatched to neutralise them almost as soon as France overran the Netherlands in 1795. Dundas spelt out the threat that he perceived from those quarters in a letter to Spencer in 1797; ‘the Cape of Good Hope is in truth and literally so the key to the Indian and China commerce, that if the French are directly or indirectly in possession of the island of Ceylon, the French Minister of War would deserve to lose his head if we kept our Indian territories for five years’.¹⁴⁸

British policy to Dutch colonies at and after Amiens was equally driven by apparent strategic necessity rather than public opinion. Although the Cape was returned to the Batavian Republic as a free port in 1803, the renewal of war once more made it a threat and it was retaken by Britain in 1806.¹⁴⁹ However, other colonies were left in Dutch hands until the Netherlands was annexed by Napoleon in 1810. This was largely due to the fact that the government did not consider the Dutch capable of launching an assault on far flung British colonial interests, while Napoleon, at the apogee of his Continental hegemony, posed a much graver danger. The capture of Java in September 1811 was certainly motivated by the fact that it had passed into French hands and could prove much more dangerous than it had as a Dutch colony.¹⁵⁰

A British policy that had little to do with public opinion of any stripe was the consistent support offered to the House of Orange. British support for the Stadholderate was inspired by the close historical Anglo-Orangist connection, and the close family links of George III to William V. In 1802 Hawkesbury candidly admitted that until 1795 ‘HM’s connection with Holland was founded on that which subsided between him and the House of Orange’.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Corbett & Richmond (eds.), *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer*, vol. 1, pp.276-77; Jaap R. Bruijn, ‘Facing a New World; the Dutch Navy Goes Overseas (c.1750-c.1850)’, in Bob Moore & Henk van Nierop (eds.), *Colonial Empires Compared, Britain and the Netherlands 1750-1850* (Aldershot, 2003), p.118.

¹⁴⁸ Corbett & Richmond (eds.), *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer*, vol. 2, pp.215-16.

¹⁴⁹ TNA, PRO 30/35/1 – 30/35/5 ; William Freund, ‘The Cape Under Transitional Governments, 1795-1814’, in Richard Elphick & Herman Giliomee (eds.), *The Shaping of South African Society 1652-1840* (2nd edn., Cape Town, 1989), 324-75.

¹⁵⁰ Bruijn, ‘Facing a New World’, p.122; Hall, *British Strategy*, p.189; Rodger, ‘Seapower and Empire’, p.109.

¹⁵¹ TNA, FO 37/61, Instruction no. 1 for Liston, 16 August 1802.

Britain's continued recognition of the exiled Stadholder as the head of the legitimate government of the Netherlands after 1795 can perhaps be shown to coincide with general ideas of the role of a ruling prince in British national discourse, but this was by no means a prime motivation for the pro-Stadholder policy. It is possible that British politicians over-estimated the power of popular Orangism, and over-estimated the capacity of William to ensure Dutch support for Britain, because they interpreted the Stadholder's worth by the standards of their own views of the monarchy. At times in the mid-1790s the government seemed to fail to appreciate that loyalty to the Stadholder was fundamentally different to loyalty to the king. Although it was in the name of the Stadholder that soldiers, sailors and colonial officials were invited to defect to Britain in the aftermath of the French conquest, their oaths of loyalty were to the States General and not to the Stadholder.¹⁵² The Orangist portion of the Dutch population may have been inclined to favour Britain as a staunch ally of the Prince, but William was not the unifying force that British politicians presumed him to be.

From a British point of view the Orangist restoration in 1813 came about more by accident than design, but it fed neatly into British policies for the post-Napoleonic Netherlands. The settlement of the Low Countries agreed in 1815 can be considered as Britain putting into practice some of the idealised notions of the Netherlands that had long been held in public opinion. The Netherlands was to be the buffer against France that Britain had always desired, the return of the colonies would ensure the commercial prosperity that Britain expected the Dutch to enjoy, while the elevation of the Prince of Orange to King of the United Netherlands would obviate the deficiencies of decentralised government that British ambassadors and Foreign Secretaries had found so frustrating in the past. In some ways the Netherlands of 1815 was a country made in Britain's image of it. The addition of Belgium to the Netherlands was a newer concept, one that had been firmly rejected a quarter of a century previously but that now was accepted as the least objectionable option available.¹⁵³ If the rest of Europe and the Dutch themselves saw the 1815 settlement as a period of rupture and reformation in the Low Countries, for Britain at least it was a partial return to an idealised past, an attempt to recreate the Netherlands as British politicians and public opinion had long seen it and wished it to be.

Britain's foreign policy towards the Netherlands in the period 1785-1815 was a grand mixture of diplomatic necessity, strategic sensitivity and economic pragmatism, all of which were contextualised and interpreted by the received notions in latent public opinion of national

¹⁵² TNA, FO 37/58, Governor of Elmina to Governor of Cape Coast, 31 December 1795.

¹⁵³ Chamberlain, *'Pax Britannica?'*, p.51.

character and identity, military capacity, wealth and commercial interest. Although politicians sought to avoid conflict with public opinion, active opinion was rarely taken into account in policy formulation. Latent opinion was much more important, rarely providing incentives for policy, but often providing aims, methods of execution, or simply guidelines to keep policy within certain parameters.

The major British policy throughout the period was the simple desire to ensure that France did not control the Netherlands. Foreign Secretaries from Carmarthen to Castlereagh continued to push for the Netherlands to be separated from French influence and subordinated to that of Britain. Only twice in this period did these plans become reality; from 1787-95 the Stadholderate was restored and the United Provinces struggled on under British domination, and then again in 1814-15 when Britain was able to mould the Netherlands into London's image of what it should be. Britain's policy of delivering the Netherlands from the 'French yoke' was backed up with military action, though a series of campaigns ended in varying degrees of failure. Britain threw resources at the Netherlands in 1793-95, 1799 and 1809 that would in hindsight have been more profitably employed elsewhere. Britain had to abandon her commitment to the Stadholder at the Peace of Amiens, but this was not an abandonment of the commitment to remove French influence from the Netherlands. Rather, it was a change in emphasis from strength to subtlety. By renouncing interest in internal Dutch politics, by appealing to the supposed commercial nature of the Dutch, and by insisting on the independence of the Batavian Republic, Hawkesbury showed that the British government remained determined to regain Dutch confidence by appealing to aspects of supposed Dutch identity and national character. It is also evident that the British government remained convinced that an independent and flourishing Netherlands would prove a natural and useful British ally.

Much of British policy was based on considerations of strategy or diplomatic necessity, though these often overlapped with latent public opinion of the Netherlands. The most striking and long-term example of this was in considerations of the naval capabilities of the Netherlands. The British obsession with the threat from Dutch ports was based on sound geostrategic principles, but was exacerbated by latent opinion's exaggerated impressions of Dutch naval capacity. British politicians also followed public opinion in consistently overestimating the depth of Dutch wealth and resources, though from Amiens onwards the idea of Dutch poverty was more prevalent and the supposed need to remove Dutch wealth from French hands diminished. Latent opinions of the Dutch predilection for trade also affected British policy,

though the effects tended to be felt in the mode of executing policy rather than in its formulation. The continual anxiousness of the government to reach trading agreements with the Netherlands was partly due to the continued importance that the Netherlands commanded as a trading entrepôt, but was also down to British expectations that commercial ties were the most effective means of cementing friendly relations between two such supposedly commercial nations. Yet perhaps the most important assumption underpinning British policy throughout the period was that the Dutch were naturally predisposed to a British alliance. The primary expression of this idea came with the failed expedition of 1799, but it can be seen in British policies across the period. Even in 1813, when little in the way of friendship had passed between Britain and the Netherlands in almost a decade, the British government still considered the Dutch people as well-disposed and was prepared to make this a foundation of future policy.

CONCLUSION



The United Kingdom of the Netherlands, France and Britain, 1815-30
Louis-Hyacinthe Langlois, *Nouvelle Carte Routière* (1830)
(Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département Cartes et Plans, GE D-14154)

There is little doubt that public opinion and ideas of national identity played a part in informing foreign policy in France, Britain and the Netherlands in the period 1785-1815. The three countries underwent very different experiences as states and nations, but analysis of their foreign policies in light of public opinion and national discourse has revealed some pervasive themes that run across boundaries of nation, regime and ideology. This work is not making a case for Dutch exceptionalism, or claiming that policies towards the Netherlands were subject to different impulses to policies towards other countries. Rather, by looking at the three-way foreign policies of these major powers at the end of the eighteenth century as a case study, it has been possible to trace some commonality in how ideas of public opinion and the themes of national identity and discourse were able to shape foreign affairs.

In all three countries politicians tended to be wary of embracing active public opinion, ignoring the brief outpourings of opinion except when they could be used to gain public support for pre-determined policies. No government or regime, no matter how democratically- or even demagogically-minded, deliberately and consistently sought to tailor their foreign policy to the public's desires. Yet public opinion managed to have a more subtle impact. Politicians of all three countries were prone to interpret the world in terms of what they already 'knew', and it is apparent in many cases that much of what they knew came from the received ideas and perceptions of latent public opinion. Policy in all three countries was formulated with such opinions in mind. It was often not a conscious decision to use latent representations of another country, but rather a product of convenience, as these representations provided the most obvious interpretive schema with which to see the world. In the absence of a 'God's eye view',¹ decision makers were not necessarily able to distinguish fact from fiction, or representation from reality, and were compelled to base policy on the source of information most readily available. In many cases, that source of information was latent public opinion.

Public opinion cannot be considered an uncontested term. Public opinion perhaps implies a consensus that rarely existed, or attributes objectively unjustifiable universality to a particular discourse. In reality, opinion was often fractured, uncertain and malleable. Active public opinion needed no Habermasian 'rational consensus' to exist, and could quite easily be irrational or even irredeemably split, as shown by the irreconcilable differences of opinion between Patriots and Orangists in the 1780s.² Latent opinion was perhaps more consensual than active opinion as it represented the evolutionary results of longer-term discursive

¹ Maria Baghramian, *Relativism* (London, 2004), p.236.

² Daniel Gordon, 'Philosophy, Sociology, and Gender in the Enlightenment Conception of Public Opinion', *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (1992), p.885.

practices, but even this was not guaranteed to ensure agreement. The idea of 'national interest', for example, was universally acknowledged to be important by British latent opinion throughout the eighteenth century, but its meaning was often highly contested.³ Nonetheless, the concept of a generally-accepted public opinion was evident during this period, and many widely agreed-upon ideas can be identified as having been part of public opinion. The relatively well-established public sphere in all three countries, replete with burgeoning print culture, improving communications and a growing hunger for secular news, discussion and debate, led to the widely-accepted idea that the public could have its own opinion. Although print was by no means the only vehicle for public discourse, it was enormously important in allowing standardised ideas, perceptions and representations to be maintained across a disparate but supposedly national public.

The concept of a national public has also proved complicated. Both public and national community were flexible constructs, subject to sometimes widely different meanings. Both could be used expansively to refer to the plurality of people in a certain community, or could be used much more narrowly to refer to a relatively small elite. While contemporaries sought legitimacy by deploying the language of nation and national community, and ideas of the public and the people, they were often referring to a fairly narrow band of educated and propertied men. The dominant themes of public opinion in all countries tended to emerge from an urban, and specifically metropolitan, context, and that which is labelled eighteenth-century public opinion was often one largely-urban elite expressing their perceptions of another. These elites were not necessarily closed either in terms of social standing or gender; the idea of a masculine-bourgeois public sphere is something of a false construct. Female participation in the public sphere and input into public opinion has been established elsewhere as beyond doubt, and there was little in the way of a glass ceiling to prevent plebeian participation in the public. However, it remained the case that public discourse and the opinions that emerged from it, and especially those pertaining directly to foreign affairs, were largely dominated by the higher echelons of society.

Despite the elite nature of the national public, and the integration of members of government in all three countries into those publics, the lack of input of active opinion into foreign policy perhaps remains unsurprising. Governments clearly cared what their people thought, as demonstrated by their penchant for censorship and prosecution of contrary opinions, but even the most radical political practices of the time did not demand direct popular input into policy.

³ Jeremy Black, *Debating Foreign Policy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Farnham, 2011), p.216.

Self-satisfied discourses of consensual representative government in Britain throughout the period, and in France after 1789 and the Netherlands after 1795, gave the impression that broadly-conceived public assent was necessary to the work of government, but fell short of seeking public approbation for individual policies, especially those involving foreign affairs. Even well into the nineteenth century many statesmen viewed countries requiring public consent to foreign policy as more dangerous and unpredictable than despotic absolutist regimes.⁴ Although there were moments when governments were compelled to embrace policies by popular pressure, especially in revolutionary France and the Netherlands, these policies tended to be domestic rather than foreign. Foreign policy in general was rarely an emotive enough subject to cause uproar amongst the educated public or to bring the mobs of Paris, London or Amsterdam onto the streets, and if it did cause a stir it was generally the domestic corollaries of policy such as war, increased taxation, unemployment or rumours of 'foreign plots' that caused unrest. Public concern in Britain and France over policy towards the Netherlands was never likely to bring down a government – the Walcheren debacle's *coup de grâce* to Portland's administration notwithstanding – and the lack of genuine electoral accountability meant that strong governments could flirt with unpopular policies with relative impunity. Administrations less secure in their positions were more likely to seek policies that would receive popular approval, which often meant refraining from potentially-unpopular foreign adventures, but at no point during this period did a government feel compelled to adopt a specific foreign policy to come into line with active public demands.

The peripheral influence that active public opinion occasionally achieved tended to come at the instigation of individual policy makers rather than from any structures, formal or informal, that allowed the public to pressurise their government. In the Netherlands the constitution of the United Provinces and the lack of a formal central ministry gave the public a degree of influence over policy – the French alliance of 1785 was instigated by a petition from the burgers of Utrecht and was agreed despite the misgivings of the Stadholder – but this influence tended to be tenuous without strong central leadership. Louis Bonaparte sought to rule the Kingdom of Holland with the will of his people in mind, but his efforts to ascertain what his people thought were haphazard and erratic, and his policies always constrained by the demands and threats of his imperial elder sibling. In France, revolutionary leaders who regularly attended political clubs or assemblies would have been well aware of what at least a section of the people was thinking, but their presence and presentations at these clubs would be as likely to shape as to absorb collective opinion. Napoleonic surveillance of *esprit public*

⁴ Muriel E. Chamberlain, *'Pax Britannica'? British Foreign Policy, 1789-1914* (London, 1988), p.14.

gave the emperor a fair idea of the major issues of concern to the French people, but disquiet would provoke an outpouring of propaganda rather than a change in Napoleon's policy. In Britain many of the key decision makers were integrated into the elite public and were well aware of the currents of opinion, but were under no obligation to follow them. It was possibly paradoxically due to the relatively personal nature of policy formulation that there could be a degree of public influence over policy decisions, as certain ministers might be willing to consult with friends or peers before committing themselves to a course of action. Nonetheless, active public influence over policy remained entirely dependent upon the will of decision makers to embrace it, and was not at any point able to force a government to adopt or adhere to a certain course of action.

The influence of latent opinion was perhaps more subtle and required less of a conscious embrace from ministers. No politician was able to make policy from a conceptual *tabula rasa* and, as this thesis has shown, many of the widespread discourses of latent public opinion were unconsciously used as the conceptual background on which policy was built. While it may retrospectively seem that many British and French politicians had only a 'minimal understanding' of the Netherlands, as Simon Schama put it,⁵ evidence suggests that they were often basing their understanding on the prevalent representations in latent public opinion. Not all ministers were equally likely to uncritically accept latent representations as a sufficient conceptual background, but policy makers of all regimes were to some extent affected by the principal themes of latent public opinion. Although ministers would be expected to cast aside the most hackneyed stereotypes, such as the caricatured images of the Dutch as glum, dull and ponderous, there was little reason for them to question the basic understanding of the Netherlands that they had imbibed from discourses and representations prevalent in the public sphere. Especially during times of upheaval when governments came and went in rapid succession, many foreign ministers would simply not have time to thoroughly interrogate whether the representations of each of the dozens of countries with which they dealt was accurate. Those who did take the time to read memoranda in the files of the foreign ministries would in any case have been confronted by a corpus of work that, for the most part, did little to counteract latent representations.⁶

⁵ Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators, Revolution in the Netherlands 1780-1813* (2nd edn., London, 2005), p.xiii.

⁶ For example, the memoranda of the French foreign ministry: Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, La Courneuve, Paris (AMAE), Mémoires et Documents, Hollande: 48 & 71; for Britain: The National Archives, London (TNA), FO 37/5, Memorandum for Sir James Harris, October 1784.

Latent public opinion was generally an interpretive tool rather than an imperative force, informing but not instigating policy. It acted to channel expectations rather than to insist on a specific course of action. At the most basic level, the importance of the Netherlands was so entrenched in both British and French opinion that successive governments continued to see it as a country worth large military, financial and diplomatic commitments. Even once the Netherlands was extinguished as an independent entity in 1810 the British government continued to consider it as crucial to the future security of north-western Europe. In something of a last hurrah for the eighteenth-century principle of the balance of power before it was superseded by the nineteenth-century 'great power' system, Britain offered the resurrected Netherlands an important role in the post-1814 settlement of Europe. For Dutch politicians, the overwhelming underlying interpretation that informed almost all policy during this period was the concept of decline, and the desperate need to reverse it. The polarisation between Patriot and Orangist was not a battle between an entrenched reactionary regime and a progressive cadre of bourgeois-democrats, but a struggle between two ideologies that each saw itself as the best method of arresting the decline of the Republic and returning its ancient success. The Orangist-British and Patriot-French alliances simply reflected differing interpretations of which power would be most useful in re-establishing Dutch prosperity.

Although some of the evidence for the influence of latent public opinion inevitably comes from inference and deduction rather than from explicit proof – and this is inevitable, given the nature of the records of foreign policy creation – this thesis has shown that at times governments were unequivocally accused of basing policy on well-known representations rather than well-researched realities. The complaints of French representatives François Ramel in 1795 and Florent Guiot in 1799 about the lazy stereotypes habitually employed by their own government, and the Batavian protestations to Napoleon in 1800, all explicitly linked the representations of latent French opinion to French foreign policy towards the Netherlands, especially regarding the resources that France expected her ally to supply. In Britain, William Windham's complaints that Dutch émigrés were habitually better trusted than their French counterparts and the parliamentary Opposition's derision of the assumptions upon which the government based plans for the 1799 campaign are also clear acknowledgements that latent public opinion was being used as a basis for foreign policy. Such complaints surfaced only rarely, but their tone and content indicate that the issue of latent opinion informing policy was a more constant theme.

Latent opinion was not, however, the main instigator of policy, and there were some prosaic limits to its influence in all three countries. Policy was always limited by strategic necessity, political exigency, and diplomatic realities. Dutch foreign policy was especially prone to be reactive rather than proactive, responding to the threats and demands of ally or enemy. From 1787-94 the British alliance provided much of the formative spark to Dutch policy, while from 1795 Dutch policy was entirely subordinate to her relationship with France, and subsumed by the renewed war and Napoleonic control after 1803. The strategic location of the Netherlands meant that British and French governments were obliged to take a more consistent interest in the country's wellbeing than they were with more peripheral states such as Sweden or Portugal. Foreign policy of all countries also had to deal with wider evolving diplomatic realities, internal and external. The demands of wider alliances or of developing conflicts with other major powers often influenced foreign policy entirely independently of any aims stemming from the representations in latent public opinion. Britain's policy of trying to nudge the Netherlands towards independence through neutrality after Amiens, for example, foundered on the rocky shoals of Anglo-French relations long before soft diplomacy had a chance to make an impression. The Austro-Dutch spat over the Scheldt in 1784 likewise stymied French diplomacy for a time, and Prussian intervention in 1787 completely undermined the developing Anglo-French standoff.

Despite evidence that policy was to some extent shaped by latent opinion in all three countries, there remains the question of why some aspects of latent opinion appeared to inform policy while others did not. The belief that the Netherlands had the capacity to be a naval power on a par with all but Britain and France, for example, obsessed politicians on both sides of the Channel until at least 1809, yet the equally-widespread idea of the Netherlands as a staunchly Protestant country had no discernible impact on policies. Similarly, fables of Dutch riches influenced French policy until the end of the empire, while the perception of the Dutch as poor soldiers did nothing to stem Napoleon's desire to use them in his armies. One obvious explanation is the wider diplomatic-strategic concerns of the period. Control of the seas was a major strategic concern for powers with overseas possessions, while religion had largely ceased to be an important factor in the foreign policies of any major European power. Yet religion remained hugely important to many people in all three countries and continued to impact on domestic affairs. Napoleon's Concordat is commonly seen as crucial to healing some of the rifts of the Revolution,⁷ while the question of Catholic emancipation in Britain forced Pitt's resignation in 1801 and scuppered proposals for a Grey-Grenville-Perceval coalition in

⁷ D. M. G. Sutherland, *France 1789-1815, Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (London, 1985), pp.354-55.

1809.⁸ That religion was not an issue in foreign policy perhaps reflects the fact that the public whose latent views mattered was largely an elite one. Religious insecurities were more popular than elite, and by the late eighteenth century the elite publics of Europe were moving towards a more tolerant stance on religious matters. While religion could still be used to whip up popular fervour, the fact that a foreign power adhered to a different religion was of little concrete concern to the politicised classes. Public opinion may have strongly identified the Dutch as Calvinist, and British and French national identities may have strongly self-identified as Protestant and Catholic respectively, but the idea that religious affiliation should cause friction between two countries lingered more as a facet of popular than elite imagination.

Another explanation for why some aspects of latent opinion were influential and others were not is simple necessity. A clear example of this is the French demands for men, money and material from the Netherlands. The extortion of vast sums from the Netherlands after 1795 was encouraged by latent French visions of the mountains of gold stored in Dutch vaults, but was driven by the dire state of French finances and the desperate need to solve the Republic's perennial flirtation with insolvency. Latent opinion informed French politicians that the Netherlands was rich; necessity drove them to try to expropriate those supposed riches. Equally, necessity meant that successive French governments ignored the latent public representation of the Dutch as reluctant soldiers. Napoleon's demands for Dutch troops were based purely on population, and reflected the emperor's almost insatiable need for manpower. Napoleon had little respect for the quality of the Dutch army but necessity drove him to demand that the country furnish him with troops like all other allied states.

Domestic political necessity also caused some aspects of latent opinion to appear more frequently than others in political writings and discourse. Ministers often required political approval for policies from either the head of government, their fellow ministers, or, less often, a representative assembly, and were often best able to persuade their colleagues of the justice of a policy by appealing to well-known traits. The need to appeal to a domestic audience was certainly a prominent factor in the process of publicising policy, as policies that fit neatly into latent public opinion were generally the easiest to sell. That Lord Grenville was able to persuade Cabinet, king and Parliament that the Dutch were ripe for revolt in 1799 was as much due to latent opinions of Dutch Anglophilia as to objective proof of Dutch dissatisfaction with France, as the government refused to publish their intelligence for security reasons.

⁸ D. Gray, *Spencer Perceval, the Evangelical Prime Minister, 1762-1812* (Manchester, 1963), pp.234-35.

Caution should be used, however, when linking the rhetoric used to 'sell' policy to the impulses behind its formulation. As Jeremy Black argued, 'exploring the relationship between the power of the *zeitgeist* as expressed in the conventional orthodoxy of opinion and the contingencies of particular moments reveals the limitations of a focus on political rhetoric.'⁹ The stated aims of governments did not always equate to their true intentions. An earlier eighteenth-century example of this came in debates surrounding British continental commitments, which were consistently publicly justified as necessary to ensure naval security, even though ministers were inspired to pursue those commitments by very different impulses.¹⁰ A similar process was at work with policies towards the Netherlands. By playing on latent fears of Dutch naval power and emphasising the importance of the capture of the Dutch Texel fleet the British government was able to retrieve a degree of public credit from the damp squib of the 1799 campaign, even though these were secondary aims for the expedition. Napoleon's publicly-proclaimed interest in Dutch independence in 1806 was similarly a publicly-acceptable facade behind which he hoped to shelter his true intention of ensuring absolute Dutch submission to Napoleonic control. Rhetorical devices and explanations arising from received notions and stereotypes were even used between diplomats to justify or explain policy. British and French representatives in the Netherlands often explained the actions of the Dutch government in terms of proverbial national characteristics – phlegm, lethargy, avarice, caution – but these traits were not taken into account in the formulation of policy, nor were they necessarily intended to inform the government's decision-making processes.

Similarly to latent public opinion, ideas of national identity also played into foreign policy, as national self-identity naturally informed interpretations of the 'other'. In many ways national identity and latent opinion shared similar traits, as both were constructs based on perception and representation, both were the work of discursive practices, and both required a degree of consensus in order to justify their labels of public and national. Yet while latent opinion was malleable, part of the legitimacy of national identity stemmed from the supposed solidity and ancient provenance of its most prominent traits. The nascent nature of national identities meant that nationalist rhetoric was uncommon, but there were still some aspects of national discourse that influenced foreign policy. The main idea to explicitly influence policies was the concept of the nation itself, which under the French Revolution took on new meanings and influenced French relations with several of her neighbours, including the Netherlands. In

⁹ Black, *Debating Foreign Policy*, p.216.

¹⁰ N. A. M. Rodger, 'The Continental Commitment in the Eighteenth Century', in L. Freedman, P. Hayes & R. O'Neill (eds.), *War Strategy and International Politics* (Oxford, 1992), 39-55.

Britain, national rhetoric was of less importance, but in all three countries facets of national identity could inform whether decision makers saw a foreign other in a positive or negative light.

The subtle impact of emerging ideas of national identity can partly be traced through the differing responses that different aspects of self-identity provoked from British and French politicians. A striking example is the attitude to trade, which was considered a proverbial Dutch habit in both British and French opinion. For Britain, a self-confident trading nation, this was a largely positive trait, but for the French it was not something to be admired. Britain's continued policy to stimulate trade as the foundation for Dutch strength when allied to the Netherlands, and to cut it off when at war, contrasted sharply with the irritation evinced by many French agents at Dutch trading practices. A succession of French governments after 1795 believed that Dutch overseas trading practices were largely incompatible with a strong continental connection. Napoleon was especially scathing and mistrustful of the supposed mercantile spirit of the Dutch, while several of his representatives in the Netherlands insisted that as allies of France the Dutch should look to industry and the empire for prosperity. The difference in importance of commerce to British and French self-identity accounts at least in part for their differing attitudes and policies regarding Dutch trading practices.

Aspects of self-identity were perhaps more influential in Dutch policy than in the policies of her two neighbours. Britain and France were more assertive powers, in that both countries attempted to project their views and influence onto the Netherlands. Dutch policy was more defensive and introspective, seeking to temper Anglo-French encroachments and to protect what the Dutch government considered as key Dutch interests. Although these interests were frequently the pragmatic concerns of all governments – territory, sovereignty, prosperity – the battle lines of policy were often drawn on issues that held importance because of their key place in Dutch national identity. Successive Dutch governments struggled to assert a sense of national independence, especially with Napoleon becoming increasingly meddlesome after 1800, by leaning heavily on aspects of national identity. Dutch policies of attempting to remove French troops from Dutch soil, of insisting on the use of the Dutch language, and of refusing to accept a French-written constitution all stemmed in part from the desire to defend central aspects of Dutch identity. Aside from the desire for national independence, which itself was arguably a corollary of national sentiment, ideas of national identity offered little incentive to create foreign policy, but they did help to shape the form taken by Dutch policies towards France and Britain.

The influences of nationalist impulses on either the public or policy should not be exaggerated. The limits of pragmatism and necessity that applied to latent public opinion also restricted the influence of national identity. There was also nothing of the militaristic mid-twentieth-century nationalist agenda based on ideas of 'spiritual superiority' in British or French policies towards the Netherlands at the end of the long eighteenth century.¹¹ Popular xenophobia was not used to whip up mass support for military action against the Dutch, nor did such ideas push politicians towards policies of belligerence. Nationalism was still at a formative stage and feelings of national identity remained insecure. National identities in this period were generally more elite than plebeian, and potentially more cosmopolitan than parochial, and often found unity as much in opposition to the foreign as in shared culture or sense of national community. Nationalist sentiment was not strong enough to provide a popular incentive for action and, as with latent opinion, the impact of national identity on policy came from its use as an interpretive schema rather than as an imperative force.

Many aspects of opinion and identity that have been shown to have influenced policy makers were ostensibly based on observable reality rather than on representation. Some might be considered as facts rather than aspects of public opinion. The importance of colonies and commerce to Dutch prosperity, for example, could be retrospectively defended as objective fact rather than just popular perception. However, few policy makers at the time had access to the data or analytical tools that historians enjoy to make such a distinction, and there was no separate objective reality against which politicians could measure the information that they received. When looking through the eyes of contemporaries, no worthwhile distinction can be made between 'reality' and received perceptions, as all politicians by necessity interpreted the world as they perceived it; to them perception was reality. It is perhaps more difficult to show that politicians' perceptions always came from public opinion, and in some cases they probably did not, but in many cases it is clear that politicians readily believed the information that they were fed because it tallied with what they expected to hear. Many politicians, for example, would have accepted the premise of Dutch commercial prosperity as a truism because it was an entrenched part of the latent representation of the Netherlands. By the same process, other possibly less objectively justifiable representations were able to enter political calculations. The regular reports that ministers received from their representatives abroad tended to give details of the political situation in the country in question, but rarely dealt with wider generalities and did little to counteract established narratives or question widely-

¹¹ Hans Kohn, *Prelude to Nation-States, the French and German Experience, 1789-1815* (Princeton, 1967), pp.2-3.

accepted themes of latent public opinion. It was perhaps mostly in the absence of regular and supposedly reliable information that politicians would be expected to regress to accepting the perceptions in public opinion as the basis for their interpretation of a country, but some politicians were wont to wilfully ignore information they received that went against what they already believed they knew.

In proposing that long-term socially- and culturally-developed latent public opinion underlay the interpretive schemas used to make policy, it is not the intention of this thesis to deny the capacity for individual input. Many politicians broke away from stereotyped views or adopted unpopular interpretations of the Netherlands, from Lord Mulgrave who ignored almost all standard British perceptions of the Netherlands when he tentatively proposed extinguishing the country as an independent entity, to Napoleon who took up or discarded popular representations of the Netherlands in rapid succession depending on whether they suited his immediate needs. This work does not argue for an unstructured interpretation of history shaped by the 'idiosyncratic decisions of individuals',¹² but nor does it intend to offer a deterministic interpretation of policy shaped by the uncontrollable forces of a particular *zeitgeist*. Rather, it is argued that foreign policy was formed from a complex interaction of strategic necessities, political ideology, and the expectations created by the underlying themes of latent public opinion, at times interpreted through notions of nascent national identities. Much of the background information used by politicians to interpret their world stemmed from their familiarity with the prominent themes of latent public opinion, but public opinion offered no prescriptive plan for what politicians should do with such information.

Although this thesis set out to examine the impact of public opinion on foreign policy, it must be acknowledged that this is never a mono-directional process. It would be perhaps more apt to characterise their relationship as one of mutual influence and interaction. As in almost all periods, active opinion was often 'a follower, not a leader' in foreign policy.¹³ It was often a government's actions that provoked a response from the public rather than vice versa, and indeed policy influenced active opinion in all three countries to a far greater extent than opinion was able to influence policy. Latent opinion could also be shaped by policy, though this was often a longer-term process. In many cases the experience of long-standing policies went some way to shaping public opinion. The entrenched British belief that the Netherlands was a natural British ally can best be explained in the context of a century of alliance and close

¹² Chamberlain, '*Pax Britannica*'?, p.15.

¹³ Christopher Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy* (Basingstoke, 2003), p.264.

commercial accord, and Dutch opinion's general mistrust of France stemmed from decades of opposition to the France of Louis XIV and Louis XV. Contemporary policies were perhaps less influential in shaping latent opinions, if only because they did not have the authority and weight of tradition that came from longer-standing principles. Evolutions in foreign policy could provoke new ideas to enter the discursive world from which latent opinion emerged, but the mere fact that new ideas were part of official policy could not guarantee that they would prevail over older and more established prejudices.

This thesis has also underlined several issues that warrant further study. The work has focused on the tripartite relations between France, Britain and the Netherlands, but of course these countries' policies towards one another were not formed in a diplomatic vacuum. One area that this thesis could not fully explore for want of space was the relationship of other major powers to the Netherlands. Prussia and less frequently Austria and Russia showed an interest in Dutch affairs and were at times deeply involved in the internal and external politicking of the Netherlands. The Emperor's interest in the Scheldt in 1784 and Prussia's interest in the Netherlands in 1787 are both clear examples of Dutch relations with other powers taking precedence over those with Britain and France. Yet these countries were also less consistently predatory than Britain and France in their attitudes towards the Netherlands, meaning that Dutch policy towards them might be expected to differ in function to the policies adopted towards her two closer neighbours. Whether the same facets of self-identity that informed Dutch policy towards Britain and France were also at work in the formulation of policies towards the other powers of Europe was sadly beyond the scope of this work.

Another subject worthy of consideration, and one that is of importance far beyond the realm of foreign affairs, is the obvious impact of transnational cosmopolitanism on supposedly nationally-based public opinion. The elites that made up the publics of all three countries were often self-consciously cosmopolitan and engaged in cultural and reading practices that sometimes deliberately eschewed national bases. Much of the information that fed into a supposedly national public sphere was of foreign origin, and although domestic literature prevailed quantitatively there was little discernible qualitative privileging of domestic literature over foreign. At many turns, attempts to discern the state of public opinion in Britain, France and the Netherlands were faced with the problem of transnational influence. Equally, although it was possible to outline different national public opinions by surveying a range of sources to determine the dominant themes or principal discourses in each country, it remains impossible to state with any confidence what proportion of a particular national public should hold those

views. It is beyond the scope of this work to suggest a definitive solution to these problems, so for the moment we must be content with airing the questions.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Add MSS	Additional Manuscripts Collection (British Library)
AMAE	Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (Paris)
AN	Archives Nationales (Paris)
BL	British Library (London)
BM	British Museum (London)
CPS	Committee of Public Safety (Comité de Salut Public)
EIC	East India Company
HCPP	House of Commons Parliamentary Papers
HNA	Het Nationaal Archief (The Hague)
HUA	Hull University Archives (Hull)
MP	Member of Parliament
PWDRO	Plymouth and West Devon Record Office (Plymouth)
SA	Sheffield Archives (Sheffield)
TNA	The National Archives (London)
VOC	Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (Dutch East India Company)

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ADM 7/321 Registers of Letters of Marque: Batavian Republic

ADM 98/293 To Dutch Ministry of Marine, 1804-1808

Foreign Office:

FO 37/1 – 37/86 General Correspondence, Holland, 1781-1815

FO 38/1 – 38/10 Secret Communications, Holland, 1795-1807

FO 90/34 – 90/36 King's Letter Books, Holland

FO 94/82 France Additional articles, inviting Bavaria, Holland, and Hanover to join the alliance, 1815

FO 95/5/2 – 95/5/4 Holland and the Netherlands, Miscellanea, Series I

FO 95/6/3 – 95/6/4 De Stamford Papers

FO 95/522/3 Treaty Papers, 1814

Privy Council:

PC 1/28/61 Privy Council, 1795

PC 1/32/81 Privy Council, 1796

PC 1/33/83 Privy Council 1795-96

PC 1/35/98 – 1/35/99 Privy Council, 1796

PC 1/38/121 Privy Council, 1797

PC 1/40/133	Privy Council, 1798
PC 1/42/142	Privy Council, 1798
PC 1/3561	Dutch Property, Embargo, Entry of Neutral Ships, Isle of Man, Militia, Quarantine, 1803
PC 1/4471	Imports from Spain and Holland, Licences to Trade, List of Merchandise
Private Papers:	
PRO 22/46	Letter and envelope addressed to the King of England by Louis, brother of Napoleon, King of Holland
PRO 30/29/1/15	Letters from Lord Thurlow, Dutch Affairs
PRO 30/35/1 – 30/35/7	Sir James Carmichael Smyth: Papers, 1805-1815
PRO 30/42/5/1 – 30/42/5/10	Reports and Opinions (drafts) to the Privy Council on maritime and colonial matters, c.1800
PRO 30/43/25/7	Events in London on the Restoration of Holland, 1813
PRO 30/70/4/220	Duke of York to William Pitt, 1799
War Office:	
WO 1/178	In-letters and papers, 1796-97
WO 1/198 – 1/201	In-letters and papers, 1813-14
WO 1/414	Maj. Gen. Taylor's mission to aid Dutch army, 1813-14
WO 1/911 – 1/912	Exchange of prisoners with the Dutch, recruiting Dutch prisoners, 1795-1805
WO 1/924	Intelligence, 1802-1805
WO 6/26 – 6/28	Walcheren Expedition, 1809
WO 28/350	Lt Gen Sir Ralph Abercromby KB: Campaign of 1799; securing ports and arsenal of the Dutch Republic and rescuing the Naval Force in the Texel from the French

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AF IV 1719-25 Administration de la Hollande après sa réunion à l'Empire

AF IV 1729 Lettres et rapports du Ministre des Affaires Etrangères

AF IV 1730 Légation de Paris 1806-08

AF IV 1732-33 Légation de Paris, 1809-10

AF IV 1740 Lettres et rapports du Ministre de Commerce, 1806-07

AF IV 1744	Lettres des départements
AF IV 1745	Rapports du Ministre de la Justice et de la Police
AF IV 1784-86	Finance ; Rapports concernant l'Intérieur, 1806-10
AF IV 1795	Correspondance et rapports relatifs à la guerre
AF IV 1820	Pièces diverses ; pétitions, 1806-1809
Pays annexés ou dépendants:	
F ^{1E} 48 – F ^{1E} 55	Hollande, An III-1813
Police Générale:	
F ⁷ 3064	Rapports du directeur de la police en Hollande, Paul-Etienne de Villiers du Terrage (1811-1813)
F ⁷ 3224-25	Correspondance et comptabilité de Villiers du Terrage, directeur général de la police en Hollande (1811-1814)
F ⁷ 3238	Rotterdam (1811-1814)
F ⁷ 3819	Bulletins particuliers, relatifs aux insurrections en Belgique et Hollande (15 novembre 1813-24 mars 1814)
Archives Privées :	
183 AP 1-4	Papiers Coquebert de Montbret
215 AP 1	Papiers Talleyrand de Périgord
284 AP 7	Papiers Sieyès; Voyage en Hollande
284 AP 10	Papiers Sieyès; Relations Extérieures
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60-70	Bij de stadhouder ingekomen brieven van - en van de stadhouder uitgaande brieven aan de Staten-Generaal, met bijlagen (Correspondence between Stadholder and States General) 1786-1795
124	Brieven, de Engelse Koning en J. Harris, Engels gezant, (correspondence with the English King and J. Harris)
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1458	Stukken betreffende de inmenging van Frankrijk, Engeland en Pruisen in de binnenlandse onlusten van de Republiek (pieces regarding the interference of France, England and Prussia in the internal unrest of the Republic)
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1458A	Stukken raekende de Negotiatie met Pruisen (en Engeland) over het Tractaat van Alliantie (Pieces relating to the negotiation of the treaty of alliance with Prussia and England), 1787-89
1460B	Different tusschen Engeland en Spanje over de Haven van Noortka (Dispute between England and Spain over Nookta Sound), 1790
1854	Hendrik Fagel als extra-ordinaris ambassadeur van de Republiek in Engeland, (Hendrik Fagel as extraordinary ambassador to England), 1794-95
1855-82	Stukken, opgesteld en verzameld als agent van het huis Oranje-Nassau in Engeland (1795-1813)
Buitenlandse Zaken, 1795-1813 (2.01.08):	
1-2	Minuut notulen van de Commissie voor de Buitenlandse Zaken (Minutes from Foreign Affairs Commission), 1796-98
47	Minuut geheime notulen (Secret minutes), 1796
50-54	Minuut geheime notulen (Secret minutes), 1798-1805
55-56	Geheime notulen van het Provisioneel Besogne voor de Buitenlandse Zaken (Secret notes of Provisional Council for Foreign Affairs)
57-60	Registers met korte inhoud van ingekomen geheime stukken (registers of abstracts of incoming secret pieces), 1798-1801
61	Geheime notulen van het Staatsbewind, Departement van Buitenlandse Zaken (secret notes of Staatsbewind, Department of Foreign Affairs), 1802-1805
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