



Dutch Republicanism: 1555-1609

Establishing the origins of Dutch liberty
and Republicanism

Bo-Peter Laanen

Dutch H196

Professor Jeroen Dewulf.

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Abstract

The formation and success of the Dutch Republic and its unique institutional and ideological foundations were possible through a set of circumstances rare to Europe and the world. During the 16th Century, the provinces of the Low Countries and much of Europe were under the control of the Holy Roman Empire. At this time, the provincial governors within the Low Countries sought to break out of the restrictive mold of their sovereign, Philip II, under the leadership of William the Silent, Prince of Orange. In order to understand the political complexities of this peculiar time in history, this paper seeks to analyze the political discussions and publications that led to the ambitious revolt. This analysis will be used to explain the transformative nature of the distribution of power between the States-General and the Princes of Orange, and the tension between the federal level and the provinces within the Union of Utrecht. The analysis will show that the Dutch Republic was indeed a representative Republic in practice, but that its constitutional institutions were a result of both historical traditions and the ambitions of the Princes of Orange and the nobles who sought autonomous provinces. The leadership of the Princes of Orange unified the nation, but this executive was dependent on the States-General for both authority and treasury. The Republic does fit in the modern conception of a republic in theory. The success of the Eighty-Year's War can be explained by the state formation process which created the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands. The provincial states became a Confederate Republic form of governance in the era of Revolt. A study of the historical development of the economic and political systems of the Low Countries will establish an understanding of the formation of the Dutch Republic and its especially peculiar position within Europe. The purpose of this paper is to explain why it is the Seven United Provinces can be considered as a political form of governance known as a republic, to consider what it is to be a republic. For that purpose, a republic will be defined according to the Civic Republican interpretation of the classical republican tradition. The notion of political liberty¹ is the basis of civic republicanism, and is construed as non-domination or independence of arbitrary power. For most of the cities and towns, as well as the provinces themselves, political liberty in the manner was considered their first and most important right. The nobility backed by burgher populations of those regions represent the first of two opposing views (the 'traditional view'), responsible for the decentralized manner in which the Dutch Republic would form. The merits of Dutch Republicanism are often questioned because the republic was not formed on the basis of an intellectual uprising of sorts, but rather out of reaction and success². Although it does not fit within the paradigms of the Atlantic Republican Tradition³, Dutch Republicanism could correctly be defined as having its own Dutch paradigm.

¹ For all intents and purposes of this paper, liberty and freedom are roughly thought of as equals.

² See J.G.A. Pocock or E.H. Kossman

³ Pocock, J.G.A. *The Atlantic Republican Tradition: The Republic of the Seven Provinces*, 2010

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Dutch Republicanism: 1555-1609.....	1
Introduction.....	1
The Civic Republican Interpretation.....	3
History of the Low Countries.....	8
Early Origins.....	8
The House of Burgundy.....	11
The Habsburg Netherlands.....	13
Charles V.....	13
Reign of Philip II, the Dutch Revolt and Political Outcomes.....	17
Understanding the Dutch Revolt.....	18
Institutional Reforms.....	23
Pacification of Ghent.....	25
Union of Utrecht.....	27
Developments to the nature of the Union.....	29
Conclusions.....	33
Bibliography.....	36

Dutch Republicanism: 1555-1609

Introduction

Unlike anywhere else in Europe, a unique set of historical and political circumstances gave rise to the formation of the institutional and ideological success of the Dutch Republic. During the 16th Century, the provinces of the Low Countries and much of Europe were under the control of King Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire. The removal of the seat of the Burgundian, and subsequently Habsburg, Empire from the Low Countries to Spain in the late 16th century perpetuated a politically complex form of governance that grew into a fierce form of localism within each province⁴. As the century progressed, various provincial governors, as well as established nobles and merchants, within the Low Countries sought to break out of restrictive centralizing policies of their sovereign, Philip II, Charles' successor, under the leadership of William the Silent, Prince of Orange. This Dutch Revolt against the Spanish king led to *de facto* freedom for the northern Dutch provinces in 1609. The success of the Eighty-Year's War can be explained by the state formation process which created the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands. The provincial states became a Confederate Republic form of governance in the era of Revolt. The national representative body known as States-General (*Staten-General*), in a struggle of codependency with the executive Stadholder, the ground for a Republican form of government was set as the two separate powers sought the support of the Dutch citizens. Using a

⁴ Rowen, Herbert H., ed. *The Low Countries in Early Modern Times*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972.

Civic Republican interpretation of the classical republican tradition, this paper argues the Dutch provincial states which would become Republic fits into the modern understanding of what a republic is.

A study of the historical development of the economic and political systems of the Low Countries will establish an understanding of the formation of the Dutch Republic and its especially peculiar position within Europe. The Dutch political and economic systems can hardly be understood in a vacuum: a combination of events opened the opportunities that were effectively channeled to create the rise of the Dutch Republic⁵. The merchants of the Dutch Republic to raised extensive capital⁶, and in turn for the state to effectively tax this capital to support the ambitions of their internal and external politics⁷. De Vries argues the beginning of the first modern economy emerges at the beginning of the 16th century in the Low Countries⁸. Understanding of the economic and social structure of this period serve as the necessary context which had allowed for the blossoming of political environment characterized by tolerance and freedom. This political and social sphere will be taken from a variety of literatures, but notably separate works by Jonathan Israel, Herbet Rowen, Andrew Lossky, E.H. Kossman and others. I will begin by laying down the necessary principles of Civic Republicanism that will define a republic. In order to provide structure in understanding the complexities of the republic born out of the Dutch Revolt, I will continue by observing a history of the Low Countries region, starting as far back as 9th century. This early starting point will build the distinct Dutch understanding of

⁵ Henk van Nierop, *Historiography of the Dutch Revolt* in Darby, *Dutch Revolt*, 2001 pgs. 29-47

⁶ Stasavage, David, *Public Debt and the Birth of the Democratic State*, 2005

⁷ Hart, Marjolein C. 't, *The Making of a Bourgeois State*, 1993

⁸ De Vries, Jan; van der Woude, Adriaan; "The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500-1815

liberty, freedom and religious tolerance. This simultaneously provides necessary evidence for explaining the lack of centralized governance in the region until the policies of the house of Burgundy. A shift in focus will take place onto the economic circumstances of the 16th and early 17th century. The economic success, in combination with the established tradition demanding political freedom will then allow for sufficient context in understanding the peculiar political circumstance that made the Dutch Republic a forerunner in the Republican form of governance.

The Civic Republican Interpretation

It is necessary, if the purpose of this paper is to explain why it is the Seven United Provinces can be considered as a political form of governance known as a republic, to consider what it is to be a republic. For that purpose, a republic will be defined according to the Civic Republican interpretation of the classical republican tradition. This tradition is easily recognized to the modern political citizen for its support of popular sovereignty, constitutional separation of powers and rule of law. It is no less known for the loose family of writers associated to it such as Aristotle, Cicero, Machiavelli, the English Republicans such as Mill and Harrington, and many of the American founding fathers.⁹ Our interpretation uses the work of historical figures, but seeks to remove the prejudices these authors may have had due only the historical context in which they write in. By this I mean to remove any elitist or patriarchal bents to their literature that may exist, to universalize their ideals, as they should in the modern era.¹⁰ The notion of

⁹ Lovett, Frank, "Republicanism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL= <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/republicanism/>>.

¹⁰ Although it will be avoided as much as possible, this has the adverse affect of needing to explain certain bents the subjects of this essay may have due to the time period observed. Such an example exists in the need for a royal prince to act as representative of the state.

political liberty¹¹ is the basis of civic republicanism, and is construed as non-domination or independence of arbitrary power. For most of the cities and towns, as well as the provinces themselves, political liberty in the manner was considered their first and most important right. The nobility backed by burgher populations of those regions represent the first of two opposing views (the ‘traditional view’), responsible for the decentralized manner in which the Dutch Republic would form. The civic republican understands that one can enjoy freedom to the extent that no other person or group has “the capacity to interfere in their affairs on an arbitrary basis.”¹² To promote this freedom, civic republicans are committed to the institutional devices of a republic – the rule of law, separation of powers, constitutionalism and more – as the necessary safeguard. The burghers, *gemeente*, and nobles, prince William included, are particularists with varying political interests. However concott existed between the adherents of the ‘traditionalist view’ and in their strife against the Spanish throne, the institutional devises of a republic are deemed the most appropriate for preserving their collective freedom.

It is the seat of the foreign imperial ambitions, and its representatives that make up the second of the two clashing views on how the Dutch territories are to be treated and ruled. As the historical portion of this essay will show, beginning with the first rulers whom united all of the Dutch counties and provinces under him, the ‘absolutist view’ sought to exploit and use their lands for the sole ambitions of their dynasties. These exploitations existed without the use of a comparable structured feudal system found elsewhere in Europe, thus the House of Burgundy,

¹¹ For all intents and purposes of this paper, liberty and freedom are roughly thought of as equals.

¹² Pettit, Philip *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1996

and later of Habsburg, would attempt to build institutional structure so that they may be able to rule with more ease. In the sense of the second view, the ‘absolutist’ perspective, wielding arbitrary power over the subjects is seen as a viable manner of ruling. Recalling the notion of political liberty described above, absolutism is domination conspiring to interfere by means of extraction and exploitation of a people. If we are to subscribe to this notion of freedom, than the subjects lack freedom because they are vulnerable to the arbitrary power of their sovereign, notably Philip II. There is no greater example of the absolutist view than the generals of the military who with their soldiers laid to waste towns and cities of the Low Countries, breaking well-established feudal law on war and sieges for their own benefits. The sacking of Antwerp known as the “Spanish Fury” is one of the worst of such an instance.¹³ Carrying out the will of Philip, and that of his father before him, was not without meeting obstacles as the provinces wished their promises (read liberty) kept and that they be left to rule the lands while remaining loyal to the royal king. Never were the promises and wishes fully met throughout any duration of the monarchical reigns, but exploitation could not always continue.

The very existence of these two opposing views within the process of state formation suggests that they will inevitably clash, and they certainly did. The middle grounds they found helped shape demands and exploitations into a more preferable form for the provinces. Over the course of two centuries these exploitations were tolerated, but as the freedoms of individuals shrank more and more, revolt against the sovereign became the most justifiable answer.

Complaints taken against the foreign prince, Philip II, can be summarized into three groupings:

¹³ Israel, Jonathan. *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. Pg. 185

“this essentially foreign prince had infringed the liberties and privileges to which he and his predecessors had sworn, that he had gone beyond the invasion of legal and political privileges in the excesses of religious persecution, and that he had compounded all these abuses of his feudal and reciprocal obligations to his subjects by taxing them beyond right or reason.”¹⁴ These complaints, among many others before it, were first directly addressed to the Philip in Spain, and to his regents and governors in the Netherlands. When these proved to no avail, more direct steps were found necessary to force the Spanish influence out of the Netherlands, which mainly came in form of Spanish mercenary troops and Papal inquisitors. In creating the Union of Utrecht for this purpose, seven provinces were eventually united with the goal to right the errors of a sovereign who had lost his way. Perhaps unsuspected at the time, the formation of a new and independent state would take place. As it is the goal of this paper to determine if the early period of this state could be considered a republic in more than name, an outline and characteristics of how to identify such a republic will follow.

The understanding of political liberty described above, and its comparison with the absolutist view provide context in the formation of the republic state. In order to uphold the freedoms fought for, and address the grievances identified above, it follows in the civic republican tradition that the purpose of the state is to protect the citizens of society from possible abuses of arbitrary power, whether that comes in the form of the government or from abuses that stem from within society such as an exploitive employer, for example. The answer to the question of how this could be done begins with a government with good institutional design.

¹⁴ Leeb, *Batavian Revolution*, 1973, Pg. 15

Even within a Republic, good institutional design does not equate to a populist democracy in which government is the direct collective will of the people, but rather a form of democratic institution that give citizens the effective opportunity to contest the decisions of their representatives.¹⁵ In contrast with arbitrary power, representatives of a republican government have discretionary authority. So long as the means a discretionary authority is permitted to employ and the goals or policies it is meant to serve are appropriately answerable to a common knowledge understanding, discretionary authority does not reduce the freedoms belonging to a society¹⁶. Society must be able to contest this authority when they deem it so necessary, thus mechanisms for contestation are necessary, such as courts of appeals where citizens can raise objections to laws and policies. Additionally, civic and democratic contestation must be equally open to all of society; democratic inclusiveness.¹⁷ Other important standard institutional devices for achieving republicanism are rule of law, the separation of powers, federalism, and basic rights. Using this information as a summary for what is sought for in a republic, according to the civic republican interpretation of the classical republican tradition, I will prove that the Dutch Republic could in fact be considered a Republic. To show this, the history of the Low Countries will be a guide to understanding how the revolting government of the northern Netherlands would become the Dutch Republic of the 17th century.

¹⁵ Lovett, Frank, "Republicanism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Sect 2.

¹⁶ Lovett, Frank, "Republicanism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition) Sect 2.2

¹⁷ Lovett, Frank, "Republicanism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition) Sect 4.2

History of the Low Countries

Early Origins

A distinguishing characteristic of the Low Countries, defined as present day Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg, has always been, since the fall of the Roman Empire, the lack of absolutist oversight. In comparison with regions such as France and Spain, the relative freedom of the Low Countries in this regard is rather high. Explaining such contrast in Europe can begin as early as the 9th Century. The fall of the Roman Empire, and the later division of the Carolingian Empire, split Europe into three distinct regions between the three sons of Emperor Louis I under the Treaty of Verdun in 843 AD¹⁸. Of interest is the middle Kingdom of Lothar I, the elder of the three sons, containing the Low Countries and East Germany, and running down through Eastern Francia, the Alps and finally the kingdom of Italy. His early death in 855 split Lothar's territory once more between his three sons. Lotharingia, the name given for the region containing the Rhineland and the Low Countries, was passed to the second son, Lothar II. The youngest, Charles received the counties of Burgundy and Provence, while the oldest, Louis II was crowned Emperor of the Romans and King of Italy.

Lotharingia lasted a mere fourteen years when the absentee King Lothar II died on his return from annulling his marriage. Upon his death, and the earlier death of young Charles, Lothar I's brothers divided Lotharingia and incorporated the lands into their respective empires. Charles the Bald, of Western Francia, laid firm claim on the provinces of Burgundy, Hainaut and Brabant; Louis the German laid claim to the remainder of the Low Countries and the Alps.

¹⁸ "Treaty of Verdun." *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.* Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2013. Web. 13 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/625953/Treaty-of-Verdun>>

However, boundaries were unclear and there were disputes on rightful claim to the land; the brother kings and their successors would continue to fight over the Low Countries for several more decades, when the first Treaty of Ribemont secured Flanders, Artois and Hainaut for the East Frankish kingdom, if only on paper.

This history of territorial disputes between the Eastern and Western European spheres over the Lotharingian middle ground establishes characteristic foundations for many centuries to come for separate spheres of Europe, and several key points must be drawn from it. First, the area considered as the Low Countries existed primarily as autonomous provinces and city-republics, with minimal interference from any of the descendants of Louis I. Each province favored the autonomous positions they had gained from a lack of interference of their Kings and Emperors. Even when these lands were claimed as Lotharingia, Viking raiding and occupation makes the idea of a firm sovereignty over the lands inconsiderable. Generations of both French and German kings were unable to establish firm control over these provinces that were simply too far from the heartlands of the kingdoms.

Second, Louis II, Lothar's eldest son, King of Italy and Imperial Emperor, had his father's territories effectively striped leaving him only the Italian peninsula. Lotharingia had been a vital blood-tie, literally, to the North Sea for Louis II. After the Treaty of Ribemont, the Republic city-states and the seat of Rome were all that were left for the crowned emperor, making the title rather meaningless. Additionally, it also limited the power of the Pope during this period, who had historically ruled through the Emperor by virtue of crowning him. Isolation would not last however, by the end of the 10th century, a King Otto married the widowed Queen of Italy to become Emperor. The brief autonomy Italy held did have a lasting effect: the rise of a

dominant merchant elite in the Republican city-states. As one of substantial partners and competitors of the future Dutch Republic, this will have important consequences, which will be revisited later.

The third point, which has already been alluded to, is of high importance for the future of European politics, and especially the Dutch Republic. Western Francia under Charles the Bald held stability throughout the Middle Ages, with the feudal system well in place, the Kingdom of France reigned well into the era of the Sun King, Louis XIV. On the other side of the Treaty of Ribemont¹⁹, the legacy of Louis the German, held to form the Holy Roman Empire, which not only held all of the Germanic lands, but also extended itself immensely to include Italy and Rome, parts of France, expansion eastward and a partnership through marriage with Spain. The existence of one entity forced the other to be wary of its political state; the two sides kept up an almost brotherly competition between one another, constantly in attempt to show their strengths. There should be no misunderstanding here; the regions were certainly not stuck in a static state, nor were they only concerned with one another. The focus of this paper does not allow for complex discussion regarding the relationship between the Kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Empire, however several items deserve mention. The Hundred Years' War (1337-1453), the discovery of the New World, trade with Asia and Africa, the rise of Protestantism, and not to forget the focus of this paper, the Dutch Revolt and growth of the Dutch Republic, were all exogenous factors that have affected the manner in which the region's governments ruled and managed their affairs. Their political affairs were in need of great amounts of capital, structuring

¹⁹ Following this, the Treaty of Fourons established by their immediate successors guaranteed the respect for a singular lineage of successors.

the manner in which taxation and levies operated. Gaining loyalty from the Duchies, Counties and Provinces necessitated flexibility from the far-away rulers allowed for wide variations in style of ruling within both of these regions. A lack of respect for sovereign border meant constantly changing boundaries over many centuries, yet another tension that had to be dealt with. The longevity of these two major political forces should this not be understood as static entities, but rather as persistent forms of dominance that shaped the internal politics and economies of Europe. It is the resistance and ambitions of outside entities, often in close proximity between the Kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Empire that will drive the argument forward for the origins of the Dutch Republic.

The House of Burgundy

Battles for territory and the question of feudal lineage are a part of the introductory history given above. It is only fit that claims over the rightful heir to the throne of France marks yet another starting point. The long process of unifying the Netherlands into a single entity has its root during the Hundred Years' War, when King John II assigns his fourth son, Philip the Bold, the Duchy of Burgundy as an apanage in 1363²⁰. Through marriage with the heiress of the Count of Flanders (and the counts death in 1384), Philip gains the County of Flanders, Artois, Free County of Burgundy, in addition to others. Early on, Philip sets a precedent for his heirs to build a base for their own political power, in contrast with simply being an extension of French interests. Extension of land power continued under the Dukes John the Fearless, Phillip the Good and comes to an end with the death of Charles the Bold in 1477. At this time, the process had

²⁰ Darby, Graham, ed. *The Origins and Development of the Dutch Revolt*. Print. London: Routledge, 2001. Pg. 10

brought fourteen of the seventeen Dutch Provinces under the House of Burgundy. During the reign of Duke Phillip, the 1430's, the first attempt at centralization was made through the following institutions:

“...the States General, an assembly of representatives from various provincial States, a central Chamber of Accounts and the Order of the Golden Fleece (a distinction designed to bind the various magnates to the court), all of which came to be centered in Brussels. Under Philip the Good, some territories were placed under the duke's lord lieutenant or 'stadholder' as provincial governors were called.”²¹

The provinces enjoyed these institutions as they retained a considerable amount of autonomy and allowed both nobles and educated non-nobles to assert themselves. For the provinces, the institutions allow them to exploit the usefulness of centralized governance for their own growth. No matter how these institutions were received, the merchants and nobles who believed they represented the people of the Low Countries had obtained a manner bargain and communicate with their sovereign.

The Burgundian house would soon find out however, that the States General would demand more from their sovereign quickly. Charles's death (1477) had left no heir, thus the Duchy of Burgundy and several other territories reverted back to King Louis XI of France. Margaret of York, Charles's widow, inherited the remainder of the territories with the understanding these territories would be passed down to their child, Mary of Burgundy. Deep grievances within the provinces against the Burgundian state had built under Charles; the news of his death brought instant rebellion upon Mary and Margaret. The culmination of this rebellion forced the Burgundian house to concede *The Great Privilege*, to the States General, in addition

²¹ Darby. *Dutch Revolt* 2001, Pg. 10

to Holland and Zeeland earning their own. This charter granted the States General to meet when they saw fit as well as confirming the individual liberties to the provinces as they saw fit due to custom. Limitations in both fiscal and military matters were put upon the sovereign ruler of the Low Countries as well. Mary's death in 1482, left Philip I as sovereign, but too young to be ruler, Mary's husband Maximilian of Habsburg took up the regency. His regency was characterized by distrust from the provinces resisting centralizing efforts, while fighting off French acquisition of the Low Countries²². By August of 1493, when Maximilian was crowned Holy Roman Emperor, the *Great Privileges* were declared void and his son Philip I took position of the ruler of the Habsburg Netherlands. Maximilian was successful in the Low Countries in holding up the monarchist characteristics for his son, Phillip I who would only swear to uphold the same rights and privileges guaranteed by Charles the Bold (Duke from 1467-77)²³.

The Habsburg Netherlands

Charles V

With the regency of Maximilian and the subsequent succession as sovereign ruler of his son Philip I, the Low Countries now presided under the House of Habsburg. The switch was markedly important, as the Low Countries now presided under the Holy Roman Emperor, with Maximilian as their Emperor. Due a series of marriage mishaps and deals arranged by Maximilian, Philip and his sister Margaret were part of a double marriage for the Kingdoms of

²² Edmundson, George. *History of Holland*. 1923. <http://www.authorama.com/history-of-holland-1.html> (accessed 21, 2013).

²³ Israel, Jonathan. *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. Pg. 30-34

Aragon and Castile. Due to existential circumstances, Margaret's claim to the Spanish throne was reverted, but eventually passed down to Philip anyhow. On route to Spain in 1506, Philip I died, leaving behind his Burgundian domain to his six-year old Charles of Luxembourg, the Iberian Peninsula continued to be united under King Ferdinand of Aragon. The States General offered the regency of the provinces to Maximilian, who in turn installed Margaret of Austria, Philip I's sister and Maximilian's daughter, as Regent²⁴. Charles became 16 in 1515, declared of age and then ruler of the Netherlands. He was first and foremost a Netherlander, speaking Dutch and grew up educated in his Aunt's court receiving a Dutch education. The death of King Ferdinand, pulled Charles from the Netherlands as he was crowned King of Spain. Subsequently Maximilian's death in 1519 led to Charles' election as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.²⁵ Intermittently, Charles had selected his aunt Margaret to the regency of the Netherlands for the second time, and upon her death in 1530, his sister Mary of Hungary²⁶.

In that same year of his aunt's death, Charles would return to Brussels, still seat of the Habsburg Netherlands, to reorganize the government. To administer Charles' home domain, he set up three councils: the Council of State, the Council of Finance, and the Secret Council²⁷. The Council of Finance was a simply a reorganization of a preexisting function charged with managing the revenue, taxes and other finances of the provinces. The most important organ, the

²⁴ Edmundson, George. *History of Holland*. 1923. <http://www.authorama.com/history-of-holland-1.html> (accessed 21, 2013).

²⁵ Darby. *Dutch Revolt* 2001, Pg. 10

²⁶ It should be noted that Margaret was known for her excellent statesmanship and diplomatic skill. Her goals were dynastic and authoritarian, and by no means did she seek to improve the status of the nobility or the provinces. Charles and his siblings, Mary and Ferdinand, were brought up and educated in the court of their aunt and had thus retained their aunt's ability and skill famously. Edmundson, George. *History of Holland*. 1923.

²⁷ The Secret Council is also referred to as the Privy Council in other works, but here for the sake of consistency we will take up the same term that is used in J. Israel's *The Dutch Republic*.

Council of State, was made up of twelve magnates, primarily from the southern Netherlands and whose occupations were primarily jurists and churchmen. The Secret Council was created to satisfy the new reality that a growing class of professionally trained and educated bureaucrats and jurists was to take up the lead in administration, thus this council had no magnates or nobles. The importance of this lies in the fact that common burghers could have governmental aspirations by means of an education.

As for provincial organization, Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht and later Gelderland were grouped together, in another group Flanders, Walloon Flanders and Artois were together, while later Friesland, Groningen, Drenthe and Overijssel were grouped with one another. Each of these groups was united under their own stadholder, who answers to the Confederate administration and Charles V²⁸. “Grandest of Charles’ Stadholders was Hendrick of Nassau’s son who became known as René de Chalons (1519-44), on inheriting the principality of Orange (in Southern France); René succeeded his father in the Nassau possessions in the Netherlands in 1538...first of the Nassau line to bear the title ‘Prince of Orange’,”²⁹. Under this Prince of Orange, Gelderland would be added to the region of his stadholdership through conquest in 1543. The Stadholder would prove to be one of few remaining positions of nobleman influence on the Habsburg Netherlands³⁰. In the eyes of the governing administration, nobles, although influential on common people, were often away from their immediate provincial appointments and unable to fulfill the duties expected of them. It was also discovered that the relationship between the

²⁸ Darby. *Dutch Revolt* 2001. Pg. 10

²⁹ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1995. Pg. 37

³⁰ The only other real areas of influence nobles had inside the Council of State depended at the discretion of the ruler to listen to their advice. Otherwise their influence was limited to provincial politics.

central councils in Brussels and Mechelen, and the provincial high courts, whom were increasing their fiscal and political jurisdiction, were key to administering the provinces effectively. Speaking to this point, the high courts and the councils themselves were made up of increasingly more university educated jurists and bureaucrats, thus squeezing out the nobles which had not already taken up the route of an education themselves. The States-General had lost their privilege to convene upon their own right, but Charles effectively convened the regents to propose taxation measures and stabilizing currencies in order to increase revenue for the expenses of the empire. A point was made to ensure that these meetings never allowed for much more than discussions pertaining to raising the revenues themselves. Preventing the regents from discussing their sovereign's usage of their revenue and the liberties they felt entitled to was temporarily an effective measure of quelling another political uprising.

A difference between Charles and the son, Philip II, who would take his place, is that Charles at his core was still a Netherlander. In 1548 he convinced the Diet of the Holy Roman Empire to grant autonomy outside the jurisdiction of the empire to the Dutch Provinces. In the Treaty of Ausburg of that year the Burgundian Circle, the name the provinces would take up, was made a sort of protectorate that would pay a tax or remuneration for its special status and protection from the Empire. Within the treaty it was specified that the provinces would thus be passed down to the heirs of Charles. To the provinces and the States General this was a bargain that they could not refuse, and was fully endorsed by all seventeen provinces as the 'Pragmatic Sanction'. Throughout the 1540s Charles' warfare with the French caused new tax burdens on a growingly successful Dutch economy. Knowing better than to further expand Habsburg control over the Netherlands, the larger role of collection and fiscal management was left to the States

General. The States General slowly glorified its role in the administration of the provinces and in turn they viewed their relationship with their sovereign as beneficial instead of burdensome to the Netherlands. This was only temporarily however, as the military expenditures continued to grow, they saw their role grow as true representatives of the people against their rulers. By 1555, Charles V abdicated his various titles at a time when Protestantism was taking root over much of the Netherlands and dissatisfaction with the House of Habsburg had seeded in the population.

Reign of Philip II, the Dutch Revolt and Political Outcomes

On 25 October 1555, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, leaning on the shoulder of the young Prince William I of Orange-Nassau, in the presence of the States-General, read his speech abdication speech and proclaimed Philip II as the new ruler of the seventeen provinces³¹.

Although Charles abdicated all of his titles, not all of them went to his son. Instead Charles still presided for some time over the administration in Brussels, determining the composition of the Council of State and appointing other administrative, ecclesiastical, and military appointments³².

Philip and his father disagreed over many issues regarding their vast empire, and, due to the expectation that Philip would not stay in the Netherlands, Charles appointed Emanuele Filiberto, duke of Savoy as the lieutenant-governor of the Netherlands. These appointments and otherwise Philip's rather general disregard for the Council of State added to existing confusion of power politics, and which institutions had the ability to check another. Previous confusion based mainly on the question of whether provincial assemblies could meet on their own accord or on the instruction of their Stadholder. Such confusion was taken advantage of by the provinces, such as

³¹ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1995, Pg. 135

³² Darby. *Dutch Revolt* 2001, Pg. 15

the States of Holland to increase their range of business within the province. Power politics mattered little to Philip so long as the existing central organization could be exploited to his will. He was much more concerned with his ability to use the Netherlands for both a financial and militarily strategic advantage against France, as well as protecting and furthering the Catholic religion. Ultimately Philip's exploitation of the Dutch people would lead to the Dutch Revolt, starting 1566 due to previously mentioned grievances that compiled against Spanish troops. I will now consider further the historiography and power structures and institutions that would form the Dutch Republic.

Understanding the Dutch Revolt

The biggest source of confusion surrounding the Dutch Revolt falls upon the variety of accounts dealing with how the events have been understood. To compound the issue, only more statistical evidence and theoretical studies have been published rendering older accounts incompatible. Finally, the contemporaries who wrote on the Dutch Revolt at time of its unfolding often focused on micro issues of their immediate surroundings instead of a macro view of the entire Republic. In his essay "Historiography of the Dutch Revolt", Henk van Nierop analysis these accounts and concludes with his own interpretation.³³ Early interpretations of the revolt assumed that the course of history had transpired in pursuit of a particular goal. These interpretations included a divine revolt against the abuses of the Pope, a national movement for independence, a civil war between North and South, and as well as a Marxist bourgeois revolution. It was not until the 1960s when research showed and meshed the great variety of interests throughout all of the Low Countries. Additionally, a greater macro observation

³³ Henk van Nierop, *Historiography of the Dutch Revolt* in Darby, *Dutch Revolt*, 2001 pgs. 29-47

displayed the Dutch Revolt only as a part of a much larger international conflict. “Geoffrey Parker in particular has emphasized that the success or failure of the rebels did not depend in the 1st instance on their own perseverance but on the international situation.”³⁴ Van Gelderen disputably states that with military victory and a much more pronounced political control in 1590, the Northern Netherlands had experienced little change in the political makeup of the government:

“A further comparison of the institutional makeup of the government of the northern Dutch provinces of 1555 with the institutional makeup of the Dutch Republic in 1590 shows that the constituting elements the two frameworks have remained basically the same. There was one crucial difference. The Dutch Republic had no sovereign ‘Lord of the country’. His authority and power had shifted to the true victors of the Dutch Revolt, the states and the towns.”³⁵

Contrary to that claim, Jonathan Israel, in his *The Dutch Republic*, claims that beginning in 1572 a tremendous transition occurred in the institutional makeup. “It would be entirely wrong to suppose that the Revolt preserved the provinces, and provincial institutions, as they had been under the Burgundians or Habsburgs.”³⁶ Once the Dutch Republic had taken away the power of the Spanish throne in its former territories, the manner in which the government operated was certainly different, in stark contradiction with the claims of van Gelderen.

To evaluate the claim of Israel regarding the changes in the political make up of the Dutch Republic, a comparison of the structures and processes between the time Philip II accepted the hereditary endorsement of his father, Charles V, and around the 1620s, after an initial peace was broken off and war resumed. Once Philip had secured his possessions in the

³⁴ Darby. *Dutch Revolt* 2001, Pg. 32

³⁵ Gelderen, Martin van, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt, 1555-1590*, 1992 pg. 60

³⁶ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1995, Pg. 277

Low Countries through ending the Spanish war with France through the Treaty of Cateau-Cambresis, he promptly left, never to return to the Low Countries, to assume his position as King of Spain. In his wake, a Regent or Governor-General was left to rule for him. However, through fighting the war with France, the Habsburg central authority had made many concessions to the States General and to the individual provinces of the Low Countries. Centralization policy in the Habsburg Netherlands is characterized as a struggle between the Central Authority, assumed in the Collateral Councils and the Regent, and the rebellious nature of the provinces to conserve their traditions and customs. The war with France led the Spanish treasury to reach close to bankruptcy. Lack of funds forced Philip's reign to begin by demanding that the Burgundian Circle pay for its governance through taxes. This was an upset to the States General whom traditionally paid lump sums to the Habsburg when it was requested, in order to prevent intrusion into provincial taxation systems. It took two years for Philip to reach an agreement with the provinces. Instead of the proposed taxes, a lump sum would be paid over a range of nine years. In exchange, the States General gained from Philip complete powers of collection and expenditure on their own right. This was the typical manner in which centralization took place within the Netherlands during Habsburg reign. If the 'Natural Prince' wished something from his subjects, he had to give some concession of political power to the institutions of the provinces to overcome the great resistance that met every policy of centralization. Concerned primarily with establishing his absolute rule and extracting what he could from the provinces, as is tradition for the Habsburg and Burgundian rulers, Philip sought to negate all the power Dutch nobles held by bottlenecking them through the Council of State. Additionally, by filling as many positions as

possible with replaceable educated professional and lawyers in the bureaucracy, Philip furthered his control.

Historians and philosophers alike, notably Hobbes and Locke, frequently note the state building weapon of choice for absolute rulers comes in the forms of centralization and bureaucratization. The processes Philip undertook to bring the Low Countries under control could be recognized to fall under these categories likewise, along with the religious determination that would find him much opposition and hatred in attempting to carry out his policies. The institutional structure of the Dutch Republic that left after Philip's death and was solidified by 1609, had come to be from a conversion of the two opposing views of political power, freedom, and religious tolerance. These two opposing views have already been discussed in brief, but it is their paradoxical and conflicting natures that caused both the Dutch Revolt and the subsequent government.

The first, the Absolutist ruler, was based much in the 'Divine Right of Kings' doctrine personified by Charles V and Philip II. Their policies necessitated centralization and strict adherence. Financial policies were deemed successful in the above-described procedure of conceding some political power to provincial towns. Policies on religion however could not be any more unlike the stance taken on fiscal policy. For the theory of divine right of Kings to work, the Habsburgs forced as best possible for their subjects to be nothing but members of the Catholic faith. Such a policy had no room for religious tolerance, and for many the religious insistence became a growing source of disdain against Philip. Resistance to the policies of ruling sovereigns did give power to the Dutch Provinces but simultaneously gave way to the process of centralization.

Opposing the view of their absolutist rulers was what could be considered a collective popular sentiment against the Habsburg control. Nobility, townsmen and magistrates, and Protestants and other religious dissidents, made up the Dutch resistance to Philip. It is certainly worth noting however that these groups overwhelmingly represented the urbanized population (which was the highest in the Low Countries of all European regions). This collective did not necessarily agree together on every issue, but each member's individual grievances slowly turned into a unifying bond because of repressive policies from the top. William the Silent led the charge, with tremendous effort, to unify all of the varying interests. Religious tolerance being again one of biggest concerns, which William believed (and rightly so) would be the only manner in which to unite the Protestant majority with the privileged Catholic minority. Spanish troops and Papal Inquisitors were feared and held close eye on the population, enough so to seriously dissuade many from joining some sort of resistance. It would take an initial show of force, a military victory over the Spanish to create the necessary catalyst for start a serious dismantling of Philip's influence over the Low Countries. After several failed military incursions against Spanish troops, it was the capture of Den Brielle on April 1st, 1572 by Dutch "Sea Beggars" sailing under the flag of William of Orange³⁷.

Once the revolt began, this process of centralization was taken over by William the Silent for the purpose of successful secession against Spain. The Union of Utrecht serves as the constitutional foundation of the Dutch Republic, although it does not specify the exact institutions that came to represent the republic. The traditions for which the nobility, towns and provinces revolted for were upheld, but for the purposes of foreign policy, central institutions

³⁷ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1995, pg. 170-1

remained were employed. As Van Gelderen (1992) does point out, the chief institutional change of the government is the replacement of the sovereign by the States General of the Dutch Republic. This replacement does not equate to a transfer of power to the States General by any means. Instead, as Van Gelderen suggests, power lay with the towns and provinces that together formed the Dutch Republic via the Union of Utrecht. Primarily the States General was a forum for representatives of provincial assemblies to come to unanimous decisions for the Dutch Republic. The Council of State continued by name but initially was stripped of all power and served as a secretary and administrative unit for the States General. The transition from the political framework from 1555 to the 1620s required the development of several new institutions that did not exist before both within the Generality and on the provincial level.

Institutional Reforms

The States of Holland formed the basis and example of a framework that would be spread to the remainder of the provinces. Israel focuses on 1572 as an institutional turning point at the provincial level, which consequently would be an important step towards a greater union of provinces. Up until 1572, the armies of William the Silent had been pushed back to the boundaries separating the Northern and Southern provinces; a natural boundary of a great river. The capture of the Den Brielle turned the tide and was the resurgence of the Dutch Revolt. William returned from self-exile to Holland to begin reforming the province and use it for the base of operations against Spain. Holland as the most populous province with great economic might would be the first to have its provincial assembly be granted the rights for self-assembly³⁸. Just like the States-General (see Fig. 1, National Level), all provincial assemblies until that point

³⁸ Gelderen, Martin van, *The Political Thought*, 1992 Pg. 43

could only assemble when called upon by their ruler, and as the example of Philip II's first request of them shows, for mostly economic reasons³⁹. Several actions were taken to increase the size of Holland's government. More towns and cities were added slowly, from six in 1572, to fourteen in 1581. As had been customary already, there was a position for the nobility, but qualifications for the position became more limited to those loyal to the revolt. Each town, as well as the nobility as a whole, had one vote on procedural matters.

In order to administer the States of Holland, a standing committee was created known as the *Gecommitteerde Raden*, otherwise known as the college of Delegated States. The Delegated States served as an advisory committee to the Stadholder, at the time William of Orange⁴⁰ and also kept the cities and towns, as well as the nobles in some cases informed as to the state of the province and the itinerary and outcomes of the Assemblies. All of the provincial assemblies had a Land's Advocate, a professional jurist appointed as a chairman for the assembly, and in the future was often the Assembly's representative to the States-General⁴¹. The elected office of Stadholder remained part of the provincial framework, as "loyal" provinces to the representative of Philip II. As the Stadholder for both Holland and Zeeland, William strengthened his own position, but also that of the future state, by bringing the two strongest provinces together in the Particular Union of Holland and Zeeland in 1575.

According to Israel, this agreement for the first time created a joint (as well as exclusively Protestant) political, military, financial and religious framework, an entity which

³⁹ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1995, pg. 277

⁴⁰ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1995, pg. 280

⁴¹ Gelderen, Martin van, *The Political Thought*, 1992 Pg. 60

was, in embryo, the state which was to be set up subsequently in 1579.⁴² It should be emphasized that up until and through this point, Orange had attempted to act within the boundaries of how the Dutch understood the legalities of the situation⁴³. Even though Holland and Zeeland formally abrogated Philip II as an influential force, they still recognized him as their sovereign. More likely than not this was simply a matter of ensuring that no pretext could be given for the Spanish to accuse his Stadholder of attempting to secede from the Habsburg empire. In any case, William went on to reconstitute the States of Zeeland to remove ecclesial influence out of politics and add voting places for two strongly pro-revolt towns⁴⁴. Attempting to create a standard formula, a college of Delegated States was set up for Zeeland in 1576. The example would be followed by Friesland in the north, and by the States of Utrecht to Holland's east, both in 1577⁴⁵.

Pacification of Ghent

A combined Holland and Zeeland, under the leadership of William of Orange hosted formal negotiations with Governor-General Requesens in Breda in 1575. The formers unwavering pursuit of the States-General to be seen as an equal to the governor and religious tolerance to be accepted in exchange for peace, doomed the peace talks. With Resquesens' death in the March 1576, the last source of payment to Spanish troops diminished. Consequentially,

⁴² Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1995, pg. 197

⁴³ Once again coming down to opposing views of how the Low Countries were to be ruled, Philip had replaced William of Orange as Stadholder of Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht, but had done so without following the customs and rights of those provinces, thus making Orange's successor invalid. Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1995, pg. 175

⁴⁴ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1995, pg. 281

⁴⁵ The States of Friesland had been called much more infrequently than elsewhere, thus making its administrative ability much less influential. William had them create a Delegated States, with a third of votes going to towns and the remainder to rural areas. Additionally they also set up yet another administrative apparatus underneath that would do the task of informant the Delegated States were meant to do. Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1995, pg. 282

Spanish troops mutinied and wreck havoc throughout the Low Countries, predominantly the Southern provinces. Mutinying soldiers had, in November 1576, “According to some reports as many as 18,000 citizens of Antwerp were slaughtered.”⁴⁶ Talks already underway between Orange’s legion and the remaining provinces in the national States-General, reacted to this occasion in haste. By November 8th, the ‘Pacification of Ghent’ was signed as a treaty between the two parties, both agreeing to reunify in Brussels as a single States-General together claiming allegiance to Spain. Regardless of that, the *Pacification* that once “...the departure of the Spaniards and their adherents...” take place, the States General will revert the territorial rule “...in the form an manner in which it was held during the time of the late Emperor Charles, of praiseworthy memory, when he ceded and transferred these Low Countries to the hands of the King our sire,”⁴⁷. Problematic of the Pacification was that only Holland and Zeeland were acknowledged as Calvinist provinces, while suspending persecution of Protestants elsewhere.

The next governor-general of Philip, Don Juan, and later a States-General chosen governor, Philip’s half-brother Archduke Mathias. Once Don Juan had removed Spanish troops his power quickly declined, official recognition of him from the States-General was removed and Mathias was recognized. William of Orange had hoped to establish a constitutional monarchy under the Habsburg Prince Mathias, but Philip’s next governor arrived with a tried and ready army. Alexander of Parma was a suitable match in diplomatic and statesmanship abilities in rank with William of Orange. Don Juan and the duke of Parma invaded the Low Countries from the south in 1578, while an entirely separate contingent of English backed German-Calvinist troops

⁴⁶ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1995, pg. 185

⁴⁷Text of the *Pacification of Ghent*, Article III Rowen, *The Low Countries*, 1972 pg. 61

invaded from the East. Luckily, William's preparation had secured French armed forces through the Duke of Anjou, thus alleviating these strains. The Spanish forces may have been capable of taking back most of the Netherlands but again fiscal difficulties hampered their advance. The German-Calvinist forces did face much opposition from Dutch Calvinist forces, but destroyed towns in Catholic dominant provinces. Skeptical of Calvinist Netherlands and the Calvinist William of Orange, Parma quickly took advantage and formed an alliance, the Union of Arras, with the provinces of Hainault, Artois, and other Southern provinces in January 1579. By the end of the same month, Holland and Zeeland formed the Union of Utrecht in alliance with Utrecht, Gelderland, and various towns and districts not in reach of Spanish influence yet.

Union of Utrecht

The purpose of the Union of Utrecht of 1579 was to create a defense alliance against the Spanish threat represented now by Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma. The treaty was unlike any before it in the history of the Netherlands, as the first unification by the provinces for the common interest of those provinces instead of the interest of a foreign ruler. For this reason, it would without being its purpose become the constitutional foundation of the Dutch Republic. To romanticize this aspect would be wrong for it also contributed to the Union's weakness. The possibility for creating a politically robust and secure confederation was sacrificed in order to keep open the options of reuniting with the remaining provinces and the hope of finding a benevolent prince if Philip would not bend to their demands. For all its vagueness in defining the bodily functions and limits of the union as a sovereign body, it did strongly demand of the provinces to stand together to accomplish their goals. The first article of the treaty reads prominently that:

“Firstly, the aforesaid provinces will form an alliance, confederation, and union among themselves...in order to remain joined together for all time, in every form and manner, as if they constituted only a single province, and they may not hereafter divide or permit their division or separation...” but they “...shall help to maintain, strengthen, confirm and indeed protect the other in these by all proper and possible means, indeed if need be with life and goods, against any and all who seek to deprive them of...” of their rights, privileges, customs or freedoms⁴⁸.

Although it mentions the protection of each province’s ancient rights, it makes no specific particulars to these positive laws⁴⁹. There is no justification for unification by means of natural or divine rights either as is common with the constitutions of the post-enlightenment era. By not elevating any particular rights or interests, the Union had the pragmatic ability to organize and appeal to a wide range of interests against the Spanish threat. That is not to say no further protections exist. Provisions are written to protect civilians through courts of justices, to settle disagreements between provinces through procedures of established law (Article I); provisions for the common defense and costs derived there from (Art. III & IV); for taxes allowed only to the Generality (Art. V & XVIII); and, common currency and monetary exchange (Art. XII)⁵⁰. Article IX states any decisions that must be made in regards to the confederacy, representatives must vote unanimously “...according to the existing practice of the States General...” until other arrangements are made by the body. In the same article, and in XXIV, it is stated that the Stadholders will continue to be elected in each province and have the duty to continue the unity of the provinces and help bring provinces to agreement in the States-General. Finally, Article XIII makes abundantly clear that “...no one shall be investigated or persecuted because of his religion...” and are free to practice any religion of choosing so long all procedures of law are

⁴⁸ *Union of Utrecht* in Rowen, *The Low Countries*, 1972, pg. 68-74

⁴⁹ By which I mean, man-made laws such as the continuously mentioned privileges.

⁵⁰ *Union of Utrecht* in Rowen, *The Low Countries*, 1972, pg. 68-74

adhered to. The outcome of the confederation lacked a centralizing agent easily explained by the view the majority of the parties involved shared: the 'Traditional' view. All of these articles considered, the *Union* remained open-ended and over the coming years developments of fundamental importance would rapidly take place in shaping the nature and form of the Confederation.

Developments to the nature of the Union

William of Orange continued his traditional role effectively serving as the Commander in Chief of the Armed forces, while the Republic's second Stadholder served as a deputy to Orange, and later as Grand Admiral of the Navy. While all provinces had a Land's advocate, it was only Holland's, as most powerful (both economically and politically) and first self-assembled of the provinces, that came to serve as the equivalent to a Minister of Foreign Affairs (and was so duly treated by ambassadors and foreign state visitors). It would be the Land's Advocate along with the Princes of Orange whom would continue the fight for uniting the remainder of the provinces against the Spanish. They did so well. Two years later, the combined States-General of the Dutch Republic signed the Plakkaat van Verlatinge (Act of Abjuration) to finally renounce their allegiance to Philip II. The political rhetoric of the declaration was much stronger than that of the Union. The case against Philip was presented in three parts. First, a theory of political responsibility based on Calvinist ideas, insisted a prince is constituted to be ruler of God's people not to oppress them as a tyrant but for the sake of the people to protect them; that if the people's 'natural rights', prosperity and liberties have been infringed, it is their legal right to revoke their

allegiance⁵¹. Second, a list of specific and concrete grievances, and third, declaring Philip guilty of these charges, renouncing their allegiance to him, and that all symbols of his rule are to be removed from these countries.

Removal of the sovereign once again raised question and debate over sovereignty. The ‘traditional view’ fever spread across the provinces and towns seeking to protect their own interests. Representatives sent to the States-General and provincial assemblies lost their initiative rights and instead could only deliberate and make decisions once they had consulted with the town councils of the province⁵². Temporarily the Duke of Anjou returned to States-General to accept their offer to be their sovereign, but left again disappointed with the lack of power he was granted. After William of Orange’s assassination in July, 1584 the States of Holland took provincial matters first over the needs of the confederacy, but without doubt needed the confederacy in order to survive. Likewise, the States-General appointed a new Council of State to exercise provisionally the executive powers of sovereignty⁵³. The on going search for a princely power that could aid and protect the Low Countries was answered in a plea to Queen Elizabeth of England who sent Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Leicester’s reception in 1586 was very welcoming everywhere but Holland. As a Governor-General of the country, Leicester began immediately with defending the country in the South, but also made crucial mistakes by further dividing power structures and alienating Stadholder Maurice of Orange, Holland and religious moderates, opting instead to favor zealot Calvinists and seating the government in

⁵¹ **Dutch-English Comparative Text of the Act of Abjuration**

http://www.h4.dion.ne.jp/~room4me/docs/abj_dut.htm

⁵² Leeb, *Batavian Revolution*, 1973, Pgs. 17-18

⁵³ Edmundson, *History of Holland*, Ch. 8,

Utrecht. More over, Leicester took it upon himself to overstep the powers given to him, asserting himself as the sovereign of the country. His presence drove the States of Holland into an even more particularistic status, going as far as raising their own militia in case the states needed defense from Leicester's British troops (who themselves did not have upmost loyalty to Leicester). Remonstrance, apologies, and other declarations flow back and forth between Utrecht and Holland, each defending their rights of power⁵⁴. Leicester gave up his post in 1588 and ended the Leicesterian period of the Dutch Republic. He left the Union in a weak position against its enemies, but his authoritarian presence spurred the political minds of the entire country that formalized the relations the states would take over the next two centuries⁵⁵.

The authors and actors of the States of Holland and the States-General, in general seemed to agree on the Renaissance assumption that the principal purpose of the states was to protect political life. The motto of the Dutch Republic, *Concordia res parvae crescent*, meaning 'Small things grow though Concord' exemplifies the belief that internal peace necessary for Rule of Law could only be possible if factional interests were set aside in pursuit of the common good⁵⁶. The most dominant form of government that the state should take was that of princely rule. An argument for princely rule was of course favored because the United Provinces were in desperate need of aid to defend their country. After two failures of princely rule, acceptance for the Republican argument finally began taking place. Even though the Republic was already in place, to take it as the final form of government had not yet been accepted, if only because no solution

⁵⁴ Gelderen, Martin van, *The Political Thought*, 1992 pg.205

⁵⁵ Edmundson, *History of Holland*, Ch. 8,

⁵⁶ Gelderen, Martin van, *The Political Thought*, 1992 pg 208

had been found for the problems of faction, inefficiency of the government and the lack of discipline in the armies. Arguments rejected the examples of the Roman Republic and of the Swiss confederacy, thus new arguments for a republic were devised. Civic virtue was preached, on the basis of Cicero, that for the protection of the fatherland and individual liberty, citizens must have the willingness to make personal sacrifices. Popular sovereignty was defined as “the permanent social framework by they are united,”⁵⁷ in place of seemingly united individuals. Additionally, the republican institutions in place were argued as ‘the social bond which unites people in society.’⁵⁸ The States-General down to the town councils were all described as the delegates of the individuals of the country who would only act in conformity with the desire of the people.

Civil war in France in 1589, which Philip II took interest in to further the Catholic cause, tore Parma and the Spanish army away from the Netherlands and into France. The momentary gap left stadholders Maurice and William Lewis and the government to reform the armies and their republican institutions. It was nothing short of a ‘military revolution’⁵⁹ Hired troops took the place of traditional warfare, with an enormous increase in numbers of soldiers and sailors. This occurred simultaneously with professionalization of the armed forces using improved and more effective armaments. Since siege warfare was the dominant form of battle, Maurice made huge investments to create the most modern siege artillery, and armed all of his soldier with muskets not used anywhere else in Europe.⁶⁰ By 1600, the Dutch army recaptured huge portions

⁵⁷ Koosman, *Political thought in the Dutch Republic*.

⁵⁸ Gelderen, Martin van, *The Political Thought*, 1992 pg. 210

⁵⁹ Hart, Marjolein C. ‘t, *The Making of a Bourgeois State*, 1993, pg. 71

⁶⁰ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1995, pg. 295

of land from the Spanish, including the provinces of Groeningen, Overijzssel, Gelderland and Drenthe. Additionally, the death of Philip II had taken place. His son Philip III replaced him, and he willed away the Southern Netherlands to his daughter and her husband. In time, the new rulers were far more flexible when it came to the question of sovereignty, and secret negotiations began in 1606. An initial truce occurred in 1607, but the Dutch used it as an opportunity to strike Spanish possessions not only in the Low Countries but in South American as well. Three years later, peace negotiations again took place, and mostly for fiscal reasons, the Spanish accepted a twelve-year truce.

Conclusions

Before the evidence was presented, this essay began with an explanation of the Civic Republic interpretation of the Classical Republican tradition. From that point on, the evidence exemplified why the Dutch Republic fits the description of a Republic based on that interpretation. A look at the long history of the Low Countries in the greater European context shows political geographical divisions that characterize each region, lack of absolute oversight being the prevalent case. The Houses of Burgundy for the first time brought together the various provinces in the Low Countries under a single banner, which was met with resistance as attempts were made to take power out of the hands of the towns and into that of the rulers. New institutions such as the States-General were created under the family, leading the way for a united Netherlands. The Burgundians had done well for themselves however; marriages and alliances brought them into the House of Habsburg and heirs of the Spanish Throne. Charles V was a Dutchman himself allowing his centralizing efforts and sometimes-harsh methods to pass without the chance for a successful uprising. Under his rule, nobles were being more alienated

for more replaceable and skilled jurists within in the centralized bodies, but allowed some such as the Princes of Orange-Nassau to be involved with the Council of State and be close allies with Holy Roman Emperor. When in 1555, Philip II became ruler of the Netherlands, the alienation went further yet, on top of high tax demands and a religious inquisition against the rising popularity of Protestantism. By the end of the 1560s, the Dutch Revolt had begun against Philip, and by 1581, the state of the Dutch Republic was formed and independence was declared. War ensued and the Republic went through its institutional developments. Based on all of the evidence presented, an effective argument can be constructed holding the United Provinces as a true republican government according to the Civic Republic interpretation.

The merits of Dutch Republicanism are often questioned because the republic was not formed on the basis of an intellectual uprising of sorts, but rather out of reaction and success⁶¹. Although it does not fit within the paradigms of the Atlantic Republican Tradition⁶², Dutch Republicanism could correctly be defined as having its own Dutch paradigm⁶³. Republican theory holds liberty at its key, and its understanding of non-domination both requires self-rule and that the citizen has no fear of having his life interfered with. In order to create such an environment, factionalism must be avoided and concord must be committed to, which can be accomplished when rule of law is enforced and some form of representative government. Citizens are expected to engage politics with virtue, and can do best to defend their community by being apart of the virtuous civil militia, common of Dutch towns. Dutch political order was

⁶¹ See J.G.A. Pocock or E.H. Kossman

⁶² Pocock, J.G.A. *The Atlantic Republican Tradition: The Republic of the Seven Provinces*, 2010

⁶³ Gelderen, Martin van, *The Political Thought*, 1992 Pg. 43, pg. 277

based on liberty, privileges, States and popular sovereignty, yet Dutch Republicanism took liberty to mean more than merely the right to own property, but included freedom of conscience and religious toleration⁶⁴. The foundation of the republic, it was thought, depended on concord and union based on the works of Cicero, and although it was not possible to fully remove discord, good and pragmatic laws helped ease tensions of wide diversity. Laws were of high importance in the Netherlands, which was often reverted to for precedent even in justification for the revolt. Quentin Skinner calls Dutch conceptions of liberty to fit “the scholastic defense of liberty”⁶⁵, that is attempting to preserve freedom in terms of strong institutional structures with authorities that had minimal discretion in administering the laws. With its complex system of magistrates within the cities checking on another, and the towns effectively checking both provincial and the General assemblies, the constitutional structure held up well to quell factionalism and induce effective bargaining. This paper meant to show that the Dutch Republic formed during the Dutch Revolt was indeed a republic. The structures of the republic as well the abjuration of Philip II were based on the constitutional rights and privileges understood on its indigenous history. Due to a successful revolt and outstanding political dedication, the provinces and their leaders effectively created a republic built upon liberty, constitutional charters, representative institutions and popular sovereignty by the time of the it obtained it’s twelve year truce with Spain in 1609.

⁶⁴ Gelderen, Martin van, *The Political Thought*, 1992 Pg. 43, pg. 282

⁶⁵ Skinner, Quentin *The foundation of modern political thought*, Pgs. 53-66

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