

Conflicting Traditions

Rethinking Tendencies in the Foreign Policy of the Dutch Republic, 1700-1763

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21-8-2015

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Introduction

For most historians studying early modern Dutch history, the War of the Spanish Succession, waged from 1702 until 1713, is considered the final conflict in the 40-year struggle between France and the Dutch Republic.¹ This conflict started in 1672 with the French invasion of the Republic, in coalition with England and the German bishoprics of Münster and Cologne, which brought the country to the brink of destruction. William III (1650 – 1702), who came to power that same year, thereby ending the first Stadtholderless era, would spend his life challenging and containing France. He tried to do so first as Stadtholder of the Dutch Republic, and, after 1688's Glorious Revolution, also as king of England, subsequently becoming the figurehead of European resistance against French dominance.²

William's foreign policy can be characterised as aiming at active involvement in the affairs of Europe and has been labelled in Dutch historiography as the Continental tradition. This policy was opposed by the rich merchant-regents of the wealthiest Provinces of the Republic, Holland and Zeeland who propagated the Maritime tradition. The adherents of this tradition aimed at neutrality and abstention from European politics, seeing involvement in continental wars as detrimental to the interests of the Republic as a state that drew its wealth and prosperity mainly from international trade and shipping.³ It is this second tradition that is generally considered to have dominated the foreign policy of the Dutch Republic after the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht, which ended the War of the Spanish Succession in 1713, and left the Dutch Republic, as a result of the tremendous financial burdens of the war, as a second-ranked power in Europe.

However, regarding the War of the Spanish Succession as the final conflict fought in the Continental tradition of William III is somewhat problematic. William III died in March 1702, some two months before war was officially declared on France and Spain. After his death, no new Stadtholder was proclaimed and the Republic entered its second Stadtholderless era during which effectively the regents from the Province of Holland held all the power. The War of the Spanish Succession appeared to be the final conflict in which the Dutch Republic followed the Continental tradition. However, it was subsequently proclaimed and fought by the regents that supposedly supported the Maritime tradition of neutrality and abstention. This dissonance raises the question whether or not the War of the Spanish Succession was really fought in the Continental tradition and

¹ One of the most recently published works that propagates this view is: D. Haks, *Vaderland en vrede 1672-1713. Publiciteit over de Nederlandse Republiek in oorlog* (Hilversum 2013).

² E. Luard, *The Balance of Power. The system of international relations 1648-1815* (Houndmills 1992), 339.

³ J.J.C. Voorhoeve, *Peace, profits and principles. A study of Dutch foreign policy* (Leiden 1985), 42-54.

if the classical dichotomy between the Continental and Maritime traditions in early modern Dutch foreign policy is as clear-cut as it has always been made out to be.⁴

Research Question.

This thesis aims to critically reflect on the existing narrative and representations of tendencies in the Dutch Republic's foreign policy in the first half of the eighteenth century. In recent years the classical approach to studying foreign policy has been increasingly criticized by constructivists and post-constructivists in the field of international relations emphasizing the importance of language in formulating foreign policy, and the way foreign policy is formulated to facilitate legitimization.⁵ This approach has led historians of foreign policy away from the classical sources of diplomatic history like diplomatic correspondence, and include a wider range of new potential sources to track foreign policy discourse, for instance semi-political sources as declarations of war and more popular sources as newspapers, pamphlets and other publications.⁶

This thesis aims to make use of this approach by using a hitherto hardly used set of sources: the General Petitions issued by the Council of State. By focussing on analysing the discourse on foreign policy that is to be found in the General Petitions during the three large European conflicts of roughly the first half of the eighteenth century this thesis will contribute to the question whether or not we need to re-evaluate the existing story of Maritime versus Continental traditions in early modern Dutch foreign policy. The first major European conflict under evaluation is the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713), in which the Republic was an active belligerent and, while still counted among the great powers of Europe, ostensibly following the Continental tradition. The second conflict is the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748), in which the Republic, where the Continental tradition had made way for the Maritime tradition, tried to remain neutral but was eventually reluctantly dragged into the conflict. The third and final conflict will be the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), in which the Republic successfully remained neutral all together.

Historiographical context.

The eighteenth century is a period that has received less attention in Dutch historiography than other periods, and the research that has been conducted on the Dutch Republic's foreign policy in the early

⁴ A few historians have also commented on this discrepancy, most notably: J.G Stork-Penning, *Het grote werk. Vredesonderhandelingen gedurende de Spaanse Successie-oorlog 1705-1710* (Groningen 1958), XXIV-XXV.

⁵ D. Onnekink, 'Nederland en het Europese machtsevenwicht', in: J. Pekelder, R. Raben and M. Segers (ed.), *De wereld volgens Nederland. Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek in historisch perspectief* (Amsterdam 2015), 25-41, 29-30.

⁶ Onnekink, 'Nederland', 40-41.

modern period is consequently not plentiful. Traditionally, historians viewed the eighteenth century, in particular the first half of it, as a period of stagnation and decline wedged in between the glorious decades of the Dutch Golden Age of the seventeenth century and the tumultuous period of Patriots and Batavians in the years just before the outbreak of the French Revolution. Supposedly nothing happened during this period that was considered to be of very much importance and therefore academics had little incentive to study it. In the last decades the paradigm shifted and historians came to see the eighteenth century as a key period in Dutch historiography bridging the gap between the Dutch 'golden' seventeenth century and the founding of the 'modern' Dutch state in the nineteenth century.⁷

Another factor contributing to the lack of scholarly work on Dutch foreign policy in the eighteenth century is the fact that the thesis of dominant traditions influencing foreign policy, as formulated by the eminent professor Boogman, of which parts have already been mentioned above, has hardly been challenged to this day.⁸ According to Boogman, foreign policy in the early modern Dutch Republic was characterized by two different competing positions. The Maritime tradition found its origin in the Province of Holland, by far the wealthiest and thus powerful of the seven Provinces.⁹ This tradition focussed on maritime commercial interests, owing to the crucial importance of trade for the wealth and influence of Holland, and especially the city of Amsterdam. The adherents of this foreign policy believed in the benefits of maintaining peace in Europe since this would bring least disruption to international trade. This resulted in a form of utilitarian pacifism in which the Republic would only submit to defensive alliances for the sake of the Balance of Power, or otherwise stay neutral in international conflicts. The Republic was to abstain from territorial expansion in Europe and should instead focus on commercial expansion; enlarging the wealth and power of the country through trade, not conquest. Some of the merchant-regents following the Maritime tradition even went so far as to favour a policy of territorial contraction, gladly giving up parts of some of the less profitable land-locked Provinces in return for economic benefits.¹⁰

From 1672 onwards, the year in which the Stadtholderate was restored, this policy became overshadowed by the Continental tradition supported by the so-called *Landfront*, headed by the

⁷ J.J. Klok and W.W. Mijnhardt, *1800: blueprints for a national community* (Assen 2004).

⁸ The most important contributions to mention in this field are: J.C. Boogman, 'Achtergronden, tendenties en tradities van het buitenlands van Nederland (eind zestiende eeuw-1940)', in: N.C.F. van Sas (ed.), *De kracht van Nederland. Internationale positie en buitenlands beleid* (Haarlem 1991), 16-35; M.A.M. Franken, 'The General Tendencies and Structural Aspects of the Foreign Policy and Diplomacy of the Dutch Republic in the Latter Half of the 17th Century', in: *Acta Historiae Neerlandica* (Leiden 1968), vol. 3, 1-42.

⁹ J.C. Boogman, 'Die holländische Tradition in der niederländischen Geschichte', in: *Westfälische Forschungen: Mitteilungen des Provinzialinstituts für westfälische Landes- und Volkskunde* (1962), vol. 15, 96-105.

¹⁰ Boogman, 'Achtergronden', 18-22.

Stadtholderly house of Orange, which mostly got its support from the land-locked Provinces of the Republic. The Stadtholders were traditionally inclined to take a more pro-active stance in international politics, focussing on continental affairs due to their territorial possessions outside of the borders of the Republic, whereas Holland preferred to concentrate solely on maritime issues. The Stadtholders even propagated territorial expansion through conquest. In this respect they closely resembled most of the more hereditary rulers in Europe at the time.

After the War of the Spanish Succession and the beginning of the Second Stadtholderless Era in 1702, the Republic entered a phase in which the Continental tradition gave way to the Maritime tradition and its policies of neutrality and abstention as propagated by the merchant-regents of Holland. However, a new contradiction surfaced within this strand of foreign politics, mostly focussed on the barrier of fortresses in the Southern Netherlands the Republic had been guaranteed after the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) in order to defend its borders against possible French aggression. This barrier had never been designed to stop a French army altogether but was supposed to be strong enough to halt a potential French advance for at least one or two military seasons, in which time the Dutch could get their forces ready for combat. Aalbers, one of the students of Boogman, noted two different strands of foreign policy emerging within the Maritime tradition during this period. On the one hand, there were the politicians that continued to propagate the Politics of Abstinence, (*Onthoudingspolitiek*), meaning the country had to uphold neutrality and abstain from forming alliances, with the exception of the one with Great Britain, with whom, as a fellow trading nation, its interests supposedly aligned. These politicians regarded the barrier in the South as being too far away and taking up too many forces that could be better used for the defence of the Republic's actual border fortifications. They thus favoured a policy of contraction with regard to the barrier in the Austrian Netherlands. On the other hand there were those who wanted to propagate the so-called Politics of Surety, (*Zekerheidspolitiek*). They were absolutely no adherents of territorial expansion or active involvement in European politics, but did want to keep hold of the barrier as a way to keep the actual territory of the country secured against foreign invasion. They also saw defensive alliances purely as a way to secure the peace, regarding an unarmed peace as a risk in an international environment that was ruled by the irrational urges of hereditary monarchs.¹¹ The dominance of the Maritime tradition in the decades after 1713 also seems justified when looking at the conflicts fought during this period. For instance, the Dutch Republic stayed neutral during the War of the Polish Succession (1733 – 1738) and only reluctantly entered the War of the Austrian Succession (1740 – 1748) on the side of Austria and Great Britain, with the result that the Republic

¹¹ J. Aalbers, *De Republiek en de vrede van Europa. Deel I. Achtergronden en algemene aspecten* (Groningen 1980), 26-60.

ended up losing the fortresses of the barrier in the Southern Netherlands. Afterwards the Republic continued to practice neutrality, for instance during the Seven Years War (1756 – 1763). Thus neutrality was to become the dominant tradition in Dutch foreign policy in the decades to come.

Building on the theory set out above, Voorhoeve, another of the students of Boogman, formulated four long-term tendencies in Dutch foreign policy that encompassed the entire period from the founding of the country until the twentieth century; a maritime-commercial tradition, a second tradition based on neutrality, a third international-idealistic tradition and finally the continental tradition.¹² It is this interpretation of Dutch foreign policy that has most certainly been the dominant interpretation since Boogman formulated his theory in the 1960s, finding its way into most of the commonly used reference books on Dutch history - both in the Netherlands and abroad – and in textbooks used in Dutch history education on primary and secondary level.¹³ Yet not all historians endorse this explanation of the Republic's foreign policy. One of the most shared critiques on this interpretation in Dutch academia has focussed on Boogman and his students too hastily assuming there are long-lasting traditions of neutrality and free trade that have been influencing foreign policy since the emergence of the Dutch Republic. For instance Hellema considers traditions as long-term influences on foreign policy as to imply a certain intellectual or politico-cultural continuity on foreign policy.¹⁴ It is very hard to demonstrate this continuity lasting for over hundreds of years, since there are also meaningful disruptions in this traditional stability. In the opinion of Kossmann, there is certainly continuity, but there are also moments in Dutch history when foreign policy takes a sharp turn from the traditions of neutrality and commercialism, for instance during the reign of William III and his continental politics. Kossmann therefore does not see evidence of a continual intellectual tradition.¹⁵ Furthering this interpretation, both Hellema and Kossmann instead propose to search for other factors that have influenced Dutch foreign policy, instead of traditions. We can, for instance, with more certainty say that specific material circumstances in the Dutch Republic have stayed the same since the seventeenth century, like the small size of the country, its geographical location and, perhaps most importantly, its prime position among the most important countries in the world economy. Of course there were also internal circumstances that have

¹² Voorhoeve, *Peace, profits and principles*, 42-54.

¹³ For examples in both Dutch and English consult: A.J. Veenendaal, 'Het politieke leven in de 18^e eeuw', in: D.P. Blok et al. (eds.), *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden Deel 9. Nieuwe tijd* (Haarlem 1979), 15-30; F. Wielenga, *Geschiedenis van Nederland. Van de Opstand tot heden* (Amsterdam 2012), 161-167; P. Arblaster, *A History of the Low Countries* (New York 2006); J.C.H. Blom and E. Lamberts (eds.), *History of the Low Countries* (New York 1999), 201-203. For examples on history books used in primary and secondary education: A. Wilschut, *De tijd van pruiken en revoluties (1700-1800)*, (Zwolle 2008), 77-79.

¹⁴ D. Hellema, *Neutraliteit en vrijhandel. De geschiedenis van de Nederlandse buitenlandse betrekkingen* (Utrecht 2001), 9-11.

¹⁵ E.H. Kossmann, 'De deugden van een kleine staat', in: E.H. Kossmann, *Politieke theorie en geschiedenis. Verspreide opstellen en voordrachten* (Amsterdam 1987), 388-394, 393.

remained stable, like the dominant position of the merchant-class. Hellema formulated several different factors, both external and internal, that influenced foreign policy in the past; for instance a country's position in the world economy, its geographical location, party-politics and individual statesmen. All these factors might have contributed to the fact that neutrality and free trade were important to Dutch statesmen throughout the centuries. However, there were too many disruptions of these neutral and commercially minded politics to speak of a single dominant tradition. Consequently both Hellema and Kossmann agree that the preservation of the status-quo was a much more viable constant factor in Dutch foreign policy. When and where possible or profitable, the Republic's statesmen thus moved away from the 'traditional' lines of abstention and neutrality.¹⁶ Because of these different positions on the existence and possible influence of traditional tendencies in Dutch foreign policy, this thesis aims to reconsider the validity of these outlined traditions during the War of the Spanish Succession, the War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War by evaluating them in the context of new archival material.

Sources.

As already mentioned, the sources that are to be considered the most important new material studied in this thesis are the General Petitions. These sources have hitherto scarcely been systematically studied, let alone in light of early modern foreign policy, even though, according to one of the few of historians that has worked with the sources, they contain 'important statements on the political ideas that were circulating in the Republic'.¹⁷ General Petitions were issued annually by the Council of State as a written elucidation of the State of War, which, for the lack of a better term, can best be viewed as the war-budget of the Republic for the coming year.¹⁸ On behalf of the States General, the Council of State was responsible for all military affairs of the Dutch Republic. The council was made up of twelve representatives from the seven Provinces constituting the Republic, headed by the Paymaster General, who was also responsible for writing the General Petitions. In the eighteenth century the Provinces Utrecht, Gelderland and Overijssel each had one representative in the Council of State; Zeeland, Friesland and Stad en Lande (Groningen) had two, while Holland, by far

¹⁶ Hellema, *Neutraliteit en vrijhandel*, 46-51.

¹⁷ H.L. Zwitser, 'Het quotenstelsel onder de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden alsmede enkele beschouwingen over de generale petitie, de staat van oorlog en de repartitie', in: *Mededelingen van de Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis, Landmachtstaf* (The Hague 1982), vol. 5, 5-57, 24.

¹⁸ Opinions vary on whether or not it is anachronistic to call the States of War a war-budget, *begroting* in Dutch: W.A. van Rappard, 'Welke generale petitiën schreef Simon van Slingelandt?', in: *Nederlandsch archievenblad* (1969), vol. 73, 30-40, 30; P.W. van Wissing, 'De staten van oorlog te lande en de generale petitie 1576-1795', in: H.W. Lintsen (ed.), *Broncommentaren X-XII* (The Hague 1990), 45-62, 54; Zwitser, 'Het quotenstelsel', 36-37.

the most powerful of the seven Provinces, had three representatives.¹⁹ Since the Republic was established by these seven independent states, each of them had to consent to paying their provincial share of the costs that the Council of State deemed necessary for the military affairs for the coming year.²⁰ The petitions dealt subsequently with the militia, naval affairs, frontier fortifications, artillery and ammunitions depots and the general war finances, the last constituting mostly the debts inflicted by past war expenses. All these matters followed on a general introduction in which most of the times the current state of political affairs in Europe was discussed.²¹ The petitions thus functioned as a way for the Council of State to convey their motivations and considerations on military spending and foreign policy to the different provincial estates.²² Subsequently, these motivations can be used as indications of either a Maritime or a Continental tendency in the conduct of the Council of State, and the foreign policy of the Dutch Republic as a whole.

The outcome of the analysis of the General Petitions will, where possible, be compared to other sources that conveyed to an even wider audience in the Republic opinions, motivations and argumentations of the States General. The archives of the Royal Library in The Hague contain a treasure trove of documents, among which can be found declarations of war, manifesto's, edicts and proclamations, all containing information on the reasons for the Dutch Republic to go to war, or to remain neutral. However, the nature of the sources with which the General Petitions will be compared will be slightly different in each chapter. For instance, a declaration of war or a peace treaty is not available for each case study. In the case of the Seven Years' War this is obvious since the Republic remained neutral, but even during the War of the Austrian Succession war on France was never officially declared. While the sources collected in the so-called Knuttel collection have already been extensively analysed and are underlying to current historiography, new evidence obtained from the General Petitions will put these sources in a new perspective.

Structure.

This thesis consists of four chapters, of which three have a fairly similar structure. The first chapter will deal with constructing the methodological framework that will be used in the three different case studies. Each subsequent chapter will cover the span of one of the three wars that is covered by

¹⁹ A. Th. van Deursen, 'De Raad van State onder de Republiek van 1588-1795' in: *Raad van State 450 jaar* (The Hague 1981), 47-91, 49.

²⁰ Van Wissing, 'De staten van oorlog', 47-48.

²¹ Van Rappard, 'Welke generale petitiën', 30-31.

²² A. Th. van Deursen, 'Staat van oorlog en generale petitie in de jonge Republiek', in: *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* (1976), vol. 91, 44-55.

this thesis; the War of the Spanish Succession, the War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War. Each chapter will start with a brief historiographical summary of the events leading up to the conflict, after which a more or less chronological analysis of the developments of Dutch foreign policy during the wars will be outlined on the basis of the researched sources. Due to the fact that the sources do not contain equal amounts of information on foreign policy during each conflict and the conflicts themselves are not equally long, the length of each of the chapters differs. For instance the chapter on the War of the Spanish Succession will be substantially longer than the chapter on the Seven Years' War, since the first conflict lasted four years longer and the General Petitions during that period contained relatively more information relevant to this thesis. The chapters will be subdivided by significant turning points concerning foreign policy that can be discerned from the General Petitions.

The first chapter has thus a more theoretical orientation and will evaluate previous research that has been done on early modern war legitimisations. This paper proposes the construction of a new methodological framework for analysing the war legitimisations found in the General Petitions that will be used throughout this research. This methodological framework consists of a set of characteristics of both the Maritime and the Continental traditions in order to better frame the argumentations used in the primary sources. Due to the fact that there is hardly any historiographical research to take into consideration, the historiographical context, as sketched earlier in the introduction, will subsequently immediately permeate into the primary source material.

The second chapter is concerned with the, supposedly fought in the Continental tradition, War of the Spanish Succession. The chapter will open by providing more context on the Partition Treaties for the Spanish inheritance, signed between England, France and the Dutch Republic, leading up to the eventual death of Spanish king Charles II in 1700 and the outbreak of the war in 1702. As from 1700, the first chronological section will deal with the state of Dutch foreign policy regarding the Spanish successional crisis before the conflict, the initial response to the death of Charles II and the stance of the Council of State at the outbreak of the war. The second section will include the period from 1703 till 1706, the first years of actual warfare, in which the Republic became increasingly confident in its own capabilities to counter France and Spain. The final section describes the period from 1707 till the end of the war with the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713.

The third chapter, discussing the War of the Austrian Succession, will again starting out with providing some context on the conflict. In this case the context will focus on the successional crisis looming for the Austrian Habsburgs in the first half of the eighteenth century and the Pragmatic Sanction, the solution proposed to this problem by Emperor Charles VI. The second section of the

chapter will incorporate the period from 1740 till 1743, during which the Republic refrained from entering the conflict and sought to remain neutral. This changed in the period from 1744 till 1747, the third section of the chapter, in which the Republic started to openly support Maria Theresa in her struggle to defend the Southern Netherlands against a French invasion. The final section will deal with the disaster that befell the Republic in 1748, when the French army, causing widespread unrest, invaded the country.

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis will address the Seven Years' War, the first major European conflict of the eighteenth century in which the Dutch Republic succeeded in maintaining total neutrality. As in the previous two chapters some background information will be provided, this time on the Diplomatic Revolution of 1756 that turned the age-old system of alliances in Europe upside-down. Subsequently, the remainder of the chapter will cover the argumentations on foreign policy found in the General Petitions in this period. However, due to the fact that the Republic stayed neutral in the conflict there is less information to be found in the petitions. Therefore the chapter is not subdivided into different chronological time-periods.

Chapter 1. A new methodology

The General Petitions offer valuable information on the legitimisations for the Dutch Republic to declare war on the French and Spanish crowns in 1702, and subsequently the reasons for continuation of the War of the Spanish Succession. Later on in the century they contain similar information on the reasons why the Council of State initially refrained from entering the War of the Austrian Succession, why the Republic eventually did enter the conflict, and the reasons the Council had for choosing to remain neutral altogether during the Seven Years' War. By analysing the argumentations used in these sources and trying to place them in the context of the existing narrative of both the Maritime and Continental traditions in early modern Dutch foreign policy, this thesis contributes to an evaluation of the narrative and representation of these tendencies in Dutch foreign policy in this period. In order to better structure the framing of the different legitimizing arguments that can be found in the General Petitions, this first chapter will deal with constructing a typology of war legitimization that is specifically applicable to these case-studies and may be beneficial for further research on Dutch foreign policy in the early modern period.

Legitimizing war in the early modern period.

In the analysis of nearly every conflict, the reasons and motivations of each belligerent can be considered among the most important aspects of investigation. However, systematic analysis of war legitimisations is still uncommon, especially for the early modern period, since information into the reasons and motivations for going to war during this period is a lot scarcer than when dealing with conflicts in the modern era. However, there have been a number of historians working on systematically analysing war legitimisations in early modern Europe. Their work will serve as a framework and guideline when constructing the typology for this thesis that is applicable to the specific period in Dutch historiography under scrutiny.

One of the most important examples of systematic analysis of war legitimisations in early modern Europe is Konrad Repgen's *'Kriegslegitimationen in Alteuropa. Entwurf einer historischen Typologie'*, published in 1985.²³ After studying a great number of declarations of war issued before 1800, Repgen framed a dozen of key concepts that were considered legitimate reasons for one

²³ K. Repgen, *Kriegslegitimationen in Alteuropa, Entwurf einer historischen Typologie* (München 1985).

country to wage war on the other in the early modern period. Disregarding the number of times they were mentioned, when and by whom, these legitimisations are the following:²⁴

- Defending against a potential Universal Monarchy.
- Putting down rebellion.
- Hereditary rights.
- The Balance of Power.
- Trade interests.
- A crusade (in this period understood as a war against the Ottoman Empire).
- Preventive measures against an external threat.
- Religious rights.
- Defending subjects against warlike dangers.
- Defending corporate liberties.
- Treaty obligations.
- Amending suffered injustices.

More recently similar conceptual categories were formulated by Anuschka Tischer in her book *'Offizielle Kriegsbegründungen in der Frühen Neuzeit. Herrscherkommunikation in Europa zwischen Souveränität und korporativem Selbstverständnis'* published in 2012.²⁵ After analysing different forms of early modern war legitimisations she formulated a number of overarching categories in which to subdivide different argumentations:²⁶

- Defending subjects against danger.
- Honour, reputation and prestige.
- (Un)gratefulness.
- Ambition.
- Religion and confession.
- Humanitarianism.
- Friendship or common ground.

The question may arise; why not simply make use one of the typologies constructed by Repgen or Tischer, instead of constructing a new one specifically applicable to the Dutch Republic in the first half of the eighteenth century? However, there are a number of instances where these existing typologies fall short in describing the specifics of the legitimisations in the General Petitions. First of

²⁴ Repgen, *Kriegslegitimationen*, 21.

²⁵ A. Tischer, *Offizielle Kriegsbegründungen in der Frühen Neuzeit. Herrscherkommunikation in Europa zwischen Souveränität und korporativem Selbstverständnis* (Berlin 2012).

²⁶ Tischer, *Offizielle Kriegsbegründungen*, 147-178.

all, both typologies cover a much broader time-period than just the first half of the eighteenth century. Whereas Tischer only considers the early modern period, Repgen analysed declarations of war in the entire period from 1200 till 1800. This is problematic because some of his categories, most obviously the crusading legitimization, seem to be irrelevant when analysing Dutch war legitimizations in the eighteenth century. Secondly, since Repgen overviews such a broad time period this means that there is less attention for specific legitimisations that were highly relevant in the early eighteenth century, but did not feature as extensively during the rest of the period. Therefore, these legitimisations did subsequently not make the cut as one of the twelve key concepts.

Moreover, the typology of Repgen makes use of declarations of war as primary source material, sources that - in his own words - 'contain nothing but theatrical thunder and shadow-boxing'.²⁷ It becomes clear when comparing both Repgen's and Tischer's categories that the latter uses some legitimisations, like ambition, that are a lot less noble than the ones signified by Repgen. This can be attributed, according to Repgen, to the fact that declarations of war also had a very important propagandistic value. On the contrary, General Petitions were only meant to be read by members of the Council of State, the States General and the provincial estates and lacked a lot of the propagandistic value of the declarations of war. This means using the exact same categories to analyse both would provide us with a rather asymmetrical comparison. Declarations of war were, especially in the early modern period, often published in a number of languages, not simply only in the two languages of the respective feuding states. In this way declarations of war became sources accessible to a large European-wide audience, and the prime means of gathering public support for one or the other belligerent at other European courts.²⁸ Governments also widely circulated the documents among their own population. This argument is reinforced by another characteristic noted by Repgen, namely the black and white contents of declarations of war.²⁹ These documents left no room for nuancing, or politically inconvenient argumentations. Declarations had to convey the complete validity of the issuing party's reasons for declaring war on another state. Mere ambition, signified as an important category by Tischer, is subsequently lacking from Repgen's categories since it could hardly be considered a noble cause for one country to declare war on its neighbour. This distinction between the two types of sources makes using the same typology irrelevant.

²⁷ Repgen, *Kriegslegitimationen*, 25.

²⁸ Ibid., 22.

²⁹ Ibid., 23.

A new typology: Continental vs. Maritime.

When formulating a typology that is specifically applicable to foreign policy in the Dutch Republic in the first half of the eighteenth century, the traditions as formulated by Boogman, Aalbers and Voorhoeve, which have already been discussed in the introduction of this thesis, form an excellent basis to construct new conceptual categories with which to approach the General Petitions. This study applies these categories to analyse the framework of both the Continental and the Maritime traditions in Dutch foreign policy to answer the question whether the theories about these long-term traditions hold ground when compared with the argumentations used in the General Petitions.

Starting with the Continental tradition, as propagated by the Stadtholderly family of Orange and the landlocked Provinces of the Republic and focussing on active Dutch involvement in the affairs of Europe, we can identify the following six categories of legitimate reasons for the Dutch Republic to go to war:

Fighting Universal Monarchy

Already featuring among the categories formulated by Repgen, protecting Europe against the dangers of one of its states establishing a Universal Monarchy can be considered one of the key characteristics of a Continental foreign policy, since it requires pro-active involvement in the affairs of Europe, and seeing the Dutch Republic as a state with the responsibility to act according to the best interests of Europe, even if the Republic was not directly challenged. If one country in a Balance of Power system was becoming so powerful that no coalition of lesser powers could bring the disrupting state to heel, the threat of a Universal Monarchy loomed. The Roman Empire and the Empire of Charles V were considered historical examples of this phenomenon.³⁰ Striving for 'Universal' or 'General' Monarchy is a concept that in this period was mainly used to describe the policy of France and Louis XIV, who, according to contemporaries, seemed keen to subject the entire continent to his will.³¹

Upholding the Balance of Power

The establishment of a Universal Monarchy was not the only way in which the Balance of Power in early modern Europe could be disturbed. If one of the players in Europe suffered a serious blow by one of his enemies, or if one coalition of states would overthrow its enemies and force upon them an unjust peace, this could lead to the permanent disruption of the Balance of Power on the continent.

³⁰ M. Sheehan, *Balance of Power. History and theory* (London 1996), 195.

³¹ D. Defoe, 'A Review of the State of the English Nation, 1 June, 1706 (extract)' in: M. Wright (ed.), *Theory and Practice of the Balance of Power 1486-1914* (London 1975), 45-49.

Most notably the Maritime powers, Great Britain and the Dutch Republic, envisioned for themselves a role of Balancer State, characterised by the fact that they strove to uphold the balance and envisioned themselves to be above the quarrelling parties. In order to become a Balancer State and successfully uphold the Balance of Power, a state had to be strong enough to tilt every potential alliance of states against any threat, yet not so strong it could pose a threat to the Balance of Power on its own. By upholding diplomatic flexibility and thus not fully committing to either side in a conflict but purely striving to restore the balance, a Balancer State could successfully protect the equilibrium.³² In this way, acting in the best interest of the Balance of Power in Europe, active involvement in the affairs of the continent, and thus a Continental policy, became necessary.

Protecting the Liberty of Europe

Another argument that features extensively in the General Petitions and is closely related to the previous two legitimizations of fighting a Universal Monarchy and upholding the Balance of Power is the idea of protecting the liberty and freedom of not just the Dutch Republic but the entirety of threatened Europe. In these specific cases it was not the threat to the Balance of Power on the continent that was at stake but the obligation of protecting for instance the innocent inhabitants of smaller or weaker countries that were defenceless in the face of an aggressive, more powerful foe or coalition of enemies. In this way, protecting, or in the words of eighteenth-century statesmen 'maintaining' the freedom on the continent also became a characteristic of a more pro-active foreign policy as propagated by the Continental tradition.

Protecting the Protestant Religion in Europe

Distress of a pursuit towards Universal Monarchy was in the early modern period often coupled with a fear for an attack on the Protestant religion, since it were especially the devout Roman Catholic countries like France, Spain and the Austrian Habsburgs that had the potential to grow into a Universal Monarchy. Protecting the Protestant religion and, in particular the smaller Protestant states in the German Empire could thus become an important potential argument for involvement in a European war. If not for the aid of the larger Protestant countries like England, Prussia or the Dutch Republic, these smaller Protestant states would be defenceless when facing Catholic behemoths like France, which were considered ready to destroy what they considered the Protestant heresy, bringing the inhabitants of these Protestant lands back to Catholicism. Subsequently, protecting the Balance of Power became part of the struggle between Northern European Protestantism and Southern European Catholicism that had dominated the continent for the greater part of the early

³² Sheehan, *Balance of Power*, 65-71.

modern period.³³ Most of the time it was not so much the explicit threat of Catholicism that was mentioned, but the danger that Protestant, or 'true', religion found itself in.

Preventive action against an external threat

A pro-active stance in European affairs, and thus practicing Continental foreign policy, did not only mean standing up for the interests of other European states. Protecting the wellbeing of the inhabitants of the Dutch Republic could also be interpreted in line with the Continental tradition, provided that it happened as preventive action against a potential external threat to the country. In this way protecting the country's interests became more than merely a defensive matter, which is of course more in line with the Maritime tradition. It is for instance in the case of the declaration of war issued in 1702, that the Dutch Republic declared war on France for feeling threatened by their military movements in the Southern Netherlands and closer to the Dutch borders, even though actual hostilities against the country had not yet occurred. A pro-active response to threats of this kind is a clear example of a more Continental policy since in the Maritime case abstention from military action would have to be pursued as long as possible.

Territorial Expansion

One of the most distinctive and yet controversial features of a Continental foreign policy was the prevalent territorially expansive element. In order to mirror themselves to the more absolute hereditary rulers of Europe, it were especially the members of the Stadtholderly house of Orange that propagated territorial expansion as a way to enhance the prestige of the Dutch Republic.³⁴ Even though there is little mention of outright territorial expansion in the first half of the eighteenth century, this conception is still at odds with the Maritime notion of territorial contraction, which the Holland merchants at times favoured if it would benefit the commercial interests of the Republic.³⁵

As can be distilled from the six categories elaborated above, Continentally-minded argumentations were mainly characterised by the explicit and active involvement in the politics of Europe, be it for the benefit of the country, as in the case of territorial expansion and preventive action against an external threat, or for the putative benefit for the entirety of Europe, as is the case with fighting to protect the continent against a Universal Monarchy or to uphold the Balance of Power. In this respect that Continental categories consequently differ the most from Maritime motivations. The Maritime tradition, mainly focussing on abstention from involvement in European politics and a focus

³³ Sheehan, *Balance of Power*, 34.

³⁴ Voorhoeve, *Peace, profits and principles*, 53-54.

³⁵ Boogman, 'Achtergronden', 21.

on commercial activities, as formulated by specifically Boogman and Aalbers, can be summarized in the following five categories:

Protecting the Republic's Trade

The founding principle of the Maritime tradition was naturally the preservation and aggrandizement of Dutch trade and shipping. The merchant classes of the Provinces of Holland and Zeeland, the two most wealthy Dutch Provinces and main adherents of the Maritime tradition, saw commercial activity as the only way for the Republic to further enhance its prestige and standing in the world. They subsequently did not favour territorial expansion within Europe but commercial expansion through the establishment of colonies and trading missions in the rest of the world. When a foreign power threatened the commercial interests of the state, a conflict that was fought primarily in order to safeguard these interests of the Republic can thus be considered a clear example of the Maritime tradition in foreign policy.³⁶ The terminology used to express this danger was usually very elaborate and dramatic, using terms like manufactures, commerce, navigation and trade, the lifelines of the Republic, being at stake.

Protecting the Republic's Liberty

However, it was not only the commercial interests of the Republic that could be at stake in a European conflict. The principle of protecting the country could also be applied to the protection of the liberty of the citizens of the Republic. The main difference with fighting a war for the preservation of liberty and freedom in either the Maritime or the Continental tradition is the fact that the argument in the first case was national, and in the latter case international in origin. Fighting a war to protect the freedom of the Dutch Republic in the Maritime tradition thus gained a remarkably more defensive character. The interests of populations other than the Republic's own inhabitants were not taken into account. In the Maritime tradition the Republic would not get involved in a European conflict over the beleaguered freedom of other countries.

Protecting the Republic's Religion

The same principle of the Maritime tradition can be applied to the protection of the Protestant religion. In the face of danger from loyal Roman Catholic France or Spain it was widely felt that the freedom of the Protestant religion was at stake. In these instances, protecting religious freedom became an acceptable argument for waging or continuing a war, but, as with protecting general liberty and freedom in the previous category, in the Maritime tradition this was done exclusively with

³⁶ Boogman, 'Achtergronden', 17.

concern to the religious freedom of the inhabitants of the Dutch Republic, and not for smaller Protestant states in Germany or Protestant minorities. The terminology used in this respect closely resembled the ones when the Protestant religion in Europe was concerned.

(Defensive) treaty obligations

As stated in the introduction, according to Aalbers, signing defensive alliances was one of the main features of the Politics of Surety that emerged after the War of the Spanish Succession as a separate branch of the Maritime tradition, together with the Politics of Abstention.³⁷ Defensive alliances were considered to be an effective means to guarantee the peace in Europe and maintain Dutch neutrality, but this also meant that if a defensive ally came under attack the Republic was obligated to come to its aid, albeit reluctantly. In this way the Republic would involve itself into European affairs, but would blame this on the signed treaties since it would not consider the Republic to have any direct stakes in the conflict. It is exactly this grudgingly entering into a conflict, almost as being forced against its will, which makes the defensive treaty obligations argument part of the Maritime tradition.

Threat to the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands

By far the most controversial category of the Maritime tradition is the position of the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands in Dutch foreign policy in the first half of the eighteenth century. At first glance, this ring of fortresses occupied by the Republic's forces but paid for by - and in name still in the possession of the actual owners of the Southern Netherlands - first the Spanish, later on the Austrians, seems adamantly Continental in character, mainly as a form of semi-territorial expansion. However, the way in which the Barrier was figured in the General Petitions was evidently Maritime in character. The petitions did not mention the Barrier as a way to exert control over the Southern Netherlands, or even as a way to hold leverage over the other European powers, as has been stated by various Dutch historians, who consider the Barrier, due to its favourable location in one of the most heavily contested regions in early modern Europe as a way for the Republic to enforce its status as a great power.³⁸ On the contrary, the only way the Barrier was mentioned in the General Petitions was as a sort of outer wall of which the main function was to protect the actual borders of the Dutch Republic. A threat to the security or actual loss of the Barrier, was thus purely conveyed as a danger to the protection of the Republic's borders and not as a loss of influence within Europe, which makes

³⁷ Aalbers, *De Republiek en de vrede van Europa*, 36-60.

³⁸ For more on the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands as a guarantee for the Republic's status as great power in the first half of the eighteenth century: O. van Nimwegen, *De Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden als grote mogendheid: buitenlandse politiek en oorlogvoering in de eerste helft van de achttiende eeuw en in het bijzonder tijdens de Oostenrijkse Successieoorlog (1740-1748)* (Amsterdam 2002).

any argument concerning the Barrier fall in line with the Maritime tradition of refraining from European affairs instead of the Continental one of active involvement.

These five categories applicable to the Maritime tradition differ with the Continental tradition because of their concern with the protection of the Republic itself, whether in matters of freedom, religion or, most important, trade. With the exception of honouring defensive alliances, the interests of other European states are hardly taken into consideration. Although only with great reluctance as the case-study concerning the War of the Austrian Succession will show in chapter three. Apart from that, champions of the Maritime tradition had the intention to abstain from involvement in any European conflict as much as possible and were only willing to wage war if the direct existence of the country or the wellbeing of the Republic's trade or religion depended on it.

Operationalisation of the categories.

While both the Continental and Maritime categories contain typologies that have also been outlined by Repgen, like fighting Universal Monarchy in the case of the Continental tradition, and protecting trade interests in the Maritime Tradition, both categories also contain typologies that are very specific to the Dutch Republic in the first half of the eighteenth century. The most obvious example of this is of course the category dealing with the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands. Due to its specific use in the case of the Dutch Republic in the first half of the eighteenth century, a category like this would have never made it into the more general European-wide methodology of Repgen, and thus validates the development of categories specifically applicable to the case-studies under analysis in this thesis. Furthermore, that there exist substantial differences between the two categories become even clearer when putting both next to each other:

Continental Tradition	Maritime Tradition
Fighting Universal Monarchy	Protecting the Republic's Trade
Upholding the Balance of Power	Protecting the Republic's Liberty
Protecting the Liberty of Europe	Protecting the Republic's Religion
Protecting the Protestant Religion in Europe	(Defensive)treaty obligations
Preventive action against an external threat	Threat to the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands
Territorial Expansion	

As can be seen, most of the categories fall specifically in either the Continental or the Maritime tradition. It is only in the two cases where freedom and religion are concerned that more attention needs to be paid to the question whose freedom or religion is being mentioned. In the following

three chapters, these categories will be the explanatory framework to gain a better understanding of the argumentations used in the General Petitions. As mentioned before, the General Petitions contain all sort of information about the reasons and motivations for joining or continuing a war, since the Council of State depended on the provincial estates to pay their share of the costs of war. Especially the introductions of the General Petitions elaborated on the current state of affairs, both for the entirety of Europe and the implications these events had on the Republic. Using the categories developed in this chapter will facilitate the interpretation of certain arguments in these introductions of the General Petitions by analysing the words or phrases formulated by the Council of State. After these argumentations are categorised, it subsequently becomes easier to see whether or not the General Petitions fall in either the Continental or Maritime tradition, so it becomes possible to see whether or not there are long-term traditions at play in Dutch foreign policy in the first half of the eighteenth century, and how these traditions were developing throughout the period.

Chapter II. The War of the Spanish Succession.

A final struggle against Louis XIV.

The War of the Spanish Succession is generally viewed as the final conflict in the forty years' war between the Dutch Republic and France, more personally between King-Stadtholder William III and King Louis XIV.³⁹ Between 1672 and 1713 three major European wars were to be fought, starting with the Dutch War, lasting from 1672 till 1678, the Nine Years' War, from 1688 till 1697 and finally the War of the Spanish Succession from 1702 till 1713. These wars can to a large extent be attributed to the expansionist politics of Louis XIV of France, who initiated the first two confrontations in which the Dutch Republic would be his main adversary.⁴⁰ According to biographer Wout Troost, William III's sole mission in life was the containment of Louis XIV.⁴¹ William became Stadtholder during the 'year of disaster' 1672. The Dutch Republic was under attack both by France, England and the German bishoprics of Münster and Cologne, but William successfully defeated the forces besieging the Dutch Republic and became the bulwark of the Protestant resistance against the Catholic Louis XIV's aspirations to French Universal Monarchy.⁴² This image would only be enhanced after William was offered the English throne during the Glorious Revolution in 1688, when it was feared that James II would restore Catholicism on the British Isles. Since he had married the daughter of James II, Mary Stuart, in 1677, the English parliament saw William as the most suitable candidate to remove James II and rule in his place, albeit with increased power in the hands of parliament. As ruler of both England and the Dutch Republic, the most powerful Protestant states in Europe at the time, it was obvious that William would become the figurehead of resistance against Louis XIV and France.⁴³

³⁹ Even though William III died shortly before the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession, this war is still generally considered as being fought in his legacy.

⁴⁰ J.A. Lynn, *The wars of Louis XIV, 1667-1714* (London 1999).

⁴¹ W. Troost, "To restore and preserve the liberty of Europe': William III's ideas on foreign policy' in: D. Onnekink and G. Rommelse, *Ideology and Foreign Policy in Early Modern Europe (1650-1750)* (Farnham 2011), 283-303, 302.

⁴² A. Thompson, *Britain, Hanover and the Protestant Interest, 1688-1756* (Woodbridge 2006), 36-41.

⁴³ For one of the most complete surveys on the life and politics of William III consult: W. Troost, *Stadhouder-koning Willem III. Een politieke biografie* (Hilversum 2001).

Context: The end of the Spanish Habsburgs and the Partition Treaties.

The War of the Spanish Succession was caused by the death of King Charles II of Spain. In the words of Clark: 'on no other occasion in the history of modern Europe have so many questions of vital concern to its peoples depended on the death or survival of one man'.⁴⁴ Charles was the last male in the line of the Spanish Habsburgs, and was, due to his frail health and sickly condition, from the beginning of his reign in 1660, not expected to have a male successor. This meant that in the event of his death the entire Spanish monarchy was in need of a new ruler. This monarchy, even though it had been in decline since the sixteenth century, was still one of the most wealthy and definitely the largest power in the world, made up of the Iberian kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, extensive territories on the Italian peninsula including Milan, Naples, Sicily and Sardinia, the Southern Netherlands and the extensive Spanish colonial possessions in Latin America and the Philippines. Without a direct heir, both the rulers of France and the Austrian Habsburgs claimed the exclusive right of inheritance through their marriages with a member of the Spanish royal family. Louis XIV had married Maria Theresa, half-sister of Charles II, who gave birth to the first son of this marriage, the Dauphin. He was a suitable candidate, were it not that he was also first in line to inherit the French throne upon the death of his father. On the other side was Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I, the son of the aunt of Charles II, Maria Anna of Spain. This made the Austrian Habsburg line also a very rightful claimant in the case of the Spanish inheritance.⁴⁵

While both powers had equally strong claims on the Spanish throne, in both cases the union of the entire Spanish monarchy to either France or Austria was questionable. A union with the Austrian branch of the Habsburg family would practically reinstate the colossal empire of Emperor Charles V, while a potential union with France, would mean the creation of an immensely powerful state spanning from the Iberian Peninsula to the borders of the Dutch Republic. This was the reason that Maria Theresa, on marrying Louis XIV, had been forced to renounce all claims of her and her offspring to the Spanish throne. However, since he claimed no dowry had ever been paid by the Spanish court, Louis XIV considered this renunciation void. With the health of Charles II deteriorating, the other European powers decided that if they wanted to prevent a war, they had to take precautions and signed a treaty of partition in 1698. By far the largest part of the inheritance was bequeathed to a third potential claimant, the Bavarian prince Joseph Ferdinand, great-grandson of the Spanish king Philip IV. Both of the other claimants would be compensated with territories in Italy. Even Charles II, even though he had been left out of the deliberations of the partition scheme, was in

⁴⁴ G. Clark, 'From the Nine Years War to the war of the Spanish Succession' in: J.S. Bromley (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History Volume 6: The Rise of Great Britain and Russia, 1688-1715* (Cambridge 1970), 381-409, 384.

⁴⁵ D. Onnekink and R. de Bruin, *De Vrede van Utrecht (1713)* (Hilversum 2013), 20-21.

favour of appointing the Bavarian claimant, and subsequently changed his will to reflect this wish. Unfortunately Joseph Ferdinand died unexpectedly on 6 February 1699, even before the death of Charles II himself had come to pass.⁴⁶

On the instigation of France and the Maritime Powers England and the Dutch Republic, negotiations were opened once again, but this time there was no suitable third party to bestow the greater part of the Spanish Monarchy. This meant that the signatory powers of the second partition treaty were forced to try and divide the Spanish inheritance equally between the French and Habsburg claimant. Archduke Charles of Austria, son of Emperor Leopold I, was to receive the Spanish Netherlands, mainland Spain and the extensive Spanish colonial empire, while the French Dauphin was to be satisfied with receiving Spain's Italian possessions. For neither of the parties involved, this treaty was very satisfying; the Austrian Habsburgs for instance did not accept it. Least of all it was satisfying for Charles II himself, who had, again, not been invited to join in the deliberations. He would not have his empire divided after his death so he decided to rewrite his will once again.

When Charles eventually died in November 1700 it became clear that he had proclaimed the second son of the French Dauphin, Philip of Anjou, as sole heir to the Spanish throne, upon the exclusive condition that the French and Spanish crowns were never to be united. Charles II's testament placed Louis XIV in a difficult position. Accepting the Spanish inheritance on behalf of his grandson would be risking a war with the Maritime powers and Austria, since then he would break the promises made in the latest partition treaty. However, adhering to the partition treaty, and thus casting aside Charles' dying wish, would also bring war, since Austria had accepted neither the testament nor any of the partition treaties. Avoiding a new conflict seemed inevitable, which made Louis decide to accept the Spanish inheritance for the Duke of Anjou, moving French troops to secure the new possessions of his grandson, hoping he could at least convince the Maritime Powers to prevent a general war.⁴⁷ War between Austria and France broke out almost immediately, after the Emperor sent an army into Italy to claim the city of Milan. It were the actions of Louis XIV that eventually made Britain and the Dutch Republic consider war inevitable. In order to safeguard his grandson's possessions, Louis occupied for instance the Spanish Netherlands, seemingly imposing French rule in the process. When subsequently Spanish harbours were closed to Dutch and British shipping it seemed even more likely that Louis used his grandson to rule indirectly over the Spanish

⁴⁶ J.C. Rule, 'The Partition Treaties, 1698-1700: A European View' in: E. Meijers and D. Onnekink (ed.), *Redefining William III. The Impact of the King-Stadholder in International Context* (Aldershot 2007), 91-105.

⁴⁷ Onnekink and de Bruin, *De Vrede van Utrecht*, 21-26.

monarchy. This ostensible union of the French and Spanish crowns made the maritime powers declare war on 15 May 1702.⁴⁸

1700-1702: General Petitions and a looming war.

With this brief introduction of the events leading up to the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession in mind, it is time to turn to the General Petitions: what information did they contain? The General Petition of 1700 serves as an apt starting point for this investigation. It was published on 20 October 1699, over a year before the actual death of Charles II, whose death brought the successional crisis that would culminate into the War of the Spanish Succession. The fact that no mention was yet made of European unrest or a threat of war, means that this General Petition can serve as an example or blueprint of the issues generally being discussed in these documents.

First and foremost, as on any General Petition, came the matters concerning the militia. Because the Republic was at peace, there were no proposals for change. However, the Provinces did get reprimanded. The Dutch Republic had no state army to which all the Provinces contributed their fair share in wages and maintenance costs. Instead every Province furnished its own regiments of infantry and cavalry, so the military power of the Republic was really just the combination of seven small armies.⁴⁹ This also meant that the Council of State had no direct control over the payment of these forces, and a number of Provinces were accused of paying their assigned regiments too little or too late, which implied that regiments were consisting of fewer troops, and were thus weaker, in reality than they appeared on paper.⁵⁰ The same applied to the second issue on the Petition, the maintenance of fortifications. Because the Republic was at peace, most Provinces neglected to pay for the ammunition warehouses and general maintenance of their frontiers, which were found to be in a considerable state of neglect. The Council warned that if 'the frontiers were not dealt with urgently, it would be too late when potential enemies would be at the gates'.⁵¹ This is one of the few times a potential new conflict was mentioned in the entire document, even though no prospective adversary was named.⁵² The third issue traditionally dealt with in a General Petition concerned the naval affairs of the Republic. Again the Provinces were pressed to contribute more to the

⁴⁸ A.J. Veenendaal, 'The war of the Spanish succession in Europe', in: J.S. Bromley (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History Volume 6: The Rise of Great Britain and Russia, 1688-1715* (Cambridge 1970), 410-455.

⁴⁹ O. van Nimwegen, 'De Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden in oorlog met Frankrijk' in: J.R. Bruijn and C.B. Wells, *Met Man en Macht. De militaire geschiedenis van Nederland 1550-2000* (Amsterdam 2003), 65-104, 66.

⁵⁰ Het Utrechts Archief, Utrecht, (hereafter: NL-HUA), 233, Staten van Utrecht, 1581-1810, inventory number 654-45, General Petition 1700, 1-2.

⁵¹ NL-HUA, 233, 654-45, 1700, 3. 'de Frontieren gestalt warden buyten alle defensie, dat het te laet is om daer voor te sorgen, als de Vyandt voor de Poorten leght'.

⁵² Ibid., 2-3.

maintenance of the fleet, particularly the land-locked Provinces, since it were especially Holland and Zealand that contributed to the navy, even though the costs were supposed to be split equally.⁵³

Having dealt with all the financial matters concerning the coming year, the final point of the Petition was a pressing request for the Provinces to continue to pay their share of interest on the debt inflicted by past wars. It was considered to be in the immediate interest of the Republic and all its inhabitants that the solvency of the state was not put in jeopardy. The petition concluded with the wish that all Provinces gave their consent to the demands in a timely fashion and the hope that no unforeseen circumstances would force the Council to issue 'extraordinary petitions'.⁵⁴

To put it gently, it is striking that no mention whatsoever was made of the turmoil that was brewing within Europe. As mentioned above, the Dutch Republic was an active participant in the two partition schemes, and at the moment this specific petition was drafted the first treaty had already become obsolete due to the untimely death of Prince Joseph Ferdinand. In the second partition treaty, that was signed in March 1700, explicit mention was made of the intention of the three signatory powers France, England and the Dutch Republic, to do their utmost to preserve the peace of Europe. In the worst case scenario, for instance when the emperor would not acquiesce to the treaty's stipulations, they committed themselves to taking military action to uphold the partition scheme.⁵⁵ These obligations and the unstable state of affairs in Europe would appear to be sufficient motivation to coerce the different provincial estates into paying their share of the necessary expenses, yet for some reason the Council of State refrained to even mention it.

After analysing this specific petition, there are a number of things that are more generally applicable to the General Petitions. First of all, their purpose was twofold: 'pressing the Provinces into paying for the military expenses of the following year and, secondly, to clear up any financial issues that remained from the previous year'.⁵⁶ All the petitions were structured to deal consecutively with the military, fortifications, navy and the outstanding war-debt. Whereas it would appear the main concern of the Council of State was the approval of the budget for the coming year, in reality, in most of the Petitions the Council focused primarily on requesting the Provinces, once again, to pay the sums they had already decided upon. Most Provinces chronically paid either too little, too late, or sometimes even not at all. The fact that this was already a grievous problem in

⁵³ NL-HUA, 233, 654-45, 1700, 4-5.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 5-7. 'geen onverhoopte toevallen sullen aenleyding geven tot extraordinaris Petition'.

⁵⁵ Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague, (hereafter: NL-KB), Knuttel Catalogue, Inventory number 14497, Tractaat Tusschen de Alder-Christeljksten Koning, de Koning van Groot-Brittannien, En de Heeren Staten Generaal Der Vereenigde Nederlanden.

⁵⁶ Nationaal Archief, The Hague, (hereafter: NL-NA), 3.01.04.01, Staten van Holland na 1572, 1572-1795, inventory number 5885, General Petition 1701, 1. 'de Bondtgenooten namelijk te brengen tot het dragen der noodige consenten voor het volgende jaer, en te gelijk tot het suyveren der defecten van voorige'.

peacetime would foreshadow that in times of war the financial duress of the Republic would be overwhelming.

The petition formulated for the year 1701 still hardly contained any information on a possible war because the Petition was delivered to the States General on 26 October 1700, even though this was a mere six days before the actual death of the king of Spain. Nevertheless tensions had definitely been rising. According to the Council of State it was without any doubt that, 'with the present uncertain, and confused state of affairs in Europe', no Province can expect the militia to be reduced.⁵⁷ In light of this uncertainty, the Council requested the Provinces to act more harmoniously, and to realise that 'together they form but one body, which cannot be governed by the individual interests and insights of each member, but only by the common interest of all its inhabitants'.⁵⁸ The petition closed with the wish that 'all the fine people of the country would taste the fruit of peace to the fullest, to which both the Council of State and his majesty would like to contribute'.⁵⁹

How completely different the sentiment was in the General Petition for 1702. Even though war on France and Spain was not declared until May of that year, events throughout Europe had given the Council of State much to worry about. Despite the treaty of partition signed two years earlier, Louis XIV had decided to accept the Spanish inheritance for his grandson. For the first time since the peace of Ryswick, signed in 1697, an increase of the armed forces was deemed necessary by the Council of State, since 'the continuation of the general peace, and in particular the one of the state, was very uncertain, mostly due to major equipment for war and the movement of troops in neighbouring countries and even on the borders of the State'.⁶⁰ The biggest threat facing the Republic was the occupation of the Barrier-fortresses in the Southern Netherlands by the French. To safeguard his grandson's new possessions from the Austrian Habsburg claimant, Louis XIV had his army take control of the Southern Netherlands, in which the Dutch Republic possessed a chain of fortresses that were to act as a barrier against France. Now deprived of this safeguard, the Council of State devoted special attention in 1702's General Petition to the restoration of the numerous border-fortifications of the Republic. In order to do this, extra engineers, sappers and artillerymen had to be

⁵⁷ NL-NA, 3.01.04.01, 5885, 1701, 2. 'dat gene van de bondgenooten met reden twijffelen kan of 't in de tegenwoordige onsekere en verwarde toestand van zaken in Europa, tijdt is om te verminderen te Militie'.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 2. 'dat sys amen maer een lichaem maecken, dat niet door de particuliere belangen en insichten van yeder lidt, maer door het gemeen Interest van allen moet geregeert'.

⁵⁹ NL-NA, 3.01.04.01, 5885, 1701, 6. 'de goede Ingezetenen van 't landt eens sullen mogen ten vollen smaken de vruchten van de Vreede, waer toe sijne Majesteyt en den Raedt van State van herten wenschten te mogen contribueren'.

⁶⁰ NL-HUA, 233, Staten van Utrecht, 1581-1810, inventory number 654-46, General Petition 1702, 1. 'de continuatie van de algemeene ruste, en die van desen Staet in het bysonder, als seer onseker aan te sien [voornamelijk door de] groote toerustingten ten oorlogh, en bewegingen van Troupes daer op gevolght in de Nabuyschap, en selfs tot op de Grenzen van den Staet'.

hired, which put extra financial strain on the Provinces. However, the necessity of these measures for the safety of the country was so urgent that the Council of State was convinced that all the provincial estates would consent to the State of War without delay.⁶¹ Focussing on the protection of the country and the role the Barrier fortresses played in this, the arguments in the General Petition for 1702 were thus clearly Maritime in origin.

As mentioned earlier, on 8 May 1702, the States General of the United Provinces, in full agreement with its British allies, officially declared war on France and Spain. In a fairly elaborate seven page long manifesto, particularly compared to the British counterpart, which was only one page long, the States General explained to the population the reasons for going to war with France and Spain. Contrary to the approach in the General Petitions, where in the years before to the conflict no mention of France was made, the States General predated the cause of the present war to before the death of Charles II of Spain. For decades, France had been pursuing 'occupying, or in another way completely ruining and destroying the Republic'⁶². One only needed to remember the unjust wars started by France in 1672 and 1688, which, if they had been won by France, 'would have opened the way for a Universal Monarchy'.⁶³ This would destroy the freedom and religion for which the ancestors 'had been persecuted so severely, and had only been won after the loss of possessions and blood, and all that they had held dear, during eighty years of war against the mighty kings of Spain'.⁶⁴

The manifesto continued with a number of treaties that had been infringed by France in the past decade, starting with the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697, after which Louis XIV wasted no time to 'ruin the commerce of the state, which would leave it and its inhabitants weak and emaciated so that France could continue its previous schemes'.⁶⁵ The last treaty broken by France had been the treaty in which France, Great Britain and the United Provinces had agreed on the partition of the possessions of Charles II. After this king's death, and the unveiling of his testament, Louis XIV broke the Partition Treaty and 'not only had the Duke of Anjou proclaimed king of Spain, but also, in his

⁶¹ NL-HUA, 233, 654-46, 1702, 4-5.

⁶² NL-KB, Knuttel Catalogue, Inventory number 14761, Manifest houdende de redenen waerom de Hoogh Mog. Heeren Staten Generael der Vereenighde Nederlanden, genoodtsaecht zijn tegens de Koningen van Vranckrijk en Spaigne den Oorlogh te declareren, (08-05-1702), 1. 'occuperen [...] ofte andersints deselve geheel te ruineren en te verwoesten'.

⁶³ NL-KB, Knuttel 14761, 1. 'deselve daerdoor voor sich de wegh soude hebben gebaent tot de universele Monarchie'.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 2. 'soo schrickelijke vervolgingen hebben moeten lijden, ende dewelcke na dat Goedt ende Bloedt ende alles wat haer lief was, met een seer groote bereydwillegheydt ende standtvastigheydt hadden opgeset, ende tachtig jaren aen den anderen jegens die machtige Koningen van Spaigne den oorlog gevoert, eerst in een volle versekertheyt zijn gestelt geworden'.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 2. 'ruineren van Onse Commercie ende commercierende Ingezetenen den Staet 't eenemael te verswacken ende uyt te mergelen, om alsdan de voorige desseynen te gemakkelijker te kunnen vervolgen'.

name, took possession of all the territories and dominions of the late king'.⁶⁶ It was only here, on the fourth page of the document, that the barrier in the Southern Netherlands entered the stage. France had deprived the Republic of its barrier, for which it had fought two costly wars. But what was even more important was the fact that, 'in the way the king of France had started to rule the Spanish dominions, both in a political as in a military sense, it appeared that both countries were so intertwined that they appeared to be just one country with one government'.⁶⁷

This threat of Universal Monarchy, feared by the entirety of Christian Europe and caused by the ostensible union of the French and Spanish monarchy, remained the most important issue throughout the rest of the document. Brief mention was made of the French occupation of the cities of Liège and Bonn, and of the illegitimate closing of Spanish ports to Dutch shipping in the Southern Netherlands, Italy and the Indies.⁶⁸ However, in the present danger of Universal Monarchy, the Dutch Republic found itself 'closest to the fire, and thus forced to take up arms against such superior numbers and threatening danger, for the preservation of the freedom of the entirety of Europe, and the restoration of the general peace and quiet'.⁶⁹ Contrary to the General Petition that was issued for the same year, the arguments used in the declaration of war - focussing primarily on the threat of Universal Monarchy - had thus a remarkably more Continental character.

1703-1706: First years of warfare.

The General Petition of 1703 was the first one actually written while the Republic was in a state of war with France and Spain. Immediately the length of the documents increased significantly; from a mere six to seven pages in times of peace, it doubled to fifteen pages in 1703. This increase can to a large extent be attributed to the considerable expansion of the introduction of the General Petition. These introductions were the primary means of the Council of State to summarize the war developments of the past year, and reminding the provincial estates of the necessity to keep up with their payments, by bringing - once again - the reasons for which the country was at war to the attention of the provincial regents. The Petition of 1703 started with an elaborate defence of why the United Provinces had been forced to declare war on France and Spain. Surprisingly, the focus of

⁶⁶ NL-KB, Knuttel 14761, 3. 'Dan deselve Konigh, in gevolge van dat Testament, den Hertogh van Anjou niet alleen heeft doen proclameren voor Konigh van Spaignen, maer op desselfs naem possessie heeft genomen van alle de Rijcken en Domeynen van hoogst-gedachte Konigh'.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 4. 'Dat boven dien den Konigh van Vranckrijck aenstonds den Rijcken en Domeynen van Spaigne, onder den naem van sijn Soons Soon, soo in het Politicq als Militair despotiquelijck heeft beginnen te regeeren, en deselve met sijne Rijcken soodanigh vereenight, even of al het selve maer een Rijk en een Regeeringe was'.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 4-6.

⁶⁹ NL-KB, Knuttel 14761, 5. 'Wy, als de naeste aen het vuyr wesende geëxponeert, [...] genoodtsaecht geworden zijn Ons selven [...] te Wapenen jegens soo grooten overmacht en dreygend gevaer, [...] tot conservatie van de Vryheyt van geheel Europa, en tot het herstellen van Generale Rust ende Vreede te kunnen verbinden'.

the Council of State - again - differed remarkably from the official declaration of war. The loss of the barrier in the Southern Netherlands was considered to be the first and foremost incentive. This threat was only exacerbated by the fact that 'within and outside of Europe, the state, its friends and inhabitants were deprived of their commerce and navigation'.⁷⁰ The final straw had been the French occupation of the regions of Liège and Cologne, which had meant that the Republic found itself cornered even more and forced to 'take up arms, and increase its militia to the same numbers as by which it was threatened'.⁷¹

What followed was a recapitulation of the military exploits of the Republic's army in the previous year. While initially the Allied advance was halted during the siege of Kaiserswerth, near the city of Düsseldorf, after the taking of this fortress the Dutch troops managed to combine forces with their British counterparts and were able to occupy a large part of the South Netherlands and even managed to capture the fortress of Liège, giving the Republic the much needed security against French invasions. However, this did not mean the provincial estates could sleep any easier, because great successes achieved by the Allies had not so much lessened as they had enlarged the zeal of the enemy to return to the field of battle with increased forces that would threaten all that had been won so far, and the borders of the state.⁷² Consequently, the Council of State was adamant that it could not permit the Republic 'the least bit of relaxation or carelessness but, on the contrary, the increased zeal of the enemy should lead to a doubling of the courage of the government, and of its commitment to keep hold of all the conquered territories and pave the shortest way for an honourable and lasting peace'.⁷³ After concluding this quite extensive introduction, the remaining part of 1703's General Petition focussed mainly on all that was required of the Provinces to sustain the war effort. The Council of State recognised that the burdens of war against 'so powerful a foe as the crowns of France and Spain and their allies are great, but necessary if the Republic hopes to defer the two countries from controlling the rest of Europe and the especially the Dutch Republic, which if come to pass, would cost the country's inhabitants their religion, freedom and possessions'.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ NL-HUA, 233, Staten van Utrecht, 1581-1810, inventory number 654-47, General Petition 1703, 1. 'binnen en buyten Europa, om den Staet, [...] hare Vrunden, en hare Ingezetenen van Hare Commercie en Naviga[t]ie te ontsetten'.

⁷¹ NL-HUA, 233, 654-47, 1703, 1. 'in de wapenen, sigh genoodtdrukt vonden, haer Militie soodanigh te verstercken, als de macht met dewelcke sy gedreyght wierden'.

⁷² Ibid., 1-2.

⁷³ Ibid., 2. 'admitteren selfs de allerminste verslappinge, of sorgeloosheydt, [...] maer dat ter contrarie, de verdubbelingh van den yver der Vyanden moet dienen tot een dubbeldt encouragement [...] van de Regeringe, om [...] alles te doen, en by te brengen, wat mogelijk is, ten eynde de gedane Conquesten behouden, [...] en alsoo in het korte de weg gebaendt moge werden tot een honorabele en stendige Vreede'.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 2. 'jegens soo groote machten als de Kroonen van Vrancrijk en Spaigne, met hare Geallieerden [zijn zwaar maar nodig] in hoope van een spoedige goede uytkomste, als met sich die te onttrekken, de Monarchie

A comparison between the petitions of 1702 - 1703 and the declaration of war paints two remarkably diverse pictures of the outbreak of the conflict. Even though the manifesto contained a plethora of arguments for the war, of which some can be placed in the Maritime tradition and others in the Continental tradition, the document focussed first and foremost on the threat of French Universal Monarchy to the stability in Europe, and the responsibility of the Republic to prevent this from coming to pass. While a lot of the secondary arguments that are given can be attributed to the Maritime tradition, as formulated in chapter one, like the loss of the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands, deprivation of Dutch trade and shipping and the loss of the freedom and religion of the country, the most important and most frequently recurring argument remained concerned with the threat of Universal Monarchy, and was thus intrinsically Continental in origin. On the other hand, the General Petitions focussed primarily on the threat to the security of the state and the deprivation of trade and commerce inflicted by the current turn of events. The contradiction can hardly be more obvious: whereas in the manifesto the Continental tradition is clearly dominant, the legitimizations in the General Petition are unequivocally of a more Maritime tradition.

The State of War and General Petition were commonly sent to the different provincial estates with an accompanying letter of the States General, in which they would sometimes emphasise the urgency of certain requests made by the Council of State. In the supplementary letter to the General Petition of 1704, mention was made, again, of the huge amounts of money asked of the Provinces. This was, however, necessary for 'the maintenance of peace and religion, obtained by the blood and possessions of their ancestors, and bequeathed to the States General'.⁷⁵ For this reason, the States General expected each Province to pay their part of the war-debts.

The necessity of these additional demands made by the Council of State would become very clear in the petition for 1704. The military events of the previous year were once again the first to be discussed. After a bad start, the military operations of 1703 ended gloriously, with 'the conquering of several cities and fortresses that affected the borders of the Republic on the eastside of the River Meuse, and the Allied forces in Germany'.⁷⁶ However, the enemies were, yet again, not defeated, but continued their campaign with even more vigour. The French armies had mostly been focussing on reinforcing their positions in the Spanish Netherlands and moving their troops across the eastern bank of the Rhine, all the way to the Danube, in order to join forces with the army of the Elector of

vande voorschreve twee Kroonen over de rest van Europa, en over desen Staet in 't bysonder, en de goede Ingezetenen aen verlies van Religie, Vryheydt en Goederen, geëxponeert te sien'.

⁷⁵ NL-HUA, 233, Staten van Utrecht, 1581-1810, inventory number 654-48, General Petition 1704, Accompanying Letter States General. 'tot onderhoudenisse van vryheyten en Religie, door de Voorouderen met goet en bloet verkregen, en aen ons nagelaten'.

⁷⁶ NL-HUA, 233, 654-48, 1704, 1. 'de verovering van verscheide Steden en Sterckkens, die den Frontier van den Staet aen de Oostzyde van de Maze, en de Geallieerden in 't Rijck [...] te meer affectueerden'.

Bavaria and leaving 'the hereditary lands of the Emperor in much perplexity, danger and concern'.⁷⁷ Considering all the victories achieved by both the Allies and the French, the Council of State saw no reason to lessen the war effort, for it might have brought danger to 'the interests of the Republic, its allies and the whole of Europe'.⁷⁸ The Council warned in particular for the fighting of a defensive war, since this would not affect the power of France, but rather consolidate its relationship with Spain. For the Republic this would mean a 'continual threat to its borders, protracted war-costs and eventually an insecure peace, dependence on her enemies, which would be as harmful as the war itself'.⁷⁹ For the maintenance of the 'liberty of Europe' it was necessary to continue the state's extreme efforts to try and bring France to its knees. For the first time since the actual declaration of war, protecting the liberty of Europe, an essentially Continental argument, had made it into a General Petition.

Meanwhile, in the remaining part of Petition the cry for more money grew ever louder, since practically no part of the war machine was receiving enough funds. The army and fleet were not functioning at their maximum capacity and the government was having difficulties paying the interest of state-loans, which, if not resolved soon, would lead 'to the ruin of the credit of the country'.⁸⁰ The Council of State was even more vocal in expressing this point in the General Petition for the year 1705, by stating that 'should this great backwardness continue for much longer, all payments would come to a halt, which would be followed by the complete ruin of the credit of the country'.⁸¹

Overall, the war effort seemed a lot less optimistic in 1705. After a reminder of the reasons why the Republic had entered into war with France and Spain in the first place, mention was shortly made of the joyous accession of Portugal and Savoy to the camp of the Allies, and the battle of Blenheim, 'by the grace of God an advantageous success, which had led to the complete destruction of one of the enemies' armies and forced them to abandon Bavaria and retreat back across the Rhine'.⁸² Even though the battle of Blenheim would become one of the most important victories for

⁷⁷ NL-HUA, 233, 654-48, 1704, 1. 'Erflanden des Keysers selfs in veel perplexiteyt, gevaer en bekommernis te brengen'.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 2. 'de interessen van den Staet, en van haere Geallieerdens, en gevolgelyck van gansch Europa'.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 3. 'geduurig gevaer voor haere Frontieren, in langdurige Oorlogskosten, en eindelijk gebragt tot een onseckere, en van der Vyanden sinnelyckheid afhanckelycke Vreede, schadelijcker in verscheyde opsichten, als den Oorlog selve'.

⁸⁰ NL-HUA, 233, 654-48, 1704, 9. 'tot ruine van het credit van 't Landt'.

⁸¹ NL-HUA, 233, Staten van Utrecht, 1581-1810, inventory number 654-49, General Petition 1705, 12. 'By langer continuatie van een soo groote achterlijckheydt, de Interessen van de voorschreve genegotieerde Capitalen niet sullen kunnen werden betaeldt, en ter contrarie moeten stilstaen, daer uyt dan sal volgen een totaet verval van 't credit van 't Landt'.

⁸² NL-HUA, 233, 654-49, 1705, 3. 'door Godes goedtheydt wel zijn geweest van dat avantagieus succes, dat een van die Legers genoegsaem totaliter wesende geslagen, de Vyanden genoodtsaeckt zijn geworden Beyeren te abandonneren, den Rhijn te repasseren'.

the allies, the war was going much less successful on other fronts. Without aid, the duke of Savoy was bound to lose his struggle against France, which would mean Louis XIV would be able to send extra troops to Germany and the Low Countries. At the same time, unrest in Hungary was demanding most of the Emperor's attention. The Council of State recognised the trouble for the Provinces to gather the necessary amounts of money, especially in times of war 'filled with human disasters and adversity, such as stagnation of trade, shipping and inundation. It seemed infinitely better to bite the bullet for a little while longer, and do everything that is humanly possible to not endanger all that is most precious in this world'.⁸³ This argumentation was repeated in the General Petition for 1706, in which the Council of State recognised the wish of the Provinces to lower the burdens of war, but was simply unable to do so and still 'reach a stable and good peace, and thus prevent the coalition and consolidation of the two crowns [of France and Spain], which is needed for the freedom of Europe and the peace of mind of the Republic'.⁸⁴

Analysing the General Petitions for the first few years of the war already demonstrates some interesting shifts in the patterns concerning the legitimization of the conflict. At the outbreak of the war it was mainly the security of the Republic that was considered to be at stake due to the loss of the Barrier fortresses in the Southern Netherlands, and the encroachment of French forces on the borders of the state. Subsequently, in the petition for 1703, further mention was made of the deprivation of trade and commerce inflicted on the Republic's inhabitants around the globe. This argumentation is clearly in line with the Maritime approach; this was most obvious in the case of the deprivations inflicted on the trade interests of the Republic, but also in the case of the loss of the Barrier, since this legitimisation was primarily about the acute defence of the country against a potential French invasion. It becomes evident that the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands was not considered a means of enforcing Continental politics, but simply a matter of protection of the country's territory, and thus Maritime in nature.

This dominance of Maritime legitimisations may be noticed as a remarkable change in the argumentation in the General Petitions only a few years later, after the immediate threat to the Republic's borders had abated. Suddenly there appeared a multitude of new reasons for the country to continue the war with France and Spain: the potential loss of religion, possession and liberty, not

⁸³ NL-HUA, 233, 654-49, 1705, 4-5. 'met de menschelijke rampen en tegenspoeden, [...] seer groote verminderinge, van den Handel en Scheeps-vaert, van inundatien, [...] schijnt het oneyndigh beter, noch voor een kleynen tydt in een suyren appel, als men seydt, te bijten, en alles, wat menschelijckerwijse mogelijk is, by te brengen, dan [...] alles, wat in dese wereldt meest dierbaer moet zijn, te hazarderen'.

⁸⁴ NL-HUA, 233, Staten van Utrecht, 1581-1810, inventory number 654-50, General Petition 1706, 5. 'om tot een seeckere en goede Vreede te geraecken [...] niet konnen verhinderen de coalitie en consolidatie van de twee Kroonen, welcke voor de vryheydt van Europa, en gerustheyt van den Staet, soo seer, [...] is te apprehenderen'.

only for the Republic but especially for the entirety of Europe, should the war not be continued. Even though, in the course of the conflict, it became apparent that the Provinces had increasing difficulty to finance the war, protecting Europe from the despotic designs of the French became one of the primary goals for the Republic. Still, no explicit mention was made of the concept of preventing Universal Monarchy, which had featured so prominently in the declaration of war. However, there was a strong legitimizing factor in the defence of the liberty of Europe and upholding of the balance. Defending freedom of religion and trade all became dependant on this. In the scope of just a few years, the legitimization for continuing the War of the Spanish Succession gained a remarkably more 'Continental' character, focussing primarily on active involvement on the European stage. After uncertainty in the initial years of the war, the seeming continual successes of the Allied forces against the combined forces of France and Spain appear to have made the Council of State more ambitious about their aims for the war and the role the Dutch Republic could still play on the European stage, albeit at the cost of an enormous financial burden for the Provinces.

1707-1713: Final years of the war.

From 1707 onwards a further increase is noticeable concerning the length of the General Petitions. From an average of fifteen pages in the previous period, the number of pages increased to a staggering thirty-four in 1711. It is difficult to determine from the petitions what the specific reason for this increase was, but it can be related to the fact that it became increasingly arduous for the Council of State to gather the necessary funds, stress the importance of the war and convince the provincial estates to keep on raising taxation. More and more description was devoted to recollecting both the military exploits in the previous years and, again, the reasons for which the Republic had decided to declare war on France and Spain in the first place. It is in light of these increasing financial strains that the argumentation used in the petitions, once again, turned more Maritime in origin.

One of the changes in the argumentation that can be linked to this shift away from continental involvement can be read in the closing pages of the General Petition for the year 1706. Mention was made of the Republic's dependence on the sea, mostly due to the fact that 'from its inhabitants, only a small part derives their livelihood from the land. All the others subsist from trade, navigation or fishing'.⁸⁵ While in 1706 this argument was mostly put forward as a reason to commission new ships of war to protect the merchant fleet, from that point onward the protection

⁸⁵ NL-HUA, 233, 654-50, 1706, 19. 'van hare Ingezetenen, die maer alleen voor een seer kleyn gedeelte hare subsistentie konnende vinden uyt de grondt, [...] voor de rest principalijck bestaen moeten door Commerce, Navigatie, Visscherye'.

of trade and commerce became one of the prime motivations for continuing the war. For instance in the General Petition for 1708 this argument already appeared on the second page. In one of the most elaborate and eloquent petitions of the whole conflict, the case was made that the war was not started in order to gain honour and glory 'through the expansion of the borders, or the mending of wrongs inflicted on the allies in the past. Generally all these wars, even though some might be just, are still unwanted and even harmful, and should thus, if possible, be carefully avoided. This is especially important for a state like the Republic that exists by the grace of trade, commerce, fishing and trade-goods. A state like the Republic should try to increase its standing not by conquest and the glory of her arms, but by guaranteeing her safety and augmenting the abovementioned true sources of her wealth and prosperity'.⁸⁶ In the final pages, mention was again made of these commercial interests of the Republic, 'as a common marketplace and general storehouse of commerce between the east and the west'.⁸⁷

The petition for 1708 focussed so explicitly on the importance of trade and commerce as the foundation of the Republic, and, perhaps more important, the renunciation of both aggrandizement through territorial expansion and involvement in European wars, that it is difficult to imagine a more clear shift from the predominantly Continental legitimizations that were so emphatically expressed only a few years earlier. Nevertheless, on the same page the petition also reflected on the inevitability of the present war, stating that the struggle was legitimate and necessary in order to 'maintain the liberty of Europe and the conservation of the state, the biggest thing that states, or individuals, can wish for in this world'.⁸⁸ From that point onward, both Maritime and Continental arguments were thus used side by side.

In the petition for 1709, the Council of State reflected on the reasons why France was still capable of putting up resistance, in spite of the great victories that had been won by the Allies since the beginning of the war. This was mainly attributed to the fact that France, while in control of the Spanish Empire, had unlimited access to the wealth of the New World. 'Particular ships that still sail the Southern Sea, from time to time bring unimaginably great riches to France, which enhance the

⁸⁶ NL-HUA, 233, Staten van Utrecht, 1581-1810, inventory number 654-52, General Petition 1708, 2. 'van uytbreyingh van Landtpalen, van reparatie van geleden hoon der Bondtgenoten, [...] alle, hoedanige oorlogen hoewel somwijlen rechtveerdigh, nochtans als min nuttigh, ja als schadelijck, sorghvuldigh, vermijdt, behooren te werden, soo langh 't eenighsints kan geschieden, [...] by een Staat, als dese, welckers welwesen, ten grooten, ja ten grootsten deele, bestaande is, in den handel en Scheeptvaart, Visscherye en Manufacturen, [...] en haer luyster, en aensien te doen steygeren, niet door conquesten, of door éclat, en roem van hare wapenen, maar door betrachtigh van hare sekerhey, en, door 't aanqueken van de bovengemelte ware bronaders van haar welvaren en voorspoedt'.

⁸⁷ NL-HUA, 233, 654-52, 1708, 25. 'Als een gemeene Marcktplaats, en generaal Magasijn van Commerce tusschen het Oosten en het Westen'.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 2. 'en streckende, nevens het maintien van de liberteyt van Europa, tot eygen conservatie, het grootste voorwerp, dat Staten, of Menschen, in dese wereltd, gewoon zyn te betrachten'.

French crown in the present war'.⁸⁹ Reference was even made to the legendary capture of the Spanish treasure fleet in 1628 by Piet Heyn. A similar venture was proposed by the Council of State as a potential option to divert the Spanish trade from the French ports back to the Republic.⁹⁰ Further on in the petition even more historical examples were given. The present war was considered to be 'practically of the same nature as the one the Republic fought at its founding to preserve her true religion, freedom and government, and is thus a war in self-defence'.⁹¹

Even though the French had been actively trying to sue for peace since 1705, mention of these pleas was first made in the General Petition for 1710. Louis XIV, faced with practically continual military defeats and growing financial problems, tried to make an end to the conflict by seeking a rapprochement with the Allies, and decided to approach the Dutch Republic individually, hoping the States General would be more inclined to peace negotiations than their British allies.⁹² Yet the Council of State warned the Provinces to be cautious of the French pleas, since 'the enemy's request was deceitful, and meant to drive the Allies apart'.⁹³ At long last the Allied forces had entered French soil, forcing the enemy into fighting a defensive war. Striking is the fact that, for the first and only time during the entire war, mention was made in a General Petition of France's aims to a Universal Monarchy, which would have caused the 'general subjection of Europe, and in that way, also of the Republic'.⁹⁴ This was an argument for the Council of State to commit to fighting the war just a little while longer, in order to obtain a 'common, good, and secure peace'.⁹⁵ However, the explicit wish for peace in the very near future was also expressed, 'to, as the old saying went: *Gallus amicus, sed non vicinus*⁹⁶, have France as a friend, but not as a neighbour, which was considered undesirable due to

⁸⁹ NL-HUA, 233, Staten van Utrecht, 1581-1810, inventory number 654-53, General Petition 1709, 10. 'door verscheyde particuliere Schepen, die de Zuydt-zee gedurygh bevaren, seer groote, en de verbeeldingh te boven gaande schatten in Vranckrijck, van tydt tot tydt gebraght zijn, en daar door die Kroon by uytneementheyt in desen Oorlogh is gestyft'.

⁹⁰ NL-HUA, 233, 654-53, 1709, 11. 'Op wat voor wyse, en, door wat middelen, de Voorouderen soo groote successen in America, en op de Retour-vlooten van daar gekomen, als vooren gemeldt, hebben weten te verkrygen, overwogen werde, of niet, door die selve middelen, dien avantagieusen Handel, en Vaart van Vranckrijck gestremt, en na dese Landen geleyt, en overgebraght soude kunnen worden'.

⁹¹ Ibid., 14. 'in effecte van een en de selve natuyr, met die geene, welcke de Republicq, in hare eerste begintelsen, [...] tot maintien, en bevestigingh van hare Godtsdienst, vryheyt en Regeringh heeft moeten uytstaen; te weten, een oorlogh van nootweer'.

⁹² One of the most important works dealing with the failed peace negotiations conducted throughout the war: Stork-Penning, *Het Grote Werk*.

⁹³ NL-HUA, 233, Staten van Utrecht, 1581-1810, inventory number 654-54, General Petition 1710, 2. 'des Vyandts [...] versoek van vrede, hoewel oock listigh aangeleght, soo niet tot separatie der Geallieerdens'.

⁹⁴ NL-HUA, 233, 654-54, 1710, 5. 'tot het établissement van de universele Monarchie, van die Kroon en tot een algemeene subjectie van Europa, en sulcks oock, tot die, van desen Staat'.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 4. 'eerlangh te mogen verkrygen een algemeene, goede, en secuere vrede, dat den oorlogh werde voortgeset'.

⁹⁶ Haks, *Vaderland en vrede*, 8.

the unrest and constant turmoil of the French nation'.⁹⁷ The same argument was repeated, though somewhat more elaborate, in the petition for 1711. It was decided not to make peace unless this was 'more sure and durable than the treaties of peace signed with France in the previous sixty years, since they only functioned to give France the opportunity to start preparing for the next war'.⁹⁸

However, the actual end of the war was closer than the Council of State at that time was aware of. After peace-talks between the Dutch and the French had failed time after time, war-weariness in Great Britain had led to a huge victory of the anti-war Tory party in the 1710 parliamentary elections.⁹⁹ The Tories wanted to end the war as soon as possible, and preferred to negotiate with the French in secret, eventually presenting their allies with a *fait accompli* when they reached an agreement on preliminary articles of a proposed peace-treaty in October 1711.¹⁰⁰ Surprisingly, in the General Petition for 1712, issued just over a month later, no mention of this was made. As if to put some extra effort into persuading the provincial estates to commit to the war for just a little while longer, the Council of State explained extensively the reasons why the war had been dragging on for so much longer than was anticipated. Spain had regained a lot of her former power under the French rule of Philip of Anjou, and the Allies had had a lot of disadvantages concerning the 'weather, climate differences and the Spanish mountainous terrain, that had served as an excellent place of hiding for over seven hundred years, from the times of the first wars of the Spanish against the Moors'.¹⁰¹ Despite of all these hardships, war was still considered the only viable option to reach the goals for which the war was begun in the first place, namely the preservation of common liberty and the security of the state. The aggrandizement through conquests was again denounced as a policy for a state like the Republic that derived its wealth and prestige through commerce, as was mentioned in previous petitions. However, the Council of State did, for the first time, promise the

⁹⁷ NL-HUA, 233, 654-54, 1710, 11. 'volgens die oude spreuke, dat men Vranckrijck hebbe tot vrund, doch niet tot nabuur, onwystelijck om 't ongerust, en gestadigh woelend humeur der Fransche natie'.

⁹⁸ NL-NA, 1.01.19, Raad van State, 1581-1795, inventory number 2229, General Petition 1711, 12. 'de te maken Vrede, meer seker en bestendigh soude mogen wesen, als niet geweest zyn, die geene, welcke, zedert ruym sestigh jaren, met Vranckrijck, successivelijk, zyn gemaect, en alleen gedient hebben, om aen die Kroon te geven eenige respiratie van lasten'.

⁹⁹ D. Coombs, *The conduct of the Dutch. British opinion and the Dutch alliance during the War of the Spanish Succession* (The Hague 1958), 213-232; J.B. Hattendorf, *England in the War of the Spanish Succession. A Study of the English View and Conduct of Grand Strategy, 1702-1712* (London 1987), 221.

¹⁰⁰ H.G. Pitt, 'The pacification of Utrecht' in: J.S. Bromley (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History Volume 6: The Rise of Great Britain and Russia, 1688-1715* (Cambridge 1970), 446-479, 457-459.

¹⁰¹ NL-NA, 1.01.19, Raad van State, 1581-1795, inventory number 2229, General Petition 1712, 5. 'kortheyt van goedt Weeder, [...] differentie van 't Climaet [...] en veelheyt van Geberghtens, die al eertydts, aen de Spagniaerts, in hun Oorlogen tegen de Mooren, meer dan seven hondert jaren lang, tot een veylige schuytplaets dienden'.

Provinces a quick end to the war. The armies of the Allies were short from pushing into the heart of France, and thus close to forcing Louis XIV to a much-coveted durable peace.¹⁰²

The final General Petition to be issued during the War of the Spanish Succession was composed in November 1712. At this point the peace negotiations in Utrecht, where the Peace Congress had opened on January 29, had been well underway.¹⁰³ This was also reflected in the petition. No more acts of war were mentioned, even though the Dutch and Austrians - contrary to their British allies - had not yet ceased hostilities against the French, nor any of the grave injustices committed by France in the previous decades. 'It was for peace, that war was fought. Taking up arms had been just, but now it was the time to substitute war, with all its dangers and insecurities, for peace and all the benefits that could be derived from it'.¹⁰⁴ The Council of State did, however, warn for the fact that peace had to be secure. 'Security could be seen as the soul of the peace, and without it, peace could not exist, like a body without a soul'.¹⁰⁵

Peace between France and the Dutch Republic was signed on 11 April 1713.¹⁰⁶ In the peace-treaty that was subsequently published and distributed throughout the country, there was little mention of the reasons the Republic had had for going to war over more than a decade earlier. The signatory powers were overjoyed with 'the restoration of the general peace of Europe'.¹⁰⁷ The principle aim of the war, as featured in the declaration of war, preventing the union of the French and Spanish crowns, was, amazingly, only mentioned in the 31st article. It was stated that the peace and liberty of Europe could only be guaranteed if these crowns would never rest on the same head. Shortly this was confirmed both in Paris and Madrid, so it appeared the principle goal of the Dutch

¹⁰² NL-NA, 1.01.19, 2229, 1712, 14. 'een handtbreet weeghs tot in het hert van Vranckrijck; en om die Kroon, tot gewenschte en billyke Vreedens Conditien t'obligeren'.

¹⁰³ L. Frey and M. Frey, *The Treaties of the War of the Spanish Succession. An Historical and Critical Dictionary* (Westport 1995), 506.

¹⁰⁴ NL-NA, 1.01.19, Raad van State, 1581-1795, inventory number 2229, General Petition 1713, 2. "T is om de Vreede, dat den Oorlog wert gevoert. En hoe noodwendig, en gevolglijk, hoe wettigh, en regtveerdig ook mogen zyn de Wapenen, cesser en nogtans de selve te zyn wettig, als se tot d'uitterste extremiteit vervolgt, of met eere en sekerheid, kunnen afgelegt, en verlaten worden; en, op dien voet, een einde gemaakt van alle de calamiteiten, gevaaren, en wisselvalligheden, van een Oorlog, en gereduceert een Vreede, met alle de voordeelen, agrementen, en commoditeiten, die gewoon zyn, daer uyt, te proflueren'.

¹⁰⁵ NL-NA 1.01.19, 2229, 1713, 5. 'de sekerheyt zynde, als de ziele van de Vreede, en sonder deselve, alsoo weynig konnende subsisteeren, als, by manier van spreken, een Lighaem sonder Ziele'.

¹⁰⁶ D. Onnekink, "Een generale, goede en duysame vreede": het Utrechtse vredescongres (1713) vanuit Staats perspectief' in: S. Groenveld et al (eds.), *Tussen Munster & Aken. De Nederlandse Republiek als grote mogendheid (1648-1748)* (Maastricht 2005), 49-66.

¹⁰⁷ NL-KB, Knuttel Catalogue, Inventory number 16166, Tractaat van Vreede; Tusschen den Koning van Vranckrijck En de Staaten Generaal der Vereenigde Nederlanden, (11-04-1713), 1. 'de herstelling van de algemeene rust van Europa'.

Republic, as stipulated in the declaration of war from 1702, had been achieved.¹⁰⁸ Apart from one short sentence, little mention was made of the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands, which had featured so extensively in the General Petitions throughout the conflict. The, now Austrian, Netherlands, were indicated to serve as a barrier for the Republic, of which the exact stipulations were further regulated in a separate Barrier Treaty between the Emperor, Great Britain and the Dutch Republic, which was signed in 1715.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion.

When looking at the course of the War of the Spanish Succession through the eyes of the Council of State and their General Petitions, a picture emerges that is remarkably different from the traditional perception of the war in Dutch historiography. Boogman and his students narrate the war was fought in the Continental tradition of William III, and served as the final battle in the forty-year struggle the Republic fought against France and Louis XIV. The General Petitions prove that this is an oversimplification of what actually happened.

At the start of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1702, the petitions did not mention the Continental tradition of protecting Europe against the Universalist claims of France. The Council of State was mostly worried about the defence of the country due to the loss of the Barrier fortresses in the Southern Netherlands and the damage inflicted on Dutch trade, both in European ports and in ports in the Spanish Indies. Focus lay first and foremost on protecting the Republic and its trade interests and definitely not with protecting the general peace in Europe. These arguments can thus best be assessed as a policy deriving from the Maritime tradition and be attributed to the merchants-regents of Holland. However, a shift in this policy can be perceived after only a few years of the war. While the war-effort was quite successful for the Republic and its allies, the argumentation for continuation of the war changed significantly. With the immediate threat of a French invasion averted, the Council of State changed its argumentation for warfare to have a much more Continental character. Protecting the trade interests of the country suddenly was overshadowed by protecting the entirety of Europe against the designs of France. The ambitions of Louis XIV to use the Spanish inheritance of his grandson to obtain Universal Monarchy became an immediate threat to the freedom of the entire continent. This potential French Universal Monarchy did not only threaten

¹⁰⁸ NL-KB, 16166, 9. 'Dewyl men daar in overeenkomst, dat het ten hoogsten noodzakelyk is, en sekerlyk beter moet worden, dat de kroone van Vrankryk en Spagne nooyt op het hooft van eenen Koning vereenigt worden, op dat door dit middel de veylige rust en vryheyte van Europa vastgesteld werd'.

¹⁰⁹ NL-KB, Knuttel Catalogue, Inventory number 16266, Tractaat van Barriere tusschen sijne Keyserlijcke en Catholicque Majesteyt Karel de VI., sijne Majesteyt van Groot-Brittannien en de Staaten Generaal, (15-11-1715).

Dutch trade, which was the key argument at the beginning of the war, but also put the Protestant religion throughout all of Europe in danger. The Council of State formulated the responsibility of the Dutch Republic to lead the way in fighting the combined French-Spanish threat and thus propagated a policy that was much more Continental in character than the Maritime policy followed by the Council immediately at the outbreak of the war.

However, this Continental dominance did not prevail throughout the rest of the conflict. From 1707 onwards, in the face of increasing difficulty to collect the necessary funds to meet the demands of both the military and navy, coupled with the first signs of war-weariness due to the length of the war, the argumentations in the General Petitions regained some of the Maritime character that had been dominant around 1702. Trade interests again became the main concern of the Council of State, and specific mention was made of the disadvantages of waging a war for a commercially-minded nation like the Dutch Republic. Nevertheless, protecting the liberty and general peace in Europe never completely disappeared from the petitions. The threat of Universal Monarchy was even mentioned for the very first time in the General Petition for 1710, but Continental arguments like this definitely became of secondary importance as a legitimisation of the war. Faced with ever increasing financial constraints, a growing reluctance among the provincial estates to continue the war and, last but not least, the French and British attempts to conclude the war without involving the Republic, the petitions demonstrate arguments that can be ascribed as both Continental and Maritime. This dual approach was not abandoned until the end of the war in 1713.

The view of Boogman and his students about the War of the Spanish Succession being fought while the Dutch Republic pursued a foreign policy based on the Continental tradition is based on the traditional sources as discussed in this chapter, such as the declaration of war and the peace-treaty between France and the States General. The General Petitions, which this study is based upon, represent a more complex interpretation of the conflict. This can be best demonstrated by the declaration of war from 1702, which dealt extensively with protecting Europe from the threat of French Universal Monarchy, a term that was hardly even mentioned in the General Petitions. The same can be said from the peace treaty of 1713, in which the major focus was the Continental reasoning why the Republic had had to go to war, instead of the more Maritime reasons that had featured in the General Petitions throughout the conflict. Whereas the frequently consulted sources tell a story of the Republic being very proactive in leading the European-wide resistance against France, the General Petitions show this interpretation needs to be adjusted. This case-study of the War of the Spanish Succession, in this way, also endorses the decision made in the first chapter to construct a new methodology for approaching the General Petitions, instead of embracing the one framed by Repgen. This chapter explained the different functions of both the General Petitions and

the more public sources dealing with the war, like a declaration of war, on which Repgen had based his typology, which both contain remarkably different legitimisations for the conflict.

The General Petitions show that the Continental tendency, as formulated by Boogman, was not the only guiding principle in Dutch foreign policy during the times of the War of the Spanish Succession. The diversity of the argumentations and legitimisations the Council of State used to persuade the provincial estates to keep paying for the war show more interaction between the Continental and Maritime reasoning. In fact, the Continental tradition only appears to be dominant from 1704 till 1706, so just in two of the eleven years of the war. Instead of being guided by the legacy of William III and his ideas on the just course for the Republic's foreign policy, the Council of State used a more flexible and pragmatic approach, adjusting their argumentations to the demands of the Provinces and the opportunities the war offered. This meant that in the opening years of the war, when the provincial estates felt just as threatened by a potential French invasion as the Council of State itself, argumentation had a more defensive, and thus Maritime character. With the immediate crisis averted, and continual success on the battlefield, the door was open to a more Continental approach. Even though aspects of this tradition remained in use up until the very last petition in 1713, economic hardship and war-weariness meant a return to a more Maritime argumentation. This was regarded necessary in order to keep the provincial estates investing in the war-effort. The idea that a single tendency or tradition guided the conduct of the Council of State for the entirety of the war is contradicted by the more dual approach that is found in the General Petitions.

Chapter III. The War of the Austrian Succession.

The Dutch Republic as a great power or a secondary player.

The War of the Austrian Succession was the first major European conflict after the Peace of Utrecht had brought the War of the Spanish Succession to an end in 1713. The Peace of Utrecht is generally considered to be the end of the Dutch Republic as a great power in Europe. The Republic had driven itself close to financial bankruptcy to keep up with the demands of the war, but gained relatively little from the peace treaty, even though it could count itself among the victors. The most important gain for the Republic was the international recognition of the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands. The Dutch even made some small territorial gains by being granted the cities of Venlo and Stevensweert, which had previously belonged to Prussia.¹¹⁰ Unfortunately, the Republic lost out on the much coveted *Asiento*, the right to trade with the Spanish colonies in the New World, which was granted to the British instead.¹¹¹

According to Boogman, the disappointing outcome of the Treaty of Utrecht and the pitiful state of the Republic's finances after the war were the primary reasons the state entered into a period of neutrality and abstention from European politics, focussing instead on trade and commerce, which were considered, as described in the previous chapter, the foundations of the prosperity and wealth of the Dutch Republic.¹¹² As already discussed in the introduction, Aalbers researched extensively on Dutch foreign policy after 1713, and formulated two tendencies based on the Maritime tradition; the Politics of Surety and the Politics of Abstention, differing primarily on the question whether or not the Barrier in the Austrian Netherlands was needed in order to guarantee the neutrality of the Dutch Republic.¹¹³

However, not all historians confirm this idea that the Dutch Republic ceased to be a major power after the War of the Spanish Succession. Most notably Van Nimwegen pursues that the Republic was still regarded a great power, especially due to the fact that the country held the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands, one of the key regions in early modern Europe. With a firm hold on the

¹¹⁰ J.I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford 1995), 980.

¹¹¹ Frey and Frey, *The Treaties of the War of the Spanish Succession*, xxiii.

¹¹² Boogman, *Achtergronden, tendenties en tradities*, 16-17.

¹¹³ Aalbers, *De Republiek en de vrede van Europa*, 26-60.

Southern Netherlands, the Republic held leverage over the other European great powers that all had stakes in the Southern Netherlands, and thus remained a major player amongst them. For France the Austrian Netherlands were traditionally a much coveted region to expand its northern borders, while the British saw it as pivotal to keep the French out of - what they considered - the most advantageous staging ground for an invasion of the British Isles.¹¹⁴ In this view, it was only after the French occupied the Barrier at the end of the War of the Austrian Succession that the Republic officially ceased to be a major great power in Europe. After this war the Dutch failed to successfully reinstate their Barrier in the south. In this context this chapter will not only discuss the question what the General Petitions contain on the validity of the existence of a Maritime tradition in Dutch foreign policy during the War of the Austrian Succession. It will also look into the question what can be discerned from the petitions regarding the 'great power'-status of the Republic during the War of the Austrian Succession, and the role the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands played in it.

Context: The last male Habsburg and the Pragmatic Sanction.

The events that led up to the War of the Austrian Succession found their origin well before the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession. Just like the Spanish line, the Austrian branch of the House of Habsburgs had become thin in legitimate male heirs in the years before the conflict. Head of the family was Emperor Leopold I (1640 – 1705). He had two sons, the archdukes Joseph (1678 – 1711) and Charles (1685 – 1740). Joseph was destined to succeed his father as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. With the looming vacancy of the Spanish throne, Charles was put forward to become the new Habsburg king of Spain. To prevent any successional disasters like the one that had befallen the Spanish Habsburgs, the Emperor and his two sons decided to enter into the so-called *pactum mutuae successionis*, a mutual succession pact, in 1703.¹¹⁵ Between the three men it was decided that after Leopold's death, Joseph would inherit the Austrian dominions and Charles would rule in Spain. Should either line become extinct in the future, the surviving male line would succeed to both realms. Should both male lines become extinct, the female offspring, with preference to the elder line of Joseph, would be permitted to succeed to both Habsburg territories. This clause was thought to be necessary because at the moment neither of the two archdukes had any male heirs. Joseph had only fathered two daughters while Charles had no children yet. Another important clause concerned the indivisibility of the Habsburg territories. The Habsburgs Austrian dominions consisted of a conglomerate of individual kingdoms, duchies and fiefdoms, and it was decided that the three rulers would never let their territories be carved into pieces. The final point of interest was that the pact

¹¹⁴ Van Nimwegen, *De Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden als grote mogendheid*, 33.

¹¹⁵ M.S. Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession, 1740-1748* (New York 1995), 7.

was signed in utmost secrecy. Apart from the three Habsburgs, only a few selected ministers and members of the Secret Council knew of its existence.¹¹⁶

The War of the Spanish Succession did not turn out the way the Austrian Habsburgs had intended. Emperor Leopold died in 1705, only a few years after the war had started. As agreed, his son Joseph succeeded him as Emperor Joseph I of the Holy Roman Empire, while Charles continued to pursue his claims for the Spanish throne. The fragile balance agreed upon by the three Habsburgs in 1703 was crudely shattered when Joseph died during a smallpox epidemic in 1711. Because he had no son as his heir, his brother Charles succeeded him as Emperor Charles VI. Great Britain and the United Provinces, did not allow the Spanish and Austrian possessions to be united under one ruler and therefore the French candidate, Philip of Anjou, eventually became King of Spain in 1713. Charles was compensated with the Spanish possessions in Italy and the southern Netherlands, but the Spanish throne was lost to the Habsburgs. Meanwhile Charles – like his brother Joseph - had no sons, leaving him, just as his Spanish namesake a decade earlier, without a legitimate male heir.¹¹⁷

On April 19, 1713, in the same month that Philip of Anjou was officially recognized as king of Spain, Emperor Charles VI officially issued the *Sanctio pragmatica lex perpetua valitura*, better known as the Pragmatic Sanction.¹¹⁸ In this document, Charles chose to reveal the succession pact he had made with his late father and brother in 1703 to his subjects and the rest of the world. In front of all the ministers and members of the Secret Council present in Vienna, Charles once again stressed the indivisibility of the Habsburgs Central European possessions. More important, he publicly proclaimed his intent to make woman eligible to inherit the Habsburg territories in the case no male heir was available. The exception to the original succession pact was that he gave his own - still unborn - children preference over the two daughters of his late elder brother, over whom he was guardian. The next thirty years of his life, Charles was mainly preoccupied with the recognition of this Pragmatic Sanction, which became even more important after his first daughter, Maria Theresa (1717 – 1780), was born. In most of his dominions he just issued the Pragmatic Sanction by royal decree after which local diets recognized it practically immediately. The only exception was the Hungarian monarchy, which - as a separate kingdom - enjoyed special privileges. In 1687, the Hungarian Reichstag had recognized the Habsburg succession in the male line, guaranteeing that they could choose their own king again, should the male line fail to deliver an heir. Eventually the Hungarians agreed to the new succession arrangement in return for more control over their own

¹¹⁶ C. Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1618-1815* (Cambridge 1994) 128-130.

¹¹⁷ S. Scheitsek, 'Geschichtlicher Abriss' in: S. Scheitsek et al, *300 Jahre Karl VI. 1711-1740. Spuren der Herrschaft des "letzten" Habsburgers* (Vienna 2011) 38-57, 38-53.

¹¹⁸ 'Pragmatische Sanktion. Text Nr. 1 vom 19.IV.1713' in: H. Fischer, *Texte zur österreichischen Verfassungs-Geschichte, von der Pragmatischen Sanktion zur Bundesverfassung (1713-1966)* (Vienna 1970) 1-2.

taxes.¹¹⁹ By 1725 all the Habsburg territories had endorsed the Pragmatic Sanction, where after Charles made it the central theme of his foreign policy. In 1735, France was the last of the great powers to officially recognize the Pragmatic Sanction. Charles felt assured that he had safeguarded his daughter's accession, but according to the Austrian military commander, Prince Eugene of Savoy, 'a well-stocked treasury and a strong army would be a better guarantee to an undisputed succession'.¹²⁰

The Pragmatic Sanction can be considered as one of the most peculiar documents in Habsburg history. As Charles VI very well knew, it had little force whatsoever in the Holy Roman Empire. He recognized that there was no possible way Maria Theresa would be able to inherit the imperial title. The Holy Roman Empire was governed by Salic law, meaning that only men could inherit. For the Empire this had meant that if the male line of any of the ruling houses would die out, their territories would revert to the Emperor upon which he could enfeoff them to another of his vassals. The Austrian hereditary lands were in this case no different from any other part of the Empire. However, the only reason this change in succession policy could be enforced was because the ruler of the Austrian territories was at the same time, as emperor, the highest feudal authority. The Pragmatic Sanction was therefore nothing more than an attempt to change the Salic order of succession that had never before been successfully challenged in the Empire. This attempt would be tested after the death of Charles VI, by placing the Austrian hereditary lands outside the jurisdiction of the Holy Roman Empire. The rationale was that the Austrian territories within the Empire could never be separated from the other parts of the Habsburg dominions that were no part of the Empire, like for instance Hungary. This emphasis on Habsburg unity made the Pragmatic Sanction one of the founding documents of the Austrian, and later Austro-Hungarian monarchy, influencing policy until 1921 when the Hungarian parliament officially revoked it, thereby severing any ties with the House of Habsburg.¹²¹

Even though Charles VI devoted his ruling life to get his Pragmatic Sanction recognized, he never intended Maria Theresa to actually rule the Habsburg dominions. Charles never gave up the idea of a son as a male heir. When this seemed impossible with his first wife, he secretly hoped to outlive her and beget a male heir by a second wife. At the worst he would have to wait till Maria Theresa would give birth to a grandson who could become his successor. This staunch belief that everything would turn out all right made Charles commit some grave errors of judgement. He married his two nieces - the daughters of his late brother Joseph - off to the electors of Bavaria and

¹¹⁹ R.A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire. 1526-1918* (Los Angeles 1974) 58-62.

¹²⁰ S. Scheitsek, 'Die Pragmatische Sanktion' in: S. Scheitsek et al, *300 Jahre Karl VI. 1711-1740. Spuren der Herrschaft des "letzten" Habsburgers* (Vienna 2011) 235-239.

¹²¹ Fischer, *Texte zur österreichischen Verfassungs-Geschichte*, IV-XIII.

Saxony, making them renounce all their claims to the Habsburg dominions, even though the elector of Bavaria had not recognized the validity of the Pragmatic Sanction, and did thus not recognise the claim of Maria Theresa over the one of his own wife.¹²² Even worse, Charles never prepared his daughter for the throne. Upon her marriage to the duke of Lorraine, Francis Stephen, her husband was granted a seat on the Secret Council, while Maria Theresa was denied any experience in government.¹²³

Charles VI died unexpectedly on October 20, 1740, presumably after eating poisonous mushrooms during a hunting-trip just south of Vienna.¹²⁴ Immediately it became evident how little value his efforts with his successional policy of the Pragmatic Sanction had had. The succession of Maria Theresa was challenged by Bavaria and Saxony, on the grounds that their electors had married the elder nieces of Maria Theresa, who had a better claim to the Habsburg territories. France saw an opportunity to get rid of its major rival Austria, and secretly supported any attempt to dismember the Habsburg dominions with troops and subsidies. However, the first attack came from Frederick II, the King of Prussia (1712 – 1786), who had only come to the throne five months earlier. In December 1740 his armies invaded Silesia, the wealthiest of the Austrian provinces. Frederick did not directly challenge Maria Theresa's succession. He simply proclaimed intent to guarantee the Pragmatic Sanction in face of the French threat and Silesia was to be seen as a just reward for his aid.¹²⁵

1740-1743: A country in denial.

The Dutch Republic, even though one of the traditional allies of the Austrian Habsburgs, was remarkably absent during the events leading up to the outbreak of the War of the Austrian Succession. In 1731 the States General had officially recognized the Pragmatic Sanction, and thus the right of Maria Theresa as heir to the Habsburg monarchy, by signing the Treaty of Vienna.¹²⁶ In this agreement, concluded already a year earlier, Great Britain recognised the Pragmatic Sanction in return for Charles VI's abolition of the Ostend Company, a trading company that was operating from the Austrian Netherlands, and thus a straightforward competitor for British trade with the West and East Indies.¹²⁷ In the treaty, the Anglo-Austrian alliance was reconfirmed, and in consequence, the Dutch Republic obligated itself to come to the aid of either of the two other signatory partners if

¹²² K. Gutkas et al, *Prinz Eugen und das barocke Österreich. Katalog des Niederösterreichischen Landesmuseum* (Vienna 1986) 92-94.

¹²³ C.A. Macartney, *Maria Theresa and The House of Austria* (Aylesbury 1969) 7; Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, 150.

¹²⁴ A. Wandruszka, *Maria Theresia. Die große Kaiserin* (Göttingen 1980) 26-27.

¹²⁵ Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession*, 59-62.

¹²⁶ C. Cook, *The Routledge Companion to Early Modern Europe, 1453-1763* (New York 2006), 85.

¹²⁷ J.O. Lindsay, 'International relations', in: J.O. Lindsay, *The New Cambridge Modern History. Volume 7: The Old Regime, 1713-1763* (Cambridge 1957), 191-213, 202.

need be. This commitment would put serious strains on the Dutch wish for neutrality only a small decade later.

Contrary to the General Petition issued on the eve of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1702, it was not surprising that the General Petition for 1740 did not contain much on an imminent danger or growing unrest in Europe because of a new successional crisis. Unlike Charles II, who had been ill for decades - giving the other European powers time to anticipate his death - Charles VI died rather unexpectedly. The petition was issued 'to confirm the peace and quiet the Republic had - unexpectedly - been able to enjoy for so long'.¹²⁸ However, problems were foreseen. Due to the financial arrears originated during the War of the Spanish Succession, which - even twenty-six years later - still had not been paid off completely. This was considered as one of the gravest dangers to the Republic, since even though 'the continuation of the peace was not in imminent danger, some friction between the states with which the Republic was allied was noticeable. The Council of State wished for these sparks of discord to be distinguished shortly'.¹²⁹

First mention of the troubles that had befallen the house of Austria was made in the General Petition for 1741, issued on 15 December 1740, exactly one day before the Prussian army invaded the province of Silesia and war officially commenced.¹³⁰ In the same sentence the Council of State mentioned the passing of both 'the highest head of the German Empire and the Empress of Great-Russia, both friends of the Republic whose deaths will have consequences that are yet unknown'.¹³¹ Even though the first claims on parts of the Habsburg inheritance had already been made by various German princes, the Council was more concerned with the conflict between Great Britain and Spain, who had only a few years earlier entered into a war over colonial trading rights.¹³² In 1742, after even more German states, including Prussia, had stated their claims on the Austrian Monarchy, and Spain had openly entered the war claiming parts of the Habsburg's Italian possessions, the Council of State

¹²⁸ NL-NA, 1.01.19, Raad van State, 1581-1795, inventory number 2229, General Petition 1740, 1. 'tot bevestiging van de rust en vrede, waar van de Republicq nu soo lange jaaren buiten, en tegen verwagting gejouilleert heeft'.

¹²⁹ NL-HA, 1..01.19, 2229, 1940, 2. 'de continuatie van de vrede wel niet hoopeloos is, maar men bespeurt egter tusschen Ryken, en Mogentheeden, waar meede deese Staat in vriendschap is, eenige verwydering, en ofschoon de smartelijke wensch van den Raad van Staate is, dat de voorschreeve vonken van tweedragt by tyds gedooft en uitgeblust, moogen worden'.

¹³⁰ Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession*, 59.

¹³¹ NL-NA, 1.01.19, Raad van State, 1581-1795, inventory number 2229, General Petition 1741, 1. "de onverwagte dood van het Opperhoofd van het Duitsche Ryk, en van de Keiserin van Groot-Rusland, met welke beide deese Republicq in vriendschap was; het blyft voor als nog onseeker, wat influentie de voorschreeve twee gevallen sullen maaken op de gemoederen van die die geen en, dewelke daar bye enig belang sullen vermeinen te hebben'.

¹³² For more information on the conflict that would enter the history books as the War of Jenkins's Ear, and would eventually be subsumed by the wider War of the Austrian Succession: R. Harding, *The Emergence of Britain's global naval supremacy: the war of 1739-1748* (Woodbridge 2010).

manifestly stated that in none of these troubles engulfing Europe, 'the Republic was directly concerned'.¹³³ At no point during the first four years of the War of the Austrian Succession the provincial estates were reminded of the treaty obligations that officially committed the Dutch Republic to the defence of Maria Theresa. She was not even mentioned as sole heir to Emperor Charles VI.

The complete disregard to the plight of Maria Theresa becomes even more peculiar when taking into consideration the upsurge in political pamphlets that were published over the question whether or not the Republic should come to the aid of the Queen of Hungary, as the daughter of Charles VI was now commonly referred to. While during the War of the Spanish Succession most pamphlets that circulated in the Dutch Republic had been translations from the most popular pamphlets that were published in Great Britain, this time most of the publications were of Dutch origin, and mainly urged the States General to take their responsibility and declare war on the enemies of the beleaguered queen. For one author this was simply a consequence of the treaties that the Republic had signed with Austria, both in 1715 concerning the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands, and in 1731 when they Republic recognised the Pragmatic Sanction, and thus Maria Theresa's rights to the Habsburg inheritance.¹³⁴ Another pamphleteer went even further, and invoked the old image of the Dutch Republic as a bulwark of the Balance of Power, fearing the loss of the freedom of the entirety to Europe if Austria was not saved from total destruction.¹³⁵ Whatever the reasons or motivations writers had for supporting or not supporting Maria Theresa, unlike in the General Petitions, in the public debate the issue featured prominently.

Even though the Council of State saw no reason for the Republic to get involved in any of the conflicts dominating Europe, this was no reason for the provincial estates to rest assured in the country's aloofness. The Council prayed for 'God almighty, in his favour, to divert all the sad disasters from the dear fatherland, and that all the dark clouds, that seem to want to shower over the state, might disappear'.¹³⁶ There was a consideration of a substantial threat that the Republic would still be dragged into the conflict, and therefore the country had to rearm itself, since 'there was nothing

¹³³ NL-NA, 1.01.19, Raad van State, 1581-1795, inventory number 2229, General Petition 1742, 1. 'Ofschoon de Republicq in allen deesen niet direct geconcerneert is'.

¹³⁴ NL-KB, Knuttel Catalogue, Inventory number 17260, *Redenerend verhoog van een Republyks gezinden*, (Amsterdam 1742), 2.

¹³⁵ NL-KB, Knuttel Catalogue, Inventory number 17267, W. van Haren, *'T Verlangen van Europa; of Zedig Onderzoek, of de Vereenigde Nederlanden in de tegenwoordige tyds-omstandigheden zig kunnen houden buiten 't Geschil tusschen de Koninginne van Hungarye en Bohemen, en eenige tegen Haare Majesteit verbonden Vorsten*, (The Hague 1742), 54-55.

¹³⁶ NL-NA, 1.01.19, Raad van State, 1581-1795, inventory number 2229, General Petition 1743, 1. 'Dat God Almagtig in sijne gunste alle droevige rampen van het lieve Vaderland afwenden sal, en dat alle donkere wolken, die op den Staat schynen te willen nederstorten, verdwynen moogen'.

more necessary, than in order to maintain the peace, one had to arm itself against war'.¹³⁷ Uncertain where the Republic might be struck first, the Council of State focussed on both the protection of the country at sea and through the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands. These two defensive measures had already been frequently insisted upon during the War of the Spanish Succession. In the present uncertain times, rearmament at sea was essential, since 'the Republic was heavily invested in trade, [...] and commerce could hardly prosper without decent protection, especially in a time when all the neighbouring states were enhancing their fleets and the events in Europe were so uncertain'.¹³⁸ As during the later years of the War of the Spanish Succession the paramount importance of trade for the wealth and prestige of the country was mentioned in practically every General Petition during the early 1740s, and was considered one of the most important aspects the Provinces needed to invest money in. The second issue that was frequently mentioned was the state of the Barrier fortifications. The militia of the country was considered too small, since the Barrier Treaty signed with Austria and Great Britain in 1715 obligated the country to 'employ twelve thousand men to occupy the fortresses in the Austrian Netherlands'.¹³⁹ The Council was content being in possession of the Barrier, since it greatly enhanced the protection of the country, but this did come at a price, which most Provinces were unable, or unwilling, to pay.

The Council of State blamed the Provinces for 'great weakness and neglect, where the security and the defence of the state were concerned'.¹⁴⁰ Fortresses and supply storages were in a pitiful state due to that fact that the different defects that had plagued the check book of the Dutch Republic ever since the end of the War of the Spanish Succession still had not been paid off. In the General Petition for 1740, mention was made of the State of War issued already in 1728, focussing mainly on issues of maintenance of the fortifications that up until that point still had not been paid for completely.¹⁴¹ Even more than during the War of the Spanish Succession it were the monetary problems of the Council of State that dominated the General Petitions in the first years of the War of the Austrian Succession.

¹³⁷ NL-NA, 1.01.19, 2229, 1742, 2. 'is er niets noodsaakelijker, dan dat men om de vrede te behouden, sig tegens den oorlog wapene'.

¹³⁸ NL-NA, 1.01.19, 2229, 1741, 6. 'de Republicq, dewelke by den Koophandel soo kragtdaartig geïnteresseert is, [...] de Commerce onmogelijk niet bedreeven kunnende worden sonder behoorlijke protectie, voor al in een tyd dat de nabuurige Mogentheden soo sterke Armatures ter Zee doen, en het onseker blyft, wat keer de saaken in Europa neemen sullen'.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 3. 'twaalf duizend Man te emploieeren tot besetting van de Plaatsen in de Oostenryksche Nederlanden'.

¹⁴⁰ NL-NA, 1.01.19, 2229, 1743, 7. 'Indien egter omtrent eenig point, de securiteit, en de defensie van den Staat raakende, seedert een geruimen tyd een groote slapheid, en versuim is geweest'.

¹⁴¹ NL-NA, 1.01.19, 2229, 1740, 5.

As can be shown from analysing the petitions for the first four years of the War of the Austrian Succession, they contained little argumentation on why the Republic should go to war. The Council of State was basically ignoring the fact that one of the traditional allies of the Republic, to which - by treaty - they owed their assistance, was in grave danger of being completely dismembered by its enemies. The petitions also show why the Council of State decided to refrain from committing the country to the cause of Maria Theresa for as long as possible, contradictory to the increasing public opinion in favour of the Queen of Hungary. The pitiful state of the Republic's finances, with outstanding sums of money commissioned over decades ago still waiting to be paid, meant that even smaller pleas to raise the defence budget, for instance to repair fortifications or raise the number of troops stationed at the border, fell on deaf ears. The country was in no state to uphold the Balance of Power like it had done in the past, or even to simply acquiesce to their treaty obligations, even though a substantial part of the opinion leaders might have wished otherwise.

1744-1747: The power of treaty obligations.

At the outset of the War of the Austrian Succession, Maria Theresa had found herself threatened from all sides. While the weakened Habsburg army was beaten back in Silesia by superior Prussian forces, a Bavarian army, supported by French auxiliaries, invaded Bohemia. Defeat seemed complete when on December 19, 1741, Charles of Wittelsbach, the Prince-electoral of Bavaria (1697 – 1745) was elected Holy Roman Emperor Charles VII in Prague, the recently conquered Bohemian capital. For the first time in over 300 years, the imperial crown rested on a head that was not of the House of Habsburg.¹⁴²

The French/Bavarian armies made the mistake of marching into Bohemia when they had the chance of capturing Vienna, a city that was ill-prepared for a long siege. This gave the Austrians the chance to reorganize their armies and Maria Theresa the chance to enlist the help of her Hungarian subjects. In the summer of 1741, Maria Theresa made a journey to appear before the Hungarian diet at Pressburg, present-day Bratislava. Holding her infant-son in her arms she made a desperate plea for help to the Hungarian nobles, with tears in her eyes placing her fate and that of her children into their hands. This emotional display led to an outburst of sympathy for the young queen, with the Hungarians shouting: '*Vitam et sanguinem pro rege nostro*', willing to give their lives and blood to protect Maria Theresa.¹⁴³ Even though, of the 100.000 mercenaries that were promised, only slightly more than 20.000 were delivered, the symbolic significance of the occasion, proved more important. On 25 June, Maria Theresa was crowned ruler of Hungary, which made most of her other unoccupied

¹⁴² Ingraio, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, 152-155.

¹⁴³ W. Monter, *The Rise of Female Kings in Europe, 1300-1800* (London 2012) 166-168.

dominions declare in her favour shortly after. Meanwhile her enemies did not manage to present a unified front. Frederick II, content with annexing Silesia - in secret - opened peace negotiations with Maria Theresa. This gave her the opportunity to relocate her Silesian armies to fight the Bavarian threat, and with great success. On the same day the Bavarian elector was crowned Emperor in Frankfurt, early in 1742, Munich, the Bavarian capital, surrendered to an Austrian army, leaving him a homeless and destitute emperor.¹⁴⁴ The immediate threat to the survival of the Habsburg monarchy had been averted.

It was not until the General Petition issued for the year 1744 that a change can be noticed in the way the Council of State regarded the conflict. For the first time since the outbreak of the war, mention was made of Maria Theresa, 'hereditary daughter of the highest praised monarch [Charles VI], and universal heiress to all his possessions, but at the same time under attack by various powers with the intention to deprive her of the most important parts of her inheritance, even though they had been the ones guaranteeing her succession'.¹⁴⁵ Surprisingly, the Council of State did not stop at just mentioning the plight of Maria Theresa. For the first time actual mention was made of the aid that was to be lent to the Queen of Hungary, specifically in defence of the Austrian Netherlands, that had become one of the main theatres of the war, especially after France officially declared war on Austria in the spring of 1744.¹⁴⁶ The Council considered this 'an obligation, derived from the acceptance of the Treaty of Vienna of 1731, but also in the Republic's own best interest, since the downfall or weakening of the House of Austria would put not just the freedom of the Republic, but of the entirety of Europe in jeopardy'.¹⁴⁷ A reason was even given for the fact why these treaty obligations only surfaced now, after the Council of State had neglected to mention them for the first three years of the conflict. The fact that no prior aid had been given to the allies was attributed to the fact that the Republic, due to the brewing of war, and with so many foreign troops stationed at

¹⁴⁴ Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession*, 84-94.

¹⁴⁵ NL-NA, 1.01.19, Raad van State, 1581-1795, inventory number 2229, General Petition 1744, 2. 'Erfdogter van hoogstgedagte Vorst, en universeele Erfgenaame van alle sijne Staaten doo verscheide Mogentheeden ter selver tyd aangevallen wierd, met intentie om haar van alle, immers van het importantste gedeelte van haar Possessien te ontsetten, en dat onaangesien deselve aan haar door magtige Koningen, en Staaten gegarandeert waaren'.

¹⁴⁶ R. Browning, *The War of the Austrian Succession* (New York 1993), 149-152; France had even offered the States General to refrain from making the Southern Netherlands a theatre of war, in return for Dutch neutrality in the matter of the Austrian succession: P. Geyl, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Stam. Deel IV 1701-1751* (Amsterdam 1961), 1083.

¹⁴⁷ NL-NA, 1.01.19, 2229, 1744, 2. 'Een verpligting, waar toe deesen Staat absolut gehouden was door de accessie aan het Tractaat van Weenen van den jaare 1731, en uit hoofde van haar eige belang, en behoudnisse, als met geen indifferentie kunnende aansien den ondergang, of verswakking van het voorschreeve Huis, waar van het notoire gevolg soude zyn geweest, dat een groot gedeelte van Europa overheerst hadde kunnen worden, en niet alleen de vryheid van de Republicq, maar van geheel Europa selfs in de waagschaal gesteld soude zyn geweest'.

her doorstep, was cut off from the House of Austria, and prevented from coming to the aid of the Queen of Hungary and Bohemia'.¹⁴⁸

Even though the initial concern relating to the Balance of Power in Europe seems to closely resemble the argumentation of the Continental tradition, most of the argumentation throughout the rest of the war was of a remarkably more Maritime character. Every petition contained a fairly similar sentence, in which the aid to the House of Austria was justified as a way to protect 'the valuable assets of freedom and true religion, bequeathed by the ancestors, which can never be defended and protected with too much gravity and bravery'.¹⁴⁹ Argumentations like these closely resembled the ones already given in the War of the Spanish Succession, during which the possessions and blood sacrificed by the ancestors for the preservation of freedom and the Protestant religion during the Dutch Revolt [1566 – 1648] was a frequently invoked argument for continuing the war. However, the most frequently used argument during this conflict, and which was most elaborated in the General Petitions, concerned the treaties that bound the Republic to actively aiding the cause of Maria Theresa. In an accompanying letter to the General Petition for 1745, the States General made clear that there were 'neighbouring powers threatened by violence and war, with whom the Republic is allied, and thus obligated to help, even though the State itself was not at war'.¹⁵⁰

This dichotomy, of active military support in the defence of a beleaguered ally, while still claiming to maintain strict neutrality and not really being directly involved in the conflict can be considered the main characteristic of the Maritime character of the General Petitions in this period. Apparently, the Council of State had no problems with writing down this duality. France was at that point considered to be the principal enemy by both the Habsburgs and the British, though never mentioned as such in the General Petitions. In the petition for 1745 mention was made of 'the two powerful allies of the Republic, against whom a war is fought by one of the most powerful states. However, the Republic is blessed to live in peace and friendship with this country'.¹⁵¹ Later on in the same petition, mention was even made of the fact that, 'even though the Republic's power is greatly

¹⁴⁸ NL-NA, 1.01.19, 2229, 1744, 2. 'en door het ontstaan van een oorlog in het Noorden alle hulpe aan het voorschreeve Vorstelijk Huis was afgesneeden, en de Republicq wegens haare voorschreeve soo ongelukkige gesteldheid, en op haar Frontieren soo veel vreemde Troupes hebbende, belet wierd aan de Koninginne van Hungaryen, en Boheemen toen ter tyd eenige assistentie te geeven'.

¹⁴⁹ NL-NA, 1.01.19, 2229, 1747, 3. 'De waarde panden van vryheidt en zuivere Godtsdienst, die nooit te zorgvuldig kunnen werden bewaart, nog te duur en met te veel ernst en te dapper verdedigt en beschermt'.

¹⁵⁰ NL-NA, 1.01.19, 2229, 1745, *letter States General*. 'ten opsigte van de Mogentheeden, aan welke den Staat door Alliantie verbonden is, en aan welke door geweld en oorlog aangetast zynde, haare hulpe, volgens de Tractaaten verschuldigt is, als ten opsigte van de Staat selve, die, schoon nog niet zynde in een gedeclareerde oorlog'.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1. 'met betrekking tot twee van haare magtige Geallieerden, tegens welke den oorlog word gevoert door eenige van de voornaamste Mogentheeden, met welke deese Republicq het geluk heeft, in vrede, en vriendschap te leeven'.

reduced since the last war, they are contributing as much as they can, without giving any other power cause for offence'.¹⁵²

The Council's wish to formally uphold strict neutrality becomes difficult to understand when viewed in respect to the lightning speed with which the French were advancing in the Austrian Netherlands. Together with Italy, from 1745 onward, the Southern Netherlands became the principal theatre of the War of the Austrian Succession, after the war in Germany had been resolved, mostly in the favour of Austria. Due to the fact that the Republic was heavily involved in the Austrian Netherlands through their occupation of the ring of barrier fortresses, the threat the French posed to the outer wall of the country became increasingly difficult to reconcile with the wish to remain at peace with France. In 1745 first mention was made of the actual threat to the safety of the country, due to the fact that 'the interests of the Republic were compromised in the Austrian Netherlands, a region that functioned as an outer wall and where some of the most strategically located cities were guarded by Dutch forces. Now these cities were being violently put under the control of France, disregarding the fact that France was not only at peace with the Republic, but also an ally, that had previously guaranteed the possession of the Barrier by the Republic'.¹⁵³ In another accompanying letter from the States General, this time issued on behalf of the General Petition of 1746, mention was made of the government's 'sincere anxiety over the current perilous predicament of the state of affairs, and the apparent danger the Republic is in; the wellbeing of the country is hanging by a thread, in the face of a superior power completely overrunning the Austrian Netherlands, and thus depriving the Republic of their wall and barrier, for which an eleven year war was fought, costing a lot of blood and treasures from which the Republic still had not completely recovered: the fires of war had finally reached the old borders of the state'.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² NL-NA, 1.01.19, 2229, 1745, 1. 'en soo veel haare kragten, vermindert door de voorige oorlogen, die zy voor het gemeene welweesen gevoert hebben, het na de tyds omstandigheid hebben toegelaaten, en wel op soodanige voet, dat daar door aan andere Mogentheeden geen reedenen van offensie konden worden gegeven'.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 1-2. 'De Republicq selfs in de Oostenryksche Nederlanden, dewelke aan haar tot een Voormuur geschikt zyn, aangetast is geworden, in soo verre dat de meeste Steeden, en Plaatsen, welke tot meerder sekerheid door de eige Troupes van deesen Staat bewaart wierden, met geweld ingenoomen, en onder de magt van Vrankryk gebragt zyn geworden, onaangesien men niet alleen met de voorsz. Kroon in vrede is, maar ook selfs in eene Alliantie, volgens welke de voorschreeve Possessien aan den Staat geguarandeert zyn geworden'.

¹⁵⁴ NL-NA, 1.01.19, 2229, 1746, *letter States General*. 'te regt opgevatte bekommering over de jeegenwoordige hachelijke toestand van saaken in het generaal, en over het oogenschynlijk gevaar, waar in de Republicq in het bysonder sig bevind, [...] 's Lands behoudenis hangt als aan een zyde draad: Want was in het voorleede jaar den Staat, schoon niet zynde in een gedeclareerden oorlog, in haare Barriere feitelijk aangetast, het is dit jaar daar by niet gebleeven, maar het grootste gedeelte van de Oostenryksche Nederlanden is door een superieure magt overheerscht, den Staat is daar door werkelijk ontset en beroofd van haare Voormuur en Barriere, de vrugt van een elfjaargen oorlog, die soo veel Bloed, en sulke immense schatten heeft gekost, dat 's Lands finantien daar

It remained unclear from the General Petitions what exactly made the Council of State change their policy and support of Maria Theresa in 1744. The most likely incentive was the danger posed to the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands by the advancing French armies, and subsequently its effect on the safety of the entire Republic. Without aid from the British and the Dutch, the beleaguered Austrian forces in the Southern Netherlands did not stand a chance, exposing the Republic to a possible French invasion. However, aid was given with the greatest possible reluctance. The way the Council of State legitimised the aid to Austria, and thus the involvement in the conflict, definitely demonstrate more of a Maritime tradition than during the entire War of the Spanish Succession. Surprisingly the importance of trade for the Republic ceased to be mentioned in the petitions altogether after 1743, and while there was some talk about protecting the freedom and religion of the country, both essential Maritime argumentations, the main argument used was the one concerning the treaty obligations, an argument that had never once featured during the previous conflict. Notwithstanding some incidental mention of protecting the Balance of Power and the freedom of Europe, the entire argumentation in favour of the war was constructed around the fact that the Republic was practically forced to help the Austrians, even though the Council of State absolutely preferred to have stayed completely neutral in the conflict, since the Republic was in no financial state to commit itself to a wider war. However, when the petition for 1747 was drafted in late 1746, nobody could have imagined just how disastrous the war would turn out for the Republic.

1748: A veritable *Annus Horribilis*.

In early 1747, *maréchal-général* Saxe, the commander of the French forces in the Austrian Netherlands, was finally given permission from Versailles to invade the territory of the Dutch Republic, even though, as was so frequently stated in the General Petitions, the Republic was officially still neutral, and even more important, bound by treaties with France.¹⁵⁵ The results from this French invasion would be devastating for the Republic and completed their fall from great-power status. In April, the northern part of the County of Flanders, that was under direct control of the Dutch, and thus no part of the Austrian Netherlands, was invaded, and subsequently completely overrun.¹⁵⁶ This invasion would culminate in the fall of Bergen op Zoom, one of the key fortresses on the border of the Republic, which was, by all standards of that time, considered nigh impregnable. The fall of Bergen op Zoom left the heart of the Republic exposed to a French invasion.

van niet een weesentlijk gevoel hebben: het vuur des oorlogs is daar door tot op de oude en eige Frontieren van den Staat genaderd’.

¹⁵⁵ Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession*, 171-172.

¹⁵⁶ O. van Nimwegen, *‘Dien fatalen dag’ Het beleg van Bergen op Zoom in 1747* (Bergen op Zoom 1997), 5.

Meanwhile, the Republic was in turmoil, which is also noticeable by the date the General Petition for 1748 was issued. Usually the petitions were distributed to the Provincial Estates around December the year preceding, but this time the petition was dated 25 April 1748, more than four months later. The chaos engulfing the Council of State was also clearly visible in the change of the standard format of the General Petition, which had stayed the same since at least the beginning of the war.

Evidently, the country was in immediate danger and needed to be protected from France. The Council of State could no longer pretend that the Republic could remain neutral in the conflict, and had to commit fully to the treaty obligations with Austria. The times of pretending that France was still a valuable friend and ally were also over. The Council of State opened a reservoir of argumentations against France that had not been mentioned since the closing of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1713. Once again, after more than three decades of peaceful co-existence with France, the country was once again the tyrant, plotting to subject the entirety of Europe to its will. As during the previous conflict, the petition commenced with a narrative of historical events since the death of Emperor Charles VI in 1740. 'The true and only object of France in stirring up the troubles following his death, had been to light and fan the flame of war in neighbouring Germany, for the sole purpose of humiliating, and the potential total destruction of, the House of Austria, and conquering the Austrian Netherlands'.¹⁵⁷ For centuries, this had been the main objectives of French foreign policy, and the reason France had concluded several treaties. For instance the Barrier Treaty from 1715 had just been signed so as not to worry the Dutch for the time being. France had done everything in their might to make the Dutch feel safe behind their Barrier, meanwhile declaring war on all their allies, 'with the sole intention, to attach the entire Austrian Netherlands as a precious treasure to the French crown, after which France surely would have found no other state that would be able to prevent her in her despotic designs to declare the law for the rest of Europe'.¹⁵⁸

On multiple occasions, the Council of State used arguments and even complete passages, that seemed to be directly taken from the General Petitions issued in the final years of the War of the Spanish Succession. The Republic was not fighting the present war 'out of considerations of

¹⁵⁷ Gelders Archief, Arnhem, (hereafter: NL-GA), 0124, Hof van Gelre en Zutphen, 1543-1811, inventory number 2174, General Petition 1748, 1-2. 'De waere en eenige oogmerken van Vrankrijk in het verwecken van die Troubelen, en in het ontsteeken en aanblaesen van het Oorlogsvuur in het nabuurig Duitsland, alleenlijk bedoelden deze twee groote eindens, te weten: de vernederinge en was het mogelijk den totalen ondergang des huyzes van Oostenrijk, en het conquesteeren der eertijds Spaansche, nu Oostenrijksche Nederlanden'.

¹⁵⁸ NL-HGA, 0124, 2174, 1748, 4. 'met als plan, de geheele Oostenrijksche Nederlanden als een kostelijk kleijnoot aan de Fransche Kroon te hegten; waar na zeekerlijk Vrankrijk geene Mogendheid meer in staat zoude hebben geagt, om haere heersch-zugtige desseinen te traverseeren, of haar voortaan te beletten de wet voor te schrijven aan het overige van Europa'.

honour and glory, territorial expansion or the enlargement of the country's possessions. Such wars, even though sometimes just, were always harmful, and should thus be carefully avoided'.¹⁵⁹ As during the War of the Spanish Succession, this was especially the case for countries, like the Republic, that depended on commerce and navigation. On the contrary, the Republic's two main goals were both 'the maintenance of the liberty of Europe, and the preservation of the state, two goals so righteous and so just, that they should be considered the grandest objectives states and people in this world could wish to obtain'.¹⁶⁰

Even though the preservation of the balance and liberty of Europe was frequently mentioned, the Council of State realised perfectly well that - first of all - the Republic itself needed to be secured, since figuratively speaking 'Hannibal was at the gates'.¹⁶¹ 'Since the founding of the Republic, there had never been a time in which the same urgency was being felt, and the state of events had been so dangerous, [...] lest future generations would be reduced to slavery'.¹⁶² The fall of Bergen op Zoom was also specifically referred to as 'a loss so heavy, and a damage so great, that the Council considered it evident that the provincial estates would understand the weight and importance of this occasion, even more since France could now invade and harass the country's old possessions and frontiers'.¹⁶³ Finally, the Provinces were requested to gather all possible resources for 'the defence and protection of the dear fatherland and all those to whom freedom and religion was the most precious'.¹⁶⁴ However, the Council of State must have realised that this request would be in vain, as it had been in the past years, when gathering the necessary funds to defend the Republic had been nigh impossible. For the first time the petition was concluded with the wish for the regents 'to pray to the almighty God, that He might be pleased to look down from heaven upon the suffering Netherlands, assist the country, and deliver it from all danger'.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ NL-HGA, 0124, 2174, 1748, 5. 'uit eenige insigten van eer en glorie, van uitbreiding der Landpaelen, van vergrooting der bezittingen [...]. Hoedanige Oorlogen, wel somtijds regtvaardig, egter als schadelijk, zorgvuldig behooren vermijdt te worden'.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 6. 'zijn beiden tot maintien der vrijheid van Europa, en tot haar eigen behoud en conservatie, twee saeken soo equitabel, soo regtmatig, [...] dat se moeten werden aangesien en gehouden voor het grootste voorwerp dat staeten of menschen in deze waereld hebben te betragten'.

¹⁶¹ NL-GA, 0124, 2174, 1748, 24. 'Hannibal ante portas!'

¹⁶² Ibid., 24-29. 'dat er zedert de grondlegging van de Republicq, nooit een tijd geweest is, waarin meer op dezelve heeft moeten werden geurgeert, off waarin [...] de gesteldheden der saeken nooit soo gevaarlijk en soo calamiteux zijn geweest, [...] Ondraeglijk en voor de posteriteit onverantwoordelijk Jock van Slavernije'.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 11. 'Een verlies soo swaar, en een schade soo groot, dat de Raad zich versekert houd, Dat U Hoog Mog. met haar daar van al het gewigt en d'importance op het smertelijkste gevoelen, te meer vermits Vrankrijk invadeerde en infesteerde de oude bezittingen en frontieren van den Staat'.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 63. 'Tot de defensie en behoud van het Lieve Vaderland, voorstanders van Vrijheid en godsdienst dierbaar lief en waard is'.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 63. 'Biddende wijders den almagtigen God, dat het Hem behage uit Sijnen hoogen hemel neder te zien op het bedrukte en noodlijdende Nederland, hetzelfde bij te staen, en te redden uit alle zijne gevaeren'.

Whether or not attributable to divine providence, only six months later, in October 1748, peace was concluded at Aix-la-Chapelle.¹⁶⁶ Even though no declaration of war had been issued or received by the States General during the entire war, a peace treaty was published on 18 October.¹⁶⁷ First and foremost mention was made of the wish, by all belligerents, for the restoration of peace and quiet in Europe, by way of a 'Christian, universal and everlasting peace, both on land and at sea'.¹⁶⁸ Even though Maria Theresa did lose Silesia to Prussia, all the gains the French had made in the Netherlands were to be reversed, meaning the Dutch Republic regained control of the cities of Bergen op Zoom and Maastricht, and all the occupied territory in Flanders and Brabant that had previously belonged to the State. However, no mention was made of the return of the right to the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands the Dutch had so adamantly wished to receive after the War of the Spanish Succession. Most likely, the fact that the Barrier had proven to be useless in keeping out the French, and in effect exposed the weakness of the Dutch Republic, contributed to the fact that the negotiators did not mention it. What was certain, after eight years of denial, financial problems and military disaster, was that the time the Republic had the power to be a major player on the European stage had gone.

Conclusion.

When comparing the Republic's attitude in War of the Austrian Succession with the War of the Spanish Succession it is obvious that the Republic played a very different role in both conflicts. From one of the main belligerents, and practically the core of the Allied war-effort against France and Spain during the Spanish successional crisis, the Republic behaved as a secondary-rate auxiliary force, unable to mount any serious resistance against the French army threatening its borders during the War of the Austrian Succession. Contrary to the findings in the first chapter – in the case of the War of the Austrian Succession - Boogman's conclusions about the dominance of the Maritime tradition in Dutch foreign policy persevere. Nevertheless, the General Petitions demonstrated again that also in this period the Council of State used a dual approach in its argumentation and thus did not endorse one single tradition explaining the foreign policy of the Dutch Republic.

Even though the actions of the Council of State during the first four years of the War of the Austrian Succession can hardly be considered to show explicit foreign policy, the deliberate choice to ignore the Republic's obligations to Maria Theresa clearly show the dominance of a

¹⁶⁶ H. Duchhardt, 'Die Niederlande und der Aachener Friede (1748)' in: S. Groenveld et al (eds.), *Tussen Munster & Aken. De Nederlandse Republiek als grote mogendheid (1648-1748)* (Maastricht 2005), 67-73.

¹⁶⁷ NL-KB, Knuttel Catalogue, Inventory number 17833, *Generale en Definitif Vreede-Tractaat, gesloten tot Aaken den 18 October 1748, tusschen de volgende Mogentheden*, (18-10-1748).

¹⁶⁸ NL-KB, 17833, 8. 'Daar zal een Christelyke, universeede en altoos duurende Vrede zyn'.

Maritime tradition, focussing on neutrality and abstention from continental affairs. This denial was a far cry from the language used in, for instance, the declaration of war issued in 1702, in which the Republic vowed to uphold the Balance of Power in Europe against the threat of French Universal Monarchy. During this 'Austrian' war, the Republic's government preferred to stay outside the conflict for as long as possible, and ideally would not get involved at all. Even though there were clear signs in political pamphlets that the public did not agree on this course of in-action. This way of policy making of the Council of State hindered using the methodology of war legitimization as formulated in chapter one, apart from, labelling the Council of State's complete abjuration of any responsibility to come to the aid of Austria as quintessentially Maritime in origin.

Due to an ever increasing French threat in the Austrian Netherlands, this initial phase of denial ended in 1744, when the Council of State for the first time openly showed support for the young Queen of Hungary and Bohemia. With her forces stretched thin across numerous battlegrounds in Germany and Italy, Austria was unable to counter French aggression without Dutch aid. This meant the French could easily occupy the Southern Netherlands. However, the petitions show that the argumentation of the Maritime tradition remained most used in legitimising the support for the Austrians, even though in a completely other way than during the War of the Spanish Succession. Apart from some minor mentions of protecting the freedom and religion of the state - in itself Maritime argumentations - the main focus was on the treaty obligations. According to the General Petition from 1744 the Republic was bound to the cause of Maria Theresa ever since 1731. No argument was given as to why the Council refrained from mentioning this obligation during the first years of the war, apart from claiming that the turmoil of war had prevented the Republic from actively aiding the Austrians. However, it is clear, that if this had actually been the case, mention of the treaty obligations would have been made from the outset of the war, and not only brought up after the successional crisis entered the fourth year of open conflict. The reluctance of being dragged into the war, as seen in how the Council of State almost 'blamed' active involvement on treaty obligations, was further emphasised by the fact that the Council refused to recognise the fact that the Republic could no longer remain neutral. Even at the point where the French had occupied the entire Southern Netherlands - including the once so coveted Barrier - and were ready to strike at the Republic at a moment's notice - the Council of State persisted in expressing how they were still at peace with France.

In 1748, faced with a French invasion and the country's integrity at stake, the Council of State pulled out all the stops, as they feared the country was at the brink of collapse. First of all, the time of pretending France was still a valuable ally was finally over. France became the principal enemy of the state, as it had been during the War of the Spanish Succession. It is thus in the General Petition

written for the year 1748 that the hypothesis of Boogman falls short. The Council of State used some of the exact same argumentations against France as they had used in the previous conflict. And for the first time during the entire war Continental argumentations were at least of equal importance as the Maritime ones. France posed a threat, not just to the wellbeing of the Dutch Republic but to the entirety of Europe, since now it seemed France had resuscitated the ambitions of becoming a Universal Monarchy, even though the exact term was not used, as it was in the General Petition for 1710.¹⁶⁹ The Maritime argumentations of joining in the war because of treaty obligations were completely lacking. The Dutch Republic was in grave danger, and this required a totally different approach from the Council of State. Thus again pragmatic considerations won over traditionalist tendencies.

As to the question posed in this chapter, what the General Petitions tell us about the great power status of the Dutch Republic during the War of the Austrian Succession, it is clear that the Republic was financially on its last legs. The Republic retained the possession of the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands at the outset of the war, which, according to some historians made them still a great power.¹⁷⁰ The simple fact of the matter, however, is that the Republic was – as seen in the General Petition for 1740 – still in the process of repaying the debts inflicted by the War of the Spanish Succession, and thus in no state to enter into a new major European conflict. The financial problems that remained dominant in the General Petitions throughout the entire period were the reason the Republic chose to remain neutral in the conflict in the first place. When pressured by French encroachment, it were the financial problems that contributed to the fact that the Republic could not mount any decent defence against the French onslaught. The Barrier, that had been so important to the Dutch in previous decades, became completely obsolete. In the War of the Austrian Succession, Europe as a continent was confronted with the fact that the Dutch Republic had lost the power to be one of the major players in the field and this was definitely already the case at the outbreak of the war.

¹⁶⁹ NL-HUA, 233, 654-54, 1710, 5. 'tot het établissement van de universele Monarchie, van die Kroon en tot een algemeene subjectie van Europa, en sulcks oock, tot die, van desen Staat'.

¹⁷⁰ Van Nimwegen, *De Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden als grote mogendheid*, 33.

Chapter IV. The Seven Years' War

The advent of Dutch neutrality

In this fourth and final chapter, attention will be paid to the conduct of the Dutch Republic during the Seven Years' War, which lasted from 1756 till 1763. After the War of the Austrian Succession, in which the Republic had tried in vain to uphold their neutrality, the Seven Years' War was the first conflict in which the Republic successfully remained aloof from any involvement in the conflict. This neutrality would be upheld till the outbreak of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, which started in 1780.¹⁷¹ According to Boogman, Dutch foreign policy during the Seven Years' War, much like during the War of the Austrian Succession, was clearly dominated by the Maritime tradition of neutrality and abstention from European continental politics.¹⁷² Since the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands had become practically obsolete after 1748, in the typology of Aalbers the period was thus also characterised by the Politics of Abstention, focussing on abandoning the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands, since it was considered too far away and too expensive, and refraining from using defensive alliances to safeguard the neutrality and integrity of the Republic.¹⁷³

During the first years of the War of the Austrian Succession, the Dutch wish for neutrality resulted in the fact that the General Petitions contained hardly any information on what foreign policy for the Dutch Republic the Council of State was pursuing. This changed notably during the Seven Years' War. Especially during the initial years of the conflict the General Petitions contained a lot of information on the events raised in Europe, and the challenges they posed for the Republic. Even during the conflict - in which the Republic was explicitly not involved - the General Petitions reveal the motivations for the Republic's foreign policy and whether or not the Council was directed by any sort of long term tradition while following this policy.

¹⁷¹ For more on the relationship between Great Britain and the Dutch Republic and the events leading up to the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War: H.M. Scott, 'Sir Joseph Yorke and the Waning of the Anglo-Dutch Alliance, 1747-1788' in: B. Moore and H. van Nierop (ed.), *Colonial Empires Compared: Britain and the Netherlands, 1750-1850* (Aldershot 2003), 11-31.

¹⁷² Boogman, *Achtergronden, tendenties en tradities*, 18-19.

¹⁷³ Aalbers, *De Republiek en de vrede van Europa*, 26-36.

Context: The Diplomatic Revolution of 1756.

The outbreak of the Seven Years' War can hardly be understood without taking into consideration the *Renversement des Alliances*, or Diplomatic Revolution, which occurred in 1756.¹⁷⁴ This series of treaties, that brought an end to the system of alliances that had characterised Europe for centuries, found its origin at the end of the War of the Austrian Succession in 1748. First of all, after the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748), the Austrians were frustrated with their tradition allies, the Maritime Powers of Great Britain and the Dutch Republic. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the Dutch Republic, due to financial problems, was unable to come to the aid of Maria Theresa, and had basically become an unreliable and useless ally. Less obvious than the Dutch, the British had also let the young Queen of Hungary and Bohemia down by not adequately supporting her financially and militarily. Even worse, the British had not backed up Austria's territorial claims during the negotiations of the peace treaty. In their turn, the British were not as sure as they had been in the past about Austria's ability to function as a proper counter-balance to French might on the continent. They regarded Prussia, the state that had been on the rise as a potential great power ever since the conquest of the rich province of Silesia from Austria during the War of the Austrian Succession, as a potential new candidate to become the European cornerstone of the British anti-French foreign policy. Likewise, the relationship between Prussia and France, its principle backer during the 1740s, had also been straining.¹⁷⁵

In January of 1756, Great Britain and Prussia signed the Westminster Convention, in which Britain promised not to support Austria should she try to regain Silesia from Prussia. In return Prussia would defend the minor German state of Hanover, of which the British monarch was the elector, against a potential French invasion. Neither of the signatory powers would attack the other's possessions, by which they hoped to guarantee peace in the entirety of Germany. The Low Countries were – at the specific request of Prussia – not included in the territory that both countries wanted to neutralise, which was of special interest to the Dutch Republic.¹⁷⁶ In response to this unexpected move from Great Britain, Maria Theresa sought a rapprochement to Austria's erstwhile archenemy, France. In May of that same year, a defensive alliance between these two great powers was signed in Versailles, where they pledged to come to each other's aid should either be under attack.¹⁷⁷ After the conclusion of this treaty, Maria Theresa's principle aim was to form a European coalition against Prussia. After the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, France and Austria entered into a Second Treaty

¹⁷⁴ For one of the only books that specifically deals with this diplomatic revolution: R. Waddington, *Louis XV et le renversement des alliances. Préliminaires de la Guerre de Sept Ans 1754-1756* (Paris 1896).

¹⁷⁵ D.B. Horn, 'The Diplomatic Revolution', in: J.O. Lindsay, *The New Cambridge Modern History. Volume 7: The Old Regime, 1713-1763* (Cambridge 1957), 440-464, 440-443.

¹⁷⁶ Horn, 'The Diplomatic Revolution', 449.

¹⁷⁷ Waddington, *Louis XV et le renversement des alliances*, 284-332.

of Versailles only a year later, in 1757. In this treaty, France promised to help the Austrians in reclaiming Silesia, for which France would receive the Austrian Netherlands at the end of the conflict.

After the signing of the first Treaty of Versailles, the complete realignment of the European system of alliances already seemed to be a reality, and the stage was now set for the outbreak of the so-called Seven Years' War (1756 – 1773). Since 1754, war was already being waged between France and Great Britain over some disputes of both countries' colonial possessions in North America. Even though Europe becoming a second theatre in this conflict seemed inevitable to many statesmen at that time, it would be Prussia that ignited the flame of war in Europe. Feeling cornered by both France, Austria and Russia, with whom Austria was also in alliance, Frederick II of Prussia ordered a pre-emptive strike against the Duchy of Saxony, after which the Prussians hoped to be able to invade Austrian Bohemia and prevent Maria Theresa from attacking Silesia first.¹⁷⁸ At this point Prussia and Austria were at war, as well as France and Britain. This put the Republic in a tough position, since both of their traditional allies found themselves in opposite camps.

As was the case with the relationship with Austria, the relationship between the Dutch Republic and Great Britain had also been severely strained by the War of the Austrian Succession. The British blamed the Dutch for their weakness and indecisiveness during the conflict, which had resulted in the French occupation of the Southern Netherlands.¹⁷⁹ At sea, the Republic had also failed to be of any assistance against the French, practically unable to provide any seaworthy vessels to come the aid of Britain.¹⁸⁰ On the side of the Republic, there was also growing resentment against the British, which has been attributed to their rising commercial success, while the Republic lagged behind, unable to match the profitable years of the seventeenth century.¹⁸¹ Yet with the Diplomatic Revolution complete, both France and Great Britain wanted to gain the support of the Republic; Britain in the form of an extended Protestant alliance with Prussia, in which the Republic was even envisaged as custodians of a new barrier, this time on the country's eastern frontier, in Prussian-controlled East Frisia. France, on the other hand, hoped to make use of Dutch neutral shipping.¹⁸² However, in the Republic, the Diplomatic Revolution was seen as an opportunity to reconfigure the role of the Republic in European affairs altogether.

¹⁷⁸ E. Robson, 'The Seven Years War', in: J.O. Lindsay, *The New Cambridge Modern History. Volume 7: The Old Regime, 1713-1763* (Cambridge 1957), 465-486, 465-469.

¹⁷⁹ P. Geyl, 'Holland and England during the War of the Austrian Succession', in: *History. The quarterly journal of The Historical Association* (London 1926), vol. 10, 47-51, 47.

¹⁸⁰ R. Prud'homme van Reine, 'De Republiek als grote en kleine mogendheid ter zee (1648-1763)', in: J.R. Bruijn and C.B. Wells (eds.), *Met man en macht. De militaire geschiedenis van Nederland, 1550-2000* (Amsterdam 2003), 105-139, 131-132.

¹⁸¹ Scott, 'Sir Joseph Yorke and the Waning of the Anglo-Dutch Alliance', 11-13.

¹⁸² A.C. Carter, *The Dutch Republic in Europe in the Seven Years War* (London 1971), 69-70.

1756-1763: Upholding Dutch neutrality.

The Dutch Republic did reoccupy the Barrier fortresses in the Austrian Netherlands they had been guaranteed at the end of the War of the Spanish Succession, after France retreated in 1748, even though no mention of it was made in the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. However, the ease with which France had conquered the Barrier during the war had enhanced the feeling among Dutch regents that the Barrier was no longer an adequate way to defend the country against a potential French threat. This feeling grew even stronger after the Austrians entered into the defensive alliance with the French in 1756. The Barrier had been agreed upon by Great Britain, Austria and the Dutch Republic as a means to shield the Republic from French aggression. Now Austria had become an ally of France, so the Barrier system had virtually lost all its value, as had the alliance between the three signatory powers.¹⁸³ The Dutch saw further neutrality as the best option to safeguard the Republic, and the Council of State was tasked with finding the best way to guarantee this neutrality, since both France and Great Britain wanted to commit the Dutch Republic to their cause.

In the General Petition for 1756, issued on 29 December 1755, so only a few weeks before the Westminster Convention was signed between Great Britain and Prussia, already extensive mention was made of the clashes between the French and British in North America. The Council of State feared for the security of the state due to 'the drifting apart of the courts of France and Great Britain over the expansion of the reciprocal possessions in America, which had gone so far, that there was not the slightest hope for a settlement left. It was a matter of days before talks would come to an end'.¹⁸⁴ Even though 'no declared war had yet erupted between the two differing powers', The English had already attacked a number of French ships of war, and taken merchant vessels captive.¹⁸⁵ The Council recognised the threat that this conflict could pose to the Republic, especially if it would spill over to Europe. It was adamant that 'the Republic was not concerned in these differences [between France and Britain], and it would be in no way beneficial to enter in a war, and should thus carefully avoid giving any of the powers any umbrage. It is in [the Republics] best interest to cultivate the friendship of all powers, due to her situation and the state of her commerce. The finances of the Republic do not allow her to be armed and at war. She should thus, as long as her neighbours are at

¹⁸³ Carter, *The Dutch Republic in Europe*, 37-44.

¹⁸⁴ NL-HUA, 233, Staten van Utrecht, 1581-1810, inventory number 526-1, General Petition 1756, 7. 'hoe de verwydering, tusschen de Hoven van Vrankryk en Groot-Brittannien over de uitgestrektheid der weederzydsche besittingen in America was ontstaan, soo verre was gekoomen, dat geen de minste hoop tot eenig accommodement was overgebleeven; dat niet anders te wagten was als dat eerdaags de Conferentien oer een minnelijke afkomst afgebrooken soudon worden'.

¹⁸⁵ NL-HUA, 233, 526-1, 1756, 9. 'dat de begonne feitelijkeeden tot nog toe in geen gedeclareerden Oorlog tusschen de in verschil zynde Mogentheeden zyn uitgeborsten'.

peace, trust in signed treaties'.¹⁸⁶ But the Republic should be watchful not to hide behind her treaties, since the past had shown they were not always reliable. The Republic 'should guard itself against insults, and make sure not to be forced in choosing one party or the other, [...] and do anything to protect commerce, the main artery of the Republic'.¹⁸⁷

A year later, the conflict had changed completely. According to the Council of State, since 'none of the other powers were by treaty or interest concerned in the conflict' between France and Great Britain in the colonies, thus the peace in Europe seemed secure.¹⁸⁸ At that moment, Prussia declared war on Austria and Saxony. At this point the Council was convinced that 'the greater part of Europe would become involved in this war. [...] The fire would spread more and more, and faster as expected, a general flame would be lit'.¹⁸⁹ However, this fate would not befall the Republic, since 'she lived in peace with all the warring parties, wishing for this peace to remain undisturbed, and that she may enliven the long-withered manufactures, commerce and navigation'.¹⁹⁰ The Council of State thus saw the new war as a way to stimulate the trade interests of the Republic, providing that she could uphold her neutrality.

Mention was also made of the confusing turn of events surrounding the Diplomatic Revolution. 'The balance, which was kept by the European powers by alliances and combined forces, [...] was founded on the jealousy between the House of Austria and of Bourbon [France], and now these mighty houses had become allies'. Furthermore, 'the House of Austria and the crown of Great Britain, who had been natural allies of the State for many years, where each concerned in their own war'.¹⁹¹ The Council of State clearly had its worries about how the Republic could be alert in these

¹⁸⁶ NL-HUA, 233, 526-1, 1756, 9. 'De Republicq is in de verschillen selve niet geconcerneert, het convenieert haar in geen en deele te engageeren in een Oorlog, en sy moet selfs sig sorgvuldig wagten van eenige gefundeerde ombrage te geeven. Het is haar interest te cultiveeren de vriendschap van alle Mogentheeden, [...] 't zy uit hoofde van haare situatie, 't zy uit hoofde van haare commercie, geleegeen legt. De Constitutie en Financien van de Republicq laten ook niet toe, dat se altoos op den voet van Oorlog gewapent soude zyn. Dienvolgende moet se vertrouwen op Tractaaten, en, soo lang haare Nabuuren in Vreede zyn, haare gerustheid voornamentlijk daar in stellen'.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 10. 'maar sig te dekken teegen insultes, te precaveeren dat men niet gedwongen werde de eene of andere party te kiezen, [...] om aan de Commercie, de hartader van de Republicq, genoegsaame protectie te geeven'.

¹⁸⁸ NL-HUA, 233, Staten van Utrecht, 1581-1810, inventory number 526-1, General Petition 1757, 3. 'De overige Mogentheeden van Europa waaren nog uit hoofde van Tractaaten nog uit hoofde van haare belangen in die verschillen geconcerneert'.

¹⁸⁹ NL-HUA, 233, 526-1, 1757, 6. 'Het grootste gedeelte van Europa in deesen Oorlog sal worden ingewikkelt. [...] Dus sal het vuur sig meer en meer verspreiden, en rasser als men gedacht soude hebben eene algemeene vlamme doen opgaan'.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 6. 'tot nog toe met de oorlogende Mogentheeden in Vreede leeft, en dat deese Vreede mag blyven ongestoort, en dat sy aan de lang gekwynt hebbende Manufacturen, Commercie en Navigatie een nieuw leeven mooge geeven'.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 6. 'dat het evenwigt, het welk tusschen de Mogentheeden van Europa door Alliantien en saamengevoegde kragten voormaals wierd gemaintineert, [...] gegront was op de jalousie, die tusschen de

troubled times, and thus asked the provincial estates - rhetorically - whether 'she was protected by alliances or respectable through the number of her forces, the state of her frontiers and the strength of her fleet?'¹⁹² The break with the Barrier system became clear later in the petition, after it was mentioned that 'the Barrier lies open, and the Austrian Netherlands, the first wall of the Republic, has been deprived of its troops'.¹⁹³ 'The old frontiers of State Flanders and Brabant were, again, the first and only wall of the Republic'.¹⁹⁴ These fortifications should thus be well supplied with men and provisions, since they had become the only line of defence.

With the exception of the General Petition for 1757, in which the outbreak of the Seven Years' War was described extensively, few explicit mention of the course of the conflict was made throughout the rest of the war. The need for the Republic to rely on its own defence, both on land and at sea, instead of treaties and allies was explained far and wide, and was often the reason for the provincial estates to consent to the augmentation of the armed forces, or the commissioning of new ships of war. However, financial problems were still plaguing the Republic. There was also a growing resentment among the different Provinces, since the Provinces that did pay their share of the State of War became increasingly frustrated with the Provinces that were chronically short for cash, and thus overdue. The Council of State put forward in the General Petition for 1760 that the common interest of the Republic should prevail above specific provincial concerns: 'the council lamented the disaster of the times, in which the bond that connected the seven arrows no longer functioned, and means of persuasion had little effect to mend [this bond]. [...] None of the Provinces could have interests that were contrary to the general interest. If this became the rule, the decaying state of affairs might still be repairable'.¹⁹⁵ In the General Petition for 1763 final mention of the wider war in Europe was made. The Council expressed the concern it had had in the previous years, and the fears about 'the flame of war finally reaching the soil of the Republic'.¹⁹⁶ Luckily, the fires of war had been

Huisen van Oostenryk en van Bourbon constantelyk subsisteerde, en dat die magtige Huisen sig met elkander thans hebben geallieert'. Ten tweede 'dat het Huis van Oostenryk en de Kroon van Groot-Brittannien, die seedert een langen reeks van jaaren zyn aangesien geworden voor de natuurlijke Geallieerden van den Staat, thans ieder afsonderlyk geengageert zyn in een Oorlog'.

¹⁹² NL-HUA, 233, 526-1, 1757, 6. 'is sy gedekte door Alliantien, of is sy respectabel door het getal van haar Troupes, door de welgesteldheid van haare Frontieren en door de sterkte van haar Vloot?'

¹⁹³ Ibid., 9. 'dat de Barriere-plaatsen open leggen en dat de Oostenryksche Neederlanden, de voormuur van de Republicq, van Trouppes zyn ontbloot'.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 11. 'dat de oude Frontier-plaatsen in Staats-Vlaanderen en Brabant weeder geworden zyn de eerste en eenige voormuur van de Republicq'.

¹⁹⁵ NL-HUA, 233, Staten van Utrecht, 1581-1810, inventory number 526-2, General Petition 1760, 2-3. 'De Raad, [...] betreurt het ongeluk der tyden, waar in de band der seven Pylen niet meer samenbint en middelen van persuasie weinig uitwerken. [...] Niemand kan waare belangen hebben, die strydig zyn met het gemeen belang. Wierd deese stelling meer betracht en tot een stokregul in alles aangenoomen, daar was misschien nog middel te vinden tot herstel van der vervallen staat der saken'.

¹⁹⁶ NL-GA, 0124, Hof van Gelre en Zutphen, 1543-1811, inventory number 2185, General Petition 1763, 11. 'dat de vlamme eindelyk ook tot den bodem van de Republyc soude kunnen overslaan'.

largely extinguished, which meant the number of mercenaries hired by the Republic could finally be lessened. The Council of State hoped 'for a general peace to follow shortly, and prayed to God that He might inspire the government of the Republic that they might find the solutions to remedy the past mistakes, making the Republic durable, happy and respectable till the end of times'.¹⁹⁷

Conclusion.

The Seven Years War is the first of the three conflicts discussed in this thesis in which the General Petitions tell a story that resembles the view formulated by Boogman and his students concerning this specific conflict. The General Petitions between 1756 and 1763 confirm occasionally Boogman's and Aalbers' view that this period in Dutch foreign policy was characterised by the Maritime tradition and politics of abstention.

During the Seven Years' War, the Council of State had the explicit wish of remaining neutral, as it had during the War of the Austrian Succession. The Republic was able to uphold its neutrality throughout the entire conflict, contrary to the previous conflict. One of the principle reasons the Republic pursued this policy again was that it found itself not connected or concerned with any of the conflicts between either France and Great Britain, nor Austria and Prussia. The Republic even regarded the war as a means to enhance the position of the Republic in world-trade, one of the principle pillars of the Maritime tradition. Both elements of the Maritime tradition that were suggested by Aalbers – the Politics of Abstention and Surety –, were also reflected in the General Petitions. On numerous occasions mention was made of the fact that the Southern Netherlands no longer function as the first line of defence of the Republic, and the Provinces should focus on the actual borders of the state. Furthermore, frequent mention was made of the fact that the Republic should no longer put too much prospects or trust in treaties and alliances that had been concluded with the other powers of Europe. The War of the Austrian Succession had proven that alliances could just as easily be broken, as the treaties with France had not prevented this country from invading the Republic in 1747. The Republic could only guarantee its own security by staying aloof from international politics as much as possible, and having trust in their own means to defend the borders of the state. Both of these arguments set the Politics of Abstention apart from the politics of surety. For the first time since 1702, the General Petitions during the Seven Years' War thus affirm Boogman and his students' views.

¹⁹⁷ NL-GA, 0124, 2185, 1763, 11. 'dat eene algemeene Vreede spoediglyk volgen moge, en sy bid God almachtig, dat Hy aan de hooge Regeering van het lieve Vaderland wil inspireeren sulke raadslaagen, waar door de Republycq van voorgige rampen herstelt, en tot het einde der Eeuwen bestendig, gelukkig en respectabel gemaakt mag worden'.

Conclusion

This research has focussed on the course of Dutch foreign policy during the three great military conflicts of the first half of the eighteenth century through analysing of the General Petitions issued by the Council of State of the Dutch Republic. These General Petitions offer a plethora of information on the reasoning and motivations behind the foreign policy decisions taken in this period and have proven to be an excellent source for analysing foreign policy. Building on the information provided in the General Petitions, this paper challenges Boogman's views on long-term tendencies and traditions influencing Dutch Foreign Policy and reaffirm Hellema and Kossmann's critique on the existence of a continual intellectual tradition due to the multitude of discontinuities in Dutch foreign policy. In the conclusion, we will briefly reflect upon the results from the individual three case-studies and the implications this research has for the historiographical work already done in this field. Finally, the findings of the case-studies will be brought together to answer the initial research-question. Successively, recommendations for further research into the field of early modern Dutch foreign policy will be proposed.

The War of the Spanish Succession.

According to Boogman, the War of the Spanish Succession was fought in the Continental tradition of King-Stadtholder William III, who had been the dominant factor in the shaping of the Republic's foreign policy ever since he came to power during the crisis of 1672. Even though William had died just before the outbreak of the war, Boogman considers the States General and the Council of State to have continued his policy of active involvement on the European stage.

However, the General Petitions between 1700 - 1713 show a remarkably different pattern of foreign policy during the conflict. The Republic initially chose a far less pro-active approach in the conflict than Boogman suggests. The fear of negative implications of the French occupation of the Spanish Netherlands for the commercial interests and the protection of the country proved to be the decisive factors in Dutch foreign policy. These were both intrinsically Maritime motivations due to the focus on the protection of trade and the Republic's integrity. A few years later - after the French had been well brought into the defensive and the immediate danger to the Republic's borders became less - Continental arguments were put forward, mostly focussing on the protection of the Balance of Power, and the threat France posed to the freedom of the entire continent. After a few years, the Maritime conception of protecting the trade and commerce of the Republic once again

regained the upper hand. Now it coexisted with a slightly tuned down version of the Continental argumentation until the end of the war in 1713.

Thus in light of the General Petitions the War of the Spanish Succession cannot be characterised as the last war fought in the Continental tradition of William III, because of the Maritime aspects that dominated the General Petitions. The traditional conception of a Continental policy found its origin in research into more formal sources, like the declaration of war, since these sources had a remarkably more Continental character, which can be attributed to their propagandistic purpose. This thesis also questions the assumption that the War of the Spanish Succession was the final war in the "40 years' struggle" against France, waged by the Dutch Republic, and more personally, by William III. The General Petitions show that the opinions that motivated William III in his struggle against Louis XIV's hegemonic ambitions were not as clear-cut continued by the Council of State as was thought. Further systematic analysis of the General Petitions of the period from 1672 till 1713 might thus be valuable to historiographical research on this period in the history of the Dutch Republic.

The War of the Austrian Succession.

According to Boogman, Dutch foreign policy during the War of the Austrian Succession was characterised by the Maritime tradition and was thus in contrast with the previous conflict. Aalbers fine-tuned this view by his typology that these were the times of the Politics of Surety, focussing on defensive alliances and the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands.

During the first few years of the conflict there was practically no mention in the General Petitions of the European-wide war against Austria, one of the Republics traditional allies. Clearly the Maritime tradition dominated. The aid the Republic reluctantly offered to Maria Theresa from 1744 onward was primarily framed as an obligation the Republic had committed itself to by being a defensive ally of the Queen of Hungary. Besides this argument, that can be soundly placed within the category of the Politics of Surety, and thus the Maritime tradition, almost monotonous mention was made - in every General Petition between 1740 and 1747 - of the specific need to protect the freedom and religion of the Republic. These motivations can also be considered Maritime in character.

It was not until the General Petition for 1748, formulated after the Republic had been invaded by a superior French force - that had taken some of the most formidable of the Republic's border fortifications with ease - that the tone of the General Petition drastically changed. Faced with a potential French attack on the core of the Republic, the Maritime legitimisations of the conflict that

had been so dominant during the years before no longer sufficed to express the danger of the situation the country was currently in, and thus completely disappeared. The Council of State returned to the arguments that had last been used during the War of the Spanish Succession, focussing not only on the danger the French posed to the Republic, but to the Balance of Power and the liberty of the entirety of Europe. In the face of this imminent danger in 1748, the Provinces were persuaded to put all their efforts into quelling the French threat and thereby saving the Republic and the entire European continent. These arguments were essentially Continental in origin. The General Petitions thus show that the legitimizing arguments for involvement in the War of the Austrian Succession do not align with Boogman's interpretation, as was the case during the War of the Spanish Succession.

The arguments used in the General Petitions during this period give furthermore new insights into the contested question in Dutch historiography whether or not the Republic can still be considered a Great Power during this period. The initial years of 'blatantly' ignoring the Republic's responsibility to come to the aid of Maria Theresa clearly show a wish to remain neutral. This was quite opposite from the 'arbiter of Europe' motive that had characterised Dutch conduct during some of the early years of the War of the Spanish Succession. When the Republic finally acknowledged the fact that they had to come to the aid of Austria due to French successes in the Southern Netherlands, the inability of the country to muster any serious resistance to France became embarrassingly obvious. The Republic did never really recover from the financial burdens that had been inflicted by the War of the Spanish Succession, which became painfully clear after the virtually unopposed French invasion of the Barrier, and subsequently the threat of an attack on the Republic itself. This shattered completely the great power status the Republic once had possessed.

The Seven Years' War.

The third and final conflict under evaluation surely shows similarities between the argumentation in the General Petitions and the existing historiographical point of view. According to Boogman and Aalbers, Dutch foreign policy during the Seven Years' War was essentially Maritime in character and - after the loss of the Barrier system - the States General favoured the Politics of Abstention, instead of the Politics of Surety that had been dominant during the 1740s.

Even though the Dutch Republic managed to remain neutral throughout the entire war, the General Petitions contained plenty of information on the current state of affairs in Europe, and the consequences these had for the Republic. One argument for upholding neutrality used most often concerned Dutch trade, which was hoped to prosper from the fact that the country did not get

involved in the war, and could thus, more or less freely, trade with all the belligerents. Focussing on trade as a motivation for choosing a specific foreign policy points to a Maritime argumentation. This Maritime focus became part of the Politics of Abstention due to the fact that the Council of State realised that - in order to remain neutral - it could no longer focus solely on either the Barrier in the Southern Netherlands or alliances and treaties, the two pillars of the Politics of Surety. After the Austrians and French became allies during the Diplomatic Revolution in 1756, the Barrier in the Austrian Netherlands became obsolete, and past wars had shown that treaties were never a fool proof guarantee to stay out of a conflict. The Republic thus focussed on defending its own borders with its own troops, both by land and by sea, to secure the country's neutrality. The General Petitions here thus endorse Boogman and Aalbers' views.

The existence of tendencies in foreign policy.

When bringing together the findings of the three different case-studies, trends in the broader field of Dutch foreign policy in the first half of the eighteenth century can be disclosed. It becomes possible to reflect on the role played by age-old traditions in the formulation of foreign policy matters during this period.

The General Petitions show a tendency of more Maritime legitimisations for the foreign policy of the Dutch Republic, especially during the 1740s and 1750s. However, the exceptional years, for instance 1748, show us the assumptions of Boogman and his students are too short-sighted and simplistic. The Council of State was not directed by age-old traditions in deciding foreign policy for the Dutch Republic, but was guided by what seemed to be in the best interest of the country at that specific moment in time. Throughout the War of the Spanish Succession both Maritime and Continental argumentations could shift in importance, and subsequently coexist in the petitions throughout the second half of the conflict. The Council of State was pragmatic in using the arguments that were most suitable to the immediate needs and interests of the Republic. This is clearly shown in the initial hesitance of joining in a potential war, and subsequently becoming more enthusiastic. Thus the arguments became more Continental when the war went favourably. During the War of the Austrian Succession it became apparent that there were two sides to this coin. In the face of a French invasion in 1748 the Council of State let go of all its 'traditional' Maritime argumentations and called forth some strong Continental arguments in order to muster forces for the Republic and hopefully resist the French armies. The petitions in the Seven Years' War do reflect the existence of the Maritime tendency, which does not diminish the fact that the Council of State applied pragmatic motivations instead of long-term traditions. The Council of State used whatever arguments it

deemed in the best interests of the country to secure the safety and prosperity of the Dutch Republic.

This research goes to the core of the execution of the foreign policy of the Dutch Republic during the three analysed conflicts in the early eighteenth century, and the result of the study of the General Petitions in this span of time is so promising that many further avenues for future research can be explored that could give further insight into the role of the Continental and Maritime traditions in Dutch politics. This thesis may serve as a precursor to more in-depth research on early modern Dutch foreign policy in general. The General Petitions prove that, as already stated by Hellema and Kossmann, there are too many discontinuities in the foreign policy of the Dutch Republic in the first half of the eighteenth century to uphold Boogman's assumption of continual intellectual traditions influencing policymakers. Especially in the case of the War of the Spanish Succession this thesis has revealed that while using the General Petitions - as a hitherto practically unused source - additional evidence can be obtained next to the information distilled from more generally used sources, like a declaration of war or a peace treaty. The General Petitions have proven to be a very valuable source in successfully re-evaluating and challenging foreign policy paradigms in Dutch historiography. The General Petitions have also demonstrated to contain plenty of information about the way in which the Council of State viewed the affairs of Europe while the country was not in a state of war, or when war did not immediately threaten the Republic or the continent. Since the petitions were issued from the end of the sixteenth century right until the abolishment of the Republic at the end of the eighteenth century, they should thus be considered a meaningful and consistent source to the further re-evaluation of the development of the Dutch Republic's foreign policy in the early modern period.

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