

# “What cannot be helped must be indured”: Coping with Obstacles to Business During the Anglo-Dutch Wars, 1652–1674

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By nature, wars appear hostile to commerce, bringing disruption to international relations and to everyday life. By focusing on the individuals involved in continuing commerce, however, an increasing body of scholarship has shown that merchants in a number of contexts continued to operate successfully during periods of war. This article builds on these recent methodological shifts in business history, applying them to the three Anglo-Dutch wars of the seventeenth century. Although these conflicts have been described as being harmful to commerce, there has been no focus hitherto on merchants' experiences of or responses to these wars. This article addresses this problem and, in so doing, proposes a different way of analyzing and thus characterizing the

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relationship between the Anglo-Dutch Wars and business. Through examining the surviving correspondence of merchants operating during these wars, I investigate the various methods used—both successfully and unsuccessfully—to navigate obstacles to business during these conflicts. The value of considering this activity in broader British and European contexts is explored, and the range of concerns exhibited by merchants during these periods of conflict is analyzed, showing that war was not paramount among their concerns, despite the political context. Throughout, I show that although all three Anglo-Dutch Wars had an impact on commerce, this was not necessarily negative, and that the most enterprising and proactive merchants benefited from commercial opportunities created by the conflicts.

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In December 1672, the Norwich merchant and textile manufacturer Thomas Baret wrote to Rowland Cockey in Amsterdam to ask him to “direct me to secure [my goods] from the enmities at home or abroad.”<sup>1</sup> Operating during the Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672–1674), Baret was just one of many merchants who sought to pursue commerce despite an outwardly hostile climate. The seventeenth century has long been characterized as a period of “general crisis,” with Europe frequently erupting into episodes of armed conflict that brought disruption to international relations and everyday life.<sup>2</sup> By nature, wars seem particularly hostile to international commerce—they brought with them higher taxes, increased customs duties, the pressing of men and ships for service, an increase in privateering and piracy, and restrictions on trade. As an increasing body of scholarship is starting to show, however, merchants active in a number of early-modern European and American contexts were able to continue to operate during periods of war, with some degree of commercial success.<sup>3</sup> By looking at the individuals who continued to stimulate commerce, rather than focusing on the outwardly hostile political climate, these studies have taught us a

1. Norwich Record Office [NRO] MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, December 11, 1672, Norwich, 5.

2. Notably Hobsbawm, “The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century,” 44–65; Trevor-Roper, “The General Crisis,” 31–64; Parker and Smith, eds., *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*.

3. Talbott, *Conflict, Commerce and Franco-Scottish Relations*; Croft, “Trading with the Enemy”; Marzagalli, “Was Warfare Necessary for the Functioning of Eighteenth-Century Colonial Systems?”; Haggerty, “*Merely for Money?*”, 198, 204; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 279; Gervais, “Facing and Surviving War”; Truxes, “Dutch and Irish Cooperation.”

great deal about how and why business continued during conflicts, and what strategies merchants adopted in order to cope with war.

This article addresses these issues in the context of the three Anglo-Dutch wars of the seventeenth century. The Anglo-Dutch wars, fought between 1652–1654, 1665–1667 and 1672–1674, had by the mid-1990s “faded into relative obscurity.”<sup>4</sup> The lack of scholarly attention afforded to them was a result of two things: first, the similarities between England and the Dutch Republic are more readily apparent than their differences, as both were Protestant Republics when the first war broke out; second, the Dutch wars do not fit into the conventional narrative that the seventeenth century was dominated by conflict between Britain and France. In recent years, the Anglo-Dutch wars have begun to be rescued from this alleged obscurity, and debates have abounded about how and why conflict broke out between two nations that bore so many parallels.

While the Anglo-Dutch wars continue to be described in some quarters as “one of the very few major conflicts in Britain’s history which can be ascribed in the main to commercial rivalry,”<sup>5</sup> elsewhere this interpretation has been rightly challenged, and the three wars were fought for different reasons and in different circumstances. The passing of the first Navigation Act in 1651 has been seen by some as the apogee of Anglo-Dutch economic rivalry and a direct cause of the outbreak of the first war,<sup>6</sup> and certainly this act, and those that followed, had implications for merchants’ business.<sup>7</sup> Contemporary commentators highlighted maritime and economic rivalry as central to Anglo-Dutch tensions, with Samuel Pepys recording Captain Coeke’s observation that “the trade of the world is too little for us two, therefore one must down,”<sup>8</sup> reflecting contemporary mercantilist concepts of trade as a zero-sum game in which participants competed over a finite amount of wealth.<sup>9</sup> “Early-modern thinkers did not all consider they lived in a zero-sum world,”<sup>10</sup> however, and many years ago Charles Wilson called for scholars to consider political and strategic as well as economic influences on the outbreak of the wars, criticizing “those accounts which attribute the wars

4. Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 4.

5. Israel, “Competing Cousins,” 17; see also Davis, *English Merchant Shipping*, 1, 28.

6. Beer, *The Origins of the British Colonial System*, 385–386, cited in Wilson, *Profit and Power*, 53; Farnell, “The Navigation Act of 1651,” 440.

7. The First Navigation Act (October 9, 1651), in Scobell, *Acts of Parliament*, pt. ii, 176; The Second Navigation Act (September 13, 1660), in Pickering, *The Statutes at Large from the Magna Charta*, 7:452ff.

8. Wheatly, *Diary of Samuel Pepys*, February 2, 1664.

9. As described by Joel Mokyr in *The Enlightened Economy*, 64.

10. Pincus and Robinson, “Wars and State-making Reconsidered,” 9; see also Leng, “Commercial Conflict and Regulation,” 933–935.

quite simply to the Navigation Acts.”<sup>11</sup> John Shovlin concludes that although the seventeenth-century Anglo-Dutch conflicts were the “best candidates for the label ‘war for trade,’” there were many other motivations for these conflicts, and that “it is reductionist to claim that the chief impetus for any war is economic.”<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Gijs Rommelse notes that all “three Anglo-Dutch wars of the seventeenth century were caused by political and economic rivalry,” with the second war in particular being born in part out of political processes and pressure from the London mercantile community.<sup>13</sup> Steven Pincus suggests that the first war was “the result of an unusual political alliance between apocalyptic Protestants and classical republicans who dominated English political culture,” and presents English concerns about Dutch economic aggrandizement before the outbreak of the second war not as purely secular or economic, but bound up with fears of a Dutch pursuit of a universal monarchy.<sup>14</sup> The third war, which saw the unlikely alliance of England and France as part of the larger Franco-Dutch conflict, has been less commonly described as a trade war, being recognized instead as a planned war of political aggression.<sup>15</sup>

The differences in the causes of these three wars are politically and historically important, inevitably impacting their progression and their ultimate consequences. But although this period saw a growing influence of some sectors of the mercantile class on economic policy,<sup>16</sup> the majority of merchants paid little heed to the causes of conflicts being waged on a political level. As we will see, the restrictions and anxieties caused by all three Anglo-Dutch wars impacted merchants in similar ways in each of these conflicts, and their responses and behavior were not markedly different depending on which Anglo-Dutch war they were functioning during. In one particular case, surviving source material documents the business relationship of two merchants—Thomas Pengelly and Samuel Davis—who continued their business through both the second and third wars, allowing us to compare their approaches within each of these conflicts.

11. Wilson, *Profit and Power*, v.

12. Shovlin, “War and Peace,” 306, 308.

13. Rommelse, *The Second Anglo-Dutch War*, 12. Rommelse has provided succinct summaries of historiographical developments, here 11–12, and in Rommelse, “The Role of Mercantilism,” 591–595.

14. Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism*, 14; Pincus, “Popery, Trade and Universal Monarchy,” 29. Pincus’s thesis has been developed further by Tony Claydon: Rommelse, “Mountains of Iron and Gold,” 246.

15. Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 10, 13; Groenveld, “The Seventeenth-Century Anglo-Dutch Wars,” 174.

16. For more on this, see: Leng, “Commercial Conflict and Regulation,” 943; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 3; Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism*, 13–14; Rommelse, *The Second Anglo-Dutch War*, 12.

Whatever the cause of the Anglo-Dutch wars—collectively or individually—they were in many ways maritime conflicts in their execution: they were fought at sea and “involved a . . . momentous struggle for maritime supremacy.”<sup>17</sup> Despite this context, however, the impact of these wars on international business has been largely overlooked, as scholars have focused their attention on analyzing the complex causes of their outbreak. When the wars’ consequences have been contemplated, focus has been primarily on their impact at a state level: on national losses to privateering fleets and dwindling government coffers, supporting the assumption that the conflicts were by their nature damaging to trade. Both the first and second wars have been described as bringing maritime trade to a “standstill,” and the second as “disastrous for English commerce.”<sup>18</sup> When England and France joined forces against the Dutch in the third war, a crash in the Amsterdam Exchange “temporarily paralyzed the entire Dutch trading system,” leading to “the almost total cessation of Dutch seaborne traffic in European waters for nearly two years.”<sup>19</sup> It has been asserted that the wars were “harmful to the commerce of both sides,”<sup>20</sup> but there has been little focus on merchants’ experiences of or responses to the wars, creating a story that does not fully reflect the realities of continuing business during these conflicts.

We gain a much clearer picture of the experiences of merchants “on the ground” as they navigated the challenges of this period if we prioritize merchants’ business and personal correspondence. In doing precisely this, this article builds on recent methodological shifts in commercial and business history. Qualitative approaches that place the actions of individuals who were directly involved in business at the heart of commercial histories have broadened our understanding of international exchange.<sup>21</sup> There are, of course, limitations to this approach—there are inevitable questions about representativeness and the survival rates of source material—but as Stephanie Decker suggests, this sort of “data collection (and analysis) stands up in comparison with what social scientists do,” not least in providing rich details about the business lives and struggles that lie behind broad political contexts or statistical data.<sup>22</sup> This is particularly the case in

17. Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires*, 1; Klooster, “Anglo-Dutch Trade in the Seventeenth Century,” 261.

18. Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires*, 37; Rommelse, “Mountains of Iron and Gold,” 263; Rommelse, *The Second Anglo-Dutch War*, 189–190.

19. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade*, 293–294.

20. Ball, *Merchants and Merchandise*, 202.

21. This includes, but is not limited to: Haggerty, *The British-Atlantic Trading Community*; Lamikiz, *Trade and Trust in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*; Talbot, *Conflict, Commerce and Franco-Scottish Relations*.

22. Decker, “The Silence of the Archives,” 169.

a period when independent entrepreneurs and businessmen in provincial ports operated alongside (and beyond the regulations of) the powerful metropolitan trading companies that monopolized official trading routes.<sup>23</sup> Throughout this article, the surviving correspondence of three merchants in particular provides a lens through which to explore merchant activity in seventeenth-century Europe beyond the monopolists. These are Henry Thompson, a merchant in Hull who maintained business with the Netherlands during the First Anglo-Dutch War; George McCartney, a Belfast merchant active during the second war; and the Norwich merchant and cloth manufacturer Thomas Baret, who traded with the Netherlands throughout the third war. Analysis of their correspondence is supported by other surviving evidence, where appropriate, demonstrating that although we may only have a small number of large corpuses of surviving material to work with, the actions of these three merchants were demonstrably not unrepresentative when it came to the methods adopted to continue business during the Anglo-Dutch wars.

This article is specifically concerned with merchants' reactions to the wars and with practical aspects of business and does not aim to wade into the fierce, established debates regarding the causes and nature of the Anglo-Dutch wars that usually characterize studies of them; readers can explore for themselves the diverse literature on this topic highlighted earlier and in the notes to this article. Similarly, though the impact of the Anglo-Dutch wars were felt beyond Europe, in the colonies of both the English and the Dutch, there is not room here to do justice to an analysis of the conflicts' impact across the Atlantic Ocean and on the Indian subcontinent.<sup>24</sup> Focus here is on the impact of the Anglo-Dutch wars on European trade, and on British merchants' responses to these crises. The first part of this article acknowledges the economic impact of the wars on a state level, before merchants' records are scrutinized to explore the effect that the wars had on merchants' behavior and to highlight merchants' responses to the conflicts. The various methods by which commercial agents navigated—both successfully and unsuccessfully—the obstacles they faced are illuminated, and the value of considering the Anglo-Dutch wars in broader European and British contexts is emphasized. In the second part, I examine the range of concerns expressed by merchants during

23. See later discussion of the role of the Merchant Adventurers and those individuals operating outside the jurisdiction of regulated companies during the Anglo-Dutch Wars.

24. For analysis of the impact of the Anglo-Dutch wars on colonial trade, see: Klooster, "Anglo-Dutch trade in the Seventeenth Century," 275-277; Russo and Russo, *Planting an Empire*, 111-112; Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband*, 74; de Vries, "The Dutch Atlantic Economies," 8; Hatfield, "Dutch and New Netherland Merchants," 207; Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 11-12.

periods of conflict, showing that they worried primarily about other, less predictable problems than war: issues with manufacturing, relations with business associates, and the challenges of trading across cultural barriers—problems that were not unique to wartime. Throughout, I show that although all three Anglo-Dutch wars made conditions difficult for some merchants, many others continued to pursue their business successfully, and some benefited from the commercial opportunities created by conflict. Despite the claims of some previous scholarship, the correspondence examined here shows us that, for the most enterprising of merchants, business during the Anglo-Dutch wars did not stand still.

### Obstacles to Business and Merchants' Coping Mechanisms

At the government level, some financial losses were ascribed directly to Anglo-Dutch conflict. During the third war, the customs officers for Bristol recorded a loss to government coffers of £9340 15 08 from the “ships lost this year” (for the twelve months from September 1672), which was directly attributed to this being “an entire yeare of war.”<sup>25</sup> Estimations of how many prizes were taken by privateering fleets are prominent in a great deal of scholarship on the Anglo-Dutch wars,<sup>26</sup> with figures calculated for the first war leading to the conclusion that it was “unquestionably the greatest single maritime disaster” suffered by the Dutch during their Golden Age.<sup>27</sup> Not all consequences of participation in the Anglo-Dutch wars were negative for the state, however. James Farnell asserts convincingly that “rather than injuring England’s overseas commerce, a result often assumed by historians, the [First Anglo-] Dutch War seems to have advanced her direct carrying trade in several important areas.”<sup>28</sup> England’s trade with Spain expanded, as Spanish wool was diverted from both Holland and France to England, and the collapse of England’s Baltic trade following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 was reversed. Anglo-French trade had taken place via the Low Countries since a dispute

25. Bristol Record Office 12964/1/40, “Abstract of moneys collected by Isaac Morgan and John Ramsey, collectors at port of Bristol,” 1672–1674. Figures for 1672 and 1674 are accompanied by notes that “halfe this year was war with the Dutch.”

26. For example, Murdoch, *The Terror of the Seas*, 278–279; Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade*, 208–210, 273–274; Israel, “Competing Cousins,” 20–21; Lunsford, *Piracy and Privateering*, 17, 115, 242n83; Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires*, 276; Rommelse, “Prizes and Profits,” 153–4; Rommelse, “English Privateering Against the Dutch Republic,” 27–28; Boxer, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 23, 39, 60; Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 29–30.

27. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade*, 210.

28. Farnell, “The Navigation Act of 1651,” 451.

in 1649 regarding French prohibitions on English wool and tin, and the First Anglo-Dutch War saw this practice cease, heralding a return to traditional Anglo-French trading patterns.<sup>29</sup> After the outbreak of the third war “the exchange on Holland [was] 16 per cent in favor of London.”<sup>30</sup> Privateering activities allowed England to acquire superior Dutch shipping technology,<sup>31</sup> and throughout all three Anglo-Dutch wars, Dutch shipping techniques and organization were appropriated in British ports.<sup>32</sup>

To understand the commercial impact of the Anglo-Dutch wars fully, however, we must look beyond consequences felt at the state level and examine the experiences of those merchants operating during the conflicts. During the first war, the Hull merchant Henry Thompson reported to Thomas Benson “tidings of the takeing of a londener bound for hambrough within the river, & of severall Hollands men of war that were there soe that intent of sudan dispatching away a ship thither is as yet att a stand.”<sup>33</sup> Five months later, Thompson still felt that “to adventure our fleet of necessity must be lessned, & the Holland capers will increase, soe that I conclude much more hazard.”<sup>34</sup> By opting not to “adventure his fleet” and keeping his plans for “dispatching away a ship ... att a stand,” Thompson lost out on business. His cautious approach on this occasion was perhaps vindicated, as other merchants, despite the warnings of dangers at sea, continued to pursue trade but had their vessels or goods taken by enemy vessels. Less than a week after the second war broke out, Thomas Dobson and his ship, the *Exchange* of Yarmouth, were “taken by a holand Caper of 6 or 8 guns out of theire flett.”<sup>35</sup> On hearing of “a small dutch caper” taking prizes off the Irish coast near Donaghadee in August 1665, George McCartney felt that “it is a great shame that such a small rogue should have libertie to stay heire it is shee that was heire in june last she will doe great in this channel if not soone persued.”<sup>36</sup> It was, though, possible to avoid capture when accosted by an enemy privateer. When George Harper

29. Farnell, “The Navigation Act of 1651,” 451.

30. *Calendar of State Papers relating to English affairs in the Archives of Venice*, vol. 37, Girolamo Alberti, Venetian secretary in England, to the Doge and Senate, June 24, 1672, 231.

31. Rommelse, “English Privateering Against the Dutch Republic,” 17–18; Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires*, 276.

32. O’Brien, “Mercantilism and Imperialism,” 473.

33. Hull City Archives [HCA] DDF/A/37/5, Henry Thompson to Thomas Benson, April 19, 1653 [York].

34. HCA DDF/A/37/5, Henry Thompson to Thomas Benson, September 27, 1653 [York].

35. NRO Y/L 13/24 [George Harper] to Thomas Pengelly, March 10, 1664/5, Yarmouth.

36. Linenhall Library [LL] Outletter book of George McCartney, vol. I, 148, George McCartney to Joshua Allen, August 19, 1665, Belfast.



recounted the loss of an English man-of-war during the Second Anglo-Dutch War, he qualified the event by noting that “the captens are much blamed it is sayde they might easly have rescued him.”<sup>37</sup> McCartney felt similarly when, in October 1665, his master Mr. Ravens “did fall amonges 14 hollands men of war” but was taken only because the weather was so calm: “if it had blowen any gale of wynd he sailed so well that there wold have beene little hazard of him.”<sup>38</sup> Captivity did not stifle Mr. Ravens’s participation in commerce: he wrote to McCartney while imprisoned to report that “goods are at a greate raite.”<sup>39</sup>

While some merchants were dissuaded from trading or fell prey to privateers, others used various methods to adapt their approach to business, continue to succeed, and even to exploit the conflict to maximize profit. The behavior of these merchants during the Anglo-Dutch wars reflects that of merchants during other conflicts. In her study of the Armada War of the sixteenth century, for example, Pauline Croft demonstrates that merchants viewed war as an interruption rather than a barrier, with “flexible responses” allowing trade between England and Spain to continue, and Thomas Truxes notes the “adaptive and pragmatic character” of those involved in eighteenth-century wartime Atlantic commerce, describing the “fluidity, adaptability, and responsiveness to change” of mid-eighteenth-century Atlantic markets.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, losses did not tend to be absolute. It was common practice to “diversify risk”: merchants collaborated in owning parts of multiple ships and avoided allowing all of their commodities to be shipped on a single vessel.<sup>41</sup> This was good business practice in peacetime as well as wartime: after the third war had been concluded, Thomas Baret still instructed William Peacock that iron sent “by way of Rotterdam” should “for security ... come in two severall vessels.”<sup>42</sup>

In addition to diversifying risk, early-modern merchants used a variety of methods to avoid trouble at sea as they continued to pursue business during conflicts, and the merchants trading during the

37. NRO Y/L 13/24 [George Harper] to Thomas Pengelly, March 10, 1664/5, Yarmouth.

38. LL Outletter book of George McCartney, vol. I, George McCartney to John Sexton, October 25, 1665, 176; George McCartney to Joshua Allen, October 25, 1665, 176–177.

39. LL Outletter book of George McCartney, vol. I, George McCartney to Joshua Allen, October 25, 1665, Belfast, 176–177.

40. Croft, “Trading with the Enemy,” 302 and passim; Truxes, “Dutch and Irish Cooperation,” 303; Truxes, “Transnational Trade in the Wartime North Atlantic,” 751.

41. de Bruyn Kops, *A Spirited Exchange*, 5, 96; Rommelse, “Prizes and Profits,” 147; Forte, “Marine Insurance and Risk Distribution,” 394; Haggerty, “*Merely for Money?*,” 62; Ormrod, “The Demise of Regulated Trading,” 253.

42. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to William Peacock, October 13, 1676, Norwich, 227.

Anglo-Dutch wars were no exception. The threat of privateering caused merchants to take extra care in selecting their vessels. During the second war, George McCartney instructed John Brow that “if the war hold still betwixt England and Holland that you wold be inquiring out for a good little oostend veshell and to gett ane honnest master to her.”<sup>43</sup> A week later, McCartney wrote to James Thrustone about “some Dutch man of war that was upon the cost,” explaining that “they examine vere striklike the french veshells for english mens goods.” McCartney was not too perturbed, assuring Thrustone, “I will send out more in another veshall,”<sup>44</sup> but by the end of the August he was struggling to procure any suitable ships. He wrote again to John Brow that:

the tymes are so now that men knowe not what to doe I wold have fraughted a french veshell...but they are not to be fraughted for no money I wrote to [Bordeaux] for on[e] and my friend wrot mee they were so afrayed of wars with England that none wold adventure to come hither ... no veshells can I gett any to send out for in any English ship I dar not hazard and the french not to be had so my desire is that you wold let mee heare from you whither ane ostend veshell might be had that wold goe saife to and againe ... I mean if you could get a free veshell and send her hither I will soone depart her to you againe for a free veshell must be had other wayes there is no venturing.<sup>45</sup>

By October McCartney was casting his net even further, as “tymes ar so unsertaine that doth not know whither to run fast or to go softlie however in a Flemish veshell with a flemish companie I thinke there will be little hazard.” McCartney put his money where his mouth was, agreeing to “stand to on[e] third of her cargoe” for this voyage, indicating his confidence that it would succeed despite inhibiting factors.<sup>46</sup> Adapting trading habits in this way was not easy; it required perseverance and taking risks in using unfamiliar vessels to trade in unknown markets.

It is important to note that the impact of the three conflicts was felt beyond Anglo-Dutch exchanges. In part because merchants did not confine their activities within national borders or along linear routes, to ascertain the true impact of the Anglo-Dutch wars on business activity, we must look beyond the immediate participant nations, acknowledging

43. LL Outletter book of George McCartney, vol. I, 126, George McCartney to John Brow, June 10, 1665, Belfast.

44. LL Outletter book of George McCartney, vol. I, 132, George McCartney to James Thrustone, June 17, 1665, Belfast.

45. LL Outletter book of George McCartney, vol. I, 151, George McCartney to John Brow, August 25, 1665, Belfast.

46. LL Outletter book of George McCartney, vol. I, 186, George McCartney to William Watt, October 28, 1665, Belfast.

that merchants outside the Anglo-Dutch sphere were also compelled to alter their methods of doing business during these conflicts. Merchants participating in Anglo-Portuguese and Franco-Scottish trade, for example, suffered during the third war. John Cooke wrote from Exeter to his cousin in Porto, lamenting that

you cannot have that constant supply as formerly per reason of a warr declared against the Dutch ... wee have a general embargo upon all ships; & none but such as have obtained protections are permitted to depart neither are there any more of them procurable so that I cannot now resolve whither shall send you any fish this season.<sup>47</sup>

The following year, Andrew Milner, William Watson, and John Pierce sailed from Aberdeen to Le Havre in France with salmon and were returning with a variety of commodities, including hats, paper, and hoops for straw bales, when they were taken by “ane hollands caper” captained by Jan Jacobson, who wrecked the ship and some of the merchandise and held William Logan, one of the merchants on the ship, to ransom.<sup>48</sup> To counter these problems, merchants involved in Anglo-Portuguese trade adopted a hierarchy of methods to protect their business. In June 1673 William Selay wrote from Exeter to Cooke in Porto that “heare is no convoy for O Porto, and its verry hazerdous sendeing goods” and asked Cooke to send his merchandise

for bristoll, or London, in any good vessel with convoy, or if no convoy presents, may sende in a Portuguese without convoy; but then you muste remember the bills of Loadinge may be in some Portuguese name; in cause shoulde meate with capers, and let not your letter per the vessel contradicte the bill of loadeing.<sup>49</sup>

Selay makes clear here his hierarchy of protections—first, to utilize a convoy; second, to send goods in a Portuguese ship, but in the latter case making sure to alter paperwork in case of capture. Two months later, Humphry Yeo adopted the same hierarchical approach, asking John Cooke to “pray faile not to sende mee more oyles per first vessel bounde for this port with convoy or per a Portuguez carvell or other free ship.”<sup>50</sup>

47. Massachusetts Historical Society [MHS], Jefferies Family Papers, vol. 25, John Cooke to John Cooke, April 8, 1672, Exeter.

48. Aberdeen City Archives, Propinquity Book I, June 7, 1673, fo. 101r.

49. MHS, Jefferies Family Papers, vol. 26, William Selay to John Cooke, June 5, 1673, Exeter.

50. MHS, Jefferies Family Papers, vol. 26, Humphrey Yeo to John Cooke, August 14, 1673, Exeter.

Sailing under the protection of a convoy, where one was available, minimized the danger to merchants from privateers. During the third war, Thomas Baret placed his trust in a safe convoy, instructing Rowland Cockey that “you would not adventure above £2: or £300 vallue in one bottum unless you see safety in the conveyance & good convoy & then send as you thinke convenient,”<sup>51</sup> suggesting that he would approve a reduction in the level of diversification if his goods were shipped under a convoy. The falsification of documentation contemplated by Selay was a common method of overcoming the difficulties of trading during conflict. Despite his earlier reticence, Henry Thompson asked Thomas Benson during the first war to “load in dutch mans name pretending for Holland or some other plase and take first port as Newcastle, take notice what you say for corsars and gods willing shall make a voyage.”<sup>52</sup> During the second war, George McCartney asked William Watt to instruct their vessel “if they meet with dutch or french men of ware as they come backe to pretend they are bound for Norway and to have some papers to that effect.”<sup>53</sup> Using neutral carriers and falsifying paperwork were widely used and regularly effective methods, but they did not guarantee success. Despite the idea that “war created opportunities for neutral carriers,”<sup>54</sup> Steve Murdoch has demonstrated the impact of the First Anglo-Dutch War on neutral parties, showing that England seized a number of neutral Swedish vessels, which was “costly, time-consuming and potentially devastating” to those caught up in the conflict.<sup>55</sup>

In looking beyond the immediate participant nations of England and the Netherlands, we must also consider that there was a broader British dimension to all three of the Anglo-Dutch wars. Somewhat understandably, given their moniker, existing analyses of the Anglo-Dutch wars are predominately Anglocentric. To understand the conflicts fully, however, the wider British context must be a central part of any evaluation of them. Scotland entered the Anglo-Dutch wars under different rules of engagement and separate legal jurisdiction from England,<sup>56</sup> and Steve Murdoch, Andrew Little, and Angelo Forte note in their study of the Third Anglo-Dutch War that “Scotland was as much a combatant nation as England ... thus the title of the war as Anglo-Dutch is

51. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, February 10, 1672/3, Norwich, 8.

52. HCA DDFA/37/5, Henry Thompson to Thomas Benson, April 19, 1653 [York].

53. LL Outletter book of George McCartney, vol. I, 233, George McCartney to William Watt, March 24, 1665/6, Belfast.

54. Shovlin, “War and Peace,” 313.

55. Murdoch, “Breaching Neutrality,” 146.

56. Murdoch, *The Terror of the Seas?*, 238.

something of a misnomer.”<sup>57</sup> The fact that Scottish privateers “played a very significant part in the disruption of Dutch commerce”<sup>58</sup> during the Anglo-Dutch wars proves, Murdoch argues, that “Scotland punched well above her weight throughout the maritime conflict.”<sup>59</sup>

As a nation, Scotland benefited in a number of ways from involvement in the Anglo-Dutch wars. The legacy of Scotland’s participation has been described as “economic, technical and legal ... [giving] the Scotland of the 1680s the necessary prerequisite for a successful infiltration of the trade and colonial markets of others, including the English.”<sup>60</sup> Scotland was allegedly transformed “from a relatively insignificant outpost of the northern European trading community to that of an aggressive participant in the rapidly expanding Atlantic economy,” and England’s acquisition of Dutch technology during the wars, as mentioned earlier, spread north of the border.<sup>61</sup> Like their English counterparts, Scottish merchants continued to work for personal gain. Some operated as privateers, profiting from the sale of prizes.<sup>62</sup> During the third war, despite a royal proclamation prohibiting Scottish subjects from operating in any foreign service, Henry Martin captained the French privateer the *Sharlot* of Calais. Once the conflict had concluded, Martin petitioned the Admiralty Court of Scotland for a letter of protection from Charles II that would provide him with immunity from prosecution. The Privy Council granted this request.<sup>63</sup>

One of the methods employed by both English and Scottish merchants during the Anglo-Dutch wars was simply to cooperate with one another. In 1653 the Hull merchant Henry Thompson recognized the benefits to be gained from doing business with Scottish counterparts, writing to John Lussignet: “pray informe me from Edenburgh, upon what certainty a vessel may goe & how you would steer to get the securest way from danger.”<sup>64</sup> In May 1654 Thompson made it clear that Scotland was a viable alternative for goods if war continued, instructing James DuCornet to make his vessel “a fre ship of your part” and in sending goods back “addresse the vessel for Amsterdam we being att peace, or Edinburgh in Scotland.”<sup>65</sup> Further, official

57. Murdoch, Little, and Forte, “Scottish Privateering,” 37.

58. Murdoch, Little, and Forte, “Scottish Privateering,” 53, 38.

59. Murdoch, *The Terror of the Seas?*, 6, 330.

60. Graham, “The Scottish Marine,” 74. Arguably, Scotland already had access to colonial markets: Macinnes, *Union and Empire*, 137, 150, 157–171, 183.

61. Graham, “The Scottish Marine,” 67.

62. Graham, “The Scottish Marine,” 71.

63. National Records of Scotland [NRS] AC7/4, Register of Decrees, Supplication of Henry Martin, August 6, 1675, Edinburgh.

64. HCA DDFA/37/5, Henry Thompson to John Lussignet, July 30, 1653 [York].

65. HCA DDFA/37/5, Henry Thompson to James DuCornet, May 2, 1654 [York].

assistance from Scotland was seen as a realistic possibility. Later in May, Thompson informed DuCornet of his intention to ask John Lussignet “if [he] could have procured the king of Scots protection for our vessell from all his men of war.”<sup>66</sup> Although Scotland would be included in Westminster’s declaration of war on the Dutch in 1665, by the end of the previous year, the Dutch had been formally ordered to avoid the threat of English privateers in the Channel by sailing around the north coast of Scotland,<sup>67</sup> a practice already being utilized by Dutch merchants.<sup>68</sup> This practice became so common that English authorities discussed the possibility of building forts in Scotland to prevent it,<sup>69</sup> perhaps to force the Dutch back through the Channel and make them easier prey. As war continued, most of the Atlantic trade of northern Europe began to round Scotland rather than sail through the Channel,<sup>70</sup> avoiding a route that presented a higher risk. Scottish merchants, too, recognized the benefit of British cooperation: during the third war, Alexander Gillespie, a skipper from Elie in Fife, continued to trade from his native Scotland with protection from a Newcastle convoy, highlighting that merchants of the still politically independent British nations cooperated with each other to facilitate commerce.<sup>71</sup> The actions of English, Scottish, and Dutch merchants alike underline the importance of considering the wider British dimension both to the conflicts themselves and to the business undertaken during them.

So far we have looked at merchants who ceased trading and those who employed methods such as using convoys or falsifying papers, but there is a third group of merchants to consider—those who accepted that their usual routes of trade were closed off and who broadened their horizons, rather than ceasing their business and allowing the conflicts

66. HCA DDFA/37/5, Henry Thompson to James DuCornet, May 16, 1654 [York].

67. National Archives, Kew [TNA] SP84/173/69, Downing to Bennett, December 16, 1664, The Hague.

68. TNA SP84/173/65-8, Downing to Bennett, November 2, 1664, The Hague, reported “2 from Amsterdam...neer ready to sett saile with intent to go round Scotland.” Although the intention was to avoid problems caused by conflict with England, Rommelse argues that these tactics in fact caused additional problems for the Dutch, as trade was delayed and there was a knock-on effect on the re-export trade, both of which reduced profitability: Rommelse, “Prizes and Profits,” 152.

69. TNA SP84/174/84, De Bacquoy to Bennett, February 14, 1665, Leeuwarden; *Calendar of State Papers relating to English affairs in the Archives of Venice*, vol. 34, Alvise Saguedo, Venetian ambassador in France to the Doge and Senate, January 9, 1665, 74–75.

70. Graham, “The Scottish Marine,” 69.

71. University of St. Andrews Special Collections [UStASC], ms38352, Alexander Gillespie’s logbook, 36. For this phenomenon in the French context see Talbott, *Conflict, Commerce and Franco-Scottish Relations*, 149.

to prevent them from thriving.<sup>72</sup> Our Hull merchant, Henry Thompson, was aware of “severall ships att Hull boun for severall places as leiden oostend etc I have thoughts of putting this cloth aboard some of them and soe dispose of it.”<sup>73</sup> John Cooke’s cousin, after reporting his inability to send goods during the third war, added “you shall have a more certaine account per a vessell that may depart 5 weeks hence via Gijón.”<sup>74</sup> In March 1673, with the third war interrupting his primary trade with Amsterdam, Thomas Baret asked William Fittz, “Whether you doe thinke that any of my comodities would sell in Antwerpe or not.”<sup>75</sup> This broadening of horizons manifested itself in commodities as well as geographies: as he continued to experience difficulties selling his cloth, Thompson wrote that “iff any dutch man have any commoditye in these parts I would take it in liue of them.”<sup>76</sup> This incident suggests two things: first, that Thompson moved to accept “any commoditye” in lieu of payment, even if it was a commodity he was not familiar with; second, that he had no scruples about exchanging goods with a Dutch merchant despite their nations being at war. This reflects merchant behavior in other contexts. As Jean Agnew notes in her study of merchant families in seventeenth-century Belfast, “political restrictions on trade did not impose any kind of moral obligation on merchants and trading with the enemy was not seen as unpatriotic,” and Thomas Truxes shows that in the eighteenth century, the “Dutch ... had few scruples about trading with enemies—their own or anyone else’s.”<sup>77</sup> By adjusting their methods and expanding their markets, and by not holding themselves to the political ideologies of the conflicts, merchants were merely inconvenienced by the wars, rather than being ruined.

There is yet another group of merchants who, notwithstanding complications arising from war with the Dutch, continued to trade in their usual way. When Dutch privateers threatened Samuel Davis’s trade in chintzes from Yarmouth to Spain in 1666, Davis nonetheless wrote to

72. This has been shown in other contexts, including during the British Civil Wars and the Anglo-French War of 1665–1666 (which was part of the Second Anglo-Dutch War): Talbott, *Conflict, Commerce and Franco-Scottish Relations*, 91–92, 95, 98, 105.

73. HCA DDFA/37/5, Henry Thompson to Thomas Benson, April 19, 1653 [York].

74. MHS, Jefferies Family Papers, vol. 25, John Cooke to John Cooke, April 8, 1672, Exeter. Gijón, a port in northern Spain, can also be rendered “Xixón.” The hand in this letter is inconsistent, and although Gijón makes contextual sense, this transcription is uncertain. I thank Dr. Alex Bamji for assistance in deciphering this place name.

75. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to William Fittz, March 10, 1672/3, Norwich, 13.

76. HCA DDFA/37/5, Henry Thompson to John Drew [May 10, 1653] [Hull].

77. Agnew, *Belfast Merchant Families*, 116; Truxes, “Dutch and Irish Cooperation,” 330.

Thomas Pengelly that “if you shall thinke it convenient for me to adventor I shall bee willing to doe as you account best for me.”<sup>78</sup> Davis and Pengelly’s business relationship survived the second war and remained active into the third, during which Davis reported to Pengelly that although spices were cheaper in Holland than in London there was an added danger that they “may be taken by the customehouse her[e] and then they are all gone.” Despite this, Davis was once again content to be guided by Pengelly, assuring him that “I shall observ your order the first opportunity.”<sup>79</sup> This correspondence suggests little change in the dynamic of this business relationship between the second and third wars (a relationship in which Pengelly was the dominant partner), as well as highlighting that this relationship survived the problems of the second war to remain active into the third. Not all merchants were anxious regarding the hazard of continuing trade: William Selay, who we met earlier, altered his trading methods in reaction to the threat of war, but his business partner John Cooke did not share Selay’s anxieties, assuring his Porto-based cousin and namesake that “if there bee any vessel procurable & the hazard not very considerable you may expect a performance of my promise.”<sup>80</sup>

There were several ways in which merchants took advantage of the war to increase their profits—not merely surviving the conflict but thriving through new opportunities. One way was by taking privateering commissions, for which their knowledge of maritime trade and commodity exchange was an advantage.<sup>81</sup> Many merchants were proactive, pursuing potential opportunities even before they were forced into this stance by a declaration of war and choosing to actively pursue, rather than avoid, trading with nations beset by conflict. France did not enter the second war until April 1666, but eight months previously, George McCartney wrote to Thomas Hackett that he would not proceed with trade “til I see how the war with France be or not”;<sup>82</sup> not because he did not want to trade during a war, but so that he could adjust his business methods to achieve the maximum profit. In writing to John Prouse, McCartney explained the potential advantages of a war with France: “if you dele in butter it were good you dealle at first ... these that have goods there the money will give a good value being no goods can

78. NRO Y/L 13/27, Samuel Davis to Thomas Pengelly, July 6, 1666, Yarmouth.

79. NRO Y/PP 7/3, Samuel Davis to Thomas Pengelly, April 20, 1674, London.

80. MHS, Jefferies Family Papers, vol. 25, John Cooke to John Cooke, April 8, 1672, Exeter.

81. Lunsford, *Piracy and Privateering*, 183–184. See also Groenveld “The English Civil Wars as a Cause of the First Anglo-Dutch War,” 548, 551.

82. LL Outletter book of George McCartney, vol. I, 145, George McCartney to Thomas Hackett, August 5, 1665, Belfast.



goe from England.”<sup>83</sup> Four months before the outbreak of the third war, George Northleigh and William Hodges wrote from Livorno to Thomas Pengelly that “if warre with the French & Dutch” broke out, “lead & pepper will gaine in estimate.”<sup>84</sup> Once war had begun, not all merchants were dissuaded from proposing new speculations. John Ellington, another of Thomas Pengelly’s business associates, wrote two months before peace was agreed at Breda that he had bought a new trading vessel, choosing to invest in this asset at a time when the seas remained perilous.<sup>85</sup> In March 1673 Thomas Baret boasted to Thomas Shephard that “if you incourage I will send you patterns of comoditiese fitt to be worne by men by women by children for I deale in all sorts to the Court of England as well as to Amsterdam.”<sup>86</sup>

Given these approaches, it is not surprising that there are examples of merchants celebrating the wars: in 1664 Christopher Lowther, an apprentice to a Turkey merchant, wrote to his father that “a successful war will bee of no less advantage ... this trade may in processe of time bee of infinite advantage boath to Kinge & people & us the managers especially.”<sup>87</sup> In November 1665, George McCartney specifically stated that “if the wars with Holland continiew may doe us good,”<sup>88</sup> and Baret noted in February 1673 that the value of his goods was rising “because few if any as the constitution of affairs now are will adventur to send any of these goods over.”<sup>89</sup> As these experienced traders realized, war reduced supply, removed competition, and allowed those merchants continuing with their business to increase their profit. By being proactive, drawing on their impressive understanding of international politics, taking advantage of fluctuations in supply and demand, managing risk, and being flexible in their approaches, merchants were able to exploit conflict for financial gain.

The advent of peace, too, presented merchants with further opportunities, and it is telling that those very merchants who navigated the wars successfully were also prepared to navigate a shift to peace. Although it has been suggested that “the prospect or advent of peace

83. LL Outletter book of George McCartney, vol. I, 155, George McCartney to John Prouse, August 29, 1665, Belfast.

84. NRO Y/L 13/48, George Northleigh and William Hodges to Thomas Pengelly, January 15, 1671/2, Livorno (Leghorn).

85. NRO Y/L 13/35, John Ellington to Thomas Pengelly, May 21, 1667, Leith.

86. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Thomas Shephard, March 26, 1673, Norwich, 22.

87. Carlisle Archive Centre D LONS L1/1/15, Christopher Lowther to Sir John Lowther, August 31, 1664, London.

88. LL Outletter book of George McCartney, vol. I, 191, George McCartney to John Scouler, November 18, 1665, Belfast.

89. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, February 19, 1672/3, Norwich, 12.

seems to have led to a surge of unsuccessful risk-taking,”<sup>90</sup> the ways in which some merchants planned for peace during the Anglo-Dutch wars highlights their astuteness. When planning for business post-war, Thomas Baret recognized that if he acted quickly, he could benefit: “I am now in greate hopes wee shall have a peace & therefore if there be any comodities fitt for my sale heere which would rise if a peace dus come I should be willinge that you lay out 2 or 3 hundred pounds for me ... I would take the opportunity to draw before the exchange dus rise,”<sup>91</sup> thus capitalizing on favorable rates available during the conflict that would disappear with the coming of peace. Indeed, the very advent of peace was seized on as an opportunity: Baret was actively preparing for peace as early as April 1673 by planning to manufacture commemorative cloth, sending to Rowland Cockey

some patterns of such stuffs as are the mode with us ... the silke in future may be made into orrange or any collour you order ... I may be early to salute a peace in your contrey with prince collors & if you send me all the princes collours I will indeavour to mix them soe in a stuff.<sup>92</sup>

Being able to deal reactively to or to plan proactively for both the onset of war and the onset of peace suggests that capacity for success had more to do with merchants’ abilities and adaptability than with the broader political situation.

When merchants caught wind of the notion that peace might be approaching, they reacted in myriad ways, reflecting the various ways in which they were affected by the conflicts. Some merchants greeted rumors of peace with raised spirits and boosted confidence. In May 1667, two months before the Treaty of Breda was signed, George McCartney wrote to Nicholas Gareldine “that treatie at breda can agree upon peace I hope trade and commerce will reveive again.”<sup>93</sup> Two days following the signing of the treaty, Deveraux Parry had “no newes at present” of the proclamation of peace, but reported to Thomas Pengelly that “Mr John Langly tould mee this day that his friend to whom you sent the patterns from Amsterdam writes him that if hee had those goodes nowe hee did nott question but could putt them of to good

90. Hoppit, *Risk and Failure in English Business*, 98.

91. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, January 26, 1673/4, Norwich, 57.

92. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, April 11, 1673, Norwich, 24.

93. LL Outletter book of George McCartney, vol. I, George McCartney to Nicholas Gareldine, May 4, 1667, Belfast, 359.

advantage to be sould.”<sup>94</sup> Indeed, the next month Parry wrote of his intention to “ship the 100 pieces mixt serges ... for Amsterdam.”<sup>95</sup> Just halfway through the third conflict Thomas Baret reacted to rumors of peace by explaining that “the present discourse of peace or rather a treaty dus encourage me to request you to send away noe more goods (that is retorne goods) till further order.”<sup>96</sup> That the wait for peace to be agreed interrupted his business plans does not seem to have frustrated Baret unduly; on February 13, he exclaimed: “The good newse of a peace betuixt England & Holland although I have long wished for it yet now really it is come sooner then I could expect it butt not any thinge the less welcome be for that it doeth revive my spirits & I hope it will revive trade.”<sup>97</sup>

In light of the ways in which merchants continued to pursue their business in spite of the conflicts, and others benefited directly from them, it is unsurprising that others greeted the cessation of war with despondency. A return to an open market and wider competition was not welcomed by some of those who had found a way to be successful during wartime. Indeed, “if the threat of war caused problems, then the threat and reality of peace also demanded readjustments.”<sup>98</sup> Although Henry Thompson initially balked at the idea of trading in an uncertain market, as examined earlier, we have also seen that he overcame those fears, utilizing foreign shipping and alternative markets to allow him to continue his business. His methods were ultimately so successful that when news of the first Peace of Westminster reached him in March 1654, fears of a saturated market stirred him to write two letters on the same day, one to John and Joseph Drew in Amsterdam to “conjecture wee shall have suddently vessels either from Amsterdam or Rotterdam,”<sup>99</sup> and one to Thomas Benson complaining that “if peace be with the Hollanders I feare this ordinary way of trade will not be very beneficiall.”<sup>100</sup> This example suggests two things: first, not all merchants looked forward to the return of peacetime trading, as they were accustomed to the opportunities

94. NRO Y/L 13/38, Deveraux Parry to Thomas Pengelly, August 2, 1667, London.

95. NRO Y/L 13/40, Deveraux Parry to Thomas Pengelly, September 10, 1667, London.

96. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, March 26, 1673, Norwich, 20.

97. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, February 13, 1673/4, Norwich, 59.

98. Hoppit, *Risk and Failure in English Business*, 129.

99. HCA DDFa/37/5, Henry Thompson to John and Joseph Drew, March 24, 1653/4 [York].

100. HCA DDFa/37/5, Henry Thompson to Thomas Benson, March 24, 1653/4 [York].

offered by war; and second, merchants did not necessarily fall cleanly into one of the categories of responses examined throughout this section. At different junctures, Henry Thompson opted not to trade, utilized various methods to continue his business, and later went so far as to lament the coming of peace.

### Merchants' Concerns

In examining the behavior of merchants during the three Anglo-Dutch wars, we have seen that they employed a variety of methods to continue to make a profit despite the problems caused by war. Merchants' correspondence also sees them voicing concerns about conducting business during periods of conflict, including merchants who were able to adjust their trading methods successfully. During the third war, Thomas Baret wrote to Rowland Cockey that "my feares doe make me to advice & request you to make what possible hast you cann to convey away my goods from Amsterdam to some more secure place."<sup>101</sup> Despite Cockey's "apprehentions of safety in Amsterdam ... its my owne thoughts & all my friends that there can be noe long safety in that place unless the discourse of peace."<sup>102</sup> Two months later Baret declared himself to be "now againe full of feares ... for methinks the peace looks farther off us then we desire it should."<sup>103</sup> In June, Baret added that "as to trade I see you have but little, nor are you like to have much, this beeing the time of action, I must confesse I am some what unwilling to adventure any more goods as yet."<sup>104</sup>

Although in isolation such evidence suggests first that concerns about conflict were foremost in merchants' minds and second that the timing of these business problems means that they were caused by the Anglo-Dutch wars, closer examination of such correspondence suggests otherwise. In fact, in-depth analysis of this material reveals a broad range of difficulties faced by merchants, many of which cannot be attributed to conflict, and which frequently take up more room in business correspondence than concerns regarding war. The mid-1660s were not the most propitious time to maintain business, even if the Second Anglo-Dutch War is taken out of the equation, as

101. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, January 17, 1672/3, Norwich, 7.

102. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, February 10, 1672/3, Norwich, 8.

103. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, April 30, 1673, Norwich, 27.

104. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, June 11, 1673, Norwich, 31.

disease spread throughout Europe and the Great Plague and the Great Fire prevented freedom of movement and exchange in England. In August 1664, Sir George Downing reported from The Hague that “the plague increaseth mightily in this country ... it is scattered in all Townes of Holland ... I thinke those of Scotland have not bin ill advised in prohibiting all trade with this country.”<sup>105</sup> The “sickness” in England in August 1665 prevented George McCartney finding insurance, and he noted that he “dar not hazard a whole loading upon my oune account.”<sup>106</sup> Attempts by merchants to undertake business despite the plague were quickly curtailed. Edinburgh merchants traveled to the City of London “beginning commerce and trade, and adventuring to bring into this Kingdome all Comodities as formerly,” despite the fact that “the Plague is not yet altogether ceased.” This prompted a proclamation in Edinburgh in December 1665 reiterating a prohibition on trade with London due to “the danger and fear of infection.”<sup>107</sup> The Great Fire the following year not only required the rebuilding of London but impacted on overseas trade, as it struck “the commercial heart” of the city.<sup>108</sup>

Indeed, when surviving merchants’ correspondence is examined in more detail, we see that discussion of war takes up surprisingly little space and that many concerns were about issues unrelated to the political context. Eleven months after the conclusion of the third war, Henry Ashhurst, a London merchant, wrote to John Bridges in Amsterdam that “it is very dangerous to go in or out in the winter from Amsterdam I am pleased you have insured,” citing the weather as his concern.<sup>109</sup> Five months later, Samuel Davis, who had been content to continue business during both the second and third wars, wrote to Thomas Pengelly of a number of complaints, including sickness in his family and the cost of a doctor, and moaned that “my trade is soe smale and inconsiderable and provision of all sorts soe very deare as I do not receive enough in a weeke to discharge my expenses.” Davis’s jealousy of other, more successful Norfolk merchants was palpable: “I wish I had [Mr. Tayler’s]

105. TNA SP84/171/107, Downing to Bennett, August 4, 1664, The Hague.

106. LL Outletter book of George McCartney, vol. I, George McCartney to John Brow, August 25, 1665, Belfast, 151. These were long-term concerns; McCartney raised fears about the plague both in England and abroad to numerous recipients throughout the following year: McCartney to John Sexton, August 25, 1665, 152; McCartney to Richard Huish, August 26, 1665, 154; McCartney to John Sexton, September 9, 1665, 159; McCartney to Daniel Arthoure, May 12, 1666, 243–244; McCartney to William Watt, May 23, 1666, 246.

107. Beinecke BrSides 1999 126, Proclamation discharging trade and commerce with the City of London, December 21, 1665.

108. Rommelse, “Mountains of Iron and Gold,” 263.

109. Bodleian MS. Don. c. 169, Henry Ashhurst to John Bridges, January 15, 1674/5, London.

trade friends & helpe he have had to gitt such an estate as he have done in 8 years time,” concluding “I am confident a slave in Turkey lives not a more dejected discontented life then I doe.”<sup>110</sup> For some, war was not uppermost in their list of complaints.

The Norwich merchant and cloth manufacturer Thomas Baret, who has featured throughout this article, provides an ideal case study through which to examine the range of concerns exhibited by early-modern merchants.<sup>111</sup> For Baret, one of the most pressing concerns was his manufacturing business. In June 1675, despite peace between England and the Dutch, Baret struggled to acquire raw materials, writing that “I can not gett yarne enough.”<sup>112</sup> The next month Baret was finding it “difficult to geet good mixt wool yarnes to keepe those lombes that I have in worke.”<sup>113</sup> He struggled to manufacture a stuff “soe difficult to make ... that my workemen will leave rather than goe on.”<sup>114</sup> Baret commented that one of his commissions was “a very teedous comodity to make, it swallows a vast deele of yarne & is 14 days to worke a piece.”<sup>115</sup> In August 1674 Baret felt obliged to confess to a customer that “these ... are not soe good as I would have had, I putt new persons upon them whoe could not hitt right at first but you shall have better in future.”<sup>116</sup> Although Baret’s problems were exacerbated by the third war—in June 1673 he responded to a complaint regarding the quality of goods he had sent to Holland by explaining that “the truth is the cessation of my Holland trade hath caused me to employ these workemen in English comodities which I use[d] to employ in Hollands comodities”<sup>117</sup>—Baret’s fundamental problems in manufacturing rarely had much to do with the political climate. His inexperience in textile manufacturing showed as he struggled to manage his workmen and produce complex fabrics. We know that his manufacturing operation was large,<sup>118</sup> and it may be that he attempted more than he was

110. NRO MC 265/3, Samuel Davis to Thomas Pengelly, June 13, 1675, Yarmouth.

111. Talbott, ed., *The Letter-Book of Thomas Baret*.

112. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, June 3, 1674, Norwich, 77.

113. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, July 15, 1674, Norwich, 88.

114. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, June 3, 1674, Norwich, 77.

115. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, July 1, 1674, Norwich, 85.

116. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, August 5, 1674, Norwich, 98.

117. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, April 30, 1673, Norwich, 31.

118. In 1661, six looms was thought to be an “unusually large number”: Priestly, “The Fabric of Stuffs,” 195. We know from Baret’s letter-book that he had at least four

really capable of. While Norwich weavers were primarily craftsmen, overseeing all aspects of manufacturing and being present in their workshops,<sup>119</sup> Baret was more heavily involved in marketing his produce than in the day-to-day process of manufacture. This left less time to deal effectively with manufacturing problems as they arose.

The role of networks and the importance of credit, trust, and reputation in early-modern business have received a great deal of academic scrutiny in recent years.<sup>120</sup> The merchants who continued to operate during the Anglo-Dutch wars, including Thomas Baret, demonstrably made use of contacts not only for practical assistance but to gauge the likelihood of success, and the presence of a trusted associate increased the likelihood of continuing trade. In February 1673, Thomas Baret had ordered “a totall withdrawinge my wholle concerns from Amsterdam,” but on learning that Rowland Cockey would “still abide there & that there is some small trade to be driven there I will not totally desert you & that place but lett some small stock runn the fate of the place ... I will keepe a small trade goeing as long as you stay there.”<sup>121</sup> In June Baret was adamant that he was “unwilling to adventure any more goods as yet ... the danger of the present warr dus make me at present unwilling,” but asked nonetheless: “Could your freinds give me any incouragement.”<sup>122</sup>

The importance of these networks helps to explain the extent to which Baret was angered when his business associates did not fulfill their part of the bargain. Indeed, Baret’s fraught relationships with his business associates—particularly Rowland Cockey, who played a significant role in Baret’s trade with Amsterdam—were one of his primary grievances and were mentioned far more than the Third Anglo-Dutch War, despite Baret continuing to trade throughout the conflict. In the first entry in his letter-book, from November 1672, Baret insisted that his money be “remitted ... which please to doe per first conveniency for really I am in want.”<sup>123</sup> Cockey was admonished numerous times for failing to send updated accounts, causing Baret to ask him in November 1673 to “send me one every six months.” Nonetheless, twelve months

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in 1674, and he frequently refers to “all my loombs”: NRO MS6360, 6B8, Letter-Book of Thomas Baret of Norwich, 66, 74, 91, 105. See Talbott, ed., *The Letter-Book of Thomas Baret*.

119. Priestly, “The Fabric of Stuffs,” 188.

120. See, for example, Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation*; Haggerty, “Merely for Money?”

121. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, February 19, 1672/3, Norwich, 11.

122. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, June 11, 1673, Norwich, 31–2.

123. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, November 27, 1672, Norwich, 3.

later, Baret had still “for many months beene desiringe an accompt from you after two yeares standinge.”<sup>124</sup> In June 1675 Baret threatened to withhold commissions until the accounts were received, and by August, following numerous pleas for updated accounts, Baret lamented that Cockey “neglect it which is not the part of friend nor can it be called civill dealing ... it doth not turne to your reputation to have an accompt of towards five yeares now depending ... now I must make all best of a badd accompt.”<sup>125</sup> By October, Baret was lamenting to other associates—in this case William Peacock—that “as to Rowland Cockey, I wish he did deale otherwise with his friends than he doth, for at the last the discredit will light upon himselfe, altho at present the loss light upon others.”<sup>126</sup> Throughout the five years covered by Baret’s letter-book, we see his relationship with Cockey—once one of his most prominent business associates—slowly disintegrate, owing largely to Baret’s frustrations with how Cockey conducted himself in business. This relationship broke down irrespective of the war, and the importance of personal relationships in this period makes it unsurprising that this is so prominent in Baret’s correspondence, not only in his letters to Cockey but also in his correspondence with his wider network.

Cultural differences, both in business methods and communication, also caused problems. In August 1675, Baret wrote to Nathaniel Mathew, who was based in Hamburg, that he did not fully understand an invoice, noting that “I have tryed it all wayes that I can invent but can not give my selfe ssatisfaction about it & therefore by next pray cleare it to me.” These were “the first goods that I have received from your parts & must confes my selfe ignorant at present in your moneys & accompts.” Baret admitted to Mathew that “I doe not soe well understand the coarce of your exchange as I doe some others & therefore pray instruct me what coarce of exchange is even money with starlinge & how much every penny is in the rice or fall of the exchange.”<sup>127</sup> When such information was not forthcoming, Baret was not shy about revealing his displeasure, reprimanding William Peacock for sending a letter “which had noe price current in it.”<sup>128</sup> Baret did business in a range of textile commodities, but seventeenth-century Norwich stuffs are

124. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, November 4, 1674, Norwich, 123.

125. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Rowland Cockey, August 11, 1675, Norwich, 158-9.

126. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to William Peacock, October 13, 1675, Norwich, 178.

127. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Nathaniel Mathew, August 27, 1675, Norwich, 161-2.

128. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to William Peacock, November 17, 1676, London, 233.



notoriously difficult to identify: there are no known survivals of Norwich stuffs, and pattern books and samples only survive from the 1760s.<sup>129</sup> This was a problem for contemporaries as well as today's historians: in June 1675, Baret wrote to John Dey

you are sorry that I send noe crowne rashes & truly I am sorry that I doe not know what you meane by them & therefore if you would have any you must send me a pattern of them or give me such description as I may understand for I am sure wee have noe such name for any comodity here.<sup>130</sup>

There was also a language barrier to contend with: Baret wrote to Shephard regarding the “worthy person whome you have recommended, Mr Jacomo Lemo, whoe beeing a Dutch man may possibly be as farr from understanding my language as I should his.”<sup>131</sup> Baret's unfamiliarity with the Dutch language may explain why so many of his correspondents were English expatriates, rather than native Dutchmen—this limited his capacity to trade more than the ongoing war did.

Another of Baret's chief concerns was his desire to operate in an arena subject to a governmentally controlled monopoly held by the Company of Merchant Adventurers of London. A regulated trading company founded in the fifteenth century, the Merchant Adventurers were granted a monopoly on the export of cloth from England in 1564. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Merchant Adventurers “held unquestionable leadership in London's merchant community,”<sup>132</sup> monopolizing the major export market in semi-finished cloth. Baret continued to participate in the cloth trade to the Netherlands as an independent agent during the Third Anglo-Dutch War. Perhaps as a result of pressures caused by the conflict and subsequent attempts to expand his business, he sought to open trade with Hamburg and made repeated attempts to partake in the activities of the Merchant Adventurers (or, as they were termed by Baret throughout his letter-book, the Hamburg Company). In several letters to Thomas Shephard, a member of the company, Baret complained about his exclusion from this trade. In August 1673, he noted that “if I were a member of the Hamborough Company you would afford me the utmost of your assistance

129. Priestly, “Marketing of Norwich Stuffs,” 195, 198; Talbott, ed. *The Letter-Book of Thomas Baret*.

130. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to John Dey, June 11, 1675, Norwich, 156.

131. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Thomas Shephard, March 26, 1673, Norwich, 21.

132. Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 3.

... [but] amongst your selves you have made a resolution not to deale for any butt such as are of the company.”<sup>133</sup> Baret acknowledged that the charter of the Merchant Adventurers “extends only to London, I live 100 miles off from it,” but protested that the “Citty of Norwich hath always had Hamborough marchants ... till within these last 40 years.”<sup>134</sup> By July 1673, Baret was becoming irate. On July 4, he penned a letter to Shephard that ultimately went unsent, in which he stated that he “must acknowledge my selfe not to be free of the Hamborough Company neither doe I know how to procure it & therefore I must totally defit trading to your ports & steere my coarse of trade some other way.”<sup>135</sup> Three days later, having calmed himself somewhat, Baret wrote to Shephard in a more measured tone but still argued that he should be permitted to trade with Shephard despite the monopoly of the Merchant Adventurers.<sup>136</sup> Baret echoed the fears of many of those opposed to trading monopolies in protesting that “I doe thinke it some what hard in soe generous a Company as yours is to discourage the new inventions of our English manufactory.”<sup>137</sup>

Despite the Merchant Adventurers’ monopoly, this was not a completely closed trade, and in principle, admission to the company was open on payment of a “relatively nominal” entry fee.<sup>138</sup> Despite declaring himself “very thankfull to your court for admitting the sale of my goods,” Baret decided that he was not willing to take up freedom of the company. He objected to the oath of freedom, “which dos particularly express Holland Zealand & the rest of the Low Contres with so large an obligation to the Company that I cannot take this oath & continue the trade which I now have in the Low Contry without breaking of it.”<sup>139</sup> Baret was also reluctant to pay the entry fee, stating that “to be out of money for a fredome before ever I can trye my experiment or be in a probable way to gett soe much by the trade seemeth a litle hard.”<sup>140</sup> Excluded from the Merchant Adventurers’ activities, at first by the

133. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Thomas Shephard, August 6, 1673, Norwich, 42.

134. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Thomas Shephard, August 6, 1673, Norwich, 43.

135. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Thomas Shephard, July 4, 1673, Norwich, 34.

136. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Thomas Shephard, July 7, 1673, Norwich, 34.

137. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Thomas Shephard, July 4, 1673, Norwich, 34.

138. Ball, *Merchants and Merchandise*, 34; Bennett, “Migration,” 74.

139. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Thomas Shephard, September 29, 1674, London, 115.

140. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Thomas Shephard, August 6, 1673, Norwich, 43.

monopoly and later by choice, and trading during a volatile period, it was important for Baret to trade within business networks that he knew and trusted. In August 1675, Baret declared that “my way of trading is not in Company but either upon my particuler accompt or elce in commission,”<sup>141</sup> after earlier warning Shephard that “I have a mind to try to settle a trade in your parts & to doe it by our contrymens hands.”<sup>142</sup> As early as 1674, Baret was “drawinge up reasons & stating the case to severall members in parliament & craving their advice upon it with directions how I shall steere my coarse to effect a general liberty of trade in your parts.”<sup>143</sup> Such behavior perhaps reflects the growing influence of some merchants on economic policy, as noted earlier, but more significantly for this study, it is telling that the institutional and bureaucratic barriers faced by Baret appear to have worried him much more than any of the inconveniences caused by trading between two countries at war. Certainly they occupy far more space in his letter-book.

The role played by regulated companies like the Merchant Adventurers is crucial to understanding international business, but focus on institutional activities at the expense of those pursued by independent agents can obscure the importance of the latter. The contention that overseas trade—particularly between Europe and the wider world—was “undertaken chiefly by state-chartered monopoly trading companies”<sup>144</sup> has contributed to the activities of these companies being overprivileged in analyses of international commerce. However, there are contexts in which nongovernmentally controlled mercantile networks have been shown to be more effective than ventures tied to companies or monopolies, and—as Baret realized in turning down membership of the Merchant Adventurers—it could benefit merchants to be independent of the protectionist schemes of governments, as it gave them freedom to trade wherever markets were best.<sup>145</sup> Further, as Michael Bennett has argued, “Many of the merchants and agents who worked for trading companies regularly subverted the instructions provided by the

141. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Nathaniel Mathew, August 27, 1675, Norwich, 163.

142. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Thomas Shephard, August 6, 1673, Norwich, 43.

143. NRO MS6360, 6B8, Thomas Baret to Thomas Shephard, January 23, 1673/4, Norwich, 34.

144. Irwin, “Mercantilism as Strategic Trade Policy,” 1297. Irwin acknowledges that intra-European trade was relatively less hindered by government monopoly policies than trade between Europe and the rest of the world.

145. Murdoch, “Scotland and Europe,” 137; Murdoch, *Network North*, 423; Dickson, “Introduction”; Talbot, *Conflict, Commerce and Franco-Scottish Relations*, 9.

directors in London, by rejecting company authority [and] conducting commerce on their own private accounts.”<sup>146</sup> The gradual decline of the Merchant Adventurers’ dominance of the Anglo-Dutch cloth trade during the seventeenth century is well documented and has been attributed in part to “the company’s trade to Holland slowly disintegrat[ing] during the Anglo-Dutch wars.”<sup>147</sup> The continuing activities of what David Ormrod describes as “interlopers” in the trade, including Thomas Baret,<sup>148</sup> however, demonstrates that this is not the whole story of how England’s seventeenth-century cloth trade was affected by the Anglo-Dutch wars. By supplementing studies that consider broad, national concerns with analysis of the actions of merchants “on the ground,” we see the importance of considering business activities—and those conducting them—at a practical level. Such an approach highlights issues relating directly to the conflicts discussed here, but also contributes to discussions surrounding other aspects of business history, including monopolies, manufacturing, and the exchange of information. Merchants were used to operating during periods of war and were accustomed to adjusting their actions accordingly. Far more concerning to them were the less predictable obstacles to business, including unreliable workmen, cultural barriers, the behavior of business associates, and the restrictions of monopoly trade.

## Conclusion

As Charles Boxer pointed out many years ago, “not all traders and merchants in England were rivals and competitors of the Dutch,”<sup>149</sup> and there are more examples of merchants doing business directly with their “enemy” during the Anglo-Dutch conflicts than there is room to discuss here. The material I have considered suggests that the long-standing scholarly tendency to view wartime commerce—and in particular the aims, ambitions, and successes of merchants—through the lens of international political relationships is highly problematic.<sup>150</sup> Jack Levy and Katherine Barbieri’s statement that “most international trade takes place at the intersocietal level rather than the intergovernmental level—between private actors in different countries and not

146. Bennett, “Migration,” 74.

147. Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires*, 33.

148. Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires*, 124–125; Ormrod, “The Demise of Regulated Trading,” 256, 259; see also Pettigrew, “Political Economy,” 62–63.

149. Boxer, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 20.

150. Talbott, *Conflict, Commerce and Franco-Scottish Relations*, 156–157.

between governments themselves”<sup>151</sup> would be recognizable to the businessmen who pursued profit intersocietally against the fluctuating intergovernmental backdrop of the Anglo-Dutch wars. The arguments highlighted in the introduction to this article characterizing the Anglo-Dutch wars as damaging to commerce and business interests would not be so recognizable among these contemporaries.<sup>152</sup> Early-modern merchants were used to operating during periods of war and were prepared for these eventualities. While some merchants exercised a growing influence on policy, most were not preoccupied with worrying about what they could not control. If we are to refine our assessments of the impact of early-modern warfare on trade, we must go beyond consideration of consequences for state economies and the activities of privateers, to consider individual experiences, the myriad ways in which business was impacted by war, and the resulting variety of ways in which merchants coped with obstacles to their business.

In addition to providing a reassessment of the commercial impact of the Anglo-Dutch wars, this study contributes to recent methodological shifts in business history by applying their approaches to an arena hitherto not considered in such a way, consolidating the value of scrutinizing the commercial impact of the Anglo-Dutch wars at a micro-level. British merchants’ experiences of trading with the enemy during these conflicts were diverse and encompassed a range of different techniques that had varying degrees of success. Although, as acknowledged earlier, the three wars considered here had different causes and consequences, the merchants trading during them did not differentiate their coping mechanisms—it made little difference to them what had caused the conflict. Thomas Pengelly and Samuel Davis’s business relationship operated during both the second and third wars, with similar approaches to their operation—a rare example of surviving source material that allows us to track a business relationship through two conflicts. Indeed, though Julian Hoppit suggests that even when merchants coped well with the “early problems” of the threat and outbreak of wars, “they tended to find themselves undone after a while,”<sup>153</sup> the continued relationship of Pengelly and Davis, as well as the protracted activities of the other merchants examined here, suggests that their coping mechanisms allowed for long-term business success despite the wars.

151. Levy and Barbieri, “Trading with the Enemy During Wartime,” 18; see also Leng, “Commercial Conflict and Regulation,” 939, who shows that trade necessarily took place outside the “bounds of the body politic,” as merchants prioritized private interests.

152. Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires*, 37; Rommelse, “Mountains of Iron and Gold,” 263; Rommelse, *Second Anglo-Dutch War*, 189–190; Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade*, 293–294; Ball, *Merchants and Merchandise*, 202.

153. Hoppit, *Risk and Failure in English Business*, 98.

We have seen that some merchants suffered losses during the Anglo-Dutch wars, but many more adjusted their trading methods, planning in advance for expected disruption. The coping mechanisms employed were varied. Options included the use of convoys, trading on neutral ships, and falsifying papers, all of which necessitated taking additional risks—trading in untested commodities, on unknown ships, in unfamiliar markets, and with people outside their usual trusted networks—and as we have seen, using perennial methods such as diversification to mitigate the additional risks associated with continuing business during periods of war. Some merchants coped by withdrawing themselves from the market and opting to cease trading; others benefited from this reduction in competition, coping by expanding. As the reluctance of some merchants to continue to pursue Anglo-Dutch trade left the market open for others, the likes of Henry Thompson and George McCartney were able to benefit to the point that they lamented the return of peace and the consequent return to open competition. The most successful wartime merchants were proactive, keeping abreast of political developments and planning their wartime business activities even before war had been declared. Further, not all those who struggled during wartime did so necessarily because of the wars themselves—the nature of international trade is that it “created losers as well as winners”<sup>154</sup> in both wartime and peacetime, and we have seen that merchants more readily voiced anxieties about other, less predictable uncertainties than the commonplace matter of undertaking business during a war.<sup>155</sup> While merchants recognized the challenges posed by international conflict, they had plenty of other, more pressing concerns to deal with, usually caused by the behavior of other individuals rather than wider political issues. Given his continued success throughout the Third Anglo-Dutch War, despite his ultimate exclusion from the markets of the Merchant Adventurers and other numerous struggles, it seems fitting to leave the final word here to Thomas Baret, who believed that “what cannot be helped must be indured.”<sup>156</sup>

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