

**MERCHANTS AND OBSERVERS.
THE DUTCH REPUBLIC'S
COMMERCIAL INTERESTS IN
SPAIN AND THE MERCHANT
COMMUNITY IN CADIZ IN THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.¹**

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Introduction

Around 1720, the Dutch merchant colony in Cadiz succeeded in restoring trade with Amsterdam after several crisis periods. At the end of the 17th century and during the Spanish War of Succession, Dutch-Spanish trade went into a period of recession, although only in relative terms. Trade in general, just like everything else as far as the United Provinces were concerned, was affected by this 'decline' (*Achteruitgang*), as once described by Jonathan Israel or even by Jan de Vries himself. Holland stepped off the aggressive international scenario but continued its fruitful growth in the cultural and economic fields (Israel 378-395). The signs of such decline vary depending on the different sectors of Dutch foreign trade. To the minds of the merchants in the Maritime Provinces trading with vast overseas regions and for those that received their consignments at various European port-towns, Dutch trade and shipping was the mainstay of the economy of the countries where they had spread their commercial networks. One of those countries was Spain, especially the areas of influence of various ports in Andalusia, the Mediterranean and the northern coast. With regard to trade with France and even with England, the Dutch lost ground in financial terms, although their role as capital and financial marine services (freights, insurance), exporters as well as manufacture providers and re-exporters of colonial produce and certain raw materials, did not diminish. It is a fact that Spanish merchants and, indeed, certain politicians of the day had the notion that the Republic of the United Provinces acted as a skilful diplomatic mediator as well as being a model of economic progress for Spain. Such a notion stands in clear opposition to the idea of a decline. Some of the ideas in current historiographic debates suggest that 'decline' is relative, affects different areas differently and only reached its peak after 1750 (De Vries conclusion).

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Spanish traders and even politicians had their own notion of what they still regarded as the 'powerful Republic'.² What is the basis for this notion? Holland was, among other things, a political and economic model for philosophers and statesmen alike, as well as an example for the specialised mercantile societies emerging in Atlantic Europe, ever on the look out for successful international businesses or networks. In certain Spanish towns, Dutch businesses still held a great deal of power due to the export of capital from Amsterdam and their heavy involvement in Spain's industry (mostly textile and shipbuilding). In the second half of the 17th century, the United Provinces went on to play their major role in their relationships with their former enemy, thus becoming Spain's allies and most loyal commercial partners (Echevarria 467-504). During the 18th century, the commercial balance between Spain and Holland was in favour of the latter and Spain absorbed a large portion of Dutch exports, although in fierce competition with France and England. Furthermore, the presence of Dutch factories, warehouses and *comptoirs* in many port-towns on the Spanish seaboard, namely Bilbao, Malaga, Alicante and, especially, Cadiz, was very high (Crespo 23). The balance of Spanish-Dutch relations was a fundamental to an understanding of how an alleged Dutch 'decline' late in the Seventeenth Century and early in the 18th Century was viewed by Spain. The economic recession, already present in the public opinion at the time, was witnessed by the Dutch merchant community in Cadiz. The political context of the day is crucial to an understanding of how Dutch foreign trade developed, namely, the end of the War of Spanish Succession and its immediate consequences, the peace and trade treaties (especially the Treaty of Seville in 1729) and the change of political regime in the United Provinces in 1702 whereby the regime without a Stadholder was to last until 1747.

This text analyses these diplomatic relations, the business of the Dutch colony in Cadiz and their impact on how these merchants perceive the prevailing situation. They were aware of a temporary interim crisis that could be reversed if they became involved in the diplomatic relations between Spain and the United Provinces. The fact that the Provinces were valued as an economic model by Spanish statesmen encouraged merchants to attempt to make the most of Spain's commercial policy.

² Madrid, Biblioteca del Palacio Real (BPR) V/2668. 'Carta del Abad de la Ville A.S.A.P. los Estados Generales de las Provincias Unidas con una declaración de S.M. Christianísima', in: *Colección de todos los escritos que se han publicado en Holanda en pro y en contra, después de la entrada de las tropas francesas en el territorio de la misma República*. Madrid, 1 March 1747. Imprenta del Mercurio, f. 9.

Holland as a political and economic model

Between the Peace of Munster in 1648 and the end of the War of Spanish Succession (1713-1714), a new *status quo* made it clear that the relationship between Spain and the Netherlands was based on cooperation and mutual help in the face of the changes taking place in Europe. In the political field, it has been stated that the Dutch Republic became a power secondary to the newly emerging powers. It did, however, continue to be a major commercial and political nation even though it had never sought political hegemony. Historiography has only partly dealt with diplomatic relations between Spain and the United Provinces. On only a few occasions has it been succinctly specified that the importance of good diplomatic relations only serves the purpose of encouraging trade (Carter 46, Smith 13-36). The reason for this is that on the European political stage at the time, most armed conflicts were caused by dynastic ambitions displayed by the reigning dynasties and their opponents and by the shadow of many unsettled territorial feuds involving great monarchic powers. Within this context, the mostly diplomatic role of the Republic has been traditionally neglected, although it has been more thoroughly addressed more recently (Jacob & Mijnhart Introduction). Still in the 1700s, several issues highlight the Dutch Republic's leading performance on Spain's stage as the source and driving force behind the broad commercial networks spread over the vast Hispanic markets. As shown by several chronicles of the time, both issues heavily influenced how Holland was regarded by Spanish statesmen as a commercial and political model. At the same time, the republican 'Regenten' government displayed a particular kind of diplomacy, especially after the War of Spanish Succession, intended to maintain, at all costs its trade with the Iberian Peninsula as being central to the Dutch commercial routes in Europe and to other markets, including the Mediterranean and America. Heavily influenced by the envoys from the Dutch Consul in Cadiz, Hispano-Dutch diplomatic relations were framed in a context characterised by *'guerras inevitadas y alianzas necesarias'*.³

The emergence of France as a major power in the second half of the 17th century encouraged a Hispano-Dutch rapprochement (Herrero 393, Crespo 77-104). In 1702, the return to a republican political regime in the United Provinces was also followed by a distancing from their English allies. The restoration of the 'Regenten' regime meant that the political guidelines, between 1702 and 1747, were to be characterised by an interest in maintaining a series of treaties for the defence of trade and by neutral alliances signed with the major powers of the time. Furthermore, the

³ 'Unavoided wars and necessary alliances.' Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, (AHNM) 'Expedientes de Memoriales vistos en el Consejo de Estado para el fomento español, en relación a Holanda'. Estado, Leg. 3188.

Republic's merchants began to look upon certain issues with disapproval. In the first place, - and according to John Aalbers, - it seems that the crisis in the treasury is key to understanding the Dutch change of mind towards peace and her distancing from England. Indeed, the ongoing warlike conflicts had exhausted the Dutch public treasury, and the strength of her merchant and military navies was at an all-time low (Aalbers 81). Although war affected both England and the Republic, the latter was the worst hit. A further problem was that many Anglo-Dutch commercial trading firms with business interests in Spain, Italy and Portugal had their ships seized by Spanish coastguard vessels with alarming frequency, as described in an anonymous letter written by an Amsterdam merchant to his correspondent in London.⁴ It is no coincidence that, in 1701, a book was published in Amsterdam entitled *Histoire abrégée des Provinces-Unies des Païs-Bas* supporting Phillip d'Anjou as the heir to the Spanish throne. Such a book was probably inspired by Huguenot merchants living in the republic after fleeing France.⁵

1709 and 1710 witnessed the beginning of the distancing between the English and the Dutch, when the Spanish government began to break away from Versailles and to reach an understanding with Great Britain, which led to a series of trade privileges requested by England and granted by the Spanish king that were detrimental to the privileges that Flemish and Dutch traders had enjoyed in Spain during the second half of the 17th century. The agreements between Spain and the United Provinces, signed between 1667 and 1672, whereby the Dutch colonies in port-towns were recognised as the '*nación más privilegiada*'⁶, were reviewed and enforced again by the Spanish authorities (Pulido Bueno 44-48). Special accountants and tax inspectors were deployed in order to monitor and register Dutch traffic in relation to its volume, composition and fiscal yield.⁷ During the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Utrecht, the States-General became aware that England posed a threat to Dutch interests as the English only

⁴ London, British Library (BL), Ms. *A letter from a merchant in Amsterdam to His Correspondent in London*, (1718).

⁵ Madrid, Biblioteca del Banco de España (BEE), BS 5487, *Histoire abrégée des Provinces-Unies des Païs-Bas, où l'on voit leurs progrès, leurs conquêtes, leur Gouvernement, et celui de leurs Compagnes en Orient & en Occident. Comme aussi les Hommes Illustres dans les Armes & les Savans dans les Lettres. Enrichie d'un grand nombre de figures*, A. Amsterdam, chez Jean Malherbe, Marchand Libraire sur le Vygendam (1701).

⁶'The most privileged nation.'

⁷ Valladolid, Archivo General de Simancas (AGS.) Contaduría Mayor de Hacienda, '*Orden de 1648 por el Consejo de Hacienda sobre el Almojarifazgo mayor de Andalucía*', Leg. 2287.

pursued their own advantage, which they were not willing to share with the Dutch ally (just as indeed was to happen in 1713 and 1714). From then onward, Dutch neutrality on foreign policy clashed with its own trade interests and its own security in Europe. A further problem at a diplomatic level with regard to the Dutch Republic's neutrality is the 'barrier' in the Southern Low Countries (Denys 115-139, Van Nimwegen 147-173). The agreement between Spain and the Republic meant that the former kept the Flemish provinces. Pamphlets describing the Dutch's positive attitude towards Spain's involvement in the Barrier Treaty are translated into Spanish. Such documents show Spain's support for the amendment proposed by the Dutch to the French motion as the latter clearly threatened the Spanish Netherlands.⁸ However, there are conflicting interests within the Netherlands, as many merchants oppose the barrier and, especially, the high rate of tax to be levied, which threatened to drive Flemish trade away from Dutch routes (Geikie & Montgomery 12).

This and other factors may be the reasons for a political shift towards a slightly hidden neutrality, providing that neutrality means safeguarding Dutch commercial interests in Spanish markets, especially in southern Spain and America. This hidden neutrality of self-seeking collaboration regarding Spain's affairs came to light in a series of events occurring throughout the whole period when there was no Stadholder, between 1702 and 1747, and especially in the first two decades after the War of Spanish Succession. Thus, political events only add to a situation of mutual interdependence in social and economic terms, with backing from pamphlets and other literature in favour of the merchants and the defence of trade with Iberia, as well as Flemish and Dutch trade with America from Andalusia. Furthermore, as described by Accarias de Serionne, Dutch trade networks were exclusively interested in keeping the traffic of goods, manufactures from other countries and, especially, the gold and silver acquired in the port of Cadiz (Accarias de Serionne 224-229). Between 1713 and 1748, cooperation reached higher levels than the mere commercial relationships between individuals, leading to a period of growth in southern Spain. This cooperation also reached the naval and military levels in the form of loans and escorts.⁹ There are two central issues that exert an influence on the

⁸ Madrid, BPR, Impreso, III/6550 (6). Jonathan Swift, *Breves reflexiones sobre el tratado de La Barrera hecho entre su Magestad Británica y los Estados Generales en La Haya el día 29 de octubre de 1709 por el mismo autor del primer papel intitulado La conducta de los aliados ... ; traducido del inglés à la lengua francesa, y de esta al idioma castellano*, (Madrid, 1712).

⁹ Madrid, AHNM, Estado 604, exp. 55. Consultation of the Cabinet Office or Consejo de Estado on October, 26 1683; AHNM. Estado 605, Caja 2, Consultation on 19 August, 1719.

Spanish-Dutch *rapprochement* as well as in the view of the Dutch Republic taken by both politicians and merchants in Spain.

Firstly, the Republic's ability in the diplomatic field. The Spanish government believed, at some point, that the diplomats at The Hague could be of great assistance in solving certain problems that Spain had in Europe, especially in relation to possible alliances with England and Austria. During the period of the *Regenten*, the Dutch republic becomes involved in various important treaties where the nature of its true relationship with Spain shows. The 20s and 30s were to witness a continuous search for alliances marked by diverse tendencies showing the contradictions of the balance system and the highly interesting but self-seeking role as mediators played by the Dutch. On the one hand, Austria and Spain set out to attract them to their causes, but the States-General, however willing to have a profitable relationship with Spain, were not prepared to make enemies and, in 1725, chose to join England, France and Prussia. In this treaty, France and England decided to support Prussia's demands, which could jeopardise Holland's security on the eastern border since this had not been clearly defined. This is one of the reasons why the Republic took part in the talks leading to the Treaty of Seville, signed shortly afterwards, in 1729. The Dutch viewed this opportunity as their last chance to persuade England, France and Spain to sign an agreement favourable to Holland. Let us not overlook the fact that the Dutch were endlessly trying seeking to regain their old trading privileges in Spain that were being lost to the English. Furthermore, Spain's diplomats could be their best allies to secure their border with France. According to a Spanish minister, in 1747 the States-General and the Spanish court had been working together to maintain a: '*conservative will and a wish for stability*' in order to pave the way for a new era of alliances between both countries against France, and even against England.¹⁰ The Spanish statesmen feared the possibility that this wish for mutual cooperation, based on a peaceful alliance, would be lost if the Dutch Republic began a *rapprochement* with France after the events in 1747. That year marked a shift in Spanish-Dutch relations as the change of regime in the Republic and the ensuing restoration of the Stadtholder coincided with the beginning of the reign of Fernando VI in Spain, which was characterized by a policy tending towards pacifism as a means to achieving greater economic prosperity (Molina Cortón 36). In fact, the Spanish ministers were very happy to identify themselves with the interests of Dutch diplomacy, as stated by the anonymous author of a Dutch pamphlet translated and published in Spain: '*pues cada nación está obligada a vigilar continuamente para prevenir el excesivo engrandecimiento de su vecino, para su propia seguridad que el impedir al vecino que sea demasiado poderoso no es hacer mal sino*

¹⁰ Madrid, BPRM, "*Colección* ", Letter, 1 March 1747.

*libertarse de la servidumbre de preservar de ella a los demás vecinos suyos. En una palabra, es trabajar en la libertad, tranquilidad y salud pública.*¹¹

Secondly, there is the fact that Spanish merchants and statesmen felt a great admiration for the Dutch Republic as a model nation (Delgado Barrado 469-491). In 1717, works by Pierre-Daniel Huet were translated into Spanish, and several notorious Spaniards such as Gerónimo de Uztáriz and Francisco Javier Goyeneche, the latter being a member of the *Consejo de Indias*¹², described Holland as an example of a trading nation to be taken as a model if Spain and her colonies were to regain their wealth by promoting trade and industry and by encouraging shipping, ‘...as –shipping- provides support to the motherland by way of commerce, and affirms her predominance by way of weapons’, as the Dutch did.¹³ Pierre-Daniel Huet’s works were translated into Spanish by Gerónimo de Uztáriz (1670-1732), a mercantilist economist. In 1725 he was appointed Secretary of the *Junta de Comercio y Moneda*¹⁴ and was also a member of the *Consejo de Castilla y de Indias*. Due to the critical situation in which Spain was immersed after Utrecht and its very delicate economic situation, Uztáriz’s profound knowledge of Europe and its various contexts inspired in him ideas of a model and an example to be followed. Huet’s works describe the ‘Dutch model’ for Uztáriz and other Spanish economists as a paradigm of an economic system that could be applied in Spain in order to alleviate the crisis: by promoting the manufacture of goods to supply the foreign market, setting up privately-held factories, a fiscal reform to increase import tax and decrease export tax, creating a strong merchant navy and a military navy in order to protect foreign trade (Fernández Durán 111). The ‘Dutch model’ was regarded as an example to be followed, Holland being a trade-driven republic rather than an aggressive dynastic nation posing a threat to Spain like England or

¹¹ *For every nation has to constantly be on her guard in order to prevent an excessive growth of her neighbour for her own safety. For preventing it is not wrong doing but ensuring her own freedom from having to preserve her neighbours’ own freedom. Therefore it is working towards liberty, tranquillity and public health.’* Madrid, BPRM, ‘Declaración comunicada por Orden de S.M Cristianísima a los Señores Estados Generales de las Provincias Unidas’, Fol. 16-49. p. 18.

¹² A government department for American affairs.

¹³ Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional (BN), 2/61731, Pierre-Daniel Huet, *Comercio de Holanda o el gran tesoro historial y político del floreciente comercio que los holandeses tienen en todos los Estados y Señoríos del mundo. Qual es el modo de hacerlo... Obra tan curiosa como necesaria para todos los negociantes, y muy útil para establecer un comercio seguro.* Madrid, 1717.

¹⁴ A government consultative department responsible for deliberating on economic policy.

France. This view was clear at the time and has to be taken in account as a yet another hypothesis in explaining Spain's affinity to the United Provinces.

Spanish government officials and politico-economic analysts sought to imitate the Republic on several occasions, for instance when limited and privileged companies were set up in Spain. The Dutch did not approve of these measures since companies such as the *Guipuzcoana de Caracas* or the *Compañía de Filipinas* jeopardised the Dutch role as a commercial link with Asian and Caribbean markets. The Spanish government encouraged cooperation by supporting the creation of trading companies to deal directly with those areas in America previously neglected and left out of the routes covered by the fleets and galleons. Such is the case of Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico, enjoying a short-lived success (Martínez Cardo 255-269, Crespo Solana 73-90).¹⁵ The government endeavoured to encourage manufacturing industry such as textiles and even attempted to bring in engineers and experts from the Netherlands. It is paradoxical that, a few years later, the Stadtholder Willem IV of Orange-Nassau supported cooperation with Spain in order to step up imports of raw materials, such as wool, to promote Holland's textile industry.¹⁶

Spain's shipbuilding industry also benefited from these ideas of modernisation, not only in terms of sales volume of Dutch suppliers, but also as several Spanish shipbuilders experimented with new craft-maintenance techniques developed in the Netherlands. For example, Francisco de Varas y Valdés, President of the *Casa de la Contratación*¹⁷ in Cadiz at the time, praises the techniques devised by craftsmen from Rotterdam, in 1717, to improve hull caulking and preservation. There was also an unsuccessful attempt to apply certain other techniques imported from the Netherlands¹⁸ in Spain's shipyards. The Netherlands was also a model of urban development that exported an image of commercial coexistence and architectonic display, held in high regard both in Spain and

¹⁵ Madrid, BPRS, Mss. 2819. "Memorial de José del Campillo".

¹⁶ Madrid, AHN, Estado 3208, exp. 341. "*Traduction d' un escrit intitulé: Considerations sur l'article des manufactures et fabriques établies dans les sept provinces unies des Pays-Bas relativement au projet du redressement du commerce general de cette republique, proposé par le defunt prince d'Orange en 1751*" s.f. "Extrait du préavis des colleges d' l'Almirauté de Hollande sur la proposition de feu S.A.S. concernant les moyens à employer pour le retablissement du commerce de la republiqu, remis à L.N. et G.P. dans une conference du 28 avril 1752", s.f.

¹⁷ The Spanish Board of Trade.

¹⁸ Seville, Archivo General de Indias, Seville (AGI) Arribadas 3, Letter and Project of Louis de la Court, Engineer of Rotterdam, 13 July 1717.

America as the authorities set out to demonstrate wealth on the basis of trade and industry (Mijnhardt 345-48). Although there was a good deal of controversy about the existence of a Dutch model, and such term is even present in the pro-liberal discourse of Latin America (Klooster 230). The traveller, Antonio Pons, in his *‘Viaje fuera de España’* (1783), expressed his admiration for the wealth and diversity to be found in the Provinces in addition to their religious, political and intellectual freedom (Pons 327-355). All these good intentions reflect on how the Spanish government gave Dutch diplomats a prominent role in the Treaty of Seville in 1729, where the probably most relevant agreements between the two nations in the whole of the 18th century were signed.

My theory is that the opinion held by the foreign merchant colonies in Spain exerted a strong influence on the attempts by the Dutch diplomats to encourage peace and trade treaties with Spain during the period of the Regents’ government. Furthermore, the strong admiration felt by Spanish statesmen towards Holland also had some impact. Spanish and Dutch diplomatic documents at the time, especially those leading to the Treaty of Seville in 1729, the private correspondence of Cadiz merchants and the memoranda of the Dutch consuls in Cadiz as well as the memoranda and other politico-economic Spanish writings from the first half of the 18th century, all seem to disprove the notion of a Dutch decline.

The Treaty of Seville (1729) and Dutch commercial interests in Spain and Latin America

Where the Netherlands’ influence on Spanish foreign relations most clearly shows is in the Treaty of Seville. Signed on 9 November 1729, this decisive treaty in Dutch-Spanish relations has an impact on the Dutch merchant colony and on Dutch business with America. England does not hesitate to give vent to her fears of a strong Hispano-Dutch alliance.¹⁹ Dutch Ambassador Francisco Van Der Meer spares no effort to obtain a series of privileges that reinstate Holland as a privileged nation, well ahead of England. The interests of merchant groups (whether based in the Low Countries or in Spain) are focused on a return to the privileged situation that they had been enjoying following the treaties in 1650 and 1670, which came to an end as a result of the Dutch-British alliance and their involvement in the War of Spanish Succession. *‘From now onwards there will for ever be a solid peace, a single action and a sincere and lasting friendship: as a way to forget the past and renew the former treaties.’*²⁰

¹⁹ Madrid, AHN. Estado, leg. 3365 y 3381.

²⁰ Madrid, AHN.Estado, leg. 3365, art. I.

The Treaty of Seville discussed old differences regarding commercial rivalry. In article 14 of the Treaty, the right of the Dutch is recognised to engage in commerce whether in Spain or elsewhere. The main difficulty is that the Spanish colonial authorities act against the Dutch at sea, showing a complete disregard for the guidelines set out by the metropolis that the Dutch must enjoy a better treatment than the English. It is obvious that the Dutch intended to become the most privileged nation to have dealings with Spain as a result of their interdependence on Spanish economy. As for the English, they were regarded with suspicion as a political and economic threat. The Dutch scored a few wins as, firstly, they settled a few old complaints over abuse of power by the Spanish authorities when seizing Dutch craft bound for Cadiz and the American coasts; secondly, the Ostend Company all but disappeared and, thirdly, their old trading privileges were restored.²¹ The Quadruple Alliance meant that Spain would return England the trade concessions granted in the treaties of 1667, 1713 and 1716, in exchange for an ambiguous support from the maritime powers in Italy. This was regarded as a problem as it would encourage Anglo-Dutch competition in the Mediterranean. As stated by Koningsbrugge, this alliance was a diplomatic failure and, in 1731, the Spanish monarchy pulled out (Koningsbrugge 39-70). Nevertheless, in 1729 there was a shift in the relations between Spain, England and Holland; Dutch-Spanish trade launched into a period of understanding and cooperation with regard to the hot issues in which the Dutch were most interested, namely, untroubled navigation for Dutch vessels in the Caribbean and free involvement (not always legally) in the fleets and galleons headed for America from Cadiz. On the other hand, the relationship with England was characterised by an ongoing conflict caused by commercial competition and the British economic boom seeking to expand across Latin America. Throughout almost the whole period without a Stadtholder, Anglo-Dutch conflicts were the result of competition over Spanish markets and, especially, over the privileged status enjoyed by certain foreign merchants. Despite their political alliances, the Dutch and English fiercely competed with each other in Spain's vast markets. Alice Carter states that competition increased after 1677 (Carter 77). Dutch presence in this treaty set out to obtain privileges from Spain regarding commerce. In general, all Dutch negotiations in this treaty were intended to agree on commercial issues based on a mutual understanding with Spain and the strengthening of a series of advantages granting Dutch merchants in Cadiz and other port-towns the status of 'most privileged nation'. This means that Cadiz merchants registered with the Dutch Consulate or as residents from Flanders enjoyed a series of rights not granted to other citizens such as non-Catholic English. In addition to the previously described rights gained by Dutch merchants in Utrecht, the

²¹ Seville, AGI, Indiferente General 1596.

majority of those gained in Seville refer to commercial advantages such as a widespread tax exemption enjoyed in certain ports.²² Simultaneously, a law was passed disallowing the common practice by corsairs, especially French, of seizing Dutch ships and taking them to port in order to unlawfully sell their cargo.²³

The States-General major victory was the closure of the Ostend Company. They also attempted, however unsuccessfully, to press for the closure of the *Compañía de Caracas* as it was a strong competitor in the cocoa trade between Venezuela and Cadiz. Furthermore, the *Compañía's* vessels interfere with the Dutch ships that have dealings with the islands in the West Indies under the *Compañía's* jurisdiction.²⁴ The key issues for the Dutch in this Treaty of Seville were, undoubtedly, the personal safety and economic survival of their colonies in Spain and their trade, whether direct or indirect, with Spain's colonies. One of the most annoying issues was the abuse suffered by Dutch merchants and their ships in Spain and the Caribbean. Regarding the first issue, voices were raised to stop the practice of '*indulto*' ('pardon'), or fine imposed on foreign merchants' goods on their return journey to Cadiz on board the galleons. Such a practice led several financial firms in the Netherlands to bankruptcy (Béthencourt Massieu 55).

Several reports submitted by the Dutch plenipotentiary in Spain and various commercial firms insisted on various issues: firstly, Spain's acceptance of Dutch fleets as intermediaries in large areas of Latin America; secondly, corsairs and Spanish Navy ships were to be prevented from interfering with Dutch ships and goods; and thirdly, the *indulto* arbitrarily imposed on Dutch goods and properties was to be banned. In addition, the Spanish authorities had to sign pacts with the States-General in the face of the number of Dutch ships bound for Curaçao and St. Eustatius that were boarded and seized by privateers as they were accused of heading for the Spanish territories.²⁵ There is a further fundamental issue with regard to the coexistence of Dutch and Spanish merchants in a number of Spanish cities: they cooperated to fill an age-old gap due to the endemic faults and failures of Spain's commercial monopoly. The Treaty of Seville was a last attempt to re-establish Dutch commerce in Spanish markets and, despite being described as a diplomatic failure by certain authors, such as Antonio de

²² Valladolid, AGS, Estado, Legajos 2668 y 4153.

²³ Madrid, AHN, Estado, leg. 193, exp. 71.

²⁴ Valladolid, AGS, Letter Olivier a Marqués de la Paz, 7 July 1729; Madrid, AHN, Estado 3365.

²⁵ Seville, AGI, Indiferente General 1596. "*Memoriales*".

Béthancourt, it meant the beginning of a period of relaxed trade relations between Spain and the United Provinces that was to last for a few decades and would particularly favour the Dutch merchants in Cadiz.

Dutch merchants in Cadiz. Echo of a decline?

As much as in other European port-towns, the Dutch community in Cadiz behaved like a factory for storing goods and capital to be drained off to other areas within the global framework of Dutch trade, thus taking risks and reaping profits. Such communities were active pieces in the Dutch economic machinery, even in the 1700s when the Republic was perceived as gradually losing its tentacular commercial network while the Bank of Amsterdam started its decline as the most important financial centre in West Europe (Klein & Veluwenkamp 27-55). The coexistence in Cadiz of diverse foreign merchant colonies is a paradoxical indication that legal trade and contraband lived together in better harmony than previously admitted in Historiography. Smuggling is a set of actions taken in order to break the laws imposed on trade by the State institutions (Alloza 227-279). Against such laws, merchants used a variety of legal subterfuges perfectly entwined in society to escape the control imposed by the State on private trade. The nature of Mercantilism allows for such possibility and even the Government and its institutions allowed such subterfuges not to be treated as contraband.

It is very likely that, as occurs in Cadiz, foreign colonies had developed very strong mechanisms for integrating into Spanish society and that they also had important dealings with America. As proven in my previous works, these mechanisms for socio-cultural integration were driven by a constant migratory influx. Furthermore, at a time when the Dutch Republic carried out active direct trade with the Spanish colonies, both in the Caribbean and circum-Caribbean areas, trade with Cadiz was a perfect complement for direct Dutch trade with America. One of the reasons for this is the fact that Cadiz trade was conducted by some of the same families that privately carried out direct trade with America and enjoyed greater success than private or state-run monopolies and privileged companies such as the *West-Indische Compagnie* (WIC). What is the nature of the Dutch businesses in Cadiz, whether legal or otherwise? '*La contratación de España* –as stated by economist Manuel Colmeiro as he recalls the co-existence of different foreign traders in Spain- *se hallaba reducida a dar materiales en cambio de manufacturas que introducían los extranjeros, vendiéndonos lo mismo que nos habían comprado y aprovechándose de nuestra desidia para continuar en la posesión de aquella antigua granjería*'²⁶ How odd but accurate definition of the state of the

²⁶ ('*Business in Spain was merely the giving of raw materials in exchange for manufactures brought in by the foreigners, who were selling us the same things we had sold to them, thus taking*

Spanish trade with America, from Prime Minister José Campillo's works, which shows how foreign –mainly Dutch- merchants and commercial travelers conduct their business in the Hispanic world (Campillo y Cossío, Bustos Rodríguez 47-69). English writer Josiah Child is known to have described Dutch trade in a similarly graphic fashion.²⁷ Such simple explanation of the mechanisms involved makes it plainly clear that these foreign traders were deeply involved in the Spanish monopoly as they fed from it and supported it at a time when Spain was keeping a grip on its exhausted empire with permission from the rest of Europe. '*No necesitaban, pues los extranjeros acudir al contrabando manifiesto y declararlo para despachar en las Indias sus mercaderías, porque los mismos españoles las compraban, las traían a Sevilla o Cádiz y allí las embarcaban en las flotas y galeones con ánimo de venderlas en América de segunda mano. Otras veces, los mercaderes de Andalucía se allanaban en ser los testafierros.*' (Colmeiro 290).²⁸ This relationship in the heart of the Spanish society was based on mutual cooperation and interdependence. Regarding the attitude of the Republic's merchants, Child also said: '*They have in their greatest councils of state and war, trading-merchants that have lived abroad in most parts of the world; who have not only the theoretical knowledge, but the practical experience of trade; by whom laws and orders are contrived, and peaces with foreign princes projected, to the great advantage of their trade.*' (Child 39). It is clear that even the economists at the time were ready to admit that the Spanish economy depended on the commercial activities undertaken by foreign merchants.

With regard to the interests of Holland and Zeeland and of those of many a business firm in their commercial cities, the transition from the 17th to the 18th century posed a serious challenge to the maintenance of the route to the south of the Iberian Peninsula and all the various markets where supplies to be later stored in Amsterdam were to be found. Besides, one crisis after the other at the turn of the century came as an unpleasant surprise to all those Cadiz-based subsidiary traders that had stocked up with

advantage of our failure to keep hold of our old harvest?') Madrid, BPR, Manuscritos, tomo XI. Vol. 1, II/334. José del Campillo y Cossío, "Lo que hay de más y de menos en España" *España Despierta*, Iª parte, Memorial. Quoted by Manuel Colmeiro, *Historia de la Economía política española*, 2 vols. 1863, (Madrid 1988), Vol. 2, p. 252.

²⁷ Josiah Child "A New Discourse of Trade", the text used is found in: Henry C. Clark, *Commerce, Culture and Liberty. Readings on Capitalism before Adam Smith* (Indianapolis 2003), p. 38-53.

²⁸ "*Foreigners needed not to resort to outright smuggling in order to send their merchandise to the Indies, for the very Spaniards would buy them, ship them to Seville or Cadiz and then on the fleets and galleons bound for America where they would be sold on. On occasions, merchants from Andalusia would embark to act as agents for the foreigners.*".

capital and manufactures for export.²⁹ The traditional privileged status enjoyed by the Dutch was affected by the shift in Atlantic hegemonies and the emergence of France and England as serious contenders for the profits to be gained on Spanish markets. Nevertheless, everything seems to point to the fact that Dutch businesses regarded this crisis as passing and, therefore, temporary and that it could be remedied through collaboration with their Flemish and Spanish partners. Trade figures show (see Table 1) an increase in volume from the 1720s onwards (Crespo Solana 87).

In 1702 Gilles Amias, a merchant and Dutch consul in Cadiz, states that trade with the south of the Iberian Peninsula was as important as that in the Baltic.³⁰ Trade with Cadiz was a hazardous business due to the constant state of warlike unrest and the subsequent fluctuation of marine insurance prices. Keeping the south route in operation was so vital since it linked with other major routes such as the Mediterranean and as the last port of call for the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC) fleet before the long and treacherous southward trip to the Cape of Good Hope, and, last but not least, as the gateway to American trade. The latter provided many Dutch firms the possibility for complementary business in addition to the direct trade they were engaged in with the Caribbean and the coasts of the Latin America (Crespo Solana 45-76). The concerns of Cadiz-based Dutch merchants did indeed seem to be a reflection of the thoughts of Amsterdam commercial firms: Dutch merchants wanted to protect the Mediterranean trade carried out via Cadiz by the *Levantse Handel*, which had set up an office or *comptoir* there on 28 May 1648 (Crespo Solana 32-33). They voiced their wish to try to safeguard the *Straatvaart*, which went into a crisis period during the War of Spanish Succession, only pulling out of it in the late 1720s owing to the possibilities offered by the American connection. Most trading firms involved in the Amsterdam-Cadiz route regard traded with America as a safer, more profitable alternative. In this case, the perception of Spain-based Dutch merchants of the loss by the Republic of its hegemonic position as the economic power is different to what has been said later, and this position needs to be regained.

The characteristics and identity of the Dutch merchants in Cadiz and other Spanish cities has been discussed in depth. Several less known aspects of this colony, however, are present from a political and diplomatic point of

²⁹ This is the case of the Dutch merchant who traded with Cadiz in 1702, Jan Lijnslager, of Amsterdam and his partners Cornelis Rost and Louis Grand, in Cadiz. Amsterdam, Gemeente Archief (GAA), n.a 3356/1457, Accord 12 September 1702.

³⁰ Amsterdam, GAA, n.a. Proxy 25 March 1702. Gilles Amias were married to the daughter of the merchants Gaspar Van Collen and Catharina Opmeen.

view. Since the Twelve Year Truce (1609-1621), there is an extensive network of Dutch consuls in Spain, especially after the citizens from the United Provinces were allowed to travel, trade and settle anywhere freely in Spain. Cadiz, Bilbao and Malaga are their main destinations. Having a consulate means being able to set up a subsidiary company located in, say, Cadiz (Crespo Solana 21). What were the characteristics of Dutch trade in Spain? Cadiz was, as capital of the *Carrera de Indias*, a very mobile society with an especially practical mentality that found the trading and marine services sector to be enviable sources of income. Such a set up could be seen in almost every European port-town and even in America. A hierarchical structure in such international merchant cities made them complementary to Amsterdam as merchandise and capital depots. The goods available to Dutch merchants on the Spanish markets were mainly colonial produce and Spanish wool, essential to Dutch factories, according to certain politico-economic writers such as Pierre-Daniel Huet himself (Huet 100). In addition to those products, the southern part of the Iberian Peninsula produced a great deal of red and white wine. Alicante, Malaga, El Puerto de Santa María, Puerto Real, Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Cadiz and Rota, are the busiest port-towns. Most wines shipped from the ports in and around the bay of Cadiz were Sherry wines, and the Dutch would pay large sums of money for them, as well as for wines and spirits from the Canaries. It is estimated that at the turn of the 18th century, the Dutch extracted around 16,000 barrels of wine a year. We can see from the accounting books from the Admiralty of Amsterdam for the year 1753, that this trade had diversified by the middle of the century, taking in sugar, shipwrights' timber, ceramics, books, glassware, candles, ammunition, rice, cereals and grains, cheese, tar and pitch for the Spanish Navy, etc (Crespo Solana 28-9, Nanningan, 652-701). Citric fruits and capers were also exported (averaging 5 or 6 ships annually), soap from Alicante and Cartagena; soda and *barrilla* (a mineral used in glass manufacturing extracted off the Valencia coast). The Dutch also buy iron in Biscay and salt in the bay of Cadiz. Bilbao and Cadiz are the main port cities for Dutch trade in Spain. 30 to 40 Dutch ships call at Cadiz every year, apart from those heading for the Mediterranean straight after unloading their cargoes at the bay. The systematic use of the *Levantse Handel* ships increases the number considerably, as seen in Table 1.

During the years when fleets and galleons were fitted out, the amount of ship traffic from Cadiz increased from 15 to 20 units (Huet 106). It is said that in each of such years, the Dutch had nearly 5 million *pesos escudos* from the merchandise shipped to the Indies and consigned to Spanish middlemen, and the same amount from the goods sold in Cadiz (Crespo Solana 34). The balance of this trade was clearly favourable to the United Provinces. Nonetheless, the inhabitants of Cadiz and the Spanish society at large profited from this trade in many ways. In a report on the

cocoa trade, since the Spanish government was seeking to set up a cocoa export company, the Spanish traders said that neither time nor money needed to be invested in such a company as cocoa was already bought very cheaply from the Dutch and the Flemish. It appears that certain Cadiz-based trading firms from the Low Countries imported cocoa from America and redirected it to other areas. This is a single example of the social and economic coexistence that existed in Cadiz. As stated by Huet himself: *'the Dutch are known to work with Spanish middlemen whose integrity is beyond any doubt'* (Huet 99).³¹

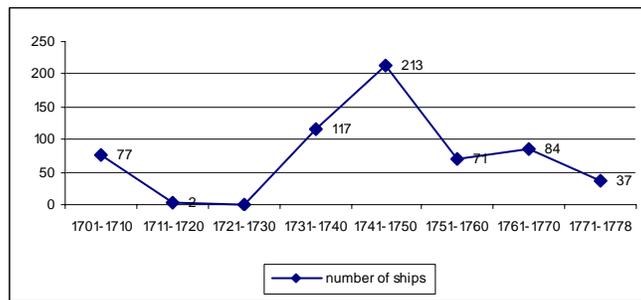


Table 1. Maritime Route Amsterdam-Cádiz.³²

As can be seen in Table 1, the crisis as a result of the most troublesome years in the War of Spanish Succession and England's competition in Atlantic routes (1709-1721) diminished in the 1720s, probably due to a combination of factors. The most decisive are the context of social and economic prosperity in Cadiz after single register ships to America were allowed. This accounted for a sharp increase in trade, and the ongoing warlike conflicts waged by England, the main competitor in those years of both Spain and the Republic. The rights granted to the Dutch in the Treaty of Seville encouraged the presence of Dutch vessels on American and Spanish coasts while Spain was at war with England, their main competitor along those routes. The Dutch had a further advantage over the English as their colonies in Spain were more densely populated than the English'. Cadiz was the Spanish port-town where the most numerous communities of Dutch and Flemish could be found. This colony increased in number late in the 15th century onwards, reaching its peak in the 1660's and lasting until the end of the 18th century. Several factors led to this increase: the relocation of Dutch families from other Castilian cities

³¹ Seville, AGI, Arribadas 12, "*Memorial sobre el comercio del cacao*", 11 May 1728.

³² Cádiz, Archivo Histórico Provincial (AHP) (freight contracts). Notary's offices 5, 9, 15, 19 and 23. The Hague, N.A. *Straatvaartlijsten*, *Levanstse Handel*, 172 and 173.

and the existence of the so called *Ancient and noble Flemish Nation in Cadiz* as an important pole attracting an ongoing migratory influx. On the one hand, this *Flemish Nation* was a body of illustrious citizens enjoying privileges as special Catholic subjects to the Spanish King. On the other hand, the Dutch consulate welcomed temporary residents intending to set up a business through their connections among Spanish officials and/or with other Flemish merchants (Crespo Solana 133-157).

By the 18th century, this large but closely interrelated Flemish and Dutch community turned into two different colonies (legally and politically divided into the Flemish Nation and the Dutch colony), but with strong links between them in the social, economic, cultural and religious spheres. Most Dutch citizens that arrive in Cadiz are or claimed to be Catholics in order to integrate smoothly into Spanish society. Only a few openly admitted to being Protestants. Both communities have been widely studied in several of my books and articles. It is very frequent for a Dutch or Flemish businessman whose family migrated to a town in the Dutch Republic, in the mid 17th century, then later settled in Seville or Cadiz, to be determined to set out to become a large trader within the *Carrera de Indias*, whether legally or otherwise. Dutch merchants can be seen to have settled in Cadiz after a long stay on a Caribbean island, such as Curaçao, to conduct their business with America from the convenience of the Spanish fleets to the Indies.³³ Dutch merchants showed their ability to keep this trade alive by taking advantage of the strong connections within the Spanish society that had provided them with the means for survival in difficult times, especially during the War of Spanish Succession. The survival of their businesses was linked to those connections with the long-settled Flemish families at social, linguistic and family level as the latter enjoyed a special status as privileged citizens. Many a Dutch businessman 'became Flemish' in order to pursue his business interests in Andalusia. A graphic example is the case of Egidio Cloots, a traveller born into an Amsterdam Catholic family who, in the 1720's, decides to settle in Cadiz as a safe port for his family business. In association with his fellow countrymen, Juan Baptista Brach and Louis Bayaca, he went into business. His Catholic faith, the social prestige attached to the *Flemish nation* and the trust they placed in institutions that cooperated with foreigners, were good enough reasons to make the decision to settle in Cadiz. Italy or Lisbon, where Cadiz had business connections, were open to them.³⁴ There were many other cases to illustrate this age-old presence. In the 1730's and 40's, new waves of

³³ Cádiz, AHP, Protocolos notariales (p.n) 5/1015, fol. 1; Testament of Jacobo Lucas, 7 December 1746. His wife, Catalina Van Beckt, was born in Curaçao, too.

³⁴ Cádiz, AHP, p.n. 23/5325, p. 437-42. 22 September 1726.

merchants settled in Cadiz. Cornelio Collingh shared the ownership of a business company in Cadiz with José Gadeyne, between 1739 and 1742. Subsidiaries of Amsterdam companies usually lasted 3, 4 or 5 years, and only had a longer life if one or more of the partners took up residence in Cadiz. Most traders remained in business for short periods of time, while others stayed for 10 or even 15 years. The company contract included clauses to expressly prevent any activity liable to jeopardise the firm's success. For instance: none of the partners could 'engage in walks, entertainment or costly invitations which could endanger the company or attract dangerous acquaintances'.³⁵ Christian Francisco Libert settled in Cadiz before 1690 and became a prominent Dutch expert in maritime insurance brokerage that survived the crisis at the end of the century and outlived the War of Spanish Succession. Raymundo de Lantery, a trader from Savoy describes him in his memoirs (Bustos Rodríguez 90). Certain Dutch traders had very close links with wealthy Flemish families in Andalusia, such as Jacobo Vanderbergh, who did business with the Maelcamp family, settled in Seville since the 16th century.³⁶ Vanderbergh followed in the footsteps of his fellow countrymen that devoted their efforts to the search for new markets for the Dutch textile industry; Andalusia and America were their most regular destinations.

If anything can be clearly seen, it is the idea held by merchants that Cadiz still afforded them the opportunity to make the town a factory subsidiary of Dutch centres, which made it possible for several trade fields to be managed by a single merchant. For instance, Cornelio Noorman shipped goods in the fleets and galleons apart from having his own Dutch ship that he registered in the fleets. In addition, he did business with the Genoese consul in Barcelona, introducing cocoa into various Spanish towns from Caracas and the Dutch colonies while selling ground Havana tobacco on the Cadiz black market in association with his Spanish partner Joseph de Urbaneja – his nephew by marriage. Furthermore, he stated in his will that a good deal of his fortune had been amassed by investing his Dutch capital together with a very important Spanish merchant: *'I declare that I have an unsettled account with Don Andrés Martínez de Murguía, a Knight of the Order de Saint James and a resident of this town, which amounts to various sums of maravedies that were handed to me as well as the profits gained from his merchandise, which I shipped to the North [Holland] to be sold.'*³⁷ Subterfuges were commonplace, such as cases of certain traders having dual nationality. The Dutch are

³⁵ Cádiz, AHP, p.n. 17/3834, f. 1105-1107. Contract.

³⁶ Cádiz, AHP, p.n. 5/986.

³⁷ Cádiz, AHP, p.n. 9/1563, fol. 357-63. Testament of Cornelio Noorman.

experts at this, as they camouflaged themselves as members of the 'Flemish nation' so as to avoid Dutch taxes. Sometimes it was the Flemish that pretended to be Dutch as they worked for firms in Amsterdam. The fact that a single language was spoken by the people of both nationalities was very confusing for notaries in Cadiz when drafting commercial contracts. A singular case is that of *Henrique de Roo's* family which, despite being from Holland, called themselves Flemish. However, they kept their properties in Oudewaters, and one of them, Juan Baptista de Roo, was a *steward* (representative and spokesperson) of the 'Flemish Nation' in 1738. The privileges granted to the Dutch in that year made him change his mind and he 'became Dutch' again.³⁸ Even the Amsterdam firms for which he worked were suspicious of him, although their fears were allayed since he was a very skilful shipping agent for the *Levantse Handel* ships. But his dealings involved ships calling at Cadiz but that were not listed in the consul's records, and was suspected of smuggling. In that respect, the Dutch consul did not allow any of his fellow countrymen to engage in any activity that might jeopardize their good relationship with the Spanish authorities; this could be the reason why he himself reported Juan Baptiste de Roo to the *Casa de la Contratación* for smuggling in 1767. The majority of those ships not duly registered with the authorities came from Rotterdam and the Amsterdam Admiralty had no records of them.³⁹ '*Goede vriendschap*'⁴⁰ between the Cadiz Governor and the '*Hollandse Natie en Commercianten*'⁴¹ (sic) was instrumental in bringing the incident to a satisfactory conclusion.⁴²

From a quantitative study we can see that the percentage of individuals that claimed to be from Holland was 12.6 percent (a person claiming to come from Holland could be from any of the United Provinces). The remaining 87.4 percent claimed to have come from Flanders (they could have been from the southern Low Countries or, interestingly enough, from the Northern Provinces). Really extraordinary cases occurred, such as a merchant from Groningen who claimed to be Flemish. On many occasions, families originally from the Southern Low Countries but which had migrated to the Northern Provinces in previous generations would claim to be from Flanders on arrival in Cadiz. Such is the case of the van Hemert family. Originally from Antwerp, their descendants that had migrated to

³⁸ Cádiz, AHP, p.n. 2/372, fol. 5.

³⁹ The Hague, NA, *Levantse Handel*, 173 (II). Cádiz, 22 December 1767.

⁴⁰ Good friendship.

⁴¹ The Dutch nation and merchants.

⁴² The Hague, NA, *Levantse Handel*, 173 (II), Cádiz, 18 October 1767.

Cádiz were born either in Haarlem or in Amsterdam, where they founded a dynasty involved in textile manufacturing as well as trading with southern Spain.⁴³ It is worth noting that a large number of individuals wrongfully claiming to be Flemish would do so once the separation of both nations had taken place, i.e. after 1648. In most of such cases, where people stated in their wills to be Flemish, around 55 percent of them had joined the *ancient and noble Flemish nation* and enjoyed their privileges. Between 16 and 20 percent of those really did come from the United Provinces. Twenty eight percent of people from the Low Countries stayed only temporarily or registered with the consulate. A few of the latter were Calvinist and were, therefore, buried at the Gibraltar cemetery upon their death. Flemish and Dutch Catholics who died in Cadiz were to be buried at St Andrew's Chapel in the St. Francis Convent in St. Francis Square.⁴⁴

Cádiz was very often used as a storage and redistribution centre as being a financial branch of Amsterdam. Large amounts of capital invested in the *Carrera de Indias* were drawn at the bank of Amsterdam, although competition from other European cities became very strong. From a number of deeds found in Amsterdam notarial archives we learn that many firms granted proxies to Flemish and Dutch merchants from Cadiz, as well as to Spaniards and even other foreigners as their appointed shipping agents for the goods and agents responsible for their payment and for shipping the merchandise on the registered ships bound for America. Capital was deposited in the hands of Cadiz traders in order to fuel the continuous trade traffic. The growth and regularity of these businesses seemed to fluctuate throughout the 18th century as a reflection of the irregularities of Spanish trade in the Indies. The traffic of bills of exchange between Amsterdam and Cadiz gives us an idea of how trade was possible through family ties and cooperation mechanisms, but based more on family ties as much as on social credibility where Dutch ships and capital were unreservedly offered on Spanish markets. The most remarkable feature of Dutch merchant networks in Spain was the very high degree of trust and confidence granted to them by Spanish individuals and indeed institutions.⁴⁵

⁴³ Cádiz, AHP, p.n, 12/2391, Fol. 340-41r. Fol. 593-98r.

⁴⁴ Cádiz, AHP. p.n. 11/2211, fol. 540-41. Testament of Mauricio Jacobo Lobé, Cádiz 13 May 1786.

⁴⁵ Some examples in: GAA, n.a, 11457/85, 29; 12374/383; 10561/1536; 11435/75; 11416/74; 11366/40, 113; 11457/109; 10846/806; 7977(II)/68; 10738/397; 11307/99; 11487/61; 11457/66; 11396/126; 10707/359; 11324/113; 8007/330; 11244/101; 10711/176; 10766/1028; 11295/36; 10447/891.

The close interconnection between family and business and the ability showed by the firms in Amsterdam and Rotterdam to act as intermediaries and capital exporters are two important reasons for the survival of such family networks. But there are also certain diplomatic issues that served to attract Dutch traders to Cadiz and make them feel safe there. The wish to settle in a prosperous city was inextricably linked to the perception of those merchants that Dutch decline was relative. Diplomatic pacts greatly favoured trade for Spain-based Dutch traders, especially after 1729, as most old privileges were recovered and most conflicts at sea were settled. Spanish authorities respected, to a certain extent, the Dutch idea of a 'Mare liberum', and preferred to have them as allies since there was enough confrontation with the more aggressive French and English. The prerogatives granted to the Dutch in Spanish towns are framed in a complex context as a consequence of the transformation process that Spain was going through. Economic issues are central to the transformation of the Spanish State during the 18th century. Despite royal absolutism and under the influence of the interests of the emerging bourgeois groups, governments pass new laws and modify certain jurisdictions in favour of these new groups and their commercial and industrial interests in such a way that governance actually changed (González Enciso 34-50). Despite the apparent surveillance to which foreign traders were subjected by the Spanish authorities, the privileges of foreign communities deeply rooted in Spanish society were often acknowledged and observed. Most complaints repeatedly lodged by Cadiz traders with the consulate regard export duties and import taxes on goods to and from the Low Countries.⁴⁶ This recurrent issue was never solved to everybody's satisfaction. Flemish and Dutch traders enjoyed tax privileges as foreigners allowed to trade in Spain. Besides, Dutch merchants had to pay additional taxes to the consulate (the so-called *Natiepeningen*) to be permitted to act as shipping agents for the *Levantse Handel*. In 1719, José Patiño, Head of the *Casa de la Contratación* and of the Navy headquarters in Cadiz at the time, drew up a list of goods subject to duties and taxes and sent it to the States-General for approval. A very long list of products and the respective duties on them was sent back and accepted.⁴⁷

We must admit that the laws passed by the Spanish government taxing foreign trade had no negative effect. In fact, Dutch merchants and most other foreign traders were able to bypass those laws through collaboration

⁴⁶ The Hague, NA, Staten Generaal, 7125 (Liasse Spanje), San Lorenzo del Escorial, 6 November 1719.

⁴⁷ The Hague, NA, Staten Generaal, 7125 (Liasse Spanje), San Lorenzo del Escorial, 6 November 1719.

from the Spanish traders and, indeed, from the officials at the *Casa de la Contratación*, who were always ready to profit from foreign trade in the Bay of Cadiz. In order to elude the law, a great number of Dutch traders joined the Flemish Nation to become privileged citizens, making it easier for them to carry out their illicit dealings. On the other hand, one of the most common complaints raised by the Dutch consulate was the petition that the Spanish authorities should adhere to the diplomatic agreements with the States-General in relation to the interests of Dutch business in the bay. In 1730, the Dutch consul in Cadiz lodged a protest with the Spanish authorities to the effect that *'they would take all the necessary steps to ensure that we receive by the merchants to whom the goods are consigned the duties that are rightfully ours on the clothes and the other merchandise transported on the Dutch vessels put into the port of Cadiz and the other ports in the Bay, with no exception whatsoever, so as to ensure that we keep our privileges'*.⁴⁸ In this way, Dutch traders also benefitted, in one way or the other, from the review of the regulations enacted by the government granting them the right to be considered as residents and to trade with the Indies, with the proviso that: *'they obtain carta de naturaleza or naturalisation papers, or they are born in the kingdom, embrace the Catholic faith, or seek and obtain a residence permit in a town, or marry a Spanish woman, or put down roots by acquiring land and property, or are tradesmen and come to work on their trade, or are field workers or are to set up shop, (...), or reside for 10 years in populated house'*.⁴⁹

Throughout the various wars that the Spaniards were involved in, Dutch trading firms requested letters and special passports to allow them to trade in several Spanish port-towns, mainly Bilbao, San Sebastian and Cadiz.⁵⁰ From the 1720s and until the Orange Restoration, Dutch merchants in Cadiz boasted a prosperous trade with the American markets, as direct sailing was underway to the ports less frequented by fleets and galleons from Amsterdam (especially to Cartagena, Portobelo, Veracruz and Buenos Aires). There is a wealth of information about the fact that, in return for diplomatic collaboration, the States-General spared no efforts in securing a happy ending for numerous vessels and crews caught red-handed in their illicit dealings in American waters. Furthermore, Cadiz authorities would turn a blind eye to the countless irregularities occurring in the bay. Customs officers would consistently fail to check the merchandise on board Dutch ships or would ignore the fact that it was against the law to change a

⁴⁸ Valladolid, AGS, Estado, 7597. Report of 1730.

⁴⁹ Valladolid, AGS, Estado 7583. Royal Deed on March, 8 1716. "*Recopilación de las leyes impresas*" 1745, Tomo III, auto 22, tit. 4, libro VI, 7 June 1727.

⁵⁰ Madrid, AHN, Estado 700.

vessel's name and nationality so as to include it in the fleets bound for America. In 1738, the king of Spain signed a *deed of privilege* in favour of foreigners on Spanish soil. Dutch and Flemish citizens were granted special privileges.⁵¹

The lawsuits brought by merchants while conducting their dealings say a lot about the real progress of such businesses during certain junctures and what they thought about the conditions under which they were carried out. Due to the lack of commercial correspondence, those lawsuits, some of which were heard at the *Real Chancillería de Granada*, provide invaluable information about cooperation between traders. For instance, in 1702 –the year of the crisis provoked by the War of Spanish Succession–, a lawsuit was brought by Guberto Looten. Looten was enjoying a temporary visit to Spain in 1700 but prolonged his stay to set up a company with Juan de Mortier. Juan Bruijn was appointed ‘curador apoderado’⁵² –representative for bankruptcy proceedings– for Amsterdam firms. After a short period of time, the *Looten & Mortier* firm was unable to pay its agents in Amsterdam and Flanders (one of them being the Antwerp firm *Justo y Guillermo Fourchoudt*) as a result of the losses suffered by the Spanish fleets to America hit by the war and, what is worse, the interruption of trade between Spain and the Indies owing to the war at sea. This is the reason for the bankruptcy of the firm *Veduve van Adrián Van Aldevereldt* as the payments due from Spain were never received.⁵³

But very soon, this game of common interests was to be put to the test by events in the political scene. Paradoxically, the Orange Restoration meant the end of this period. Due to the war of Austrian Succession (1740-1748) and the French invasion of the southern Low Countries in 1744, Hispano-Dutch trade went into recession, at least in Cadiz, where several trading firms went bankrupt, and the number of business deals and contracts decreased considerably compared to the first half of the 18th century. The Dutch Republic's ‘*false neutrality*’ was an issue widely discussed by public opinion at the time, as opposing sides in favour or against French interests in Spain emerge.⁵⁴ The invasion of the Netherlands by French

⁵¹ The Hague, NA, Levantse Handel, 173, Letter from the Governor of Cádiz to the consuls. S.F. (1738?).

⁵² Representative for bankruptcy proceedings.

⁵³ Cádiz, AHP, p.n. 5/986, fol. 207. Declaration 6 September 1700. Proxy to Cristobal Ossorio Espínola, 15 February 1701.

⁵⁴ Madrid, BPR, “Declaración comunicada”, in *Colección de todos los escritos*, Madrid, 1st March 1747.

troops divided Spanish public opinion and shook the political world.⁵⁵ A pamphlet circulated in Spain –written by a man from Dordrecht and one from Rotterdam- put the blame on England for having swept the Republic into several wars on the continent against the will of Dutch politicians that only wanted to stay neutral in order to safeguard their trade.⁵⁶ An anonymous testimony in favour of the French invasion states that ‘...*this [Spanish] Secretary of State has as his sole aim the restraint of Europe, which cannot be achieved until that powerful republic is placed under a yoke or, at least, she is forced not to abide by such pernicious neutrality.*’⁵⁷ The inner contradictions emphasised by the Orangist aversion to France and the anti-British feelings of those in favour of republican active neutrality grew in the 1740s.

From that decade onwards, the United Provinces were more interested in enjoying the benefits of neutral trade. As occurred in their relationship with the Spanish government, there seems to be a possibility that neutral trade was the only strategy that they were acquainted with since playing second fiddle on the international stage is the most suitable option in order to reap profits from trading with all parties involved. In fact, that marked the beginning of a period of commercial boom for the Republic, in contrast to the idea of an absolute decline after 1750, as proven by George Welling’s figures (Welling Appendix). Even if the French invasion and the outbreak of the *Patriot Revolutie* had a negative impact on Hispano-Dutch trade, the Dutch colony in Cadiz survived, despite a massive return to the Republic of his members, the bankruptcy of some subsidiaries and the dying out of certain families that had resided in Spain since late in the 16th century. In the early stages of the war with England, in 1780, a number of Dutch seamen took refuge in Cadiz and regarded its port as allied, a suitable location for protecting their business. But this situation was not to last very long due to the Spanish eagerness to monitor foreign trade in the face of the threat of a French invasion. In 1786, the Republic’s Consul General in Cadiz maintained his trade and his protestant faith in a country that regarded religious confession as unimportant since what it feared most was the threat posed by French revolutionary ideologies.⁵⁸ It is no mere

⁵⁵ “Reflexiones sobre la declaración comunicada a sus alti-potencias por parte del Rey Cristianísimo”, in *Colección (B.P.R.)*, p. 16-49.

⁵⁶ Madrid, BPR, Ms. V/2668. “*Carta de un vecino de Dorth a otro de Róterdam en que se satisface con grande extensión a los cargos, que se han hecho contra la Francia, con motivo de haber entrado sus tropas en territorio de la República de Holanda?*”, (Dordrecht 1747).

⁵⁷ Madrid, BPR, Ms. V/2668. “Carta del Abad de la Ville A.S.A.P. los Estados Generales”, in *Colección.....*, p. 9.

⁵⁸ Cádiz, AHP, p.n. 11/2211, fol. 540-41. Proxy, 13 May 1786.

accident that the former rebel subjects became the last witnesses to an old and necessary alliance marked by survival and commercial struggle.

Conclusion

Little is known, from a historiography point of view, of the framework of the Spanish-Dutch relations in the 18th century. This must be explained and taken into account in order to understand the very issues that gave rise to the commercial alliance between these countries as well as the continuity of a frequent trading exchange. Needless to say that, until recently, the existence of a community composed of businessmen from Flanders and Holland settled in Cadiz and closely related to the Atlantic commerce networks built around the highly profitable *Carrera de Indias*, was certainly unknown. This colony fought for its survival and to keep alive the trade that was its very reason for existing within a context that was not always favourable. Their experiences - shown by the documents that they have left to us, such as private letters, their correspondence with Spanish statesmen, memoranda, pamphlets and so on mentioned in this article – give us an idea, which is contradictory to the notion of a decline. Firstly, the Dutch Republic appeared as a politico-economic model for other nations, such as Spain. Secondly, the Republic performed as a skilful diplomatic mediator and the diplomats from The Hague played a relevant role on the European stage, with a powerful influence in the diplomatic decisions made by countries such as England and France. This situation was to continue, as far as I can gather, at least until the *Regenten* period (around 1748). Finally, the documents of the Spanish *Consejo de Estado* describe the United Provinces as a ‘powerful republic’.

The above three points are essential in order to contemplate what the Dutch merchants in Spain considered to be a supposed decline or decadence of the United Provinces. Broadly speaking, there is a difference between the modern concept of decline and the significance of that concept in the 17th and 18th centuries. The current idea of decline or decadence as a sign of weakness can also be applied to previous historic times. But the notion of such decline is different. And such notion varies in the same way as the position of the Republic in Europe differs from one country to another. Therefore, the notion of a supposed Dutch decline responds to a number of different interpretations in relation to the type of relationship that each nation has with Holland. In the case of Spain, this particular notion goes from regarding the Republic as the enemy during the Eighty Years War to the notion, in the second half of the 17th century when the latter was Spain’s most powerful economic ally. The Republic defended and protected, especially during the second period without a Stadholder, trade with Spanish cities since on this trade hinged the prosperity of many an Amsterdam –based business.

Do Cadiz-based Dutch merchants believe that the Republic is a nation in decline? My answer is – no. It is clear nowadays that there is a Dutch decline in relative terms in relation to its hegemonic position in the world. However, this concept needs qualifying. It appears that the Dutch perceived, early in the 18th century, a decline due to the loss or failure of its expansionist colonial projects, such as that in America. But from a Spanish perspective, the information collected from the 18th century reflects different perceptions. In order to elucidate, from a comparative perspective, the perception in Spain of the Dutch role (and its supposed decline or recession as compared to its ‘golden century’), I will raise the following points, which reflect the opinion held by the various kingdoms in Spain, by the inhabitants of the towns where the Dutch were settled and by the Spanish government itself.

1. Regarding the economic aspect and, more particularly, the commercial one: both Spanish merchants and Spain-based Dutch traders still appreciated the very important role of the Dutch Republic in relation to freights and sea transportation, which made the integration of the various markets and the maintenance of the Amsterdam-Cádiz commercial route possible. This route was central to the Republic’s economy and its connection to those markets where vital businesses were carried out, namely in the Baltic, America, Asia Minor and even the Mediterranean, despite the crisis suffered by this latter market in the second half of the 17th century.
2. With regard to the political and diplomatic fields, chroniclers and writers describe the Dutch Republic as a model nation in the politico-economic and the diplomatic spheres.
3. Lastly, the Dutch colony in Cadiz was still able to exert a high degree of influence owing to its integration within the Flemish Nation. Most Dutch traders were Catholics and, therefore, register with the Flemish, a larger colony with which the Dutch had established family ties and commercial connections over several generations. This colony perceived the situation as an interim crisis rather than a decline. The Dutch Republic underwent various government changes in a European context characterised by shifts in international politics. It was a republic of merchants immersed in a dynastic world where powerful monarchies would fight one another to preserve their respective hegemonic territorial positions to safeguard the ambitious interests of the royal families. The merchants involved in the *Carrera de Indias* were aware of this situation, as were the Flemish and Dutch in Cadiz and the Amsterdam firms. They were aware that *‘no hay Buenos tiempos para los de esta nación’*⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the Flemish and Dutch in Cadiz posed, as they were deeply rooted in society, a strong competition for other nations’ merchants, especially French and English, which had only enjoyed a short-lived, institutionally endorsed privileged

⁵⁹These are no good times for the people of this nation.

situation at certain junctures. To the latter, Dutch and Flemish were still an annoying competition and extremely difficult to rout out.

APPENDIX

A1: Merchants belonging to the Flemish Nation in Cadiz or registered with the Dutch Consulate.⁶⁰

FLEMISH NATION	DUTCH CONSULATE
Gilberto Ignacio van Eindhoven,	Octavio Barbour
Leonardo van Aalst	Juan Lespinasse
Martin van Hemert Vander Plas	Francisco Heegerman
Juan Baptista de Roo	Pedro Heegerman
Juan Baptista Rooman	Cornelio Van Linterlo
Guillermo de Graeff	Juan Beumer
Juan Liertaand	Constancio Albertini
Francisco Van Raes	Miguel Woenigh
Guillermo Reynerman	Antonio Adriesens
Esteban Van Uchelen	Carlos Panhuys
Mathyas Theyzen	Alberto Adrian Van Niewenhu
Juan Baptista Brach	Cornelio Norman
Louis Bayaca	Pedro Brack
Pedro Collingh	Reynaldo Boom
José Gadeyne	Juan Clocqueser
Juan Conique	Egidio Cloost
Martín Guillermo Van Hemert	Alejandro Julinet
Gerardo Geerdinck	Cornelio Schiff
Juan Wenceslao Van der Poel	José Guichet
Juan Van Laecken	Guberto Looten
José Juan Van Laecken	Cornelio Noorman
Cornelio Van Linterloo	Jacobo Lucas
Christian Francisco Libert	Mauricio Jacobo Lobé Huselbosch
Juan Lieertand Valois	Willem Nagel
Louis Legrad	José Romano
Jacobo Vanderbergh	Antonio de Ronge
Cornelio Paerslaecken	

⁶⁰ AHPC. p.n.: 5/1009, 4967, 11/2202, 2227, 5/1001, 10/1826, 3831, 11/2237, 10/1856, 11/2236, 9/1587, 5/990, 5/986. Crespo Solana, *Ente Cádiz*, Appendix. Pedro Collado Villalta, "Los consulados extranjeros en el Cádiz de Carlos III", in *La burguesía de negocios en la Andalucía de la Ilustración*, (Cádiz 1991), p. 245-59; A.H.P.C. *Disposiciones testamentarias*.

Pedro Pau Henrique de Roo Felipe Renard Guillermo Ragay Creuses Juan de Roy Diego de Roy Teodoro Joseph de Roy Salvador Soudaan Houtweyk Carlos Stagman Prick Guillermo Suaen Justo de Termeyer Juan Tilly Esteban Van Uchelen	
José Wandeneinde	

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