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Chapter 4

The armed forces

Introduction

War was one of the key determinants of Dutch success in the seventeenth century. This was not only true in the rather self-evident sense that without victory against the Habsburg rulers in the Eighty Years' War there would have been no independent Dutch Republic; or in the only slightly less self-evident sense that Dutch commercial expansion both within Europe and in other parts of the world was underwritten by massive military violence. It was also true in a less obvious sense: the way in which the Dutch state organised its armed forces, though costly to society, allowed those with wealth and power to profit substantially both from the employment of military means, and from their upkeep. In 1637, the Dutch Council of State noted what many other contemporary observers confirmed:

> 'War is ruinous for other countries, but it did strengthen the United Provinces in its trade, riches, and power, it did improve its territories and cities, and those funds extracted from the common people seemed to return by other ways again, like the waters which are transported by the rivers into the sea and which are returned by nature to its resources in a way unknown to us.'[1]

This chapter provides an overview of the evolution of the Dutch armed forces from the loose rebel bands on land and at sea at the start of the Dutch Revolt to the highly organised army, navy and company troops of the mid- and late seventeenth century. Special attention will be given to the interaction between military developments and commercial expansion, both at home and abroad. Using a modern analogy, one could say that warfare for the Dutch Republic facilitated the emergence of a powerful military-industrial complex, or perhaps a combination of military-financial, military-commercial and military-manufacturing complexes, at the heart of the state. The chapter will start out by providing some basic facts about the evolution, employment and composition of the Dutch armed forces. Later sections will deal with the impact of armed might on state formation and the economy. To avoid the common trap of describing early-modern warfare in the way of a clinical exercise in

[1] Cited in Marjolein 't Hart, *The Dutch Wars of Indpendence. Warfare and commerce in the Netherlands, 1570-1680*, London / New York, 2014, 1.

dissecting the anatomy of power, the chapter will take a brief look at the human consequences of warfare for those who found themselves at the opposite end of Dutch arms at home and abroad, as well as at the labour conditions and forms of resistance of the soldiers and sailors who wielded them. Emphasising the social aspects of warfare, this chapter complements the one on the 'cult of war and violence' that follows it.

From rebel troops to organised armed forces: a Military Revolution?

The emergence of the Dutch Republic as a globally operating military power can be traced back to the transformation of the armed forces during the first half of the Eighty Years' War. The political events leading to the outbreak and spread of the Dutch Revolt in the second half of the 1560s, and eventually to the establishment of an independent state in the seven northern provinces and the collapse of resistance in the ten southern provinces, have been described elsewhere in this volume. Here it is important to note that the success of the Northern Provinces entailed a thorough transformation of the nature of the armed struggle. Initially, the core of the rebel forces had consisted of Dutch and foreign mercenary troops payed by William of Orange out of his own shallow treasury. During the reign of the Duke of Alva, these were supplemented by roving bands of exiles named the Sea Beggars who committed acts of piracy and engaged in privateering, and by largely untrained volunteers. Such motley forces stood against the vastly superior Royal troops, which explains why between 1568 and 1581, out of the nine battles waged on land the soldiers of the Spanish crown won all but one.[2] It was the largely accidental coming together of a lucky strike by the Sea Beggars at the small Holland town Den Briel and a string of urban revolts against new taxes and the harsh military regime of the Duke of Alva which in the spring of 1572 unsuspectedly gave the rebel forces a foothold in the Netherlands.

The 1570s and 1580s saw frantic attempts by the leaders of the Revolt to knit together the loose and often improvised elements of their army and navy into a well organised force. This was a two-sided process. On the one hand, the room for independent operation by 'guerrilla'-type bands, more or less autonomous commanders and civic militias which had played a prominent part in the fighting during the first years of the Revolt was closed down. In 1581, William of Orange famously decreed that civic militias should no longer be

[2] Petra Groen (ed), *De Tachtigjarige Oorlog. Van opstand naar geregelde oorlog 1568-1848*, Amsterdam, 2013, 115.

consulted in city politics – a crucial route for exerting influence on the course of the struggle. On the other hand, the emerging state managed to strengthen its control over its payed troops. A crucial element in transforming the nature of army discipline was the struggle that first William of Orange, and then with even greater success his son Maurice of Nassau, waged against the traditional *landsknecht*-organisation of mercenary companies. This guild-like system allowed soldiers quite a lot of influence over the terms of their employment, and ensured the internal cohesion of the army unit, not only against the enemy soldiers but also against the state and its paymasters. Already under William of Orange, this form of organisation was gradually broken down. Under his command, elected positions within the unit were replaced by a strict system of appointment from above, and traditional privileges of the *landsknecht* such as a relatively high salary and short-term contract were limited. Maurice followed this up with his famous army reforms, introducing stricter discipline enforced by a heavy punishment regime, standardised armament and an elaborate training that allowed for a tactical revolution in the use of firearms. All of this earned Maurice a prominent place in the literature on the 'Military Revolution'. This term is used for the series of changes in warfare that during the seventeenth century led to the employment of ever larger armies, supported by escalating state finances and increasingly sophisticated state bureaucracies. Extensive professionalisation of the Dutch army, the large-scale application of new scientific insights on fortress building and siege warfare, and a revolution in state finances made the Dutch army one of the driving forces of the European-wide changes in the organisation of warfare.

The organisation of the States' Army into an increasingly professional and top-down controlled force was accompanied by, and could not have succeeded without the thorough reform of state finances and the erection of new bureaucratic institutions. Within the framework of the Union of Utrecht, the States General assumed responsibility over military affairs, though the individual provinces remained responsible for the payment of 'their own' army units. In the 1580s, a Council of State was installed as the executive body of the States General in military affairs, responsible for drafting the yearly army budgets. Regional influence over the armed forces was solidified even more in the case of the navy. Between 1576 and 1597, five separate Admiralty Boards were established that each managed the organisation and equipment of a section of the Dutch Republic's war fleets from their own regional base. Three Admiralty Boards were based in Holland, one in Zeeland, and one in Friesland. The daily management of admiralty affairs was overseen by colleges in which representatives of different cities rotated seats. While the army was paid by the provinces

from general taxation, the five Admiralty Boards had to finance themselves primarily through customs on foreign trade. Given that the federal system of representation on the Admiralty Boards gave great weight to the very merchant elite that had to pay these customs, this created continuous tensions over the matter of tax evasion. However, local merchants were also dependent on the outfitting of convoying and cruising fleets that became one of the key tasks of the navy, resulting in some willingness to contribute in bearing the costs of protection.

Professionalisation of the navy remained a much slower process than in the army, as naval warfare remained heavily reliant on the employment of temporarily armed merchant ships and their crews until well into the seventeenth century. Only in the course of the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654), a 'tactical revolution' at sea forced the Dutch state to move towards a standing fleet of purposely built war-ships. Nevertheless, despite these limitations professionalisation went far enough to give the newly established Dutch Republic important advantages over its Habsburg adversaries on land and at sea. Finally, the 1580s and 1590s saw the beginnings of Dutch commercial expansion into the Atlantic and Indian Ocean. The first ventures were undertaken through private initiative, but the States General soon started to consider the potential for bringing the war to the Iberian overseas empires. In 1602 and 1621 respectively, the United East India Company (VOC) and West India Company (WIC) were established. These chartered companies combined trade monopolies with state-like prerogatives, including the right to make treaties or declare war in the name of the States General, build fortresses, raise armies and administer (military) justice. They became powerful instruments of expansion in their own right.

As a result of these developments, the 1590s saw a fundamental shift in the nature of the war. A string of successful campaigns and sieges allowed the States' Army to drive the royal troops from most of the Northern provinces, securing 'Holland's Garden'. At sea, after the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 Dutch fleets greatly enlarged their area of operation while upholding the blockade of the Flemish coast. The blockade allowed Amsterdam to take over Antwerp's position as Europe's staple market. The Dutch now faced their European competitors not as a rebel region, but as an independent state that could wield considerable military might. Two large-scale operations at the turn of the seventeenth century made this reversal of fates abundantly clear. In 1599, a fleet of 73 ships carrying 7,600 men under the guidance of Vice-Admiral Pieter van der Does sailed to the coast of Spain in order to attack the port city La Coruña and blockade the Spanish coast. One of the primary aims was to

intercept the Spanish fleet, leaving for the Americas. When this failed, the fleet sailed to the Canary Islands where it destroyed Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, before briefly overtaking the sugar island Sao Tomé on the West-African coast. There, the African disease environment defeated the Dutch conquerors, killing 1800 including Van der Does. But for the first time, the Dutch navy had operated outside European waters. Ironically, the second landmark shift also took place in the context of a mission that failed in its primary objective. In 1600, the States General ordered a reluctant Maurice to march into the Spanish controlled Southern Netherlands to capture the important privateering port Dunkirk. However, his armies were intercepted at Nieuwpoort. Displaying the full range of the new style of training and tactics that had been introduced in the previous period, the Dutch troops proved superior to the Spanish forces. After obtaining a victory in battle, Maurice ordered a strategic retreat. Nevertheless, the Battle of Nieuwpoort stands as an iconic moment in the 'Military Revolution', and announced the new role of the Dutch Republic in European politics.

An age of permanent war

The Dutch 'Golden Age' was also an age of iron, dirt and blood. Contemporaries and modern historians alike have often found it difficult to imagine the Dutch Republic as an aggressively expansionist power. The small size of the country, its barely two million inhabitants, and the emphasis on commerce over conquest in its (European) foreign policy, all militate against this. Furthermore, intense political conflicts over military spending and grand strategy plunged the state into grave crises in 1617-18, 1650-51 and 1672, and created many smaller moments of tension in between. Often described in more traditional writing as clashes between a 'pro-war' party around the House of Orange and a regent 'peace party', this has created the illusion that merely episodic disputes over war-priorities reflected deep-seated and permanent opposition within the Dutch state and ruling stratum against war per se. This contention is belied by the fact that during the seventeenth century, the Dutch state in practice operated as a permanent war state.

Figure 1 presents a timeline which only includes armed confrontations between the Dutch and one or more major European powers on the continent or in European waters. It shows that for the entire seventeenth century, three out of four years were European war-years. This still leaves out the many full-scale wars fought by the Dutch East and West India Companies to carve out their respective empires against European competitors, Asian,

American and African rulers and indigenous populations. Regardless whether the Dutch Republic was an enthusiastic or a 'reluctant imperialist', the result was a global empire that at the time of its peak geographical reach stretched from the collection of North-American settlements called New Netherland to a large part of North-Western Brazil; via fortresses along the West-African coast from the island Gorée in Senegambia to the Cape Hope settlement; and beyond Cape Hope to the extensive and growing VOC-empire in Asia. The proliferation of Dutch armed forces can, among other things, be measured by the number of military outposts built in Asia, Africa and the Americas. In Africa and America, a total of over 250 separate military structures were erected during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, thought they were often relatively small and short-lived. In Asia, the VOC around 1790 possessed 162 fortresses and other armed outposts, which on average were larger and more durable than their West-Indian counterparts.[3]

With such an armed presence all throughout the world, it should come as no surprise that large amounts of resources were mobilised for military purposes. Marjolein 't Hart has calculated that around 1641, 51.5 percent of all state expenses went to the army, 26.0 percent to the navy, and 8.7 percent to the building and upkeep of fortifications.[4] Military expenditure also weighed heavily on the capital employed by the VOC. Femme Gaastra has estimated that for the eighteenth century, the VOC offices in the Netherlands payed about *f* 2 million on average per year for military purposes, while about 30 percent of all costs made by the company in Asia during the seventeenth and eighteenth century went to war.[5]

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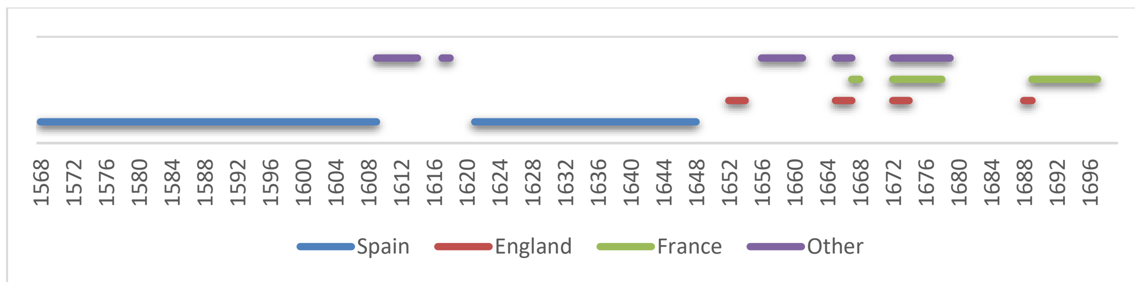
[3] Gerrit Knaap, Henk den Heijer and Michiel de Jong, *Oorlogen overzee. Militair optreden door compagnie en staat buiten Europa 1595-1814*, Amsterdam, 2015, 230-2 and 412.
[4] Marjolein C. 't Hart, *The making of a bourgeois state. War, politics and finance during the Dutch Revolt,* Manchester, 1993, 62.
[5] Femme Gaastra, '"Sware continuerende lasten en groten ommeslagh". Kosten van de oorlogsvoering van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie', in: Gerrit Knaap and Ger Teitler (eds), *De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie tussen oorlog en diplomatie*, Leiden, 2002, 81-104, 87-8.

Figure 1: Timeline of armed conflicts in Europe involving the Dutch Republic



Timeline shows: **Spain:** Eighty Years' War (1568-1609 and 1621-48) / **England:** First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-4), Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-7), Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-4), Glorious Revolution and Jacobite War (1688) / **France:** War of Devolution (1667-8), Franco-Dutch War (1672-8), War of the Grand Alliance (1688-97) / **Other:** (large-scale Dutch interventions in) War of the Jülich Succession (1610-14), Uskok War (1617-18), Second Northern War (1656-60), European phase of the Dutch-Portuguese War (1657-61), First War Dutch-Münster War (1665-6), Second Dutch-Münster War (1672-4), Scanian War (1675-9)

One of the reasons why despite the frequency, cost and impact of warfare historians find it difficult to see the Dutch Republic as a war-state, is the strangely particularistic organisation of its bureaucratic apparatus. For a long time, historians have seen it as self-evident that warfare in the early-modern period facilitated the emergence of highly centralised bureaucratic states. But nowadays, historians increasingly question this proposition. European states throughout this period continued to rely heavily on local political elites, merchants and private suppliers of violence such as mercenaries, privateers and chartered companies in the organisation of their armed forces. In the Dutch Republic, this dependency was taken to the extreme. Despite attempts at centralisation, provinces retained full responsibility over the payment of soldiers, the navy remained parcelled out over five organisationally independent Admiralty Boards, and the leading personnel of the relatively light-weight state bureaucracy and the semi-private VOC and WIC provided an intricate patchwork of local and regional representation. While this made policy-making an often painstaking process, it did guarantee an extraordinary level of involvement of the wealthy classes in both the raising of the means of war and the decision making on their employment. As a result of this involvement, so long as economic and geopolitical success provided a basis for a minimum level of consensus on questions of war and peace within the ruling class, the Dutch state proved highly capable of producing the levels of violence needed to maintain a global commercial empire.

The business of war

The peculiar federal organisation of the Dutch state, in combination with the highly commodified nature of the economy, created many opportunities for private gain from warfare. The favours that the Dutch state bestowed on internationally operating private arms dealers, suppliers of provisions to the army and navy and military financiers laid the basis for some of the biggest fortunes of the seventeenth century. At the same time, production for military purposes left a large imprint on the local economies of smaller garrison towns like Gorinchem or Doesburg, as well as on cities housing Admiralty Boards and chambers of the VOC and WIC like Amsterdam and Middelburg. The way in which military markets affected Dutch agriculture after the period of highly destructive army campaigns in the countryside during the Eighty Years' War has hardly been investigated. However, the expansion of highly commercialised and heavily urban-dominated branches of agriculture such as ox farming has sometimes been linked to the needs of supplying the navy and the colonial companies.

The most famous war profiteers of the Dutch seventeenth century were the Trip family. They built an international arms dealing empire that supplied the war-fronts of Europe with an endless stream of cannons, guns and bullets. In the same period, the family managed to entrench itself deeply in the political and cultural world of the Amsterdam regents. Several members of the family had their portraits painted by Rembrandt, and in 1660-1662 the brothers Louis and Hendrick Trip ordered the building of a stately house along one of the Amsterdam canals. The front of the house was embellished with sculptured cannonballs and olive branches, to illustrate the family motto *De bello pax*. The history of the family business shows that large arms traders did not inhabit a special economic zone of their own. Rather, the military and the non-military side of their enterprises were well integrated, and in many ways built upon each other. The late-sixteenth century patriarchs of the family were iron traders in Dordrecht, who also traded in such diverse products as paper, cheese, stock fish, herring and wine. Jacob Trip, who in the seventeenth century entered the arms trade on a grander scale, at the same time supplied cheese, wine, wood and grain to the States' Army, operated as a ship owner and as representative of Amsterdam and Liège merchants, and acted as a middleman in troop payments.[6]

[6] P.W.Klein, *De Trippen in de 17e eeuw. Een studie over het ondernemersgedrag op de Hollandse stapelmarkt*, Assen, 1965, 93 and 100.

Close relationships with, or direct or indirect involvement in the management of state and semi-state tasks played an important part in the building of commercial fortunes. Elias Trip, who moved the family firm from Dordrecht to Amsterdam, was one of the Directors of the VOC. In 1616 he became responsible for supervising the Amsterdam VOC shipyard, overseeing the Company's ammunition supplies and for negotiations over protection between the VOC and the Amsterdam Admiralty Board. Although state officials were banned explicitly from financial or commercial involvement with their own institutions, many hardly concealed routes for profiting remained. One such route was through family connections. This can be seen from the case of Hiob de Wildt, a close associate of Stadtholder William III who was First Secretary of the Amsterdam Admiralty Board during the last three decades of the seventeenth century. His sisters Anna and Eva married the rope and hemp merchants Hendrik and Jan Lijnslager, who were involved in trade with the Amsterdam Admiralty Board and the VOC. In 1691, the by then widowed Anna acted as the largest single supplier to the navy, trading rope at a value of almost *f* 200,000. Meanwhile, Hiob himself became prominent in the ox trade. His estate amounted to the sizeable sum of *f* 170,000.[7]

The massive state expenses on warfare also created new opportunities for financiers. This followed two main routes. The first was through state loans. Even though the Dutch Republic had the largest tax burden per head of the population, the state and its provincial treasuries built up an ever larger state debt. One of the reasons was that the Dutch rulers retained a consistent preference for indirect taxes such as customs and excises over wealth taxes. This meant that in relative terms, the poorer segments of the population were heavily taxed while the rich were spared. The gap was filled with a highly innovative system of state loans and annuities, that became a stable form of investment in which both the very rich and the middle classes participated. But private investment was not limited to the income side of state finance. Many investors, officials and suppliers provided short-term loans to cover part of the state's direct expenses in warfare, for example by accepting promissory notes instead of payment for deliveries. Over the course of the seventeenth century, a lively secondary market for such 'payment ordinances' developed, predicated on the justified notion that although early-modern states were notoriously bad in paying their military and naval bills, the Dutch state was relatively reliable in this respect. A particularly important group of financiers engaged in providing short-term loans for war expenditure were the 'military solicitors', who acted as financial agents supplying credit for paying the troops. In the course of the

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[7] Pepijn Brandon, *War, captial, and the Dutch state (1588-1795)*, Leiden / Boston, 2015, 65.

seventeenth century this form of financial intermediation became increasingly protected and regulated, leading to the involvement of new groups of specialised financiers.

Historians often discuss the making of private profit from state expenditure on armies and navies primarily within the framework of corruption. Certainly, the history of the Dutch Republic provides plenty of examples. When describing a large case of corruption at the Rotterdam Admiralty Board in which administrators had rigged the auction of prize-goods, the mid-seventeenth century chronicler of Dutch war policies Lieuwe van Aitzema sighed: 'That if one would examine all Colleges and Magistrates in this way according to their instructions, one could easily say *Domine quis sustinebit* [Lord, who would remain standing].'[8] Nevertheless, the link between war and the Dutch economy was deeper and more structural than the trope of corruption suggests. Production, trade and finance for the army, the navy and the colonial companies, as well as for the international military market, became one of the largest and most concentrated terrains for capital accumulation, interlaced at every step with the civilian economy.

Military violence at home and abroad

War did not only effect societies indirectly, through its impact on the state and the economy, but also directly, through the actual employment of armed force. One simple reason why permanent war did not prove disruptive for Dutch economic success is that from the final decade of the sixteenth century onwards the rich North-Western core region of the Republic did not experience military occupation. But other parts of the country, especially in the South and the East, suffered the presence of warring armies much longer. Only after the successful siege of Den Bosch under Stadtholder Frederik-Hendrik in 1629 were the Spanish troops gradually driven back to the Southern Netherlands. After the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, the Eastern provinces experienced an invasion by 20,000 troops under the Bishop of Münster in 1665, and most of the country was overran by French and German soldiers in the 'disaster year' 1672 when the Dutch Republic was simultaneously at war with France, the Bishops of Münster and Cologne, and with England at sea.

[8] Lieuwe van Aitzema, *Saken van Staet en oorlogh, in, ende omtrent de Vereenigde Nederlanden. Beginnende met het Jaer 1621, ende eyndigende met het Jaer 1632*, Vol. I, The Hague, 1669, 529.

In the context of these wars, the States' troops not only fought foreign armies. Especially during the Eighty Years' War, they also waged war on the Dutch countryside. Usually considered an urban affair, this aspect of the Dutch Revolt has long escaped the attention of historians. But a recent study by Leo Adriaenssen has laid bare the full scale and the gruesome impact of warfare on Dutch agricultural regions. Based on a detailed study of one Southern agricultural region, he has shown the ruthlessness with which the Dutch forces wrung tribute from the areas they were sent to 'liberate'. According to his estimates, an alternating policy of scorched earth campaigns and taxation through plunder led to a drop in population numbers for the rural region around Den Bosch of 68.5 percent.[9] In 1587 the States General ordered Maurice to strip bare the Southern countryside at the head of an army of 5,000 troops, supported by urban militias from Amsterdam, Leiden, Delft and several other cities. Thirty to forty villages, including Helmond and Eindhoven, were burned to the ground. In Veghel 500 peasants took up arms to defend their village, and were slaughtered by the troops. The deprivation that resulted from such campaigns led to mass famine and plague epidemics. During the first decades of the seventeenth century tribute raising began to take on a more organised form and such violent extraction campaigns became less frequent. However, the consequences of warfare had left the rural population powerless to resist the imposition of structurally high levels of taxation, which remained once the war ended. In the same period, urban investors from Holland and other regions started to buy up large stretches of the land that the activities of the opposing armies had left empty. The trauma of violence in the countryside drew deep furrows through popular culture [, as the next chapter will further examine]. A mid-seventeenth century pamphlet presented the readers with a dialogue in verse, in which a fictive peasant told a soldier:

> 'Oh no! How greatly must the Peasant, the poor Peasant pay:
>
> From another person's sorrow, it is easy to gather hay.
>
> Our ruin is the Winter-Garrison
>
> Get the peasant where oats are good, is the common song.'[10]

While the direct experience of military violence became less acute for much of the Dutch population in the final decades of the Eighty Years' War, it remained central to Dutch

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[9] Leo Adriaenssen, *Staatsvormend geweld. Overleven aan de frontlinies in de meierij van Den Bosch, 1572-1629*, Tilburg, 2007, 271.

[10] Anonymous, *De blyde uytvaert van myn heer den krygh*, Utrecht 1659, 563.

expansion overseas. In Asia and the Americas, company troops were frequently engaged in conflicts where they were pitted not only against enemy armies, but against entire indigenous populations. In March 1621 1900 sailors, soldiers and Asian subsidiary troops under the command of VOC Governor General Jan Pieterszoon Coen arrived at the Banda islands to enforce the company monopoly in the trade in nutmeg and mace. Several thousand were killed or enslaved in operations that systematically and purposely depopulated the islands. While Coen's actions on the Banda islands are remembered as exceptionally cruel, depopulation, enslavement and mass killings remained frequent parts of VOC wars. In 1666-1667, a large VOC fleet established Company rule on Celebes by defeating the Sultan of Makassar. After the victory, the VOC commander Cornelis Speelman ordered 5,000 prisoners of war to be put on an uninhabitable island, where they all perished. In a later war over the control of the Java kingdom Mataram, Speelman alleged: 'The matter has to be dealt with at heart, and the enemy must not only be chased away, but has to be persecuted and unravelled.'[11] Such ruthlessness, increasingly uncommon in European warfare, also remained characteristic of the mode of operation of Dutch soldiers in the slave-colonies in the Atlantic region.

Military labour, mutiny and desertion

Soldiers and others employed in military labour were not only perpetrators of violence, but also its victims. Maurice's tightening of army discipline had included the introduction of the 1590s military regulations, which with dull regularity proscribed the death penalty for insubordination, desertion and many other offenses. In practice the maximum penalty was often not applied, for given the rate at which soldiers broke regulation this would probably have decimated the ranks. Nevertheless, severe corporeal punishment was an important aspect of life in the army and the navy, and the death penalty was executed with great frequency in cases where commanders or captains thought this necessary to maintain discipline or restore order. Impressment was forbidden in the Dutch Republic, so that at least nominally soldiers and sailors joined the army, navy and companies out of their own volition. However, professional recruiters in collusion with inn-keepers did make use of debt traps to cajole people into signing up. In popular parlance these intermediaries became known as *zielverkopers*, a play with words that combined the official meaning of 'seller of seals' after

[11] Cited in Knaap, Den Heijer and De Jong, *Oorlogen overzee*, 118.

the documents used in recruitment, with the secondary meaning of 'seller of souls'. Once signed up, the law gave their commanders far-reaching prerogatives over the lives, limbs and labouring capacities of military workers, *de facto* and *de jure* introducing important elements of bondage into the 'free' labour practices of the Dutch Republic.

Table 1 provides an overview of the number of people employed directly for military purposes by the army, the navy, the VOC and WIC. After a century of incremental increase of the armed forces, in 1700 these four institutions together employed almost 130,000 men. Many thousands more were employed in subsidiary tasks as workers in the private arms and shipbuilding industries, as soldiers on armed merchant ships, or as sailors on privateering ships. In 1703, the Zeeland towns Middelburg and Vlissingen alone equipped 47 privateering ships manned by a total of 6667 sailors and soldiers.[12] Migrant labourers made up a large proportion of all these groups, even more so than for other forms of employment in the Dutch Republic. Nevertheless, making a conservative estimate it seems fair to say that at the end of the seventeenth century around 10 percent of the entire labour force of the Dutch Republic was engaged directly or indirectly in military-related work.

Table 1: The military labour market: an overview

	c. 1600	c. 1625	c. 1650	c. 1675	c. 1700
Army	35,408	51,265	29,315	88,588	94,176
Navy: warfleets	8,000	8,500	11,000	20,000	20,000
Navy: shipyards					1,500
VOC: European soldiers		3,600		10,000	9,523
WIC: European soldiers			4,500		3,000

Sources: **Army:** H.L. Zwitzer, *'De militie van den staat'. Het leger van de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden*, Amsterdam, 1991, 175-6. Figures taken from ordinary and extraordinary war budget for the years 1599 (partial), 1621, and 1701. **Navy:** warfleets: estimates 1600, 1628, 1642: Jaap R. Bruijn, *The Dutch navy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*, Columbia SC, 2011, 49; estimates 1675 and 1700: Jaap R. Bruijn, 'Dutch maritime industries and maritime employment in early modern times', in Robert Bohn (ed.), *Nordfriesische Seefahrer in der frühen Neuzeit*, Amsterdam 1999, 105-12, 111. **Navy:** shipyards: estimate on the basis of Pepijn Brandon, *War, Capital, and the Dutch State (1588-1795)*, Leiden / Boston 2015, 170-5. **VOC:** 1625 and 1675: projections on the basis of Jan Lucassen, 'A multinational and its labor force. The Dutch East India Company, 1595-1795', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 66 (2004) 12-39, 15, and

[12] J.C. de Jonge, *Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche zeewezen,* Vol. IV.2, The Hague, 1841, 559.

Femme Gaastra, '"Sware continuerende lasten en groten ommeslagh". Kosten van de oorlogsvoering van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie', in: Gerrit Knaap en Ger Teitler (eds.*), De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie tussen oorlog en diplomatie*, Leiden, 2002, 81-104, 85; 1700: Gerrit Knaap, Henk den Heijer and Michiel de Jong, *Oorlogen overzee. Militair optreden door compagnie en staat buiten Europa 1595-1814*, Amsterdam, 2015, 196-7. **WIC:** Rough estimates based on Knaap, Den Heijer and De Jong, *Oorlogen overzee*, 374-5.

As a result of the reforms in army organisation and especially the improvements in the payment system, open mutiny by soldiers in the States' Army became rare. However, in the navy and among Dutch soldiers and sailors in the West and East Indies mutiny remained an important instrument in the military labourer's arsenal of resistance. The threat of mutiny in 1626 forced vice-admiral Adriaen Claesz to end his operations in the Caribbean and return to the Dutch Republic. Collective desertion and a mutiny in 1649 seriously hampered the WIC's attempts to hold on to Dutch Brazil. And in July 1688, underfed and overworked soldiers in Suriname killed governor Cornelis van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck. Mutineers took over fortress Zeelandia, but internal divisions among the soldiers led to an end of the rebellion after which eight instigators of the revolt were hanged, two were convicted to be broken on the wheel, and sixty were banished from Suriname. In the Dutch Republic itself a string of refusals by crews of hired merchant-men to take to the sea in unfit ships under drunk and incompetent captains was one of the factors behind the shift towards a standing fleet in the aftermath of the First Anglo-Dutch War.

The most common form of resistance against military labour was not mutiny, but running away. In all early modern armies and navies desertion was endemic. The Dutch were no exception. In VOC settlements like Surat and Bengal, the general annual desertion rate lay around 5 percent, and in Europe, anywhere between 20-40 percent of soldiers who left the States' Army did so through desertion.[13] Sometimes soldiers and sailors ran away from any kind of military employment, often they joined competing armies or navies in order to gain better working conditions or to retain the 'hand money' they received for signing up. Outside Europe there are quite a number of known cases of deserters converting and living among indigenous tribes, joining pirate bands, or attempting to establish their own communities

[13] Jeannette Kamp and Matthias van Rossum, 'Introduction: Leaving work across the world', in: Jeannette Kamp and Matthias van Rossum (eds.), *Desertion in the early modern world. A comparative history*, London, 2016, 3-14, 9.

outside the reach of the authorities. Finding room for manoeuver within the straightjacket of military labour regimes was an integral part of life and work within the armed forces.

Conclusions

While often viewed as a particularly non war-oriented society, the Dutch Republic became one of the most effective wielders of global military force of the seventeenth century. War was a permanent feature of life in the Dutch Golden Age. Of course this does not mean everyone was affected by it in equal measure. During the Eighty Years' War, rural populations in the Southern and Eastern provinces experienced the hardship of actual fighting much longer than their urban counterparts in the North-West. Around the turn of the seventeenth century, the Dutch state proved it had managed to transform the motley bands of rebel troops into a professional army and navy which could challenge the Iberian adversary both on land and at sea. The creation of chartered companies for the East and West Indies with far-reaching prerogatives for waging war on their own behalf helped to carry the war across the oceans, to the detriment of the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns, Asian, American and African populations, and Dutch soldiers and sailors who died in high proportions in battle or as a result of tropical diseases.

The social and human costs of the operations by the Dutch army, navy and the chartered companies was great. Nevertheless, the particular form of organisation of the state and its armed forces also provided much room for private gain. The States General had a structural preference for arrangements in which private investors were involved directly in manufacturing arms, supplying the army and navy, providing short-term loans for troop payments and other key logistical tasks. It also ruthlessly and unhesitatingly employed the army and navy to secure Dutch commercial interests. This combination made war into an important area of capital accumulation, tightly connected to the other main branches of the economy. After the end of the Eighty Years' War in 1648, the Dutch continued to wage war at a large scale, largely outside their own territory. Nevertheless, it was in the final quarter of the seventeenth century and the first decade of the eighteenth that the army and the navy reached their peak in size. With immense fortunes running through the wheels of war and as much as ten percent of the labouring population employed in some form of military labour or subsidiary tasks, organised mass violence formed a core factor behind the success story of the Dutch seventeenth century.

Further reading:

In Dutch

Leo Adriaenssen, *Staatsvormend geweld. Overleven aan de frontlinies in de meierij van Den Bosch, 1572-1629* (Tilburg 2007)

Victor Enthoven, Henk den Heijer en Han Jordaan (eds), *Geweld in de West. Een militaire geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Atlantische wereld, 1600-1800* (Leiden / Boston 2013)

Petra Groen (ed), *De Tachtigjarige Oorlog. Van opstand naar geregelde oorlog 1568-1648* (Amsterdam 2013)

Michiel de Jong, *'Staat van oorlog'. Wapenbedrijf en militaire hervorming in de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden, 1585-1621* (Hilversum 2005)

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H.L. Zwitzer, *'De militie van den staat'. Het leger van de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden* (Amsterdam 1991)

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Pepijn Brandon, *War, capital, and the Dutch state (1588-1795)* (Leiden / Boston 2015)

Jaap R. Bruijn, *The Dutch navy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Columbia, SC 1993)

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Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road 1567-1659. The logistics of Spanish victory and defeat in the Low Countries' Wars* (Cambridge 1972)

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