

Sir Francis Vere in the Netherlands, 1589-1603:

A re-evaluation of his career as Sergeant Major General of Elizabeth I's troops

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Transcription

The original spelling and punctuation of the manuscripts has been retained, and all abbreviations have been written in full.

Dating

The dates cited are in Old Style, unless otherwise indicated.

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List of Abbreviations

- Archives* G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Archives ou Correspondance inédite de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau*, 2nd series, I and II (Utrecht, 1857-58)
- ARA Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague
- APC *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, New Series, edited by J. Roche Dasent, IV-XXXII (London, 1897-1907)
- Bescheiden
Betreffende* S.P. Haak (ed), *Johan van Oldenbarnevelt. Bescheiden Betreffende Zijn Staatkundig Beleid en Zijn Familie*, 2 vols. (The Hague, 1934, 1962)
- BM MS *British Museum Manuscript Source*
- Bruce* J. Bruce (ed), *Correspondence of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, during his government of the Low Countries in the years 1585 and 1586*, Camden Society, XXVII (London, 1844)
- Brugmans* H. Brugmans (ed), *Correspondentie van Robert Dudley Graaf van Leycester en andere documenten betreffende zijn Gouvernement-Generaal in de Nederlanden, 1585-88*, 3 vols. (Utrecht, 1931)
- Chamberlain
Letters* N.E. McClure (ed), *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 2 vols. The American Philosophical Society Memoirs, XII i (Philadelphia, 1939)
- Collins* A. Collins, *Letters and Memorials of State...Written and Collected by Sir Henry Sidney*, 2 vols. (London, 1746)
- CSPD *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth*, edited by R. Lemon et al (London, 1857-72)
- CSPF *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth*, edited by S. Crawford Lomas et al, XIX-XIII (London, 1916-50)
- CSPS *Calendar of Letters and State Papers Relating to English Affairs, Preserved in, or originally Belonging to, the Archives of Simancas*, edited by M.A.S. Hume et al, III and IV (London, 1896, 1899)
- CSPV *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice, and in other libraries of Northern Italy*, edited by H.F. Brown et al, VIII and IX (London, 1894, 1897)
- Devereux W.B. Devereux, *Lives and Letters of the Devereux, Earls of Essex, in the Reigns of Elizabeth, James I, and Charles I, 1540-1646*, 2 vols. (London, 1853)

- Du Mont J. Du Mont, *Corps Universel Diplomatique du Droit des Gens*, V ii (The Hague, 1728)
- Edmond's Papers* G.G. Butler (ed), *The Edmond's Papers. A Selection from the correspondence of Sir Thomas Edmond's, Envoy from Queen Elizabeth at the French Court* (London, 1913)
- Gedenkstukken* M.L. van Deventer (ed), *Gedenkstukken van Johan van Oldenbarnevelt en zijn tijd*, 3 vols. (The Hague, 1860-5)
- HMC *Sal* Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Salisbury, Preserved at Hatfield House, Herts.*, III-XXI (London, 1889-1970)
- *D&D* *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord de L'Isle and Dudley, Preserved at Penshurst Place*, II and III (1934, 1936)
- *Anc* *Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Ancaster, Preserved at Grimsthorpe* (London, 1907)
- L&A* R.B. Wernham (ed), *List and Analysis of State Papers, Foreign Series, Elizabeth I*, 6 vols. (London, 1964-93)
- Lefèvre J. Lefèvre (ed), *Correspondance de Philippe II sur les Affaires des Pays-Bas*, 2nd Series, III and IV (Brussels, 1956, 1960)
- RSG* N. Japikse and H.H.P. Rijperman (eds), *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal van 1576 tot 1609*, V-XIV (The Hague, 1921-70)
- Somers Tracts* W. Scott (ed), *A Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts...Selected from an infinite number in print and manuscript, in the Royal, Cotton, Sion, and other public, as well as private, Libraries; particularly that of the late Lord Somers*, 2nd edition, I (London, 1809)
- SP* *State Papers, Foreign Series, Public Record Office*
- Triumphs of Nassau* J.J. Orlers and H. de Haestens, *The Triumphs of Nassau: or, a Description and Representation of all the Victories both by Land and Sea, granted by God to the noble, High and mightie Lords, the Estates generall of the united Netherland Provinces, Under the Conduct of his Excellencie, Prince Maurice of Nassau* (London, 1613)
- UHG* *Kronijk van het Historisch Genootschap - Gevestigd te Utrecht*, 4th series iii, XVI-XXII (Utrecht, 1860-66)
- Vere's Commentaries* Sir Francis Vere, *The Commentaries of Sir Francis Vere, Being Diverse pieces of service, wherein he had command, written by himself in way of Commentary*, edited by W. Dillingham (Cambridge, 1657)



A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely of Sir Francis Vere.

Figure 1: Sir Francis Vere (c.1560-1609)

National Portrait Gallery, London

Introduction

The Historiographical Background

Sir Francis Vere's intervention in the Netherlands during Elizabeth's reign is a subject that has been overshadowed in historical works by the ascendancy of his predecessor, the Earl of Leicester, which is commonly regarded as being one of the most turbulent, transitional, and above all significant periods in Anglo-Dutch relations. It was a time when the newly formed alliance was severely tested and caused a great deal of dissatisfaction for both sides. The Earl's meddlesome activities served to exacerbate the situation, and by the time of his departure in 1587, relations between the allies were approaching a nadir. However, it is widely believed that the alliance subsequently began to settle down into a pattern of more routine and peaceful exchanges, and that by the end of Lord Willoughby's ascendancy in 1589, it was more acceptable to both sides than at any time in the past. This was indicated by the appointment of a man who was apparently both less flamboyant and of a much lower status than the Earl of Leicester. Sir Francis Vere was a relative unknown who had only his skill in military affairs to recommend him for the post of senior commander of the English forces. His apparent lack of interest in affairs of state made him an uncontroversial figure, and his ascendancy in the Netherlands has been regarded as a reflection of the increasingly indifferent, if cordial, relations between the allies during this period.¹ A combination of a lower profile commander and an apparently less interesting and significant period of the Anglo-Dutch alliance has in turn led most historians to neglect these areas in preference for the earlier period and protagonists of their connection. This will be demonstrated in the following review of the secondary material, which will focus upon those studies relating to Vere himself and the pattern of Anglo-Dutch relations during his ascendancy.

'He was earnest and persevering. He put his shoulder to the wheel when he was a young man, and he never faltered nor turned aside until the work was done. And such work! It demanded every faculty, every power of mind and body, and he gave them all lavishly and without stint. He lived for duty'.² This passage typifies the only major study relating to Sir Francis Vere,³ which

¹ By 'Vere's ascendancy', I am referring to the period 1589-1603, when he was Elizabeth's Sergeant Major General in the Netherlands. He was to remain in command of the English troops there for a year after her death.

² C.R. Markham, *The Fighting Veres. Lives of Sir Francis...and of Sir Horace Vere* (Boston and New York, 1888) N.B. Although it is a joint biography, Sir Horace Vere receives significantly less attention than Sir Francis.

forms a rather eulogistic account of his life and career. The *Fighting Veres* was written by Clements Markham in 1888, and has enjoyed a place in historiography that has remained largely unchallenged. Vere is the untainted hero of the work: a noble and valiant soldier who was inspired by devotion to his Queen, and fought untiringly for the causes of freedom and justice. The primary aim of Markham's study is biographical. He gives a full account of Vere's life - from his upbringing in Essex during the 1560s, to his death as Governor of Portsmouth in 1609. However, the greater part of his narrative focuses upon Vere's service in the Netherlands, and he provides a wealth of meticulous detail about every battle, siege and campaign in which his protagonist was involved. He suggests that Vere played a vital role in all of these, and was indispensable to the Dutch leaders - in particular Count Maurice of Nassau - both as a highly skilled soldier and a perceptive adviser of strategy. In fact, he accredits the English General with most of the major allied victories, implying that by comparison, the other military leaders played only a secondary role.⁴ While Markham is obviously preoccupied with Vere's military career, he does make passing reference to his activities in the sphere of diplomacy. He also describes his relations with the English Court and Dutch authorities, and claims that these were always harmonious as both sides held him in great esteem. Indeed, he points out that Vere cooperated so well with the States that it was sometimes believed that he favoured their cause more than his sovereign's. Markham refutes this notion, however, arguing that it was natural that Vere should enter heart and soul into the cause for which he fought for so many years, and stresses that the only 'romance' of his life was his 'devoted loyalty to Queen Elizabeth'.⁵ The *Fighting Veres* does contain occasional references to Anglo-Dutch relations, but these are almost always portrayed as harmonious, and are not analysed in any great depth because the aim is clearly to focus upon Vere. According to Markham, he executed his task in the Netherlands more effectively than anyone else could have done, and consequently enjoyed a fame and renown both during his lifetime and for many years after his death. It is perhaps not too surprising that he came to this conclusion when one considers that he relied heavily upon Vere's own account of his service in the Provinces, which tends to exaggerate the importance of his contribution to the Dutch war. Markham justifies this reliance by claiming that the account is supported by other

³ G.R. Gleig does include Vere amongst the eleven military commanders in his three volume study, but he has relied almost exclusively upon Vere's own account, and quotes extensively from it. *Lives of the Most Eminent British Military Commanders*, I (London, 1831) [in D. Lardner, *The Cabinet Cyclopaedia*]. The same is true of A. Collins' *Historical Collections of the Noble Families of Cavendish, Holles, Vere, Harley and Ogle* (London, 1752). More recently, L. Stephen and S. Lee, *Dictionary of National Biography*, XX (London, 1921-22), 229-35 and P.W. Hasler, *The House of Commons, 1558-1603*, III (London, 1981) History of Parliament Series, 555-57 contain brief biographical accounts of Vere, but both are based upon Markham's study.

⁴ Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 254-62, 287-305, 309-30

⁵ *ibid.*, 362

contemporary sources, such as the State Papers and British Museum collections, as well as certain printed Dutch works - notably van Meteren's study of this period.⁶

The portrayal provided by the *Fighting Veres* has filtered down to more recent studies. While none of these afford Vere much attention, they almost all cite Markham's work and conform to his interpretation of the English General's character and role in the Netherlands. A classic example is J. B. Black's *The Reign of Elizabeth* - one of the most respected and comprehensive surveys of the period. Vere receives only scant attention: his role in the Netherlands is not mentioned, and he is only referred to in the discussion of the Cadiz and Islands Voyages. Black has evidently relied upon Markham's account, both for the brief portrayal of Vere and the narrative of military events in the Netherlands that he provides. Elizabeth's foreign policy is discussed at length, but the chapter that is devoted to her relations with the Dutch focuses upon the period 1575-86, giving particular attention to the exchanges during the years preceding the Treaty of Nonsuch. The relations after 1586 are referred to only intermittently, and are submerged within the discussion of other foreign and domestic events. The sources used for his assessment of Anglo-Dutch relations reflect the emphasis that he places upon the period before Vere's ascendancy. He has relied primarily upon the *Calendars of State Papers* and Lettenhove's *Relations Politiques*, which combine to cover the period up to 1589. For the later period, he has consulted various printed collections of Philip II's correspondence, as well as of the House of Nassau, and has also used the works of P.J. Blok and J.L. Motley.⁷

E.P. Cheyney's two-volume study covers the period of Vere's ascendancy, but affords the English General little attention. He refers to Vere's military prowess and claims that the Dutch military leaders valued him highly. Although he stresses that Vere was deprived of political power, he does give some attention to his relations with the Court, in particular the Earl of Essex. Nevertheless, in relying upon both Markham's and Vere's account for his portrayal of the English General, Cheyney does not stray from what has become the traditional interpretation of him, and in this respect his study adds little to current understanding. In addition, while he does provide an

⁶ *ibid.*, v-vi; *Vere's Commentaries*; E. van Meteren, *Historie van de Oorlogen en Geschiedenissen der Nederlanden*, 10 vols. (Gorinchem, 1748-63)

⁷ J.B. Black, *The Reign of Elizabeth, 1558-1603* (Oxford, 1959), 417-19, 426; CSPF, XI-XXI iv; K. de Lettenhove (ed), *Relations politiques des Pays-Bas et de l'Angleterre, 1555-79*, 11 vols. (1882-1900); L.P. Gachard, *Correspondance de Philippe II*, 1st Series, 5 vols. (1848-79); Lefèvre, I-IV; *Archives*, I and II; P.J. Blok, *The History of the People of the Netherlands*, 5 vols. (New York, 1970) [Original in Dutch, 8 vols. Groningen and Leiden, 1892-1908]; J.L. Motley, *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, 3 vols. (New York, 1861-62); —, *History of the United Netherlands from the death of William the Silent to the twelve years' truce - 1609*, 4 vols. (London, 1875-76)

overview of Elizabethan foreign policy during the period of Vere's ascendancy, his treatment of Anglo-Dutch relations is rather limited and has been superseded by more recent accounts.⁸ Vere does receive slightly more attention in A.L. Rowse's analysis of Elizabethan foreign policy, but again the author has clearly relied heavily upon Markham's account, and portrays him as a brilliant soldier and strategist. He focuses upon his military career, claiming: 'He had a remarkable, an unbroken, record of success - in this like Wellington, whom as a commander he much resembled', and goes on to state that his 'long run of unbroken victories' and 'all-round excellence' justify Markham's description of him as the first great English general of modern history. Rowse even agrees with Markham (and, indeed, with Vere himself), that he was more resolute and decisive than Count Maurice, and claims that he enjoyed excellent relations with the States, who 'trusted him absolutely and confided some of their most difficult enterprises to him.' Like Markham, he points out that Vere's friendship with the States led to some doubt over where his loyalties lay, and caused the Queen to become jealous of his following their service rather than her own. As regards Anglo-Dutch relations, Rowse's study is of comparatively limited use, as these are discussed quite briefly and conform to Markham's portrayal of harmony. Furthermore, it relies primarily upon English sources, and is an essentially Anglocentric study of Elizabethan foreign policy which takes little account of Dutch attitudes. It therefore leaves a good deal of scope for an exploration of these areas.⁹

The same is true of Conyers Read's two major studies of Elizabeth's reign, which focus upon Lord Burghley and Sir Francis Walsingham. In the latter, Read adheres to Markham's interpretation of Vere, but only mentions him in passing as: 'a man of far greater discretion than either Leicester or Willoughby'. He also conforms with Markham's view that Vere's relations with the English and Dutch authorities were essentially harmonious. However, he evidently does not regard his ascendancy as being significant enough to include in his study (even though he gives Leicester's and, to a lesser extent, Willoughby's some attention), because he writes: 'It will not be necessary to follow the career of Vere in the Netherlands.'¹⁰ As the work is primarily concerned with Walsingham's contribution to the making of policy, it is hardly surprising that Vere's ascendancy is scarcely mentioned, because the Secretary only lived to see two years of it. Yet it is also largely omitted from Read's study of Lord Burghley, and this focuses significantly more attention upon Leicester's intervention. Both of the works discuss Anglo-Dutch relations,

⁸ E.P. Cheyney, *A History of England - From the Defeat of the Armada to the Death of Elizabeth* (New York, 1948) I, 233-7, 296-7; II, 52-3, 57, 444

⁹ A.L. Rowse, *The Expansion of Elizabethan England* (London, 1955), 399-400, 404

¹⁰ C. Read, *Mr. Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth*, III (Harvard, 1967), 360

but the emphasis is firmly upon the 1580s - in particular the period surrounding the Treaty of Nonsuch. By contrast, the 1590s are neglected, and receive scarcely more attention than Vere himself. Because of the Anglocentric nature of the two studies, it is not surprising that there is a definite English bias to the sources used, and those relating to the Dutch side are comparatively few.¹¹ A similar bias is inherent in Paul Johnson's analysis of Elizabeth's reign. Vere receives even less attention than in Read's studies, and he is portrayed in the same way as in the accounts already mentioned. Johnson describes him as 'completely non-political', arguing that this was why he was chosen as the chief English military representative in the Netherlands at a time when the Queen was seeking to limit her commitments there. He does not expand upon this point, however, and also neglects the subject of Anglo-Dutch relations in general.¹²

These relations are dealt with in far greater depth by Charles Wilson's *Queen Elizabeth and the Revolt of the Netherlands*. This study became the foremost text for the subject and may have encouraged historians to focus upon the earlier period of the Anglo-Dutch alliance rather than Vere's ascendancy because it portrays the alliance as essentially fragile during the later 1580s, but more stable as the 1590s progressed and both sides began to adapt to each other's needs and priorities. In common with the works cited above, Wilson's study tends to focus upon the prelude to the Anglo-Dutch alliance and Leicester's intervention in the Netherlands, and Vere receives little attention by comparison. It also conforms with the image of him that Markham provides, and claims: 'Francis was the George Patton-crossed-with Montgomery of Maurice's campaigns: fiery, arrogant, but clear-headed; a great commander.' Although Wilson does differ from most other accounts by suggesting that Vere's relations with Maurice were less than ideal, he does not expand upon this idea, and his study therefore does little to contradict the overwhelmingly favourable portrayal of the English General.¹³ His study is based primarily upon printed sources, most of which only cover the early period of the alliance. Nevertheless, he takes more account of Dutch sources than the studies mentioned above.¹⁴

As regards their treatment of Vere, two of the most recent studies of Elizabethan foreign policy are similar to Wilson's. Firstly, there are R.B. Wernham's two volumes relating to England's

¹¹ Lord Burghley and *Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1960), chapter 13, 461, 473

¹² P. Johnson, *Elizabeth I - A Study in Power and Intellect* (London, 1974), 331

¹³ C.H. Wilson, *Queen Elizabeth and the Revolt of the Netherlands* (London, 1970), 107-9, 112-14

¹⁴ For example: Lettenhove, *Relations Politiques; Archives*, I and II; Gachard/Léfevre, *Correspondance; Gedenkstukken*, I-III; P.C. Bor, *Nederlantsche Oorlogen*, 6 vols. (Amsterdam, 1626)

war with Spain during the period 1588-1603.¹⁵ Neither of these devotes particular attention to Vere and his role in the Netherlands, and they certainly do not attempt to contradict the accepted view of him as an uncontroversial military figure. When Vere is mentioned, it is almost invariably as part of a narrative of the campaigns in which he was involved.¹⁶ The scant attention that he receives can be explained by the fact that both studies are primarily concerned with Elizabethan foreign policy, and tend to focus more upon the war in France and Anglo-Spanish naval encounters. Nevertheless, they do provide some useful narrative detail for most of the major campaigns in the Dutch war during these years, and for the role played by the English forces in these. The sources consulted by Wernham reflect the Anglocentric nature of the two studies. The first volume demonstrates his extensive knowledge of Elizabeth's State Papers, and he has relied heavily upon his own *Calendars* and *List and Analysis* of these, which combine to cover the period 1588-95. He has also consulted a number of private English collections calendared by the Historical Manuscripts Commission - notably the Ancaster, Salisbury and De L'Isle and Dudley papers. Interestingly, this volume (and, indeed, the later one) relies upon Vere's *Commentaries* for much of the narrative detail about the Dutch campaigns, and it is often given precedence over other contemporary sources. Original manuscripts are cited occasionally, particularly those in the Public Record Office and British Museum, but Wernham's study appears to be based more upon printed sources. He has made use of a number of Dutch sources, such as P.C. Bor's account, the *Resolutiën der Staten Generaal*, and *Kronijk van het Historisch Genootschap*, and has also incorporated Lefèvre's collection of Philip II's correspondence with the Low Countries. However, on the whole, the sources used betray an undeniably English bias, and the same is true of the more recent volume. Again, English sources are most prominent, but there is evidence of a heavier reliance upon the original State Papers because the *List and Analysis* of these does not cover the period after 1595. For the Dutch side, S.P. Haak's collection of Oldenbarnevelt's papers is cited, but on the whole, significantly less emphasis is given to Dutch sources in this volume. The reason for this is that the Netherlands generally receives less attention in the second volume than in the first, and this may in turn reflect the author's belief that the Anglo-Dutch alliance had ceased to be a major concern in the formation of English foreign policy during the last few years of Elizabeth's reign.¹⁷

¹⁵ His earlier volume, *Before the Armada. The Emergence of the English Nation, 1485-1588* (New York, 1972), is useful for the build up to, and the first few years of the Anglo-Dutch alliance.

¹⁶ See for example: R.B. Wernham, *After the Armada. Elizabethan England and the Struggle for Western Europe, 1588-95* (Oxford, 1984), 207-8, 213-14; 303-4; 319-20; 486-87; *The Return of the Armadas. The last years of the Elizabethan war against Spain, 1595-1603* (Oxford, 1994), 57-61, 328, 374, 388-9

¹⁷ *L&A*; HMC, *Sal*, V-XII; HMC, *D&D*, II and III; HMC, *Anc*; *RSG*, VI-VIII; *UHG*, XVI-XX; Lefèvre, II and III; *Bescheiden Betreffende*, I; Bor, *Nederlantsche Oorlogen*. Other works by Wernham which I have consulted include: *The Making of Elizabethan Foreign Policy, 1588-1603* (Berkeley, 1980); 'Elizabethan War Aims and

The other major recent study of Elizabethan foreign policy during the period addressed by this thesis is W.T. MacCaffrey's *War and Politics*. While this covers the same period as Wernham's two volumes, it takes a rather different approach and assesses England's relations with Europe in a thematic, rather than a narrative way, and also contains a valuable analysis of the Anglo-Dutch alliance during the period 1588-1603. MacCaffrey takes a similar line to Wilson, tracing the progression of the alliance from a protector-dependency to a more equal and collaborative arrangement as the English came to appreciate their ally's capacity for effective, independent action. He has obviously relied upon Markham's interpretation for Vere because he presents him as a capable soldier whose interests and ambitions did not extend beyond the military sphere, but on the whole affords him little attention. Furthermore, MacCaffrey clearly accepts Markham's view that Vere enjoyed close relations with the Dutch, and describes how he and Count Maurice worked 'hand in glove' to achieve many significant victories against the Spanish forces in the Netherlands.¹⁸ Like Wernham, MacCaffrey relies upon Vere's *Commentaries* for narrative detail of the campaigns in which he was involved. The bias of his sources is also towards the English side, and for the period up to the early 1590s, he makes use of the printed calendars of *State Papers* and the *List and Analysis*. For the last decade of the reign, he draws most heavily upon the original State Papers, and also incorporates material from the Historical Manuscript Commission's reports. By contrast, the Dutch side is rather sparsely covered, and MacCaffrey cites only Groen van Prinsterer's volumes of Nassau correspondence and the English translation of Jan den Tex's *Oldenbarnevelt*.¹⁹ This is perhaps not surprising, however, because the aim of the study is to give an overview of Elizabethan foreign policy during the last fifteen years of the reign, and the analysis of Anglo-Dutch relations forms only part of this, the main focus being England's position in relation to France and Spain.

The existing secondary sources which provide a Dutch perspective on the alliance are less abundant than those relating to the English side. One of the earliest is R. Fruin's *Tien Jaren*. This concentrates upon the decade 1588-98, which it claims was one of the most prolific and successful in the history of the Netherlands. It traces the various campaigns waged during this

Strategy', in S.T. Bindoff, *Elizabethan Government and Society* (London, 1961); 'English Policy and the Revolt of the Netherlands', J.S. Bromley and E.H. Kossmann (eds), *Britain and the Netherlands*, I (London, 1960)

¹⁸ W.T. MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I: War and Politics, 1588-1603* (Princeton, 1992), chapters 13 and 14. I have also consulted MacCaffrey's earlier work, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572-88* (Princeton, 1981), which provides a useful analysis of Leicester's intervention, and his most recent publication, *Elizabeth I* (London, 1993), which covers the whole reign.

¹⁹ *Archives*, I and II; J. den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, I (Cambridge, 1973)

period, and also examines the diplomatic relations between the Dutch and other European powers, including England. Vere does rate a mention, mostly in the context of the role that he played in the campaigns as commander of the English forces, but the attention is mainly focused upon Maurice, William Louis, and other Dutch leaders. Fruin's study relies upon certain contemporary Dutch works, notably the chronicles by Bor and van Meteren, but it does not benefit from the various printed sources which were published the following century.²⁰ P.J. Blok's *History of the Netherlands* covers a longer period than *Tien Jaren*, and incorporates all of the major campaigns fought during Vere's ascendancy. Vere himself is mentioned only very briefly in passing, and the author devotes far more attention to Maurice's role in the Dutch campaigns. The subject of Anglo-Dutch relations is addressed, but more emphasis is given to the earlier period of their connection - in particular Leicester's Governorship. Blok also explores the diplomatic relations between the Republic and other countries of Europe (in particular France), and thus offers a useful perspective on the international climate in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. His emphasis upon Anglo-Dutch relations during the later 1580s rather than Vere's ascendancy is illustrated in his use of the sources, as he has relied upon Lettenhove's *Relations Politiques*, and Bruce's collection of Leicester's correspondence.²¹

Of far greater use and interest for this thesis has been J.L. Motley's *History of the Netherlands*. In marked contrast to all of the English and Dutch works cited above, this offers an alternative to Markham's interpretation, which appeared just over a decade later. The study runs into four volumes, tracing the history of the Dutch war of independence from the death of William the Silent in 1584 to the signing of the Twelve Year Truce in 1609, and provides a wealth of narrative detail about every campaign waged in the northern provinces during this period. Motley focuses his attention upon the valiant actions of Count Maurice, and in so doing relegates Vere to the position of a humble inferior who merely obeyed orders rather than taking decisive and independent action, as Markham suggests. He writes: 'An efficient colonel, he was not a general to be relied upon in great affairs either in council or the field.' He clearly believes that Vere's importance in the allied campaigns was exaggerated, and implies that the *Commentaries* was largely to blame for this. He claims: 'modesty was not a leading characteristic of Sir Francis Vere. According to the whole tenor of his narrative he was himself not only a great part, but the whole of the events he describes', and argues that it was flatly contradicted by most contemporary Dutch sources. He therefore relies upon the *Commentaries* very little in his study,

²⁰ R. Fruin, *Tien Jaren uit den Tachtigjarigen Oorlog, 1588-1598* (Amsterdam, 1861)

²¹ Blok, *History of the People of the Netherlands*, III, 253, 283

and instead bases it upon the accounts given by Maurice and his cousins, Louis Gunther and Ernest of Nassau, as well as a number of other contemporary Dutch sources and certain English collections. In addition, Motley claims that Vere's relations with the Dutch were far from ideal, and refers to his 'undisguised hostility to the Nassaus and Hollanders', implying that the contempt was mutual. He rejects the idea that Vere was dedicated to the Dutch cause, and states that his 'want of true sympathy for the cause in which he fought' was a 'frequent source of trouble and danger to the Republic'. Yet Motley does acknowledge Vere's military skill, even if he believes that it has been exaggerated, and he describes him as 'one of the noblest relics of a race of fighters slowly passing of the world's stage'.²² This concession gives credibility to an account which could otherwise have appeared as a blatantly biased attack on an English general whose contribution to the Dutch war was seen by some contemporaries as overshadowing that of Count Maurice, the chief protagonist of Motley's study.

Although the *United Netherlands* offers an interesting appraisal of Vere, it has been largely dismissed in favour of Markham's account, which has been relied upon by subsequent generations of both English and Dutch historians. Even den Tex, whose study provides arguably the most pertinent and comprehensive analysis of the situation in the northern provinces during the period of Vere's ascendancy, conforms to what has become the widely accepted view of the English General, and bases his portrayal upon Markham's account. He claims that Vere's preoccupation with military affairs was the source of his friendship with Maurice, while his malleability and political naivety recommended him to Oldenbarnevelt. He goes on to assert that the English General was well liked by the Dutch in general, and was 'zó pro-Hollands' that he was more than once reproached by Elizabeth and Burghley. Regarding Vere as an uncontroversial military figure, den Tex delves no further into his character or role in the Netherlands, and mostly includes him in his analysis only when discussing the campaigns in which he was involved, although he does give some attention to his diplomatic activities. If his treatment of Vere is brief and uncontroversial, however, his portrayal of Anglo-Dutch relations is more useful, particularly as it gives an insight into the Dutch perspective. His line of argument adheres quite closely to that of Wilson and MacCaffrey, and he asserts that the growth of Dutch cohesion and independence during the 1590s ultimately led to an improvement in their relations with Elizabeth, who gradually began to view them as equal allies. However, as with most of the works mentioned above, the Anglo-Dutch alliance forms only part of den Tex's study, the bulk of which is concerned with Oldenbarnevelt's rise to power. The sources used reflect this, as they

²² Motley, *History of the United Netherlands*, IV, 48-51n, 65

are mostly contained in the Algemeen Rijksarchief, and centre around the Advocate's papers, as well as those of the States of Holland and States General. He has also consulted a number of English sources, but these are mostly the standard printed works (such as the *Calendars of State Papers* and the Historical Manuscript Commission's reports), and his analysis of Anglo-Dutch relations is therefore scarcely more balanced than those offered by the likes of Wernham and MacCaffrey.²³

Among the other recent Dutch works, Rowen's study, *The Princes of Orange*, has provided some valuable background material on Maurice's role in the Dutch military and political spheres, but does not devote any attention to Vere.²⁴ J.G. Kikkert's account of Maurice's life and career has also proved quite useful, although to a lesser extent. The subjects of Vere and the Anglo-Dutch alliance receive very little attention, but the author makes an interesting remark about Maurice's 'violent dislike' of the English General.²⁵ Both Rowen and Kikkert have relied upon Dutch printed and secondary works (in particular Blok and den Tex), and they make no reference to manuscript sources. Jonathan Israel's study stands out among the more general works relating to the Netherlands. This traces the rise and fall of the Dutch Republic from the later fifteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth, and devotes some attention to the war against Spain during the period of Vere's ascendancy. However, because the work covers such a broad timespan, it does not discuss this period in great depth and rarely mentions England's contribution to the war. Neither does it refer to Vere's role, and focuses instead upon the military and political leaders of the Dutch Republic. Israel seems to have relied principally upon secondary works for his account of the military campaigns waged during Vere's ascendancy, in particular those by Fruin and den Tex, although he also cites the *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal* and contemporary Dutch works such as those by Bor and van Meteren. English sources are comparatively neglected, and for these he has relied almost exclusively upon the State Papers.²⁶

It is worth noting that there are various studies which are solely devoted to the Dutch Revolt. Two of the most respected are by Pieter Geyl and Geoffrey Parker. First published in English in 1932, Geyl's study became the standard text for this subject, and it provides a detailed

²³ den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II (Haarlem, 1962), 44-7, 105, 111, 118, 128, 209, 328, 331, 347, 422-3, 426-9, 475 N.B. The fourth volume of Tex's study contains transcripts of various documents relating to the Anglo-Dutch alliance which have proved useful for this study.

²⁴ H.H. Rowen, *The Princes of Orange. The Stadholders in the Dutch Republic* (Cambridge, 1988)

²⁵ J.G. Kikkert, *Maurits van Nassau* (Weesp, 1985), 71

²⁶ J. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford, 1995), chapter 12

chronological account of the Revolt from its prelude in Charles V's reign to the conclusion of the Twelve Year Truce in 1609. While it is useful for narrative detail, however, it does not attempt to analyse the pattern of Anglo-Dutch relations during this period, and only refers to Leicester's intervention, affording Vere no mention at all.²⁷ The same is true of Parker's study, which when first published in 1977, was believed by many to have superseded Geyl's account. He covers the same time-span as Geyl and treats the Revolt in a chronological way, dividing it into six distinct stages. Although he gives Anglo-Dutch relations some attention, the main focus is upon the military and political events occurring in the Netherlands during this period. Furthermore, in common with Geyl, he discusses Leicester's Governorship but makes no mention of Vere.²⁸ Similarly, van Gelderen's two recent studies of the Dutch Revolt have proved useful for Leicester's intervention, but have yielded little on Vere.²⁹

While the majority of both English and Dutch works relating to this period discuss the alliance only as part of a more general study, and tend to give a rather unbalanced perspective, there are a number of works which are solely dedicated to the subject of Anglo-Dutch relations and claim to give them equal attention. One of the most notable is by J.F. Bense, and he traces the pattern of relations between 1066 and 1702. Not surprisingly, because it incorporates such a prolonged period, this study does not offer a very comprehensive account of the narrow time-span with which my thesis is concerned. Indeed, in the little that is said about Elizabeth's alliance with the Dutch, most of the attention is focused upon Leicester's Governorship, and Vere's, though far more prolonged, is dismissed in a couple of paragraphs. Furthermore, although the account claims to present a balanced portrayal of the relations between the allies, it seems to have been written from a predominantly English viewpoint. The sources used reflect this, as Bense relies heavily upon Stowe's *Annals*, as well as Green's *History of the English People*. The Dutch sources are scarce by comparison.³⁰ K.H.D. Haley's study takes a more thematic approach than Bense's essentially narrative account, and explores the political and cultural relations between the allies. However, it too covers a very broad time-span (from the eighth century to the twentieth), and does not devote a great deal of attention to any one period, including the sixteenth century. Also in common with Bense, Haley has evidently relied most heavily upon English secondary

²⁷ P. Geyl, *The Revolt of the Netherlands, 1555-1609* (London, 1958), 196, 201, 203, 209-18, 225-26

²⁸ G. Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (London, 1990), 216-21, 241-3, 245

²⁹ M. van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt, 1555-90* (Cambridge, 1992); *The Dutch Revolt* (Cambridge, 1993)

³⁰ J.F. Bense, *Anglo-Dutch Relations: from the earliest times to the death of William III* (The Hague, 1925), 162-3; J. Stow, *The Annales or Generall Chronicle of England* (London, 1615); J.R. Green, *A Short History of the English People*, 4 vols. (London, 1902-3)

sources, including Markham's biography and Vere's *Commentaries*. His references to Vere reflect this, as they conform to the traditional interpretation accepted by most other historians of this period.³¹ Haley's study therefore contributes little to current understanding of Vere and the Anglo-Dutch alliance during the period 1589-1603. Both his and Bense's account cover too long a period to give much space to these subjects. Another notable study of Anglo-Dutch relations is by G. Edmundson. Although he focuses upon the rivalry between the two sides during the seventeenth century, he does briefly discuss their relations during Elizabeth's reign and puts forward some interesting arguments. Nevertheless, like Bense, he allows Leicester's intervention to overshadow this discussion, and makes no mention of Vere at all.³²

The above review of the secondary works which relate to Vere's ascendancy is necessarily brief, and there are many more studies which could have been included. However, the aim has been to focus upon those works which give either Vere or Anglo-Dutch relations during the 1590s at least some attention. In so doing, it has become clear that these two areas have been noticeably neglected, particularly when compared with the 1580s and Leicester's intervention, and there is thus plenty of scope for embarking upon a more thorough analysis of them. Beginning with Vere, even though a biography has been written of him, it leaves room for an exploration of his role in the Netherlands during Elizabeth's reign, and of the light that this sheds upon the Anglo-Dutch alliance. This, in essence, is the aim of the thesis: it is not intended to form a biographical account of his life, but rather to provide an assessment of a specific stage of his career in the Queen's service. Moreover, instead of simply building upon the knowledge already provided by Markham, it aims to offer a reinterpretation of Vere and his role in the Netherlands, thereby casting doubt upon the portrayal that has been accepted by almost every historian of the period since its appearance more than a century ago. Among the main themes of my study is Vere's military role. While his flawless reputation in this sphere may not have originated with Markham, it was certainly enhanced by him, but the sources consulted for the thesis suggest that this reputation was not entirely deserved. In fact, there is a great deal of justification for placing more faith in Motley's account than Markham's, as this suggests that Vere's contribution to the war in the Provinces was exaggerated by the *Commentaries* and received far less emphasis in contemporary Dutch works. Vere's political role will also be explored at greater length than it has been in any other existing study. Markham's portrayal of the English General as a primarily military figure who had neither the time for, nor interest in, affairs of state is one which has

³¹ K.H.D. Haley, *The British and the Dutch* (London, 1988), 44, chapter 2

³² G. Edmundson, *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry During the First Half of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1911), 11-16

filtered down through the works of subsequent historians, most of whom describe him as 'completely non-political', or simply do not mention this facet of his career and focus instead upon his military role. However, the evidence suggests that Vere did become involved in political affairs, both because his military responsibilities made this necessary, and because he had some interest in doing so. It will therefore be argued that Vere's role was rather more complex than historical accounts suggest, and the military and political aspects of it will be discussed in the third chapter of the thesis. Markham's biography also gives a misleading impression of Vere's relations with the English and the Dutch by claiming that these were always cordial and harmonious. An exploration of his dealings with the Court betrays an intricate pattern of patronage and intrigue, harmony and hostility, and illustrates how skilful he had to be in manipulating his contacts in the opposing parties in order to attain and maintain favour with the Queen: it was not simply a case of a devoted servant whose valiant endeavours won him the eternal respect of his sovereign and her ministers, as Markham suggests. Similarly, Vere's relations with the Dutch were not as ideal as is widely believed, and the notion that he was so pro-Dutch that his loyalty to the Queen was obscured is certainly misleading. Again, Motley's view deviates from this accepted belief, and his contention that the relations between Vere and Maurice were particularly tense will be explored in chapter 5 as part of a general analysis of the English commander's contact with the Dutch.

If Vere's role in the Netherlands has been misrepresented and generally neglected, then the same is true of the Anglo-Dutch alliance during the period of his ascendancy. No recent study is devoted entirely to the relations between the allies during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and instead these tend to be subsumed within more general discussions of Dutch history or Elizabethan foreign policy. Wilson's study does relate specifically to Elizabeth's involvement in the Netherlands, but he gives more emphasis to the twenty or so years before Vere's appointment, in particular Leicester's intervention. This is true of the more general studies of Elizabethan foreign policy, and Vere's appointment to a lower profile role than those assigned to both Leicester and Willoughby is regarded as something of a watershed, signalling the Queen's determination to become less involved in the Netherlands. The period of his ascendancy is overshadowed by an inherent assumption that the relations between the allies slipped into a pattern of reciprocity and comparative indifference, thus making it unnecessary to explore them at any great length. Even MacCaffrey and den Tex, who give the 1590s more emphasis than most other historians, portray the exchanges between the allies during this decade as being increasingly harmonious in contrast to the period that went before. Yet it will be argued that this interpretation is rather misleading. The Anglo-Dutch alliance continued to be fraught with

tension and hostility throughout the period of Vere's ascendancy - so much so, indeed, that it often seemed as if it would break down altogether. The fact that Vere was appointed to a comparatively low-profile role may well have signalled the Queen's intention to reduce her commitments in the Netherlands, but this in itself was a cause of much friction between the allies and continued to sour their relations throughout the 1590s. Dissatisfaction rather than indifference marked their alliance, and in this respect the period of Vere's ascendancy was every bit as turbulent as the one that had preceded it. The theme of Anglo-Dutch relations will form a context for much of the thesis, but it will also be discussed separately in the first and, to a lesser degree, the second chapter. The focus will be upon English perceptions of the alliance, and the extent to which these adapted to the changing position of the Dutch during the 1590s. It will also endeavour to take account of Dutch attitudes and priorities, and to explore how they often seemed to be at variance with those of their English ally. Nevertheless, the aim of this thesis is not to provide a completely balanced picture of the alliance. Neither is it to view the alliance from an international perspective. Instead it aims to present the alliance from an English perspective, and to use this as a backdrop for the focal point of the study, namely Vere himself.

The bias of the sources upon which this thesis is based suggests its Anglocentric stance. Beginning with the manuscript sources, undoubtedly the most useful have been the Holland Series of State Papers for Elizabeth's reign. These have formed the basis of my research as well as providing the inspiration for many of the themes that I have pursued in this thesis. It is here that the bulk of Vere's correspondence can be found, as well as the other letters that passed between the Court and the Netherlands. There has been a tendency among historians to neglect these manuscripts, at least for the period up to 1595, which is covered by the Calendars and Wernham's *List and Analysis*. Because they are not calendared after this date, there seems to be less reliance upon them, and those studies which incorporate the period of Vere's ascendancy often turn their attention to printed collections, notably the Reports of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. However, this thesis is based upon a systematic appraisal of the State Papers relating to the whole period 1589-1603. This is covered by twenty nine volumes, each of which contains an average of around 150 letters. The majority of these were received by the Queen and her Court, but there are also drafts and copies of letters sent out by them. The authors of the incoming correspondence tend to be Dutch statesmen and English representatives in the Netherlands. Vere's letters form a comparatively small, but - from the point of view of this thesis - highly significant part of the collection, and shed light upon his relations with the Court, as well as upon his perception of the situation in the Provinces. The correspondence dispatched by the Queen's other representatives there (in particular Bodley and Gilpin) provides alternative English

perceptions, and therefore offers an interesting contrast to Vere's. As regards Anglo-Dutch relations, the incoming letters from the States General, Council of State and Count Maurice are of great importance because they give an insight into Dutch perspectives and are particularly revealing about their relationship with Elizabeth. The drafts and copies of letters dispatched *from* the Court are mostly those which were ultimately sent by the Queen to the States General or, less frequently, her representatives. These drafts cannot be relied upon in the same way as the completed versions, but they nevertheless give an impression of English attitudes and perceptions. Besides, I have tested the accuracy of those which were drafted to the States General by comparing them with the completed versions received at the Hague and housed in the Algemeen Rijksarchief. Similar drafts can be found in some of the British Museum manuscripts, in particular the Cotton Galba D collection, which incorporates seven volumes of correspondence relating to the period of Vere's ascendancy.³³ As well as containing similar drafts and copies to those in the State Papers, this collection also houses some original letters which passed between England and the Provinces (in particular the correspondence of Walsingham and Bodley). In addition, the British Museum collections contain various drafts for and ratifications of the treaties that were concluded between England, France, the Netherlands and Spain during the period of the Anglo-Dutch alliance, as well as accounts of the negotiations that led up to these. Therefore, for the theme of England's relations with her Dutch ally, the British Museum collections have provided some valuable material for my thesis. However, as regards Vere himself, they have proven less useful. Unlike the State Papers, they house very few of his letters to the Court, and even though there are also some useful versions of the instructions that were forwarded to him in the Netherlands, on the whole they have been of comparatively limited value.

If the State Papers have proved the most useful manuscript source for this thesis, they are closely followed by the collections of the States General's correspondence which are contained in the Algemeen Rijksarchief. By far the most important among these has been the 'Liassen Engelandt' - an eight-volume collection of letters sent to the States General from both the Court and the English representatives in the Netherlands. This collection contributes enormously to current understanding of English perceptions of their alliance with the Dutch, but it does not appear to have been consulted by any recent historians of Elizabethan foreign policy. Among modern Dutch authors, den Tex cites various collections in the Rijksarchief, but makes no reference to the 'Liassen Engelandt'. The collection contains numerous original dispatches from Elizabeth which are only occasionally found in draft form in the English collections, and when used in conjunction

³³ Also of particular use in this respect is Harley 287.

with the letters from her representatives, these have given a valuable insight into English attitudes and perceptions. It has also yielded some useful material relating to the various delegations that Elizabeth despatched to the Hague between 1589 and 1603, and the proposals that were delivered to the States General by her envoys are documented in full. The 1598 delegation concerning the peace proposals (in which Vere was closely involved) is particularly well covered. I have been able to trace the reaction to these proposals - as well as to the other English correspondence received at the Hague - in the various English collections, most notably the State Papers, and as a result at least some balance has been attained when discussing their exchanges. The *Liassen Engelandt* also contains some correspondence from Vere to the States, most of which concerns the various diplomatic missions to the Hague that the Queen instructed him to undertake. These letters are of value in illustrating the extent to which he became involved in political affairs. Another collection of manuscripts in this archive has proved useful for the thesis and has hitherto been neglected by historians. The 'Liassen Lopende' is a more general and extensive collection of the States General's correspondence, and contains some thirty eight volumes relating to the period 1589-1603, many of which are subdivided into separate volumes. The collection houses some correspondence from the Court and the English representatives in the Netherlands, but it is most useful for the light that it sheds upon Vere's relations with the States because this is where the majority of his letters to them can be found. Particularly numerous are the dispatches relating to the period when Vere was in charge of the allied troops in the besieged town of Ostend.

While the two collections combined have therefore proven extremely valuable to this thesis, I have not relied upon them to the same extent as upon the State Papers. This is because my thesis does not attempt to provide a comprehensive or balanced review of Anglo-Dutch relations, and instead aims to place Vere at centre stage. In this respect, the Dutch sources have not been promising enough to warrant as much attention as the State Papers. Nevertheless, the material that I have derived from them has enabled me to give an insight into Vere's relations with the Dutch authorities, as well as to attain some balance in my portrayal of the Anglo-Dutch alliance

The research for this thesis has been greatly facilitated by the numerous printed collections of correspondence that exist for the period. On the English side, the most useful have been the Reports of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. The Calendars of Salisbury Manuscripts have proven particularly valuable. In common with the State Papers, they contain a wide range of letters written to the Court by the Dutch leaders and the English representatives in the Netherlands, as well as a number of outgoing letters from the Queen herself (most of which are drafts or copies). There are also a significant number of letters written by Vere, and the most

important are those that he sent to the Earl of Essex. These have formed the basis for my analysis of the close affiliation between these two men during the mid-1590s. Slightly less important, but still significant, are the de L'Isle and Dudley calendars. The relevant correspondence is almost all written to Sir Robert Sidney, who was Governor of Flushing for most of Vere's ascendancy, and provides an interesting insight into the situation in the Netherlands. The correspondence from the Court and Sidney's fellow representatives in the Provinces illustrates these parties' perceptions of both Vere and the Dutch, and gives an idea of the prevalence of intrigue and misconceptions. There are also a number of letters from Vere himself, and these offer a perspective of his relations with the English and Dutch in the Netherlands.³⁴ Of rather more peripheral use for this thesis have been the reports on the Bath and Ancaster manuscripts. The former contains a small number of letters from the English who served in the Provinces, while the latter provides some useful material on Vere's early career there and Willoughby's ascendancy (which will be discussed in chapter 2), and has been used in conjunction with the original manuscripts in this collection.³⁵

The two printed collections of the Earl of Leicester's correspondence have proved valuable for the period leading up to Vere's appointment. The most useful in this respect has been H. Brugmans' collection because this incorporates correspondence from both the English and the Dutch, most of which derives from the Public Record Office and Algemeen Rijksarchief, and embraces the entire period of Leicester's intervention. As well as letters to and from the Earl, it contains the correspondence that passed between the political authorities of both countries, and therefore sheds light upon Anglo-Dutch relations during this formative period of the alliance. Bruce's collection has also been of use, but it covers a narrower period than Brugmans', and the focus of attention is upon Leicester rather than the relations between the allies.³⁶ The Calendars of State Papers (Holland Series) yield a great deal of material for Leicester's and Willoughby's intervention in the Netherlands - in particular their relations with the Court and the exchanges between the allies during the period 1585-89. They also contain references to Vere's early career in the Provinces, but the period that they cover expires the month before his official appointment

³⁴ HMC, *Sal*, III-XXI; HMC, *D&D*, II and III. N.B. I have used the De L'Isle and Dudley Calendars in conjunction with Collins' two-volume collection of the Sidney correspondence, as this often gives full transcriptions of documents that are more briefly summarised in the Calendars.

³⁵ HMC, *Calendar of Bath Manuscripts at Longleat*, II (London, 1907); HMC, *Anc*; *Ancaster MS*, Lincolnshire Record Office. I have also consulted various collections of correspondence relating to a particular family or individual which are not part of the HMC series. Among these are: Devereux; *Chamberlain Letters*; E. Sawyer (ed), *Memorials of Affairs of State in the Reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I, Collected (chiefly) from the Original Papers of the Right Honourable Sir Ralph Winwood*, 3 vols. (London, 1902)

³⁶ Brugmans, I-III; Bruce

as Sergeant Major General of the English forces.³⁷ Nevertheless, the State Papers from August 1589 to December 1595 are categorised by Wernham's *List and Analysis*. These six volumes cover the entire foreign series of State Papers and analyse them in both a systematic and narrative way. Various recent historians of the Elizabeth period (notably MacCaffrey) have relied upon the *List and Analysis*, often using it in place of the State Papers themselves. Yet as regards Anglo-Dutch relations, it has been of only peripheral use for this thesis. Although it provides a narrative overview of the military campaigns in the Netherlands and the exchanges between the allies (as well as between the England and the other European countries), it does not provide transcriptions of the State Papers similar to those found in the calendars. As a result, I have only used the *List and Analysis* as an occasional source of reference for Anglo-Dutch relations, rather than a substitute for the manuscripts contained in the Public Record Office. Nevertheless, it has been valuable for the light it sheds upon the relations between England, France, and the Dutch Republic, and I have used it in conjunction with some of the original manuscripts of the French series of State Papers in the Public Record Office, as well as with the printed volumes of Sir Thomas Edmond's correspondence.³⁸ For a wider European perspective, the Calendars of Venetian and Spanish State Papers have proved invaluable, particularly for the relations between England, Spain and France. They contain a great deal of material relating to the negotiations between these powers, and give an insight into the principles and priorities that guided their policies and diplomacy. In this respect, they have helped to piece together a more comprehensive picture of Elizabeth's diplomatic exchanges than that which is suggested by the Holland series of State Papers.³⁹ Another English printed source that is worth noting here is the *Acts of the Privy Council* series. This has provided some detail about the scale of the Queen's commitments in the Netherlands and elsewhere (notably France) because it refers to the levy of troops, as well as the forwarding of financial assistance. It has also proved useful as a source of information about specific events - for example, Vere's appointment as Sergeant-Major-General, which is not outlined at such length in any other available source. In addition, it has given an interesting insight into Vere's relations with the Court - particularly the rift that developed between himself and the Earl of Essex towards the end of the century.⁴⁰

³⁷ CSPF, XX-XXIII. N.B. The Calendars of Domestic State Papers have been of more limited use. They contain some interesting letters received and sent by John Chamberlain, but most of these are covered by *Chamberlain Letters*.

³⁸ L&A; *Edmond's Papers*

³⁹ CSPV, VIII and IX; CSPS, III and IV

⁴⁰ APC, IV-XXXII



Among the Dutch printed collections, the *Resolutiën der Staten Generaal* has yielded some interesting material. It incorporates the States' exchanges with various European powers, and gives the Anglo-Dutch alliance particular attention. The nine volumes which cover the period of Vere's ascendancy are of use primarily for the Dutch perspective that they give of the connection with England. They refer to letters received from the Queen, her court and representatives in the Provinces (including Vere), and detail the resolutions passed by the States General in response to these. The withdrawal of English troops for service elsewhere forms a particularly common theme in the resolutions, and this was a frequent cause of tension between the allies, as will be discussed in chapter 1. The *Resolutiën* has also provided some information about the various campaigns waged by the Dutch in the Provinces, and the role played by Vere and the English troops. Finally, as with the *Acts of the Privy Council*, it has been of value for details of specific events or appointments - notably Vere's Colonelship and Generalship.⁴¹ Also useful has been the collection of letters contained in *Kronijk van het Historisch Genootschap*. This has provided some very interesting material on the Anglo-Dutch alliance, and at least as much, if not more, on Franco-Dutch relations. It contains a small number of the manuscripts housed in the Algemeen Rijksarchief, but only covers the period up to 1596. The great majority of the correspondence is either from or to the Dutch authorities, and is both domestic and international. Diplomatic exchanges between the Netherlands on the one hand, and England and France on the other, form a dominant theme of the collection, and there is some particularly useful material on the dissatisfaction with the Anglo-Dutch treaty during the late 1580s and early 1590s. The Franco-Dutch correspondence provides an interesting parallel to this, and illustrates how Henry IV seemed more ready to acknowledge the United Provinces' independence than Elizabeth and many of her ministers were. In particular, the collection is valuable for the indications that it gives of the scale of Dutch assistance to France, as well as the number of English troops that were withdrawn from the Provinces for service elsewhere. The downside of the collection, from the point of view of this thesis, is that the bias does tend towards the province of Utrecht, and that Vere is scarcely mentioned. However, on the whole it has proved a useful source.⁴² A similar collection is van Deventer's *Gedenkstukken van Johan van Oldenbarnevelt*. Again, this gives an insight into the States' relations with both England and France, but in contrast to *Kronijk*, it incorporates the whole period of Vere's ascendancy.⁴³ Obviously, the main focus of the collection is upon Oldenbarnevelt's correspondence, but in this respect it is superseded by Haak's

⁴¹ RSG, V-XIV

⁴² UHG, XVII-XXII

⁴³ *Gedenkstukken*, I-III

Bescheiden Bettreffende, which is more recent and comprehensive. One of the greatest benefits of this collection is that it contains many full transcriptions of the correspondence, and there are letters written to the Advocate by Elizabeth and members of her Court, as well as the States' envoys and the English representatives in the Netherlands. Like the *Resolutiën*, *Bescheiden Bettreffende* contains numerous references to the withdrawal of English troops, and also details the major diplomatic exchanges between the allies - such as the negotiations in 1598 surrounding the peace debates and the Treaty of Westminster. In addition, there are a number of letters written by Oldenbarnevelt to Elizabeth and the Court, and these have allowed a more balanced picture of their relations to emerge. The collection also gives an insight into Franco-Dutch relations and contains much of the correspondence that passed between the two sides. Of particular use are the numerous letters from Henry IV which suggest the scale of Dutch commitments in France. It also offers a perspective on Dutch politics, because as well as containing Oldenbarnevelt's correspondence with foreign powers, it incorporates a wealth of letters from prominent figures in the Netherlands - notably his colleagues in the States General.⁴⁴ Groen van Prinsterer's collection of Orange-Nassau correspondence fulfils a similar function for Maurice. It includes letters from the Queen and her court, and when used in conjunction with *Bescheiden*, has been of particular use for exploring and contrasting English perceptions of Maurice and Oldenbarnevelt. This collection has also shed some light upon the Count's relations with Vere, and has helped to assess whether the extent to which they collaborated in military affairs was as great as most contemporary and more recent commentators believe.⁴⁵

Both English and Dutch perspectives have therefore been reasonably well covered by the printed material consulted for this thesis. Yet there is one more collection that is worth noting for the valuable insight that it has given into *Spanish* perceptions of the situation in the Netherlands. Lefèvre's compilation of Philip II's correspondence relating to Dutch affairs has yielded some material on his relations with the United Provinces, England and France. In this respect, it has provided a different perspective on the Spanish peace offers to both the Dutch and the English, and has helped to verify the frequent rumours of these that are found in the manuscript and printed sources mentioned above. Lefèvre's collection also indicates the changing fortunes in the war because it contains the letters that Philip received from his various representatives in the Netherlands, detailing the advances made by the Dutch and English forces there. In addition, it illustrates his response to their many requests for further military aid, and traces his increasing

⁴⁴ *Bescheiden Bettreffende*, I and II

⁴⁵ *Archives*, I and II

preoccupation with affairs in France. Used in conjunction with the Calendars of State Papers, Spanish, the collection has therefore made it possible to help set the Anglo-Dutch alliance in a wider European context, and to assess the outlook and priorities of the country that had the most direct influence upon the relations between the allies.⁴⁶

The vast array of manuscript and printed sources which are available for the period and subject of my study has therefore provided me with ample material to explore a variety of themes relating to both Vere and the Anglo-Dutch alliance. On the whole, I have been fortunate in the consistency of the source material: it exists in abundance for the entire period of Vere's Generalship, and varies little in quality. Perhaps inevitably, however, there have been gaps. Among the most notable is the lack of Vere's correspondence during his absences from the Netherlands. It is not surprising that the Holland series of State Papers should contain none of his correspondence during these absences, but it is also lacking in the other manuscript and printed sources. This can be explained by the fact that when he was in England, Vere tended to communicate in person with the usual recipients of his correspondence, and when he was involved in the Cadiz and Islands Voyages the opportunity for written communication was no doubt rare. For the periods when Vere was absent from his post in the Netherlands, I have therefore been forced to rely upon the correspondence of his compatriots there for Dutch affairs, and upon his *Commentaries* for his own activities. Given the misleading nature of the latter, it is fortunate that Vere's absence from the Netherlands tended to be rare.

Another, more noticeable, gap in the source material is the scarcity of correspondence received by Vere. This contrasts markedly with the wide range of existing correspondence that he dispatched to military and political figures in both England and the Provinces. Any analysis of his relations with these figures must therefore be rather one-sided. I have attempted to redress the balance slightly by incorporating the drafts and copies of letters to him which are contained in the State Papers and British Museum collections, although these are relatively few in number and usually take the form of instructions. In addition, Vere often made quite detailed references to the letters that he received in replying to them, thereby giving an indication of their content.

The scale of the source material consulted for this thesis is in a sense greater than its variety, for it is dominated by written correspondence. Nevertheless, this correspondence is in itself immensely varied, for it embraces a range of different authors, themes, attitudes, perceptions, and

⁴⁶ Lefèvre, III and IV

misconceptions. Viewing this range of correspondence in bulk has allowed patterns to emerge - especially as regards Anglo-Dutch relations - and it has been possible to trace both changes and continuities in these patterns during the period of Vere's ascendancy. For example, on the whole the *tone* of the correspondence that passed between the two sides suggests an overriding continuity in their relations: the superiority and condescension of Elizabeth is matched by the deference and humility of the Dutch. However, the *content* of their dispatches suggests a shift in their relationship throughout the 1590s as the Dutch grew in independence and aspired to equality with their English ally, and Elizabeth persistently refused to give them the respect that they deserved as such. An appraisal of Vere's correspondence with the Court has betrayed a similarly complex pattern. By assessing the content and volume of the letters that he wrote to his patrons there, I have been able to present the pattern of shifting focus and changing allegiance upon which his career strategy was based. While I do not claim to have accessed all of his correspondence, the large sample that I have studied has given an insight into the complexity of his relations with the Court, and the way in which he used these to further his career.

Basing one's research upon written correspondence has inherent dangers, but the major drawback is also one of the main advantages, namely ambiguity. Words so frequently belied thoughts, intentions and actions that it has often been extremely difficult to ascertain the true meaning of the correspondence. A degree of naivety in analysis has been unavoidable, and I have sometimes been forced to take the material at face value. This is particularly true of Vere's favour with his patrons and the Queen. While the testimonies provided by Vere's compatriots and the various court commentators have substantiated or contradicted some of his claims, on the whole I have been forced to rely upon his own correspondence to ascertain the way in which his patrons perceived him. In places, this may have given a distorted impression of the favour that he enjoyed, and it is unfortunate that this cannot be qualified by exploring the frequency and content of the letters that they sent him.

Nevertheless, wherever possible, I have attempted to discern the 'sub-text' of each letter: for example, the author's objective, the political or strategic stance from which they were writing, their attitude towards the intended recipient. This sub-text varies enormously amongst the authors of the correspondence, and there are inevitable inconsistencies as attitudes and perceptions changed. Furthermore, the authors tended to tailor their correspondence to each recipient, and this gave rise to apparently contradictory attitudes. For example, Vere wrote enthusiastically to his activist patron, Essex, about English ventures against Spain, but he tempered this enthusiasm when writing to the more pacifist Cecil and tended to limit the content

of his dispatches to more routine assurances of loyalty and narratives of events in the Netherlands. More blatant contradictions can also be found. A notable example is Sir Robert Sidney's account of the Battle of Turnhout in 1597. In assuring Essex that Vere had played a pivotal role in the victory, Sidney contradicted his usual stance of criticising the English General and attempting to promote his own role in the Dutch war at the latter's expense. Indeed, Vere claimed that when Sidney returned to England shortly after writing this letter, he ensured that the Court knew of his own endeavours in the battle, but 'held back' the letters that Vere had asked him to deliver, describing *his* contribution.⁴⁷

The degree of variation in the aims and priorities of the different correspondents is inevitable: they each had their own distinctive agenda. For Bodley it was to report back on political affairs in the Netherlands and to generally portray the Dutch in an unfavourable light due to his inherent prejudice against them. For the States General it was to persuade the Queen of the necessity of continuing the alliance and of maintaining or bolstering the scale of her assistance. For Vere it was, above all, to preserve his position in the Netherlands and advance his career. In attempting to apply a set of methodological principles to his correspondence, I have found that these two priorities form the only constant agenda in an apparently inconsistent set of objectives and perceptions. It has not been possible, for example, to apply a persistent strategic outlook to all of his correspondence: although his commitment to the Dutch war led him to oppose the withdrawal of troops from the Netherlands, he actively supported the substantial levies for the Cadiz and Islands Voyages. I have therefore had to look at his motivation in offering his support for these two voyages. In so doing, I have discovered that a key factor may have been his close affiliation with the Earl of Essex, who was to lead the two expeditions. Yet even this explanation cannot be consistently applied, for within two years, Vere was actively opposing the withdrawal of troops for another of the Earl's ventures. I have therefore returned to the simple factor that can be applied to practically all of Vere's correspondence: self interest. While it has been useful to discover the web of patronage in which he was involved, together with the broad strategic principles which he endorsed, such factors were not at the core of his aims and outlook. In a rare instance of openness, he confided to Cecil: 'I can no more be enemy to my own advancement than he that hath ever endeavoured to make himself capable of good place',⁴⁸ and the evidence bears this statement out. However, on the whole he was careful to disguise his ambition (political as well as military) behind protestations of loyalty to the Queen, the States, and his patrons, and an

⁴⁷ HMC, *Sal*, VII, Sidney to Essex, 21 January 1597, 31-2; *Vere's Commentaries*, 81

⁴⁸ HMC, *Sal*, VI, Vere to Cecil, 18 May 1596, 189-90

unswerving commitment to furthering their cause. I can be grateful that he did because in attempting to devise a set of principles which could be applied to the all his correspondence, I have been able to explore various dimensions of his career in the Netherlands: most notably his military and political activities, and his relations with both the Dutch and the English Court.

The same methodology has been applied to the context of this thesis: namely, Anglo-Dutch relations. An initial assessment of the language and phraseology that was often employed by the two sides in their correspondence gives the impression that they were equally committed to the 'common cause' and were satisfied with their connection. However, if one leaves this aside and examines the content of the dispatches, it becomes clear that there were many and varied causes of friction between the two sides, for example: the withdrawal of troops from the Netherlands, trade infringements, outstanding debts, and secret peace talks. Yet it has also been necessary to go one step further and explore the underlying priorities and outlook of both sides in order to explain the frequency and vehemence of the disputes which broke out between them. In so doing, their fundamental incompatibility has emerged: on the one side was a monarch who was uncomfortable in her role as adversary of Spain and protector of a newly-formed rebel state; on the other was an increasingly coherent and independent state which was firmly committed to the war with the Spanish King and anxious to prevent their English ally from coming to terms with him. The divergence of their outlook led to misconceptions, which in turn fuelled hostility - hostility which was frequently, but barely, masked by protestations of loyalty and commitment. As with Vere, apparent irregularities and inconsistencies arise in attempting to discover the subtext of the allies' correspondence. The cordial sentiments expressed by Elizabeth were sometimes genuine - for example, when the Dutch agreed to contribute troops or shipping for her defence, or when they achieved a notable victory in their war with Spain. Thus in July 1593 she assured them that their capture of Geertruidenberg had secured 'une concurrence si bonne entre nous et vous'.⁴⁹ Even so, it is still feasible to keep the underlying priorities in mind because these bouts of harmony were merely anomalies: they did little to alter Elizabeth's desire for peace with Spain, and did not resolve the grave differences between the two sides.

As regards my treatment of the correspondence relating to both Vere and the Anglo-Dutch alliance, I have therefore kept one primary aim in view: the pursuit of the sub-text. In so doing, I have only been able to employ broad principles due to the overwhelmingly ambiguous and contradictory nature of the sources. Although broad, these principles can be divided into three

⁴⁹ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 II, Elizabeth to States General, 6 July 1593

broad categories: the study of words, actions and motivations. The motivations can in turn be divided into those which were expressed, those which were secondary or occasionally influential, and those which underlay all of the correspondence of a particular individual or institution. In the midst of this rather complex web, there have inevitably been inconsistencies and anomalies, but in spite of these, it has been possible to construct a sub-text which applies to the majority of the correspondence that I have consulted.

On the whole, therefore, the nature of the manuscript and printed sources upon which this thesis is based has proved liberating rather than restrictive. Ambiguous and contradictory they may be, but it is these very qualities which have cleared the way for a range of analysis and interpretation, as well as inspiring many of the themes which this thesis aims to explore. A similar flexibility is provided by many of the contemporary publications that have been consulted, and none more so than Vere's own account. *The Commentaries of Sir Francis Vere* was completed in 1606, and provides a detailed narrative of all the campaigns in which he was involved during the period 1589-1601.⁵⁰ Vere's purpose in compiling this narrative is not immediately obvious. Markham's assertion that it was not intended for publication is backed up by the fact that it was not published for more than half a century after its completion. Motley, however, refers to the *Commentaries* as 'a party pamphlet in an age of pamphleteering.'⁵¹ It is unlikely that Vere decided to write the account because he had time on his hands after resigning from his post in the Netherlands and wished to reflect upon his past endeavours. Nor is it likely that he intended the work to be for his consumption alone. The most feasible explanation for his turning from sword to pen is that he wished to present his own interpretation of his military career, thereby contradicting those accounts which bestowed the credit elsewhere, and preserving (and indeed embellishing) his reputation for centuries to come. This theory is supported by the fact that copies of the *Commentaries* were circulated among contemporaries: Camden, for one, certainly had access to it. More significantly, perhaps, various recent historians (notably Wernham) have relied upon the account for details of the allied campaigns in the Netherlands, as well as the Cadiz and Islands Voyages. However, while this thesis is largely based upon the author of the *Commentaries*, in a sense it has relied upon it less than other studies have. I have tested the accuracy of the account by comparing it with other contemporary sources, and it has become clear that Motley's criticism of it was more than a little justified, as will be argued in chapter 3. Yet if the *Commentaries* has not been relied upon by this thesis in the same way as by other

⁵⁰ Unfortunately, the *Commentaries* focuses almost exclusively upon Vere's military service and rarely mentions his activities in the sphere of diplomacy.

⁵¹ Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 303n; Motley, *United Netherlands*, IV, 48n

recent studies, it has nevertheless proved invaluable for analysing Vere's own perception of his role in the Netherlands and the way in which this differed from other contemporary perceptions. The Dutch sources in particular suggest that he exaggerated both his own role and that of the English troops, failing to give credit to the part played by Count Maurice and the native forces in the Netherlands. The *Commentaries* has therefore also given an insight into Vere's character: assumed by so many recent observers to be humble and deferential, his own account shows him to be ambitious, arrogant, and above all self-congratulatory. In addition, it has provided some very useful material on his relations with both the English and the Dutch, and, somewhat ironically, portrays these as being rather less harmonious than Markham claims they were. The light that the *Commentaries* sheds upon Vere's relations with Maurice and Essex is particularly interesting, as are the references to his contact with the soldiers who were under his command. Therefore, in these respects, if not for its military narrative, the *Commentaries* has formed a crucial source for my thesis.

A number of other contemporary English publications have been consulted. Among the most useful is Naunton's *Fragmenta Regalia*, which includes Vere in the description of Elizabeth's court favourites. The author largely conforms to the portrayal of his military prowess that is given in the *Commentaries*. He also refers to Vere's cordial relations with Elizabeth, and helps to cultivate the impression that Sir Francis had no interest in affairs of state, because he stresses how seldom he visited court, being instead 'almost perpetually in the campe.'⁵² Naunton's account is supported by other contemporary observers. Lloyd, for example, refers to Vere as being 'of a fiery spirit and rigid nature, undaunted in all danger', and goes on to give a favourable account of his role in the Dutch war. Similar descriptions are provided by Camden and Birch, both of whom testify to his valour.⁵³

There are also various contemporary English pamphlets relating to specific battles or campaigns in the Netherlands which discuss the roles played by the military leaders of both sides. These have proved useful for testing the accuracy of Vere's *Commentaries*, and are included in the discussion of his military role in the Netherlands.⁵⁴ However, of most use in this respect are the

⁵² R. Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia. Memoirs of Elizabeth, Her Court and Favourites* (London, 1824), 143-46

⁵³ D. Lloyd, *The Statesmen and Favorites of England since the Reformation* (London, 1665), 584-9; W. Camden, *The Historie of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princesse Elizabeth* (London, 1630), iii, 124, 126; iv, 102; T. Birch, *Memoirs of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, From the year 1581 until her Death*, I, 387-91; II, 253-55 (London, 1754)

⁵⁴ See for example: *Triumphs of Nassau*; P. Short, *A True Discourse of the overthrowe given to the common enemy at Turnhaut the 14 January last 1597 by Count Moris of Nassa, and the States, assisted with the Englishe forces. Sent from a Gentleman of account, that was present at the service, to a friend of his in England* (London, 1597);

three major Dutch publications consulted by this thesis. As contemporary chroniclers, Pieter Bor, Emanuel van Meteren, and Everhard van Reyd constituted what Geyl describes as ‘a remarkable trio’.⁵⁵ Their lives coincided with the campaigns fought in the Netherlands during Vere’s ascendancy,⁵⁶ and they produced very detailed accounts of each of these, describing every battle and siege more meticulously than perhaps any of the surviving correspondence. Each chronicle is written from the Dutch perspective and focuses upon the role played by the native military leaders in the Provinces (in particular Count Maurice), although they balance this slightly with references to the contribution made by Vere and the English troops. They therefore take a stance that is diametrically opposed to Vere’s, and have proven of immeasurable value in assessing the accuracy of the *Commentaries*.⁵⁷ Although certain other English historians have also incorporated works by Bor, van Meteren and van Reyd in their studies, they have tended to use them in conjunction with the *Commentaries*, rather than contrasting them and highlighting the discrepancies between them. This latter task is attempted in chapter 3, which aims to reassess Vere’s military role in the Netherlands. In so doing, it also takes account of Grimestone’s detailed *Generall Historie of the Netherlands*. This is a contemporary English work which was compiled ‘out of the best authors that have written of that subject’, and tends to rely more upon Dutch sources than English. Not surprisingly, it largely corroborates the material provided by Bor, van Meteren and van Reyd.⁵⁸

The proliferation of printed and manuscript sources that exist for the period addressed by this study has enabled it to give a different slant on Vere’s service in the Netherlands and the pattern of Anglo-Dutch relations to that which is common in most of the secondary works mentioned above. The great majority of the sources take the form of correspondence, and it is for this reason that the underlying emphasis of the thesis is on *perceptions*. It is not intended as an objective or narrative overview of the events that took place during this period, but rather as a subjective and thematic account, most often seen through the eyes of a comparatively low-profile figure. Vere is an ideal subject for this purpose: not only has there been relatively little research

———, *The Battaile Fought Betweene Count Maurice of Nassaw, and Albertus, Arch-duke of Austria, nere Newport in Flaunders the xxij day of June 1600. Written by a Gentleman imployed in the said service* (London, 1600)

⁵⁵ Geyl, *Revolt of the Netherlands*, 282

⁵⁶ N.B. Van Reyd is the exception, although he died only a year before the end of Elizabeth’s reign.

⁵⁷ Bor, *Nederlantsche Oorlogen*, III-V; van Meteren, *L’Histoire des Pays Bas...depuis l’an 1315 jusques à l’an 1612* (The Hague, 1618) [French translation of the original]; van Reyd, *Historie der Nederlantscher Oorlogen begin ende voortganck tot den Jaere 1601* (Leeuwarden, 1650)

⁵⁸ E. Grimestone, *A Generall Historie of the Netherlands...continued from the yeare 1608 till the yeare 1627* (London, 1627)

carried out on him, but his prolonged ascendancy also coincides with one of the most neglected periods of Anglo-Dutch relations. It is to be hoped that a study of Vere's position and perceptions has led to a more general awareness of English and Dutch perspectives, even though the nature of the sources consulted has tipped the bias towards the former side. The thesis therefore attempts to fill at least part of the void created by historiography, and to elevate both Vere and the period of his ascendancy to the position that they deserve.

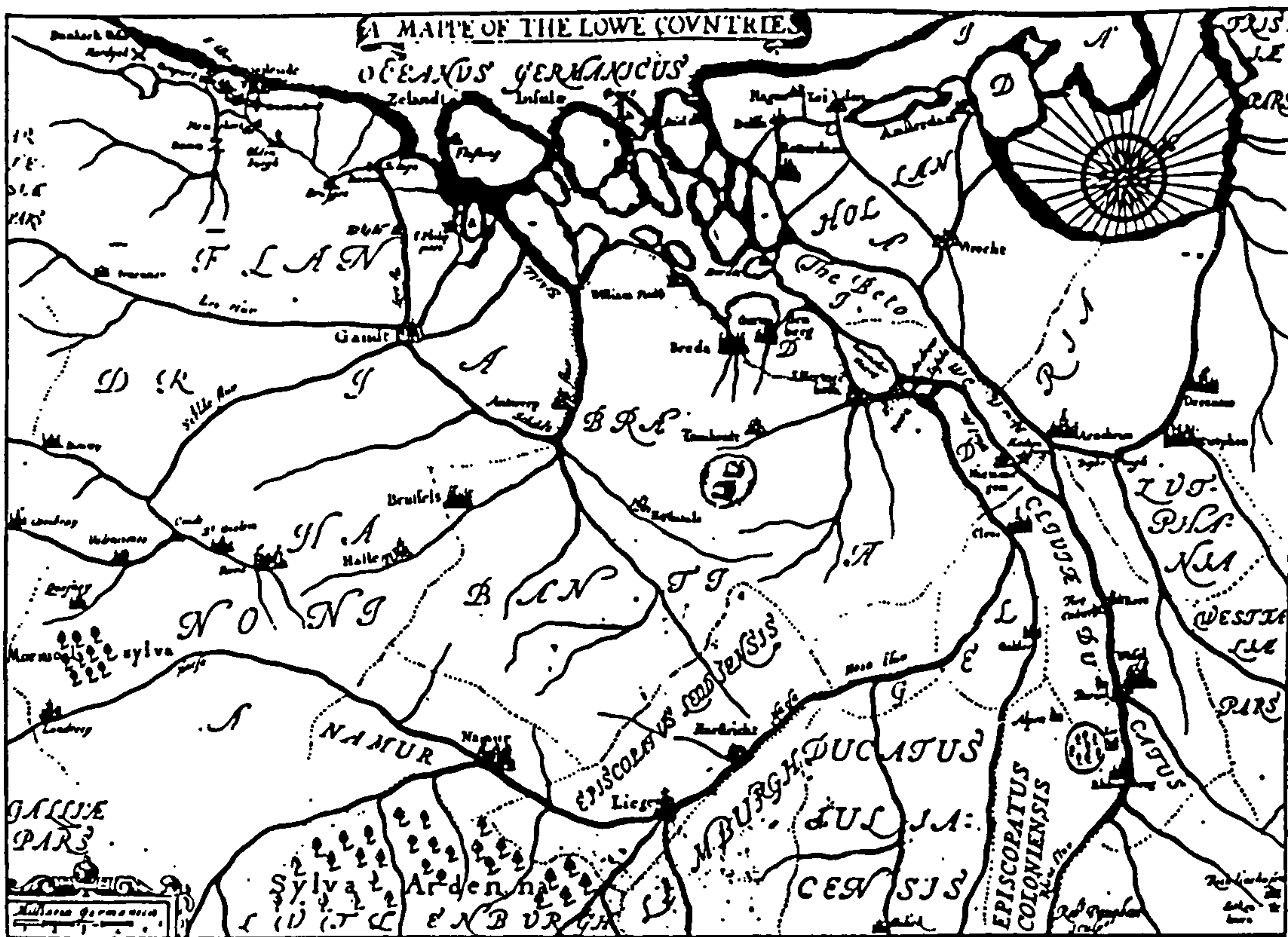


Figure 2: The Netherlands in the late sixteenth century

Taken from *Vere's Commentaries*



Figure 3: Europe in the late sixteenth century

Taken from *Vere's Commentaries*

Chapter 1

The auncient amitie and alliance: *The survival of the Anglo-Dutch alliance, 1589-1603*

'I wyshe that owre fortune and theirs were not so straytely tyed as yt is', lamented Walsingham at the very beginning of Sir Francis Vere's ascendancy in the Netherlands, 'so as we can not well untye without great hasard.'¹ This sentiment seemed to echo the general discontent with the Dutch alliance that was felt among members of the English Court during the late 1580s. It was to improve little during the following fourteen years or so, when Vere was their chief military representative in the Netherlands. This period witnessed rapidly interchangeable bouts of harmony and hostility, cooperation and intransigence, but negative factors all too often came to the fore, and the resultant dissatisfaction felt by both sides often seemed grave enough to threaten the continuation of their attachment. Yet the survival of the Anglo-Dutch alliance has been viewed with little surprise by most modern historians, and they tend to argue either that the two sides had little choice but to stand by each other, or that their relations improved as they updated their alliance and came to hold an increasing respect for each other. Such views do not take sufficient account of the factors that were working against the attachment, or of the serious tension that so frequently existed between the English and the Dutch. The aim of this chapter is therefore to highlight the fundamental weakness of their alliance, and to argue that its survival was in fact more remarkable than inevitable.

England's 'auncient amitie and alliance' with the Burgundian Netherlands had long formed a key part of her strategic and economic policy. Its strategic importance derived from the fact that alliance with the Netherlands translated to alliance with the Habsburgs because ever since the death of the last Duke of Burgundy in 1477, the Netherlands had formed part of the Habsburg empire. From England's point of view, the Habsburg ruler acted as a powerful counterpoise to the threat posed by her traditional enemy, France. Furthermore, the proximity of the Netherlands provinces to her shores made them an ideal launchpad for an invasion, and it was therefore crucial to England's security that friendly relations be maintained. The Burgundian alliance was also important to the security of Habsburg interests in Europe. England's geographical position could be useful if the Habsburg ruler attempted an invasion of France; it could also be dangerous

¹ BM MS, Cotton Galba D, V, fo.65, Walsingham to Bodley, 2 August 1589

if the alliance broke down and England allied with France. The economic ties between England and the Netherlands were similarly strong. The traditional markets for English wool and cloth exports were in the Provinces. The Merchants of the Staple carried wool to the weaving industries of the southern Netherlands, while the Merchant Adventurers sold their cloth in the same region, but increasingly at Antwerp, which became the entrepôt of western Europe. The trading link with the Netherlands was strengthened during Henry VII's reign and continued to fuel the prosperity of both countries until the middle decades of the sixteenth century. By this time, England had come to rely very heavily upon Antwerp, and around three quarters of her overseas trade was centred there. This trade was also important to Antwerp's prosperity, accounting for roughly one third of the city's import and export trade.

By the end of Charles V's reign in 1556, therefore, England's economic and strategic interests seemed to be closely tied up with the Habsburg Netherlands. However, the accession of his son Philip changed this situation. Philip did not inherit the title of Holy Roman Emperor, but he did come into possession of a vast array of territories - including the Burgundian Netherlands. What was ominous for both England and the Netherlands, however, was that he was clearly intent upon augmenting Spanish power in Europe, and that this involved the subjugation of the formerly semi-autonomous Netherlands to his interests. Underestimating both the strength of provincialism and the extent to which the Dutch valued the liberties and privileges which they had been allowed under Charles V, Philip set about bringing the Netherlands more directly under Spanish rule by creating a centralised political system with Brussels at its head. In so doing, he by-passed the General and Provincial States, and set up an 'inner ring' of councillors to direct policy making, excluding the higher Dutch nobility. Furthermore, he antagonised Catholics and Calvinists alike by reorganising the ecclesiastical structure of the Netherlands, and it was feared that he would introduce the Spanish inquisition to root out heresy. As a result, a crisis rapidly began to develop, and this found expression in the first uprising of what was to be one of the most prolonged revolts in history. The fusion of political and religious disaffection led to an explosion of iconoclasm, as gangs of rebels sacked hundreds of Catholic churches and shrines. Yet Philip's resolve to subjugate the Netherlands was strengthened rather than diminished by this first outbreak of revolt, and he decided to fight fire with fire by sending over the Duke of Alva with a formidable force to subdue the rebels and establish an even more repressive regime in the Netherlands.

This altered political situation was compounded by a shift in the economic relationship between England and the Netherlands. The prospect of a Spanish-dominated Netherlands that was hostile

to England significantly reduced the appeal of Antwerp as the best market for English trade. In fact, this appeal had begun to decline almost a decade earlier when the city had been glutted and unable to process all of the English cloth imports. England therefore began to look around for alternative markets, and in 1564 the Merchant Adventurers transferred their trade from Antwerp to the German city of Emden. They did return to Antwerp the following year, but their confidence in that trading centre had been diminished, and the outbreak of revolt further increased their doubts. In 1567, they therefore made an agreement to transfer their trade to the German city of Hamburg, where they were to remain for the next thirty years. This effectively ended England's economic dependence upon the Netherlands, and thereby upon Spain also.

Barely a decade into Elizabeth's reign, therefore, the traditional Burgundian alliance was beginning to look shaky. The schism between the Burgundian overlord, Philip II, and his Netherlands' subjects, which became ever wider as the Dutch revolt got underway, posed a serious dilemma for Elizabeth. It was now uncertain whether England's 'ancient ally' was the Spanish King or the rebellious provinces that were attempting to break free from his jurisdiction. This dilemma was gradually resolved, however, as events pushed the Queen ever closer towards open hostility with Spain. In fact, the seeds of discord had been sown at the very beginning of her reign, and during the ensuing years it is possible to discern the build up of tension between the two sides, ultimately culminating in her decision to openly ally with the rebels. Relations between England and Spain had been somewhat tense from the outset due to Elizabeth's refusal of Philip II's marriage proposal, her moderately Protestant religious settlement, her support of heresy in Scotland and France, and a number of commercial clashes. This tension found expression in the controversy of 1568, when the Queen seized the treasure that was carried by a flotilla of Spanish ships sheltering in English ports and destined for the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands to help him suppress the revolt. In response to this, Alva made reprisal on English merchants and goods in the Netherlands, and the Queen immediately ordered retaliation on Spanish merchants and goods in England. A complete standstill of trade between England and the Netherlands ensued which was to last for almost five years. In this hostile climate, Elizabeth was forced to seek alternative allies. She signed a treaty of friendship with the French at Blois in 1572, and gave serious consideration to the idea of marrying the Duke of Anjou, who became closely embroiled in the Netherlands struggle. In addition, she began to show her support for the Dutch rebels, allowing her privateers to collaborate with the Sea Beggars and Huguenots in preying upon Spanish vessels. Philip also made hostile moves, promising his support for the Northern Rebellion in 1569 and the Ridolfi Plot in 1571. Nevertheless, both sides were reluctant to enter into open hostility, and it was only when it became clear that Philip would not compromise on the

Netherlands issue by returning to his father's policy of allowing the Dutch semi-autonomous rule that Elizabeth was drawn gradually into the war with Spain. For the sake of England's security, she could not afford to sit back and watch Philip subjugate the Netherlands completely, thereby establishing a Spanish-dominated territory that was menacingly close to her shores. Neither did she wish to see the French in power there, as this would have posed an equally grave threat to England - especially if they were to ally with Spain. She therefore sought to counteract the threat of both French and Spanish domination in the Netherlands by offering financial and military support to the rebels. The mutiny of the Spanish troops in 1576, and the ensuing sack of Antwerp pushed her further down this path, and in 1578, she hired John Casimir of the Palatinate to fight for the Dutch with 11,000 mercenaries. The following year, she reopened marriage negotiations with Anjou and supported his unpropitious expedition to the Provinces. However, any hope of effective Anglo-French collaboration on the rebels' behalf was extinguished in 1584 by a combination of Anjou's death, which ushered in the final phase of the French civil wars, and the Treaty of Joinville, by which Philip II threw in his lot with the Guises and the Catholic League. The same year witnessed the assassination of the rebel leader, William of Orange, and the onus was now upon Elizabeth to undertake the protection of the insurgent provinces. The following year, the ominous threat that Antwerp would be taken by Spanish forces gave her further incentive to do so. In June 1585, an embassy from the States General offered her the sovereignty of their provinces and pleaded for military support. She declined the former, but eventually, and not without some misgivings, agreed to undertake the latter. A treaty of alliance was subsequently concluded between the two sides at Nonsuch Palace on 10 August 1585.²

Yet it is important not to let hindsight render the events leading up to the Treaty of Nonsuch a steady progression towards inevitable war with Spain. Although Anglo-Spanish relations were rather tense during the first three decades of Elizabeth's reign, they did not suffer an irretrievable breakdown, and both sides were reluctant to enter into open war with each other. Only when Orange's assassination left the rebels in the Netherlands without a leader, and the city of Antwerp looked set to fall to the Spanish forces did the Queen reluctantly throw in her lot with the Dutch. However, even though she had thereby officially recognised the Dutch as her Burgundian ally, she continued to hanker after an alliance with the figure who had traditionally filled this role - the

² There are numerous studies relating to Elizabeth's relations with Spain during the period preceding the Treaty of Nonsuch. Of particular note are: S. Adams, 'The Lurch into War', *History Today*, XXXVIII (May 1988), 18-25; Wilson, *Elizabeth and the Netherlands*, chapters 1-4; MacCaffrey, *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (London, 1969); *Making of Policy*; Wernham, *Before the Armada*; *Making of Elizabethan Foreign Policy*, chapters 1-3

King of Spain. This was a goal that she apparently kept in view throughout the remainder of her reign, thereby undermining her commitment to the Dutch.

The traditional Burgundian alliance maintained during the first half of the sixteenth century was therefore transformed during the course of Elizabeth's reign. It was a transformation that undermined England's amity with the Netherlands, despite the conclusion of a formal alliance between the two countries, and placed her relations with Spain on an altogether different footing. She now faced a hostile Spain, as well as a potentially hostile France, and had only a newly-formed, weakly united rebel state as an ally. The ideal situation, from Elizabeth's point of view, would have been a return to the Burgundian alliance of Charles V's time, which provided England with a powerful counterpoise to France and also safeguarded her economic interests. However, this was a situation that could never be regained. The schism between the King of Spain and the northern Netherlands was apparently irreparable, and try as she might, Elizabeth could not bring them to an accord. During the remainder of her reign, she therefore had to choose between maintaining the alliance with the Netherlands and abandoning it in favour of peace with Spain.

Her obvious uncertainty was compounded by the fact that she clearly had little in common with her Dutch ally. Their newly-formed state was made up of a decentralised conglomeration of provinces, lacking both sovereign leadership and a coherent, centralised system of government. Worse still, their very nature set them in the opposing camp to the English monarch: they were first and foremost rebellious subjects who had usurped the authority of their sovereign, setting up an independent state of their own which was free from Spanish power. The experience that Elizabeth had of such rebels in her own kingdom was enough to make her suspicious, even hostile, to them elsewhere. This was certainly evident in her attitude towards the Dutch. She had been reluctant to openly ally with them in the first place, and remained clearly uneasy and distrustful throughout the eighteen years of their connection. Even their religious stance did not bring them closer together, although in theory it should have. While they were both opposed to the Spanish King's tyrannical brand of Catholicism, Elizabeth had no great liking for Calvinists, and these formed the core of the Dutch Revolt. Besides, for both sides, religious ideology was outshone by strategic and economic concerns, and it was not therefore a strong enough bond to bring them any closer together.

There was thus a high degree of incompatibility between the two sides, and it would seem that this underlay much of the resentment and misunderstanding that was to plague their alliance. In

spite of its shaky foundations, however, most modern studies suggest that the alliance was gradually strengthened during the last fifteen years of Elizabeth's reign, and that it became the lynch-pin of her foreign policy. One of the most comprehensive accounts of the relations between the allies during this period is provided by MacCaffrey's *War and Politics*. According to this, the alliance was transformed from a protector-dependency arrangement during the mid to late 1580s, into a more equal alliance during the early to mid 1590s, and finally a collaborative arrangement during the closing years of Elizabeth's reign. He argues that a crucial contributory factor in this progression was an increasing appreciation by the English of their Dutch allies' capacity for effective and independent action. MacCaffrey also implies that the Queen had little intention of abandoning the Dutch because her alliance with them formed the key to her policy of preventing both Spain and France from controlling the Provinces.³ In this respect, he endorses Wernham's argument. Wernham asserts that the alliance was an essential component of England's policy of checking the overweening ambitions of the French and Spanish Kings, and that therefore its endurance can be explained by its necessity. He claims that Elizabeth followed a consistent policy towards the Netherlands, aiming to restore their ancient liberties, but at the same time return them to Spain, thus ensuring that they could act as a counterpoise to France. However, as it became clear that this aim would not be realised, the Queen was compelled to maintain her alliance with the Dutch because if they were to submit to absolute Spanish domination, this would threaten England's security. Wernham's theory therefore implies that Elizabeth had little choice but to maintain her support of the Dutch.⁴ A similar argument is put forward by Edmundson. He claims that Elizabeth forged and maintained the alliance because it was essential to England's security - a consideration that overrode all others in the formation of her policy. He also portrays Anglo-Dutch relations as overwhelmingly harmonious, and writes: 'friction in the relations between England and the Republic was at times inevitable, but the community of interests was so strong that friendly co-operation never ceased.'⁵ A slightly different perspective is given by Wilson. Firstly, he portrays the Queen's policy as a 'bewildering succession of expedients' rather than a consistent, pre-planned strategy, and doubts that she genuinely intended to restore the Netherlands to the situation that they had enjoyed under Charles V. As regards the relations between the allies, he refers to the hostility that existed at the

³ MacCaffrey, *War and Politics*, chapters 13 and 14; *Elizabeth I*, 266, 268

⁴ Wernham, *After the Armada*, ix-x, 23-4; *Making of Elizabethan Foreign Policy*, 48-57; 'English policy and the Revolt of the Netherlands', 30-1, 37-8; 'Elizabethan War Aims and Strategy', 341-7. Both Wernham and MacCaffrey thus concur with Black, who claims: 'the rebel cause in the Netherlands was of relatively small significance in the eyes of statesmen beside the great game being played out between England, France and Spain'. 'Queen Elizabeth, the Sea Beggars, and the Capture of Brill, 1572', *English Historical Review*, XLVI (1931), 47

⁵ Edmundson, *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry*, 4, 12, 15

beginning of Vere's ascendancy, and claims: 'There was certainly an unprecedented itch, on the English side anyway, to be rid of Nonsuch and its costly alliance, which seemed to point straight to bankruptcy. For once the Queen was united with her Council, including even Walsingham, in wishing the Treaty at the bottom of the sea.' However, he argues that a profound change subsequently took place in the relationship between the allies as the Queen came to realise that it was in England's best interests, in view of the Spanish threat and the volatile situation in France, to maintain her alliance with the Dutch. Wilson then follows a similar line of argument to MacCaffrey, asserting that, as well as becoming increasingly binding, the alliance progressed from a protectorate to a more equal and mutually beneficial arrangement.⁶ Similarly, den Tex's *Oldenbarnevelt* refers to the hostility that sometimes flared up between the English and the Dutch, but argues that this tension gradually subsided as they got used to each other's faults, and compares them to a moderately happy married couple. It also infers that this process was accelerated during the 1590s when England gradually came to appreciate the prolific success of the Dutch enterprises, and hence formed a more mutual pact with them than had existed before.⁷

The existing sources do contain some material to support the notion that the Anglo-Dutch alliance was both strong and collaborative. The allies' correspondence often suggests that their commitment to each other was binding, as they cultivated an image of an ideological union of two states fighting side by side under the banner of justice and toleration to bring down the tyranny and repression of Spain.⁸ Both sides seemed eager to give the impression that they were united by common aims and ideals, and that their alliance was strong enough to resist any threats from outside - such as offers of peace from Philip II. The word 'commune' - mostly in conjunction with 'la cause', 'les intérestes' or 'l'ennemi' - was frequently used in their correspondence, thus invoking a sense of comradeship and fraternity. The Dutch, in particular, seemed eager to cultivate this impression. In their letters to Elizabeth, the States General constantly urged how vital her aid was in repelling 'l'ennemi commun', and pleaded her to continue it. At the beginning of 1591, they wrote of their 'grand joie' upon receiving her letters assuring them of the continuation of her 'grande...et singulaire affection', which they claimed had furthered 'la cause

⁶ Wilson, *Elizabeth and the Netherlands*, 16, 128-9, chapter 6

⁷ den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 105, 111, 128

⁸ ARA, Liassen Engelandt, 5882 I, Elizabeth to States General, 17 April and 28 September 1590; 5882 II, Elizabeth to States General, 17 April and 7 May 1592, 6 July 1593; *SP* 84, XLI, fo.120, States General to Elizabeth, (1)/11 February 1591; XLVII, fo.121, Council of State to Elizabeth (31 October)/10 November 1593; XLIX, fo.247, States General to Elizabeth, (11)/21 December 1594; L, fo.127, States General to Elizabeth, (11)/21 April 1595; LII, fo.96, States General's Answer to Vere, (6)/16 March 1596; LIII, fo.23, States General to Cecil, (18)/28 August 1596

commune'.⁹ Similarly, during their delegation to England in 1596, the States' envoys thanked Elizabeth for her 'singulière benevolence' and 'benefices inestimables', and stressed: 'il est impossible ausdictes provinces, sans le secours et assistance de vostre Majesté, de se maintenir et resister au forces d'un si puissant Roy'.¹⁰ For the most part, it would seem that such humble gratitude and deferential praise was employed by the States as a means of persuading the Queen to continue the alliance, but on occasion they did have genuine cause for thanks. Although the amount of material aid that she sent to the Provinces was neither as great or regular as they requested, it was crucial to their defence against Spain (particularly during the early years of Vere's ascendancy), and was always received with the utmost gratitude and reverence.¹¹ This was the case in the spring of 1594, when Elizabeth agreed to levy 3,000 men for the allied campaigns of that year.¹² The States expressed their thanks, claiming that her assistance had both enabled Maurice to succour Koevorden, and had demonstrated her favour towards them.¹³ Such sentiments continued in the States General's letters right up until Elizabeth's death, and there is little to distinguish between the deferential tone of those written towards the end of the reign from those written at the beginning of Vere's ascendancy. References to English protection continued to dominate their dispatches, belying the great progress that the Dutch had made towards independence from outside interference. In September 1600, the States humbly thanked Elizabeth for all the help that she had thus far given them, and added that they believed this

⁹ XLI, fo.120 States General to Elizabeth, (1)/11 February 1591. See also for example: *UHG*, XVIII, States General to Elizabeth, (19)/29 August 1590, 278-80; *RSG*, VII, 71-2

¹⁰ *UHG*, XXII, Delegation of Leoninus, Van Loozen, Valcke and Franckena to England in 1596, 326-7

¹¹ There are various figures for the scale of her assistance. Most modern accounts more or less agree that between 1585 and 1603, the English troops in the Netherlands numbered around 8,000, although this figure was subject to fluctuations throughout the period. There is more disparity between the various estimates of Elizabeth's financial expenditure during the same period, and most historians tend to quote figures for three or four year periods, rather than the whole eighteen years of her alliance. For example, Neale estimates that between 1589 and 1593, Elizabeth spent around £500,000 on the Dutch war, and Wernham largely agrees, but suggests that the figure could have been as high as £600,000. W.A. Shaw provides an estimate for the entire period 1585-1603, and claims that the total figure (excluding loans) was £1,486,026. *HMC, D&D*, III, xxx-xlv; Neale, *Queen Elizabeth*, 325; 'Queen Elizabeth and the Netherlands, 1586-7', *English Historical Review*, XLV (1930), 373-96; Wernham, *After the Armada*, 14, 415-19; *Return of the Armadas*, 2; 'Queen Elizabeth and the Siege of Rouen', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th Series, XV (1932), 177; F.C. Dietz, *English Public Finance, 1558-1641*, II (London, 1964), 67, 82, 98, 449-58; C.G. Cruickshank, *Elizabeth's Army* (Oxford, 1966), 290. Compare these figures with Zwitzer's estimate of the average ordinary contribution that the States made to the war. He claims that between 1586 and 1598, the sum was 2,400,000 guilders per annum (c.£240,000), rising to 4,975,413 (c.£497,541) in 1599, and 5,772,000 (c.£577,200) between 1600 and 1604. H.L. Zwitzer, *De Militie van den Staat. Het leger van de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden* (Amsterdam, 1991), 78

¹² *UHG*, XX, States General to Elizabeth, (27 October)/6 November 1593, 75-6; *SP 84*, XLVIII, fo.16, Vere to Burghley, 7 January 1594

¹³ *ibid.*, fo.175, States General to Elizabeth, (29 April)/9 May 1594. See also: fo.176, Maurice to Elizabeth, (30 April)/10 May 1594; LXI, fo.302, States General to Cecil, (16)/26 September 1601; *APC*, XXXI, 2 August 1601, 137; *Archives*, II, Maurice to William Louis, (9)/19 May 1601, 80-1

stemmed from 'un vrai soin et affection maternelle' on her part.¹⁴ Similarly, two years later they wrote to Elizabeth in a humble and deferential tone that harked back to the earliest days of the alliance, thanking her for the assistance that she had given them.¹⁵ Of course, such expressions cannot be taken at face value, and there is little doubt that the States increasingly perceived themselves as being on more equal terms with their English ally than they had been during the 1580s. Their apparent reverence for, and devotion to the Queen can therefore be interpreted as a conscious effort to ensure the continuation of her assistance.

If the impression given by much of the contemporary correspondence is therefore that the States' commitment to the Anglo-Dutch alliance was strong, it is possible to draw a similar conclusion about the English stance. Indeed, from the very beginning of their alliance, the Queen was clearly anxious to convey an impression of unity and mutual affection. In describing the causes that had incited her to form the alliance with them, she made reference to the long history of confederacy between the two countries, claiming that the Dutch were 'more straightly knit in auncient friendship to this realme then to any other countrie', to such an extent that 'England and those countries have bene by common language of long time resembled and termed as man and wife.'¹⁶ This theme continued throughout most of the ensuing attachment, and in her letters to the States, the Queen maintained a cordiality (albeit condescending) that was rarely broken. As the 1590s progressed, she increasingly referred to the longevity of their alliance, and continued to stress her unswerving commitment to it, encouraging the Dutch to do the same. In April 1595, for example, she assured the States that she was 'une Princess qui a coeur vostre fortune, et soulagé vostre oppression'. Just days before her death, she informed the States that she had instructed her

¹⁴ HMC, *Sal*, X, The States General, (27 September)/7 October 1600, 325. Gilpin, for one, seemed to believe that such sentiments were genuine. In August 1597, he told Cecil that the States had assured him they would 'ever continew most affected and devoted unto hir highnes sarvice', and later that year, he claimed that they seemed to 'desyre nothinge more then to deale so as may be to hir highnes lykinge.' *SP* 84, LV, fo.103, Gilpin to Cecil, 30 August 1597; fo.277, Gilpin to Cecil, 21 December 1597. See also: LII, fo.84, Gilpin to Burghley, 29 February 1596; LIV, fo.259, Gilpin to Privy Council, 26 May 1597; LXII, fo.196, Gilpin to Cecil, 30 August 1602

¹⁵ *Bescheiden Bettreffende*, II, States General to Elizabeth, (17)/27 June 1602, 19. This letter was no doubt largely inspired by the levy of 3,000 men that Elizabeth had raised for their aid earlier that year. These were to be paid for by one of the yearly repayments of £30,000 that the States had failed to meet. BM MS, Egerton, 2714, fo.193, Vere to Sir Francis Gawdy (Sheriff of Norfolk), 30 April 1602; *Gedenkstukken*, II, Gilpin's Proposal to the States General, 7 May 1602, 320-1; *CSPV*, IX, Cavalli to the Doge and Senate, (27 May)/6 June 1602, 504-5; Dietz, *English Public Finance*, 97-8. See also for example: *SP* 84, XXXVIII, fo.202, States General to Elizabeth, (20)/30 August 1590; XLV, fo.9, States General to Elizabeth, (2)/12 June 1592; XLIX, fo.247 States General to Elizabeth, (11)/21 December 1594; L, fo.127, States General to Elizabeth, (11)/21 April 1595; LI, fo.249, States General to Elizabeth, (23 November)/3 December 1595; LX i, fo.117, States General to Caron, (28 April)/8 May 1600; LXI, fo.324, States General's reply to Gilpin, (6)/16 October 1601; fo.404, States General to Elizabeth, (31 December 1601)/10 January 1602

¹⁶ 'A Declaration of the causes Mooving the Queene of England to give aide to the Defence of the People afflicted and oppressed in the Lowe Countries', *Somers Tracts*, 413

Councillor of State to assure them of 'la continuation de nostre bienveillance envers le bien des provinces en général et de vous en particulier', and to 'corroborer l'amitié qui est entre nous.'¹⁷

Although there was a sense of routine in these expressions of goodwill and firm commitment to the alliance, there was occasionally good reason for Elizabeth to be pleased of it. By far the most notable were the military victories gained over the enemy. The alliance seemed to be strengthened after each of these, and there is little reason to doubt the sincerity and warmth of the Queen's congratulatory letters on such occasions. Following the capture of Geertruidenberg in July 1593, she expressed her 'trèsgrand contentement', claiming that the victory had 'augmenté vos territoires à vostre trèsgrand louange', and had secured 'une concurrence si bonne entre nous et vous.' Similarly, in 1600, she congratulated the States upon 'la trèsheureuse victoire' that Nieuwpoort.¹⁸ The Dutch had less cause to offer their congratulations to the Queen because English ventures against Spain (outside the Provinces) were far fewer than their own, but they did express their satisfaction upon hearing of the victory at Cadiz in 1596.¹⁹

The movement of troops and supplies between the two countries could also prove to be a source of mutual benefit and appreciation. This movement was somewhat one-sided at the beginning of Vere's ascendancy, but it had become more balanced by 1603. As mentioned above, the dispatch of troops from England to the Netherlands invariably raised proclamations of devotion and gratitude from the Dutch, and when the situation was reversed, the Queen also seemed satisfied with the alliance. Indeed, she had cause to be so on such occasions. Even though the employment of her forces in the Netherlands deprived her of a significant portion of her manpower, it ensured that her soldiers were well-trained and disciplined, and were able to gain valuable experience in one of the most advanced military arenas in Europe. Furthermore, she

¹⁷ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 II, Elizabeth to States General, 13 February 1593; Bodley to States General, 4 February 1595; 5883 II, Elizabeth to States General, 15 October and 6 November 1599; Loketkas Lopende, 12548.92, Elizabeth to States General, 1 April 1595; SP 84, LIII, fo.58, Elizabeth to States General, 12 September 1596; LXII, fo.305, Elizabeth to States General, 1 March 1603; CSPV, IX, Contarini to the Doge and Senate, (23 June)/3 July 1598, 330; Soranzo to the Doge and Senate, (2)/12 August 1598, 336; J. Maclean (ed), *Letters from Sir Robert Cecil to Sir George Carew*, Camden Society, LXXXVIII (London, 1864), 110

¹⁸ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 II, Elizabeth to States General, 6 July 1593; 5884 I, Elizabeth to States General, 9 July 1600; *Gedenkstukken*, II, Caron to States General, 28 June 1600, 290-2. See also: ARA, Lias. Eng., 5582 II, Elizabeth to States General, 1 July 1592 and 22 August 1593; 5884 I, Elizabeth to States General, 15 August 1601; LIV, fo.66, Elizabeth to Vere, 5 February 1597; LXII, fo.212, Elizabeth to States General, 20 September 1602; *Bescheiden Betreffende*, I, Elizabeth to Oldenbarnevelt, 10 July 1597, 352; UHG, XX, Elizabeth to States General, 16 July 1593, 61-2. N.B. Corbett claims that after the Nieuwpoort victory, Elizabeth 'felt she could continue the war with a lighter heart'. *The Successors of Drake* (London, 1933), 294. However, the evidence does not support this. The Dutch forces did not capitalise upon the victory effectively, and it contributed little to their war effort. Furthermore, throughout the last few years of her reign, Elizabeth was preoccupied with the siege of Ostend and the problems in Ireland.

¹⁹ UHG, XXII, Delegation of Leoninus, Van Loozen, Valcke and Franckena to England in 1596, 326

could - and frequently did - recall large numbers of these forces from the Netherlands for service elsewhere, most often in France, or to help her to counter threats of a Spanish invasion. The alliance also gave Elizabeth the advantage of being able to request military assistance from *Dutch* resources, and she made particular use of their shipping for both defensive and offensive measures, including the 'joint' expeditions that were launched against Spain during the 1590s.²⁰

Another notable source of harmony between the allies during this period were the apparent reaffirmations of their attachment - firstly in 1596 and, more importantly, in 1598. In May 1596, Elizabeth formed a pact with the King of France and later that year the Dutch also joined. In inviting them to do so, the Queen made reference to the longevity of their alliance ('la conjunction qui a de si long temps esté entre nous et les Provinces uniez'), and emphasised the necessity of providing mutual defence and offence against 'l'ennemy commun'.²¹ The States shortly afterwards agreed to join the league, and this second connection with England served to strengthen the appearance of the first.²² The Anglo-Dutch alliance was given a further boost two years later when it was both confirmed and revised. During the negotiations that preceded, and the period that followed the conclusion of the Peace of Vervins in May 1598, it seemed likely that the Queen would finally come to terms with Philip II, thereby terminating her connection with the Dutch, who resolutely refused to do the same.²³ Their resolve reaped the desired reward, however, because Elizabeth chose to reject the French and Spanish offers and once more confirm

²⁰ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 I, Elizabeth to States General, 28 September 1590 and 21 February 1591; 5882 II, Elizabeth to States General, 7 May 1592, 6 July 1593 and 3 May 1594; Bodley to States General, 21 May 1594; 5883 I, Elizabeth to States General, 6 February 1597; 5883 II, Vere to States General, 16 August and 24 November 1599; Elizabeth to States General, 6 and 29 November 1598; Lok. Lop., 12548.97, Elizabeth to States General, 6 June 1597; *SP 84*, LI, fo.249, States General to Elizabeth, (23 November)/2 December 1595; LII, fo.71, Elizabeth to States General, 16 February 1596; LIV, fo.66, Elizabeth to Vere, 5 February 1597; fo.284, Elizabeth to States General, 7 June 1597; LVIII, fo.188, Elizabeth to Vere, 15 December 1598; LIX, fo.9, Vere's proposal to States General, (6)/16 August 1599; *APC*, XXIX, Privy Council to Vere, 23 December 1598, 358-60; *HMC, The Manuscripts of the Right Honourable F.J. Savile Foljambe, of Osberton* (London, 1897), Elizabeth to Vere, 25 July 1599, 69-71. For a narrative of all the joint expeditions undertaken during the period 1589-1603, see F.J.G. ten Raa and F. de Bas, *Het Staatsche Leger, 1568-1795*, II (Breda, 1913), 300-6

²¹ *SP 84*, LIII, fo.58, Elizabeth to States General, 12 September 1596; *Gedenkstukken*, II, Calvart to States General, (17)/27 March and (7)/17 May 1596, 99-102, 112-18

²² *SP 84*, LIII, fo.105, Gilpin to Cecil, 16 October 1596; BM MS, Additional 19875, 19877; Du Mont, 531-4

²³ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 I, Elizabeth to Gilpin, [1597?], 5883 II, Gilpin to States General, 9 January 1598; Vere and Gilpin to States, 29 June 1598; Elizabeth to States General, 30 April, 22 May and 7 June 1598; *SP 84*, LVI, fo.5, States General to Elizabeth, (2)/12 January 1598; fo.19, States' answer to Gilpin, (16)/26 January 1598; fo.115, Oldenbarnvelt to Caron, (11)/21 May 1598; *Bescheiden Betreffende*, I, Conversation between Oldenbarnvelt and Elizabeth, (16)/26 May 1598. In fact, aversion to peace with Spain was by no means universal in the northern Netherlands. Gelderland and Friesland showed 'some disposition for an accord', but were unable to act without the consent of Holland and Zeeland, who were vigorously opposed to the peace, because their trade depended upon these two provinces. *CSPV*, VIII, Nani and Soranzo to the Doge and Senate, (16)/26 June 1598, 329

her commitment to the United Provinces.²⁴ The States General responded with an expression of gratitude and devotion, adding that they hoped she would continue to protect them against ‘la tyrannie du Roi d’Espagne’.²⁵ Their hopes were not to be disappointed, for the English Queen maintained her alliance with them for the remainder of her reign.

A rather more negative, but nevertheless potent factor that may have served to strengthen the Anglo-Dutch alliance was the notion that England had little choice but to continue it. The fear that if abandoned, the Provinces would be overrun by some other European potentate, thereby threatening England’s security, was both strong and widespread, and has often been cited by historians as a reason for the survival of the alliance, as mentioned above. It had long been a consideration for Elizabeth in the making of foreign policy, and was often voiced by her ministers. In 1578, for example, the Earl of Sussex observed: ‘the case will be hard with the Queen and with England if ever the French possess or the Spaniards tyrannize in the Low Countries.’²⁶ Similarly, in 1584, Burghley warned the Queen: ‘if he [Philip II] once reduce the Low Countries to an absolute subjection, I know not what limits any man of judgment can set unto his greatness.’²⁷ It is likely that such considerations had been among the main incentives for the Queen to form the alliance with the Dutch in the first place. Indeed, she had admitted this herself, declaring that she had decided to take on their defence in order to ‘stay them from yeelding themselves in any like sort to the soveraigntie of any other strange prince.’²⁸ This continued to figure prominently in English minds throughout the period of Vere’s ascendancy. At the beginning of the year when he assumed the leadership of the Queen’s forces, his predecessor, Lord Willoughby, commented: ‘The only danger of abandoning is lest they seek help elsewhere to our disadvantage’.²⁹ Similar fears were voiced during the negotiations surrounding the peace of Vervins, concluded between France and Spain in 1598, when the idea of abandoning the Dutch alliance became particularly prominent at court. The States themselves were quick to point out ‘that if they were abandoned and fall into the hands of Spain, that will be the death-blow to

²⁴ The resultant Treaty of Westminster was signed on 16 August and ratified a month later. *SP 84*, LVII, fo.17, States General to Elizabeth, (6)/16 July 1598; fo.69, Elizabeth to States General, 28 August 1598; BM MS, Additional 19,877; Du Mont, 584-9

²⁵ *SP 84*, LVII, fo.219, States General to Elizabeth, (30 December)/9 January 1598; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Vere and Gilpin to States General, 2 November 1598

²⁶ *CSPF*, XIII, Sussex to Walsingham, 6 August 1578, 120. See also: X, Memorial for Flanders, 3 June 1572, 123; William Herle’s Discourse with the Prince of Orange, 11 June 1573, 360-3

²⁷ *Somers Tracts*, The Lord Treasurer of Burleigh’s Advice to Queen Elizabeth, in *Matters of Religion and State* [c.1583], 169-70

²⁸ ‘A Declaration of the Causes Mooving the Queene of England to give aide to the Defence of the People afflicted and oppressed in the Lowe Countries’, *Somers Tracts*, 413

²⁹ *CSPF*, XXIII, Willoughby to Burghley, 24 January 1589, 59

England.³⁰ The English were also still apprehensive that the Provinces would fall to France if the alliance was severed. John Chamberlain surmised: 'Yt may be we feare the French will fall in with the States, yf we leave them in this extremitie'.³¹ The decision to renew their commitment to the Dutch later that year did not preclude further debate about the possibility of withdrawing English assistance from the Provinces altogether. The Privy Council discussed this very matter in 1602, but the old problem of another sovereign power taking England's place in the Netherlands again came to the fore. All the members of the council were in agreement that 'we may not with any safetie suffer Spaine or the Arch Duke to be absolute in the Lowe Countries: for therby our daunger were farre more.'³²

It would therefore seem that the survival of the alliance owed much to England's intent that neither France nor Spain should attain a predominant position in the Netherlands, and thereby threaten her own security. Yet in spite of this, and the other factors which apparently strengthened the alliance, there is a strong case for arguing that it was a good deal weaker than most modern accounts imply and the allies themselves tried to suggest, and that its survival owed more to chance than to reciprocity or preconceived strategy. In fact, the harmony that seemed to exist between the allies was for the most part superficial and belied an array of simmering resentments and grievances. So grave were these by the beginning of Vere's ascendancy that some believed the days of the alliance were numbered. One of these was his predecessor, Lord Willoughby, and early in 1589 he told Burghley: 'At present there is nothing but dislike and uncertainty, which may lead to a complete divorce between these countries and England.'³³ This was hardly an exaggeration, and during the years that followed, it often seemed as though one or both parties would abandon their alliance.

One of the most serious causes of hostility was Elizabeth's attitude towards her troops in the Netherlands. As well as being somewhat grudging with the amount of aid that she was willing to send them,³⁴ she also displayed a frequent and, from the Dutch point of view, annoying tendency

³⁰ *CSPV*, IX, Contarini to the Doge and Senate, (17)/27 May and (22 August)/1 September 1598, 326-7, 340

³¹ *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 20 May 1598, 38, Vere later voiced similar doubts, confiding in Cecil: 'if theas contryes growe to any such condition of peace itt is to be suspectead for many weighty respects thatt they showld deryve theyr dependencye rather from France then Inglande'. *SP 84*, LX i, fo.122, Vere to Cecil, 28 June 1601

³² H.C. Scott, *The Journal of Sir Roger Wilbraham...1593-1616*, Camden Society, 3rd Series, IV (London, 1902), 49

³³ *CSPF*, XXIII, Willoughby to Burghley, 24 January 1589, 58. For a similar view, see: HMC, *Anc*, Gilpin to Walsingham, 4 and 8 April 1589, 274-5

³⁴ From the very beginning of the alliance, the Queen had proved reluctant to forward troops to the Provinces, and whenever the Dutch petitioned her to do so, they were usually rebuked for being ungrateful and disrespectful.

to withdraw large numbers of these with little warning and apparently even less regard for the damage or inconvenience that this would cause. This betrayed an inherent disregard for her ally's position and denied them the luxury of being able to rely upon the troops as a permanent fixture.³⁵ The new division of the Queen's resources following her commitment to Henry IV in July 1589 made the problem worse. Her involvement in France before this time had been circumspect and limited to modest financial support for the Huguenots. However, the assassination of Henry III in July 1589 forced her to step up her involvement. His successor, Henry of Navarre, was a Huguenot, and as such his hold on the crown was extremely precarious in view of the ominously strong position of the Catholics in France. Worse still, Philip II had already thrown in his lot with the Catholic League, ploughing vast amounts of money, munitions and soldiers into their cause. Elizabeth's involvement was on an altogether smaller scale, but it was nevertheless significant - particularly in its effect upon her commitment to the Netherlands.³⁶ France dominated her financial and military expenditure from 1589 to the middle of the following

One of the clearest examples of this concerns the States General's request for greater assistance at the beginning of the Armada year. Her response was one of wrathful condemnation. She swore 'by the living God' that she had not believed such ungrateful people as they lived on the earth, and protested that she had already sent them thousands of men, whom they had not paid but had left to starve or desert to the enemy. She concluded that she would not suffer such conduct, and had resolved to please herself in future. *CSPS*, IV, Reply of the Queen of England to the Request of the States for Greater Aid, 5 February 1588, 202-3. See also: *CSPV*, IX, Sacrimelli to the Doge and Senate, (3)/13 and (10)/20 March 1603, 551-2, 555

³⁵ Wernham argues that her attitude was the same towards the employment of her troops in other areas: 'the Queen regarded herself as a kind of supreme commander and looked upon the Dutch, and even Henry IV, more or less as army commanders. She felt that she had the right to move her own forces around, even sometimes to move Dutch forces around, as the general situation seemed to require'. 'English Policy and the Revolt of the Netherlands', 37

³⁶ Cruickshank's analysis of the levies raised in England and Wales for service abroad during the period 1585-1602 shows clearly how France rapidly overtook the Netherlands as the most common destination for these troops from 1589 onwards. Cruickshank, *Elizabeth's Army*, 290. There are various other estimates of the scale of England's financial and military commitments in the Netherlands and France. Dietz claims that between 1591 and 1596, Elizabeth laid out £289,000 for her troops in France, and quotes a contemporary calculation which estimated that the debt owed by Henry to Elizabeth was more than £400,000 by 1596. However, he does not provide figures for her expenditure on the Netherlands during the same period. *English Public Finance*, II, 67, 82, 459. Shaw estimates that she lent the Kings of France £381,867 between 1587 and 1598, and that she spent almost one and a half million pounds on the Dutch between 1585 and 1603. *HMC, D&D*, III, xlv-xlvi. Neale estimates that between 1589-93, Elizabeth spent around £300,000 in aiding Henry IV, whereas the cost of her forces in the Netherlands was around £500,000. *Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1934), 325. [For her expenditure in the Netherlands during the earlier period of the alliance, see Neale, 'Queen Elizabeth and the Netherlands, 1586-7', *English Historical Review*, XLV (1930), 373-96]. Wernham has calculated that by August 1591, of the 14,000 English troops in the Queen's pay on the Continent, 3,000 were in Brittany, 4,000 were at the siege of Rouen, and the remaining 7,000 were in the Netherlands. Wernham, *Return of the Armadas*, 2. He also states that between July 1589 and April 1593, Elizabeth spent £286,172 on Henry IV's behalf, compared with between £500,000 and £600,000 on the Netherlands. 'Queen Elizabeth and the Siege of Rouen', 177; *After the Armada*, 415-19. [See also footnote 11, above]. Compare this with Spain's expenditure in the same campaigns: Geoffrey Parker has calculated that between August 1590 and May 1591, Philip II spent £300,000 on the war in France and £100,000 on the defence of the Netherlands. Also, that between 1590 and 1599, he spent a total of £14,500,000 on France. He stresses that Spain often spent more on the Netherlands in one year than France and England did in ten. 'Spain, Her Enemies, and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1559-1648', *Spain and the Netherlands, 1559-1659. Ten Studies* (London, 1979), 35-6, 72. Small wonder, then, that in Spain the Netherlands was referred to as 'that voracious monster which gobbles up the troops and treasure of Spain'.—

decade.³⁷ In 1589, she sent 4,000 men to Dieppe under Lord Willoughby's command, another 3,000 were dispatched to the siege of Rouen in 1591 and remained in Henry's service until 1593, and an expeditionary force was maintained in Brittany from 1591 to 1595 in order to prevent the Spanish from using the ports of Brest and St. Malo as bases for their fleets - bases which would have formed ideal launchpads for an invasion of England.

With comparatively limited manpower resources at her disposal, it was inevitable that the Queen's involvement in France would clash with her commitment to the Dutch. During the early 1590s, it was the latter which came off worse, for with alarming regularity she withdrew large numbers of English auxiliaries from the Provinces for service in France - and this at a time when they were vital to the Dutch war effort.³⁸ The result was inevitable: resentment on the Dutch side and irritation on the Queen's at being confronted with procrastination, or worse still intransigence. In December 1590, she instructed Bodley to inform the States of her intention to divert around 3,000 of her forces in the Netherlands to France for a period of three months, and to urge them to send 2,000 of their own infantrymen.³⁹ However, she had evidently resolved to secure the troops regardless of whether the Dutch could spare them, because she told him: 'And if it should happe that without any reason they shold wilfully refuse, you shall playnly lett them know, that we have commanded you to saye, that we will not forbear to call such nombres as we thynck wele'.⁴⁰ Not surprisingly, the States did object, and rightly argued that it was 'quelque

'David or Goliath? Philip II and his world in the 1580s', in R.L. Kagan and G. Parker (eds), *Spain, Europe and the Atlantic world. Essays in honour of J.H. Elliott* (Cambridge, 1995), 257

³⁷ In 1593, the Queen recalled her troops from Normandy, and the following year decided to withdraw those stationed in Brittany. In April 1595, Villeroy complained about 'la discontinuation de l'assistance de la Royne', claiming that she had thereby played into Philip II's hands and plunged the French King into danger. The Dutch also reduced the scale of their assistance to Henry at about this time, possibly because they were being pressed to begin repaying the Queen. This prompted a similar outburst from the French, who claimed that by becoming 'mere idle spectators' of the war in France, the Dutch had greatly endangered Henry's position. *UHG*, XXI, Buzenval's Proposition, (7)/17 January and (14)/24 March 1595, 53-6, 155-9; Letter from Villeroy, April 1595, 237-8; Henry IV to Buzenval, (8)/18 May 1595, 251-4; States General to Henry IV, (23 September)/2 October 1595, 404-6; *SP* 78, XXXII, fo.110, Elizabeth to Edmondes, 5 September 1593; XXXV, fo.s 5 and 97, Henry IV to Beauvoir la Noche, (2)/12 January and (16)/26 February 1595; *CSPV*, IX, Vendramin to the Doge and Senate, (4)/14 September 1593, 106; *Edmondes Papers*, Edmondes to Burghley, 1 November 1593, 111-14; Burghley to Edmondes, 10 August 1594, 153-58; Edmondes to Burghley, 21 March 1595, 225

³⁸ The best manuscript source for the negotiations surrounding the diversion of English troops from the Netherlands to France and elsewhere is the Liassen Engelandt collection of the Algemeen Rijksarchief.

³⁹ She also dispatched Sir John Norris to the Hague for this purpose the following year.

⁴⁰ *SP* 84, XL, fo.91, Elizabeth to Bodley, 25 December 1590; XLIII, fo.183, Elizabeth to the States General, 8 November 1591; *SP* 78, XXIII, fo.s 62 and 165, Elizabeth to Henry IV, 29 January and 7 March 1591; fo.139, Henry IV - Letters to procure help for Brittany, (22 February)/4 March 1591; fo.146, Henry IV to Elizabeth, (16)/26 February 1591; XXIV, fo.26, Instructions for Sir John Norris, April 1591; fo.195, Elizabeth to Henry IV [May 1591]; fo.228, Instructions for Sir Roger Williams, March 1591; fo.282, Bond for 600 men to be sent into Brittany, 24 June 1591; BM MS, Cotton Galba D, VII, fo.343, Elizabeth to Norris, 25 December 1590; VIII, fo.24, Elizabeth to Bodley, 6 March 1591; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 I, Privy Council to States General, 17 May 1590; Elizabeth to States General, 28 September 1590; Elizabeth to States General, 9 and 10 February, 24 March 1591; Norris to States General, 15 February and 13 March 1591; Points and articles presented by Norris

chose contre le traicté' to insist upon such a large reduction of their English contingent - an increasing percentage of which was now in *their* pay, not the Queen's. Bodley reported that he had never seen them 'so farre out of temper' and 'perplexed', and added that the discontent was widespread throughout the Provinces: 'I nevere knewe the common people, to take any thing more to hart: not so muche in respect, that her Highnes doth require, to have the use of her subjects, as because they are in doubt, that they shall not be returned, and because they are thus called very suddainly away, without any warning to the contrey, in a greater number than they may spare'.⁴¹ However, Elizabeth responded by urging the States not to use such 'tedieuse' delays, as they so often did, and restated her determination to withdraw the troops as quickly as possible. The States entreated her to 'considérer que cela ne se peult faire sans grand dommage de ces Provinces', protesting that they needed all the available troops to fight Spain in their own country. They added that it would benefit Henry IV more if they concentrated all of their resources upon diverting the Spanish troops away from France.⁴² A series of hostile exchanges ensued, neither side willing to back down. The States continued to protest that they could not agree to something 'si périlleuse et préjudiciable' to the safety of the Provinces, and the Queen continued to insist that they had no right to refuse her request, seeing that the troops were hers and she could dispose of them as she saw fit.⁴³ It was Elizabeth who eventually gave in, however, and she instructed Norris to tell the States that she would only withdraw a 'petit nombre de vieux soldats', and that these would be immediately replaced by recruits drafted in England.⁴⁴

This concession was by no means a sign of things to come, however. The States' obstinacy over the demand seemed to have merely alerted Elizabeth to the difficulty of gaining their consent, and made her more determined to suffer no intransigence in future. At no time did she endeavour to

to the States General, 11 February 1591; *RSG*, VII, 91; *UHG*, XVIII, Elizabeth to States General, 16 September 1590, 284-5; States General to Elizabeth, (22 September)/1 October 1590, 294-6; Norris to States General, 6 February 1591, 392-4; *APC*, XXI, 7, 21, 28; XXIII, 3, 14, 243; *HMC*, *Anc*, Vere to Willoughby, 22 January 1590, 303-4

⁴¹ *SP 84*, XLI, fo.124, Bodley to Burghley, 3 February 1591; fo.151, Bodley to Burghley, 9 February 1591; Collins, I, Bodley to Sidney, 9 February 1591, 315

⁴² *UHG*, XVIII, States General's Answer to Norris' Memorial, (1)/11 February 1591, 394-9; States General to Elizabeth, (1)/11 February 1591, 400-1

⁴³ *ibid.*, Declaration by Norris, (3)/13 February 1591, 401-7; States General's Remonstrance, (4)/14 February 1591, 403-4; States General's Protest, (6)/16 February 1591, 405-6; States General to Elizabeth, (8)/18 February 1591, 406-9

⁴⁴ The maximum number of troops now required was 1,500. It would seem that her change of mind resulted from the States' promise to concentrate their forces upon preventing Parma and his army from marching to France. It had an apparently immediate effect upon the States' attitude towards her, as Vere reported: 'The changing of her Majesties first purpose is generally well lykead of, and the contry greatlie confirmead in their hope of this yeares service'. *UHG*, XVIII, Memorial by Norris, (8)/18 March 1591, 409-11. *SP 84*, XLI, fo.168 Instructions for Sir John Norris, 13 February 1591; fo.228, Vere to Burghley, 11 March 1591

understand the source of their objections, and instead chose to view them as unfounded excuses.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the arrogance with which she withdrew her troops from the Provinces betrayed an inherent disregard for the increasing effectiveness of the Dutch war effort. During the early 1590s in particular, due largely to the combined efforts of Maurice and Vere, the Dutch achieved a considerable degree of success in their war against Spain, reclaiming much of the territory taken by the Spanish forces during the 1580s. Admittedly, Elizabeth was perhaps justified in her preoccupation with the campaigns in France, considering that these had superseded the Netherlands as the main focal point for the war against Spain, and the threat of a Franco-Spanish collaboration if Philip were to succeed there was particularly menacing.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, her preoccupation apparently prevented her from giving the needs of her Dutch ally sufficient consideration, and she constantly undervalued their military successes. In fact, it was all too often the case that she only publicly acknowledged these successes in order to use them as a means of supporting her requests for English troops, claiming that as the Dutch had proved their strength, she could justifiably divert her forces to more needy causes.⁴⁷ Her actions suggest that she largely ignored the pleas of those who were directly involved in the Dutch war and urged the necessity of her continued support - most notable among whom was Vere himself. Given his obvious commitment to the Dutch war, it must have been particularly galling for him when, in November 1592, Elizabeth suddenly ordered a substantial portion of her troops to be withdrawn from the siege of Koevorden and diverted to Brittany, and, worse still, instructed him to help organise this. His reluctance to do so was clear, and in a rather apologetic tone, he informed the States General that he and Bodley had been ordered to secure their consent, but assured them that he would leave it entirely to the latter, protesting his own unsuitability for the task.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ HMC, *Sal*, VIII, Maurice to Essex, 16/(26) December 1598, 502; *SP 84*, LVII, fo.188, Elizabeth to Vere, 15 December 1598; fo.197, Vere to Cecil, 17 December 1598; LVIII, fo.1, Vere to Cecil, 1 January 1599; LIX, fo.223, Elizabeth to Vere, December 1599

⁴⁶ Wernham stresses the overriding importance of the French war in Elizabeth's foreign policy. He claims that if Philip had been able to seize the Channel ports, the domination of Europe would have been within his grasp, and argues: 'The stakes in France were so gigantic that they monopolized everyone's attention'. 'Queen Elizabeth and the Portugal Expedition of 1589', *English Historical Review*, LXVI (1951), 217. Parker agrees, emphasising how crucial France was to Spain: 'Any war which involved France, even covertly, became of paramount importance.' 'Spain, Her Enemies and the Revolt of the Netherlands', 41

⁴⁷ See for example: ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 II, Elizabeth to States General, 1 July 1592; Elizabeth to States General, 6 July 1593

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, Vere to States General, 22 July 1592; *SP 84*, XLV, fo.361, States General to Elizabeth, (21 November)/1 December 1592; *RSG*, VII, 585-6; VIII, 218. A comparison may be drawn here between Vere and Parma. The latter also urged his sovereign in vain to concentrate his forces in the Netherlands, rather than wasting them on campaigns in France or expeditions against England. See for e.g.: Lefèvre, III, 462-3, 483, 491, 512-15, 519, 545, 555, 573-4, 579

The Queen also diverted her troops in the Netherlands to other areas. In response to the seemingly ever-present threat of a renewed Spanish invasion,⁴⁹ she consented to two sizeable counter-offensive ventures in 1596 and 1597, both of which engendered hostility in the States General and soured their relations with her. The first of these expeditions was destined for Cadiz, and in January 1596, she wrote to her General, ordering him to attain the States' approval for the contribution of 2,000 English troops serving in the Netherlands.⁵⁰ The States immediately objected, arguing that the troops were essential to the war effort in the Provinces, but Elizabeth interpreted this as unjustified intransigence and instructed Bodley to make it clear to them that they had thereby alienated her. He duly told them: 'vos froides procedures envers elle, ont engendré en sa disposition, un pareil refroidissement envers vous'.⁵¹ When this failed to move them, the Queen herself forwarded a rather haughty letter, stressing that the Dutch had been saved by her beneficent favours, and that their unwillingness to consent to the withdrawal of the troops was a sign of ingratitude. Bodley kept up the pressure in a similar manner, accusing the States of 'deceiving' the treaty and using 'ennuyeux delais' to avoid satisfying his sovereign's demands.⁵² However, they evidently did not respond well to such blatant hostility, and it was only when Vere became involved in the negotiations that they grudgingly gave their consent, complaining nevertheless that the troops could not have been withdrawn at a worse time for the Provinces.⁵³ As soon as the expedition was over, they wrote to Elizabeth, urging her to return the troops as promised.⁵⁴ The negotiations for the Islands Voyage in 1597 followed a similar pattern. This time, the Queen requested 1,000 English troops and a contribution of ships by the States. She again used Vere as an intermediary, and evidently anticipated difficulties, for she made it clear that she would suffer no objection. Sure enough, they once more protested the damage that their campaigns would suffer as a result of the troops' departure. The negotiations continued throughout the spring, only coming to an end when the States again grudgingly agreed to the Queen's demand.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ In a sense, this threat was more grave during the 1590s than it had been in 1588. Then, Philip II's navy had been inferior to Elizabeth's and he had been without a practicable point of rendezvous. By 1596, both of these defects had been largely rectified. Corbett, *Successors of Drake*, 4

⁵⁰ *SP 84*, LII, fo.15, Elizabeth to Vere, 13 January 1596; *Vere's Commentaries*, 24

⁵¹ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 I, Bodley to States General, 11 January 1596; *SP 84*, LII, fo.18, Gilpin to Burghley, 14 January 1596

⁵² ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 I, Bodley to States General, 19 March 1596

⁵³ *SP 84*, LII, fo. 38, Bodley to Burghley, 25 Jan. 1596; fo.71, Elizabeth to States General, 16 February 1596; fo.82, Instructions for Vere, February 1596; fo.96, States General's Answer to Vere, (6)/16 March 1596; fo.113, Vere to Burghley, 20 March 1596

⁵⁴ *UHG*, XXII, Delegation of Leoninus, Van Loozen, Valcke and Franckena to England in 1596, 328

⁵⁵ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 I, Elizabeth to States General, 6 February 1597; Vere to States General, 13 June 1597; Lok. Lop., 12548.97, Elizabeth to States General, 6 June 1597; *SP 84*, LIV, fo.66, Elizabeth to Vere, 5 Feb.

The combined achievement of the two expeditions was in fact hardly impressive: they reaped few of the hoped-for rewards and proved extremely costly in terms of men and money.⁵⁶ Even though they were launched under the banner of a crusade against the 'common enemy', and comprised soldiers and ships supplied by both countries, they were devised and directed by Elizabeth alone, and for essentially English interests. The Dutch actively opposed the voyages, and with good reason. They were already encountering Spanish forces first-hand, and it was hardly in their interests to suffer a depletion of valuable manpower and resources for the sake of risky expeditions on the periphery of the conflict. It was far better to concentrate these resources upon the immediate and direct threat from the enemy which they daily faced in their provinces. Viewed in this light, the expeditions were not in the true sense joint, collaborative, or mutually beneficial: they were planned by the English, resented and only grudgingly consented to by the Dutch, and formed a manifestation of one of the most enduring sources of tension between the allies - Elizabeth's failure to give her Dutch allies the consideration and respect that they deserved.

The two voyages were later followed by another demand for a withdrawal of English troops. This time, the Queen required 2,000 of her men for an expedition to Ireland, where Spanish troops were gathering,⁵⁷ and the instructions she gave Vere betrayed her hostility towards the

1597; fo.82, Vere to Cecil, 20 Feb. 1597; fo.96, Gilpin to Cecil, 28 Feb. 1597; fo.153, Gilpin to Cecil, 1 April 1597; fo.222, Elizabeth to States General, April 1597; HMC, *Sal*, VII, Vere to Essex, 25 May 1597, 211-12; *Gedenkstukken*, II, Caron to States General, 27 April 1597, 148-52; *Vere's Commentaries*, 45. N.B. Chamberlain noted that Vere brought with him 1,200 musketeers from the Netherlands. *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 11 June 1597, 437

⁵⁶ Two further Anglo-Dutch naval expeditions were undertaken in 1601 and 1602, aimed at crushing Philip III's preparations for a new Irish expedition, but these were on a smaller scale and enjoyed only limited success. As well as launching such joint expeditions, Elizabeth also periodically asked the States for assistance in defending England against renewed threats of a Spanish Armada. ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 I, Elizabeth to States General, 17 April 1590; 5882 II, Elizabeth to States General, 1 July 1592, 3 and 22 May 1594; Bodley to States General, 21 May 1594; 5883 II, Nottingham to States General, 22 August 1598; 5884 I, Nottingham and Cecil to Opdam [Admiral of the States' fleet], 19 April 1602; Liassen Lopende, 4903 I, Cecil to Opdam, 28 April 1602; UHG, XVIII, Elizabeth to States General, 6 March 1590, 58-9; CSPD, 1601-03, Cecil to Sir Thomas Fane, 8 August 1601, 82-3; HMC, *Foljambe*, Elizabeth to Vere, [25 July 1599], 69-71; G.B. Harrison, *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1935), Elizabeth to Raleigh, 12 September 1599, 269; *Edmond's Papers*, Cecil to Edmond's, 26 October 1597, 303; *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 9 August 1599, 80; ten Raa and de Bas, *Het Staatsche Leger*, II, 305-6. The last major Spanish invasion attempt came in 1599, and led to what Boynton describes as 'national mobilisation on a scale unknown since 1588.' *The Elizabethan Militia, 1558-1638* (London, 1967), 198.

⁵⁷ CSPV, IX, Contarini to the Doge and Senate, 25 January 1598, 356. See also: CSPS, IV, Report of the Council of State to Philip III, (24 April)/4 May, (21 June)/1 July, (1)/11, (3)/13 and (13)/23 July 1600, (22 January)/1 February, (30 January)/9 February 1601, 657-58, 662-67, 682-85; Summary of the estimated cost, and details of the expedition to Ireland, 9 February 1601, 685; Memorandum of all that has occurred with relation to the reinforcements for Ireland since the fleet left Lisbon, (7)/17 December 1601, 692-95. In attempting to invade England from an Irish base, Philip III was continuing the policy of his father, whose activities in this sphere had ultimately proved fruitless. Parker refers to Philip II's failure as 'perhaps the greatest lost strategic opportunity of the 1590s.' 'David or Goliath?', 261

States. He told them that she believed the matter to be so serious that she would tolerate no delay as this would demonstrate their ingratitude towards her, as well as their unwillingness to abide by the new treaty.⁵⁸ The States were understandably reluctant to adhere to this demand, and Vere reported that they were 'much troublead' because they felt 'indaungeread with the uncertayne howld they have of her Majesties subjeacts in theyr pay'.⁵⁹ He was no more optimistic about the possibility of securing their consent the following month, and told Cecil that they 'pourpos to use all possible meanes to dyvertt her Majestie from thatt demande.'⁶⁰ The States did grudgingly accede to the Queen's request shortly afterwards, but there followed weeks of delays before the troops were assembled and set sail for Ireland.⁶¹

In view of the obvious friction caused by Elizabeth's withdrawal of her forces for service elsewhere, it seems strange that this has been regarded as symptomatic of the increasingly collaborative and reciprocal nature of the alliance. The idea is that the allied troops in the Netherlands formed an extremely useful resource upon which either side could draw in time of need.⁶² This largely ignores the overwhelming one-sidedness of the arrangement. During the 1590s, the flow of troops was largely one-way, and when considerable numbers were withdrawn, they were not always returned in full or by the date promised. This led to serious friction and even open hostility between the allies, and the Queen's high-handed attitude certainly exacerbated the situation.

Elizabeth's frequent recall of her troops in the Netherlands for service elsewhere was on its own a grave source of hostility between the allies during the early to mid-1590s in particular. Yet it was made worse by the fact that not only was she reluctant to provide them with any more troops, she was also determined to gradually acquit herself of the responsibility of paying for those which she had sent over in the past. This clearly demonstrates how eager she was to reduce her commitments in the Netherlands, thereby rendering the alliance a rather tenuous attachment - one

⁵⁸ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Vere to States General, 22 August 1599; HMC, *D&D*, II, Gilpin to Sidney, 12 and 15 August 1599, 382, 383; Whyte to Sidney, 24 and 25 August 1599, 384, 385; *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 1 August 1599, 78

⁵⁹ *SP 84*, LVII, fo.197, Vere to Cecil, 17 December 1598

⁶⁰ LVIII, fo.1, Vere to Cecil, 1 January 1599

⁶¹ LVII, fo.188, Elizabeth to Vere, 15 December 1598; LVIII, fo.10, Vere and Gilpin to Cecil, 12 January 1599; fo.21, States General to Elizabeth, (15)/25 January 1599; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Elizabeth to States General, 29 November and 31 December 1598, 1 March 1599; Vere to States General, 8 January 1599; *RSG*, X, 485-6, 493

⁶² MacCaffrey, *War and Politics*, 271

which could perhaps be severed if a more attractive alternative presented itself.⁶³ The transferral of the English troops to the pay of the States was both formalised and accelerated by the revised treaty of 1598.⁶⁴ The sixth and seventh articles of the new treaty transferred Elizabeth's auxiliary and cautionary troops to the States' pay, with the slight concession that if the latter were increased to more than the 1,500 agreed in the Nonsuch Treaty, Elizabeth would foot the bill for the extra troops.⁶⁵ Yet despite discharging herself of the responsibility of paying for her troops in the Netherlands, she evidently still regarded them as a source of manpower that she could draw upon at will, as demonstrated by her request for 2,000 of them to be withdrawn the year after the new treaty had been signed.

The Queen was also unwilling to fulfil her responsibility to those towns which still housed English governors and garrisons.⁶⁶ During the early to mid-1590s, there were fears that Ostend, which was particularly vulnerable to attack, would be besieged by the enemy. Yet the Queen refused to see it as her responsibility and instead urged the States to come to its aid. Furthermore, on the rare occasions that she did forward supplies, she demanded reimbursement. In fact, the town was of immense importance to England's security because if it had fallen into Spanish possession, it would have formed an ideal launch pad for an invasion, but she argued that it was entirely in the interests of the States to fortify and defend it: 'considering the town is theirs, and our forces there by us maintained only for the defence of the same town, and not for any particular interest to ourselves.'⁶⁷ When the town was besieged in 1601, she again proved reluctant to forward supplies, and instead urged the States to 'prendre une bonne et vive resolution' to save it, sending Caron over to press them further.⁶⁸ Vere, who had been given the

⁶³ The Dutch were evidently aware of the Queen's attitude, and as early as 1591, Bodley reported that it was doubtful whether the Provinces would agree to fund the levy of 3,000 foot soldiers and 300 horse because: 'they doe imagine already, that if the forces of these contreis shall be mucche more increased, her Majestie will take it for a fitte opportunitie to lessen her charges.' *SP* 84, XLI, fo.124, Bodley to Burghley, 3 February 1591

⁶⁴ Vere's appointment to the post of General in the States' service in this same year can therefore be regarded as symptomatic of a general trend.

⁶⁵ In fact, Elizabeth never stopped paying her garrison troops, but she did expect the States to eventually repay her for this. *ARA*, *Lias. Eng.*, 5883 II, Gilpin's transcription of the ratification of the treaty, 19 September 1598; *SP* 84, LVII, fo.69, Elizabeth to Sidney, Conway, Norris and Vere, 28 August 1598; *APC*, XXXIX, 137; Du Mont, 587

⁶⁶ As well as the cautionary towns of Flushing and Brill, there were also English garrisons in Bergen-op-Zoom and Ostend.

⁶⁷ *HMC, Sal*, IV, Elizabeth to Bodley, 21 August 1592, 224-6; *ARA*, *Lias. Eng.*, 5882 I, Bodley to States General, 4 January 1590; Elizabeth to States General, 21 January and 9 April 1591; Bodley to States General, 11 January 1591; 5882 II, Elizabeth to States General, 31 May 1593; 5884 I, Elizabeth to States General, 13 August 1602

⁶⁸ *Gedenkstukken*, II, Elizabeth to States General, 22 August 1601, 293

command of the town, was left struggling to save it and imploring both countries for assistance.⁶⁹ Elizabeth put forward similar arguments with regard to Flushing, one of her cautionary towns, the frailty of which was often complained about by Sir Robert Sidney, the English Governor there.⁷⁰

Yet the Queen was evidently not satisfied with loosening her ties with the Dutch by reducing her financial commitments in the Provinces and encouraging them to fend for themselves: she also wanted some recompense for the sums that she had already laid out in their defence. She was very fond of making reference to her investment in the Dutch war, and was prone to use it as a bargaining tool when requesting the recall of her troops. Even though the Nonsuch Treaty stipulated that repayment should only begin when peace was established,⁷¹ between 1594 and 1597 Elizabeth made increasingly frequent and serious demands for reimbursement. Again, she referred to the increasing military strength and virtual self-sufficiency of the Dutch as a means of justifying her request: it seemed that she only viewed them as equal allies when it suited her. This was reflected by a paper compiled towards the end of 1594. It claimed that 'no Example can be remembred of such a burthen, or of a tenth part therof to the Realme of England or to any other Realme in Christendome in lyke Circumstances, for the yearlie quantitie of the monie, for so many yeres continuance, and want of any Recompence'.⁷² It was most probably the work of Burghley, who shared Elizabeth's lack of enthusiasm for the Dutch cause, and he wrote a similar one the following month. This was more blatantly hostile than the first and left little room to doubt the seriousness of the demand. He referred to the excessive charges that England had borne as a result of her alliance with the Dutch, and claimed that this had been to the 'general detriment of this realm by wasting of the treasure and the people thereof, and the manifest violations of the covenants of the States, to their private benefit and enriching of themselves'. He concluded that although Elizabeth intended to 'demand restitution of her expenses, and moderate all other inconveniences', this would not endanger the Provinces because their power had

⁶⁹ Lias. Lop., 4900 II, Vere to States General, 15, 24, 29, 30 and 31 July, 6, 10, 16 and 23 August, 21 September 1601; 4901 I, Vere to States General, 18 and 20 October 1601; 4901 II, Vere to States General, 30 October, 1 and 5 November, 13 and 25 December 1601; 4902 I, Vere to States General and Council of State, 5 and 7 January 1602; Vere to States General, 10 January and 14 February 1602; *SP 84*, LXI, fo.s 151 and 193, Vere to Nottingham and Cecil, 14 July and 1 August 1601; fo.s 300 and 318, Vere to Cecil, 14 and 22 September 1601

⁷⁰ *SP 84*, XLIX, fo.195, Elizabeth to States General, 25 October 1594; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 I, Elizabeth to States General, 21 November 1595; Lok. Lop., 12548.92, Gilpin to States General, 23 March 1595; Elizabeth to States General, 25 October 1595; HMC, *Sal*, V, Sidney to Burghley, 13 October 1595, 409-11; VII, Sidney to Cecil, 17 February 1597, 68-9; Sidney to Essex, 21 May 1597, 207

⁷¹ Du Mont, 454 (article II)

⁷² *SP 84*, XLIX, fo.277, 'Reasons moving the Queenes Majestie to demaund payment', (December) 1594

increased as that of the enemy had decreased.⁷³ This was a rare, but significant, acknowledgement by the Court of the growing independence and equality of their Dutch ally. Elizabeth and her ministers were on the whole very reluctant to recognise this trend, and it seemed that they only did so when it was to their own advantage. The demand for reimbursement was a prime example, for by claiming that the Provinces were all but self-sufficient, the Queen could withdraw the bulk of her assistance with a relatively clear conscience and incite the States to begin repayment.

One of the first major demands for reimbursement was put forward by Bodley in February 1595,⁷⁴ and displayed this attitude. He conveyed the Queen's satisfaction with their recent military success, claiming that there was nothing in the world that gave her greater pleasure, but went on to allege that England was suffering greatly from the diversion of her treasure to the Netherlands. He argued that, by contrast, the Dutch had a 'si grande quantité' of money, and were therefore well able to begin repaying their debt to England.⁷⁵ The demands persisted throughout most of that year, becoming ever more insistent and causing a great deal of tension between the allies. Elizabeth grew increasingly impatient with what she viewed as excuses and delays by the States, and claimed that, considering how long they had been in debt to her, she did not think it unreasonable to ask for some repayment.⁷⁶ For their part, the States publicly acknowledged the justification of her demand, but pleaded their inability to meet it, reminding the Queen that they had already laid out substantial sums to assist the French King and defend themselves against Spain, and insisting that if they were to begin repaying her, it would 'ruiner entièrement nostre Estat.' They added that, in any case, they would not be able to discuss the matter properly for some time because their deputies had already gone back to their provinces when Bodley presented his demand, and bad weather was likely to delay their return.⁷⁷ Clearly,

⁷³ HMC, *Sal*, V, 'Lord Burghley Upon the Demands made on the States General, January 1595, 100

⁷⁴ There is some confusion over the date of Bodley's first demand. The Algemeen Rijksarchief houses two propositions by him, one dated 4 February 1594 and the other 4 February 1595. The *UHG* cites the former date, but most other collections suggest that the actual date was 1595. Only from this year onwards is there evidence of negotiations for reimbursement between the two sides. ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 II, Bodley to States General, 4 February 1594; Lok. Lop 12548.92, Bodley to States General, 4 February 1595; *UHG*, XX, Bodley to States General, 4 February 1594, 123-9. A copy of Bodley's proposition can also be found in BM MS, Harley, 287, fo.235, and for his instructions, see: Cotton Galba D, XI, fo.3

⁷⁵ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 II, Bodley to States General, 4 February 1594; Lok. Lop., 12548.92, Bodley to States General, 4 February 1595

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, Elizabeth to States General, 1 April 1595; Bodley to States General, 15 August 1595; *SP 84*, LI, fo.46, Queen's instructions for Bodley, (22 July) 1595; BM MS, Cotton Galba D, XI, fo.120, Instructions for Bodley, 22 July 1595

⁷⁷ ARA, Lok. Lop., 12548.92, States General's Reply to Bodley's Proposition, (9)/19 April 1595; *SP 84*, L, fo.50, Bodley to Burghley, 22 February 1595; fo.127, States General to Elizabeth, (11)/21 April 1595; fo.129, States General to Privy Council, (11)/21 April 1595; LI, fo.95, Bodley to Burghley, 17 August 1595; *SP 103*, XXXV,

the States were very troubled by the proposition, and Bodley noted that they were 'full of silence and sadness.'⁷⁸ Furthermore, when Elizabeth persisted with her demands, they became noticeably irritated. The English envoy sent back reports of unprecedentedly 'vehement and earnest' speeches and 'solemn protestations'. The Queen's failure to either understand or appreciate their situation was apparently the principal source of annoyance. She dismissed out of hand their insistence that such an important demand as she had made necessitated the lengthy process of consultation with the various provincial states. They therefore urged Bodley 'very exceedingly, to move her Highness to consider the composition of their government, the humor of the people, and the state of their affairs, which in a cause of this nature, would by no means admitte a speedier dispatche.'⁷⁹ They also wrote to the Privy Council, reiterating their excuses and expressing their dismay that the Queen seemed determined to reject them.⁸⁰

The deadlock in the negotiations was broken, however, when Elizabeth was forced to back down because she needed the States General's assistance for an expedition to France.⁸¹ This immediately (if temporarily) alleviated the tension between the allies because the States mistakenly believed that she had made this concession in response to their current difficulties.⁸² However, within the space of just two months, the relations were once again plunged into crisis when the States proved reluctant to support the Cadiz expedition. Elizabeth claimed that this made a mockery of the embassy that they had sent over the previous month to thank her for dropping her demands for reimbursement and express their devotion to her service.⁸³ Their gratitude then had been somewhat premature in any case, for she had clearly not given up these demands for long, and was urging their compliance again within a few months.⁸⁴ This met with a

fo.87, States' Answer to Bodley's Proposition, April 1595; *Bescheiden Bettreffende*, I, Conversation between Bodley and Oldenbarnevelt, (21 February)/2 March 1595, 303-4; BM MS, Cotton Galba D, XI, fo.55, States General's answer to Bodley's proposition, 19 April 1595; Harley, 287, fo.229, Oldenbarnevelt's overture to Bodley, 1595; Stowe, 166 fo.228, Vere to (?), 29 April 1595; *UHG*, XXI, States General to Elizabeth, (11)/21 and (19)/29 April 1595, 191-2, 212-13; *Gedenkstukken*, II, 80-92

⁷⁸ *SP* 84, LI fo.95, Bodley to Burghley, 17 August 1595

⁷⁹ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 I, Elizabeth to States General, July 1595; *SP* 84, LI fo.165, Bodley to Burghley, 25 September 1595

⁸⁰ *UHG*, XXI, States General to Privy Council, (18)/28 November 1595, 492-7

⁸¹ *Gedenkstukken*, II, Caron to States General, 25 October 1595, 80-5; *UHG*, XXI, Queen's deferral of the demand for repayment, 20 November 1595, 447-8

⁸² ARA, Lok. Lop., 12548.92, Bodley's proposition to the States General, 20 November 1595; *SP* 84, LI, fo.215, Elizabeth to Bodley, 4 November 1595; fo.219, Elizabeth to States General, 4 November 1595; fo.249, States General to Elizabeth, (23 November)/2 December 1595; fo.255, Bodley to Cecil, 26 November 1595; *RSG*, VIII, 442-50

⁸³ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 I, Bodley to States General, 11 January 1596

⁸⁴ On this occasion, Burghley calculated that Elizabeth had spent £1,186,119 on the Netherlands between 1585 and 1596, whereas the Queen claimed that it was £1,100,000, exclusive of loans. The Dutch, however, were

similar response to the first, and the tension between the allies quickly resumed. In response to allegations of breach of contract for refusing to comply with the demands for reimbursement, the States General instructed the envoys that they had sent over to England to insist that they wanted nothing more than 'l'observation du traicté de l'an 1585'. The envoys also pleaded that the Provinces could not survive without the Queen's help or pay her the sum demanded.⁸⁵ The Queen was determined not to let the matter drop, however, and she raised it again a year later.⁸⁶ This time the negotiations coincided with the uncertainties surrounding the Peace of Vervins, and continued until a settlement was reached. It was finally agreed that the States would repay £800,000 to the Queen in annual instalments of £30,000.⁸⁷ This, in addition to the transferral of the English auxiliaries to the States' pay,⁸⁸ made the new treaty quite palatable to Elizabeth, and one could be forgiven for regarding it as little short of a bribe to continue her support (albeit comparatively passive) of the Dutch cause. However, the treaty by no means permanently settled the controversy surrounding the reimbursement, and the matter continued to cause tension between the allies throughout the remainder of her reign. Less than a month after the ratification of the new treaty, the Queen ordered Vere and Gilpin to present a list of complaints about it to the States General, and amongst these was the fact that they had not yet paid the first instalment of the reimbursement, which was now overdue.⁸⁹ They still had not satisfied her demand by the following February, and the Queen again instructed Gilpin to reprimand them and urge them to 'furnir l'argent de bon heure sans ultérieur dilay ou difficulté'.⁹⁰ In fact, the States General failed to meet the first two payments, and the Queen was eventually forced to acquit them of these, but

only prepared to offer £20,000 per annum in repayment, and to promise £400,000 in four years when the wars ceased. BM MS, Harley, 287, fo.231, States' offer to the Queen, (21)/31 March 1596; *Bescheiden Bettreffende*, I, 304; *UHG*, XXII, Delegation of Leoninus, Van Loozen, Valcke and Franckena to England in 1596, 355; HMC, *D&D*, III, liii-lxii; Dietz, *English Public Finance*, 80, 455

⁸⁵ BM MS, Cotton Galba D, XII, fo.33, States General's answer to Bodley's proposition, (21)/31 March 1596; fo.47, States General to [Privy Council?], (5)/15 June 1596; *SP 103*, XXXV, fo.84, States' Answer to Bodley's Proposition, March 1596; *UHG*, XXII, Delegation of Leoninus, Van Loozen, Valcke and Franckena to England in 1596, 343-62; HMC, *D&D*, III, liii-lxii

⁸⁶ *SP 84*, LIII fo.184, Gilpin to Cecil, 2 December 1596; LV fo.285, Instructions for Sidney, December 1597

⁸⁷ Du Mont, 586-7; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Gilpin's transcription of the ratification of the Treaty, 19 September 1598; *SP 84*, LVII fo.69, Elizabeth to States General, 28 August 1598; *SP 103*, XXXV, fo.205, Obligation of the States General to the Queen for the sum of £800,000, (29 December)/8 January 1599; BM MS, Additional, 19877; Cotton Galba D, XII, fo.203

⁸⁸ As mentioned above, the garrisons in the cautionary towns continued to be maintained by the Queen, and this cost her £25,000 per annum. The transferral of her auxiliaries to the States' pay has been estimated to have saved her an annual total of £30,000. Dietz, *English Public Finance*, 83, 109, 455. Camden claims that by the new treaty, the Queen was eased of 'very great expences', which every year amounted to about £120,000. *Historie*, iv, 130

⁸⁹ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Vere and Gilpin to States General, 2 November 1598; HMC, *Sal*, VIII, Vere and Gilpin to Cecil, 31 December 1598, 526-7

only on condition that she could claim any place taken by the allies during the Flanders campaign of 1602 as a cautionary town, and that she would receive the booty that was won from joint expeditions to the Spanish coasts. She also made it clear that she was not prepared to acquit the States of any future payments.⁹¹

The question of reimbursement therefore caused a great deal of hostility between the allies during the latter half of Vere's ascendancy. Yet one factor that caused friction throughout the period 1589-1603 was the issue of trading rights. This formed a very common theme in the correspondence that passed between the allies and stirred up vehement resentment on both sides. The core of the problem lay in the extent to which both sides traded with Spain. Anglo-Spanish trade had flourished for centuries and it continued to do so during the Tudor period. However, this changed with the beginning of hostilities between the two sides, especially after the conclusion of Nonsuch in 1585. From thenceforth, England's trading links with Spain, although not completely severed, were significantly curtailed.⁹² By contrast, the Dutch continued to enjoy a lucrative trade with Spain, and this was enhanced by the war, as they furnished the enemy with arms and supplies. Understandably irritated, Elizabeth issued proclamations forbidding Dutch trade with Spain, and her merchants often disrupted their trade in the Channel by seizing and looting their merchant vessels. This rather tense situation continued throughout the period of Vere's ascendancy, and was yet another indication of the divergence of interests between the allies. While the Queen was preoccupied above all with strategic considerations in her quest to enhance England's security in Europe, the Dutch were driven by economic motives and a desire to both protect and expand their trading empire. This may be a rather generalised view of the situation, and some modern studies have emphasised the influence of economic considerations in

⁹⁰ ARA Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Gilpin to States General, 26 February and 26 May 1599; *SP 103*, XXXV, fo.241, Gilpin's Proposition to the States, November 1599; *SP 84*, LVIII, fo.136, Gilpin to Cecil, 18 April 1599; LIX, fo.98, Gilpin to Cecil, 8 October 1599

⁹¹ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5884 I, Elizabeth to States General, 15 August 1601; *SP 84*, LX ii, fo.359, Gilpin to Cecil, 21 November 1600; LXI, fo.219, Elizabeth to States General, 15 August 1601; LXII, fo.66, Memorandum of the Queen's arrangements with the States, 28 April 1602; *CSPV*, IX, Scaramelli to the Doge and Senate, (9)/19 February 1603, 534. Although the States were clearly reluctant to adhere to the repayments prescribed by the treaty, Corbett portrays their perception of the new alliance in a very different light, arguing that by this time, they were both able and willing to reimburse the Queen for her expenses. He also claims that they were militarily secure, and thus happy to contribute troops for both offensive and defensive purposes. He therefore concludes: 'the whole treaty rings with a note that loudly proclaims the decline of Spain and the rise of the two great Protestant powers, and a vigorous renewal of the war seemed clearly contemplated.' *Successors of Drake*, 236

⁹² The traditional view that Anglo-Spanish trade declined during Elizabeth's reign and collapsed in 1585 has recently come under criticism. Pauline Croft argues convincingly that this trade in fact continued (albeit illicitly) throughout the period that the two sides were officially at war. 'Trading with the Enemy, 1585-1604', *Historical Journal*, XXXII (1989), 281-302; 'English Commerce with Spain and the Armada War, 1558-1603', S. Adams and M. Rodriguez-Salgado (eds), *England, Spain and the Gran Armada, 1585-1604. Essays from the Anglo-Spanish conference, London and Madrid 1988* (Edinburgh, 1991), 236-63

the formation of Elizabeth's foreign policy.⁹³ Nevertheless, it is still accurate to state that the comparative importance of economic and strategic interests to both sides formed one of the most fundamental differences between them.

The closeness of trade to Dutch hearts was demonstrated by their frequent - and often frantic - complaints against English depredations upon their merchant ships. These were mostly voiced directly to the Queen by the States General. In August 1589, they sent a list of grievances to her, the most important of which was: 'the exceding damages that the subjects of England have donne to their merchannts, maryners, and other inhabitants of the Lowe Countries by arresting and taking their shippes, and merchandizes without restitution'. They insisted that if such incursions continued, they would cause the 'totale ruine' of their state.⁹⁴ Almost exactly a year later, a similar situation arose, and the States wrote to the Queen, presenting their 'trèsgrandes plaintes et doléances' against the 'roberies et pilleries' committed by her subjects on their merchant vessels. She replied by assuring them that she had taken immediate action to rectify the situation, but took the opportunity to criticise them for trading with the enemy and supplying them with arms and foodstuffs, thereby enabling them to continue the war against their two countries.⁹⁵ Many similar complaints were to follow,⁹⁶ and the English representatives in the Netherlands made frequent reference to the States' annoyance over the matter. Bodley, for example, observed that many Holland merchants 'exclame against our nation very bitterly' and that the States believed they were 'notoriously wronged' by English adventurers.⁹⁷

⁹³ As well as Croft's two articles mentioned above, see also: G.D. Ramsay, *The Queen's Merchants and the Revolt of the Netherlands. The End of the Antwerp Mart*, II (Manchester, 1986); 'The Foreign Policy of Elizabeth I', C. Haigh (ed), *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Basingstoke, 1984); K.R. Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering. English Privateering During the Spanish War 1585-1603* (Cambridge, 1964). Among the advocates of the more traditional view is Charles Wilson. He argues that economic interests were 'pathetically vulnerable to the slings and arrows of outrageous politics' in the formation of Elizabethan foreign policy. Wilson, *Elizabeth and the Netherlands*, 17-18. See also: Wernham, *Making of Elizabethan Foreign Policy*, 21

⁹⁴ *SP 84*, XXXIV, fo.56, States General to Elizabeth (late August?) 1589. See also: fo.21, States' Envoys to Privy Council, (5)/15 August 1589; *UHG*, XVII, States General to Elizabeth, (6)/16 August 1589, 60

⁹⁵ XVIII, States General to Elizabeth, (14)/24 August 1590, 274; Elizabeth to States General, 26 August 1590, 276-8

⁹⁶ *SP 84*, XXXVIII, fo.85, States General to Elizabeth, (14)/24 March 1590; XXXIX, fo.176, Bodley to Burghley, 28 October 1590; XLIV, fo.262, States General to Elizabeth, (24 April)/4 May 1592; XLV, fo. 299, Bodley to Burghley, 10 October 1592; fo.33, States General to Elizabeth, (16)/26 June 1592; fo.75, States General to Privy Council, (4)/14 July 1592; XLIX, fo.75, States of Zeeland to Elizabeth, (2)/12 August 1594; LII, fo.109, States General to Burghley, (15)/25 March 1596; fo.128, Maurice to Burghley, (18)/28 March 1596; LIII, fo.27, States General to Elizabeth, (20)/30 August 1596; BM MS, Cotton Galba D, IX, fo.337, Bodley to Burghley, 10 October 1592; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5881 I, States General's Deputies' propositions to Elizabeth, (10)/20 October 1589; 5882 II, Bodley to States General, 24 November 1592; *Gedenkstukken*, II, Caron to States General, 6 December 1596 and 24 September 1597, 137-40, 156-61

⁹⁷ *SP 84*, XXXIX, fo.175, Bodley to Burghley, 28 October 1590; XLV, fo.299, Bodley to Burghley, 10 October 1592

Although the Queen did occasionally order investigations into the conduct of her mariners and restitution to the Dutch merchants where necessary, these were somewhat half-hearted and ineffective, and did little to resolve the disputes.⁹⁸ Besides, she was outraged that the Dutch were, as she saw it, helping the enemy towards victory by ensuring that they had a ready supply of victuals and munitions. As well as complaining to the States directly,⁹⁹ she also published proclamations prohibiting trade with Spain. For example, in September 1597, she declared it unlawful to carry grain or other victuals, as well as any kind of munitions, into Spain or Portugal, and ordered the arrest of any ships found doing so, followed by the surrender of the goods on board.¹⁰⁰ Elizabeth was clearly angry that while the war with Spain disrupted her own trade, it provided the Dutch with a lucrative business, but she was also envious of her allies. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the Dutch commercial empire was beginning to take shape, and the foundations were being laid for their domination of trade both within and outside Europe. This caused much jealousy and resentment in England, and the United Provinces tended to be viewed as a prosperous nation which was well able to fund its own wars, but which instead frittered away the Queen's resources. This resentment came to the surface during the peace negotiations of 1598. Chamberlain observed that one of the 'chiefest reasons' in favour of peace with Spain was 'a kind of disdain and envie at our neighboures welldoinge: in that we for theyre sake and defence entring into the warre, and being barred from all commerce and entercourse of marchandise, they in the meane time thrust us out of all trafficke to our utter undoing...and theyr owne advancement'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ See for example: P.L. Hughes and J.F. Larkin (eds), *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, III (New Haven, 1969), 71-4

⁹⁹ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 I, Elizabeth to States General, 8 September 1590; 5882 II, Elizabeth to States General, 22 May 1594; 5883 II, Gilpin to States General, 26 May 1599; *SP 84*, LV, fo.159, Sidney to Burghley, 4 October 1597; fo.179, Gilpin to Cecil, 23 October 1597; BM MS, Cotton Galba D, X, fo.123, Instructions for Bodley, 5 May 1594; fo.152, Bodley to Burghley, 13 June 1594; *RSG*, VII, 577-79, 580-2; *UHG*, XVIII, 'Conditions Under which the Queen would allow trade with Spain', 27 July 1590, 240-42

¹⁰⁰ *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 183-5. See also for example: *ibid.*, 83-6; 'A Proclamation publishing certain just causes for prohibition and staye of caryage of victual and other provisions of warre by seas into Spayne, for contynuaunce of the King of Spaynes purposes to invade most unjustly her Majesties Dominions; with authoritie for the staye thereof by sea', 27 September 1597, J. Payne Collier (ed), *The Egerton Papers*, Camden Society, XII (London, 1840), 259-63

¹⁰¹ *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 20 May 1598, 38. Such views were apparently shared by the majority of Elizabeth's subjects, especially, of course, the merchant community. In May 1598, the Venetian ambassador in France noted that the English were 'very desirous of peace' because they wanted to reopen their trade with Spain, and resented the fact that the Dutch were not excluded from trading with the enemy and had thereby 'amazingly increased their wealth'. *CSPV*, IX, Contarini to the Doge and Senate, (17)/27 May 1598, 326

Despite the irritation that the conflict of trading interests caused to both sides, however, it was never resolved, and while there was no major dispute on the matter, it remained a source of simmering resentment between them.¹⁰² The issue of trading rights had not been addressed by the Nonsuch Treaty, and therefore neither side could substantiate their complaints with evidence of broken clauses. An attempt had been made to settle the matter in 1590. It was suggested that the Dutch could continue trading with Spain, provided that it was only in 'comodities not hurtfulle to her Majestie', and that they would pay her a custom for the privilege of passing through the 'narrow seas'.¹⁰³ The Dutch were unlikely to renounce this lucrative strand of their trade, however, and the attempt came to nothing. Trade disputes therefore continued unabated until 1598, when the negotiations for the treaty revision sparked off another attempt to clarify the situation.¹⁰⁴ Yet again, however, this proved fruitless, and the new treaty contained no reference to trading rights, concentrating instead upon the matter of reimbursement. The allies therefore continued to bicker over this issue for the remainder of Elizabeth's reign.¹⁰⁵

What appeared to be an even more serious cause of friction was the threat that either side would abandon the alliance in favour of a separate agreement with Spain. This possibility remained a dominant theme in the exchanges between the allies throughout the period 1589-1603. In fact, Spain began as and remained the predominant influence upon the relations between the allies, as well as upon Europe as a whole, as Kamen stresses: 'Spanish power was the most obvious reality of European politics for over a century'.¹⁰⁶ She was the foremost power in Europe and seemed to cherish aspirations of world hegemony. As Parker points out, Philip II's coronation as King of Portugal in 1581 'created the first empire upon which the sun never set'.¹⁰⁷ Although recent historiography has emphasised the limitations of Spain's power and the failings of Philip's expansionist designs,¹⁰⁸ the fact that she still dominated Europe by the end of Elizabeth's reign is undisputed. Contemporaries were well aware of Spain's power. In 1585, Henry of Navarre commented with some apprehension upon 'the ambition of the Spaniards who, having acquired

¹⁰² den Tex describes it as an endless battle of wits, which was tiring for both parties because neither conceded anything substantial or allowed matters to come to a head.' *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 104

¹⁰³ *SP 8-I*, XXXVI, fo.224, 'Considerations touching the Low Countries', 14 March 1590

¹⁰⁴ LVII, fo.239, Emanuel van Meteren's representation to the States General (1598)

¹⁰⁵ Du Mont, 584-9; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Gilpin to States General, 26 May 1599

¹⁰⁶ H. Kamen, *Golden Age Spain* (London, 1988), 5

¹⁰⁷ Parker, 'David or Goliath?', 245

¹⁰⁸ Parker argues: 'The empire on which the sun never set had become a target on which the sun never set', and adds: 'Philip II, who on his coronation day at Tomar in 1581 had seemed like David, by the time of his death in 1598 had begun to resemble Goliath.' *ibid.*, 266

domination of so many lands and seas, believe no part of the world to be inaccessible to them'.¹⁰⁹ Elizabeth, too, appreciated the gravity of the threat posed by Spain. It was for this very reason that she was so reluctant to enter into open conflict with him in 1585 on behalf of the Dutch, and was therefore eager to return to peaceful terms with him.¹¹⁰ Her reluctance to enter and maintain the alliance with the Dutch rebels, together with her aversion to being at war with Spain, were feelings which seemed to dominate her outlook throughout the period of Vere's ascendancy, and often made her appear more favourably disposed towards the Spanish King than towards her Dutch allies. This was accentuated by her perception of the Provinces as a confused mass of states which were weak and divided because they had no sovereign to guide them. By contrast, she could relate to Philip II quite easily because as King of Spain he was a fellow monarch, and the likelihood of her abandoning the rebellious subjects of the Netherlands and forging a separate alliance with him seemed all too real. In fact, the Queen made this perfectly clear in one of her letters to the States, written early in 1588, in which she admonished them for voicing their fears about her negotiations with Spain. She told them in no uncertain terms: 'Princes can discuss matters as private persons cannot do', and protested that they themselves were 'simply ordinary persons in comparison with Princes'. She therefore ordered them to 'let Princes act as they think fit'.¹¹¹

The Queen's apparent distaste for her alliance with the Dutch, coupled with her inclination to make peace with Spain, were themes which dominated the exchanges between the allies throughout the period of Vere's ascendancy, and deprived the Dutch of feeling any real security in their attachment. The English who served in the Netherlands often reported rumours that Elizabeth was on the verge of concluding a peace with Spain and abandoning her Dutch allies. In July 1590, for example, Sir Robert Sidney informed Burghley that he had met a man of 'good credit' with the States, 'whome I found wonderfully troubled: becaus as he sayd her Majesty was enterred into a new treaty of peace with the king of Spain without the knowledg of the States of this contrey and that all the cheefe points were already concluded upon between her Majesty and the sayd king'. He added that if they were to hear of this, the people of Flushing would 'take a great alarum', and the States would try to reclaim the town for themselves.¹¹² Indeed, on this

¹⁰⁹ *Archives*, I, 11

¹¹⁰ This casts doubt upon Geyl's claim that, after the Armada of 1588, Elizabeth was 'cured for good of the illusion that peace with him was possible.' Geyl, *Revolt of the Netherlands*, 218. By contrast, Corbett argues: 'The dominant note of her foreign policy was a fanatic love of peace', and describes the war with Spain as the 'deepest sorrow' of her life. *Successors of Drake*, 3-4

¹¹¹ *CSPS*, IV, Reply of the Queen of England to the Request of the States for Greater Aid, 5 February 1588, 202-3

¹¹² *SP 84*, XXXVIII, fo.5, Sidney to Burghley, 2 July 1590

occasion, the rumour became so rife that the Queen was compelled to write to a number of Dutch towns herself in order to assure them that it was entirely false. She argued that the ‘bruits très faulx et scandaleux’ had been stirred up to give ‘mauvaises et pernicieuses impressions de nous et de noz actions’, and assured them: ‘nous ne désirons de vous aultre chose qu’une bonne et amyable correspondance’.¹¹³ Nevertheless, the Dutch had good reason to be uneasy about her intentions. During the autumn of 1594, Elizabeth held talks with Richardot and the Imperial ambassadors, and for a while there seemed a real danger that an agreement would be reached.¹¹⁴ Within two years, it was again reported that she was ‘really desirous’ of peace, and was likely to come to terms with Spain, even though the Dutch remained adamant that they would not. The Venetian ambassador in France claimed: ‘The Queen has come near to breaking with them on this point, and it seems that she would conclude a truce if no mention were made of the States. She is tired of these wars, and would like to pass the short remainder of her days in peace.’¹¹⁵

From the Dutch point of view, however, the most potent threat of an Anglo-Spanish peace came in 1598. At this time, it also seemed likely that Henry IV would come to terms with Spain, and both he and Philip II encouraged the Queen to join a pact. The States General wrote to Henry and Elizabeth at the beginning of that year, inciting them not to break the Triple Alliance by concluding such a treaty. They insisted that continuing the war against Spain was the ‘seul, et unique moyen pour conserver les personnes de voz Majestez, et leurs Royaulmes et l’estat de ces Provinces unies contre les Invasions d’Icelluy Roy d’Espagne.’¹¹⁶ In addition, they claimed that it was their opposition to Spain that had prevented Philip II from ‘dictating to the world at the present moment, and from making himself Monarch of Europe.’¹¹⁷ In March, the States sent delegations to both England and France in order to push forward their arguments.¹¹⁸ As it

¹¹³ *ibid.*, fo.153, Elizabeth to various Dutch towns, 7 August 1590

¹¹⁴ This was avoided, however, when Elizabeth suddenly changed her mind, apparently offended at the lack of respect that had been shown to her by the ambassadors. Lefèvre, IV, 257, 259, 267. See also: 196-7

¹¹⁵ *CSPV*, IX, Duodo to the Doge and Senate, (24 January)/3 February 1596, 182

¹¹⁶ *SP* 84, LVI, fo.5, States General to Elizabeth, (2)/12 January 1598; fo.96, Gilpin to Burghley, 29 April 1598. A few days earlier, Cecil reported that the States ‘desire the Queene to stoppe hir eares’ to Spanish peace offers. *Edmondés Papers*, Cecil to Edmondés, 31 December 1597, 320

¹¹⁷ *CSPV*, IX, Contarini to the Doge and Senate, (3)/13 May 1598, 322. Both the States and Elizabeth attempted to induce Henry to resist Spanish offers by promising substantial numbers of troops and supplies. Contarini reported from France that the Queen offered to pay for 6,000 foot soldiers, and that the States pledged 6,000 foot and 2,000 horse, as well as eighty fully equipped ships, artillery and munitions. *SP* 78, XLII, fo.361, Note on negotiations about peace with the Dutch Ministers in France, [1598]; *CSPV*, VIII, Contarini to the Doge and Senate, 31 January and (3)/13 May 1598, 309, 322

¹¹⁸ For a narrative of these delegations, see: HMC, *D&D*, III, lxiv-lxxvi; *Gedenkstukken*, II, Henry IV to Oldenbarnevelt, (17)/27 January 1598, 172; A narrative of the delegation of Oldenbarnevelt, Justin of Nassau and Aerssens, [June] 1598, 177-245; Aerssens to Oldenbarnevelt, (19)/29 May 1598, 248-50; Justin of Nassau and Oldenbarnevelt to Caron, (20)/30 May 1598, 251-2; Memorial by Oldenbarnevelt, [May 1598], 252-6;

became increasingly likely that the French King, at least, would agree to the peace,¹¹⁹ the States focused their efforts upon trying to ensure that the Queen did not follow his example, and their delegation in France (which included Oldenbarnevelt) was diverted to England on its way back to Holland.¹²⁰ The States and their envoys reminded her of their contribution to the Cadiz expedition and Islands Voyage, and promised to provide four or five thousand men for future ventures. In addition, they offered some reimbursement for the sums that she had already invested in their cause.¹²¹ The Queen was not to be easily persuaded, however, and apparently persisted in her conviction that peace with Spain was the most desirable option.¹²² Nevertheless, she clearly did not wish to choose between a Spanish and a Dutch alliance, and therefore sought to persuade the latter to enter a general peace with the former. At first, she wrote 'fair words' to the Dutch, assuring them that she had told the French King: 'wee can never accepte any conference but wherein the States shall be included, from whome wee never meane to besmirche us of any separation'.¹²³ However, she subsequently took a somewhat harder line with them, and employed Vere and Gilpin to use some quite forceful arguments of persuasion.¹²⁴ Her instructions to them formed a rather curious combination of understanding and impatience,

Conference between Oldenbarnevelt and Buckhurst, (19)/29 July 1598, 264-6; Minute by Oldenbarnevelt, (22 July)/1 August 1598, 266-8

¹¹⁹ Although Henry was clearly anxious to end the huge costs involved in war with Spain, the previous year Elizabeth's ambassador in France had put forward a more amusing theory, claiming that the King desired peace because it would leave him free to 'follow his hunting and his wenching, wherin he doth much solace himself.' BM MS, Additional, 4125, fo.293, Edmondes to Cecil, 10 February 1597

¹²⁰ *Bescheiden Bettreffende*, I, Henry IV to Oldenbarnevelt, (3)/13 and (17)/27 January, (3)/13 March 1598, 370, 307-1, 380; Oldenbarnevelt's speech to Elizabeth, 26 May 1598, 392-96; Aerssens to Oldenbarnevelt, (19)/29 May 1598, 397-400; Essex to Justin of Nassau and Oldenbarnevelt, (22 May)/1 June 1598, 404; Narrative of Justin of Nassau, Oldenbarnevelt, and the States' Deputies in England, (26 May)/5 June 1598, 407-63; *SP* 78, XLI, fo.259, Deputies of the States General to Cecil, from Blois, (21)/31 March 1598

¹²¹ *SP* 84, LVI, fo.144, Dutch offers to stop the Queen making peace with Spain, May 1598; fo.148, Offer of Dutch deputies to the Queen, May 1598; fo.184, States General to Elizabeth, (30 June)/10 July 1598; LVII, fo.17, States General to Elizabeth, (6)/16 July 1598; fo.36, Offer of States General to continue the war, (15)/25 July 1598; *SP* 103, XXXV, fo.s 27 and 182, States' offers to the Queen to prevent her making peace with Spain, June 1598; fo.s 209 and 220, States' offers and council's replies [1598]; BM MS, Cotton Galba D, XII, fo.s 183, 184, 216-240, States offers to continue the war; fo.181, Cecil to [?], 23 July 1598; *Bescheiden Bettreffende*, I, Oldenbarnevelt's speech to Elizabeth, (16)/26 May 1598, 392-6; *CSPV*, IX, Contarini to the Doge and Senate, (14)/24 July and (22 August)/1 September 1598, 333, 339-40; *RSG*, X, 80-91; *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 20 May and 30 August 1598, 38, 42

¹²² Chamberlain noted that although Oldenbarnevelt had tried his utmost to secure England's continued involvement in the war, 'I feare we are deafe on that side, and no musike will please us unles yt be to the tune of peace.' *ibid.*, Chamberlain to Carleton, 20 May 1598, 38. See also: BM MS, Lansdowne, 814, fo.43, 'A Letter from Sir Thomas Bodley...to a great Privy Counsellor' [1598]; Cotton Galba D, XII, fo.164, 'Responce donnée par 3. Conseilliers de sa Majesté à la proposition des Deputez de Messieurs les Estats generaulx du Pais bas', [1598]; fo.s 188 and 192, Consideracions for the Peace, [1598]

¹²³ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 I, [Elizabeth to Gilpin], [1597?]; *Gedenkstukken*, II, Elizabeth to States General, 22 May 1598, 245

¹²⁴ Elizabeth was clearly resentful that the Dutch were effectively making her choose between peace and war. In January 1598, Edmondes reported that Henry IV had heard that Elizabeth 'doth passionatelic desier a peace, and

friendliness and hostility. On the one hand, she wished them to reassure the States that she would act with their best interests at heart and do nothing that might endanger their provinces. On the other, she wanted them to make it clear just how much (in terms of men, money and England's safety) she had sacrificed for their sake, and that it would be in her interests to renounce the Nonsuch Treaty and join the Vervins pact. She also ordered her envoys to find out how the States proposed to continue the war and provide for her safety if she were to reject the Spanish and French offers.¹²⁵ This latter request suggests that, by this juncture, Elizabeth had decided not to abandon her alliance with the Dutch - for the time being, at least.¹²⁶

It had been a very close run thing, however. After years of flirting with the idea of making peace with Spain and checking the continual drain on her resources, she had been presented with one of the most alluring opportunities to do so, particularly as France was also tied up in the pact and was therefore less likely to forge a separate attachment with the Dutch. Yet she chose to persevere with an alliance that had apparently brought her nothing but inconvenience, frustration and expense, and on 12 August signed the Treaty of Westminster with the Dutch.¹²⁷ Perhaps it came down to the perennial fear that if the Dutch were abandoned in favour of peace with Spain, they would - either by a separate agreement or military weakness - fall prey to Spanish, or even French, domination. How rational was this fear? As regards Spain, it was highly rational - at least for the first few years of the Anglo-Dutch alliance. The Spanish forces had made great progress in the northern Netherlands during the 1580s and had threatened to overrun those provinces altogether. However, the diversion of these forces to France after 1589 enabled the Dutch to begin recapturing much of the territory lost to Spain during the 1580s, and it became increasingly obvious that the northern provinces would not be forced to return to Spanish

speakeh Contemptible of those of the lowe Countries, saying that they doe not meritt that she should hazard her State for them'. *Edmondes Papers*, Edmondes to Cecil, 21 January 1598, 324-5

¹²⁵ BM MS, Cotton Galba D, XII, fo.s 159, 166 and 174, Instructions for Vere, 7 June 1598; Sloane 33 fo.2, Instructions to Gilpin, 1598; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Gilpin to States, 9 January 1598; Vere and Gilpin to States General, (19)/29 June 1598; *SP 84*, LVI, fo.5, States General to Elizabeth, (2)/12 January 1598; fo.19, States' answer to Gilpin, (16)/26 January 1598; fo.96, Gilpin to Burghley, 29 April 1598; fo.115, Oldenbarnevelt to Caron, (11)/21 May 1598; fo.s 177 and 181, Vere and Gilpin to Cecil, 21 and 29 June 1598; LVII, fo.1, Vere and Gilpin to Cecil, 1 July 1598; fo.69, Elizabeth to States General, 28 August 1598; *Gedenkstukken*, II, Caron to States General, 7 June 1598, 257-9 [see also: 259-63n]; HMC, *Sal*, VIII, States General to Essex, (6)/16 July 1598, 250; Vere and Gilpin to Essex, 21 and 29 June 1598, 222-23, 238-39; HMC, *D&D*, III, lxvii-lxviii, lxxii-lxxiii; *CSPV*, VIII, Contarini to the Doge and Senate, (23 June)/3 July 1598, 330; *Edmondes Papers*, Edmondes to Cecil, 22 June 1598, 332; *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 4, 17 and 31 May 1598, 33-4, 36, 39-40

¹²⁶ Nevertheless, right up until she signed the Treaty of Westminster with the Dutch, it was widely believed that she would make peace with Spain. *CSPS*, IV, Archduke Albert to Philip II, (2)/12 August 1598, 648-9; *CSPV*, VIII, Contarini to the Doge and Senate, (9)/19 August 1598, 337

¹²⁷ *SP 84*, LVII, fo.17, States General to Elizabeth, (6)/16 July 1598; fo.69, Elizabeth to States General, 28 August 1598; BM MS, Additional, 19877; Du Mont, 584-9

authority - at least, not through military pressure.¹²⁸ The possibility that they would do so by treaty was also quite remote. Having attained military strength, complemented by freedom of worship and a relatively coherent system of government, they were unlikely to risk everything by agreeing to reinstal Philip II as their sovereign - particularly as he showed little sign of compromising on the religious issue.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, it is also conceivable that having acquired this position of strength, the Dutch would have felt more confident in concluding a truce with Spain.¹³⁰ This would have carried inherent dangers for Elizabeth if she were not included because in such a situation the Dutch could have allowed the Spanish King to use their ports as bases or shelter for any future invasion of England that he might undertake. Yet even this danger was offset by the steady decline of Spanish military power during the last decade of the sixteenth century. By contrast England's military strength was increasing - particularly in the naval sphere. All this considered, the danger that the northern Netherlands would be overrun by Spain if England abandoned the alliance was significantly less in the later 1590s than it had been a decade earlier.

The fear of the French taking over where England had left off in the Netherlands was also ill-founded. Although France was England's traditional enemy and enjoyed a greater proximity to the Netherlands, during the second half of the sixteenth century she posed less of a threat because she was preoccupied with internal strife. The civil wars had created deep divisions within her country, and these were compounded by the involvement of foreign powers: indeed, France overtook the Netherlands as the major battlefield for the European power-struggle during the early 1590s. In such a situation, it was unlikely that she would be able to disentangle herself from her own troubles long enough to take over the sovereignty of another country. While Henry IV managed to forward some assistance to the Netherlands during the 1590s, he was in no position to take over England's role as chief ally of the Dutch. Admittedly, his situation did improve after his conversion to Catholicism in 1593 effectively put an end to the civil wars, and after he made peace with Spain five years later. However, this peace also prevented him from becoming involved in the Netherlands on anything more than a covert level. If Elizabeth really

¹²⁸ Israel claims that by 1597: 'what had initially been a precarious strip of rebel territory had become one of the great powers of Europe.' *The Dutch Republic*, 253

¹²⁹ Neale argues that the increasing prosperity and independence of the Dutch made them 'less inclined' towards peace. *Queen Elizabeth*, 348. Similarly, Israel claims that the Dutch were unwilling to renounce their hard-won stability, cohesion and prosperity, having developed a 'siege mentality steeped in suspicion of anything apt to weaken barriers, lessen vigilance, and blur dividing lines', and that they therefore gave little credit to Spanish peace proposals. *The Dutch Republic*, 255-6

¹³⁰ Just four years after Elizabeth's death, they did agree to a ceasefire, and two years later concluded a truce with Spain.

did fear that the Dutch would replace her with the French King were she to abandon them, this was therefore quite irrational. Perhaps her perception was influenced by the temporary collaboration between the Dutch and French in the early 1580s, when the States had offered the sovereignty to Henry III, and his brother, the Duke of Anjou, had briefly assumed the leadership of the northern provinces. However, by the later 1590s, the situation had changed dramatically, and the Dutch no longer wanted the French King (or any other foreign potentate for that matter) to assume the sovereignty of their provinces. It would seem that an observation made by Wilkes at the beginning of that decade still rang true: 'they are fixed so strongly upon their liberties, and hate with a most perfect hatred, as well the Spaniard as any other monarchial commaundment over them.'¹³¹

After the first few years of their connection with England, therefore, it became increasingly unlikely that the Dutch would submit to either Spanish or French domination if Elizabeth decided to abandon the alliance. Moreover, the available evidence suggests that she and her ministers had more than an inkling of this. They became increasingly confident about the idea of ending their war with Spain, and were apparently willing to risk the fate of the Netherlands in doing so. During the debates at court in 1598 over the question of joining the Vervins pact, John Chamberlain remarked: 'though the feare of the Spaniards recovering those countries and increasing greatnes do somewhat trouble us, yet yt is thought but a weake pollicie for feare of future and uncertaine daunger (which many accidents may divert) to indure a present and certaine losse.'¹³² A decade earlier, the Queen herself had told the Dutch that they should not comfort themselves with the thought that she was bound to help them for her own safety, and claimed that it would be quite easy for her to revert to the friendship that she had enjoyed with Philip II before 1585.¹³³ Such remarks were based upon sound reasoning. As argued above, the severing of the Anglo-Dutch alliance would not necessarily have threatened England's security - or at least, not more so than did her involvement in the Netherlands. Besides, the Queen could have safeguarded against Spanish (or, indeed, French) domination in the Provinces by continuing to assist the Dutch secretly in the event of her withdrawing from the war with Spain, just as Henry IV was to after Vervins.¹³⁴ In fact, this was proposed four years later in a meeting of the Privy Council. Sir Roger Wilbraham noted that all of the councillors agreed that: 'if we might contynewe amitie with the Low Countreys, peace with Spaine were to be embraced: *rebus sic stantibus*.'

¹³¹ HMC, *D&D*, II, Wilkes to Sidney, 22 July 1590, 109

¹³² *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 20 May 1598, 38

¹³³ *CSPS*, IV, Reply of the Queen of England to the Request of the States for Greater Aid, 5 February 1585, 203

¹³⁴ See below, 76, 80

Furthermore, that if such a peace were concluded, 'we must secretlie ayd the Lowe Countreys against them'.¹³⁵ Such a situation would have been unsatisfactory for the Dutch, for it would have deprived them of their only official ally in Europe and would also have threatened to further diminish the English assistance that they were already struggling to cling on to. Nevertheless, it was a realistic option for Elizabeth, and one which she seriously considered taking. Indeed, her successor was to prove that it was possible to replace the Dutch alliance with a Spanish one without withdrawing English assistance from the Netherlands altogether. Moreover, James did not even have to continue this assistance covertly: he retained the cautionary towns of Flushing and Brill, and the Spanish King agreed to allow the English contingent to remain in the Provinces at the States' expense, as well as to let the Dutch raise further levies in England.¹³⁶ Such a treaty could also have been negotiated by Elizabeth. During the later 1580s and most of the following decade, the choice that she faced had been quite clear-cut: peace with Spain or alliance with the Dutch, neither Philip nor the States being willing to make the concessions necessary to allow the conclusion of a general peace. However, by the last years of the century, this situation had changed. The Spanish were growing weary of the expensive war that was still dragging on in the northern provinces and, particularly after Philip II's death in 1598, had virtually lost all hope of returning them to Spanish sovereignty - at least by military subjugation. It was therefore quite possible that they would have been willing to tolerate the maintenance of an English military presence in the Netherlands as part of a peace settlement with Elizabeth. Towards the end of her reign, therefore, the previously sharp distinction between peace with Spain and alliance with the Dutch was becoming more blurred, and she could conceivably have had the best of both worlds rather than being forced to opt for one side or the other.

Nevertheless, the Queen chose not to come to terms with Spain in 1598. Perhaps the prospect of reimbursement from the Dutch for all the money that she had laid out in their defence provided a sufficiently strong incentive for her to stand by them.¹³⁷ She insisted that some form of repayment was the very least that they could offer, considering that: 'no prince has ever done more for a country in Christendom, or for so long.' She added that for every day that their alliance continued, the offence taken against her by 'divers monarchs', with whom she would otherwise have been in 'perfect amity', multiplied. In view of this, she argued, if they refused to

¹³⁵ Scott, *Wilbraham Journal*, 49

¹³⁶ For a full transcript of this treaty, see: Stow, *Annales*, 845-55

¹³⁷ Dietz certainly believes that this was the case, and argues that the matter of reimbursement was, for Elizabeth, the greatest obstacle to making peace with Spain and abandoning the Dutch: 'England was so far in apparently, that she could not get out unless she were assured that she would suffer no financial loss.' *English Public Finance*, 82

reimburse her, it would be a great insult, as well as 'an example to all the Monarkes in Europe to enterlace there fortunes with those whose eies looke onlie forward and ar themselves without eyther remembrance or comparyson of that estate in which there fryndes did fynd them.'¹³⁸ The fact that the States were therefore effectively having to buy the Queen's support suggests that the alliance was neither as strong or binding as so many have believed it to be. Far from feeling a sense of religious or ideological unity with the Provinces, it seems that she mostly felt regret, or even resentment, that England's fate was tied to theirs, and she therefore sought compensation wherever possible. Fortunately, from the Dutch point of view, the lure of financial reward was sufficient for the time being to prevent her from making peace with Spain, but there was still no guarantee that she would not do so in the future.

Indeed, the Treaty of Westminster was in a sense deceptive. Rather than fortifying the alliance, as both contemporary and modern observers have suggested,¹³⁹ it actually signalled its demise. In transferring the financial - and, indeed, military - responsibilities involved in the alliance to the Dutch, the treaty allowed the Queen to withdraw from their conflict to a greater degree than at any time since the conclusion of Nonsuch. Whereas the first treaty had effectively made Elizabeth their protector, the revised version of 1598 gave England's defence paramount importance, stipulating that if the enemy attacked her shores, the States must send 5,000 foot soldiers and 500 horse to her aid, as well as 30 or 40 warships, and that they must also provide backing for any enterprise that the Queen chose to undertake against Spain. In return, she was only obliged to give the Dutch as much further assistance as she saw fit.¹⁴⁰ This new treaty therefore propelled the Dutch towards self-sufficiency, but it by no means formed an acknowledgement of their equality and independence: in fact, the Queen failed to make such an admission throughout the remainder of her reign. Rather, it illustrated Elizabeth's determination to reduce her commitments in the Netherlands and seek redress for her former assistance. It effectively enabled her to loosen the ties that bound the allies together, and should not therefore be viewed as a confirmation and strengthening of their attachment. Indeed, during the weeks and months after it had been signed, Elizabeth apparently remained receptive to Spanish overtures, and many believed it likely that she would still join the Vervins coalition. This belief certainly

¹³⁸ BM MS, Cotton Galba D, XII, fo. 159, 'Instructions for Sir F. Veyer', 7 June 1598; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Vere and Gilpin to States General, 29 June 1598

¹³⁹ The Venetian ambassador in France mistakenly reported that by virtue of the new treaty, Elizabeth intended 'to lend more protection than ever to the States.' *CSPV*, IX, Contarini to the Doge and Senate, 24 February 1599, 361. Similarly, Corbett describes the new treaty as 'a fresh and more strenuous alliance'. *Successors of Drake*, 234

¹⁴⁰ Du Mont, 454-5, 584-9

seemed strong in the Spanish Court, and the Venetian ambassador there reported in December 1598: 'The Queen lends a more ready ear than ever she did before.'¹⁴¹ The following spring, Elizabeth received a Spanish envoy at court, and expressed a desire to reopen negotiations. While she assured the Dutch that she would not make peace without them, and it was suspected that she was employing 'accustomed artifices' to divert the Spanish King from her preparations for war, the fact that she was maintaining the lines of communication between herself and Spain posed a menacing threat to the Dutch, who feared that in spite of their renewed treaty, she might still abandon them in favour of an accord with Spain.¹⁴² Later that year, she was again holding talks with Spain, and the States were so disturbed upon hearing of this that they wrote to her, urging: 'Qu'il falloit estre avec plus de soing sur la garde, et se préparer à defence quant les ministres d'Espagne commencent parler de paix, que lors qu'ils menacent de guerre.'¹⁴³ The Queen assured them (through Vere) that she would do nothing to prejudice their state, but she was clearly anxious for peace and frustrated at their dogged refusal to entertain such an idea.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, during the closing weeks of the year, her patience with them seemed to snap, and she informed them that she had resolved to conclude a peace with Spain.¹⁴⁵ To this end, she dispatched envoys to meet those of the Archduke at Boulogne the following year, and a conference ensued, lasting from May to July.¹⁴⁶ Although these negotiations also proved fruitless, they did not extinguish Elizabeth's desire for peace, and she apparently continued to aim for this

¹⁴¹ CSPV, IX Soranzo to the Doge and Senate, (29 November)/9 December 1598, 350; Contarini to the Doge and Senate, (12)/22 December 1598, 352

¹⁴² *ibid.*, Contarini to the Doge and Senate, (24 February)/6 March, (15)/25 April and (5)/15 May 1599, 361-2, 367, 368; Soranzo to the Doge and Senate, (31 May)/10 April and (26 June)/6 July 1599, 365, 370; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Gilpin to States General, 26 February and 30 April 1599

¹⁴³ SP 84, LIX, fo.94, States General to Elizabeth, (7)/17 October 1599. See also: fo.140, State General to Elizabeth, (16)/26 November 1599; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Elizabeth to States General, 15 October 1599; Gilpin to States General, 25 October 1599; Collins, II, Whyte to Sidney, 29 August and 2 October 1599, 114, 130; HMC, D&D, II, Whyte to Sidney, 29 September and 3 November 1599, 396, 409; CSPV, IX, Contarini to the Doge and Senate, (2)/12 December 1599, 386; Soranzo to the Doge and Senate, (11)/21 December 1599, 386

¹⁴⁴ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Vere to States General, 24 November 1599; SP 84, LIX, fo.164, Vere's proposals to the States, 24 November 1599; Collins, II, Gilpin to Sidney, 30 November 1599, 145

¹⁴⁵ SP 84, LIX, fo.216, Proposal to the States General, 29 December 1599; fo.200, Sidney to Elizabeth, 24 December 1599

¹⁴⁶ For a full transcript of the English deputies' negotiations at Boulogne, see: E. Sawyer (ed), *Memorials of Affairs of State in the Reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I, Collected (chiefly) from the Original Papers of the Right Honourable Sir Ralph Winwood*, I (London, 1725), 186-226. See also: LX i, fo.21, Sidney to Cecil, 18 January 1600; fo.37, Sidney to Cecil, 6 February 1600; fo.53, Gilpin to Cecil, 25 February 1600; , fo.74, States General to Elizabeth, (21)/31 March 1600; fo.117, States General to Caron, (28 April)/8 May 1600; CSPV, IX, Duodo to the Doge and Senate, (7)/17 January, (10)/20 March and (12)/22 May 1600, 390, 402, 409-10; Contarini to the Doge and Senate, 26 March and 13 August 1600, 422, 448; Mocenigo to the Doge and Senate, (12)/22 April 1600 and (28 February)/10 March 1601, 405, 448; CSPS, IV, Powers Given by the Queen to the English Envoys, (30 April)/10 May 1600, 658; Report of Council of State to Philip III, (9)/19 September 1600, 669-70; *Gedenkstukken*, II, Oldenbamevelt to Aerssen, 31 March 1600, 284-5; *Carew Letters*, 31; Elizabeth to the Commissioners at Boulogne, 19 July 1600; *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 29 February, 5 March, 28 May and 13 June 1600, 88-9, 91, 95, 98; Harrison, *Letters of Elizabeth*, 276-7

throughout the remainder of her reign, thus devaluing the renewal of her commitment to the Dutch that she had made in 1598.¹⁴⁷ She was clearly determined to end her costly war with Spain, and if the Dutch remained steadfastly opposed to a peace, then she was resolved to find out whether they were able to resist Spain without her help. She dispatched envoys for this very purpose after the battle of Nieuwpoort in 1600, and received a reply from the States General which insisted that they could only continue the war if she did not 'entirely withdraw that hand which had hitherto sustained them'.¹⁴⁸ This frustrated Elizabeth, who was growing increasingly weary of the burden posed by the war - a burden that she felt she had shouldered alone since 1598, as Cavalli reported less than a year before her death: 'the Queen is all the more inclined to peace because she considers that she alone has opposed and frustrated the universal monarchy of Spain at enormous expense and most serious risks, while the other sovereigns, who are also interested, have taken no share in the enterprise'.¹⁴⁹

Thus the Anglo-Dutch alliance hung by a thread for the remainder of Elizabeth's reign: the Dutch pleading with her to continue her assistance, and the Spanish maintaining their efforts to bring her to treaty. Even though all of the Anglo-Spanish peace talks came to nothing during Elizabeth's reign, they had proven a constant source of anxiety for the Dutch, and had increased the tension and uncertainty between the allies. Yet the English also had cause for concern, because the Dutch were frequently rumoured to be holding talks with the enemy.¹⁵⁰ Such rumours began in earnest in the early 1590s and seemed to increase as the decade progressed. It could be argued that they were a manifestation of England's perception that her allies were becoming increasingly capable of independent action, although it seems more likely that they were indicative of the increasing distrust and hostility that was creeping into the alliance. Yet if England failed to recognise her ally's independence (at least in terms of her military power), then Spain did not.

¹⁴⁷ *CSPV*, IX, Cavalli to the Doge and Senate, (6)/16 October and (15)/25 November 1601, (27 April)/7 May, (11)/21 October, (8)/18 November and (27 November)/7 December 1602; (10)/20 January, (24 January)/3 February 1603, 475, 480-1, 502, 508-9, 510, 512, 526; Mocenigo to the Doge and Senate, (7)/17 November and (19)/29 December 1601, (26 December)/5 January 1602, 479, 486; Scaramelli to Doge and Senate, (17)/27 February 1603, 537-9

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, Cavalli to the Doge and Senate, (20)/30 August 1601, 471

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, Cavalli to the Doge and Senate, (27 April)/7 May 1602, 502

¹⁵⁰ *SP 84*, XXXVIII, fo.130, Sidney to Burghley, 6 August 1590; XL, fo.100, Bodley to Burghley, 29 December 1590; XLI, fo.124, Bodley to Burghley, 3 February 1591; XLIII, fo.62, States General to Emperor's Commissioners, (29 September)/9 October 1591; fo.150, Vere to Burghley, 31 October 1591; XLIV, fo.233, Gilpin to Sir Thomas Heneage, 13 April 1592; XLVII, fo.s 13 and 161, Vere to Burghley, 18 August and 22 September 1593; LI, fo.179, Vere to Burghley, 7 October 1595; fo.281, Burghley to Bodley, 15 December 1595; LII, fo.38, Bodley to Burghley, 25 January 1596; fo.82, Instructions for Vere, February 1596; fo.98, Vere to Burghley, 7 March 1596; LIII, fo.106, Substance of Emperor's Commissioner's letters to States General, (30 July)/9 August 1596; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 II, Elizabeth to States General, 17 April 1592; Bodley to States General, 4 February 1595

Feeling the full force of Maurice's increasingly efficient and powerful army, Philip II and his representatives in the Netherlands were apparently keen to check the drain of Spanish treasure and manpower by coming to an agreement with the rebels, as mentioned above. They became increasingly aware of Dutch military strength and responded by making more and more offers of peace (or at least cease-fire) as the decade progressed. Philip II's correspondence during the early 1590s certainly contains many references to such an accord.¹⁵¹ Assurances from a number of Elizabeth's representatives in the Netherlands failed to allay her fears about the likelihood of the Dutch forming a separate treaty, and she seemed to set more store by the rather worrying reports that Bodley sent to the Court on this matter, which suggests that she placed only a very meagre trust in them.¹⁵² While he did not greatly doubt the States' intentions towards Spain, he was not so certain of the inclination of the population as a whole, for he wrote: 'though the greater part of the chiefest persons of these Provinces, are nothing to be doubted, yet because the multitude is humorous, and guided by no man, and is withal very weary of these daily exactions, wherewith their warres must be maintained, it is greatly to be feared, they will commit some soddaine folly, from which they will not be reclaimed by any after persuasion.'¹⁵³ Reports such as these alarmed the Queen, and her concern about the possibility of a peace between the Dutch and Spain continued unabated after the initial scares of 1590-1. It was manifested in Vere's mission to the States General early in 1596. This mission was inspired by the need to gain the States' support for the Cadiz voyage, but it was clear that Elizabeth also hoped to use it as a means of ensuring that they would continue in their determination not to enter into a treaty with Spain. She instructed Vere to let them understand that she had 'observed how many fals thogh faire offers have ben made them by Treaty of Pacification', and was 'very greatly contented...to see her Foytune ranged with such, as by their cleare Circumspection, have prudently avoyded such conning articles'.¹⁵⁴ The accession of Philip III in 1598 made the likelihood of such a peace even greater because, influenced by his pacifist chief minister the Duke of Lerma, he showed himself to be increasingly cautious in his foreign policy, in marked contrast to the aggressive stance of his predecessor. Accordingly, Spanish overtures to the Dutch were stepped up during his reign, and

¹⁵¹ See for example: Lefèvre, III, 487, 614; IV, 8-10, 47-8, 194, 222-3, 257, 301, 306, 318, 344-5, 370

¹⁵² *SP 84*, XXXVIII, fo.130, Sidney to Burghley, 6 August 1590; XL, fo.100, Bodley to (Burghley), 29 December 1590; XLIII, fo.150, Vere to Burghley, 31 October 1591; XLIV, fo.233, Gilpin to Sir Thomas Heneage, 13 April 1592; LI, fo.179, Vere to Burghley, 7 October 1595; HMC, *D&D*, II, Wilkes to Sidney, 22 July 1590, 109

¹⁵³ *SP 84*, XLI, fo.124, Bodley to Burghley, 3 February 1591. N.B. Vere voiced similar fears in 1593: XLVII, fo.13, Vere to Burghley, 18 August 1593

¹⁵⁴ LII, fo.82, Instructions for Vere, February 1596

in 1600 negotiations were initiated at Bergen-op-Zoom.¹⁵⁵ Clearly anxious, Elizabeth reprimanded the States for considering such a peace, but her concern was apparently needless, because Gilpin observed that they felt 'so greate and irreconcilable an antipathy' between themselves and the enemy that they had no intention of coming to an agreement at this stage.¹⁵⁶

The fact that the English and the Dutch seemed to come close to making peace with Spain, and were both uncertain of each other's intentions in this respect, betrays an inherent weakness in their alliance. It also shatters the contemporary myth that the alliance was a religious and ideological union, formed to combat the tyranny and Catholicism of the Spanish King. At times, this King did not seem to be so much the 'common enemy' as the potential ally of one side or the other: he had initially united them in war, but it seemed ever more likely that he would divide them in peace. But Spain was not the only divisive element in their relationship. Their mutual ally, France, also caused a great deal of friction. As already mentioned, Elizabeth's commitment to the French King during the early to mid-1590s was a source of annoyance to the Dutch as it diminished their ability to withstand Spanish offensives. But as the decade progressed, the Dutch also seemed to forge an ever closer friendship with Henry IV, providing him with both financial and military assistance. In return, the French King sent subsidies and troops to the Provinces, although this was mostly done in secret, especially after his alliance with Spain in 1598.¹⁵⁷ The States' assistance to Henry IV, although not on the same scale as Elizabeth's, gave a significant boost to his war effort. For example, they provided him with arms and supplies for the siege of Rouen, sent 2,000 men to Brittany in 1592, and a similar number in 1595.¹⁵⁸ Dutch help was

¹⁵⁵ LX ii, fo.248, Gilpin to Cecil, 29 July 1600; fo.262 Cecil to Vere and Gilpin, 4 August 1600; fo.270, States General to Elizabeth, (7)/17 August 1600; fo.278, Vere to Cecil, 19 August 1600; *SP 103*, XXXV, fo.262, Substance of the negotiation of the Emperor's ambassadors with the States, 1600

¹⁵⁶ LX ii, fo.298, Elizabeth to States General, 30 August 1600; fo.328, Gilpin to Cecil, 3 October 1600. See also for example: XLIII, fo.62, States General to Emperor's Commissioners, (29 September)/9 October 1591; XLIV, fo.233, Gilpin to Heneage, 13 April 1592; BM MS, Cotton Galba D, XII, fo.318, Vere to Cecil, 3 September 1601; *Edmond's Papers*, Edmond's to Cecil, 12 July 1598, 347. Elizabeth was particularly suspicious of the States in 1601 because of a rumour that they had provided financial backing for Essex's rebellion. The Spanish apparently encouraged this rumour in order to exonerate themselves from blame. *CSPV*, IX, Venier and Mocenigo to the Doge and Senate, (16)/26 May 1601, 461

¹⁵⁷ D. Buisseret has calculated that between 1598 and 1603, Henry IV sent £4,683,000 to the Dutch, and claims that these subsidies formed the largest single object of expenditure for the crown. *Sully and the Growth of Centralized Government in France, 1598-1610* (London, 1968), 82

¹⁵⁸ *UHG*, XVII, La Thullerie's Propostion, (3)/13 August 1589, 50-6; States General's answer to la Thullerie's Propostion, (3)/13 September 1589, 67-9; la Thullerie's Proposition to Verzoek, [undated], 70-1; XVIII, Buzenval's Proposition, (16)/26 January 1591, 341-9; Points proposed by Buzenval, (9)/19 March 1591, 411-12; Buzenval's Propostion to the States of Utrecht, (29 April)/9 May 1591, 423-4; Buzenval's Proposition, (18)/28 June 1591, 448-51; Extract of States General's Resolution regarding Buzenval's Proposition, (30 July)/9 August 1591, 453-4; Henry IV to States General, (22 November)/2 December 1591, 480-1; Henry IV to Buzenval, (17)/27 December 1591, 487-9; States of Utrecht to Buzanval, (20)/30 December 1591, 489-90; XIX, Henry IV to States General, (3)/13 March, (26 April)/6 May and (21)/31 July 1592, 73, 265-7, 369-72; States General to Henry IV, (28 July)/7 August 1592, 375-6; Henry IV to States General, (20)/30 September 1592, 430-1;

always received with the utmost gratitude by Henry, and the two sides often expressed their reverence for, and commitment to each other.¹⁵⁹ The French King, in particular, seemed anxious to invoke an image of their being comrades in arms, fighting side by side against the tyranny of Spain.¹⁶⁰ In this respect, their exchanges were similar to those between the Dutch and the English. However, Henry tended to address the Dutch as equals, and this, combined with the fact that he relied quite heavily upon their support, rendered the Franco-Dutch connection a marked contrast to the Anglo-Dutch alliance.

The apparently close relationship between Henry IV and the Dutch engendered a great deal of suspicion in England. It was certainly distasteful to Elizabeth, who feared French domination in the Netherlands because of the apparent threat that this posed to her own shores.¹⁶¹ Her jealousy of French intervention in the Netherlands had been apparent from the very beginning of the Anglo-Dutch alliance, and probably formed one of the reasons that incited her to continue supporting the Dutch, as mentioned above. It was also manifested in Thomas Wilkes' mission to the Hague during the summer of 1590, for the Queen had instructed him to find out the nature of the States' relations with France.¹⁶² Bodley's comments did little to alleviate her suspicions. He seemed convinced that the States were becoming increasingly enthusiastic for Henry IV's cause, and that this would ultimately lead them to abandon their alliance with England. He even advised Elizabeth to strengthen her garrisons in the cautionary towns, implying that the Dutch might

Buzenval's Proposition, (24 November)/4 December 1592, 511-12; XX, Buzenval's Proposition, (26 November)/6 December 1594, 508-15; XXI, Instructions for Leoninus, Van Loozen and Van der Does, (21)/31 January 1595, 64-8; States General to Henry IV, (22 September)/2 October 1595, 404-6; *Gedenkstukken*, II, Calvart to Oldenbarnevelt, (1)/11 May 1594, 21-9; Bouillon to Calvart, (1)/11 November 1594, 42-3; Calvart to States General, (19)/29 March and (28 March)/7 April 1595, 62-70; *RSG*, VII, 526; *SP* 84, LV, fo.33, Sidney to Cecil, 21 July 1597; HMC, *Sal*, IV, Engagement between Dutch and French ships, 6 October 1590, 65-6; *Bescheiden Betreffende*, I, Henry IV to Oldenbarnevelt, (6)/16 August 1596, 339; Henry IV to Oldenbarnevelt, (23 June)/3 July 1597, 352; HMC, *D&D*, II, Bodley to Sidney, 22 January 1592, 129. For a narrative of Dutch aid to France between 1591 and 1598, see ten Raa and de Bas, *Het Staatsche Leger*, II, 308-17. See also: Nickle, *Military Reforms*, 194-6

¹⁵⁹ For example, in 1591, the States assured Henry: 'sa Majesté ne scauroit s'adresser à ung état qui soit plus affectionné à l'avancement de ses affaires et qui plus volontiers l'assisteraient de tout leur pouvoir'. *UHG*, XVIII, Buzenval's Proposition, (16)/26 January 1591, 341; Extract of States General's Resolution regarding Buzenval's Proposition, (30 July)/9 August 1591, 453-4; Henry IV to States General, (22 November)/2 December 1591, 480-1; XIX, Henry IV to States General, (3)/13 March 1592, 73; XXI, States General to Henry IV, (22 September)/2 October 1595, 405-6

¹⁶⁰ XVIII, St. Aldegonde to Council of State, (26 April)/6 May 1590, 195-6; XIX, Henry IV to States General, (3)/13 March 1592, 73. In a delegation to the States General, Fouquerolles stated that they and Henry were 'joint ensemble d'une société si inseparable' in order to resist Philip II's offensive. XXI, Proposition by Fouquerolles, (2)/12 November 1595, 440

¹⁶¹ Lloyd emphasises Elizabeth's fear that Henry IV and the Dutch would conclude an alliance that was 'undesirable and unpropitious for England'. *The Rouen Campaign, 1590-1592. Politics, Warfare and the Early-Modern State* (Oxford, 1973), 23

¹⁶² See chapter 2, 116-17

attempt to seize them and deliver them into the hands of the French King: 'For I see this people in all their dealing are very headdy and inconstant, and quickly drawn to doe anything by those that manage their affaires: of whiche the most at this present, are nether well inclined to her Majesties causes, and endevoire to exclude her from all her interest among them.'¹⁶³ Yet not all of the English who served in the Netherlands harboured such suspicions. Gilpin, for one, seemed to have attained a more accurate view of Franco-Dutch relations. In contrast to Wilkes and Bodley, he claimed that Maurice was not so biased towards the French as many Englishmen believed him to be.¹⁶⁴ More importantly, he put forward a feasible explanation for the States' support of Henry IV, arguing that they believed it was the best way of 'continewinge of Franncce and Spayne in warres', and thereby of diverting Philip II's forces from the Provinces. He went on to assert that the States still valued their alliance with England above all else, and reported that he had heard Oldenbarnevelt say that 'no amitie or confederation fitted and steaded these contries more then hir majesties'.¹⁶⁵ It is quite likely that the States' chief motive in building up a close relationship with the French King was indeed to encourage him to remain in opposition to Spain, and thereby to deflect the latter's attention from their own provinces. In addition, of course, the Franco-Dutch connection provided them with another powerful ally in Europe, and as such increased their profile as an independent state. However, they had to strike a rather delicate balance in their relations with Henry in order to avoid upsetting their English ally - who was, after all, still the more valuable of the two because of the substantial military support that she provided. Indeed, the ambivalence of Elizabeth's attitude towards the States' attachment with France demonstrated the care that was needed. On the one hand, she was eager to gain their support for her expeditions there, encouraging them to provide ships and allow the withdrawal of English troops from their provinces. On the other, she seemed jealous of the States' dealing with Henry directly and offering their support independently of her, and suspected their motives for doing so. As well as betraying how little she trusted them, this also shows how reluctant she was to acknowledge them as equal and independent allies, capable of forging attachments outside their alliance with her.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ *SP 84*, XXXIX, fo.176, Bodley to Burghley, 28 October 1590. He wrote to Sir Robert Sidney in a similar vein two years later: 'I never perceived hearty good will in any one of this people towards her Majesty or any of our nation...But what will you have? It is not possible to draw wine out of vessels full of vinegar.' *HMC, D&D*, II, Bodley to Sidney, 10 March 1592, 125. See also: *HMC, Sal*, V, Bodley to Burghley, 22 February and 14 March 1595, 116, 144-5; Lord Burgh to Essex, 20 September 1595, 384

¹⁶⁴ *SP 84*, XLVI, fo.217, Gilpin to Burghley, 20 July 1593

¹⁶⁵ LV, fo.277, Gilpin to Cecil, 21 December 1597; *HMC, Sal*, VII, Gilpin to Essex, 27 January 1597, 44

¹⁶⁶ Den Tex aptly sums up her jealousy of the States' support of Henry by saying that while Elizabeth did not grudge him the help, she did grudge the States the honour and status to which it entitled them. *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 123

The fact that France exerted such a divisive influence upon the Anglo-Dutch alliance seems quite ironic because, in theory, it should have brought them closer together. All three countries were united by the common aim of checking Spanish aggression, and this was often stressed in their correspondence.¹⁶⁷ Yet in practice, this was no harmonious three-way alliance. Elizabeth's perception of France as England's traditional enemy was apparently deeply-rooted, and she was both jealous and suspicious of the friendship between Henry and the States.¹⁶⁸ For their part, the Dutch resented her obvious preoccupation with the war in France, entailing as it did the withdrawal of her troops from their provinces during the first half of the 1590s. Even though they formed a triple alliance in 1596, it did little to alleviate this rather tense situation. The lead up to this formal alliance demonstrated the divisive influence that France still exerted upon Anglo-Dutch relations at this stage. At first, the negotiations centred upon an Anglo-French pact, and this was concluded in May.¹⁶⁹ Plans to include the Dutch (which both they and Henry were very much in favour of) were initially thwarted by Elizabeth, who was clearly against the idea.¹⁷⁰ Her reluctance demonstrates how suspicious she was of Franco-Dutch relations, as well as how loth she was to acknowledge the independent status of her Dutch ally. Nevertheless, she eventually forgot her objections, and the 'triple alliance of offence and defence' against Spain was signed on the last day of October.¹⁷¹ It has been argued that Elizabeth's decision to invite the Dutch to join the treaty was prompted by her increasing respect for them throughout that year.¹⁷² However, the available evidence does not suggest that her attitude towards them had altered

¹⁶⁷ For example, Buzenval told the States that Henry's survival depended upon the assistance of like-minded countries: 'il a faict solliciter et rechercher les princes voisins et liez avecq sa Majeste de mesme intérêt d'estat et de religion, pour faire une générale et légitime opposition aux attentatz injustes de l'Espaignol'. *UHG*, XVIII, Buzenval's Proposition, (16)/26 January 1591, 342. See also for example: *ibid.*, Elizabeth to States General, 8 February and 16 September 1590, 30-4, 284-5; Points proposed by Buzenval, (9)/19 March 1591, 412; XIX, Elizabeth to States General, 27 April 1592, 152-3

¹⁶⁸ The French King was equally suspicious of England's involvement with the Dutch. Sir Thomas Edmondos referred to: 'the Jalousie betweene England and ffrance of not liking that either should attayn anie possession in the Lowe Countries'. *Edmondos Papers*, Edmondos to Cecil, 26 December 1597, 318

¹⁶⁹ By the terms of this treaty, Elizabeth agreed to bolster her supply of troops and money to Henry. *SP* 78, XXXVII, fo.157, Duke of Bouillon and M. de Sancy, April 1596; fo.169, Memorial of aid of 2,000 men for France, 16 May 1596; fo.190, Terms of the Treaty with France, May 1596; XXXVIII, fo.247, Account of negotiations for the treaty with France [1596]; fo.291, Notes on the treaty with France, [1596]; *CSPV*, IX, Duodo to the Doge and Senate, (29 May)/8 June and (3)/13 July 1596, 208, 219; Harrison, *Letters of Elizabeth*, Elizabeth to Henry IV, 1 September and [c.September] 1596, 246-7

¹⁷⁰ The States perceived her reluctance, as Gilpin noted: 'I understand of a desire these men have to be admitted and joyned in the league made betweene her majesty and the king of Franncce, which they are made beleve...he is contented with, but that the difficultie restes in her majesty.' *SP* 84, LIII, fo.31, Gilpin to Burghley, 20 August 1596

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, fo.58, Elizabeth to States General, 12 September 1596; fo.105, Gilpin to Cecil, 16 October 1596; BM MS, Additional, 19875, 19877; Du Mont, 531-4

¹⁷² Wernham, *Return of the Armadas*, 78-9

significantly. She was very far from acknowledging the Dutch as equal allies, even though their commitment to the Triple Alliance rendered them such, and the fact that she was now tied to them (temporarily at least) by two treaties did not seem to make her understanding of their situation greater, or her commitment to them firmer. Neither did this new alliance bring the Dutch very much closer to their English ally: in fact, if anything, it suggested that it would be possible for them to replace Elizabeth with a more amenable European potentate. It also gave them the confidence to treat with both England and France as an equal power - an important step on the road to independence.¹⁷³

The Triple Alliance proved to be a comparatively short-lived attachment, in stark contrast to the Anglo-Dutch connection. It lasted for less than two years and came to an abrupt end when Henry IV entered the treaty with Spain. Nevertheless, this did not signal the end of the friendship between France and the States. Shortly before the Vervins treaty was concluded, the States General's embassy in France, headed by Oldenbarnevelt, secured a package of financial aid from Henry IV. On 28 April, the King promised to continue assisting them, and pledged a subsidy of one million écus for a period of four years.¹⁷⁴ In 1600, Vere noted that there was still a 'good correspondency' between them, and claimed that the States had received a 'good stoare of monye' from Henry. The following year, he reported that the King had 'couvertlye' agreed to send 4 or 5,000 troops for the States' service.¹⁷⁵ As a result, English paranoia about this friendship persisted, and they seemed convinced that the Dutch were plotting to abandon their alliance and forge one with France. This is indicative of the widespread failure among the English to appreciate that the Dutch no longer either wanted or needed to be guided by a foreign potentate. It also suggests that they failed to recognise how much progress had been made in uniting the Provinces under an increasingly effective system of government. As far as most of the English were concerned, the Dutch would always be a nation of rebellious upstarts who needed a strong monarchical presence to show them the error of their ways.

The available evidence suggests that Elizabeth's perception of her Dutch ally altered little during the period 1589-1603, and that she persistently viewed them as ungrateful dependants upon her

¹⁷³ *SP 84*, LIII, fo.184, Gilpin to Cecil, 2 December 1596. In fact, the States fully deserved the equal status that the Triple Alliance gave them. In a number of separate clauses concluded between themselves and the Duke of Bouillon, they agreed to lend the French King 450,000 livres the following year, to be paid in monthly instalments. Du Mont, 537-41

¹⁷⁴ den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 315-16; HMC, *D&D*, III, lxiv-lxvi

¹⁷⁵ *SP 84*, LX i, fo.106, Vere to Cecil, 20 April 1600; LXI, fo.286, Vere to Cecil, 6 September 1601; *Edmond's Papers*, Edmond's to [?], 5 November 1597, 309; Edmond's to Cecil, 26 December 1597 and 21 January 1598, 318, 324-5; *CSPV*, IX, Cavalli to Doge and Senate, (19)/29 October 1601 and (10)/20 May 1602, 476, 503-4

favour. Yet the Dutch had long since ceased to conform to this image (if, indeed, they ever had), and during Vere's ascendancy, their position in relation to their English ally had undergone dramatic change. They had achieved political cohesion¹⁷⁶ and military success, and had attained equal status with Elizabeth in practice, even if she failed to acknowledge this in theory. These developments had greatly enhanced the capacity of the Dutch for independent action, enabling them to emerge from the suffocating cloak of English protection and giving them the option of breaking their ties with that country in the future. Yet the pride that they increasingly felt in their achievement was counteracted by the prejudice that the English Queen obviously still harboured against them. Nevertheless, while she denied them the pleasure of openly acknowledging their equal status, she nevertheless increasingly *treated* them as equals, transferring the financial responsibilities involved in the alliance to them, and using both English and Dutch forces from the Provinces for her own ends. In short, she gave them all the onerous duties of an equal partner without allowing them the respect and understanding that they deserved as such. Viewed in this light, the period 1589-1603 was one of tenuous attachment, if not open hostility, between the allies, and witnessed their growing steadily further apart.

In fact, despite the occasional benefits that ensued from their attachment, both the English and the Dutch had ample cause for dissatisfaction. The English contingent in the Netherlands had become progressively more expensive and unreliable to the Dutch during the period of Vere's ascendancy: they had been denied the luxury of knowing that a significant portion of it would not suddenly be withdrawn for service elsewhere, and had found themselves increasingly responsible for paying the numbers that remained. For her part, it had been an obvious inconvenience for Elizabeth to endure the lengthy process of recalling her troops, and she had occasionally had to modify, or even give up, her original requests. Furthermore, as the decade progressed, she had become increasingly tempted by the idea of peace with Spain, and it was perhaps only the States' offer of substantial reimbursement that had prevented her from abandoning them in 1598. Once more, the scales had just tipped in favour of the Anglo-Dutch connection. Far from being an unbreakable bond between two sides with similar attitudes and priorities, the alliance was therefore an unhappy and loveless marriage between two ultimately incompatible partners who felt precious little trust or loyalty towards each other, and whose aims and perceptions rarely coincided.

¹⁷⁶ J.L. Price argues: 'A relatively stable and efficient form of government had been constructed by 1600, a form which was to remain basically unchanged while the Republic lasted'. *Culture and Society in the Dutch Republic During the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1974), 2

If the alliance was not a symbiotic union, then neither was it an essential component of the long-term strategies of both sides. In the volatile and fluctuating diplomatic climate of Europe at that time, temporary exigencies superseded long-term strategies, and *ad hoc* measures took precedence over continuity in the making of policy. Besides, both England and the United Provinces had alternative options at their disposal, and it is conceivable that they could have abandoned their alliance in favour of a truce with Spain or an attachment with France. Indeed, peace with Spain was an increasingly viable option for England towards the end of the century because this no longer necessarily entailed the complete withdrawal of her assistance from the Netherlands, and the consequent threat to her own security. In such a state of affairs, the survival of the alliance owed a great deal more to chance than to premeditated policy, and each year of its existence seemed to introduce yet more sources of friction to threaten its future. It would therefore be unreasonable to allow hindsight to render Walsingham's lamentation prophetic: the English and the Dutch were not so 'straytely tyed' as he feared, and in 1589, neither side could have safely predicted that their attachment would survive the remainder of Elizabeth's reign. The fact that it did was quite remarkable in view of the various factors that were working against it, as well as the frequently obvious dissatisfaction that both sides felt with it. Even though circumstances had just worked in its favour during the period 1589-1603, however, its fundamental weakness made it apparent that its days were numbered. In view of this, it would be quite justifiable to argue, continuing the Secretary's metaphor, that the Anglo-Dutch alliance was a knot that certainly could have been untied.

Chapter 2

'A conductour of meaner calling': *The Prelude to Vere's Appointment*

The signing of the Nonsuch Treaty by Elizabeth and the States' deputies in August 1585 heralded the beginning of a fragile alliance that was to last for the remainder of the reign. This contract bound the Queen to give large-scale military support to the Dutch, and at the same time made some provision for governmental reform in their provinces. In return for her help, the Dutch were to yield the towns of Brill and Flushing as security. The number of English troops stipulated was 5,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry, and these were to be commanded by a 'personne de qualité' of the Queen's choosing.¹ This role was to be filled by three successive commanders during the course of her reign, and it became progressively less prestigious. Perhaps as a result of the ill-fated intervention of his two predecessors, when Sir Francis Vere was appointed to command the Queen's forces in 1589, he was given the comparatively modest rank of Sergeant Major General. He also inherited a rather ominous legacy, for the brief ascendancies of the two previous commanders had severely tested the patience of both the English and Dutch authorities, and barely four years after its inception, the alliance seemed on the verge of collapse. In the midst of the confusion, there was a recognition by both sides that the high-profile English commander stipulated by the Treaty of Nonsuch was impractical, and that what was needed was a 'conductour of meaner calling'. Sir Francis Vere, an uncontroversial and highly able military figure, was apparently perfect for this task.

Following the conclusion of Nonsuch, the issue of who was to command the English expeditionary force was debated at court. The most obvious choice was the Earl of Leicester, Elizabeth's long-time favourite. A leading interventionist at court, he had been an active supporter of the Dutch rebels ever since the first rising of the Sea Beggars in 1572, and had championed the idea of close English involvement in their cause. Not surprisingly, therefore, the

¹ Du Mont, 454-5; BM MS, Additional, 19875. For the negotiations leading up to the Treaty, see: *UHG*, XXII, Report by Dutch Envoys in England, [July] 1585, 215-55; Plan of Treaty articles, [August] 1585, 255-73; Provisional Contract, [August] 1585, 273-7; *Gedenkstukken*, I, 78-85, 89-104; HMC, *D&D*, III, viii-xxvix; Adams (ed), *Household Accounts and Disbursement Books of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1558-61, 1584-86*, Camden Society, 5th Series, VI (Cambridge, 1995), 385-95

Dutch seemed to regard him as their chief advocate at court.² However, the Queen appeared to vacillate over his appointment, and some of his supporters began to despair that he would be chosen.³ Perhaps she feared that the unenviable task of leading her troops required the energy and skill of a younger man.⁴ The Spanish forces were recapturing territory in the northern Netherlands with alarming efficiency, and the only obstacle that they faced was a relatively weak rebel army, administered by a government in disarray. Furthermore, Leicester's knowledge of Dutch politics was limited, and yet he would be required to take an active part in governmental affairs. Nevertheless, the Dutch apparently had every confidence that he would be able to provide the leadership that they were looking for, and when the Queen decided to appoint him, the Governor of Willemstad rejoiced: 'she in a way brings back to life the late Prince of Orange in the person of the Earl of Leicester, on whose coming all good men have fixed their hopes that the affairs both of state and war will be restored to their ancient lustre and splendour.'⁵

The authority that Leicester was to exercise as Governor of the English troops had been broadly defined by the Treaty of Nonsuch. He was to be the 'Personne de qualité et de respect, affectionné à la vraye Religion' that the first article stipulated for the command of the English expeditionary force. He was to have wide-ranging powers with regard to the direction of these troops, overseeing their pay, eradicating any corruption, and exercising general discipline. Aside from these essentially military duties, he was also given a significant degree of political authority, which he was to exercise in conjunction with the Council of State (on which there were to be two other English members).⁶ He was permitted to re-establish public order when necessary, as well as to ensure that nothing threatened the 'true' religion, rights, privileges and customs of the States, provinces, towns and population in general.⁷ The Council of State was also to have quite vague and wide-ranging powers, incorporating 'quelques affaires qui touchent le service de Sa

² A month after signing the Treaty of Nonsuch, the States General wrote to Leicester, thanking him for persuading the Queen to further their cause: 'Noz députez retournes d'Angleterre nous ont fait ample rapport des honneurs et faveurs qu'ilz ont receu de Vostre Excellence des bons offices faitz par icelle pour induire et disposer Sa Majesté au traicté du secours et assistance qu'il a pleu à Sa Majesté nous donner durant la continuation de ceste guerre'. Brugmans, I, States General to Leicester, (25 September)/5 October 1585, 6-7 N.B. Many of the State Papers for the period 1585-88, which tend to be only summarised in the Calendars, are fully and accurately transcribed in Brugmans' three-volume collection.

³ Walsingham, for one, lamented that Elizabeth was not 'disposed' to appoint the Earl because of some offence that she had taken against his wife, and predicted that Lord Grey would be chosen instead. *CSPF*, XX, Walsingham to Davison, 5 September 1585, 8. See also: Adams, *Household Accounts*, 385-92

⁴ Leicester was 53 years old at this time.

⁵ *CSPF*, XX, Emmerij de Lyere to Walsingham, (6)/16 October 1585, 67; Brugmans, I, States General to Elizabeth, (25 September)/5 October 1585, 4-5

⁶ Geyl describes this clause as 'A most onerous agreement'. *Revolt of the Netherlands*, 197

⁷ Du Mont, 454-5 (especially articles I, XVII-XIX)

Majesté, et la conservation des Provinces-Unies.’ In addition, Leicester was given a separate and more specific set of instructions. These confirmed his authority in military, political and fiscal matters, but implied that he should act in an *advisory* capacity.⁸ Nevertheless, it was clearly intended that he should bring leadership and unity to what the Queen perceived as a conglomeration of confused and divided rebel provinces. Elizabeth later confirmed the political connotations of her Governor’s role in a letter to the States General. She wrote that it had been agreed between them to ‘send you a nobleman of quality, not only to take charge of our said forces, but to assist you by his advice and counsel in the government.’⁹

Four frustrating months followed the conclusion of Nonsuch before Leicester was finally given leave to embark from Harwich with his troops, destined for Flushing.¹⁰ After a rapturous reception there, he proceeded to the Hague, where a delegation from the States General gave him a rather more tangible welcome by offering him the Governor-Generalship of all the liberated provinces, allowing him to rule ‘absolutely and completely’ over both the army and their civil government. The post had certain connotations with regard to the sovereignty of the Provinces. In the time of Charles V, the Governor-General was the effective leader of the Provinces, representing the King in his absence. The outbreak of the revolt had incited the rebels to find a new Governor General, and they looked first to the Archduke Matthias and later the Duke of Anjou. However, when the Act of Abjuration in 1581 declared that Philip II was no longer the lawful sovereign of the northern Netherlands,¹¹ the rebels attempted to find a replacement for him, and the English believed that they had done so with the stadholder, William of Orange. Yet it is unlikely that the Dutch ever viewed him as their ‘sovereign’: the closest he came to inheriting such powers was when it was proposed that he should be appointed Count of Holland and Zeeland, but his death prevented this from going through.¹² Besides, the rebels had not given up hope of getting the French King to agree to accept the sovereignty, and for a time, his brother, the Duke of Anjou, took on this task, albeit unsuccessfully. Henry III resisted subsequent offers from the States to accept the sovereignty, and they therefore turned their attention to Elizabeth. She, however, proved reluctant from the beginning to accept such a prominent role, aware that if

⁸ Bruce, *The Earl of Leicester’s Instructions*, December 1585, 12-15

⁹ *CSPF*, XX, Elizabeth to States General, 3 September 1585, 6

¹⁰ Brugmans, I, Leicester to States General, (9)/19 November 1585, 20

¹¹ ‘The Declaration of the States General of the United Provinces; setting forth, that Philipp the Second had forfeited his right of Sovereignty over the said Provinces. At the Hague, 26 July 1581’, *Somers Tracts*, 323-29

¹² Nevertheless, Rowen argues that the stadholders were considered ‘quasi-monarchs’ in the Provinces, and that William, as stadholder of Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht, was perceived by the rebel states as the closest thing they had to a sovereign leader. ‘Neither Fish nor Fowl: The Stadholderate in the Dutch Republic’, Rowen and A. Lossky, *Political Ideas and Institutions in the Dutch Republic* (California, 1985), 3-10

she did so, it would entail a more active English involvement in the Netherlands than she was prepared to undertake. The Treaty that she made with them in 1585 implied that she would assume the role of protector, but the Dutch seemed to persist in viewing her as their sovereign leader, and it therefore followed that Leicester, her chief representative, should fill the role of Governor-General. The majority of the English Court, and Leicester himself, seemed to assume that by bestowing the title of Governor-General upon him, the States had effectively given him sovereign authority, but it is more likely that the States intended the Governor-General to act in conjunction with themselves in both military and political matters, and to be ultimately subject to their authority. Furthermore, by offering the Governor-Generalship to Leicester, the States had, in a sense, admitted their *own* sovereign authority because in Charles V's time, only the monarch had been empowered to bestow this title. Therefore, rather than wishing to install Leicester as a 'sovereign' figure, it is rather more likely that they offered him the Governor Generalship as a means of tying England more closely to their cause, thereby bolstering their efforts to resist the might of Spain.¹³

Nevertheless, the title of Governor-General was still highly prestigious, and proved too tempting for the Earl to resist. Without consulting the Queen, he duly accepted it and was officially sworn in by the States General at the beginning of February.¹⁴ Elizabeth was outraged that he had exceeded his commission and agreed to a move that threatened to tie her closer to the Dutch rebels than she wished, particularly as she had declared when signing the Nonsuch Treaty that she would seek neither territory nor authority in the Netherlands.¹⁵ She expostulated with him for accepting the title when she herself had always refused to 'take any such government there', and ordered him to renounce it at once, vowing that she would never assent to his keeping it.¹⁶ She

¹³ The confusion that the appointment engendered is thus summed up by Kaplan: 'The intentions of the States General were contradictory, and as a result its commission practically invited misunderstanding. To Leicester, the phrase allowing him to rule 'completely and absolutely' had one obvious meaning: it gave him sovereign power.' B.J. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines. Confession and Community in Utrecht, 1578-1620* (Oxford, 1995), 169. In a similar vein, Wilson states: 'Leicester had contemplated powers equal to those of Orange: what the States offered was something less.' M. Wilson, *Sir Philip Sidney* (London, 1931), 245. The sovereignty controversy will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter, 91-5

¹⁴ 'Placard or Proclamation of the States General of the United Provinces, conferring the Government of their Countrey on Robert Earl of Leicester, the 6th day of February 1586', *Somers Tracts*, 420-1 CSPF, XX, Leicester to Davison, 11 January 1586, 287-8; Lord North to Burghley, 2 January 1586, 277-8; 'The Act of the States for ordaining of the Earl of Leicester to be Governor General', (22 January)/1 February 1586, 311; Brugmans, I, States General to Elizabeth, (1)/11 February 1586, 70-2; Bruce, Leicester to Burghley, 14 January 1586, 57-63

¹⁵ 'A Declaration of the Causes Mooving the Queene of England to give aid to the Defence of the People afflicted and oppressed in the Low Countries. 1585', *Somers Tracts*, 417; Bruce, The Earl of Leycester's Instructions, December 1585, 15; Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments*, II (London, 1965), 171-83

¹⁶ CSPF, XX, Privy Council to Leicester, 26 January 1586, 322-4; Harrison, *Letters of Elizabeth*, Elizabeth to Leicester, 10 February 1586, 174-5

subsequently sent Sir Thomas Heneage to the States in order to communicate her displeasure both to them and to Leicester, as well as to repair the 'indignity' that the latter's 'undutiful manner of proceeding' had cast upon her.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Leicester dispatched Davison to the Court to defend his actions, and, together with the apparently favourable intervention of Walsingham, Burghley and Hatton, this appeased the Queen a little, for at the end of March, she agreed to let her favourite retain the title 'until affairs may be reduced into the state most convenient and proper for our contentment and for the welfare of the whole country.'¹⁸ But the controversy was not yet over, and it flared up again a few weeks later when the Queen, in an apparent *volte-face*, suddenly ordered Leicester again to resign the Governor-Generalship.¹⁹ Her anger dissipated as soon as it had appeared, however, and just over two weeks later, Walsingham reported that she was once more satisfied that the Earl should continue as Governor General for the time being.²⁰ She remained so for longer this time, and the affair receded into the background.²¹ It had certainly not been forgotten, however, and was to have repercussions for Leicester's two successors, whose activities the Queen was to scrutinise closely, anxious that they should not exceed their commission in any way. MacCaffrey's observation about the significance of the sovereignty controversy is therefore justified. He describes it as 'a disturbing episode, for it revealed how little trust and how little freedom of action the Queen was disposed to give her commander in the Low Countries.'²²

This rather inglorious beginning to Leicester's Governorship set the tone for the remainder of his service in the Netherlands.²³ His acceptance of the Governor-Generalship had all but destroyed

¹⁷ *CSPF*, XX, Instructions to Sir Thomas Heneage, 10 February 1586, 364-5; Elizabeth to States General, 13 February 1586, 371-2; Bruce, Instructions for Heneage, 10 February 1586, 105-10

¹⁸ *ibid.*, Leicester to Davison, 10 March 1586, 168-71; Burghley to Leicester, 31 March 1586, 196-202; Walsingham to Leicester, 1 April 1586, 205-8; *CSPF*, XX, Elizabeth to Council of State, 30 March 1586, 500-1; Elizabeth to Leicester, 30 March and 1 April 1586, 500, 511; Leicester to Davison, 11 January 1586, 287-8; Elizabeth to Leicester, 1 April 1586, 510-11; Elizabeth to Heneage, 1 April 1586, 511

¹⁹ *ibid.*, Elizabeth to Leicester, 26 April 1586, 585-6; Leicester to Elizabeth, 27 May 1586, 677-9; Bruce, Walsingham to Leicester, 26 April 1586, 239-40; Leicester to Walsingham, 29 May 1586, 282-3

²⁰ *CSPF*, XX, Walsingham to Heneage, 14 May 1586, 629-30

²¹ Leicester's return to the Queen's presence in November 1587 apparently dissipated her anger even more, and the following February she defended his actions to the States General, claiming that he had accepted their offer of the Governorship at the risk of his own person and property, and that after he had made this sacrifice for their sakes, they had deceived him and deprived him of the authority that was rightfully his. She added that if she had accepted the title for herself, they would have soon discovered that she would not have put up with such treatment. *CSPS*, IV, Reply of the Queen of England to the Request of the States for Greater Aid, 5 February 1588, 20-3.

²² MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, 359

²³ Neale refers to it as 'a sorry beginning to a sorry story.' *Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1934), 289

Elizabeth's trust in him, and had marred her relations with the Dutch.²⁴ They, in turn, began to lose faith in her as a result of her frequent negotiations with the Duke of Parma, and many firmly believed that she would abandon the alliance.²⁵ In addition, she seemed unwilling to honour certain clauses in the Treaty, particularly those relating to the pay of her contingent, and the English troops became mutinous because of their dire living conditions, thereby causing disruption and resentment amongst the inhabitants of the Provinces.²⁶ Even though the first season of allied campaigning went well, with the surprise of Axel in July and the successes at Berck and Zutphen the following month, a degree of hostility had crept into the relations between the allies, and Leicester was hardly the right man to rectify the situation. Although he had been (and perhaps still was), an enthusiastic supporter of the Dutch cause, he had little understanding of, or admiration for their governmental system, and he soon became disillusioned with his task, particularly in view of the onerous difficulties that he faced. Furthermore, when he began to act as an absolute ruler and, egged on by his supporters in Utrecht, set about centralising Dutch government in his own hands, conflict with the States of Holland became inevitable. He did not therefore seem too sorry when the Queen recalled him, albeit temporarily, in September 1586, on the pretence that she needed him at court.²⁷ He left the Netherlands in November, and it is worth noting that his hold over Elizabeth's affections, which had been weakened by his absence from court, was apparently restored as soon as he returned to her presence.²⁸ At around the same time, Thomas Wilkes was dispatched to the Hague with instructions to lessen the anti-English feeling that Leicester had managed to engender in the States General and States of Holland, as well as to repeal some of Leicester's most important decisions.²⁹

The duration of Leicester's stay in England was not specified, and the States General were simply informed that he would be absent for 'quelque peu de temps'.³⁰ In fact, it was to last for over half

²⁴ See for example: *CSPF*, XXI ii, Elizabeth to States General, 15 June 1586, 15-17

²⁵ *ibid.*, and Elizabeth to Parma, 8 July 1586, 78-80; Leicester to Burghley, 8 August 1586, 115

²⁶ XX, Leicester to Burghley, 29 March 1586, 496-8; Leicester to States General, (20)/30 May 1586, 647-8; XXI ii, Leicester to Burghley, 29 July 1586, 106-8; Bruce, Leicester to Walsingham, 15 January, 6 February and 17 May 1586, 64-5, 87-8, 270-1

²⁷ *CSPF*, XXI ii, Matters to be had in consultation for the speedy preventing of the dangers like to ensue of the present state of the United Provinces of the Low Countries, September 1586, 174

²⁸ He claimed: 'I have had a most gracious welcom at Her Majestie's handes as ever I had synce I was born', and this was supported by Walsingham's account. Brugmans, I, Leicester to Wilkes, (4)/14 December 1586, 297; Walsingham to Wilkes, (3)/13 December 1586, 295

²⁹ *CSPF*, XXI ii, 'Matters to be considered of by her Majesty touching the dispatch of Thomas Wilkes to the Low Countries', 27 September 1586, 168-9; Elizabeth to Leicester, 10 October 1586, 187-8 N.B. Wilkes was also to replace Killigrew on the Council of State.

³⁰ Brugmans, I, States General to Leicester, (22 October)/1 November 1586, 248-9; States General to Elizabeth, (15)/25 November 1586, 265-9

a year, and during that time, the situation in the Netherlands changed quite dramatically. During Leicester's first year, the States of Holland, including Oldenbarnevelt and Maurice, and in conjunction with Count Hohenlohe, had been gradually enhancing their power, and they did so at a greatly accelerated rate during the Earl's absence. Worrying reports flooded into the Court, describing how the party had effected a sort of *coup d'état*: rallying together Leicester's enemies, encroaching upon his authority, making 'innovations in the government, and causing great confusions in the state as a whole.'³¹ As part of this *coup*, the States proclaimed Maurice Captain-General of Holland, Zeeland and Friesland, and appointed Hohenlohe as his lieutenant. Within two months, Maurice was also proclaimed Stadholder of Holland, Zeeland and Friesland.³² It would seem that, as Kaplan suggests, by confronting the States with an unacceptable alternative to their rule, 'Leicester forced them to accept their own sovereignty and reconciled them to running a de facto independent nation.'³³ Wilkes repeatedly urged the Earl's return, claiming that it would 'disperse all these clouds and save these poor countries from ruin.'³⁴ It is unlikely that it would have had such a beneficial effect, however. The States of Holland had begun to succeed in encouraging the people to look to them for leadership, rather than to Leicester and the English, and their efforts had been bolstered by the betrayal of Deventer and Zutphen fort to Spain by two English officers, Stanley and York, in January 1587. There had thus been a discernible decline in both England's and Leicester's popularity during the latter's absence from the Provinces.

Perhaps partly in response to this, the Queen decided to dispatch Lord Buckhurst to the Hague. He was instructed to reprimand the States for flouting Leicester's authority, but at the same time to resolve the confusion that had been initiated by his absence, and reconcile to the States General all those whom the Earl had encouraged to regard the Queen as their leader. He was also to negotiate for an amendment of the contract, and to put forward the idea of changing the Queen's

³¹ *CSPF*, XXI ii, Wilkes to Burghley, 9 December 1586, 262-3; Wilkes to Leicester, 4 and 19 January 1587, 307-8, 321-2; Wilkes to Walsingham, 19 January 1587, 322-4; Wilkes to Elizabeth, 16 February 1587, 363; Gilpin to Walsingham, 24 January and 26 March 1587, 334-5, 424-6; Extract of a Resolution of the States General, (30 January)/3 February 1587, 346-7

³² *ibid.*, Russell to Burghley, 5 March 1587, 387-8; Synopsis of Articles presented to the States General and States of Holland by Mr. Wilkes, touching their violation of the Earl of Leicester's authority, 12 March 1587; Wilkes to Leicester, 26 March 1587, 423-4; Wilkes to Hatton, 26 March 1587, 424. N.B. The English tended to refer to Maurice as Governor-General rather than Stadholder of these provinces, thus causing confusion between him and Leicester. This is just one example of their failure to understand the hierarchical structure of the United Provinces.

³³ Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 196. Wernham argues in a similar vein that Leicester's 'misrule' convinced the States that foreign sovereignty was undesirable, and adds that they were 'at last beginning to question its necessity.' 'English Policy and the Revolt of the Netherlands', 34-5

³⁴ *CSPF*, XXI ii, Wilkes to Leicester, 12 March 1587, 405-6

assistance from men to money.³⁵ However, the instructions that he was given in a private memorial clearly implied that Elizabeth was contemplating an abandonment of her Dutch alliance in favour of peace with Spain. Buckhurst was ordered to discover how able the Provinces were to defend themselves without her aid, how strong the English soldiers were in the States' pay, and what the general opinion was regarding a reconciliation with Spain.³⁶ The Queen's intentions therefore seemed to be diametrically opposed to those of the States General at this juncture because Leicester had been accompanied on his journey home by a delegation from that assembly, whose task was to secure an increase of English assistance.³⁷ The Queen gave them little hope of success, and even rebuked them for requesting more aid when she had given them so much already. She added that if they had effectively managed the assistance that she had thus far sent to the Provinces, it would have proved more than sufficient. The only concession that she made was to send over a person of quality (i.e. Buckhurst) to sort out their affairs.³⁸ Buckhurst's delegation enjoyed at best only limited success. While he made certain conciliatory moves and received both apologies and explanations from the States, by raising the issue of Leicester's authority - an issue which had lain dormant for some time - he created more hostility towards the English than he dispersed.³⁹ The envoy noted that the States General had accrued so much power and were so displeased with Leicester's proceedings, that they no longer looked to England for sovereign leadership, and were determined to restrict the Earl's authority further upon his return. He told Elizabeth that they were 'resolved - sithence Your Majestie dothe refuse the same - to lay yt [the sovereignty] upon no creature els, as a thing contrary to their othe and alleagaunce to their contry'.⁴⁰

The States General's response to Buckhurst's propositions therefore made it clear that their own perception of sovereignty was very different to the English. In fact, the sovereignty issue forms one of the best illustrations of the predominance of misconceptions in the Anglo-Dutch alliance. From the English point of view, the States had effectively offered them the sovereignty of the

³⁵ *ibid.*, Heads of Lord Buckhurst's Instructions, [14?] March 1587, 411-12

³⁶ *ibid.*, A private memorial for Lord Buckhurst, 14 March 1587, 411

³⁷ Brugmans, I, States General to Elizabeth, (15)/25 November 1586, 265-9; II, Wilkes to Burghley, (8)/18 January 1587, 24-5

³⁸ *ibid.*, Elizabeth to States General, (8)/18 March 1587, 142-4; *UHG*, XXII, Leicester to Council of State, (9)/19 March 1587, 279-81

³⁹ He admitted this to Burghley: 'Thus the wound, that was so well staid and settled, is now faln into a fresh bleding.' *CSPF*, XXI iii, Buckhurst to Burghley, (13)/23 June 1587, 112

⁴⁰ Brugmans, II, Buckhurst to Elizabeth, (28 June)/8 July 1587, 374-9; Buckhurst to States General, (24 April)/4 May 1587, 219-20; Buckhurst's Proposition to the States General, (31 May)/10 June 1587, 299-300; States General's Answer to Buckhurst's Propostion, (1)/11 June 1587, 300-4; Wilkes' narrative of his embassy in the Netherlands, July 1587, 460-4, 466-9

Provinces when they had appointed Leicester Governor-General at the beginning of 1586: sovereignty was, to them, synonymous with the monarchical power that Elizabeth exercised in her own country. They therefore viewed any usurpation of it as unlawful and reprehensible. Failing to appreciate how much the increasing authority and cohesion of the States was uniting and strengthening the Provinces, the English tended to view them as malevolent upstarts who were seeking their own advancement at the expense of the people at large. They therefore perceived the 'people' as loyal subjects who looked to the Queen for sovereign leadership, and needed protecting against the evil practices of the States, who were trying to usurp her position.⁴¹ Leicester, perhaps more than any other, viewed the situation in this light, and made a sharp distinction between the 'loyal' people and the traitorous States.⁴² He was no doubt greatly influenced by his involvement in the affairs of Utrecht. The orthodox Calvinists there were opposed to the States General because of the predominance of the States of Holland in that assembly, from whose influence they were striving to break free. He subsequently became an advocate of their cause and, perhaps as a result, believed that their sentiments were typical of the Provinces as a whole.⁴³ In fact, it is unlikely that the majority of the 'people' of the Netherlands were any more eager than the States to return to the authority of an absentee monarch. Rather, the active interventionists such as Leicester claimed that they were in an attempt to persuade the Queen to tie herself more closely to the Provinces. In other words, it was the English, rather than the Dutch, who wished Elizabeth to exercise 'sovereign' power there.

However, as E.H. Kossmann points out, 'strange things were happening to the word 'sovereign' during this period',⁴⁴ and the Dutch interpretation was somewhat at variance with the English. Kossmann argues that up to 1586, there is no evidence that the States General wielded sovereign power and could offer it to others. By sovereign, they meant one who defended their country's freedoms and privileges rather than a God-appointed sovereign in the monarchical sense. They had not therefore offered the 'sovereignty' to Elizabeth in 1585, but had simply invited her to

⁴¹ See for example: *CSPF*, XXI ii, Wilkes to Privy Council, 20 August 1586, 134-7; XXI iii, Elizabeth to States General, 22 June 1587, 124; Brugmans, II, Buckhurst to Walsingham, (26 March)/5 April 1587, 170-3. N.B. There is an inherent confusion in much of the English correspondence for this period. They tended to refer to the 'States', not specifying whether they meant the States General or States of Holland. It is quite possible that this ambiguity arose from their fundamental lack of understanding with regard to the Dutch constitution, and they did not seem to appreciate that real power was coming to reside with the States of Holland.

⁴² *CSPF*, XXI ii, Leicester to Burghley, 8 and 10 August 1586, 115; 122

⁴³ For a comprehensive discussion of affairs in Utrecht at this time, and Leicester's involvement in them, as well as of the growth of the States of Holland's influence, see Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, (especially chapters 4 and 5).

⁴⁴ E.H. Kossmann, 'Popular sovereignty at the beginning of the Dutch Ancien Regime', *Acta Historiae Neerlandicae, The Low Countries History Yearbook*, XIV (The Hague, 1981), 11

defend their constitution.⁴⁵ They wanted to *collaborate* with the Queen and Governor-General, and their definition of the latter post reflected this. Whereas Leicester assumed that they had offered him nothing less than unrestricted authority, *they* intended him to cooperate with them, and to be ultimately subject to their authority. Wilkes evidently realised this, although his perception was clouded by an inherent dislike of the States: 'They have given a government to my Lord of Leicester with the word Absolute, but with so many restrictions that his authority is limited almost to nothing, and is in truth but their servant for the politic government, having reserved to themselves, besides the sovereignty, the disposing of all the contributions, choice of officers and many other things...and are not accountable therefor either to my Lord or to the people'.⁴⁶ It would seem that, as they realised how divergent the English interpretation of sovereignty was from their own, the States decided to concentrate upon enhancing their authority and cohesion rather than urging the Queen to accept their version of sovereignty. However, the English who served in the Netherlands persisted in viewing this as an attempt to usurp the Queen's authority, establish their own, and renounce the alliance. In the light of this, it is not too surprising that the States replied quite angrily to English accusations of *coups* and usurpations.

The ill-feeling created by what the English viewed as a usurpation of Leicester's authority sparked a heated debate about the true meaning of sovereignty. In March 1587, one of the Earl's staunchest supporters, Gerard de Prouinck van Deventer, the burgomaster of Utrecht, published a pamphlet which claimed that the United Provinces needed a 'sovereign head' in order to resist Spain. He made reference to the 'perversity of our nature', and condemned his adversaries' constant appeals to privileges.⁴⁷ Shortly afterwards, Wilkes presented a similar defence of Leicester's position, but it was more forceful than Prouinck's and formed a blatant attack upon the States of Holland. He accused them of reducing Leicester's authority, which the States General had declared to be as 'supreme and absolute' as the Governor General had enjoyed in Charles V's time. He proceeded to question the States of Holland's claim to sovereignty by arguing that sovereignty belonged with 'the community', and that they were 'but servants, ministers and deputies' of this. Because the States' authority was therefore limited by the community, he claimed that it was as different from sovereignty as 'heaven is different from hell': he clearly believed that true sovereignty was absolutely unrestricted.⁴⁸ The States' immediate response was to tell Wilkes in no uncertain terms that the sovereignty ultimately rested with them,

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 10-12

⁴⁶ *CSPF*, XXI ii, Wilkes to Privy Council, 20 August 1586, 134-7

⁴⁷ van Gelderen, *Political Thought*, 200-1

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 201-2

not Leicester, and that it was not therefore fitting that 'the Governor who drew his authority from them should call them to account for their doings, no more than the governors of Charles V might tax them for any action of his done in the government.' Apparently undeterred, the envoy rebuked them for insolence and attempted to 'beat them from that humour of their sovereignty, which I declared and proved to be in the people, showing that upon that error they had grounded the rest of their absurdities.'⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the States continued to insist that they had not exceeded their authority in any way, and in August 1587, a Remonstrance was published on their behalf. This again asserted that the sovereignty rested with them, and that because Leicester's authority, by contrast, was merely 'conferred', they had every right to resist it if he used it unlawfully. The Earl himself protested against this, but the States subsequently published a series of similar declarations, all of which insisted on their sovereign powers.⁵⁰ However, while these served to refute the allegations that they had usurped Leicester's authority, they did not sufficiently answer Wilkes' attack on their own position. What was needed, therefore, was a Remonstrance that would prove the inaccuracy of Wilkes' accusations and simultaneously defend the States' authority. François Vranck, the town pensionary of Gouda, was commissioned to produce such a defence, and shortly afterwards he published a 'Short Exposition'.⁵¹ He argued that Holland and Zeeland had been governed by Counts for 800 years, and that these were 'lawfully charged and commissioned with the rule and sovereignty of these Countries by the nobles and towns, representing the States of the aforesaid country.'⁵² The Counts thus derived their power from the States, and if they acted in an unlawful or tyrannical manner (such as Leicester had done), the inhabitants⁵³ had the right to oppose him through the States. It therefore followed that political authority, and hence the sovereignty, ultimately rested with the States. Vranck thus deflected Wilkes' claim that the sovereignty rested with the people and not the States of Holland by asserting that the States were the delegates of the people, and were thereby able to exercise sovereign authority on their behalf: in other words, he effectively drew a distinction between the residence and administration of sovereignty. His concluding remark was a clear signal to the English that if they continued their efforts to enhance Leicester's position at the expense of the States', it would ultimately prove harmful to the Provinces: 'we consider to have

⁴⁹ *CSPF*, XXI ii, Wilkes to Leicester, 12 March 1587, 403-6; Brugmans, II, Wilkes' narrative of his embassy in the Netherlands, July 1587, 454-5, 457-9

⁵⁰ van Gelderen, *Political Thought*, 203-5

⁵¹ 'Short Exposition of the right exercised from all old times by the knighthood, nobles and towns of Holland and Westvriesland for the maintenance of the liberties, rights and privileges and laudable customs of the country' (1587), van Gelderen, *Dutch Revolt*, 227-38. Den Tex hails the tract thus: 'Zij werd naast de Unie van Utrecht de magna charta van de wordende koopmansrepubliek.' *Oldenbarnevelt*, I, 402

⁵² 'Short Exposition', in van Gelderen, *Dutch Revolt*, 230

⁵³ By 'inhabitants', Vranck meant the nobles and towns.

proven clearly and sufficiently how necessary it is to preserve the authority of the States, being the foundation on which the common state of the country rests, and which cannot be damaged without ruining the common good, and that in all matters the sovereignty of the country is with the States.’⁵⁴

The sovereignty debate therefore ultimately served to assert and strengthen the States of Holland’s position. However, it apparently did so only within the realms of the Dutch Republic. In England, the image of the States as usurpers of Leicester’s lawful authority remained popular, and was seen as typical of a more general erosion of English authority in the northern provinces. Indeed, it is possible that the fundamental difference between English and Dutch perceptions of sovereignty lay at the root of a great deal of the subsequent hostility between the two sides. It was perhaps the most lucid example of England’s failure to either understand or appreciate the Dutch constitution. Judging it instead by their own centralised, monarchical system, the English perceived it as a backward confederation of states whose confusions and divisions stemmed from the absence of a ruler to guide them.

Wilkes was earnest in his pleas that Leicester should return to his post in the Netherlands and reclaim the authority that the States had usurped in his absence.⁵⁵ He warned of how far Anglo-Dutch relations had deteriorated since the Earl’s departure, claiming: ‘there grew a wonderful alteration in the hartes and affections of the people againste the Englishe. They uttered lewde and unreverent speaches of His Excellencie and the whole nation.’⁵⁶ The Queen did not immediately accede to his requests, however, and it was only when news reached her that Parma had laid siege to Sluis that she decided to do so. The issue of her Governor’s authority was once again brought to the fore during the weeks preceding Leicester’s departure. Leicester wrote to Junius, his secretary in the Netherlands, ordering him to tell the States ‘that henceforward they will forbear all the difficulties of the past and will yield to him such legitimate authority as is fitting for administering the sovereignty of the countries, without opposition and countermining by the States, as in the past.’⁵⁷ Leicester’s instructions were issued a few days later, and largely backed up his bold assertions. They claimed: ‘the late confusion in Government in the United Provinces,

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 238; van Gelderen, *Political Thought*, 206-10, 265. See also: P. Geyl, ‘The Interpretation of Vrancken’s Deduction of 1587 on the Nature of the Power of the States of Holland’, in C.H. Carter (ed), *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation* (London, 1966)

⁵⁵ *CSPF*, XXI ii, Wilkes to Elizabeth, 16 February 1587, 363; Wilkes to Leicester, 12 March 1587, 405; XXI iii, Wilkes to Walsingham, 29 April 1587, 35-7

⁵⁶ Brugmans, II, Wilkes’ narrative of his embassy in the Netherlands, July 1587, 447

⁵⁷ *CSPF*, XXI iii, Leicester to Junius, 10 June 1587, 105-6

especially in martial causes, hath proceeded chiefly for lack of a head there present', and therefore instructed him to order the States 'to yield to him such sufficient power and authority that the said confusion may be avoided and the former errors in government reformed.' He was also given permission to retain the title of Governor-General, provided the States did not withdraw it. The rest of his instructions concerned the issue of peace with Spain, and he was ordered to 'incline the said peoples' hearts to desire the same', letting them know that if they did not assent to such a treaty, the Queen might be forced to abandon them.⁵⁸

By the time of Leicester's return in late June 1587, therefore, the alliance seemed quite fragile. Nevertheless, Elizabeth sent over a fresh supply of troops and money with her General,⁵⁹ and every effort was made to save Sluis. The allied attempts failed, however, and the town fell to Parma at the end of July.⁶⁰ Following the defeat, Leicester's prestige and his relations with the States deteriorated even further. He made no effort to reconcile himself to them, and instead returned to complaining about their underhand practices and attempts to usurp English authority in the Provinces.⁶¹ The States party apparently tried to patch up their relations with him, urging him not to give credence to the trouble-makers (most probably those in Utrecht) who were seeking to 'stir up discord between them' and to 'throw the countries into confusion, and imperil his Excellency's reputation.'⁶² However, the sovereignty issue also raised its ugly head once more. The States of Holland answered Leicester's allegations that they had deprived him of his rightful authority by claiming: 'since the removal of the King of Spain, all acts of sovereignty have been legitimately exercised by the said Estates, who conferred upon his Excellency the authority of Governor General.'⁶³ Therefore, even though they reaffirmed his title the following month, this was not intended as an acknowledgement of his 'sovereign' authority, any more than it had been when they had first bestowed the title upon him.⁶⁴ Yet Leicester persisted in interpreting the title as being synonymous with sovereign power, and firmly believed (not without reason) that the

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, Instructions for the Earl of Leicester, 20 June 1587, 121-3

⁵⁹ The troops numbered around 3,000 foot, and the money was to cover their pay. She also lent the States General £15,000, although they had asked her for more than three times this sum.

⁶⁰ *CSPF*, XXI iii, Leicester to [Burghley?], 27 July 1587, 199-200; Elizabeth to Killigrew and Beale, 1 August 1587, 218

⁶¹ *ibid.*, Leicester to Burghley, 31 July 1587, 210-11; Leicester to Lords of Council, 21 August 1587, 258-60; Gilpin to [Walsingham?], 21 August 1587, 263-5 N.B. He also railed against Sir John Norris, Buckhurst and Wilkes, accusing them of trying to discredit him with the States, and referred to the latter as 'a villain and devil'. *ibid.*, Leicester to Walsingham, 4 August 1587, 221; Leicester to Elizabeth, 7 July 1587, 151-4

⁶² *ibid.*, Articles exhibited by the deputies of the States of Holland to his Excellency, (20)/30 August 1587, 258

⁶³ *ibid.*, 257

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 'Act of the States General, whereby they confirm the authority of Leicester as Governor General', (8)/18 September 1587, 300

States had drastically reduced his authority as Governor-General. He frequently complained of their usurpation to the English Court, and told Burghley that they 'never meant this twelve months to yield to have such a governor as they first made me'.⁶⁵

Leicester did not only find himself at odds with the States upon his return, for he also fell from his sovereign's favour once more. The cause of her displeasure was his failure to adhere to his instructions regarding her peace talks with Spain. No doubt his alienation from the States and his aversion to an Anglo-Spanish peace lay at the heart of his failure, particularly in view of his attempts to increase Elizabeth's involvement in the Netherlands and encourage the people to look to her for protection. The Queen reprimanded him sharply for his negligence, and he humbly offered his excuses, lamenting that he had once more incurred her displeasure.⁶⁶ By this juncture, however, he had clearly tired of his post, and wished to return home for good. He referred to the Queen's promise that his second stay in the Netherlands should not exceed three months, and begged to be recalled.⁶⁷ His wish was finally granted in November, and in a letter informing the States General of this, he expressed regret that he had not been able to do what he had intended during his service in the Netherlands. However, he refused to take any of the blame for this, and claimed that he had 'done more than his duty'. He ended with a parting shot at the States, insinuating that by enhancing their own authority, they had ruined the Provinces, but he promised to promote their cause at court nevertheless.⁶⁸ When he left for England shortly afterwards, his relations with them had reached a nadir, and his position at court had also been weakened. His prolonged absence from the latter had enabled his adversaries (most notably Burghley and Raleigh), to diminish his influence with Elizabeth, and even Walsingham, his former ally, was apparently tiring of promoting his cause there, and had begun to ally with the Lord Treasurer.⁶⁹ Yet in view of the apparently rapid restoration of his position at court when he had returned there a year earlier, one could assume that the tenacity of his hold over the Queen's affections soon returned.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, Leicester to Burghley, 13 October 1587, 367-8. See also for e.g.: Leicester to Burghley, 31 July 1587, 210-11; Leicester to Walsingham, 4 August 1587, 220-2; Leicester to Lords of Council, 21 August 1587, 258-60; Leicester to Elizabeth, 9 October 1587, 355-7. Gilpin observed the hostility that now existed between Leicester and the States, noting his reluctance to go to the Hague, and the offence that his absence had caused them. *ibid.*, Gilpin to [Walsingham?], 21 August 1587, 263-5

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, Elizabeth to States General, 20 September 1587, 327-8; Leicester to Elizabeth, 29 September and 22 October 1587, 341-3, 381-3

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, Leicester to Burghley, 11 September 1587, 306; Leicester to Elizabeth, 29 September 1587, 343

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, Leicester to States General, (16)/26 November 1587, 420-1

⁶⁹ See for example: Bruce, Walsingham to Leicester, 28 March 1586, 190-2; Walsingham to Leicester, 21 April 1586, 229-33; Read, 'Walsingham and Burghley in Queen Elizabeth's Privy Council', *English Historical Review*, XXVIII (1913), 57-8

The relations between the allies could not be so easily repaired, however, and by the time of Leicester's departure, they seemed to be reaching a crisis-point. The Queen reprimanded the States General for their 'willfulness in obeying of him' as their Governor, and implied that it was their failure to honour his authority that had caused her to recall him.⁷⁰ In addition, the matter of peace was still a source of tension between the allies, and it was not clear whether Elizabeth would abandon the Dutch if they persisted in their resolve not to come to terms with Spain. The alliance therefore seemed in danger of disintegrating just two years after it had been forged, and nobody could have predicted at this juncture that it would endure for the remainder of the reign.

Nevertheless, the ascendancy of Leicester's successor was to see at least some alleviation of the tension that had built up between the allies. The Earl gave Lord Willoughby the charge of the English forces when he left the Netherlands late in 1587.⁷¹ Willoughby was a rather more suitable candidate to lead the English troops than Leicester had been. Of a significantly humbler status, he was not the subject of such envy and intrigue at court, and even though he was a staunch interventionist, he enjoyed the friendship and patronage of Burghley, as well as Walsingham. Furthermore, he had an impressive military record and was experienced in the Dutch wars, having served there as Governor of Bergen-op-Zoom since April 1586, and taken part in numerous important campaigns.⁷² However, he seemed to share Leicester's aversion to the States General, and viewed Counts Maurice and Hohenlohe with particular suspicion and resentment. Moreover, he claimed that his close affiliation to Leicester had already alienated the States from him.⁷³ He was also extremely reluctant to take on the command of the English troops. Leicester evidently realised this, and told Burghley: 'he ys ye most unwilling man in ye world to contynew here'.⁷⁴ Willoughby himself made no secret of his reluctance and pleaded to be excused from the post, protesting his unsuitability to the Court.⁷⁵ This reluctance was understandable. His predecessor had exacerbated the divisions in the Provinces and had alienated

⁷⁰ *CSPF*, XXI iii, Elizabeth to States General, 7 November 1587, 409-10

⁷¹ Brugmans, III, Leicester to Burghley, (17)/27 November 1587, 310

⁷² *CSPF*, XX, Willoughby to Walsingham, 12 March 1586, 433; XXI ii, Holland and Zeeland - Names of governors of provinces and towns, September 1586, 179; Leicester to Elizabeth, 8 July 1586, 76; Wilkes to Privy Council, 20 August 1586, 136; *HMC, Anc*, Commission from the Earl of Leicester, 16 July 1587, 48

⁷³ *Ancaster MS*, X, fo.26, Willoughby to Leicester, 15 September 1587; *CSPF*, XXI iv, Willoughby to Burghley, 12 January 1588, 13-14; *BM MS*, Galba D, II, fo.210, Willoughby to Burghley, 18 November 1587

⁷⁴ Brugmans, III, Leicester to Burghley, (17)/27 November 1587, 310

⁷⁵ *BM MS*, Galba D, II, fo.210, Willoughby to Burghley, 18 November 1587; *SP 84*, XIX, fo.76, Willoughby to Walsingham, 14 November 1587; *HMC, Anc*, A Memorial from Willoughby for Leicester, November 1587, 70;

the most powerful political authorities there, making them suspicious of - even hostile to - English interference in their affairs. He had also neglected the tasks of military administration and finance, allowing corruption to become rife and mutiny to spread among the soldiery.⁷⁶ Moreover, this was at a time when the allied troops needed to be particularly strong in order to check the relentless advance of Parma's forces, which had recently been given a major boost by the capture of Sluis. It was therefore an unenviable legacy that Leicester had left to his successor.

In spite of Willoughby's protests, Elizabeth approved of his appointment and confirmed it at the beginning of December, giving him the title of Lieutenant General of her troops.⁷⁷ In line with Leicester's recommendation that he should have 'the hole charge of all Her Majesties forces absolutely',⁷⁸ she stipulated that he would have 'plein pouvoir, autorité et mandement espécial' of all the English cavalry and infantry.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, she was determined that he should not enjoy the powers that her favourite had done, and the very title that she gave him implied a significant reduction of the authority exercised by the Governor General. Furthermore, a resolution passed by the Privy Council a few days before Willoughby's official instructions were issued made it clear that he would be forbidden to meddle in governmental affairs. It was stipulated that: 'touching the government of these countries, it shall be convenient that the Lord Willoughby should be limited by Instructions, only to deal in those things that concerneth the regiment and government of her Majesty's forces, without intermeddling in any thing that concerneth the government of the said countries.' Even though the Queen was clearly anxious to restrict his authority because of the catastrophe that had ensued from giving Leicester a relatively free hand to intervene in political affairs, she claimed that she had decided to limit her new Lord General's activities to the military sphere because of the States' 'hard usage' of his predecessor, and the 'little respect' that they had yielded him. She was therefore adamant that the post of Governor as defined by the Treaty would not apply to Willoughby (or, no doubt, to any future representative), and that he would not 'yield the authority agreed by the late contract'. In addition, he was not allowed to accept the powers that the States had given to Leicester, even

CSPF, XXI iii, Willoughby to Burghley, 29 December 1587, 469; XXI iv, Willoughby to Burghley, 23 January 1588, 27

⁷⁶ See: Neale, *Elizabeth I*, 289-90; 'Elizabeth and the Netherlands, 1586-7', 373-96

⁷⁷ She had apparently chosen him for this command because of her high opinion of him, as she called him 'trèscher et bien aymé', and referred to his 'bonnes qualitez, souffisance, idonité et expérience.' Brugmans, III, Commission for Lord Willoughby, 4/14 December 1587, 361-2

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, Leicester to Burghley, (17)/27 November 1587, 310

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, Commission for Lord Willoughby, (4)/14 December 1587, 361-2

though it is rather unlikely that they would ever have offered these to an English representative again.⁸⁰ Willoughby's official instructions, issued on Christmas Eve 1587, modified these resolutions slightly, and stipulated that he was not to be deprived of political authority altogether, but that this would be closely vetted by the Queen: 'she had thought good - although by virtue of the said treaty her Lieutenant General is authorized to deal as a principal in matters of government there - that he shall not intermeddle with their government without her direction'.⁸¹ He was also given a seat on the Council of State - a privilege that had been reserved for the General of the English troops by the Nonsuch Treaty.

Clearly, the States had also become more wary of the Queen's representative following the damage that Leicester had done, and had no intention of extending their offer of the Governor-Generalship to Willoughby. They took their time in examining his commission, anxious to ensure that it did not exceed the degree of authority that they wished him to have. In January 1588, they announced that they were willing to accept it conditionally for a period of two months, and Willoughby told his sovereign: 'They enquired of my authority, and took some exceptions to the validity of it...but concluded to show themselves dutiful and ready to receive any whom your Majesty commended.'⁸² His hostility to the States at this juncture was clear, and he seemed to have inherited Leicester's perception of them as ungrateful upstarts who were unlawfully usurping English authority in the Provinces. He evidently resented the fact that he was subject to their authority, and complained of this to Burghley: 'How ill it agreeth that her Majesties Lieutenant [is] to be ranged under them'.⁸³

In spite of Willoughby's apparent hostility towards the States General during the first few months of his ascendancy, however, his relations with them subsequently began to show signs of improvement. One of the most likely explanations for this was the formal resignation of Leicester from his post in the Netherlands in April 1588.⁸⁴ Before this time, Willoughby was still in theory

⁸⁰ *CSPF*, XXI iii, The Privy Council, 13 December 1587, 452. See also: Elizabeth to John Herbert, 16 December 1587, 453-4; *APC*, XV, 153, 325. For a recent observation on the reduction of the English Lord General's authority, see Wernham, *After the Armada*, 31

⁸¹ *CSPF*, XXI iii, 'Articles of Instructions to be put in execution by the Lord Willoughby', [24?] December 1587, 462-3

⁸² XXI iv, Willoughby to Elizabeth, 7 January 1588, 8

⁸³ *ibid.*, Willoughby to Burghley, 23 January 1588, 26 N.B. He later alleged that he was 'made contemptible to all men' because he was forced to comply with the States General's unwise commands, and gave this as one of the reasons why he wished to resign his post. *ibid.*, 'Reasons why the Lord Willoughby desireth to be deported from his authority, already being made void', 29 June 1588, 525

⁸⁴ 'A Proclamation of the States General of the United Provinces, setting forth, that Robert Earl of Leicester has resigned the government and high office of Captain-General of the said Provinces, and that all people are discharged of the Oath made to the said Earl. Nevertheless, that the Oath taken to the said States shall remaine

subject to Leicester's authority, and it seemed as if he was merely holding the reins in his absence. It is therefore possible that he considered it wise to continue the Earl's policy of objecting to the States' authority and encouraging the factions who still looked to the Queen for leadership.⁸⁵ However, as soon as he realised that the Earl would not be returning to his post, and that he was now permanently in charge of the English troops, he seemed more willing to cooperate with the States General.⁸⁶ It may also be that Willoughby recognised the continuing progress that the States were making towards enhancing their own power and increasing the cohesion of their state, and that he therefore viewed the establishment of harmonious relations with them as the best policy to adopt. Whatever the case, his new-found friendship with the States was viewed with suspicion by a number of his compatriots in the Netherlands, most of whom believed that he had been tricked by the States into carrying out their treacherous designs.⁸⁷ However, there is little evidence to support such accounts, and they can be viewed as an indication of the quite widespread failure of the English representatives to adapt to the changing situation in the Netherlands.

The publication of Leicester's resignation also helped to heal the divisions in the Netherlands. During the months immediately following his departure, the factions that he had encouraged to look to the Queen for leadership continued to resist the States General's authority, but when it became clear that he would not return, they no longer had a pretext for doing so. A reconciliation between the warring parties in the Provinces (most notably the States of Holland and the Utrecht insurgents) therefore seemed possible for the first time in many years.⁸⁸ It was made more so by the increasingly apparent trend in Elizabeth's policy towards her allies. She had always been reluctant to involve herself more closely in the Netherlands than was made necessary by the Nonsuch Treaty, and she seemed increasingly eager to reduce her commitments there, leaving her free to concentrate upon more pressing matters, such as the ominous threat of a Spanish invasion. A logical step towards doing so was to encourage the Provinces to heal their divisions and submit

in full force. 12 April 1588', *Somers Tracts*, 421-24; *UHG*, XXII, Leicester's Act of Abdication from his post as Governor-General, 1 April 1588, 282-3; *CSPF*, XXI iv, States General to Elizabeth, (4)/14 April 1588, 253 N.B. Leicester had apparently signed his resignation on 17 December 1587.

⁸⁵ *ibid*, Willoughby to Walsingham, 7 January and 19 February 1588, 9, 105; *HMC, Anc*, Willoughby to Prouinck, (9)/19 March 1588, 97

⁸⁶ See for example: *CSPF*, XXI iv, Willoughby to Burghley, 7 June 1588, 463-4; Willoughby to Burghley, 20 June 1588, 501; XXII, Willoughby to Privy Council, 17 July 1588, 55

⁸⁷ For example, Sir William Russell, the Governor of Flushing, claimed that Willoughby was 'greatly bent to yield unto the States, and thereby to be much withdrawn from the good course which might best further her Majesty's service.' XXI iv, Russell to Walsingham, 29 May 1588, 425. See also: Russell to Leicester, 11 June 1588, 477; XXII, Morgan to Walsingham, 9 July 1588, 20

⁸⁸ XXI iv, Killigrew to Walsingham, April 1588, 345

to the steadily increasing authority of the States General, rather than to her own. She therefore began to urge her new Lieutenant General to work towards the establishment of peace and unity there, and the indications are that he fulfilled her requests.⁸⁹ This policy did much to dissolve the tension between the allies that had been accentuated by the disputes regarding Leicester's authority during his last year in the Netherlands.

The alliance was further strengthened by the events that occurred in the war with Spain during the first year of Willoughby's lieutenancy. The threat of a Spanish invasion of England sparked a shift in the balance of military assistance between the allies. Whereas in the past, this had flowed largely in one direction, Elizabeth now needed to call upon the Dutch for support. They were requested to blockade their ports in order to prevent the Spanish ships from sheltering there, as well as to ensure that Parma did not send out reinforcements to join the fleet. In addition, the Dutch agreed to provide a number of ships to help deflect the Spanish fleet.⁹⁰ Although their contribution was comparatively small, its significance was not. It demonstrated the States' willingness to honour the promise made in the Nonsuch Treaty to provide troops when necessary for the defence against Spain.⁹¹ For her part, Elizabeth had entered decisively into open hostility with Philip II, after years of flirting with the idea of making peace with him, and had thereby allayed Dutch fears that she would abandon them. Following the victory, envoys were exchanged between England and the Provinces for mutual congratulation, and their alliance seemed stronger than it had ever been.⁹²

The alliance was also to prove fruitful during the months immediately following the defeat of the Armada. The failure of Philip's invasion attempt served to fuel his determination to reconquer the northern provinces, and the bulk of Spain's forces was once again directed to the campaigns there. As a result, in September 1588, the Duke of Parma was able to lay siege to Bergen-op-

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, Elizabeth to Willoughby, February 1588, 166-8; Willoughby to Burghley, 5 March 1588, 164-6; [?Walsingham] to Willoughby, 12 March 1588, 188; Killigrew to Burghley, 26 April 1588, 326-7; HMC, *Anc*, Willoughby to States General, 25 March 1588, 105; Willoughby to Prouninck, (9)/19 March 1588, 97; Willoughby to Sonoy, 5 April 1588, 117

⁹⁰ *CSPF*, XXI iv, Copy of a paper put before the States General by Lord Willoughby at his hotel on this date, 5 April 1588, 254; Killigrew to Walsingham, 5 May 1588, 353; States General to Willoughby, (22 May)/1 June 1588, 415-6; Killigrew to Walsingham, 11 June 1588, 477-8; XXII, Maurice to Elizabeth, (8)/18 July 1588, 15; Maurice to Privy Council, (10)/20 July 1588, 24-5; States General to Elizabeth, (6)/16 August 1588, 110-11; Council of State to Privy Council, (8)/18 August 1588, 117; Ortell to States General, States of Holland and States of Zeeland, 14 August 1588, 133

⁹¹ Du Mont, 455 (article XXV)

⁹² *CSPF*, XXII, Memorial for John Norris, 6 October 1588, 247-9; HMC, *Anc*, States General to Elizabeth, (6)/16 December 1588, 221-2

Zoom with a formidable body of troops.⁹³ Due largely to the valiant efforts of Willoughby and the English soldiery, the siege was lifted a month later, but it had led to a decline in his relations with the Court and the States General, both of whom had proved reluctant to adhere to his frequent and urgent requests for assistance.⁹⁴ The situation was made worse in December, when the States General implied that Willoughby was largely responsible for the loss of the strategically important town of Wachtendonck in Gelderland.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, Anglo-Dutch relations continued to show signs of improvement, and a joint expedition to Portugal, planned during the winter of 1588/9, set the seal on their harmony. The voyage was aimed to counter any renewed invasion attempts by Philip II following the failure of his Armada, and Sir John Norris was dispatched to the States General to secure their consent for the withdrawal of 2,000 English troops from the cautionary towns and a levy of sixty flyboats.⁹⁶ Willoughby objected furiously to the proposal, complaining that he had not been consulted on the matter and that the troops could hardly be spared. He also resented the presence of his old adversary, Norris, and seemed to do everything in his power to obstruct the negotiations.⁹⁷ By objecting to the voyage, he placed himself in the opposite camp to Oldenbarnvelt, who was actively in favour of it and had largely succeeded in persuading the States General of its merits, and thenceforth his relations with the Dutch political authorities deteriorated even further.⁹⁸

⁹³ *CSPF*, XXII, Killigrew to Leicester, 4 September 1588, 182; *HMC, Anc*, Vere to Walsingham, 11 September 1588, 186-7; 'A Narrative of the Defence of Berghen-op-Zoom', 14 September-20 October 1588, 201-14

⁹⁴ *CSPF*, XXII, Willoughby to Privy Council, 19 August 1588, 143; *HMC, Anc*, Willoughby to Council of State, 20 and 30 September 1588, 186, 193. The Genoese spy, Antonio Messia, justified the Queen's reluctance, claiming that she had had to 'bleed at every pore' to assemble troops for the siege, and added: 'Those that went had to be driven on board with cudgels.' *CSPS*, IV, Advices from England, (26 October)/5 November 1588, 481. Willoughby's relations with his sovereign had begun to deteriorate earlier that year because of a dispute that had arisen between himself and Sir Thomas Morgan. Willoughby had refused to let Morgan take up his Governorship at Bergen, even though he had been commanded to do so by Elizabeth. He had been swiftly reprimanded for defying her in this way, and ordered to instal Morgan at once. *CSPF*, XXI iv, Elizabeth to Willoughby, 14 May 1588, 388; Thomas Webbes to Walsingham, 17 June 1588, 492-3; XXII, Morgan to Elizabeth, 31 July 1588, 93; Christoffel Roels to Walsingham, (20)/30 September 1588, 212; Camden, *Historie*, iii, 146

⁹⁵ *HMC, Anc*, 'Resolution of the States General', (19)/29 December 1588, 230; 'Answer to the States General', (20)/30 December 1588, 231-2

⁹⁶ *CSPF*, XXII, Norris, to Walsingham, 29 October 1588, 288-9; *HMC, Anc*, 'Resolution of the States General', (14)/24 December 1588, 227-8. For a narrative of the expedition, see: Wernham, 'Queen Elizabeth and the Portugal Expedition of 1589', 1-26, 194-218

⁹⁷ *HMC, Anc*, Willoughby to States General, (19)/29 December 1588, 229-30; *CSPF*, XXII, Willoughby to Burghley, 8 October 1588, 252; Norris to Walsingham, 29 October 1588, 289; Norris to Walsingham, 10 November 1588, 311; XXIII, Willoughby to Burghley, 14 January 1589, 37; 'Memorial by Willoughby on the Portugal Voyage', 22 January 1589, 54

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, Willoughby to Privy Council, 15 January 1589, 40; *HMC, Anc*, 'Lord Willoughby's Answer to the States General', (20)/30 December 1588, 231

The instructions that the States General issued to the newly reconvened Council of State at the end of 1588 demonstrated the tension that had crept into their relations with the English Lord General.⁹⁹ As well as reducing the Council of State's authority, they also sought to limit Willoughby's, stipulating that he should be no more than an ordinary member of the Council, and that his sphere of influence should only extend to the command of the English contingent.¹⁰⁰ Both Willoughby and the English Court raised objections to this, but the States summarily dismissed their complaints, declaring: 'The Governor of her Majesty's assistance, her representatives in the Country, and the native Councillors, have no more right to quarrel with their instructions from the States, than councillors of kingdoms have to dispute with those of their kings'.¹⁰¹ This was a clear indication of how much the situation had changed since Leicester's Governorship. The States General had grown in cohesion and authority and it would seem that they were now able to dictate the degree of power that they were willing to accede to the commander of the English troops. The possibility of their ever again elevating this figure to the position of Governor-General was becoming increasingly remote.

Willoughby and the States General were never again to recover the amity that they had fleetingly enjoyed the previous year. In January 1589, he lamented: 'the States grow continually more and more out of taste with me, and the fairer I speak to them, the more unkindly they entreat me'.¹⁰² A number of his compatriots supported these claims. Bodley, ever ready to criticise the Dutch, observed that the States were completely alienated from Willoughby, and James Digges, the Muster Master of the English troops, reported: 'they abuse the Lord General most violently'.¹⁰³ The animosity between them reached a crisis point with the betrayal of Geertruidenberg to Spain in April 1589. When the garrison of the town broke into mutiny, the States and Maurice repeatedly reminded Willoughby of a promise that he had made the previous year to restore the town to them in the event of any future uprising. They insinuated that he had purposely failed to honour the promise, and had worked hand-in-glove with the Governor of the town, who was his brother-in-law, Sir John Wingfield, to ensure its betrayal to Parma.¹⁰⁴ The controversy continued

⁹⁹ The Council had dissolved itself in February 1588 out of protest at the deterioration of its authority.

¹⁰⁰ *CSPF*, XXIII, 'Bodley's Declaration upon the States General's Instructions to the Council of State', 21 February 1589, 119-21

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, 'Answer of the States General to Bodley's Reply', (28 January)/7 February 1589, 75; 'Points proposed by Bodleigh to the States', 14 January 1589, 38; 'Memorial of matters to be treated of with the States General', March 1589, 191-2

¹⁰² *ibid.*, Willoughby to Killigrew, 30 January 1589, 79

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, Bodley to Walsingham, 20 February 1589, 116; Digges to Burghley, 24 January 1589, 61

¹⁰⁴ *HMC, Anc*, States General to Willoughby, (11)/21 February 1589, 255

to rage after Willoughby left the Netherlands for the last time in March 1589.¹⁰⁵ Oldenbarnevelt ordered a placard to be published, blaming him, amongst others, for the loss of the place, and strongly implying that he was a traitor.¹⁰⁶ Clearly outraged, Willoughby published a series of placards and statements of his own, proclaiming his innocence and denouncing Oldenbarnevelt and the States as malicious slanderers who were themselves plotting to betray the northern provinces to Spain.¹⁰⁷ Their angry exchanges seemed to set the seal on Willoughby's determination never to return to his post in the Netherlands. He resisted Burghley's pleas that he should do so, and confided: 'I sie my state therein like the consuming sicknes which though the pacient take phisicke for: yett can he not lyve and yf he take none, he is assured he can butt die'.¹⁰⁸ The Geertruidenberg affair also soured the relations between the allies. The Queen had criticised Maurice for his rather unwise handling of the mutiny,¹⁰⁹ and Bodley was ordered to reprimand the States for their treatment of the Lord General.¹¹⁰ In addition, Burghley and Wilkes both wrote in person to the States General, complaining about their placard against Willoughby.¹¹¹ An all-too-familiar situation had thus arisen, the chief English representative in the Netherlands having quarrelled with the States, and the Court having defended his position at the expense of good relations with their allies.

Therefore, while the Queen's reduction of her General's authority from that enjoyed by Leicester had helped to prevent a repeat of the latter's damaging intervention, it had not guaranteed the effectiveness of the post that Willoughby filled. He had still been able to object to the States General's directions, and towards the end of his ascendancy, when it seemed as though they were intent upon diminishing his authority, he had come to view them in a similar light as Leicester had done, thereby rendering any effective collaboration with them impossible. If the posts of Governor General and Lieutenant General had both proved unworkable, therefore, the best

¹⁰⁵ The Queen informed the States General of her decision to allow Willoughby to leave his post in February. ARA, Lias. Eng., 5881 II, Elizabeth to States General, 16 February 1589

¹⁰⁶ HMC, *Anc*, Garrison of Geertruidenberg, (31 March)/10 April 1589, 271

¹⁰⁷ *Ancaster* MS VI, fo.74, 'Lord Willoughby', April 1589; fo.80, 'Geertrudenberg', May 1589; Lot X, 328, May 1589

¹⁰⁸ XII, fo.17, Willoughby to Burghley, 28 May 1589; VI fo.81, 'Notes by Lord Willoughby', May/June 1589

¹⁰⁹ Upon hearing that the mutineers had entered into secret negotiations with Parma, Maurice had suddenly laid siege to the town, without consulting either Willoughby, the Queen or the Council of State. His attempt to take it by force failed, however, and he abandoned it a week later. *ibid.*, fo.46, Maurice to Willoughby, (10)/20 March 1589; fo.52, Elizabeth to Maurice, 16 March 1588; HMC, *Anc*, Willoughby to Maurice, (8)/18 March 1589, 264

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, Privy Council to Bodley, 13 May 1589, 280-1

¹¹¹ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5881 II, Burghley to States General, 5, 12 and 14 August 1589; Walsingham to States General, 31 August 1589

solution was apparently to reduce the authority of the Queen's chief representative even further and to invest it in a figure of a somewhat lower profile, as well as a more humble and pliant disposition than Leicester and Willoughby. An apparently ideal candidate for such a role was Sir Francis Vere, a young captain who had already gained almost four years of fighting experience in the Netherlands, and who seemed to get on well with the Dutch.

Vere was just twenty five years of age when he first set foot on Dutch soil,¹¹² but he had already gained a quite significant amount of experience in the military sphere. He and his brother Robert hailed from the noble family of the Earls of Oxford,¹¹³ which was renowned for military valour, and they had been trained in the art of warfare by a Low Countries veteran, Sir William Browne. With such an upbringing, it is perhaps not too surprising that before his eighteenth birthday, Vere had already decided to enter the military profession. He found several routes available to him, and the first of these took him to Paris, where he stayed with some friends of his cousin, the future seventeenth Earl of Oxford, and was enrolled in the service of the Guises.¹¹⁴ Later, in 1580, he embarked upon a 'voyage to Polonia' with Captain Francis Allen, and probably served in the Polish army.¹¹⁵

The variety and length of the experience that Vere had gained in the military sphere by the age of twenty five gave him a reputation that belied his years.¹¹⁶ This reputation was greatly enhanced by his service in the Netherlands, which also significantly broadened his experience in the planning and execution of warfare. It began in December 1585, when volunteers from all over England were enrolled in the second batch of English soldiers that Elizabeth had promised the Dutch by the Treaty of Nonsuch some three months earlier.¹¹⁷ Vere joined this force at Colchester, and three days later, on 8 December, it set sail from Harwich, destined for Flushing and the Hague.

¹¹² There is some variation in the dates given for his birth, but most accounts suggest that it was 1560. A brief account of his genealogy is given in BM MS, Harley, 4189 and 6776

¹¹³ Vere was the second of four sons born to Geoffrey de Vere, brother of the sixteenth Earl of Oxford, and Elizabeth Hardeykin. John was the eldest son, and after Francis came Robert and Horace. There was also a daughter, named Frances.

¹¹⁴ This angered the Queen, and she rebuked him accordingly. Vere still recalled the incident more than twenty five years later, and confided to Cecil that it had 'served me for a warning ever since.' HMC, *Sal*, XVII, Vere to Cecil, 17 November 1605, 494

¹¹⁵ *Dictionary of National Biography*, XX, 229

¹¹⁶ Fortescue claims that by this stage, Vere was 'a young man of greater promise than any'. J.W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, I (London, 1910), 147

¹¹⁷ The first contingent after the Treaty consisted of around 4,000 men and had arrived in the Provinces in August 1585, commanded by Colonel John Norris.

At this juncture, Vere had no definite status in the Queen's forces, having enrolled merely as a volunteer. This was soon to change, however, and one cannot help suspecting that his rapid rise in status was due to nepotism as well as to military skill. Lord Willoughby was married to Vere's cousin, Lady Mary Vere, and although a mission to Denmark late in 1585 had prevented his joining Leicester's expeditionary force, he expressed an eagerness to serve in the Provinces, and arrived there early in the following year.¹¹⁸ He was assigned a troop of horse, and Vere joined his entourage soon afterwards. Just two months later, Willoughby was appointed Governor of the strategically important town of Bergen-op-Zoom, and his cousin accompanied him there.¹¹⁹ It was during his service in this town that Vere really developed his military skills, and his profile was raised significantly as a result. Indeed, Markham suggests that he reached the zenith of his early career in the Netherlands at this time: 'Hitherto we have only seen him as a valiant soldier, fighting bravely and untiringly, and displaying a devotion to duty and great powers of endurance. But at Bergen he appears as a prudent adviser of his general, a cautious commander, and a resourceful continuer of stratagems.'¹²⁰

Although Vere's fortuitous family connections had perhaps provided the initial impetus for his military career, his subsequently rapid rise through the ranks was due at least as much to a combination of military skill and driving ambition. During the first four years of his service in the Netherlands, he was involved in almost every major campaign, and proved himself more than equal to the task. The first year of his involvement in the war against Spain was one of the most active and varied that he was to experience. Within a month of his arrival at Bergen-op-Zoom, he was involved in a dangerous skirmish with the enemy, which ended in triumph. In July, he marched under the command of Willoughby, Count Maurice of Nassau, and Sir Philip Sidney to Axel, a town in Spanish possession, and was involved in its surprise and capture. Still under his cousin's command, he advanced to the sieges of Doesburgh and Zutphen in the August and September, respectively, of that year. His endeavours did not go unnoticed, and he was duly named in an official list of 'valiant young gentlemen' who were considered competent enough to command a company. Accordingly, in the autumn of 1586, he was nominated to the captaincy of 150 men in Bergen-op-Zoom.¹²¹ He soon became known as one of the most able and efficient

¹¹⁸ *CSPF*, XX, Willoughby to Leicester, 25 October 1585, 120; Willoughby to Walsingham, 15 December 1585, 218; 'Narrative by Lord Willoughby of his proceedings in Denmark', December 1585, 255-7; Willoughby to Walsingham, 12 March 1586, 433

¹¹⁹ XXI ii, Holland and Zeeland - Names of governors of provinces and towns, September 1586, 179

¹²⁰ Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 132-3

¹²¹ *Dictionary of National Biography*, XX, 229

captains serving in the English contingent, and as occasion required, he and his company were transferred to the areas that were most afflicted by Spanish offensives.¹²²

The following year witnessed the further enhancement of Vere's already impressive reputation, and Sir Thomas Morgan's commendation of him in a letter to Leicester was to prove prophetic, both in the months that followed, and throughout the remainder of Vere's service in the Netherlands. He described the young captain as: 'a very brave gentleman for his time, and will be able to do great service to her Majesty and the country in time'.¹²³ Indeed, within a few months, Vere demonstrated his worth at Sluis, and this formed the pinnacle of his early career in the Provinces. Parma had laid siege to the town the previous month, and the allied troops - among them Vere's company - were immediately rallied for its relief.¹²⁴ Vere was reported to have fought courageously against the *tercio viego*, the elite of the Spanish infantry, and was injured in the process.¹²⁵ Willoughby later testified to his cousin's brave actions, and in a letter to Walsingham, described how he had 'valiantly defended' one of the approaches to the town, and had shown 'great valour'.¹²⁶ The contemporary commentator, William Camden, supported this account, and noted that Vere, Sir Roger Williams, and Captain Thomas Baskerville had received 'great Commendations for their Valour.'¹²⁷ Indeed, despite the outcome of the siege, such was the renown that he had won there that he was henceforth known as 'young Vere who fought at Sluys'.¹²⁸

Leicester's departure from the Netherlands later that year, and Willoughby's appointment to the Lord Generalship offered Vere an excellent chance of further promotion, for his cousin was now the senior English military representative in the Provinces. Indeed, when Willoughby relinquished the governorship of Bergen-op-Zoom, he recommended Vere for the Sergeant-Majorship, claiming: 'so should there be found in the other [Vere], (although but young), experience, art,

¹²² For example, in the spring of 1587, Vere was requested to transfer his troop to Ostend, which was under threat from the enemy. *CSPF*, XXI iii, Privy Council to Russell, 28 May 1587, 75; Buckhurst to Walsingham, 2 June 1587, 86-8; Russell to Walsingham, June 1587, 141; *APC*, XV, 90

¹²³ *CSPF*, XXI ii, Morgan to Leicester, 31 March 1587, 432

¹²⁴ XXI iii, Thomas James to Walsingham, 11 June 1587, 107-8

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, Captain Francis Littleton to Walsingham, 11 July 1587, 160

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, Willoughby to Walsingham, 23 July 1587, 191

¹²⁷ Camden, *Historie*, iii, 124

¹²⁸ Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 117

discretion and valour sufficient to exercise the same.'¹²⁹ On this occasion, Willoughby's favourable recommendation was ignored, but his subsequent ascendancy, though brief, was to witness the further progression of his cousin's military career, and there is reason to suppose that he helped to accelerate this.¹³⁰ One of the first opportunities that he offered to Vere came in the summer of 1588, shortly before the Armada sailed. Willoughby was ordered to help ensure that none of the fleet would be able to shelter in Dutch ports, and to enlist support from the Provinces for a counter-attack. He involved his cousin in this latter task, and sent him from Flushing to capture and destroy one of the great Spanish ships.¹³¹ Vere seemed frustrated, however, that he was not able to be in England, playing a more active role in repelling the Armada, for he wrote to Walsingham: 'it grieveth us that have spent her Majesty's money to be in Flanders when our country is like to be invaded.'¹³²

Nevertheless, Vere was soon to find himself at the very centre of the war against Spain. As mentioned above, the failure of his Armada encouraged Philip to channel the bulk of his resources into the siege of Bergen-op-Zoom, the town in which Vere was stationed. He was eager to play an instrumental part in its defence, and wrote immediately to his cousin, requesting a promotion to the Sergeant Majorship that had been denied him earlier that year.¹³³ Vere was yet again refused this appointment, but he was given the command of one of the two water forts which maintained communication between Bergen and the River Scheldt, and were arguably the points of most strategic importance. He fulfilled his commission well and thwarted an assault led by the traitor, Sir William Stanley, and some senior Spanish officers, and he later became involved in a skirmish with the marquess of Rency, as is described in a lengthy narrative of the siege: 'While this skirmishe continued, Captain Veare, takinge with him ten of the Lord Generalles troupe, brake in upon some foote of th'enemyes which were come but a little way downe from there Trenches, killed some of them, dryve the rest to rugge and retired without losse.'¹³⁴ His valiant actions contributed to the raising of the siege at the end of October, and he was richly rewarded,

¹²⁹ *CSPF*, XXI iv, Willoughby to Walsingham, 23 May 1588, 417 N.B. Sir Thomas Morgan had succeeded Willoughby as Governor of Bergen-op-Zoom.

¹³⁰ Vere certainly seemed to appreciate how much his cousin had furthered his career. Some time after Willoughby's departure from the Netherlands, Vere wrote to thank him, protesting: 'I wyll never fayle in all gratefull manner to acknowledg my good cheefly from your Lordship'. *HMC, Anc*, Vere to Willoughby, 22 January 1590, 303

¹³¹ *CSPF*, XXII, Willoughby to Privy Council, 30 July 1588, 88-9

¹³² *ibid.*, Vere to Walsingham, 3 August 1588, 105

¹³³ *HMC, Anc*, Vere to Willoughby, 11 September 1588, 187

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, 'A Narrative of the Defence of Berghen op Zoom', 14 September-30 October 1588, 204, 214

for Willoughby commended him in a letter to Burghley, and subsequently bestowed a knighthood upon him.¹³⁵

After a brief visit to England, Vere returned to the Netherlands in the spring of 1589 just before his cousin abandoned his post and set sail for England. Upon leaving the Netherlands in March 1589, Willoughby made what seemed to be a temporary provision for the command of the English forces by recommending Vere to take charge of them as Sergeant Major. He assured the States General that his cousin would do his utmost to comply with their wishes, and when he arrived back in England, he wrote to Vere directly, saying: 'and althoughe I laboure and hope shortlie to obtaine my discharge from that service, yet I doubt not but you shall continewe after me the place you nowe hold.'¹³⁶ It might be supposed that the official confirmation of this appointment in August 1589 owed at least something to the favourable intervention of Vere's cousin, as well as of his other patrons at court. From the very beginning of his service in the Netherlands, Vere seemed to appreciate the necessity of establishing close relations with influential members of the court, and after his promotion he stepped up this contact, seeking the favour of a wider group of patrons.¹³⁷ Judging from his correspondence during the period 1585-89, it would seem that Walsingham and, to a lesser degree, Burghley were his most important contacts there. Walsingham was Vere's advocate at court when supplies were needed, and it seems likely that he also helped to secure his protégé the post of Sergeant Major General in August 1589.¹³⁸ Both Walsingham and Burghley acted as Vere's intermediaries with the Queen, and it was Burghley who introduced the young knight to her after the siege of Bergen-op-Zoom.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ *CSPF*, XXII, Willoughby to Burghley, 20 September 1588, 209; G. Bertie, *Five Generations of Loyall House* (London, 1845), 228, 231-2; Camden, *Historie*, iii, 146. Camden notes that Vere 'now began to grow famous'.

¹³⁶ *HMC, Anc*, Willoughby to States General, (24 February)/6 March 1589, 260-1; Willoughby to Vere, 20 May 1589, 281

¹³⁷ A more comprehensive discussion of Vere's relations with the Court during his ascendancy will be undertaken in chapter 4.

¹³⁸ Vere certainly believed this was so. *SP 84*, XXXVI, fo.140, Vere to Walsingham, 24 February 1589; *CSPF*, XXI iv, Vere to Walsingham, 13 June 1588, 482-3; *UHG*, XVII, Walsingham to the States General, 7 August 1589, 64. Read and den Tex also assume that his appointment was secured by Walsingham, and the former states that by this time, 'Vere regarded Walsingham as one of his best friends at the English court.' Read, *Walsingham*, III, 360; den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 48. Vere also entrusted Walsingham with the task of defending him when his name was mistakenly included on the list of traitors responsible for betraying Geertruidenberg. *CSPF*, XXIII, Vere to Walsingham, 20 April 1589, 222

¹³⁹ *Dictionary of National Biography*, XX, 230; *CSPF*, XXII, Willoughby to Burghley, 3 November 1588, 300. In contrast to Vere's harmonious relations with the Court during the first four years of his service in the Netherlands, his contact with a number of his compatriots was sometimes less than ideal. For example, he quarrelled with Sir Thomas Morgan and Sir William Drury, two of the Governors of Bergen-op-Zoom under whom he served. *CSPF*, XXI iv, Vere to Walsingham, 13 June 1588, 483; XXII, Captains of Bergen-op-Zoom to Privy Council, September 1588, 228-9; Morgan to Walsingham, 27 November 1588, 347. The contrast between Vere's relations with his compatriots in the Netherlands became increasingly apparent after he was appointed to command the Queen's troops, as will be discussed in chapter 4.

Vere's relations with the Dutch during the first four years of his service in the Netherlands seemed quite harmonious. At least, there is no evidence to suggest that his attitude was similar to that of many high-ranking Englishmen serving there at this time, who frequently complained about the Dutch in their correspondence to the Court. Sir William Drury's attitude was typical of these. At the beginning of 1588, he complained to Walsingham about the 'state and disposition' of the Dutch, whom he described as: 'mutable and most apt to take any occasion to fall from their best friends.' He evidently placed little trust in this 'jealous nation', and warned that they were 'apt enough to become ill neighbours'.¹⁴⁰ Similar sentiments were voiced by Henry Killigrew, one of the English representatives on the Council of State, who referred to the 'want of authority' in the Provinces, and claimed that the States General's abuses had 'tired out so many governors.'¹⁴¹ It would appear that most of the prominent English figures who served in the Netherlands in the 1580s, including Leicester and Willoughby, viewed the Dutch as ungrateful upstarts whose loyalty to the Queen was suspect, and whose government was backward and ineffective. However, not only did Vere refrain from such complaints, he seemed to cooperate well with, and even respect the Dutch - political authorities and military figures alike.¹⁴² In fact, as Vere's ascendancy progressed, his compatriots became increasingly convinced of his amity with the Dutch, and even suspected that his commitment to their cause had obscured his loyalty to English interests.¹⁴³ While it is unlikely that this was the case, throughout the period of his service in the Netherlands he seemed to get on better with the Dutch than most of the other senior Englishmen did, and certainly more so than his two predecessors, Leicester and Willoughby.

Vere's harmonious relations with influential members of the Court and with the Dutch in general, together with the enviable reputation for military excellence that he had earned during his first four years of service in the Netherlands, made him an obvious choice to succeed his cousin, in spite of his comparatively humble status. It was also a relatively easy option for the Queen to make his temporary appointment as Sergeant Major General of her forces permanent, rather than searching for an alternative, and perhaps less accomplished, figure to fill this role. The post of Sergeant Major General was a step down from the post of Lieutenant General, which had in turn been a reduction in the authority enjoyed by the Governor. These latter two posts were never

¹⁴⁰ *CSPF*, XXI iv, Drury to Walsingham, 24 January 1588, 28-9

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, Killigrew to Walsingham, 23 January 1588, 27

¹⁴² *HMC, Calendar of Bath Manuscripts at Longleat*, II (London, 1907), Bodley to Burghley, 27 September 1589, 32

¹⁴³ This will be discussed at greater length in chapter 5

again to be filled, and Vere was therefore officially third in rank after two vacant offices.¹⁴⁴ His appointment therefore smacked of a temporary, *ad hoc* provision for the command of the English troops,¹⁴⁵ but it was to prove a permanent arrangement, and one that was to last for far longer than the combined ascendancies of Leicester and Willoughby.

The exact nature of Vere's role is not as clearly documented as it is for his two predecessors, however, and the best indication of Elizabeth's perception of it is contained in a letter written by the Privy Council to the Governors of Ostend, Bergen-op-Zoom, Brill and Flushing. They were informed that: 'her Highnes hath also thoughte fitte that Sir Francis Vere, knighte, should have the chardge and commaunding of all her said forces to be employed as aforesaid, both in respecte of the sufficiencie of the gentleman and the good opynyon her Majestie conceaveth of him, as also in regard of the place he holdeth of Sergeante Major in the Field, to whom in absence of the rest of the chiefe officers the commaundement doth properlie appertaine, we doe therby likewise require you to give straighte chardge and commandment unto all the said captens and souldiours in the absence of the Governour and other chiefe officers to obey and followe his dyreccions in such sorte as they oughte in regard of the place he holdeth.'¹⁴⁶ The implication was therefore that Vere's authority was to extend to the military sphere alone. No reference was made to his role in government, and he was deprived of the privilege that the Nonsuch Treaty reserved for the chief English military representative, namely membership of the Council of State. Moreover, his military powers were more limited than those assigned to Leicester and Willoughby, for he was only given command of the troops in the field, the Governors of the cautionary towns retaining full control of their garrisons. In fact, his rank meant that he even lacked equality with the Dutch generals. Therefore, while his appointment signalled a rapid and high promotion for Vere and served as a prestigious reward for his four years of military service, it also betrayed a significant decrease in the authority of Elizabeth's chief commander in the Netherlands.

This did not go unnoticed by Bodley. In a letter to Burghley, he made an astute observation which was subsequently borne out by Vere's ascendancy: 'And whether in processe of time it be not likely to prove that conductours heere of meaner calling then suche as heretofore have bin sent

¹⁴⁴ He was evidently aware of the situation, and attempted to use it to support his request for an increase of pay: 'the ordinarie pay belonging to my place, was seatt downe, when there was a Gennerall and his lieutenant, betwyxte whome the cowntenance and chardge was borne out, which nowe in som sortt ryeasts upon me.' *SP* 84, XXXIV, fo.130, Vere to Privy Council, 1 September 1589. N.B. He was variably referred to as the Lord General, the English General, or simply the General.

¹⁴⁵ The available evidence suggests that Vere himself believed that his appointment was a temporary measure. *ibid.*, fo.94, Vere to Burghley, 21(?) August 1589; fo.96, Vere to Privy Council, 21 August 1589

¹⁴⁶ *APC*, XVIII, 6-7; *ARA*, Lias. Eng., 5881 I, Walsingham to States General, 7 August 1589

from Her Majestie will better fitte with the humour of this people I leave to be considered by your lordship.'¹⁴⁷ In one sentence, he had aptly summed up the apparent shift that had occurred in the Anglo-Dutch alliance since its formation in 1585. By 1589, it was no longer practical for Elizabeth to employ such a prominent representative as Leicester had been, imbued with wide-ranging political and military powers. The first four years of her alliance with the Dutch had proved that they neither wanted or needed close English involvement in their political affairs, and that they were more than capable of directing these themselves. Of course, they still needed as much military assistance as possible and appreciated the value of that which they had already received from the Queen, but it seemed that the acceptance of another meddlesome English representative was too high a price to pay for this.¹⁴⁸ Yet it is unlikely that Elizabeth's decision to appoint a less powerful representative in the Netherlands sprang from an appreciation of her ally's increasing independence, as MacCaffrey implies.¹⁴⁹ Rather more plausible is that she had resolved to lessen her commitments in the Netherlands (military as well as political) in order to check the continual drain on her resources and give her more freedom to employ them where she saw fit. In particular, she became preoccupied with the war in France, and the fact that she had pledged her support to Henry IV in July 1589 must surely have influenced her decision to confirm Vere as the commander of her forces the following month. In fact, she had always been somewhat reluctant to accede to her Dutch ally's requests for military assistance, and ever since the Nonsuch Treaty had been signed in August 1585, she had seemed determined to reduce her commitments there. This was epitomised by the systematic reduction of the authority of her senior military representative. By the time of Vere's appointment, therefore, it appeared that the nature of the English Governor's role and the Anglo-Dutch alliance as defined by the Nonsuch Treaty was no longer practical.

Complaints about the alliance were rife among the leading courtiers of the realm, but their objections were rather different from those of the Queen. Whereas she seemed to be aiming at a reduction of her General's authority, they claimed that it should be more in line with the prominent role assigned to him by the Treaty of Nonsuch, and that the Council of State's

¹⁴⁷ HMC, *Bath*, II, Bodley to Burghley, 27 September 1589, 32

¹⁴⁸ Wernham develops this argument in his essay on Wilkes' mission to the Netherlands, claiming that there was a 'rapidly widening gulf between the political facts of the Netherlands government and the legal theory of the Treaty of Nonsuch.' 'The Mission of Thomas Wilkes to the United Provinces in 1590', in J. Conway Davis (ed), *Essays presented to Sir Hilary Jenkinson* (London, 1957), 424

¹⁴⁹ He claims that Vere's appointment 'marked another stage in the retreat of the English from the role of protector/patron to that of ally.' *War and Politics*, 157; *Elizabeth I*, 269. In a similar vein, Conyers Read writes: 'With Vere's appointment, in fact, the position of the English in the Low Countries was put upon a basis which made effective cooperation with the Dutch really practicable. It proved to be a long step forward in the right direction'. *Walsingham*, III, 360

authority should also adhere more closely to its stipulations. A paper written at court shortly after Vere's promotion was typical of their perceptions. It claimed that if the Governor and Council of State's authority was restored, it would solve the 'principall confusions' in the Provinces which had arisen from the 'Multiplicite and equalitie of Government', and were exacerbated by the 'absence or vacancie of the person and office of the General.'¹⁵⁰ Bodley was in agreement with the sentiments expressed by this paper, and a few days before Vere's commission was issued, he complained to Walsingham that the situation in the Provinces was deteriorating due to their being 'utterly destitute of any speciall person of Conduct.'¹⁵¹ He voiced his fears again in November, claiming: 'In effect all their government heere is so voide of that apperteneth to good government, so confuse, so partiall, so full of injustice, as almost all men waxe weary of doing service to the contrey. For there is no gouverneur to take notice of any mans vertue or vices', and declared that if the situation was not rectified, there would soon be a 'generall revolt' in the garrisons.¹⁵² He seemed to have forgotten that Leicester's presence had been more harmful than beneficial, and had created more divisions than it had healed. The following summer, Wilkes expressed similar views, and told Burghley that, in his opinion, if a new Governor was not appointed: 'I cannot conceyve how her Troopes can be well Comanded, this State governed according to the Treaty (wanting the principall member), and her majesties interest in the Countries preserved'.¹⁵³

The problem of the Governor's role and absence formed just part of the general dissatisfaction with the Nonsuch Treaty, from England's point of view at least. The unsigned paper, mentioned above, that complained about the reduction of the Governor's authority also referred to the 'present jealousies risen betwene her Majestie and the states general of those Countries', and concluded: 'The Contract hath many imperfections growen with the Time, which at the first could not be discerned, they are such as must of necessitie be Reformed'.¹⁵⁴ Attempts to do so had begun in earnest some months before Vere's appointment. Late in 1588, Bodley had been commissioned to negotiate with the States General for a revision of the Treaty. Somewhat paradoxically, in view of both her recent and subsequent actions, the Queen had instructed him to reprimand the States for impinging upon the Council of State's authority, and to demand that its

¹⁵⁰ *SP 84*, XXXVI, fo.224, 'Considerations touching the Low Countries', 14 March 1590

¹⁵¹ XXXIV, fo.13, Bodley to Walsingham, 3 August 1589

¹⁵² XXXV, fo.181, Bodley to Walsingham, 12 November 1589

¹⁵³ XXXVIII, fo.78, Wilkes to Burghley, 10 July 1590. See also: Brugmans, II, Wilkes' narrative of his embassy in the Netherlands, July 1587, 466, 472

¹⁵⁴ *SP 84*, XXXVI, fo.224, 'Considerations touching the Low Countries', 14 March 1590. See also: BM MS, Cotton Galba D, VII, fo.115, Bodley to Burghley, 18 April 1590

executive powers should be restored, along with those of the Lord General.¹⁵⁵ This seems strange when one considers that a short while earlier, she had demonstrated her resolve to lessen her commitments in the Netherlands by ordering Sir John Norris, who was at the Hague to rally support for the Portugal voyage, to 'bring about agreement and unity' in the Provinces, and incite those who still looked to her for protection to reconcile themselves to the States General.¹⁵⁶ At this stage, she therefore seemed to vacillate between a passive, *laissez faire* policy towards the Netherlands, and a more active, interventionist one. In fact, she apparently continued to do so for the duration of Vere's ascendancy, although she increasingly demonstrated her preference for the former policy, due partly to her preoccupation with the war in France and the ever-present threat of a Spanish invasion, and perhaps partly also to the pervasive influence enjoyed by the Cecils at court. Bodley was also instructed to negotiate for a reform of 'les erreurs et abuz pratiquez en l'administration du gouvernement civil des provinces unies', but this, and his attempts to arrange a Treaty revision, came to nothing: the States made it clear that they were not willing to adhere to the English interpretation of the articles referring to the Governor and Council of State's authority, and although they sent a delegation to England to discuss the problem, this had no more success than Bodley's efforts.¹⁵⁷ There followed months of proposals, responses, and acrimonious exchanges, but there was still no sign of a resolution by the time Vere succeeded Willoughby.¹⁵⁸ In August 1589, Bodley wrote to Burghley, describing the futility of his endeavours: 'those that are the chiefest leaders among them, are utterly unwilling to admitte any newe resolutions or constructions in the Treaty: misdouting that they will be derogatorie to that autoritie whiche they usurpe uppon the Councill.'¹⁵⁹ A few months later, the Privy Council wrote

¹⁵⁵ *CSPF*, XXII, 'Instructions for Mr. Bodley', 20 November 1588, 324-5; XXIII, 'Points proposed by Bodley to the States', 14 January 1589, 38; Remonstrance of Thomas Bodley to the States General, 14 January 1589, 39; Bodley's Reply to the States General's Answer, 25 January 1589, 66-7; BM MS, Harley, 287, fo.117, Bodley's reply to the States General, 15 February 1589

¹⁵⁶ *CSPF*, XXII, 'Memorial for John Norris', 6 October 1588, 247-9

¹⁵⁷ BM MS, Harley, 287, fo.s 115 and 124, States General's reply to Bodley's proposition, (15)/25 January and (25 January)/7 February 1589; *CSPF*, XXIII, 'Answer of the States General to Bodley's Reply', (28 January)/7 February 1589, 75

¹⁵⁸ *UHG*, XVII, Bodley's Proposition, (24 June)/4 July 1589, 32-5; States General's Answer to Bodley's Proposition, (5)/15 July 1589, 35-7; Elizabeth to States General, 20 June 1589, 38; Memorial from Bodley, (28 June)/8 July 1589, 39-40; States General's reply to this memorial, (8)/18 July 1589, 40; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5881 I, Elizabeth to States General, 25 July 1589; BM MS, Cotton Galba D, V, fo.s 3, 10 and 29, Bodley to Burghley, 9 and 23 July 1589

¹⁵⁹ *SP 84*, XXXIV, fo.5, Bodley to Burghley, 2 August 1589; fo.25, Bodley to Walsingham, 9 August 1589; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5881 I, States General's Reply to Bodley's Propositions, (5)/15 August 1589; Negotiations between Bodley and the States General, (6)/16 and (7)/17 August 1589; 5881 II, Points delivered by the States' deputies to the Privy Council, 26 and 27 September 1589; 5882 I, Bodley to States General, 11 January and 16 April 1590

to the States General, conveying the Queen's displeasure that they had not responded satisfactorily to Bodley's delegation, and had shown both ingratitude and disrespect.¹⁶⁰

Vere's appointment was therefore issued at a time when Anglo-Dutch relations were perhaps more uneasy and uncertain than they had been since the formation of the alliance.¹⁶¹ Both sides seemed dissatisfied with the treaty, but for apparently different reasons. While the Court advocated a restoration of the authority formerly exercised by the Governor General and Council of State, the States feared that this would lead to a repeat of Leicester's disastrous intervention, and were determined to strengthen their own position. Clearly, the situation needed to be resolved, or at least improved. It seemed that the Queen's decision to send an envoy to the States General aimed to do just that. In a letter to the Council of State, she claimed that the objective of the mission was to 'redresser l'authorité de vostre Colleege', and she told the States General that it was to 'traicter, negotier et conclurre avecq vous, tant sur lésclairissement du traicté de nostre secours, pour remédier aux defaultz et imperfections que se trouvent audict traicté, que pour reformer les abus et désordres qui sont arrivés en vostre état par les contraventions qui y ont esté faictes de part et daultre.'¹⁶² She selected first Buckhurst,¹⁶³ and then Wilkes for this rather onerous task, but before the latter left for the Provinces, a number of additional instructions were joined onto the originals, significantly changing the overall purpose of his venture. The aim of the mission was now to discover the nature of the States' relations with both France and Spain, and to ascertain whether they intended to enter into a treaty with either country. Indeed, it was explicitly stated that the revision of the Treaty and the restitution of the Council of State and Governor General's authority were merely to serve as a cover for the real objective of his mission.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 5882 I, Privy Council to States General, 26 April 1590

¹⁶¹ Lloyd thus sums up the dissatisfaction that the Dutch had come to feel with their allies by this stage: 'In consequence of her assistance the Provinces had experienced meddling by her representatives in their affairs, occupation by her troops of important towns: towns from which, as some still believed despite her reassurances, she intended to move towards imposing upon the Provinces her own brand of tyranny.' *Rouen Campaign*, 21

¹⁶² *SP 84*, XXXVII, fo.184, Elizabeth to Council of State, 28 May 1590; *UHG*, XVIII, Elizabeth to States General, 23 May 1590, 213

¹⁶³ *SP 84*, XXXVII, fo.131, Memorial for Buckhurst, 3 May 1590; fo.137, Gilpin to Burghley, 9 May 1590; fo.225, Draft of Instructions for A.B., May 1590; *ARA*, Lias. Eng., 5881 II, Walsingham to States General, 25 September 1589; 5882 I, Bodley to States General, 14 June 1590; *HMC, Anc.*, J. van Houte to Willoughby, 1 November 1589, 293; *CSPS*, IV, Advices from London, (5)/15 May 1589, 539

¹⁶⁴ *SP 84*, XXXVII, fo.176, Queen's Instructions for Wilkes, 26 May 1590; fo.238, Notes for Wilkes' Mission; May 1590; fo.244, Memorial from the Privy Council for Thomas Wilkes, 28 May 1590; *BM MS*, Cotton Galba D, VII, fo.155, Instructions for Wilkes, 26 May 1590; *ARA*, Lias. Eng., 5882 I, Elizabeth to States General, 23 June 1590. N.B. The clause in Wilkes' instructions that had stipulated a reduction of the English auxiliary forces and the Queen's expenses in the Netherlands was removed.

Wilkes arrived in the Netherlands in June 1590. He presented his address to the States General, but was forced to wait three weeks for their reply.¹⁶⁵ This delay was apparently due to the lengthy process by which the States General consulted with the provincial states, but it was interpreted by the English as a sign of intransigence.¹⁶⁶ Wilkes seemed to believe that the remainder of his stay would be plagued with such delays, and wrote that he was 'sure to have a long and troublesome work among them'. He also feared that the States were delaying their response until they had ascertained the position of France. He described Maurice and his councillors as 'absolutely' and 'wholie' French respectively, and stated that he believed they were planning to offer the sovereignty of the Netherlands to Henry IV.¹⁶⁷ It was at this point that Vere became involved in the negotiations. He was commissioned by Wilkes to confer with Maurice and ascertain his attitude towards France.¹⁶⁸ He immediately carried out this task, and replied to the envoy, assuring him of Maurice's loyalty to the Queen and the English nation.¹⁶⁹ His opinion seems to have been largely disregarded, however, for Wilkes confided in Burghley: 'I beleve not fully with Sir Francis toching the devotion of the Conte to her Majestie and England'.¹⁷⁰ This scepticism was shared by both the Lord Treasurer and Elizabeth, and the former entreated him to keep Maurice in good humour by hinting that the Queen intended to appoint him as Governor of all the allied forces: 'though hir majestie doe not allowe it, yet it is not amisse that he be fedd with such an honor'.¹⁷¹

This was typical of English perceptions of the situation in the Netherlands. Wilkes himself observed that there were 'few of the Council that understand the state of the Low Countries', and this was not very far off the mark.¹⁷² Failing to understand or appreciate the decentralised nature of Dutch government, the English seemed intent upon judging it by their own monarchical system - hence the need to focus upon a 'sovereign', or head of state, and for this purpose the obvious choice was Maurice. Bodley, for one, certainly seemed to believe that authority in the Provinces ultimately rested with Maurice. Accordingly, when the Queen ordered him to arrange the

¹⁶⁵ *UHG*, XVIII, Points presented by Wilkes and Bodley, (16)/26 June 1590, 221-6

¹⁶⁶ *SP 84*, XXXVII, fo.293, Wilkes to Burghley, 21 June 1590; fo.310, Burghley to Wilkes, 29 June 1590; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 I, Wilkes to States General, 21 July 1590

¹⁶⁷ *SP 84*, XXXVIII, fo.15, Wilkes to Burghley, 6 July 1590. Bodley evidently held a similar view. See for example: BM MS, Cotton Galba D, VII, fo.202, Bodley to Burghley, 14 July 1590

¹⁶⁸ *SP 84*, XXXVIII, fo.15, Wilkes to Burghley, 6 July 1590

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, fo.19, Vere to Wilkes, 7 July 1590

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, fo.78, Wilkes to Burghley, 10 July 1590

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, fo.60, Burghley to Wilkes, 16 July 1590

¹⁷² *SP 84*, XXXVII, fo.131, Memorial for Buckhurst, 3 May 1590

withdrawal of her troops for service in Brittany in the spring of 1592, he immediately went to consult with Maurice. The Count duly took refuge behind the States General, who protested against the demand.¹⁷³ Wilkes apparently viewed Maurice in a similar light, and he added weight to English perceptions of the Count's pervading influence, telling Burghley that he had 'already so far bestrydde the auctoritie of these Provinces that it wilbe a hard matter for her Majestie to place any General here to comannde over him, and both the States and Councell of State have declared unto me how great an opinion they conceyve of the present good course of their State and Government as though there sholde neede no suche Government nowe from her Majestie, as by the Contract is required, in regard that their confusions by their former equalitie of Commandment are reformed by conferring the whole upon Conte Maurice'.¹⁷⁴

What most of the English failed to understand was that if there *was* a principal leader in the Netherlands, then it was Oldenbarnevelt rather than Maurice.¹⁷⁵ Despite conferring with the Advocate on several occasions during his mission, Wilkes apparently failed to appreciate his overriding importance. He reported one of these conferences to Burghley, but seemed to take Oldenbarnevelt's protestations of humble devotion and loyalty to England at face value, describing how he 'entred into speche of her Majestie shewing how much the Provinces were bounden unto her for the continuance of her goodnes towards them.' Yet the implication of the Advocate's subsequent 'speeches' was clear: English intervention in the Provinces, beyond the provision of troops and supplies, was both undesirable and damaging, and hindered their progress towards unity and independence. He hinted that his loyalty to the Queen had been tempered by the 'violent proceedinges' and 'insufficiencie' of her former Governors in the Netherlands, and that these men had prevented the Provinces from enjoying the full 'fruite and benefit' of her succours, as well as making them 'more perplexed and confused then ever sithence the begynning of their Troubles.' He was therefore eager to prevent the appointment of another English General 'embued with th'auctoritie mencioned in the Contract', claiming that, at least partly as a result of the absence of such a figure, 'the State of their countries was now in far better termes then at the beginning when they first desired her majesties succours'. However, Oldenbarnevelt was careful

¹⁷³ *CSPF*, XXIII, Bodley to Walsingham, 20 January 1589, 51; *den Tex*, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 120

¹⁷⁴ *SP 84*, XXXVIII, fo.15, Wilkes to Burghley, 6 July 1590

¹⁷⁵ Bodley did note that the States General was 'strangely ruled and overruled' by Oldenbarnevelt, but nevertheless continued to regard Maurice as the leader of the Provinces. *CSPF*, XXIII, Bodley to Walsingham, 20 January 1589, 51. Gilpin also seemed to have an inkling of Oldenbarnevelt's power, and he remarked upon it in a letter to Essex following Oldenbarnevelt's delegation to Henry IV in 1598. The English councillor wrote: 'His credit and vogue is rather increased than diminished, both in his and the other Provinces, by his last employment'. *HMC, Sal*, VIII, Gilpin to Essex, 4 June 1598, 194. However, Gilpin's correspondence does not suggest that he was aware of Oldenbarnevelt's rise to power before this time.

to stress that the main objection to the appointment of another English Governor came from the towns, rather than from either himself or the States General.¹⁷⁶ This was apparently sufficient to convince Wilkes, for in his letters to the Court, he gave little indication that he realised that the Advocate was the most influential objector to close English interference in Dutch affairs, and concentrated instead upon Maurice's apparent accretion of power and dubious loyalty to England.

Towards the end of July, Wilkes finally received the States General's answer to his proposition. It had hardly been worth the wait, however, for the States rejected practically all of his principal demands.¹⁷⁷ The point that they took particular objection to concerned the nineteenth article of the Treaty, which stipulated the authority of the Queen's General and the Council of State.¹⁷⁸ They claimed that they had already granted sufficient authority to the Council, and would not hear of increasing it or of allowing the appointment of a new English Governor. Indeed, such was the strength of their opposition that when Wilkes confronted them on this point, they retired from the room 'in a sorte amazed', and upon returning, protested: 'That forasmuch that her majestie had refused the souverayngntye of their Provinces being offred unto them, they supposed she would not seek it more by vertue of the Contract.' They went on to clarify their position further, telling Wilkes: 'That to have more leaders or souveraignes in their State then one, was to make the same a monster; That the authoritye grannted to her majestie by this Article was but for one tyme only to be exercysed, which was already executed by the comminge of the Earle of Laeister as her Majesties Generall in thes Contries, And that therefore the effect of that Article was already performed, and the Article vanished.'¹⁷⁹ This was one of the clearest indications of the States' dissatisfaction with the Nonsuch Treaty. They were no longer prepared to tolerate an irritatingly meddlesome English presence in their provinces, and were determined to interpret the political authority ascribed to the Queen by the Treaty as loosely as possible. They had some justification for protesting that this authority had been defined at a time when their situation had been rather

¹⁷⁶ den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, IV, Wilkes to Burghley, 24 June 1590, 475-7. See also: *ibid.*, 20 June 1590, 477-8; *SP 84*, XXXVIII, fo.78, Wilkes to Burghley, 10 July 1590

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, fo.110, Wilkes and Bodley to Hatton, Burghley and Buckhurst, 29 July 1590; *UHG*, XVIII, States General's Anwer to Wilkes' proposition, (6)/16 July 1590, 231-8; Apostiles by Wilkes and Bodley, (10)/20 July 1590, 238-40; Wilkes' and Bodley's proposition, (20)/30 July 1590, 242-8; Wilkes' and Bodley's Reply to the States General's Answer, (20)/30 July 1590, 248-51; States General's Answer to Wilkes' and Bodley's Reply, (22 July)/1 August 1590, 251; Wilkes and Bodley to States General, (25 July)/4 August 1590, 255-7; States General to Elizabeth, (19)/29 August 1590, 278-80. N.B. Confirmation of the States General's resolve not to yield to any of Wilkes' demands reached England at the end of December. *SP 84*, XL, fo.100, Bodley to Burghley, 29 December 1590

¹⁷⁸ Du Mont, 455

¹⁷⁹ *SP 84*, XXXVIII, fo.110, Wilkes and Bodley to Hatton, Burghley and Buckhurst, 29 July 1590

different, and that it was no longer either applicable or practical - if, indeed, it ever had been. The growing cohesion and authority of the States General (headed by the States of Holland) during the five intervening years between the formation of the alliance and Wilkes' mission had led to an increase in the unity and stability of the Provinces, as well as an enhancement of their independence. Therefore, even though they still relied upon English military support, they were no longer prepared to pay for this by agreeing to active English intervention in their affairs. In short, the presence of a new English Governor, legally supported by the terms of the Treaty, could only have thrown a spanner in the works, hampering, or even destroying, the progress already made by the States General. Moreover, the *practical* authority of a resident Governor could prove even more wide-ranging and (from the States' point of view) damaging than the *theoretical* authority outlined by the Treaty, as Leicester's ill-fated intervention had demonstrated.

Unequivocal though the States' answer to Wilkes was, however, it did little to alter English perceptions. They persisted in viewing the Dutch as an inferior partner whose fundamental ingratitude towards the Queen was manifested by their refusal to allow any restoration of the Governor and Council of State's authority. These prejudices were clearly apparent in Wilkes' immediate response to the States' answer. He told Burghley that he had been forced to use some 'round speaches' with them, 'signyfing how sorrye we were to discover their backward affections to her majestie so clearely manyfested by this Conference.'¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, upon returning to England, he advised Elizabeth to: 'leave thinges as they were at my arrivall here, (which althoughe they be not in such order as they should bee, yet are they in course to continewe without danger untill the States themselves upon some other accident, may be drawne to seeke her majestie, and make offer unto her of that which now shee demandeth) then to urge them any further, least they might therby confirme their conceipte, that her majestie hath neede of their alliance and without whom shee can not preserve her Estate, and so increase their pride and contempte.'¹⁸¹ Similar sentiments were expressed by Sir Robert Sidney, the Governor of Flushing, who told Burghley: 'Theyr own pryde and besydes doth greatly blind them. For they are perswaded that theyr estat cannot be in better terms then now it is. Which notwithstanding I know the wishes of this contrey doth shew they are deceived in and that it wil at last be theyr overthrow'.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *SP 105*, XCI, fo.198, Wilkes to Burghley, 22 July 1590

¹⁸² *SP 84*, XXXVIII, fo.146, Sidney to Burghley, 6 August 1590

Wilkes' mission had therefore contributed little to English understanding and, if anything, had made the priorities of each side seem irreconcilable. As a result, a reworking of the treaty was not achieved at this stage, and it was not until 1598 that a new version was agreed upon. In view of the above evidence, it seems rather strange that the 1590 mission has been heralded as a 'turning point', in terms of both the Anglo-Dutch alliance and the Queen's policy towards the Netherlands. Den Tex claims that it reflected a change of mood in England, and that the tone of English dispatches during the ensuing years suggests that they began to view the Dutch as a worthy ally rather than a nation of quarrelsome and ungrateful tradesmen.¹⁸³ MacCaffrey argues that the mission 'led the English government to a recognition of the strength of Dutch leadership and to an increasing respect for their initiatives in the Low Countries.'¹⁸⁴ In a similar vein, Wernham claims that it altered the distorted view of the situation in the Netherlands that had been previously held by Elizabeth and her council. He writes: 'The solid achievement of Wilkes's mission was to give her and them a better understanding, to make them better aware of those realities' [of Dutch opinion], and adds that the English envoy had been impressed by the progress made by the Dutch towards unity and independence.¹⁸⁵ Yet as mentioned above, much of Wilkes' correspondence suggests that he held little respect for them, and at times harboured feelings of suspicion and disdain, which he evidently communicated to the Court. More importantly, his mission had failed to resolve the issues which caused the most friction between the allies, and the English correspondence during the ensuing years suggests little change in their perception of the Dutch. Wilkes' comment that few of the Council understood the state of the Netherlands apparently remained a pertinent observation.¹⁸⁶

If Wilkes' mission had failed to achieve its explicit aims, however, it had clarified one fundamental point: the States were not prepared to allow the appointment of a new English Governor to serve in the capacity that was stipulated by the Nonsuch Treaty, and that had been exploited by Leicester. The English stand-point seemed to be the exact opposite, judging from the number of complaints voiced about the absence of a Governor. However, it is possible that

¹⁸³ den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 111

¹⁸⁴ MacCaffrey, *War and Politics*, 256

¹⁸⁵ Wernham, *After the Armada*, 231

¹⁸⁶ See for example: *SP 84*, XL, fo.91, Elizabeth to Bodley, 25 December 1590; XLI, fo.34, Edward Norris to Burghley, 13 January 1591; fo.124, Bodley to Burghley, 3 February 1591; XLIII, fo.60, Bodley to Burghley, 30 September 1591; XLV, fo.1, Bodley to Burghley, 1 June 1592; XLVI, fo.1, Bodley to Burghley, 3 January 1593; fo.217, Gilpin to Burghley, 20 July 1593; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 I, Elizabeth to States General, 21 January and 9 April 1591

there was a divergence of opinion between those Englishmen who made such complaints and their sovereign. It is rather implausible that Elizabeth was any more enthusiastic than the States about the re-introduction of a prominent English Governor. As mentioned above, Leicester's intervention had demonstrated the damaging implications that such a figure could have for both sides in practice. It is therefore quite possible that both the States General and Elizabeth were content to ignore the clauses in their contract which stipulated the appointment and role of a Governor. In the light of this, it is rather strange that this issue was apparently the principal point of contention between them during the negotiations that directly preceded and followed Vere's appointment. Perhaps the objections raised about the absence of a Governor came from those English courtiers and representatives who believed that one was necessary to direct the backward and disunited government of the Provinces, and to provide a focus for both the English troops and the Dutch population as a whole. Bodley's comments, amongst others, certainly seem to suggest this.¹⁸⁷ Elizabeth's own view is less easy to discern, and it is possible that her declarations regarding the appointment of a Governor were never genuine, and were issued to conceal more covert aims. For example, there can be little reason to doubt that she had effectively invalidated the post of Governor because of her vehement disapproval of Leicester's activities in the Netherlands, but she had claimed that she had been forced to do so because the States had treated him harshly and had not permitted him to use the authority that they themselves had given him.¹⁸⁸ She had thereby explained away her decision to leave the post vacant after Leicester's departure, and to give Willoughby the more limited role of Lieutenant General. By the time of Vere's appointment in 1589, she did not deem it necessary to provide an excuse for the continued absence of a Governor, and the States were hardly likely to raise the issue themselves when an exclusively military figure, such as the new Sergeant Major General, who was legally subject to their authority, fitted in so well with their own aims. However, the frequent complaints raised by the Queen's representatives in the Netherlands towards the turn of the decade made the question rather difficult to ignore, and it may seem to have been something of a gamble by Elizabeth that in response she had effectively instructed first Bodley, and later Wilkes to negotiate for the reinstalment of a Governor when this was so obviously against her own objectives. However, she most probably knew very well that the States would not agree to such a measure, bearing in mind their aversion to Leicester's meddlesome activities and their rather tense relations with his successor, who had in any case posed far less of a threat to their authority. Safe in this knowledge, she was perhaps prepared to pacify the disgruntled subjects who

¹⁸⁷ *SP* 84, XXXIV, fo. 13, Bodley to Walsingham, 3 August 1589; XXXV, fo.116, Bodley to Walsingham, 30 October 1589

¹⁸⁸ *CSPF*, XXI iii, Elizabeth to John Herbert, 16 December 1587, 453-4

complained of the Governor's absence by making a show of attempting to rectify the situation, and by using the objections that the States would inevitably raise to excuse her failure to do so. The wisdom of this policy was proven by the futile negotiations that Bodley undertook in the latter part of 1588 and early in 1589: clearly, the States had no intention of agreeing to a new English Governor.

Her objective thus achieved, why did she raise the matter again the following year by sending Wilkes to expostulate with the States about it? She had certainly not changed her mind about appointing a new Governor, because Wilkes told Burghley in July 1590 that 'her majestie stood resolved when I departed from her not to be at the charge of the mayntenance of a General to commande her forces and to exercise the auctoritie grannted by the Treaty'.¹⁸⁹ The answer must surely lie in the instructions that she gave to her envoy. As mentioned above, the stated aims of his mission (namely the restitution of the Governor and Council of State's authority) merely served as a cover for its real objective: to discover the nature of the States General's relations with France and Spain, a matter which was arguably of far greater importance to her than the question of her representative's authority. There was even less danger, therefore, of Wilkes' attaining the States' consent for a new English Governor than there had been of Bodley doing so the previous year, because, unlike the latter, he was not to give this objective undivided, or even significant, attention. Viewed in this way, it can therefore be argued that Wilkes' mission was a good deal more successful than it seemed. In line with the Queen's intention, it had failed to resolve the Governorship issue, and had given her an insight (however distorted) into the States' relations with France and Spain. It is therefore perhaps not too surprising that after Wilkes' return to England, there was little indication that the Queen genuinely intended to renew her demands for a restitution of her senior representative's authority in line with the Nonsuch Treaty. Although during the ensuing years there were occasional complaints by both sides about the unsuitability of some of the Treaty articles, there seemed to be no real anxiety to embark upon a thorough revision of it. In fact, the Treaty was more flexible than it appeared, and both Elizabeth and the States occasionally ignored or emphasised various clauses when it suited their purposes to do so.¹⁹⁰ Only in 1598, when the Treaty of Vervins and the Queen's determination to secure a

¹⁸⁹ *SP 84*, XXXVIII fo.78, Wilkes to Burghley, 10 July 1590

¹⁹⁰ See for example: XL, fo.81, Elizabeth to States General, 21 December 1590; XLI, fo.145, Protest by States General, (6)/16 February 1591; XLIV, fo.262, States General to Elizabeth, (24 April)/4 May 1592; XLVI, fo.227, Elizabeth to States General, 27 July 1593; XLIX, fo.195, Elizabeth to States General, 25 October 1594; L, fo.9, Elizabeth to States General, 2 January 1595; fo.118, Elizabeth to States General, 1 April 1595; fo.127, States General to Elizabeth, (11)/21 April 1595; LII, fo.109, States General to Burghley, (15)/25 March 1596; LIII, fo.27, States General to Elizabeth, (20)/30 August 1596; LV, fo.285, Instructions for Sidney, 1597; HMC, *Sal*, IV, Elizabeth to Bodley, 21 August 1592, 224-6. Den Tex supports this view, and claims that by 1595 the Nonsuch Treaty was: 'en soort verkapt protectoraatsverdrag' that was no longer in line with the changed

repayment from her ally combined to highlight the impracticalities of the old Treaty, was the question of redefining the alliance finally addressed.

After the controversy of the 1590 mission had dissipated, the Queen seemed to content to let drop the matter of her senior representative's role. She received frequent reports of Vere's efficiency in directing her troops, and her envoys at the Hague kept her informed of political matters. Perhaps as a result of this, she did not see the need to clarify the former's authority by issuing him with detailed instructions or formalising his appointment. It was apparently sufficient that the Privy Council had made his *ad hoc* promotion permanent the previous year.¹⁹¹ This suggests that she perceived Vere's role in the Netherlands to be straightforward and limited to the relatively uncomplicated sphere of military affairs, Bodley and Gilpin being on hand to cope with more complex matters. However, while this may have been true of the first two or three years of his ascendancy, the fact that his role had never been clearly and officially defined subsequently enabled him to assume various extra-military responsibilities that were not implied by the Privy Council's rather brief resolution of August 1589. It was soon evident that he would not be able to exercise a purely military role, even if this had been the Queen's intention. As leader of the English field troops, Vere had to establish a pattern of regular contact with the military and political leaders of the Provinces, as well as with the Court, the English Governors and the men under his command. An inevitable consequence of this was that his sphere of influence was steadily extended, and his profile as the senior English military representative was raised, as will be discussed in the ensuing chapter. Furthermore, as it became obvious that he was more than capable of exercising such a prominent role, Elizabeth - and to a lesser extent the States - began to encourage his involvement in affairs that were not part of his official duties. Thus, towards the end of the reign, the relatively humble title that he had inherited in 1589 belied the influence and prestige that he had come to enjoy. This is not to say that the distinction between Vere's role and that of the English Governor stipulated by the Treaty had become indistinguishable: his authority - especially in the political sphere - was more limited than that enjoyed by Leicester, and was subject to close scrutiny by both sides. However, there is some justification for arguing that he came to enjoy a degree of influence that was at least as great as Willoughby's had been, and perhaps even greater. After all, Willoughby had been explicitly instructed not to meddle in governmental affairs, and had never enjoyed the various promotions that were bestowed upon his

conditions. He adds that it was only regarded by Elizabeth and the States when it suited them, but that otherwise it had become 'een dode letter'. *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 162

¹⁹¹ *APC*, XVIII, 6-7

cousin.¹⁹² The fact that Vere's role had never been outlined in detail therefore served as a distinct advantage, and enabled him to increase his authority without defying the Queen.

In the light of this, it would appear that the significance of Vere's appointment needs to be modified. As mentioned above, it has been interpreted as a sign that the Queen was aware of her ally's increasing capacity for effective independent action, as well as being an important step on the road to a more equal and mutually beneficial alliance. However, this view is brought into question by the fact that Vere's role turned out to be more wide-ranging and authoritative than his original title suggested, and that Elizabeth seemed content to allow, and even encouraged, the extension of his sphere of influence. It therefore seems unlikely that she had made a conscious decision to appoint a figure whose official rank subjected him to the authority of the Dutch because she had come to respect their equality and independence. Furthermore, the fact that she chose not to appoint a new Governor General, imbued with the authority specified by the Treaty, is more indicative of her appreciation of the damage that such a figure could do to her *own* cause, rather than of the aversion that the States felt towards this. What is clear, however, is that Elizabeth's choice of a Sergeant Major rather than a Governor or Lieutenant General to lead the English forces indicated an intention to reduce her involvement in the Netherlands, thereby enabling her to check the drain of her treasure and direct her resources elsewhere. The introduction of a new Governor who was legally permitted to intervene closely in Dutch affairs was hardly in line with this objective, and her appointment of a 'conductour of meaner calling' was infinitely more suitable. It was perhaps largely coincidental, however, that this appointment was also in line with her ally's interests.

¹⁹² Vere was made a Colonel and a General in the States' service (1593, 1598), and Governor of Brill (1598).

Chapter 3

‘A Souldier borne as well as bred’?:

The military and political aspects of Vere’s role in the Netherlands

If Sir Francis Vere has received little attention in historiographical studies compared with the more prominent members of Elizabeth’s Court, on the occasions that he does rate a mention, it is almost always in conjunction with his military prowess. Shortly after the General’s death, Cyril Tourneur published a ‘Funerall Poeme’ in his honour, describing him as ‘a souldier borne as well as bred.’¹ This seemed to echo the view held by most contemporaries, and has come to be accepted by modern historians. However, it requires modification in two important respects. Firstly, as was suggested in the previous chapter, the transitional nature of Anglo-Dutch relations during the 1580s and early 1590s rendered Vere’s role in the Netherlands somewhat ambiguous. Although in theory he was to act in a primarily military capacity, in practice it was inevitable that as one of Elizabeth’s senior representatives in the Netherlands, he would also become embroiled in political concerns. The extent to which he did so will be discussed in the second part of this chapter. Secondly, there are grounds for doubting that Vere fully deserved the enviable reputation that he attained for military excellence. This reputation was largely founded upon his own account of the role that he played in the Dutch war, but it is possible to demonstrate the unreliability of this source. The first part of this chapter will therefore attempt to reappraise Vere’s military role, and while it does not intend to question his undoubted skill in military affairs, it aims to reassess his contribution to the war in the Netherlands, particularly compared with that of his Dutch counterpart, Maurice of Nassau.

The four years preceding Vere’s appointment were depressing ones for the allied war effort in the Provinces. This period began with the fall of Antwerp (the ‘hinge of the Netherlands’²) and ended with the betrayal of Geertruidenberg to Spain. The intervening years witnessed a string of impressive Spanish victories, brilliantly directed by the Duke of Parma, which pushed the allies ever further onto the defensive. By the time that the Armada sailed, the enemy had subdued Flanders and Brabant, and only the northern provinces of Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht and Friesland were free of Spanish garrisons. When Vere was given the command of the English

¹ C. Tourneur, *A Funerall Poeme Upon the Death of the Most Worthie And True Souldier, Sir Francis Vere, Knight* (London, 1609)

² Wilson, *Elizabeth and the Netherlands*, 80



Figure 4: The Netherlands in the late sixteenth century

troops the following year, the allied war effort had reached something of a nadir. However, it subsequently began to show signs of improvement. The intensification of the war in France following Henry III's assassination in July 1589 diverted a large portion of the Spanish forces away from the Netherlands, and in their absence the allies were able to begin recapturing the territory lost during the 1580s.³ The capture of Breda in March 1590 heralded the beginning of a period of prolific success for the allies, during which time they gradually drove the Spaniard out of the northern provinces and secured their frontiers against him.⁴ Now firmly on the offensive, Maurice and his troops - in collaboration with the English field army - recaptured key towns and ports from the Spanish, enjoying celebrated victories at Zutphen and Deventer (1591), Steenwijk (1592), Geertruidenberg (1593) and Groningen (1594). After the middle of the decade, however, this momentum began to falter, and although the allies won what was to be one of their most famous victories in 1597, routing the enemy at Turnhout, the war had begun to drift towards a stalemate. This was particularly true after the Peace of Vervins in 1598, which enabled the Spanish King to focus his attention upon the Netherlands once more after a decade or so of diversion in France. The closing years of Elizabeth's reign were gloomy for the allies as the Spanish forces began to reclaim the territory that they had lost during the 1590s. Their success at Nieuwpoort in 1600 did give them cause for celebration, but they failed to capitalise upon it effectively, and the following spring they were again pushed onto the defensive when the enemy laid siege to Ostend. This absorbed the attention and resources of the allies for the ensuing three years, and their attempts to save the beleaguered town were ultimately in vain. A series of diversionary campaigns were waged in the Spanish Netherlands, but apart from the capture of Grave in 1602, these yielded little. Vere's career as Elizabeth's chief commander in the Netherlands therefore ended on almost as dismal a note as it had begun.

Nevertheless, the period 1589-1603 was on the whole successful for the Dutch, and they capitalised upon the enemy's weakness during the early 1590s to great effect, enhancing and strengthening both their territory and independence. The importance of the role played by Vere and his troops in this success was emphasised by contemporaries - particularly those on the English side. The writer and soldier, Sir Roger Williams, who served in the Low Countries,

³ Indeed, Israel claims that the 'spectacular military achievements' of the 1590s were only possible because Spain was distracted by the struggle in France. *Dutch Republic*, 253. See also: C. Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1937), 571; UHG, XVIII, States General to Elizabeth, 1 October 1590, 294

⁴ Fruin dates this period from 1588 to 1598 and argues that this was the most significant decade for the newly-formed Republic, both militarily and politically. *Tien Jaren*. See also: *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, V (Utrecht, 1952), 307-16; J.C.H. Blom and E. Lamberts (eds), *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden* (Rijswijk, 1993), 118-26

referred to the English General's military valour, and claimed that Vere: 'had rather be kild ten times at a breach, than once in a house.'⁵ The Elizabethan historian, William Camden, also wrote well of him, and stated that his 'many brave and fortunate exploits in the Low Countries' had added 'no small lustre to his honourable family'.⁶ In a similar vein, Naunton described Vere as 'amongst all the queene's sword-men inferior to none, but superior to many'.⁷ D. Lloyd's seventeenth century study of the statesmen and favourites of England could scarcely praise Vere's military prowess enough. He claimed that the Queen's General was valued above all men by both the English and the Dutch military corps, and that his advice was always wise, and when followed invariably proved correct. He referred to Vere's most notable military accomplishments as 'instances of the wonders that courage can do when wise, valour when sober, a passion when rational, and a great Spirit when advised.'⁸ The chronicler, Grimestone, also praised Vere for his military valour, and described him as 'one of the bravest souldiers which ever our Nation delivered to the world.'⁹ Another contemporary, the poet and playwright Cyril Tourneur, contributed greatly to the cultivation of Vere's outstanding military reputation. Shortly after Vere's death in 1609, Tourneur published a lengthy 'Funerall Poeme' in his honour. This forms a eulogy of praise and admiration, extolling the virtues and valour of the 'Most Worthie and True Souldier'. The following passage is typical of the poem as a whole:

'When the face
Of bloodie handed warre in it's owne place
Did first encounter him; and did appeare
In shapes of terrour to impresse a Feare
He met it smiling. And did make it yeeld
That he brought Courage with him to the field.'

Tourneur also averred that the English General was as skilled a strategist as he was a soldier, and claimed that the Dutch fully appreciated his worth. Although his account as a whole is rather excessive in its praise, Tourneur rightly predicted that it was Vere's military prowess that would render him immortal.¹⁰

⁵ 'A Briefe Discourse of Warre', J.X. Evans (ed), *The Works of Sir Roger Williams* (Oxford, 1972), 49

⁶ Camden, *Brittania* (London, 1695), 267

⁷ Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia*, 146

⁸ Lloyd, *Statesmen and Favourites*, 588-9

⁹ Grimestone, *Generall Historie*, 1119

¹⁰ Tourneur, *Funerall Poeme*

While the accounts of contemporary observers and historians have therefore undoubtedly contributed to the enduring reputation that Vere has enjoyed, this was also founded upon the correspondence of those men who were in regular contact with him - both in the Netherlands and in England. Military and political figures alike seemed to harbour very favourable opinions of his military capabilities. Sir Thomas Bodley, perhaps the most high-profile of the English diplomatic representatives in Netherlands, wrote a number of glowing reports to the English Court, describing Vere's military endeavours. For example, in the summer of 1591 he informed Burghley of the successful siege of Zutphen, relating the daring and brilliant feats of the English General.¹¹ His view was shared by his compatriot on the Council of State, George Gilpin, as well as by a number of prominent figures at the English Court.¹²

The English soldiers who served with Vere in the Netherlands seemed to be in awe of his military skills, and sent back reports of his endeavours, and his abilities were even acknowledged by his rivals and adversaries.¹³ The great volume of letters which praise Vere's courage and valour goes a long way towards explaining the favourable way in which he is portrayed in so many contemporary and modern works of history. It also explains the English Queen's apparently high regard for him, as she was frequently informed by her servants in the Provinces and her ministers at Court of how well he was justifying the high position to which she had raised him.¹⁴ Naunton observed that the Queen regarded Vere as one of the worthiest captains of her time,¹⁵ and there is little evidence to contradict this. Indeed, the very fact that she had promoted him to the position of Sergeant Major General of the English forces in 1589 can be viewed at least partly as a recognition of his military skills - especially when it is considered that in so doing she had passed over candidates of a far higher status. Further evidence of the Queen's high regard for her General's martial endeavours is provided by the high appointment that she bestowed upon him in 1598, when she named him Governor of her cautionary town of Brill, a post that he was to hold

¹¹ *SP 84*, XLII, fo.64: Bodley to Burghley, 21 May 1591

¹² XLIX, fo.245: Gilpin to Burghley, 10 December 1594; HMC, *Anc*, Walsingham to Willoughby, 18 October 1589, 292; J. van Houte to Willoughby, 1 November 1589, 292-4; *Edmond's Papers*, Burghley to Edmond's, 27 November 1594, 190-1; *CSPD*, (1601-03), Cecil to Burghley, 15 July 1601, 69-70

¹³ HMC, *Sal*, VII, Robert Sidney to Essex, 21 January 1597, 32; X, Lord Grey to Robert Cecil, 25 June 1600, 199; Captain May to Robert Cecil, 4 August 1600, 264; XI, Captain Wignmore to Robert Cecil, 11 and 13-14 August 1601, 336, 342; Collins II, Whyte to Sidney, 5 July 1600, 204. In his pamphlet on the capture of Zutphen, Charlwood wrote: 'The honourable services that the right worshipful Sir Frauncis Vere hath performed since his being in the Lowe Countries, hath bene such as hath eternized his renowne, and runge the fame of his name, not onley into the eares of his freendes and favourers, but also into the hearts of his enemies'. J. Charlwood, *The Politique takinge of Zutphen Skonce, the winning of the Towne, and beleagering of Deventer* (London, 1591), 5

¹⁴ See for example: HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 7 July 1600, 472

¹⁵ Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia*, 146

for the remainder of his service in the Provinces.¹⁶ She told the States General that she had appointed him to this post because of his merits and the 'signales services' that he had performed 'en toutes les charges qui luy ont esté commissées'.¹⁷ Elizabeth's respect for her General's prowess was also illustrated by a letter that she wrote, congratulating him for the part he played in the victory at Turnhout. She expressed her 'good liking' of the 'speciall desert which the report of that dayes service attributeth to you', and claimed that he had helped to further the common cause.¹⁸

Vere therefore seemed to have gained a highly favourable reputation for his military prowess among his compatriots in the Netherlands and his sovereign and the Court in England. He gained a similar reputation among the Dutch. As early as 1589, Bodley noted: 'Sir Francis Vere by meanes of his valour and good government hath wonne great reputation not only with the Count [Maurice] and the other governours and statesmen here, but with the common captaines and souldiers of bothe nations.'¹⁹ Similarly, two years later, he wrote: 'no mans advise is more respected and folowed then Sir Francis Veres, who is commonly used by the Count as Mareschall of the fielde, and doth content the contrey exceedingly for his carefulnes in all thinges, as well for direction as execution.'²⁰ Such sentiments were echoed by a number of Bodley's compatriots in the Provinces, notably Gilpin, who believed the best testament to the high regard that the Dutch had for Vere's military skills was their apparently obvious anxiety whenever it seemed likely that Elizabeth would recall him for service elsewhere. Indeed, when Vere *was* recalled for the Cadiz expedition the following year, he observed: 'Sir Francis Vere's calling away doth much disquiet them, knowing their want of such sufficient commanders.'²¹

From the English perspective, therefore, the Dutch valued the English General very highly, and this view was at least partly supported by the correspondence of various members of the Dutch military and political élite. Count Maurice, in particular, seemed to perceive Vere as an extremely valuable commander, and during the first half of the 1590s, they cooperated well to

¹⁶ *SP 84*, LVII, fo.145, Oath of Sir Francis Vere on admission as Governor of Brill, October 1598; *Vere's Commentaries*, 68-71

¹⁷ *ARA*, *Lias. Eng.*, 5883 II, Elizabeth to States General, 10 October 1598; *Lias. Lop.*, 4891, Vere to States General, 16 April 1599

¹⁸ *SP 84*, LIV, fo.66: Elizabeth to Vere, 5 February 1597

¹⁹ *HMC*, *Bath*, II, Bodley to Burghley, 27 September 1589, 32

²⁰ *SP 84*, XLII, fo.296: Bodley to Burghley, 19 August 1591

²¹ *HMC*, *Sal*, VI, Gilpin to Essex, 10 February 1596, 52; V, Gilpin to Essex, 15 September 1595, 379-80; VII, Gilpin to Essex, 12 February 1597, 60. See also: V, States General to Essex, (11)/21 December 1584, 36-7

achieve a number of decisive victories against the enemy. A number of their contemporaries made reference to this, and implied that Vere was indispensable to Maurice.²² The States General also seemed to recognise Maurice's high opinion of Vere, and in 1593 they claimed that it was upon his recommendation that they had decided to promote him to the position of Colonel in their service.²³ Similarly, in 1598, when they made him a General in their service, they referred to the 'groot genuegen ende contentement' that Maurice had expressed regarding Vere's service.²⁴ Maurice's correspondence also implies the high esteem in which he held Vere's military skills. A notable example was a letter that he wrote to Oldenbarnevelt in May 1599, expressing his desire to be joined by Vere and his regiment.²⁵ Vere's own correspondence gives a similar impression, and suggests that he maintained regular contact with the Dutch military leader, consulting with him on tactics and strategy, and the progress of campaigns. This was particularly evident during the siege of Ostend, when Vere sent frequent and lengthy despatches to the Count, expressing his opinion about the best way to save the town.²⁶ Furthermore, the letters that Vere wrote to the English Court give the impression that his military skill was recognised and utilised to great effect by Maurice. They suggest that the Count kept him *au fait* with strategies and events, and regarded him as an invaluable asset to the Dutch war effort.²⁷ If correspondence such as this is to be believed, then Vere's military prowess can surely not be doubted: not only was it extolled by his own countrymen, it was also acknowledged by the political leaders of the Netherlands.

The available sources therefore suggest that Vere was a widely renowned military figure in both England and the United Provinces. The correspondence and accounts so far mentioned were at least partly responsible for the transmission of a similar view to both contemporary and more recent historical works - a view that has proved remarkably enduring due to the lack of criticism ranged against it. However, far more significant in this respect is the published narrative of Vere himself. *The Commentaries of Sir Francis Vere* was completed around 1606, two years after he had resigned his position in the Netherlands, and its publication in 1657 can be viewed as perhaps the most significant contributory factor to the popularity and endurance of the view that Vere

²² *SP 84*, XXXIV, fo.205: Gilpin to Walsingham, 21 September 1589; XXXIX, fo.131, Sidney to Burghley, 10 October, 1590; XLII, fo.296, Bodley to Burghley, 19 August 1591; HMC, *Sal*, V, Gilpin to Essex, 18 October 1595, 420; HMC, *Anc*, J. van Houte to Willoughby, 1 November 1589, 292-4, and (29 January)/8 February 1590, 304

²³ *RSG*, VIII, 61

²⁴ X, 150-1

²⁵ *Bescheiden Betreffende*, I, 532

²⁶ ARA, *Lias. Lop.*, 4900 II, Vere to States General, September 1601; Vere to Maurice, 22 September 1601; 4901 I, Vere to Maurice, 20 October 1601; *Archives*, II, 111-15

²⁷ See for example: *SP 84*, LII, fo.107, Vere to Burghley, 9 March 1596

played a predominant role in the Dutch war. It focuses upon the campaigns in which the English General played a commanding role, depicting him as a faultless soldier and strategist, and placing him at centre stage of the war in the Netherlands. In fact, it is at best self-congratulatory and at worst inaccurate and misleading, and because it has been relied upon by contemporary and more recent historians, it has led to a distorted impression of his military role.²⁸ Most notable is Markham's reliance upon the account. Markham's entire study is littered with illustrations of, and praise for Vere's military genius. He extols him as 'the first great English general in modern history', and depicts him as 'a valiant soldier, fighting bravely and untiringly, and displaying a devotion to duty and great powers of endurance', as well as 'a cautious commander, and a resourceful continuer of stratagems.'²⁹ Yet Markham's study is contradicted by Motley. While he concedes that the English General was 'a valiant and experienced commander', as well as 'the most valuable lieutenant, save Lewis William, that Maurice had at his disposition', and admits the value of his contribution to the wars in the Provinces, he nevertheless presents a less eulogistic account than Markham's. He suggests that the part played by Vere in many of the campaigns waged against the enemy may have been unjustly glorified by the *Commentaries*, and gives more credit to commanders such as Maurice and William Louis. He describes the account as: 'marked throughout by spleen, inordinate personal and national self-esteem', and adds that Vere unjustifiably elevates himself to a prominent position in the campaigns that he describes. Motley is particularly critical of Vere's account of the Nieuwpoort battle, and claims that it is 'directly contradicted by every other statement on record', as well as by itself. Motley therefore relies upon the accounts of the Dutch commanders who took part in the battle, dismissing Vere's narrative as grossly inaccurate. Indeed, for the whole of his study, he relies upon contemporary Dutch accounts and chronicles, only incorporating Vere's narrative when it concurs with these.³⁰ Not surprisingly, Markham does not let Motley's damning criticism pass without comment. Insisting that the *Commentaries* forms 'a calm and remarkably accurate statement of facts relating to actions in which Vere was personally engaged', he states: 'It is with great regret that I feel obliged to refute these persistent attacks by Mr. Motley on the good name of a great general. But the reputation of such a man as Sir Francis Vere belongs to posterity, and it is a bounden duty to defend it when unjustly assailed.'³¹ The majority of subsequent historians tend to side

²⁸ Amongst the contemporary studies, Camden's incorporates parts of Vere's narrative. *Historie*, iv, 159-61. The same is true of Lloyd's *Statesmen and Favorites*, 587-9. Grimestone also cites the *Commentaries*, but tends to rely more upon contemporary Dutch accounts. *Generall Historie*, 1118-28. Birch notes that in the *Commentaries*, Vere 'never fails to claim the chief merit of all actions, in which he was concerned', but nevertheless relies quite heavily upon this account in his own narrative. *Memoirs*, II, 21, 58

²⁹ Markham, *Fighting Veres*, iv, 132-3

³⁰ Motley, *United Netherlands*, III, 358; IV, 13-39, 48-51

³¹ Markham, 302-4n. See also: 289, 292-4

with Markham and readily accept his interpretation. Indeed, most references to Vere in modern studies can be traced back to the biography, and some have used it in conjunction with the *Commentaries*.³² As a result, the overwhelming view is that Vere was a highly skilled commander who collaborated well with the Dutch and was pivotal to their war effort. However, an appraisal of contemporary Dutch works (and, indeed, a number of English accounts) in fact supports Motley's criticism and casts doubt upon the accuracy of the *Commentaries*, and thus the *Fighting Veres*. These accounts at best qualify, and at worst clearly contradict Vere's narrative, and in order to demonstrate this, I have selected three of the most notable enterprises in which Vere was involved: Zutphen, Turnhout and Nieuwpoort. By contrasting Vere's narrative with other contemporary accounts, I aim to offer a more balanced picture of his military role than that which was suggested by the *Commentaries*, enhanced by Markham and accepted by most recent studies.

Vere attributes the taking of Zutphen in 1591 almost entirely to his skill and ingenuity. He describes how the fort outside the town was taken by a clever ruse that he devised, which involved disguising 'a good number of lusty and hardy young soldiers' as country women and men. He instructed these soldiers to station themselves at the ferry port just outside the fort, as if they were waiting for the towns' 'passage boat', and then to seize the fort as soon as the gate was

³² Fortescue's account is typical in this respect. He relies upon both the *Commentaries* and Markham's account, and refers to the difference of opinion between the latter and Motley, in which he firmly sides with Markham: 'being satisfied after careful consideration of the authorities that his account is the more accurate.' *History of the British Army*, 155, 161. Oman, on the other hand, refuses to side with either Motley or Markham, and states: 'the former seems to be too hard on Francis Vere, and the latter too insistent on the gallant veteran's infallibility and judicial fairness of mind.' He treats the *Commentaries* with caution and admits that for the battle of Turnhout, he had 'some difficulty in harmonising Vere's interesting account of the fight with the Dutch sources'. He concludes that the *Commentaries* is 'interesting though self-centred', but does incorporate some of the material that it contains. Oman, *Art of War*, 583n, 602-3n. A number of other military historians are rather more sceptical, however. Corbett's view of the *Commentaries* is roughly in line with Motley's, if a little less damning. He describes Vere's account of the Cadiz Voyage as: 'a studied apology for the author, probably exaggerating the part he played and minimising that of officers he disliked'. *Successors of Drake*, 444. Similarly, Henry describes the *Commentaries*' account of the preparations for the Islands Voyage as 'confused in detail', and claims that it 'does not give the true order of events'. 'The Earl of Essex as Strategist and Military Organizer', 371. The same is true of Nickle, who claims that Vere's testimony is 'somewhat unreliable' 'on any point', but he nevertheless incorporates it in his account of the allied campaigns in the Netherlands. Nickle, *Military Reforms*, 185. Most historians of English foreign policy tend to rely more unquestioningly upon the accounts provided by Markham and Vere. In his most recent study, Wernham relies upon the *Commentaries* for details of the campaigns in the Netherlands, as well as for the Cadiz and Islands Voyages. *Return of the Armadas*, chapters 6, 7, 10-12; *After the Armada*, 208, 213, 317-19. Rowse makes frequent reference to the *Commentaries* in his chapter on English intervention in the Netherlands, accepting the accuracy of the account. *Expansion*, chapter 10. See also: MacCaffrey, *War and Politics*, chapters 6 and 13; Haley, *British and Dutch*, 45, 47; Johnson, *Power and Intellect*, 334; E.M. Tenison, *Elizabethan England: Being the History of this Country in Relation to all Foreign Princes*, VIII (London, 1947), 546; Gleig, *Military Commanders*, 124-5, 196. Charles Wilson is more cautious. He describes the *Commentaries* as 'supremely self-confident' and 'self-congratulatory', and adds that Markham's biography has 'ensured that his merits have not been undervalued by historians.' *Elizabeth and the Netherlands*, 112. On the Dutch side, den Tex refers to the *Commentaries* occasionally, but on the whole relies upon it less directly by citing Markham's account of Vere's role in the Dutch campaigns. *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 45-6, 191. See also: Kikkert, *Maurits*, 71

opened, seconded by 200 soldiers waiting nearby. He claimed that this plan worked exactly as he had envisaged, and that as a result, Maurice was able to take the town itself quickly and easily.³³ The Dutch authorities offer a somewhat different account of the victory. While they do mention the ruse, their description of it does not tally with Vere's, and they do not attribute either its planning or success to him. Both Bor and van Reynd refer to the strategy, but neither of them mention the English General at all, and they give rather more attention to Maurice's siege of the town itself.³⁴ Van Meteren describes the taking of the fort in more detail than these two authorities, but again, does not give Vere any credit for the successful strategy. He also claims that the disguised soldiers gained entry to the fort by pretending to sell food supplies to the guards - a claim that is backed up by other contemporary accounts, notably the *Triumphs of Nassau*.³⁵ This latter account does concede that these soldiers were under Vere's command, but does not imply that the ruse was devised by him.³⁶ The same is true of Grimestone's *Generall Historie*. Moreover, in common with the Dutch authorities, Grimestone gives more attention to the taking of the town itself, and focuses upon Maurice's endeavours.³⁷ One account which does give Vere some credit for the ruse is a letter written by Bodley shortly after the town had been taken. He told Burghley that Vere had executed the strategy 'very happely' by dressing thirteen soldiers in boors' apparel.³⁸ Another English account also attributes the plan to Vere credit for the ruse, but again differs from that given by the *Commentaries*. The author claims that the soldiers were disguised as 'poore Market folkes' who, whilst driving some livestock near to the fort, were 'pursued' by a number of allied troops so that the guards would come to their aid. When the guards duly did so, admitting the disguised soldiers into the fort in the process, the latter seized the place and were immediately seconded by Vere and his troops.³⁹

Yet Vere himself contradicts this account, and (with unaccustomed modesty) does not give himself any credit for carrying out the strategy. Instead, he merely writes that 'an officer' led the troops which came to the aid of the disguised soldiers, and otherwise concentrates upon the planning of the operation - for which he *does* give himself full credit.⁴⁰ However, as already

³³ Vere's *Commentaries*, 17-18

³⁴ Bor, *Nederlantsche Oorlogen*, III ii, 26-7; van Reynd, *Historie der Nederlantscher Oorlogen*, 167-8

³⁵ van Meteren, *L'Histoire des Pays Bas*, 333

³⁶ *Triumphs of Nassau*, 124-5

³⁷ Grimestone, *Generall Historie*, 927-8

³⁸ BM MS, Cotton Galba D, VIII, fo.147, Bodley to Burghley, 17 May 1591

³⁹ Charlwood, *The Politique takinge of Zutphen Skonce*, 8-9

⁴⁰ Vere's *Commentaries*, 18

discussed, there is also reason to doubt that he was responsible for devising the stratagem because the available sources all contradict his description of the tactics involved. The only certainty seems to be that the enterprise was carried out by members of the regiment over which Vere had command at that time. His involvement beyond that point must remain open to conjecture, but the lack of reliable evidence to support his own rather self-congratulatory account leads one to doubt the claims that it makes. Furthermore, there are grounds for believing that the ingenious strategy was due more to Maurice than Vere, because the Count achieved the capture of Breda in a very similar way.⁴¹ He smuggled a force of men into the town in a boat, supposedly laden with turf, and the strategy worked so well that he may have decided to repeat it at Zutphen, or have inspired Vere to do so.⁴² Not surprisingly, however, Vere does not give Maurice any credit for the Zutphen scheme, and instead implies that it was his own original idea.

The *Commentaries* also differs from the Dutch sources in its account of the Turnhout victory of 1597. In describing the prelude to the battle, Vere claims that he advanced towards the town with 200 men, traversing an enemy-held bridge (against Count Hohenlohe's advice), and eventually discovering the main body of enemy troops, which comprised around 4,600 men. Together with some fifteen or sixteen horsemen, the English General then advanced towards the enemy, and in the meantime sent word to Maurice (by Sir Robert Sidney amongst others) that if he were to advance all of the allied troops, their victory would be assured. There followed a series of skirmishes for 'at the least four hours', as Vere and his cavalrymen followed close on the enemy's heels, and he claimed that he 'slew and galled many of them'. He apparently led the enemy to believe that his troops would soon be followed by a far greater number and thus frightened them into continuing their flight. Eventually Maurice submitted to Vere's superior knowledge and experience, and allowed him three companies of horse to use as he saw fit. With these the English General led a fresh charge against the enemy, and soon succeeded in defeating their footmen. The Spanish troops subsequently retreated en masse, and Vere claimed that around 3,000 of them were either killed or captured. He adds that Maurice and the main army returned to Turnhout that evening, and the castle yielded.⁴³ It would seem that Vere's actions therefore yet again laid the groundwork for Maurice, just as they had during the Zutphen victory, and enabled him to take the town itself with comparative ease.

⁴¹ Nickle certainly believes that the ruse at Zutphen was carried out by Maurice. *Military Reforms*, 15

⁴² van Reyd, *Historie der Nederlandscher Oorlogen*, 162-3; van Meteren, *L'Histoire des Pays Bas*, 324-5; Bor, *Nederlantsche Oorlogen*, III ii, 518; Motley, *United Netherlands*, III, 6-15

⁴³ *Vere's Commentaries*, 72-81

The *Commentaries*' description of Turnhout is both corroborated and contradicted by the accounts which flooded into the Court following the victory. Among the first to arrive was Vere's own, and he described the battle in detail to his patron, the Earl of Essex. The content is broadly similar to the account that he wrote almost a decade later, and he implied that his own role was the most crucial, as he assumed the responsibility for directing and maintaining the attack. He did give Sir Robert Sidney some credit, but only referred to Maurice in terms of his accepting Vere's advice or granting his requests to advance. He also implied that the Count unjustifiably enhanced his own reputation by 'taking care' to give a 'great testimony' of his valour.⁴⁴ There is one notable difference, however, between the account given by this letter and the *Commentaries*, which suggests that the latter might have exaggerated events slightly. As already mentioned, the *Commentaries* states that Vere maintained skirmishes with the enemy for at least four hours, but Sir Francis told Essex that the period of time was 'very near three hours'.⁴⁵ This was supported by Sidney's account, which estimated that the skirmishing had continued for two or three hours. Sidney also gave Vere a great deal of credit for his role in the battle, and claimed that the final overthrow of the enemy should have been attributed to him.⁴⁶ The other English accounts all testified to Vere's valiant endeavours, and suggested that he was instrumental in directing the battle.⁴⁷

However, a rather different picture is given by Maurice's account, which in fact forms an almost complete contrast to Vere's. He clearly implied that he alone was responsible for planning and directing the battle, and only mentioned Vere in the context of a 'brave captain' who took part in the charge. Moreover, he claimed that he himself gave chase to the enemy with a force of cavalymen, and 'attacked and beat them in such a manner that more than 2,000 remained on the field.'⁴⁸ Grimestone's chronicle also forms a quite marked contrast to Vere's account, as it accredits both the planning and execution of the battle to Count Maurice. Indeed, his account of the battle focuses almost entirely upon Maurice and relegates Vere to the position of an inferior

⁴⁴ HMC, *Sal*, VII, Vere to Essex, 17 January 1597, 24-5; *SP* 84, LIV, fo.82, Vere to Cecil, 20 February 1597

⁴⁵ Van Meteren claims that it was an even shorter period of time - just one and a half hours. *L'Histoire des Pays Bas*, 399

⁴⁶ HMC, *Sal*, VII, Sidney to Essex, 21 January 1597, 31-2. See also: HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 26 and 27 October 1599, 406, 408

⁴⁷ Interestingly, Captain John Chamberlain claimed that when Vere led a charge against one of the enemy flanks, this was 'very much against the allowance of his Excellency and the Count Hollock'. This contention was contradicted by both Vere's account and Sir Henry Docwra's, who wrote that Maurice had granted Vere permission to do so. HMC, *Sal*, VII, Chamberlain to Essex, 20 January 1597, 29; Docwra to Essex, 30 January 1597, 46

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, Maurice to Essex, (19)/29 January 1597, 28

officer who merely carried out his orders. For example, he states that for the final charge, the Count instructed Hohenlohe to attack one of the enemy flanks, and also sent Vere, Sidney and the rest of the horsemen to charge the troops. The implication is clearly that Maurice had devised this strategy beforehand, and there is certainly no suggestion that Vere prompted him to undertake it. Grimestone portrays the Count as a wise, unflappable commander who planned and exercised the battle to perfection. This contrasts markedly with the *Commentaries*, which clearly implies that Maurice was an indecisive and inexperienced commander who was at times wholly dependant upon Vere's advice.⁴⁹

The Dutch chronicles also contradict Vere's account, and none of them suggest that he enjoyed a very prominent role in the battle. Both van Meteren and Bor allege that it was Colonels van der Aa and Bacx, rather than Vere, who led the chase against the enemy, with Sir Francis playing a mere supporting role along with a number of other officers. Worse still, in van Reyd's account, the English General is barely afforded a mention.⁵⁰ These accounts therefore cast doubt upon the *Commentaries*' portrayal of the operation as being directed and executed by the English General alone. They are supported by the *Triumphs of Nassau*, which mentions Vere only as one of various officers who played an important role, such as van der Aa, Hohenlohe, Solms and Sidney.⁵¹ Furthermore, all of the above accounts give Maurice a great deal of credit for the victory, and praise Sir Robert Sidney highly, suggesting that the skirmishes were led by him and Vere jointly.⁵² A contemporary English tract goes one step further and attributes the entire victory to Sidney alone. It was written by a 'Gentleman of account' who had been present at the battle, and while he refers to Sidney and Vere's joint action, he claims that the former was responsible for the success of the strategy. According to this account, Sidney and Vere spent some two or three hours skirmishing with the enemy and, more importantly, that it was Sidney who urged the advance of the allied troops. The account claims that he described the state of affairs to Count Hohenlohe, leaving him 'resolute to charge', and that 'trulie had he not seene further into their [the enemy's] amazement then the Count did, that happie victorie, which God gave this valiant attempt, had not beene that daie atchieved.'⁵³ This contrasts sharply with Vere's own account, which gives little credit to Sidney. He does concede that Sir Robert rode to urge for

⁴⁹ Grimestone, *Generall Historie*, 998-1001; *Vere's Commentaries*, 19, 84-7

⁵⁰ van Meteren, *L'Histoire des Pays Bas*, 399-400; Bor, *Nederlantsche Oorlogen*, V, 6-9; van Reyd, *Historie der Nederlantsche Oorlogen*, 302-3

⁵¹ *Triumphs of Nassau*, 197-201

⁵² van Meteren, 399; Bor, *Nederlantsche Oorlogen*, V, 8; *Triumphs of Nassau*, 199

⁵³ Short, *A True Discourse of the overthrowe given to the common enemy at Turnhout*, 1-6

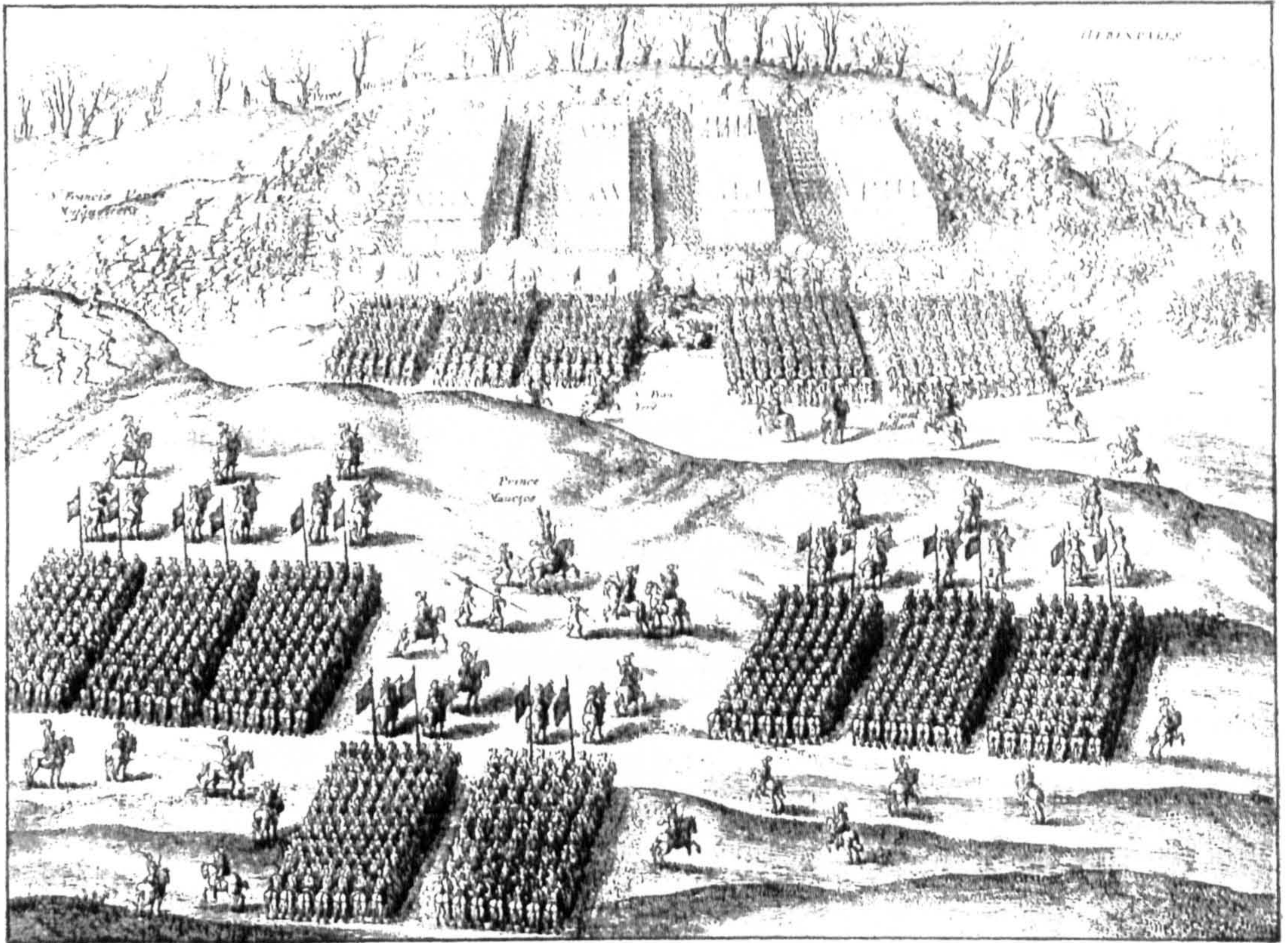


Figure 5: The Battle of Turnhout, 1597

Taken from *Vere's Commentaries*

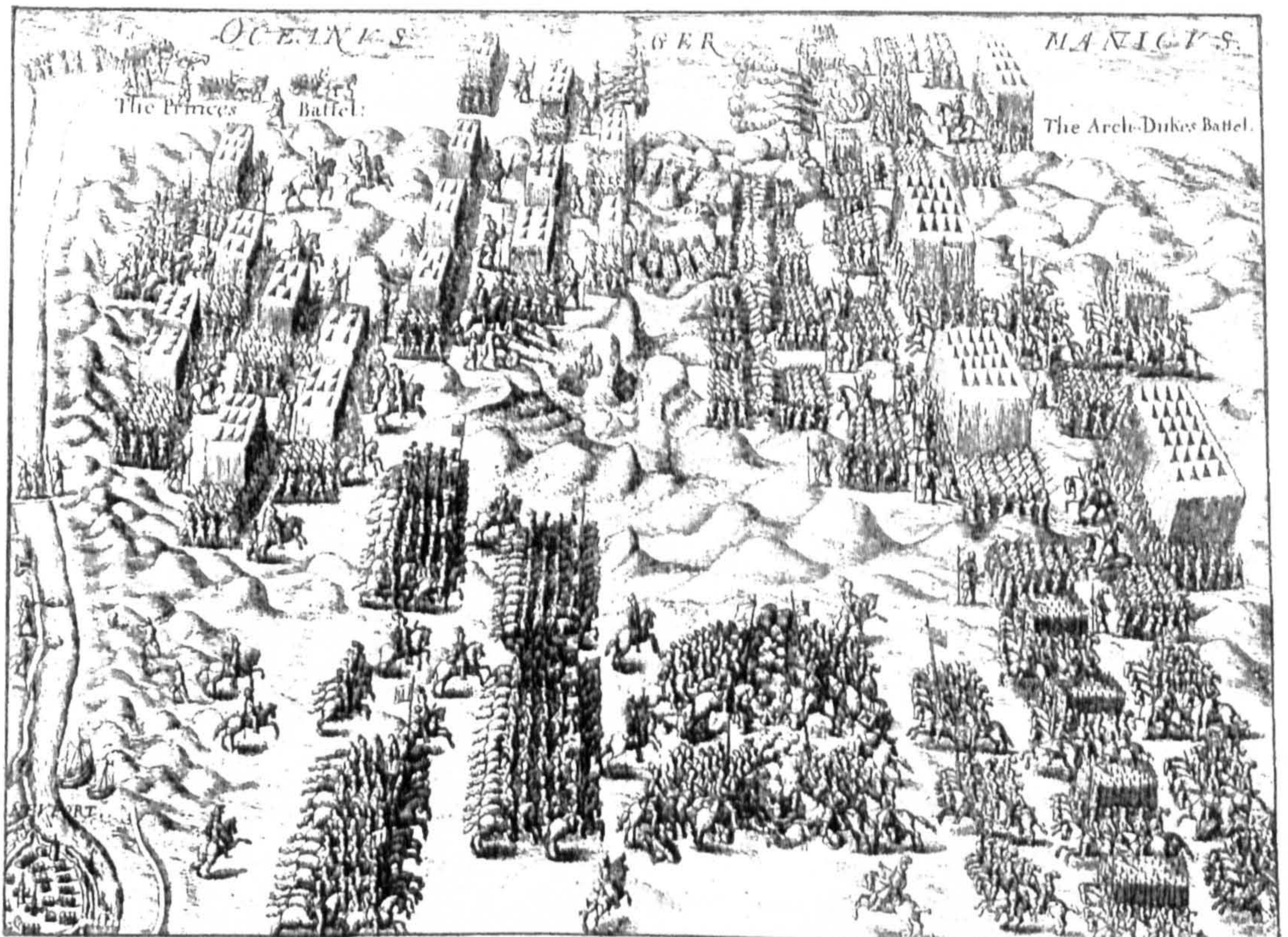


Figure 6: The Battle of Nieuwpoort, 1600

Taken from *Vere's Commentaries*

more troops, but implies that he was just one of many messengers that Vere dispatched, and does not mention him further.⁵⁴ It is doubtful that the victory was almost entirely due to Sidney's efforts, as *A True Discourse* suggests, but neither is it plausible that all the credit should rightfully go to Vere. Again, the Dutch accounts seem to give a more balanced and accurate view of events, admitting the value of the English General's contribution, but setting it firmly within the context of the actions of the other officers present.

The *Commentaries* also gives prominence to Vere's role in the battle of Nieuwpoort in 1600. As with the accounts of Deventer and Turnhout, it implies that the English General effectively laid the foundations for the victory, masterminding both the strategy and execution, and enabling Maurice to take a backseat until the very last stages of the battle. While Vere rightly claims that the allied forces were divided into three regiments - commanded by himself and Counts Ernest of Nassau and Solms - he gives no credit to the latter two officers, inferring that he himself had the overall direction of the battle. Moreover, this was apparently with Maurice's blessing, for according to the account, he was happy to submit to the English General's advice. Maurice had captured Oudenburg fort on his way to Nieuwpoort, but whilst he was preparing to besiege the town, he heard that the Archduke had taken Oudenburg itself, and was advancing towards them. This was a serious situation for the Count because he had divided his forces around Nieuwpoort into two parts, which were cut off from each other by a haven running through the town that was unfordable at high tide. According to the *Commentaries*, Vere urged him to prevent the enemy from crossing the haven via a bridge that had been constructed, and he agreed. However, Maurice dispatched only Count Ernest's regiment for this purpose, and Vere protested in vain that the whole army must advance. The outcome proved him right: Ernest's division was routed by the enemy, who had already taken the bridge, and Maurice now had to face them with a significantly weakened army. In the ensuing battle, the action was centred upon the 'sandhills' or 'downs' near to the town, which Vere and his troops were guarding in order to prevent the enemy from passing to the seaside. The enemy duly advanced, and also encamped on the downs for a short while before the battle commenced. Vere describes this as being very bloody, with a heavy loss of men on both sides due to the use of canons and the prevalence of 'hand fighting'. His description implies that the battle was fought almost exclusively between himself and the enemy: 'All this while, the fight continued, without intermission, hotter and hotter, betwixt the two other troops of the enemy and me: both of us sending fresh supplies, as occasion required, to sustain the fight.' Shortly afterwards, Vere saw that the time was ripe to 'give the enemy a deadly blow',

⁵⁴ Vere's failure to give credit to Sidney's role in the battle no doubt stemmed from the fierce rivalry that existed between the two men. This will be discussed at greater length in chapter 4, 208-10

and therefore ordered the 2,000 Frisian footmen of the vanguard to advance, and dispatched 'messenger upon messenger' to Maurice, urging him to send some cavalry. Meanwhile, he rode into the heart of the battle to give his men more courage: 'where riding up and down, I was in their eyes both doing the office of a Captain and soldier'. He was subsequently wounded twice in the leg, but would not retreat to safety because he knew that if he did, his men would 'instantly quail'. However, soon afterwards, his horse was killed under him, and he was forced to retire, having been rescued by Sir Robert Drury's servant, Higham. Sensing victory, the enemy gave chase, but at this juncture, Maurice finally advanced his infantry and cavalry, and routed them. Vere did not take part in this last charge himself, for he realised that he had already done enough to secure victory: 'seeing the success upon the sands, and knowing that my directions in the prosecution of the victory would be executed; I could easily judge that the work of that day was at an end.'⁵⁵

Of the other existing accounts of the Nieuwpoort battle, the one that aligns most closely with Vere's is Grimestone's *Generall Historie*. For once, he has relied almost exclusively upon the *Commentaries*, rather than the Dutch sources, supplementing it with the testimonies given by other English officers who were present. Grimestone claims that everything was arranged for the 'imbattailing of the Princes Armie, by the especiall care, industrie, and judgement of Sir Francis Vere, (a thing which we may boldly deliver, without intrrenching upon other mens honours).'⁵⁶ Another contemporary account, written by an Englishman who was present at the battle, endorses the *Commentaries*' portrayal of Vere's role. According to this, Vere did play a very prominent role and was given the 'whole direction' of Louis Gunther's cavalry by Maurice. It also confirms Vere's claim that his advice was taken on the issue of whether to advance towards the enemy or wait for them to arrive at the downs (the latter option being taken). In addition, the account mentions Vere's injuries and how these forced him to leave the last charge to others, giving the command of his own troops to his brother, Horace. By contrast, the author gives little credit to Maurice, or indeed to any of the other senior officers who were present.⁵⁷ Most of the English accounts of the battle that were received at court largely endorse this paper. Lord Grey spoke of Vere's 'wise providence', and claimed that Maurice had 'referred much of the direction' to this

⁵⁵ Vere's *Commentaries*, 81-105. See also: *SP* 84, LX i, fo.185, Vere to Cecil, 26 June 1600

⁵⁶ Grimestone, *Generall Historie*, 1120

⁵⁷ Short, *The Battaile Fought Betweene Count Maurice of Nassaw, and Albertus Arch-duke of Austria*

‘wise and expert man of war.’⁵⁸ Edward Cecil told Sir Robert, his uncle, that Vere had won ‘as much honour as a man can get on earth.’⁵⁹ Reports such as these greatly enhanced Vere’s standing at court, and secured him high favour with the Queen. Rowland Whyte told Sidney that everyone believed the enemy had been overthrown by ‘the valour of the English and the good direction of Sir Francis Vere’.⁶⁰ However, there is reason to suspect that their view of the battle was rather clouded by an inherent bias against the Dutch, and a desire to attribute the victory entirely to the English. Whyte, for example, wrote: ‘Of Prince Maurice little is said, and that to his disadvantage...The glory is laid on our nation.’⁶¹ Yet not all of the English accounts were so jingoistic. Telling his friend Dudley Carleton of the victory, John Chamberlain observed that Vere had sent Clement Edmunds to present his account of the battle at court, but that this was ‘so partiall, as yf no man had strooke stroke but the English, and among the English no man almost but Sir Francis Vere.’⁶² Similarly, Captain Robert King claimed that it was the Count, rather than Vere, who had rallied the troops for the final assault on the enemy, ‘showing them their choice was either to take the sea and drown or fight for their lives and country.’ This gave them the courage to confront the Spanish forces and eventually win through.⁶³

King’s account is endorsed by the contemporary Dutch authorities. Admittedly, they all acknowledge the importance of Vere’s role in the victory, but they attribute almost equal credit to the other commanders, and again assert that Maurice exercised the overall direction of the campaign. Van Meteren states that the vanguard of Maurice’s troops was commanded by Vere, and that, together with a number of other companies, they began skirmishing with the enemy. He refers to the continual advance and retreat of Vere’s and the enemy’s troops, and notes that Sir Francis gave the command to his brother after being hurt twice in the leg. However, in contradiction to Vere’s account, he also states that the allied advances were led by two other commanders as well - Captain Ball⁶⁴ and Sir Edward Cecil, and that the victory was more of a

⁵⁸ N.B. While Grey thus exalted Vere’s contribution, however, he claimed that the allied troops were extremely fortunate to attain the victory, and that they owed more to divine intervention than to the valour of any one individual in particular. HMC, *Sal*, X, Lord Grey to Cecil, 25 June 1600, 198-9

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, Edward Cecil to Robert Cecil, June 1600, 212

⁶⁰ HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 5 and 7 July 1600, 471-2

⁶¹ This bias is also evident in the work of a more recent commentator, Gleig, who states: ‘The proudest wreath which encircles the brow of prince Maurice was in reality earned by De Vere: for to him, and to him alone, was the great victory of Nieupont owing.’ *Military Commanders*, 196

⁶² *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 1 July 1600, 102

⁶³ HMC, *Sal*, X, King to Lord - , (27 June)/7 July 1600, 206. See also: Archduke of Austria to his Council, (24 June)/4 July 1600, 194-5; Battle of Nieupont, (27 June)/7 July 1600, 200-1

⁶⁴ Also referred to as ‘Bael’ and ‘Balén’.

collaborative effort than the English General suggested.⁶⁵ This is supported by two independent accounts. The *Triumphs of Nassau* gives equal weight to the endeavours of Ball and Vere, describing how they both 'charged fiercely upon the enemy', and each took prisoners from the Spanish nobility.⁶⁶ Perhaps more significantly, Sir John Ogle's account, which is included in the *Commentaries*, refers to a three-fold advance led by Vere, Cecil and Ball, and expresses surprise that Sir Francis did not mention Cecil's contribution in his version of the battle.⁶⁷ As to Maurice's role in the victory, van Meteren argues that it was fundamental, and writes of his 'magnanime' and 'valeurux' courage. He also implies that the Count was responsible for the strategy and direction of the whole operation.⁶⁸ Perhaps not surprisingly, the *Triumphs of Nassau* also focuses a great deal of attention upon Maurice's contribution, claiming that his success in defeating the enemy was 'a magnificent and gallant victorie for my lords the generall States, his Excellencie, and for all the united Provinces'.⁶⁹ Bor and van Reyd give a similarly favourable impression of the Count's actions, and both of them suggest that it was he, rather than Vere, who was ultimately responsible for the victory. Indeed, the only mention that Bor makes of Vere is in reference to the wounds that he received.⁷⁰ Van Reyd does give the English General somewhat more prominence in his account than this, and describes the various skirmishes in which he was involved, but like Bor he leaves the reader in little doubt as to the overriding importance of Maurice's role.⁷¹ If all of the accounts of Nieuwpoort mentioned above are taken into consideration, therefore, it would seem that Vere had certainly played a significant part in the victory, but not to the extent that he overshadowed all of the other officers present, as his *Commentaries* suggests. It would also appear that his dismissal of Maurice's importance was unjustified, as was his omission of the role played by his fellow commanders.

Although Vere's account of the victories at Zutphen, Turnhout and Nieuwpoort are perhaps the most lucid examples of the discrepancy between the *Commentaries* and other existing

⁶⁵ van Meteren, *L'Histoire des Pays Bas*, 478-90

⁶⁶ *Triumphs of Nassau*, 278

⁶⁷ Ogle concludes that Vere must have made this omission because Cecil had received his orders to advance from Maurice rather than the English General, and was more involved in the last charge (from which Vere was absent) than in the previous ones. *Vere's Commentaries*, 110-11. Grimestone also defends Vere's omission of Cecil by claiming that the two men were involved in different charges, and asserts that the former would not 'expose himselfe so much to interpretation, as to make any further relation touching particulars, than what might receive an Historicall credit either from his own eyes, or commands.' *Generall Historie*, 1126

⁶⁸ van Meteren, *L'Histoire des Pays Bas*, 481-2

⁶⁹ *Triumphs of Nassau*, 179

⁷⁰ Bor, *Nederlantsche Oorlogen*, V, 39-43

⁷¹ van Reyd, *Historie der Nederlantscher Oorlogen*, 424-8

contemporary accounts (in particular those by Dutch authors) there are various others which could have been cited - such as Deventer, Knodsenberg Fort, Rheinberg and Ostend. Yet why should one set more store by the Dutch sources than Vere's narrative - or, indeed, the various other contemporary English accounts which support it? Is it not equally possible that the Dutch authors underplayed Vere's role, and that his version of events was more accurate than theirs? While this is a possibility, it does not seem very likely. Firstly, Vere's account is contradicted by English as well as Dutch sources, and the accounts which it deviates from usually concur on most of the events described. Furthermore, the entire tone of the *Commentaries* casts some doubt upon its validity. Admittedly, Vere focuses upon those campaigns in which he played a major role, but the descriptions he gives of his actions are at best self-congratulatory and at worst so boastful as to be implausible. When contrasted with more staidly written accounts, the *Commentaries* appears as a work of fiction rather than fact, employing dramatic phraseology and setting Vere up as the hero of every scene. In fact, a close reading of the account suggests that Vere was more anxious to enhance his own reputation (often at the expense of others) than to provide an accurate and balanced appraisal of events. It would seem that in the *Commentaries*, as in most good plays, there could only be one protagonist, and that all the other actors were allowed only supporting roles. Vere's anxiety to portray himself as this protagonist was also apparent in his correspondence. For example, when writing to Cecil about the Turnhout victory, he claimed that, contrary to his nature, he felt compelled to point out that the victory was largely due to his efforts. He was outraged that Maurice and the other senior Dutch officers present had been 'sparyng' in their acknowledgement of his contribution and had 'bestowed' the credit elsewhere.⁷² It could be argued that his attitude was typical of English perceptions in general. Elizabeth and many of her councillors seemed reluctant to acknowledge the successes gained by Maurice's forces, and focused the greater part of their attention upon the English troops, continually reminding the States how invaluable these were to their war effort.

This inherent sense of superiority on the English side was evident in both the Court's correspondence and Vere's narrative.⁷³ The latter certainly seems to dismiss the importance of the Dutch commanders and troops in the planning and execution of campaigns, and implies that Maurice in particular was so indecisive that he relied upon the English General's advice and direction.⁷⁴ The *Commentaries* cites numerous instances of the Court's indecision and his

⁷² *SP 84*, LIV, fo.82, Vere to Cecil, 20 February 1597

⁷³ See above, 66, 80-2, 120-1

⁷⁴ Markham accepts this interpretation, and states: 'Maurice invariably consulted him and relied upon his advice.' *Fighting Veres*, 362

dependence upon Vere's advice. According to this account, the successful siege of Deventer in 1591 was almost entirely due to the English General's perception and guidance. The troops had some difficulty in advancing to the town to begin the siege, and Maurice was apparently 'so discouraged' that he proposed the withdrawal of his ordnance. However, Vere advised him to be patient and to begin the assault again in the morning, and this apparently had the desired effect: 'The Count Maurice liked well of the advise, and it had good successe: for upon the summons they yielded.'⁷⁵ This assertion is not supported by any of the other contemporary accounts relating to the siege. Van Reynd and Bor both focus upon Maurice, and make no mention of Vere at all. Van Meteren does mention the difficulty that Maurice had in approaching the town, and notes that he was forced to begin the battery from a distance, but he neither attributes this strategy to Vere, or in fact mentions him at all.⁷⁶

Similarly dubious is Vere's assertion that his advice precipitated both the decision to advance to Turnhout in 1597, and the successful conclusion of the battle. He claims that having observed the gathering of enemy troops in the town, he advised Oldenbarnevelt 'that they did but tempt us to beat them'. The Advocate apparently took note of this, for according to the *Commentaries*, he shortly afterwards ordered Maurice to gather his forces together. Vere then went on to direct the strategy of the whole battle, sending frequent directions to Maurice as to the best way to proceed.⁷⁷ There is rather more evidence to substantiate Vere's claims regarding the advice he gave during the Nieuwpoort campaign, but even so, the *Commentaries* again seems to have exaggerated his contribution. Prior to this campaign, a Council of War was convened to resolve upon the strategy for an offensive war in Flanders. The majority of those present believed that the enemy would not dare to meet the allied troops in the field, but Vere opposed this view and argued that within a fortnight of the allies' landing in the province, the Spanish troops would 'offer fight'. The Council chose to take his advice, and rightly so, for according to the *Commentaries*, events 'fell precisely out' as Vere had predicted.⁷⁸ This was apparently not the only instance when Vere's advice was invaluable to the Nieuwpoort campaign, for the account claims that his strategic foresight and perceptiveness enabled him to direct the course of events almost single-handed. For example, when it was advertised that the enemy had advanced to the

⁷⁵ *Vere's Commentaries*, 19

⁷⁶ van Reynd, *Historie der Nederlantscher Oorlogen*, 168-9; Bor, *Nederlantsche Oorlogen*, V, 27-9; van Meteren, *L'Histoire des Pays Bas*, 334. See also: Charlwood, *The Politique takinge of Zutphen Skonce*, 10-11; *Triumphs of Nassau*, 126-9

⁷⁷ *Vere's Commentaries*, 72-81. See also: HMC, *Sal*, VII, Vere to Essex, 17 January 1597, 25; Docwra to Essex, 30 January 1597, 46

⁷⁸ *Vere's Commentaries*, 82

nearby Oudenburg fort, the majority believed that it was just a 'bravado' and that he would soon retreat to Sluis again. However, Vere insisted that it was no façade and that the allies should march to the fort without delay. He offered 'well grounded' reasons for his opinion, but claimed that 'the Count Maurice was, as he is naturally, slow in resolving, so as for that time no other thing was done.' According to Vere, this hesitation proved very costly because news soon arrived that the enemy had taken the fort. Maurice had apparently learnt his lesson, however, for he henceforth relied upon the English General's advice almost unquestioningly, and gave him a free rein to 'do in all things as I saw cause myself.'⁷⁹ This was the case when the enemy had encamped in the downs, and the chief commanders of the allied troops convened to decide whether to advance or wait for the Spanish forces to do so. Vere alone insisted upon the latter option, but was apparently undaunted: 'They persisted, and as it were with one voice opposed: so as, in the end, I was moved to say that 'all the world could not make me change my counsel.' His steadfastness was rewarded, for Maurice gave him leave to act as he saw fit, 'without viewing the places or examining the reasons of my doings', and events yet again proved Vere correct.⁸⁰ This latter instance is also referred to by Short's account of the battle, which claims that Vere 'apposed himselfe against the whole counsell of warre', and that his advice was so highly valued that 'The resolution was directed by his opinion, and his excellencie continued firme in the Downes to see what the enimie would do.' It also confirms that on this occasion, the wisdom of Vere's advice was shortly afterwards proven when events fell out exactly as he had predicted.⁸¹

Yet again, however, the Dutch sources fail to concur with this interpretation of Vere's role, and afford him no mention in conjunction with the strategy of the Nieuwpoort campaign.⁸² Motley does refer to Vere's contribution to the debates which preceded the advance to Nieuwpoort, but his account differs quite markedly from that given in the *Commentaries*. Whereas the latter focuses upon Vere's advice regarding the best strategy to adopt *after* the States had already resolved to make an offensive war in Flanders, the former concentrates upon his contribution to the debates *preceding* this resolution. Vere's omission of these debates from his account is significant because on this occasion, his advice was ignored. Motley claims that Oldenbarnevelt

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 84-7; HMC, *Sal*, X, Grey to Cecil, 25 June 1600, 199

⁸⁰ *Vere's Commentaries*, 90-2. See also for example: 93-4

⁸¹ Short, *The Battaille Fought Betweene Count Maurice of Nassaw, and Albertus Arch-duke of Austria*, 2-3. Grimestone gives a similar account, although this was in any case largely based upon the *Commentaries*. Grimestone, *Generall Historie*, 1120-1

⁸² van Reyd, *Historie der Nederlantscher Oorlogen*, 424-32; van Meteren, *L'Histoire des Pays Bas*, 478-90; Bor, *Nederlantsche Oorlogen*, V, 39-43

and the States General urged an offensive campaign, and more specifically an advance to Nieuwpoort, but that 'every military man in the provinces of any consideration', *including Vere*, was opposed to the scheme. Nevertheless, the resolution was passed, and the plans for the campaign were laid. Motley does not focus upon these plans, in contrast to Vere, who evidently wished the fact that his advice was valued this time to obscure the fact that on the previous occasion it was not.⁸³

There is further evidence to suggest that Vere's advice tended to be ignored, and an alternative course of action taken. A case in point was the campaign of 1591. In the spring, before the main allied advances had begun, Vere offered his opinion to Maurice regarding the best strategy to adopt, and urged him to invade Flanders. The Count apparently 'allegead some reason' why this was not advisable, and chose to lay siege to Zutphen and Deventer instead, concentrating upon Flanders later on that year.⁸⁴ Another example concerns the battle of Nieuwpoort. As mentioned above, the *Commentaries* states that when news arrived that the enemy had reached Oudenburg fort, Vere urged Maurice to advance the whole army against him, and when the Count chose to ignore this advice, Sir Francis put it down to foolish indecision. When more detailed messages were received, describing the strength of the enemy forces, Vere again advised an advance, but Maurice again ignored him, and instead he chose to send only a portion of his army to the fort, much to the English General's disgust.⁸⁵ During the siege of Ostend, Vere, as temporary Governor of the town, repeatedly advised the dispatch of large forces there in order to defend it against the enemy. In two very lengthy missives to Count Maurice, he gave his advice as to the best way to save the town, and urged the necessity of sending nine or ten thousand foot soldiers, together with one thousand cavalrymen.⁸⁶ However, his advice went unheeded, and Maurice chose instead to concentrate his forces upon a number of diversionary expeditions.⁸⁷ This aroused Vere's resentment, and in a letter to Cecil, he implied that the Count had acted out of self-interest.⁸⁸ He also complained to the States General when, in response to his urgent requests for assistance, they sent a number of weak companies to the town, and he alleged that they had reserved the best troops for Maurice.⁸⁹

⁸³ Motley, *United Netherlands*, IV, 2-4

⁸⁴ *SP 84*, XLI, fo.228, Vere to Burghley, 11 March 1591; XLIII, fo.45, Vere to Burghley, 17 September 1591

⁸⁵ *Vere's Commentaries*, 84-5; Motley, *United Netherlands*, IV, 49

⁸⁶ *Archives*, II, 111-15

⁸⁷ *SP 84*, LXI, fo.320, Vere to Cecil, 30 September 1601; fo.344, Maurice to Vere, (5)/15 October 1601

⁸⁸ LXII, fo.259, Vere to Cecil, 19 October 1602

⁸⁹ ARA, Lias. Lop., 4902 I, Vere to States General, 14 February 1602

As well as his advice being ignored, it would seem that on occasion Vere was actually excluded from the debates concerning strategy. For example, during the second year of the Ostend siege, he observed that it was doubtful that the States would resolve to undertake a diversionary campaign. Yet it would appear that the decision to do so had already been taken, for shortly afterwards, he learned that Frederick Henry, the Marshal of the States' army, was marching with a substantial number of forces towards Brabant.⁹⁰ It would also seem that when the States did choose to keep the English General informed of their resolutions, it was often after these had already been concluded.⁹¹ This is supported by the fact that he only rates at best an occasional mention in Maurice's and Oldenbarnevelt's correspondence, and it is not apparent that he was crucial to them as an adviser on strategy.⁹²

One must therefore doubt, or at least seek to modify, Vere's claims that his advice was readily sought, unquestioningly taken, and almost always proven correct: indeed, in most cases, he seemed to be the *advised* rather than the *adviser*. While he probably fulfilled some advisory capacity, he was only one of various commanders who did so, and it is rather difficult to believe that he was the most influential of these. If he had been, one would perhaps expect to find more frequent references to this aspect of his role in the Dutch sources, but instead they suggest that Maurice was ultimately responsible for strategy, even if he did take account of the opinions and advice of others. Indeed, there are so many references to the Count's wisdom in strategic matters that the *Commentaries*, which forms the only account to contradict this, seems somewhat implausible.⁹³ While it portrays Maurice as indecisive and heavily reliant upon Vere's advice, the other available sources suggest that he was cautious and perceptive, and did not act rashly or unwisely. Taking account of the Count's enviable reputation for military genius,⁹⁴ and, indeed, his successful direction of the campaigns at which Vere was not even present,⁹⁵ the latter view seems more credible. Motley's account of Maurice is certainly more in line with this than with Vere's. He does concede that the Count tended to be indecisive, and writes: 'Maurice had not a

⁹⁰ *SP 84*, LXII, fo.338, Vere to Cecil, 29 October 1602; fo.340, Vere to Cecil and Nottingham, 29 October 1602

⁹¹ See for example: LVIII, fo.10, Vere and Gilpin to Cecil, 12 January 1599; LXI, fo.344, Maurice to Vere, (5)/15 October 1601

⁹² See for example: *Archives* II, 80-1, 110-112; *Bescheiden Betreffende*, I, 251, 521-5

⁹³ See for example: van Reyd, *Historie der Nederlantscher Oorlogen*, 168-9, 173-4; van Meteren, *L'Histoire des Pays Bas*, 333-4, 487; Bor, *Nederlantsche Oorlogen*, V, 6-9, 41-2

⁹⁴ Rowen claims that between Parma's death in 1592 and the outbreak of the 30 Years War in 1618, Maurice was 'the most admired military leader in Europe.' *Princes of Orange*, 40

⁹⁵ For example, the taking of Rheinberg in 1597. *Triumphs of Nassau*, 201-6

resolute character. Thorough soldier as he was, he was singularly vacillating, at times almost infirm of purpose'. Nevertheless, he also portrays him as a thoughtful, 'deeply pondering' strategist who could - and did - make wise decisions when it really mattered. For example, he claims that in the heat of the Nieuwpoort battle, Maurice took a 'supreme resolution' independently of any counsel, and ordered the entire allied fleet to assemble in the harbour. He states 'No more heroic decision was ever taken by fighting man.'⁹⁶

In the light of these accounts, it would seem that the English General's portrayal of Maurice stemmed from jealousy of the Count's superior position, and resentment that his own was not as influential as he wished it to be. Perhaps also Vere believed that as Maurice was seven years his junior, he had less experience in the military sphere than himself, and was thus heavily reliant upon his advice, being an older and wiser veteran. Whatever the case, Vere's portrayal of the Count suggests that their relationship was neither as close nor as collaborative as so many contemporaries believed it to be. Just as Vere was only one of many advisers to the Count, so he was only one of many valued commanders that Maurice had at his disposal. Maurice would seem to have conferred and acted in conjunction with his Nassau relatives - in particular William Louis - far more than with the English General, and this may have been another cause of the latter's somewhat distorted and derisory portrayal of him in the *Commentaries*.⁹⁷

To conclude, it has been suggested that an unquestioning acceptance of both the *Commentaries* and the traditional view of Vere's military role in the Netherlands is unjustified. While the majority of his compatriots seemed to believe that his martial prowess rendered him indispensable to the Dutch, their perception, like his, was perhaps distorted by a feeling of superiority over their allies. This was also evident in the various pamphlets that were produced by members of the English contingent in the Provinces, as well as in the more general historiographical works published both during and shortly after Vere's lifetime. The majority of contemporary Dutch sources, on the other hand, at best make no mention of the instances that Vere and various English commentators seize upon to demonstrate his importance, and at worst directly contradict them. Admittedly, they do occasionally refer to the value of the English General's contribution to the various campaigns in the Netherlands, but they also give at least equal credit to the various other commanders who fought in them, and in so doing they undermine the widespread belief in his unrivalled martial prowess. Yet the majority of more recent works adhere more closely to the

⁹⁶ Motley, *United Netherlands*, IV, 2, 4, 25

⁹⁷ See for example: *Archives*, II, 80-1, 110-1

English interpretation of Vere's military role than to the Dutch, and have thereby ensured the endurance of his posthumous renown.

It has not been the intention of this discussion to destroy Vere's military reputation, but rather to modify it. This has been possible by taking account of Dutch, as well as some English sources, and by giving more credit to Motley's study than has been afforded by the bulk of recent works, which tend to accept Markham's interpretation. Even so, this modification should not detract from the English General's overall contribution to the war effort in the Provinces. If he does not deserve all, or even most, of the credit that he gave himself for its planning and execution, he does deserve recognition for his undoubted military skill and valour. The fact that he and his forces played a prominent part in almost every campaign of importance in the Netherlands during the period 1589-1603 cannot be denied. Even if he did not fulfil an important role in the overall planning of these campaigns, he nevertheless directed his troops effectively to help ensure that they were successfully carried out. In addition, even if he did not act as an equal or superior to Maurice, he was nevertheless one of the most reliable commanders that the Count had at his disposal, and seemed to cooperate well with him on the whole to achieve a number of significant advances against the enemy. In short, Vere was undeniably the best English commander to set foot in the Provinces since the conclusion of the Treaty of Nonsuch in 1585, and the Dutch leaders certainly recognised and exploited his military potential to good effect, even if they and other Dutch commentators did not afford him as much praise as he himself and so many contemporary and modern observers have done.

In assessing the role that Vere played in the Netherlands as commander of Elizabeth's troops, it is not enough to focus solely upon his military activities, although this is precisely what the overwhelming majority of historians have done. The small attention that they afford Vere usually concerns his contribution to the Dutch war, and they either ignore or dismiss any political involvement that he may have had. 'Completely non-political' is the description that Johnson,

and most other modern observers, have assigned to him.⁹⁸ They seem to believe that as the Queen's senior military representative in the Provinces, he had neither the authority, inclination, time, or even ability to become involved in political affairs. It is certainly true that Vere's military commitments absorbed most of his time and energy during his ascendancy in the Netherlands. However, it is also fair to say that his involvement in politics was unavoidable and arose both directly and indirectly from the military role that had been assigned to him. Furthermore, he showed little sign of disliking this obligation, and was to prove quite adept at fulfilling it. He certainly became more involved in the political sphere than the majority of contemporary and recent commentators have suggested, and than was implied in his original commission of 1589: indeed, the *practical* nature of Vere's role in the Netherlands was somewhat different to the *theoretical*.

Among the first to comment upon Vere's apparent lack of interest in politics was Sir Robert Naunton, who was himself closely involved in such matters. His observation that the English General's military commitments precluded his attendance at court has often been quoted by later commentators, who tend to use it as evidence that Vere had no interest in, or time for political affairs.⁹⁹ A later commentator, G.R. Gleig, mentions Vere's election to parliament in 1593, but insists that this was merely a temporary diversion from his military duties, to which he was far more committed.¹⁰⁰ Vere's biographer, Markham, gives some attention to his activities in the sphere of diplomacy, arguing that his military duties increasingly began to propel him into this sphere: 'Thus it came about that he who had hitherto passed his life almost exclusively in camps, with few thoughts of any matters apart from military business, was, by the force of circumstances, gradually educated in the conduct of civil affairs.' He refers to the various 'confidential and delicate missions to the States General' that Elizabeth instructed him to undertake, stating: 'The Queen and her ministers were beginning to rely as much on his tact and judgement in the council room as on his valor and conduct in the field', and claims that by the late 1590s, he had 'an intimate knowledge of all matters of account between his own country and the States'.¹⁰¹ However, these form but passing references in a study that is primarily concerned with Vere's military activities, and Markham does not develop the theme of his political involvement further. Among more recent works, den Tex's interpretation best summarises the general consensus, and seems to have been accepted as definitive. Describing him as 'een ietwat naïf

⁹⁸ Johnson, *Power and Intellect*, 331

⁹⁹ Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia*, 146. See also: Tourneur, *Funerall Poeme*

¹⁰⁰ Gleig, *Military Commanders*, 147, 155, 166

¹⁰¹ Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 198, 297-8, 265

krigsman', den Tex claims that because of Vere's low rank, combined with a complete lack of interest in politics, he never laid claim to the powers allotted to the Governor General by the treaty. Furthermore, he portrays Vere as a naive and vulnerable figure in the political arena, and argues that he was not a good reporter of political matters.¹⁰² In a similar vein, Conyers Read claims that Vere was 'too much wrapped up in the profession of arms to leave him much time or ambition for affairs of state.'¹⁰³ Likewise, Haley writes: 'Outside military matters, his interests were limited and uncontroversial'.¹⁰⁴ Rowse puts forward a slightly different view, arguing that Sir Francis was a reserved and intelligent figure, but he only focuses upon Vere's character in relation to the military role that he played, and does not apply it to his political activities.¹⁰⁵ Pickering's study makes a direct reference to Vere's involvement in politics, but goes no further than to suggest that the English General did have some ambitions in this sphere.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, the most comprehensive recent English studies, MacCaffrey's *War and Politics*, and Wernham's *After the Armada*, both mention Vere only in the context of military affairs.¹⁰⁷

As was suggested in the previous chapter, recent commentators have welcomed the interpretation of Vere as an ingenuous soldier because it fits in rather neatly with the common belief that Elizabeth's choice of him signalled her intention to become less involved in the Netherlands. Indeed, there is little doubt that the act confirming his appointment contained no reference to any political authority, and merely stated that he should have the 'charge and commaunding' of the English auxiliaries.¹⁰⁸ More importantly, he was not given membership of the Council of State, and was thereby deprived of an important token of political power that the Queen's General had enjoyed ever since the conclusion of the Nonsuch Treaty. Elizabeth had therefore apparently decided to remove the ambiguities that were previously inherent in her General's role, and had made it a purely military appointment. While she did not wish to renounce her own political authority in the Netherlands altogether, it seemed that from henceforth she would exercise this through Bodley and Gilpin alone.

¹⁰² den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 46, 114

¹⁰³ Read, *Walsingham*, III, 360

¹⁰⁴ Haley, *British and Dutch*, 44

¹⁰⁵ Rowse, *Expansion*, 399

¹⁰⁶ He depicts Vere's character in a rather different way to Rowse, describing him as 'a cheerless man' who 'spoke little, showed touches of vanity and was tactless'. *House of Commons*, 556-7

¹⁰⁷ MacCaffrey, *War and Politics*, 251; Wernham, *After the Armada*, 317-19

¹⁰⁸ *APC*, XVIII, 6-7

Yet in spite of the fact that the English General's political role had been severely reduced - if not completely eliminated - in theory, there was precious little that the Queen could do to eradicate it in practice. As her senior military representative in the Netherlands and the administrator of the large body of English troops there, Vere could not easily have avoided involvement in politics altogether - even if he had wished to do so. His new role compelled him to deal with the leading military and political figures from both countries, and there was often little distinction between these two groups. Maurice, for example, was the most powerful stadtholder, as well as the chief military leader in the Provinces, and was thus a highly influential politician. The practical concerns of Vere's military role in the Netherlands therefore made an avoidance of political affairs impossible.

Nevertheless, it does not necessarily follow that he fulfilled a separate, specifically political role - one that can be easily distinguished from his military commitments. In fact, the majority of his activities that could be viewed as political arose from, and were enmeshed in his military responsibilities. For example, the Queen often instructed him to confer with the political authorities of the Provinces about strategic matters, and he always carried out such tasks with alacrity, apparently anxious to intervene in affairs of state.¹⁰⁹ However, the most common cause of Vere's military responsibilities propelling him into the political arena was when the States General's consent was required for the withdrawal of English troops. As early as 1592, the Queen enlisted his help in securing the States' consent for a levy of troops to be raised and diverted to Brittany. On this occasion, however, she instructed him to submit to the direction of Bodley, who was to be the chief negotiator.¹¹⁰ He seemed to carry out this task sufficiently, and the following year, Elizabeth openly commended his skill in diplomatic affairs, telling the States that he was 'si bien accompli en toutes vertues et perfections, tant civiles qu'appartenantes à la guerre'.¹¹¹ From thenceforth, she appeared to have no qualms about employing him in diplomatic missions. In 1594, she instructed him to present a proposition to the States, outlining her intention to recall a large number of English auxiliaries for service in France.¹¹² More significant, however, was his delegation in 1596, and it was during this year that Elizabeth encouraged his involvement in politics more noticeably than ever before. The year began with intensive

¹⁰⁹ BM MS, Additional, 5716, fo.5, Letter of Elizabeth, accrediting Vere to the States General, 20 March 1592; *SP* 84, XLVI, fo.52, Elizabeth to Maurice, 14 March 1593; fo.57, Elizabeth to States General, 20 March 1593. See also: fo.s 96, 108, 149, Vere to Burghley, 11 and 24 April, 31 May 1593; fo.168, Vere to Privy Council, 13 June 1593; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 II, Elizabeth to States General, 31 May 1593

¹¹⁰ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 II, Vere to States General, 22 July 1592; Elizabeth to States General, 2 August 1592

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, Elizabeth to States General, 27 July 1593

¹¹² *SP* 84, XLIX, fo.257, Vere to Elizabeth, 20 December 1594

preparations at court for the Cadiz Voyage, and Vere was recalled from the Netherlands in order to take part in these. Whilst in England, he was instructed to undertake a delegation to the States in order to secure their consent for the withdrawal of 2,000 English troops, as well as to incite them to contribute some shipping of their own. The Queen gave him a lengthy list of instructions containing, amongst other things, the arguments of persuasion that he was authorised to use with the States. She directed him to present the cause as: 'both for her owne service and their preservacion', and included a number of concessions that he could offer if they should continue to object. She concluded her General's instructions by entreating him to keep all these negotiations secret because a discovery of them by the Spanish would obviously hamper the expedition, and she apparently trusted Vere to do so, for she added that she would 'referre it to your owne judgment and discretion'.¹¹³ It would seem that Elizabeth's trust was well placed. Even though the States alleged the great difficulty that they faced in supplying the troops and shipping in view of the threat posed by the Spanish forces in the Provinces, as well as the excessive charges that they already bore, they nevertheless agreed to all of Vere's propositions.¹¹⁴ Indeed, he observed that they had agreed 'with such wyllingnes' as he had not 'att any tyme seene the lyke', although he modestly attributed this merely to 'the desyre they have to see her Majestie embarquead in some great actyon.'¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, it was clear that he had negotiated quite skilfully and had used his initiative by deviating from his instructions. He admitted to Burghley that he had done so by giving the States an exaggerated estimate of Archduke Albert's forces in order to incite them to contribute the necessary troops for the voyage. His strategy reaped the desired reward, but he was quick to assure Burghley: 'for the reast I hope I have contaynead my sealf within my bowndes.'¹¹⁶

Pleased with Vere's performance, Elizabeth entrusted him with the task of negotiating for the withdrawal of 1,000 troops the following year, this time for the Islands Voyage. She gave him more freedom than the previous year and authorised him to use 'such arguments as your own judgement and experience will sufficiently minister to yow.'¹¹⁷ Vere was again successful, and

¹¹³ LII, fo.82, Instructions for Vere, February 1596. See also: fo. 71, Elizabeth to States General, 16 February 1596; *Vere's Commentaries*, 24

¹¹⁴ *SP 84*, LII, fo.96, States General's answer to Vere, (6)/16 March 1596

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, fo.113, Vere to Burghley, 20 March 1596

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, fo.98, Vere to Burghley, 7 March 1596; W. Murdin, *A Collection of State Papers, Relating to Affairs in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, From the Year 1571 to 1596. Transcribed from Original Papers and other Authentic Memorials never before published, Left by William Cecil Lord Burghley, and Reposited in the Library at Hatfield House* (London, 1759), Bodley to Essex, 21 March 1596, 754-5

¹¹⁷ *SP 84*, LIV, fo.66, Elizabeth to Vere, 5 February 1597; ARA, Lok. Lop., 12548.97, Elizabeth to States General, 6 June 1597; Lias. Eng., 5883 I, Vere to States General, 13 June 1597; *Vere's Commentaries*, 45

the States apparently did not hesitate in complying with his request. In fact, Gilpin expressed some surprise at their obvious 'readynes' to agree to Vere's propositions 'withowt difficultie or dilay', but Sir Francis again seemed reluctant to take any of the credit, and protested: 'the ynclynatyon of theas men hathe been so easye thatt they robb her Majesties ministers of any commendatyones.'¹¹⁸

Vere's success in the Cadiz and Island Voyage negotiations made him an obvious choice to secure another withdrawal of troops towards the end of the following year. This time, he was to request the withdrawal of 2,000 English troops for service in Ireland, and to ask the States to provide forty of their ships, fully armed and manned. Vere had rather more difficulty in fulfilling his task this time because the States were more reluctant than ever to suffer a depletion in their manpower, and it is a testament to his skill in dealing with them that he eventually managed to secure their consent.¹¹⁹ Within a few months, Elizabeth had dispatched him on a similar mission - this time to win the States General's approval for a withdrawal of English forces, as well as a contribution of their own troops and ships to bolster England's defence against an imminent invasion attempt by Spain. However, Vere's commission was quite wide-ranging, and he was also instructed to convey the Queen's displeasure that they had not kept a fleet on the Spanish coast and 'attempted some things of good moment' (namely the destruction of Philip III's navy), as they had resolved to do. In addition, he was to reprimand them for not keeping her sufficiently informed of their intentions. Finally, Elizabeth ordered him to discover whether the enemy really intended to besiege Ostend, or whether they were just using this as a cover to transport their forces to the coast, and from thence to England.¹²⁰ The available evidence does not make it clear whether Vere adhered to all of these instructions, but he certainly succeeded in his main task because after some initial opposition, the States General agreed to contribute the men and ships that had been requested.¹²¹

The delegations of 1596, '97 and '99 had therefore brought Vere into close contact with the political authorities of both England and the United Provinces, and this forms a lucid illustration

¹¹⁸ *SP 84*, LIV, fo.82, Vere to Cecil, 20 February 1597; fo.259, Gilpin to Privy Council, 26 May 1597

¹¹⁹ LVII, fo.188, Elizabeth to Vere, 15 December 1598; LVIII, fo.s 1 and 19, Vere to Cecil, 1 and 15 January 1599; fo.10, Vere and Gilpin to Cecil, 12 January 1599; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Vere to States General, 8 January 1599; Elizabeth to States General, 29 November, 29 and 31 December 1598, and 1 March 1599; Cecil to States General, 29 December 1598

¹²⁰ HMC, *Foljambe*, Elizabeth to Vere, 25 July 1599, 69-71

¹²¹ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Vere to States General, 16, 22 and 24 August 1599; Elizabeth to States General, 4 August and 6 November 1599; *SP 103*, XXXV, Answer of the States to Vere's Proposition, August 1599

of the way in which his military responsibilities propelled him into the political sphere. As leader of the English troops in the Netherlands, it was inevitable that Vere would be appointed to deal in any matters concerning their deployment. However, it was by no means inevitable that he should become involved in the delicate negotiations *preceding* the withdrawal of troops. In theory, this should have been left to men such as Bodley and Gilpin, or even to a special envoy. Vere's position as Sergeant Major General did not oblige him to become involved in such matters to any greater extent than to levy the troops once the withdrawals had been approved. Why, then, did Elizabeth involve him more and more in the diplomatic side of the arrangements surrounding the recall of her troops? Part of the answer must lie in the fact that Vere proved himself more than equal to the task. Yet this does not explain why Elizabeth first decided to involve him. A more feasible explanation is that she believed the States would comply more readily with her requests if they were conveyed through the English representative whom they trusted and respected - perhaps above all of the others. Vere had thus far served them well in the wars and, as will be discussed in chapter 5, he often seemed to hold their cause closer to his heart than the Queen's. Furthermore, her principal envoy at the Hague, Sir Thomas Bodley, had always had a somewhat turbulent relationship with the States, and his obvious aversion to them, coupled with his general failure to appreciate their political system, led him to be rather tactless when dealing with them. This in turn led the States to be almost automatically suspicious of any proposal that he made - in particular if it concerned the withdrawal of troops.¹²² It is therefore possible that Elizabeth believed the withdrawal of her troops would be more quickly and effectively secured if she were to transfer the business to Vere, who could capitalise upon his favour with the States. This is supported by the available evidence. Her instructions regarding the Cadiz delegation incited him to use the high opinion that the States had of him to assure them of the benefit of the expedition and her devotion to them: 'all which you may affirme that you conceive they will not the lesse beleave, in regard of those good testimonies which you have given them by your service, of your Integreitie and affection towards them.'¹²³

¹²² For example, in 1591, Bodley was instructed to secure a withdrawal of troops for service in France, but the States objected to his proposition immediately. The envoy lamented: 'it is no fitte opportunitie, to enter farre with this people in any bitter contestation', and after a month of delays and intransigence, the Queen was forced to intervene in person to secure their consent. In fact, she was assisted in this by Vere himself, as he conferred with Bodley about the best way to 'accomplishe her Majesties pleasure'. *SP 84*, XLIII, fo.s 136 and 211, Bodley to Burghley, 27 October and 20 November 1591; fo.183, Elizabeth to States General, 8 November 1591; fo.209, Vere to Burghley, 19 November 1591. See also: BM MS, Cotton Galba D, XI, fo.104, Bodley to Elizabeth, 14 May 1595

¹²³ *SP 84*, LII, fo.82, Instructions for Vere, February 1596

As Vere's ascendancy progressed, it is possible to perceive the increasing trust that Elizabeth placed in his diplomatic skills, perhaps as a result of his almost unqualified success in securing the withdrawal of troops, and she began to encourage his involvement in political matters that were not *directly* linked to his official, military role. This was demonstrated by the Cadiz mission. As well as securing the withdrawal of troops, Vere was also instructed to confer with the States about recent offers of peace made to them by Spain. The Queen had evidently written directly to them on this matter and had briefed her General on the subject of the letters, directing him to support these with certain supplementary points. He was to let them know that the Queen was pleased that they had rejected the Spanish offers, and to imply that if they continued to do so in future, she was willing to maintain her assistance.¹²⁴ Vere was also given a 'hidden agenda' to fulfil during the delegation, because upon returning to England, Elizabeth questioned him about the actions of the French ambassador, Sancy. It was expected that Henry IV would dispatch Sancy to England in order to dissuade Elizabeth from withdrawing her forces from the Netherlands for the Cadiz expedition, and it seems she feared the ambassador would also persuade the States not to allow this withdrawal. Vere reported that he had conferred with Buzenval about it, and had been assured that Sancy did not mean to obstruct the Queen's will. He even sent Burghley a letter written by Sancy that Buzenval had shown him 'To authorise thatt which he had sayead to me, and make sheaw of his owne synceryty'.¹²⁵ Vere's connection with Buzenval did not end here. At the beginning of 1597, Elizabeth asked her General to find out the French King's opinion about a proposal to regain Calais. Vere duly reported that according to Buzenval, the enterprise was not well liked in France, and added that 'many great ones would oppose themselves.'¹²⁶ Even though the Calais scheme was eventually abandoned in favour of the Islands Voyage, Vere apparently did his utmost to gather information about it, as instructed, and in so doing consulted ambassadors and statesmen alike. Furthermore, there is nothing to suggest that he felt out of his depth or resented this diversion from his military duties.

Elizabeth evidently appreciated his endeavours, and the task that she gave him the following year indicates how much trust she had come to place in his diplomatic skills. Wishing to join the Franco-Spanish pact that had been made at Vervins in May, but not wanting to choose between

¹²⁴ *ibid.* This was not the first occasion that Elizabeth had incited Vere to intervene in the matter of Spanish peace offers. In autumn 1593, she ordered him to quell rumours of imminent peace talks between herself and the Archduke Albert. XLVII, fo.13, Vere to Burghley, 18 August 1593; fo.72, Vere to Burghley, 30 September 1593. For a similar case, see: ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Vere to States General, 24 November 1599; HMC, D&D, II, Whyte to Sidney, 29 September 1599, 396; Collins, II, Whyte to Sidney, 2 October 1599, 130; Gilpin to Sidney, 30 November 1599, 145

¹²⁵ SP 84, LII, fo.107, Vere to Burghley, 9 March 1596

¹²⁶ HMC, Sal, VII, Vere to Essex, 1 and 7 January 1597, 1-2, 8-10

this and her alliance with the Dutch, she endeavoured to persuade the latter to enter the pact as well. She therefore decided to despatch a special embassy to the Hague, and chose Vere and Gilpin as her envoys. She wrote to the States General on 7 June, letting them know that she had appointed Vere to negotiate with them on her behalf, and his instructions were issued on the same day.¹²⁷ These formed a lengthy and comprehensive list of the various points that Elizabeth wished him to communicate to the States, most of which were arguments of persuasion to incite them to join the Peace of Vervins. In particular, he was to emphasise the 'heavy burthen of our expences for those contryes, and what courses wee have taken to preserve their estate from apparent captivitye'. Vere was also to imply that his sovereign would not enter the peace if the States agreed to repay their debt to her. In spite of the detail of these instructions, however, Elizabeth did allow her General some leeway, for she stipulated that the instructions were 'to be used according to your descrecion', and authorised him to deviate from them as he saw fit, assuring him: 'we repose our Speciall confidence in you'.¹²⁸ In short, Elizabeth was trusting Vere to be a bargainer, a negotiator and a diplomat, rather than a mere conveyor of messages, and it could therefore be argued that by this stage she rated his political skills quite highly.

Again, her General appeared to relish the opportunity to intervene in affairs of state and, having received his instructions, he proceeded with alacrity. He delivered his proposals to the States on 19 June, and shortly afterwards reported on the response that these had received. Realising that the States needed time to confer upon the initial proposals,¹²⁹ Vere wisely forbore to tell them of the 'peticuler offers' that his sovereign had authorised him to make to them. Yet even at this early stage, he was able to perceive that they would rather continue the war without Elizabeth's help if she decided to join the Treaty, than join it themselves. Throughout the ensuing negotiations, Vere fulfilled his commission admirably, and the records of his dealings with the States which are contained in the Algemeen Rijksarchief suggest that he carried out the Queen's instructions to the letter, acting with tact and insight. Furthermore, the style and content of Vere

¹²⁷ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Elizabeth to States General, 7 June 1598. Elizabeth also told them that she had appointed Gilpin to collaborate with Vere in these negotiations. *ibid.*, 22 May 1598

¹²⁸ *SP 84*, LVI, fo.157, Instructions for Vere, 7 June 1598; BM MS, Cotton Galba D, XII, fo.s 159 and 167, Instructions for Vere, 7 June 1598; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 I, Elizabeth to Gilpin, [1597?]; HMC, *D&D*, III, lxxvii-lxxviii, lxxii-lxxiii; *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 31 May 1598, 40

¹²⁹ In this respect, Vere proved his worth as an envoy to the States. Whereas Bodley often asserted that the States' lengthy process of deliberation was due to wilful, stubborn and preconceived delaying tactics, Vere seemed to appreciate the necessary process by which they had to consult the deputies of the various provinces. In 1589, whilst negotiating with the States over a revision of the Nonsuch Treaty, Bodley had alleged that they 'purposely delay' and had described them as 'so willfull and so precisely and perversely bent, as to stand with her Majestie uppon pointes of no greater prejudice to the state of these contreis, and full of hindrance to the common resistance which is made against the Enemie.' *SP 84*, XXXIV, fo.5, Bodley to Burghley, 2 August 1589

and Gilpin's numerous joint dispatches to the Court suggest that it was the former who took the lead throughout the negotiations.¹³⁰

In July, Vere announced that he would return to England and relay the States' answer to the Queen. The States also despatched deputies for this purpose, and an agreement was reached the following month, Elizabeth vowing not to enter the Vervins Treaty if her Dutch allies repaid their debt to her.¹³¹ However, Vere's task was not yet over because he and Gilpin were required to secure the States General's ratification of the new treaty. As had been the case with the Nonsuch Treaty thirteen years earlier, this was no straightforward matter, for there were wranglings between the two sides over various clauses of the treaty, and it still had not been ratified by the new year.¹³² In addition, Vere and Gilpin were given the unenviable task of dealing with the States over their failure to meet the first instalment of the reimbursement.¹³³ Therefore, even though Elizabeth and the States had only just renewed their commitment to each other, relations between them remained tense, and the two delegates had to carry out their commission in what could justifiably be described as a political minefield.

Vere's involvement in the 1598 delegation, as well as in the other diplomatic exchanges mentioned above, therefore suggests that Elizabeth was keen to entrust him with tasks that were more political than military, and which did not stem directly from his authority as her senior commander. That he proved himself more than equal to such tasks - both in enthusiasm and aptitude - is strongly supported by the available evidence. Yet this evidence also suggests that his political involvement did not end here, and that the States General encouraged his activities in this sphere. However, it would also appear that they, unlike Elizabeth, only wished him to intervene

¹³⁰ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Vere and Gilpin to States General, (19)/29 June 1598; *SP 84*, LVI, fo.s 177 and 181, Vere and Gilpin to Cecil, 21 and 29 June 1598; LVII, fo.1, Vere and Gilpin to Cecil, 1 July 1598; *RSG*, X, 80-91; HMC, *Sal*, VIII, Vere and Gilpin to Essex, 21 and 29 June 1598, 222-23, 238-39; Vere to Essex, 10 July 1598, 256-57

¹³¹ *SP 84*, LVI, fo.184, States General to Elizabeth, (30 June)/10 July 1598; LVII, fo.17, States General to Elizabeth, (6)/16 July 1598; fo.65, Gilpin to Cecil, 24 August 1598; fo.69, Elizabeth to States General, 28 August 1598; fo.69, Elizabeth to Sidney, Conway, Norris and Vere, 28 August 1598

¹³² The main bone of contention concerned the details of repayment. The States General protested that their debt should cease on the death of Elizabeth, but she insisted that they must also pay it to her successors. They eventually agreed, and the treaty was ratified at the beginning of 1599. *SP 84*, LVII, fo.17, States General to Elizabeth, (6)/16 July 1598; fo.69, Elizabeth to States General, 28 August 1598; fo.168, Vere to Cecil, 29 November 1598; fo.195, Gilpin and Vere to Cecil, 15 December 1598; fo.219, States General to Elizabeth, (20 December 1598)/9 January 1599; BM MS, Additional, 19877; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Vere and Gilpin to States General, 2 November 1598; HMC, *D&D*, III, lxxii-lxxiii; Du Mont, 584-9

¹³³ *SP 84* LVII, fo.168, Vere to Cecil, 29 November 1598; fo.195, Gilpin and Vere to Cecil, 15 December 1598; fo.219, States General to Elizabeth, (20 December)/9 January 1598; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Vere and Gilpin to States General, 2 November 1598

in political matters that were directly linked to his military responsibilities. By far the most common cause of their employing Vere's diplomatic skills concerned the movement of troops. Just as Elizabeth capitalised upon his favour with the States to secure their consent for the withdrawal of her troops, so they used him as an intermediary when they required fresh supplies of English troops for their campaigns. For example, in the spring of 1593, Vere was approached by deputies from the States of Holland and Zeeland, seconded by Maurice and Oldenbarnevelt. Their purpose was to secure their allies' consent for an enterprise to Dunkirk, which would require forces from England as well as from their own provinces. Realising that Elizabeth was opposed to this venture, they incited her General to persuade her of its merits. He endeavoured to do so, and told Burghley that without her help, the States 'uttrely dispayread, by any meanes eals to bryng itt to pass.'¹³⁴ Similarly, the following year the States used Vere to urge Elizabeth to honour her promise of a levy of 800 men for the Groningen campaign. Again, he seemed to comply readily with their directions, and at once wrote to Burghley, stressing that 'her Majesties fayling hearin, shalbe interpreatead, as the chief cause of hynderyng their proceedynges.'¹³⁵ In 1601, before Vere took up his command at the siege of Ostend, the States asked him to persuade the Queen to contribute 3,000 troops for a proposed expedition to Flanders. It would seem that on this occasion he was successful in intervening on their behalf, for he wrote: 'With this errand I passed into England, delivered the whole plot to Her Majesty, who liked and allowed thereof, and with some difficulty (as her manner was) granted the men to be levied and transported in ten days' warning, for so the States desired'.¹³⁶ The following year, they again persuaded Vere to 'fair un tour Jusques en Angleterre' in order to secure a levy of forces from Elizabeth for a proposed diversionary campaign, aiming to draw the enemy away from the beleaguered town. Their trust in Vere's diplomatic abilities again proved to be well-founded, for Elizabeth agreed to levy a number of troops, and sent them back with her General when he returned to the Hague.¹³⁷

Vere therefore proved a skilful diplomat and a useful intermediary to both sides - one through whom they could correspond and even negotiate. Their encouragement of his diplomatic

¹³⁴ *SP 84*, XLVI, fo.108, Vere to Burghley, 24 April 1593

¹³⁵ XLVIII, fo.91, Vere to Burghley, 8 March 1594

¹³⁶ *Vere's Commentaries*, 118-19; Camden, *Historie*, iv, 197

¹³⁷ *SP 84* LXII, fo.44, Vere to Nottingham and Cecil, 21 March 1602; fo.54, States General to Privy Council, (21 March)/10 April 1602; fo.82, Vere to Cecil, 26 May 1602; ARA, Lias. Lop., 4902 II, Vere to Aerssens, 13 April 1602; HMC, *D&D*, II, Browne to Sidney, 17 March and 29 April 1602, 572, 578; *RSG*, XII, 98; den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 428-9. There was great difficulty in raising these troops. At first, the Council undertook a 'violent pressing' to assemble the numbers required, 'sweeping away serving men, country folkes, and termers of all sorts', and carieng them violently to the ships'. When this failed, they were forced to 'take other order'. *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 26 April, 8 and 17 May 1602, 139, 143-4, 146

activities, and his almost unqualified success in these, suggests that the traditional view of him as being concerned solely with military affairs requires some modification. Although perhaps less obvious, further evidence can be found to support this. The very fact that he survived in an environment of political intrigue and underhand dealings for a far longer period than either of his predecessors suggests that he was more astute than contemporary and modern observers have given him credit for. Both Leicester and Willoughby had apparently been the victims of this intrigue, and had complained about the underhand dealings of the Dutch and English alike.¹³⁸ Controversies could easily arise in an age when written correspondence was the primary means of communication. Letters between England and the Netherlands were often delayed by adverse winds, and some even failed to reach their destination altogether. This caused frustration and misunderstanding between the correspondents, which in turn could be fuelled by ill-meaning persons who informed the intended recipients that the delay was due to slackness or aversion on the part of the sender. Vere was evidently all too aware of this danger and took measures to insure against it. His close involvement in the military campaigns of the Provinces and his almost habitual residence at the camp meant that it was rather difficult to maintain a regular correspondence with the English Court.¹³⁹ This could endanger his favourable reputation there, as happened towards the end of 1591, when he was reprimanded by Burghley for not writing often enough. He immediately defended himself, protesting that he was 'nott a little greavead thatt the slowe conveyance of my lettres may make me seame more careless then I ought to be'. He also insisted that he had little to write of that would necessitate an 'express messenger', and therefore had to rely upon 'such as by thear owne busines ar drawne into Inglande which seeldome happen in the instant of my dispatch'.¹⁴⁰

As well as justifying the relative infrequency of his correspondence, Vere also had to explain his actions very carefully. This was particularly necessary with regard to the movements of the English auxiliaries. He was in a rather difficult position as commander of these troops because not only did he have to liaise with the States in order to ensure that they were used as effectively as possible in the Dutch campaigns, but he also had to arrange for their withdrawal to serve elsewhere when the Queen requested him to do so. It was therefore all too easy for him to incur

¹³⁸ See for example: Bruce, Leicester to Walsingham, 20 May and 8 August 1586, 272, 395; Leicester to Davison, 10 March 1586, 168; HMC, *Anc*, Willoughby to Leicester, October 1587, 67; Willoughby to Magistrates of Dordrecht, (13)/23 December 1588, 226-7; *CSPF*, XXI iv, Willoughby to Burghley, 12 January 1588, 13; Willoughby to Walsingham, 19 February 1588, 105

¹³⁹ This will be discussed in the ensuing chapter, 173, 199, 207-8

¹⁴⁰ *SP* 84, XLIII, fo.150, Vere to Burghley, 31 October 1591. See also for example: XLII, fo. 288, Vere to Burghley, 13 August 1591

the displeasure of either or both of these parties. A notable example concerned the levying of 2,000 English auxiliaries for Ireland at the beginning of 1599. Vere was accused of sending an insufficient number, choosing the less able of the troops, and not arming them properly. Apparently horrified, he immediately wrote at length to defend himself, alleging that he had done everything within his power to carry out his sovereign's commands.¹⁴¹ It would seem that on this occasion, the Council had been swayed by the malevolence of the Earl of Essex, who had quarrelled with Vere some two years previously and seemed intent upon destroying his credit with Elizabeth and her principal ministers.¹⁴² The Earl was to lead the Ireland expedition, and apparently believed that Vere had sent insufficient troops on purpose to hamper it. Although the letters of reprimand were signed by various members of the Council, there is little reason to doubt that Essex was the author. In view of the great influence that he enjoyed over the Queen, the Earl was a particularly dangerous adversary to have. Indeed, he apparently succeeded in persuading her that Vere had purposely betrayed her orders, and in March, Sir Francis was informed of how highly displeased she was with him.¹⁴³ On this occasion, Vere had therefore apparently fallen victim to intrigue, and his vulnerability had been clearly demonstrated: it was all too easy for ill-meaning persons to exploit his distance from the Court, and more particularly from Elizabeth. Perceiving this, he took measures to prevent it. He attempted to reaffirm his friendship with Essex's powerful adversary, Robert Cecil, by writing to him frequently to justify his actions, and he clearly intended to thereby restore his favour with the Queen.¹⁴⁴ The controversy taught Vere to be even more careful in future to explain and justify his actions than he had been before. Accordingly, in 1601, when he received instructions from Elizabeth regarding the levy of some new companies for the besieged town of Ostend, he immediately wrote to the Court, stressing 'how carefull I have been of her Majesties commandment'.¹⁴⁵ He was clearly aware of how necessary it was to insure against intrigue and misrepresentation - dangers to which he was particularly susceptible given his high profile and his distance from the Court.

In taking measures to guard himself against intrigue, Vere proved his political awareness, but he also did so in other ways. One of these was his perception of Dutch politics. Whereas many of his compatriots regarded the 'Multiplicite and equalitie of Gouvernement' with disdain, claiming

¹⁴¹ *APC*, XXIX, Privy Council to Vere, 31 January, 8, 20 and 25 February 1599, 512, 547-8, 581-2, 607-9; *SP 84*, LVIII, fo.66, Vere to Privy Council, 11 February 1599

¹⁴² *Vere's Commentaries*, 45-7. See chapter 4, 189-92

¹⁴³ *APC*, XXXIX, Privy Council to Vere, March 1599, 649

¹⁴⁴ *SP 84*, LVIII, fo.s 70 and 160, Vere to Cecil, 15 February and 13 March 1599

¹⁴⁵ LXI, fo.318, Vere to Cecil, 28 September 1601. See also: LXII, fo.82, Vere to Cecil, 26 May 1602

that it was the source of all the 'principall Confusions' in the Provinces,¹⁴⁶ Vere seemed to understand and appreciate the governmental system. His delegations to the Hague proved that he recognised the States General's difficulty in securing the assent of the provincial states to military and fiscal policies, and he tried to convey this to the members of the English Court, who nevertheless persisted in viewing the delays as obstinate intransigence.¹⁴⁷ While appreciating the decentralised nature of Dutch government, the English General also perceived that, ultimately, political authority was concentrated in just a few hands, and he told Burghley: 'I know the manning of the affayres in theas contryes consisteth on very feawe'.¹⁴⁸ Judging from his quite frequent contact with Oldenbarnevelt and Maurice, one could suppose that he recognised them as being the principal power-holders. By appreciating the basics of this political system, Vere had apparently achieved what neither of his predecessors had done. Leicester had encouraged the province of Utrecht to look to the Queen, rather than the States General, for guidance, and had thereby underestimated the power of the latter authority. Willoughby had fared a little better because he had cooperated well with Oldenbarnevelt, Maurice and the States General for a while at least, but he apparently never recognised the extent of their influence because by the time of his departure he was condemning them as ungrateful upstarts.¹⁴⁹

If Vere therefore possessed the understanding and ability to intervene in political affairs, did he also possess the ambition? As already noted, the general consensus among most contemporary and modern observers is that he did not. Indeed, Vere himself often gave the impression that his interests and talents were confined to the military arena. During his predecessor's ascendancy, he professed his 'small understanding of weighty matters',¹⁵⁰ and he was still voicing similar sentiments a decade later. In 1598, he wrote to Burghley regarding the treaty negotiations, and after giving his own opinion, declared that he would leave the matter to the Lord Treasurer's 'graver judgement' because he could 'best understand what belongs to the proceedinges in these and other lyke weightier causes.'¹⁵¹ However, it was exactly in such 'weighty matters' that Vere showed a more than occasional interest in becoming involved. In particular, he appeared eager to offer his opinion about the situation in France and made little secret of his aversion to the

¹⁴⁶ XXXVI, fo.224, Considerations touching the Low Countries, 14 March 1590

¹⁴⁷ See for example: XLIX, fo.257, Vere to Elizabeth, 20 December 1594; L, fo.213, Vere to Burghley, 25 June 1595

¹⁴⁸ XLVII, fo.72, Vere to Burghley, 30 September 1593

¹⁴⁹ *Ancaster MS*, VI fo.74, 'Lord Willoughby', April 1589

¹⁵⁰ *CSPF*, XXII, Vere to Walsingham, 3 August 1588, 105

¹⁵¹ *SP 84*, LVI, fo.181, Vere and Gilpin to Cecil, 29 June 1598. See also: Murdin, *Burghley Papers*, Vere to Essex, 17 March 1595, 682

Queen's involvement there, protesting that her resources would be better employed in the Dutch wars.¹⁵² Vere also commented upon the almost incessant rumours of peace negotiations between the States and either France or Spain, and seemed to believe that an alliance with Henry IV was more than a possibility. In April 1600, for example, he wrote that the States had given much credit to rumours that Elizabeth was on the verge of making a peace with Spain, and that they were therefore planning to 'make the ballance even' by forming an alliance with France.¹⁵³

In addition, Vere occasionally wrote to the Court, informing them of certain occurrences in the Provinces which did not directly concern them, but which he rightly perceived would be of interest to them. For example, in August 1600, he noted that a dispute had arisen between Maurice and the States General (or more particularly, Oldenbarnevelt) following the battle of Nieuwpoort. The States justifiably accused the Count of failing to capitalise upon this victory effectively, and Vere asserted: 'this jarr wyll lessen eyther the authoritye of his Excellencie or of some great mann in the state', by whom he no doubt meant Oldenbarnevelt.¹⁵⁴ He also made reference to certain intriguers whose presence was threatening to fan the flames of this already blazing quarrel, and observed that the 'discontentment' had 'gonn so farr as thatt the people tooke notyce thearof, and itt showld seame boathe partyes fearead thatt theas men myght make proffitt of this dissentyon, for they ar reconcylead of them sealves and all mattres proceed after the accustomead manner.'¹⁵⁵ Vere's proficiency in keeping the Court informed of political affairs in the Netherlands - as demonstrated both here and during his other visits to the Hague - therefore contradicts den Tex's assertion that he was not a good reporter of such matters.¹⁵⁶

While Vere seemed to take every opportunity to comment upon or intervene in affairs of state, on the whole he did so more discreetly than either of his predecessors. Perhaps he perceived the wisdom of this discretion, bearing in mind the resentment that Leicester and Willoughby had stirred up both in England and the Netherlands by intervening too closely in extra-military business. Realising that his role would be scrutinised by English and Dutch alike following their ill-fated interventions, he would most likely have been very careful conceal his involvement in

¹⁵² *SP 84*, XLI, fo.36, Vere to Burghley, 14 January 1591; XLVI, fo.177, Vere to Burghley, 16 June 1593. Vere's opinion about events in France, together with his general strategic outlook, will be discussed at greater length in chapter 5.

¹⁵³ LX i, fo.106, Vere to Cecil, 20 April 1600. See also: XLIII, fo.150, Vere to Burghley, 31 October 1591; LI, fo.179, Vere to Burghley, 7 October 1595; LXI, fo.122, Vere to Cecil, 28 June 1601

¹⁵⁴ LX ii, fo.278, Vere to Cecil, 19 August 1600

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, fo.310, Vere to Cecil, 10 September 1600

¹⁵⁶ den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 114

matters which did not fall within his official sphere of influence. Nevertheless, he was apparently not always so careful to disguise his political aspirations (if such they were) because in the autumn of 1599, it was rumoured that he had been striving to attain a place on the English Council. Rowland Whyte noted this in a letter to Sir Robert Sidney: 'Yt was told me that 29 [Vere] did expect a cownsailors place and marvails he goes without yt; he hath purchased 400l. a yeare land; he had an opinion that he should have growen great in Court, and looked to have had a lodging apointed for hym.'¹⁵⁷ While one must always view such correspondence with a degree of scepticism due to the prevalence of intrigue and rumours at court, Whyte's assertion is supported by the fact that Vere had secured a parliamentary seat at Leominster in 1593, and had skilfully built up a close affinity with various influential members of the English Court, as will be discussed in the ensuing chapter. He also appeared eager to receive information concerning occurrences at court, perhaps recognising the volatile nature of events and affinities there. For example, in March 1597, he tried to take full advantage of Sir Robert Sidney's visit to England, and wrote to ask him 'how matters stand att home', of which, he added, 'I shall be gladd to have part.'¹⁵⁸

One could therefore conclude that Vere was interested in political affairs, and aspired to intervene in them more closely than he was officially allowed to. His ambitions were not entirely frustrated, however, because, as has been suggested above, both the Queen and, to a lesser extent, the States involved him in matters of diplomatic importance. Yet it must be remembered that the bulk of these 'weighty matters' sprang from military concerns, and mostly related to the movement of the English troops who were under Vere's command. As such, it was not therefore too surprising that he became embroiled in them. Nevertheless, the main aim of this chapter has not been to assess the relative importance of the military and political facets of Vere's role, but rather to suggest that it *did* possess this dual nature and was not the exclusively military appointment that it has been so widely perceived as. Furthermore, it could be argued that by demonstrating his skill in affairs that were *directly* related to his military role, he alerted Elizabeth to the possibility of involving him in matters which deviated from it and were more blatantly political. As the 1590s progressed, she began to employ him more and more as an ambassador and negotiator, as well as a collaborator with her official diplomatic representatives, Bodley and Gilpin. In fact, it sometimes seemed that he had become the third English envoy

¹⁵⁷ HMC, *D&D*, II, Rowland Whyte to Sidney, 27 October 1599, 407. His political aspirations were further frustrated when, towards the end of her reign, the Queen refused to make him a peer. Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 362-3. See chapter 4, 200-1

¹⁵⁸ HMC, *D&D*, II, Vere to Sidney, 9 March 1597, 247-8

there, and when Bodley left the Netherlands for the last time in 1596, it is possible that the Queen used her General as a substitute, or even a replacement for him. The three years directly following Bodley's departure certainly witnessed Vere's intervention in diplomatic matters on an unprecedented scale. This demonstrates how, as his ascendancy progressed, the role that he had been given in *theory* grew increasingly divergent from the role that he exercised in *practice*. This in turn takes away much credibility from the popular notion that he was - by both nature and design - an almost exclusively military figure. While his enviable reputation for military prowess may well have secured him the leadership of the English forces in 1589, he could surely not have held onto this post for the ensuing fourteen years if he had not been able to handle himself sufficiently in the diplomatic and political circles into which it propelled him.

Chapter 4

Patronage and Politics: *Vere and the English Court*

The English Court was the place where reputations were both forged and destroyed. It could provide a route to rapid advancement and prestige, but those who aspired to such alluring rewards had to prove their political awareness by avoiding the pitfalls of intrigue, corruption and backbiting that were common features of everyday life there. Its intricate web of patronage ultimately centred around the Queen herself, and her favour and good opinion were highly sought after by senior officials and their network of clients both at court and in the localities. The necessity of successfully manipulating this rather complex web of court intrigue was fully appreciated by Vere, who owed his position in the Netherlands at least partly to the favourable intervention of his patrons. Yet the maintenance of relatively close contact between himself and the Court was not for his benefit alone because in return for promoting his cause and preserving his favour with the Queen, his patrons were supplied with a stream of information regarding military and political affairs in the Netherlands. Throughout his ascendancy, he was clearly anxious to maintain as close a contact with the Court as possible in order to offset the potential disadvantage that his prolonged and unavoidable absence from there forced upon him. This absence, coupled with the often slow and unreliable conveyance of his letters, made him particularly susceptible to the intrigues of his enemies at court. Maintaining the favour of his patrons was therefore no easy task, but it will be seen that he proved adept at capitalising upon, and even manipulating his contacts, and the fact that he enjoyed a successful career and an enviable reputation for so long suggests that he was both politically aware and able to intervene skilfully in court affairs.

‘The principall note of her raigne will be, that she ruled much by faction and parties, which she her selfe both made, upheld and weakned as her owne great judgement advised.’¹ Naunton’s observation has given rise to the popular view that the Elizabethan Court was beset with faction and intrigue. Other contemporaries added to this by denouncing the fickleness, falseness and corruption of court life. John Harington, for example, who only narrowly avoided ruin by his

¹ Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia*, 7

attachment to Essex's party, was one of the Court's most frequent critics, and claimed: 'He that thryveth in a courte muste put halfe his honestie under his bonnet; and manie do we knowe that never parte that commoditie at all, and sleepe wyth it all in a bag.'² Similarly, when he was at the peak of his influence, Essex complained: 'I live in a place where I am hourly conspired against, and practised upon. What they cannot make the world believe, that they persuade themselves unto; and what they cannot make probable to the Queen, that give they out to the world'. He added: 'those that are accounted to be plain and sincere...do speak the largest language of the strongest faction.'³ The notion that the Queen encouraged this rather turbulent atmosphere in order to reinforce her own authority and ensure that none of her councillors became too powerful or formed a united opposition against her, is a popular one. Contemporary and more recent commentators alike have viewed her manipulation of faction as one of the secrets of her success in government. Commenting upon the turbulent atmosphere at court during Essex's imprisonment, the Venetian ambassador remarked: 'It seems...that the Queen, for her own particular ends, is encouraging both the faction of the Earl and that of his enemies.'⁴ Professor Neale, who was influenced by Naunton, claims: 'In the magical hands of the Queen, Court rivalry had been a secret of glory and power'.⁵ He asserts that Elizabeth skilfully controlled court faction, and that because there was such a strong link between faction and patronage, the latter gave her a potent instrument for political control and manipulation.⁶

Recent studies have cast some doubt upon this view, and have even questioned the existence of factionalism *per se* during Elizabeth's reign. Lawrence Stone argues that the Queen was more at the mercy of factions than vice versa, and claims that by temporising and procrastinating, she only just managed to keep the balance of forces at court sufficiently even to prevent a major upheaval. He writes: 'By blowing alternatively hot and cold upon the rival factions, by promoting members of each to positions where they could act as checks upon the other, she managed to stave off the constant threat of serious aristocratic disorder.'⁷ Simon Adams, however, argues that factionalism has been both overstressed and oversimplified, and describes it as 'one of the most over-used words in the Elizabethan political vocabulary.' He demonstrates

² N.E. McClure (ed), *The Letters and Epigrams of Sir John Harington, together with The Prayse of Private Lyffe* (New York, 1977), 109. See also: J. Harington, *Nugae Antiquae*, II, edited by H. Harington (Hildesheim, 1968), 288-9

³ Devereux, I, 409

⁴ *CSPV*, VIII, Contarini to the Doge and Senate, 12 December 1599, 386; Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia*, 7

⁵ Neale, *Queen Elizabeth*, 379

⁶ Neale, *Essays in Elizabethan History* (London, 1958), 59-84

⁷ L. Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1965), 233

that it was not the practice of clientage or patronage and did not mean the taking of sides on a major political issue, but rather that it was a personal following employed in direct opposition to another personal following. While he points out that a factional struggle could involve disputes over patronage or debates over matters of state, he perceives its essence as being: 'a personal rivalry that overrode all other considerations.'⁸ His definition of court faction is therefore narrower than that given by Neale, who portrays it as an omnipresent and inevitable phenomenon in Elizabethan politics. Furthermore, Adams stresses that the relative 'internal cohesion' of the Court largely prevented debates or disputes from developing into true factionalism. This cohesion was in turn mainly due to the fact that almost all of its members came from established Tudor Court families (Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Christopher Hatton being the notable exceptions), and the web of intermarriage and family connection was very tight.⁹ David Loades has incorporated elements of both Stone's and Adams' arguments into his study of the Elizabethan Court, and asserts that the ambiguity of the Queen's attitude gave scope for conflict, but that 'Her own personality was completely dominant, and she dictated the limits within which her advisers might disagree.' He also believes that there was competition rather than faction in the proper sense, although he does concede that the Netherlands question 'tended to produce alignments', and that personal rivalry usually corresponded with disagreement over policy.¹⁰

Yet when seeking to modify the traditional view of factionalism, Adams and Loades refer to Elizabeth's reign as a whole, and they both agree that the 1590s form an exception. They argue that during this decade, perhaps more than at any time since the reign of Henry VIII, the term factionalism could justifiably be applied to the conflicts that beset the English Court. This theory has become particularly popular in recent years, and J.A. Guy's collection of essays on Elizabethan Court and culture focuses entirely upon the 1590s. It argues that there were in fact two reigns of Elizabeth, the first of which was a period of relative peace and prosperity, ending in 1585 with the dispatch of Leicester's expeditionary force to the Netherlands, while the second witnessed the growth of political, military, economic and social instability. The turbulence of the second reign was reflected at court, as Guy points out: 'the anxiety of courtiers fused with the

⁸ Adams, 'Faction, Clientage and Party English Politics, 1550-1603', *History Today*, XXXII (December 1982), 33-4

⁹ Adams, 'Eliza Enthroned? The Court and its Politics', C. Haigh (ed), *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Basingstoke, 1984), 69-70. See also: Adams, 'Favourites and Factions at the Elizabethan Court', R.G. Asch and M. Birke (eds), *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility. The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age, c.1450-1650* (Oxford, 1991), 265-87

¹⁰ D.M. Loades, *The Tudor Court* (London, 1986), 165; —, *The Tudor Court*. Historical Association Pamphlet (London, 1989), 18

poverty of the crown and the competition for patronage to kindle factionalism, self-interest and instability'.¹¹

The origins of this factionalism apparently lay in the existence of interventionist and anti-interventionist parties during the 1580s. The former was in favour of an active foreign policy and enthusiastically advocated support for the Dutch rebels in their fight against Spain, while the latter preferred a more cautious approach which, ideally, would not involve conflict with the Spanish king. The leading interventionists were Leicester and Walsingham, whereas Burghley argued for caution, and after Nonsuch was signed in 1585, Elizabeth seemed increasingly to share his aversion to an aggressive foreign policy.¹² Although the disputes between these parties were often quite vehement, during the later 1580s they were largely confined to the inner ring of the Privy Council and were not serious enough to split the Court into rival factions. However, Adams and Loades stress that the situation changed quite dramatically after the deaths of Leicester (1588) and Walsingham (1590).¹³ These caused an imbalance and greatly augmented the influence of Burghley and his second son, Robert Cecil, over both the Queen and her policy, and by 1595 they had secured an ascendancy in the Council and at court which was greater than that enjoyed by any other group earlier in the reign.¹⁴ The factional struggle began when the Earl of Essex intruded into this circle and attempted to wrest control of the Court from the Cecils. He was appointed a privy councillor in 1593, and, believing that Lord Burghley's death was imminent,¹⁵ attempted to augment his own influence, thereby establishing himself as the most obvious successor. He laid claim to the leadership of the interventionist party - a position which had been vacant since the deaths of Leicester and Walsingham - and the former supporters of this cause, such as Sir Robert Sidney and Lord Willoughby, rallied round him.¹⁶ Essex advocated an

¹¹ J.A. Guy, 'The 1590s: The second reign of Elizabeth I?', Guy (ed), *The reign of Elizabeth I. Court and culture in the last decade* (Cambridge, 1995), 1

¹² See: Read, 'Walsingham and Burghley in Queen Elizabeth's Privy Council', 54-8

¹³ Loades, *The Tudor Court*, 165; Adams, 'Eliza Enthroned?', 67-8; —, 'Party English Politics', 37-8

¹⁴ The term 'regnum Cecilianum' is commonly used to describe the Cecils' domination of the court during the 1590s, but a recent article has suggested that this was a myth created by Essex and his followers: 'It was founded on the paranoia of those who considered that they were at a political disadvantage to the Cecils and to their perceived supporters; it was a term of abuse to define what the Essexians were not.' The article concludes that the Cecil 'faction' was, in fact, the Court itself, rather than a predominant group within it. N. Mears, 'Regnum Cecilianum? A Cecilian perspective of the Court', Guy, *The reign of Elizabeth*, 58, 63; *CSPS*, IV, *Advices from England*, (7)/17 September 1588, 431

¹⁵ In a letter to Sir Henry Unton, Essex commented: 'their chief hour glass hath little sand left in it and doth run out still'. *HMC, Sal*, IV, Essex to Unton, 8 June 1593, 116

¹⁶ For Essex's role in court faction and patronage during the 1590s, see P.E.J. Hammer, 'Patronage at Court, faction and the earl of Essex', Guy, *The reign of Elizabeth*, 65-86. This essay offers an interesting reappraisal of Essex's relations with the Cecils.

offensive strategy on the Continent, and a greater English involvement in the Dutch and French wars, in contrast to the Cecils, who were more inclined towards peace with Spain and a comparatively passive foreign policy.

Charming and appealing to Elizabeth though Essex was, however, he did not command her complete trust and confidence, and she viewed his interventionist policy with scepticism, especially after the failure of the 1591-2 Rouen campaign, in which he had led the English contingent.¹⁷ He responded by stepping up his efforts to take control of the Court, and after 1593, he challenged every major court appointment, aiming to secure them either for himself or his followers. While these attempts were largely fruitless, he nevertheless succeeded in making the Court a battleground for factional struggle. The situation was exacerbated in the mid-1590s by a number of factors. The Queen's grip on events slackened markedly, and her control of the factions was increasingly weak, thereby enabling them to seize the initiative. Her inability to make quick decisions was the source of frustration for many at court, in particular Essex, who began to act behind her back in order to try and direct policy. In addition, Burghley's failing health made the question of his son's future increasingly urgent, and pushed the latter and Essex into ever more open and intense rivalry. By 1598-9, the Court was split into two factions whose influence spread deep into the country. Essex's main adherents were Roger, Lord North and Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, while the anti-Essex coalition was led by the younger Cecil, the Earl of Nottingham and Sir Walter Raleigh. The turning point came when Essex unwisely deserted his post in Ireland in 1599, and returned to England in disgrace because of the almost unqualified failure of the expedition. His subsequent imprisonment and the near-total destruction of his influence caused some of the most important members of his faction to desert him, and he was driven to take the desperate - and ultimately disastrous - course of plotting a coup d'état against Cecil. His rebellion in February 1601 proved to be little more than a minor riot led by a greatly diminished body of supporters, but it was sufficient to seal his fate, and he was executed less than three weeks later.¹⁸ Cecil thus commented upon Essex's fall from grace: 'the tree into which so many branches were incorporated, being now fallen, all men that loved him repent their errors.'¹⁹ Following the Earl's execution, he enjoyed almost unrestricted influence at

¹⁷ Devereux, I, 212-75; Lloyd, *Rouen Campaign*

¹⁸ Adams, 'English Party Politics', 34-9; —, 'Eliza Enthroned?', 67-9; Loades, *The Tudor Court*, 165-6; *ibid.*, Historical Association Pamphlet, 18-20. Following the rebellion, the atmosphere at court was still extremely tense. The Queen seemed to trust no one, and Sir John Harington reported: 'the dangers are over, and yet she always keeps a sword by her table.' McClure, *Harington*, 90

¹⁹ Neale, *Queen Elizabeth*, 379

court, thereby justifying a popular lampoon that had been put about by Essex's supporters: 'Little Cecil trips up and down, He rules both Court and Crown'.²⁰

Essex's rebellion was a violent end to a turbulent decade in the English Court, and signalled the demise of the factionalism that had, albeit temporarily, caused deep divisions both at the centre of government and further afield.²¹ It had broken a relative homogeneity and stability that had existed at court during the earlier part of the reign, and that was subsequently regained when the Earl fell from grace. The fact that this decade was therefore exceptional is of immense significance to this study because it coincides exactly with the greater part of Vere's ascendancy in the Netherlands. Any persons wishing to enhance their status and gain the Queen's favour had to rely upon the favourable mediation of patrons at court, and in the turbulent and volatile atmosphere that prevailed there in the 1590s, this had inherent dangers. Particularly from the middle of the decade onwards, too close an association with a patron from one party could easily mean alienation from the other, and if a client was unfortunate or unwise enough to choose the wrong side, the effect upon his own position could be disastrous. Never before had patronage become so closely tied to court faction and intrigue.²² But patronage was a necessary evil, and the fastest route to self-advancement and prestige, as Loades points out: 'Attendance at court, or at least a reliable channel of communication to the court, was essential, not only for those with high political ambitions, but for such as sought the rangership of a forest, the lease of a manor, or an improvement of their ranking on the Commission of the Peace.'²³ During the 1590s, therefore, anyone wishing to enhance their status through patronage needed to possess a greater degree of political awareness than before, together with at least some knowledge of the varying influence that the leading officials enjoyed over the Queen. In order to gain this knowledge and have a greater chance of preferment, it was obviously desirable to be present at court, as Loades again argues: 'absence or exclusion from the royal presence could be a fatal handicap.'²⁴ One might

²⁰ Devereux, II, 61-130; *CSPV*, IX, Scaramelli to the Doge and Senate, (3)/13 February 1603, 528; Neale, *Queen Elizabeth*, 378-9

²¹ In the words of Professor Neale: 'Faction of the old heroic pattern died with its superb, its insupportable exponent...in Essex it had burnt with such fierceness as to consume itself, and now the flame could not be relighted.' *ibid.*, 379

²² Adams thus aptly sums up the fusion between patronage and faction during the 1590s: 'Patronage became both a means to an end and demonstration of political power; factions became the norm of Court politics rather than the exception. The politics of collegiality were replaced by the politics of competition'. 'The patronage of the crown in Elizabethan politics: the 1590s in perspective', Guy, *The reign of Elizabeth*, 45. See also: MacCaffrey, 'Place and Patronage in Elizabethan Politics', S.T. Bindoff, J. Hurstfield and C.H. Williams (eds), *Elizabethan Government and Society: essays presented to Sir John Neale* (London, 1961), 95-126

²³ Loades, *The Tudor Court*, 133

²⁴ *ibid.*

therefore assume that a man who was neither able to attend court, nor had the benefit of a 'reliable channel of communication' to it, and was besides assumed to be largely devoid of political acumen, would have had precious little chance of securing a position of influence.

Yet Vere apparently fitted these criteria exactly. His commitments in the Netherlands kept him away from court for the great majority of his time, as Naunton observed: 'I finde not that he came much to the courte, for he lived almost perpetually in the campe'. However, he added: 'when he did, no man had more of the queene's favour, and none less envied, for he seldom troubled it with the noyse and alarums of supplantations.'²⁵ By contrast, Hoffman, a more recent commentator, claims that Vere was 'completely outshone at court by men like Drake and Raleigh.'²⁶ Vere's unavoidable absence from court did force him to rely upon patrons there, and he maintained his favour with these almost solely by written correspondence, which was in turn often rendered at best sporadic by the unfavourable climatic conditions that dogged the conveyance of letters between England and the Dutch provinces. Add to this his 'small understanding of weighty matters',²⁷ and one could be forgiven for assuming that he was entirely deprived of the benefits that a favourable relationship with the Court could provide. But in fact he was to remain in the Queen's favour for the majority of his fourteen-year ascendancy in the Netherlands, and during that time he even enjoyed certain promotions at her hands - most notably the Governorship of Brill in 1598.²⁸ This supports the contention made in the previous chapter that he was a good deal more astute in political affairs than so many contemporaries and later commentators have given him credit for, and also suggests that, in spite of the formidable obstacles that he faced, he was able to keep open, and even manipulate, the apparently tenuous channels of communication between himself and the Court.

Throughout his fourteen-year ascendancy, Vere displayed a quite remarkable ability to maintain good relations with some of the highest officials at court. This is particularly impressive when one considers that these patrons tended to be from opposing camps, and that some had little enthusiasm for England's intervention in Dutch affairs. Yet the pattern of Vere's relations with them is one of relative harmony (the rift with Essex forming the only major exception), and this

²⁵ Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia*, 146

²⁶ A. Hoffman, *Lives of the Tudor Age* (London, 1977), 451

²⁷ *CSPF*, XXII, Vere to Walsingham, 3 August 1588, 105

²⁸ In October 1599, Rowland Whyte observed that Vere was so highly favoured at court, and so 'enriched' by the wars that he would have been able to retire from active service. Although this was perhaps an exaggeration, it was certainly true that Vere had directed his career very effectively thus far, and had skilfully manipulated his contacts at court. HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 16 October 1599, 402

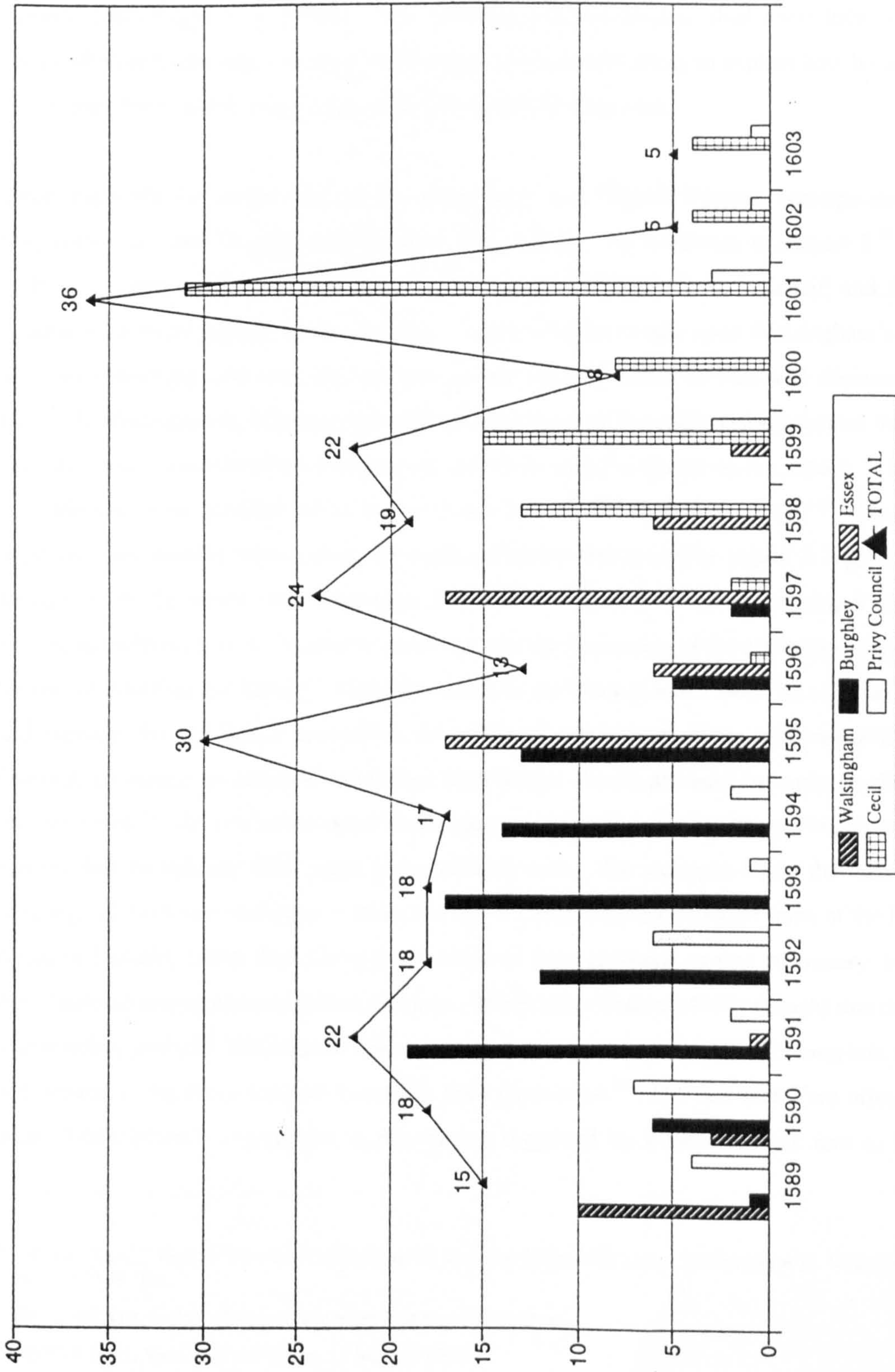


Figure 7: The Distribution of Vere's Correspondence, 1589-1603

(Based upon correspondence in the *State Papers, Holland Series* and *HMC Salisbury Manuscripts*)

may have owed something to the fact that he distributed his loyalty amongst them, wisely refraining from gambling his position and reputation upon one patron alone, no matter how appealing this might have seemed. The following analysis aims to shed some light upon the nature of Vere's relations with each of his major patrons, attempting to explain how he was able to maintain them, and to explore how mutually beneficial they were.

Beginning with the earlier part of his ascendancy, the English General corresponded most frequently with Lord Burghley and Secretary Walsingham. As mentioned in chapter 2,²⁹ he had built up a quite close contact with the latter during Willoughby's ascendancy, and the two maintained a fairly regular correspondence. Vere continued to rely upon Walsingham's favour after his promotion, and even claimed that he was his only means of help and advancement.³⁰ Evidently afraid that his finances would not bear the strain of the costly responsibilities that went with this post, he entreated the Secretary to intervene with the Queen on his behalf: 'I beseach your Honour to be myndfull of an increas of pay for I begin already to pinche.'³¹ He always appeared very humble when asking for such assistance and evidently valued it highly, for in January 1590, he wrote: 'My sealf must allwayes importune your Honour to stand my good Patron, for without your assistance in my behalf, for the continuing of the allowance, I shall nott be able to hould up my head.'³² Vere also wrote to the Privy Council when he required money and supplies, but he clearly wished the Secretary to mediate with them and present his case favourably because his letters to the former were almost always preceded by a plea to the latter for assistance.³³ He also relied upon Walsingham's mediation with the Privy Council on other matters that he believed they might prove difficult with. For example, when the main allied campaign of 1589 was coming to a close, the States General wished to retain some of the English forces in Holland, rather than letting them return to their garrisons as was customary, because they feared an enemy advance in that province. The English General clearly thought that this was a wise policy and told Walsingham that it 'wylbe many wayes profitable', informing him that he had written to the Privy Council to ask for their permission.³⁴ The fact that Vere often relied upon Walsingham's intervention in this way is suggested by a letter that he sent to him in

²⁹ 119

³⁰ *SP 84*, XXXV, fo.105, Vere to Walsingham, 28 October 1589; HMC, *Anc*, Walsingham to Willoughby, 18 October 1589, 292

³¹ *SP 84*, XXXIV, fo.213, Vere to Walsingham, 24 September 1589

³² XXXVI, fo.51, Vere to Walsingham, 27 January 1590

³³ See for example: XXXVI, fo.140, Vere to Walsingham, 23 February 1590; fo.142, Vere to Privy Council, 24 February 1590

³⁴ XXXV, fo.105, Vere to Walsingham, 28 October 1589; fo.113, Vere to Privy Council, 30 October 1589

September 1589, in which he wrote: 'I hope your Honour wyll pardon my often troubling of you with suites, and thincke thatt I am resolved to deserve well att your handes'.³⁵ It evidently did not trouble Vere too greatly that he had so frequently sought Walsingham's intervention, however, for he continued to do so until the latter's death in 1590.³⁶

Vere's humble requests did not go unheard, and Walsingham frequently intervened on his behalf. Towards the end of 1589, for example, Vere thanked him for securing the Queen's 'gracious conceyte of him', as well as 'somm hope of better mayntenance', and declared: 'I am assurd thatt through your favourable mediation, I receave all thatt good, for which I shall be allwayes bownd to doe your Honour service.'³⁷ Walsingham was in fact successful in procuring some quite substantial 'maynetenance' for his protégé later that year (around £500 in total), and Vere wrote to thank him for 'so many and so great favores poured uppon me by your Honour', claiming that he could not 'hope in my lyffe, to have sufficient meanes to sheawe my affection'.³⁸

The benefits that arose from the contact between Vere and Walsingham were not entirely one-sided, however. For one thing, Walsingham could be sure of Vere's loyalty, and his protégé often protested this. He also expressed his eagerness to carry out any task that the Secretary wished him to do, and insisted: 'no man living shalbe readyer to doe you searvice'.³⁹ More significantly, Vere supplied the Secretary with detailed information about events in the Netherlands, and offered his opinion about the most likely strategies that would be employed in the wars. For example, in September 1589, he told Walsingham that he thought the States would turn their attention to Rheinberg in view of the danger having receded in the Bommelerwaard region, and subsequent events proved his prediction correct.⁴⁰

The English General could therefore prove to be a useful source of information regarding Dutch affairs, but it is possible that this was not the sole reason for Walsingham's patronage. As

³⁵ XXXIV, fo.213, Vere to Walsingham, 24 September 1589

³⁶ See for example: XXXV, fo.25, Vere to Walsingham, 8 October 1589

³⁷ XXXV, fo.105, Vere to Walsingham, 28 October 1589

³⁸ *ibid.*, fo.267, Vere to Walsingham, 17 December 1589; XXXVI, fo.140, Vere to Walsingham, 23 February 1590

³⁹ XXXV, fo.267, Vere to Walsingham, 17 December 1589. Vere also showed his loyalty and gratitude to Walsingham by sending him gifts. For example, in 1590 he sent him a horse, and wrote endearingly: 'if he like you I shall thinck my sealf happie.' XXXVI fo.51, Vere to Walsingham, 27 January 1590. See also: XXXV, fo.267, Vere to Walsingham, 17 December 1589

⁴⁰ XXXIV, fo.213, Vere to Walsingham, 24 September 1589; XXXV, fo.25, Vere to Walsingham, 8 October 1589. See also: *ibid.*, fo.105, Vere to Walsingham, 28 October 1589; XXXVI, fo.140, Vere to Walsingham, 23 February 1590

mentioned above, the Secretary was in favour of an interventionist foreign policy, and was enthusiastic about English involvement in the Netherlands. He would perhaps therefore have been more amenable to Vere's frequent requests for assistance (most of which involved the reinforcing of the English contingent in the Provinces and an increase in his own pay), than, for example, Lord Burghley, who was on the whole reluctant to engage English resources on the Continent. Nevertheless, due credit should be given to Vere's skill in making the most of Walsingham's patronage, and in maintaining it right up until the latter's death. This unfortunate event, coming as it did the year after Vere's appointment as Sergeant Major General, deprived him of one of his most valuable patrons, as well as robbing the interventionist party at court of its most influential member.

But Vere had other irons in the fire, for he had also succeeded in gaining the patronage of arguably the most influential figure at court: the Queen's Treasurer, Lord Burghley.⁴¹ His achievement in doing so was even more impressive in view of the fact that Burghley was also the leading anti-interventionist and shared Elizabeth's lack of enthusiasm for the Dutch cause, cherishing instead hopes of a peace with Spain.⁴² Vere did not therefore take the easy option and rely solely upon the patronage of one who was likely to be amenable because his views on foreign policy were in line with his own: he also worked hard to gain the favour of one who was opposed to the cause in which he was closely involved. The wisdom of his policy was proven by the unexpected brevity of the former connection.

In spite of the fact that Walsingham and Burghley were in opposing camps with regard to foreign policy, and more particularly English involvement in the Netherlands,⁴³ the nature of Vere's contact with them was strikingly similar. When requesting an increase of pay or supplies, he wrote to Burghley as well as Walsingham, apparently not wishing to risk relying upon the assistance of just one of them in such urgent matters. For example, in August 1589, he implored the Lord Treasurer: 'For the request I have made concerninge the increase of my intertainemeant,

⁴¹ MacCaffrey argues that no one at court was as well placed as Burghley to 'guide the flow of patronage.' 'Place and Patronage', 109

⁴² In the early 1580s, Burghley had seemed actively in favour of supporting the Dutch rebels (albeit covertly), and advised Elizabeth to do so in order to prevent the further aggrandizement of the Spanish King. 'The Lord Burghleigh's Advice to Queen Elizabeth, in Matters of Religion and State', [c.1583], *Somers Tracts*, 164-70; *CSPS*, IV, Advices from England, (26 October)/5 November 1588, 482. However, Read doubts his sincerity, claiming that he had always been opposed to war with Spain, and that while he 'protested his zeal' for English intervention in the Netherlands, he worked constantly to undermine it and return England to peace with Philip II. 'Walsingham and Burghley in Queen Elizabeth's Privy Council', 54-7

⁴³ It has been suggested, however, that the two statesmen began to enjoy closer relations following Leicester's disastrous intervention in the Netherlands. *ibid.*, 57-8

I beseech your Honour to be favourable unto one thearin',⁴⁴ and the following month he asked Walsingham to do the same.⁴⁵ Yet he perhaps had little choice but to write to Burghley on such matters, considering the latter's official capacity as controller of Elizabeth's finances. The fact that he also directed his pleas to Walsingham suggests that he trusted him to lean on Burghley to forward the requested money and supplies. Furthermore, at this stage Vere's reliance upon Walsingham was far greater than on Burghley, as the graph charting his correspondence suggests.⁴⁶ Following the Secretary's death, however, Vere's letters to Burghley became more frequent, and during the first few years of the new decade, he seemed to rely almost exclusively upon the Lord Treasurer's favour. He also clearly hoped that Burghley would take over from Walsingham as his principal intermediary with the Privy Council, and during the ensuing four years, his letters to the Council were usually written either on the same day, or shortly after, his letters to the Lord Treasurer. Vere was evidently astute enough to realise that he was far more likely to gain the Privy Council's favour or consent if he sought it via Burghley, than if he relied solely upon his letters to them, which on their own would probably have carried little weight. The most common reason for his seeking Burghley's mediation with the Council was the need for money or supplies. This was the case in August 1590, when he wrote to the Lord Treasurer and the Council on the same day, asking for a levy of 300 men to be sent over.⁴⁷ Yet he occasionally had other reasons for wishing Burghley to intervene. At the beginning of 1592, for example, he incurred the Queen's and her Council's displeasure by sending weak companies to France, and, evidently anxious to regain their favour, he wrote to both Burghley and the Council. He explained and justified his actions, and implored the Lord Treasurer to 'make favorable construction of my indevores'.⁴⁸ It would seem that Burghley did intervene on his client's behalf in this matter, for relations between Vere and the Council apparently returned to normal quite rapidly, and within a couple of months, Sir Francis was again urging them to favour him with supplies.⁴⁹

As well as using Burghley as a mediator with the Council, Vere was also astute enough to perceive the great influence that his patron enjoyed over Elizabeth, and he capitalised upon this

⁴⁴ *SP 84*, XXXIV, fo.94, Vere to Burghley, 21(?) August 1589

⁴⁵ XXXIV, fo.213, Vere to Walsingham, 24 September 1589

⁴⁶ See figure 7

⁴⁷ *SP 84*, XXXVIII, fo.184, Vere to Burghley, 17 August 1590; fo.186, Vere to Privy Council, 17 August 1590. See also for example: XXXIX, fo.52, Vere to Burghley, 20 September 1590; fo.52, Vere to Privy Council, 20 September 1590

⁴⁸ XLIV, fo.21, Vere to Privy Council, 13 January 1592; fo.23, Vere to Burghley, 13 January 1592

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, fo.171, Vere to Privy Council, 6 March 1592

quite effectively. In the summer of 1592, for example, he requested the Treasurer's intervention in securing her consent for a brief visit to England. Burghley did not disappoint him, and in July, Vere wrote to thank him: 'which as I receive by her Majesties grace so I must knowe your Honour for the only worker thearof.'⁵⁰ Burghley's influence over the Queen was even more vital to Vere at the end of 1594, when he incurred her wrath again over the levying of troops for France. Sir Francis anxiously reported that he had received a 'very sharp' letter of reprimand from the Queen, and entreated Burghley to restore him to her favour, pleading: 'I have theas many yeares relyead on your Honours patronage, and now I beseache you thatt I may feele the benefit of itt as I have donn in many other thynges, and I shall ever acknowleadg the favor with all manner of thanckfullnes.'⁵¹ Such expressions of gratitude were a common feature of Vere's letters to Burghley, and he frequently implied that he was his sole patron at court. Towards the end of 1593, for example, he declared that he would be 'the greatest beggar of all, if by your Lordships favorable patronage I be nott supportead.'⁵² In fact, at the time that this comment was made, it was not very far off the mark.

It should be stressed that Vere's almost complete reliance upon Burghley's favour during the early 1590s was quite unusual because on the whole he preferred to maintain several lines of communication with the Court, as he had during the first two years of his ascendancy and was to again in the mid-1590s. However, during the last few years of Elizabeth's reign, he was again forced to rely upon one main patron for favour - this time Sir Robert Cecil. This pattern perhaps reflects the shifts of influence between the interventionists and anti-interventionists at court. During the early 1590s, the former cause had receded into the background - due partly to Walsingham's death - and Vere therefore had to focus his appeals upon Burghley. With the rise to power of Essex in the mid-1590s, however, he was again able to rely upon influential patrons from both parties. Yet when the Earl fell from grace and the anti-interventionists once more gained almost unqualified control, Vere was deprived of a leading interventionist to counterbalance his reliance upon the Cecil faction.

Burghley remained Vere's patron until his death in 1598, and it would seem that their attachment was on the whole both amicable and fruitful.⁵³ The benefits of their connection were by no means

⁵⁰ XLV, fo.89, Vere to Burghley, 13 July 1592

⁵¹ XLIX, fo.263, Vere to Burghley, 21 December 1594; see also: L, fo.19, Vere to Burghley, 24 January 1595

⁵² XLVII, fo.152, Vere to Burghley, 7 November 1593

⁵³ In February 1597, the English General declared that he had 'receavead the beast of my Fortunes by your Lordships meanes.' LIV, fo.105, Vere to Burghley, 28 February 1597

entirely one-sided, however, and it could be viewed as a reciprocal arrangement. In return for acting on Vere's behalf at court, Burghley expected his protégé to supply a constant stream of information relating to both military and political affairs. Sir Francis kept him abreast of Maurice's and the States' plans for offensive and defensive campaigns - as he did in the autumn of 1594, stating that they intended to draw together the allied forces and besiege Grol.⁵⁴ In the same year, he also provided a commentary of the negotiations that were in progress between the States and the French King.⁵⁵ Regarding the proposed withdrawal of troops for the Cadiz Voyage in 1596, Vere wrote of his dealings with the States and sent his patron a transcript of their negotiations, evidently at Burghley's request.⁵⁶

Invaluable as Vere was to Burghley as an additional source of information,⁵⁷ he did not appear to realise this, and in almost every despatch to his patron, he apologised for being 'over troublesome'. If his humble protestations are to be believed, he failed to appreciate how useful his letters were: 'I am often in doubt whether wear the better way for me, eyther by nott wrytyng att all to be heald of your Honour negligent, or in sendyng your Lordship knowne mattre to be accomptead over troublesome. Butt in the ende I grow unto a resolution thatt I must nott so muche as seame to fayle in my deuty, and to perswade my sealf, thatt itt is some euse unto your Honour to be asseuread howe thynges stande'.⁵⁸ Yet such protestations must be viewed with scepticism. It has already been argued that Vere was more politically astute and ambitious than contemporary and modern commentators have supposed, and it is therefore unlikely that he was genuinely ignorant of the value of his letters to the Lord Treasurer. A more convincing argument is that he used these as a kind of bargaining tool to ensure that his patron would continue to promote his cause at court and keep him in the Queen's favour. In order to make this tool effective, Vere had to let the Treasurer know that the supply of information that he provided was finite and could be withdrawn at any time. On the occasions when he neglected his correspondence, he received swift reprimands from Burghley, thus proving the effectiveness of his policy.⁵⁹ Their attachment can therefore be viewed as a somewhat tenuous balance between the supply of information and the maintenance of favour. Although this balance was always

⁵⁴ XLIX, fo.134, Vere to Burghley, 15 September 1594

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, fo.154, Vere to Burghley, 7 October 1594

⁵⁶ LII, fo.s 98 and 107, Vere to Burghley, 7 and 9 March 1596

⁵⁷ Bodley was the primary source of information on political affairs until his departure from the Netherlands in 1596.

⁵⁸ LI, fo.161, Vere to Burghley, 22 September 1595; see also: XLVI, fo.221, Vere to Burghley, 23 July 1593

⁵⁹ See for example: XLII, fo.288, Vere to Burghley, 13 August 1591; XLIII, fo.150, Vere to Burghley, 31 October 1591

more or less maintained, and Vere's relations with Burghley mostly appeared both harmonious and beneficial, there seemed to be a lack of common interest and genuine cordiality between the two men, perhaps because of their differing priorities with regard to Elizabeth's foreign policy. The weakness of their attachment was mostly disguised by the deferential tone of Vere's correspondence, together with his many protestations of loyalty and gratitude, but it did occasionally come to the fore. This was certainly the case when, towards the end 1593, Burghley attempted to secure Kirby Hall, Vere's family home, for his grandchildren (his daughter Anne was married to Vere's cousin Edward, the 17th Earl of Oxford, and had produced three daughters). The Hall was leased to Vere's elder brother, John, and Burghley applied to him to surrender it. John hesitated, protesting that the lease belonged to Francis by rights, and the Lord Treasurer therefore approached him instead. Markham justifiably observes: 'As that officer's advancement depended mainly on Burghley's good will, this proceeding was in very questionable taste.'⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Vere obediently replied that he desired nothing but his patron's satisfaction in this matter, and promised to ensure his brother's compliance. He evidently resented Burghley's rather selfish request, however, as it threatened his own family's well-being, and he made it clear that if the lease was surrendered, it would effectively render them homeless: 'my brothers slownes in resolution concernyng this mattre may be excusead, thatt owre Mother nor any of us have whear to putt owre headdes butt thear'.⁶¹ Yet Vere had evidently resigned himself to the fact that he would have to pay for Burghley's continued favour with his family home, and a couple of months later, he wrote: 'I shall then asweall with the consent of my other poore frendes...if so your lordship wyll have itt, pass my interest thearin fully to your lordship.'⁶² Even though Burghley's plans eventually fell through and Vere's family remained the tenants of Kirby Hall, the affair aptly demonstrates the superficial nature of the two men's 'friendship'.⁶³ There seemed to be little love lost between them, and they were evidently both concerned with exploiting their attachment to the full, maintaining it for as long as would prove beneficial.

⁶⁰ Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 210

⁶¹ *SP 84*, XLVII, fo.152, Vere to Burghley, 7 November 1593. Markham seems to have taken the deferential tone of Vere's letter at face value, for he writes: 'Doubtless he was glad enough of the chance of complying with the request made to him by the powerful Lord Treasurer.' *Fighting Veres*, 211

⁶² *SP 84*, XLVIII, fo.16, Vere to Burghley, 7 January 1594

⁶³ Another illustration of this is the fact that, in the spring of 1597, Burghley tried to cut off Vere's allowance as Sergeant Major General. He succeeded in persuading the Queen to issue a warrant to this effect, but this was subsequently thwarted by Essex's intervention. HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 1 March 1597, 328. See also: Gleig, *Military Commanders*, 166

A rather stronger alliance appeared to exist between Vere and the Earl of Essex - at least during the mid-1590s. Vere was closer to Essex - both in terms of his age, his military record,⁶⁴ and his views on foreign policy - than to Lord Burghley, and the two men seemed to rapidly strike up a close friendship. Sir Francis apparently rejoiced that he had secured the favour of a patron who was both highly influential and the main advocate at court of English intervention in the Netherlands - a cause which was obviously close to his own heart.⁶⁵ It is not therefore surprising that his declarations of loyalty to the Earl seem more genuine than those contained in his letters to Burghley, and between the years 1595 and 1597, as his attachment to him increased, his contact with the Lord Treasurer simultaneously declined.⁶⁶ Vere's lengthy correspondence to his new patron contained so many professions of devotion and loyalty that it would be impossible to include them all here, but a few examples may be cited. In September 1595, he declared: 'I would desire no more hap in this world than to follow your Honour', and the following year spoke of: 'The exceeding great desire I have of your honour and prosperity', claiming: 'all other respects set aside, I shall look only how I may do you best service.'⁶⁷ Similarly, at the beginning of 1597, he assured Essex: 'I have no mind to follow any but yourself'.⁶⁸ Vere's admiration for, and devotion to, the Earl were apparently complimented by complete trust, and in the bulk of his dispatches, he professed that he was writing in a frank and honest manner, safe in the knowledge that Essex was aware of his true opinions. This was the case when he commented upon the proposed recapture of Calais in the spring of 1597. After expressing his opinion as to the best action to take, he added: 'If I were not assured of your honours mind so far as that you will make the favourablest construction of my writing I would beware how I presumed so much in this kind, but that and the knowledge I have how much I am your devoted servant giveth me confidence.'⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Essex was Vere's junior by six years, and had also seen service in the Netherlands, having been a cavalry commander under Leicester and created Knight Banneret for his bravery at Zutphen in 1586.

⁶⁵ Vere was one of many military figures who attached themselves to Essex's cause, perceiving him as their best chance of advancement in the wars. Whilst the preparations for the Islands Voyage were underway, Rowland Whyte observed: 'The martiall Men flocke continually about hym.' Collins, II, Whyte to Sidney, 23 April 1597, 44. The Earl doubtless welcomed such attention. Corbett refers to his 'love for men of action', and describes him as 'the embodiment of the war spirit in England.' *Successors of Drake*, 14, 24. Burghley once commented, rather less generously, that Essex 'breathed nothing but war'. Camden, *Historie*, iv, 126. The Earl himself made no secret of his stance, and observed: 'That generally I am affected to the men of war, it should not seem strange; every man doth love those of his own profession'. Devereux, I, 488. For Essex's role as a military patron, see Adams, 'The English Military Clientèle 1542-1618', *Patronages et Clientismes 1550-1750*, Collection 'Histoire et Littérature Regionales', X (Paris and London, 1995), 225-26

⁶⁶ See figure 7

⁶⁷ HMC, *Sal*, V, Vere to Essex, 14 September 1595, 375; VI, Vere to Essex, 7 March 1596, 88

⁶⁸ VII, Vere to Essex, 7 January 1597, 9

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, Vere to Essex, 24 April 1597, 172

For his part, Essex certainly seemed to think very highly of Vere, and, for a while at least, included him in his circle of closest friends.⁷⁰ He conferred with his protégé about strategy, notably during the preparations for the Cadiz and Island Voyages, and L.W. Henry goes so far as to suggest that Vere was ‘generally regarded as Essex’s chief military adviser’.⁷¹ Their friendship appeared to be both close and without ceremony. For example, one morning when the Earl’s fleet was waiting to embark upon the Islands Voyage in 1597, he allowed Vere to see him, even though it was very early and he had not left his bed chamber. The English General related this encounter in his *Commentaries*, and observed: ‘he welcomed me with much demonstration of favour, and with many circumstances of words.’⁷² It seems Vere was convinced of his patron’s affection for him, and this enhanced his already high opinion of the Earl. This opinion was clearly stated in a dispatch that he sent to Essex in the spring of 1597: ‘The letter you sent me by Captain Upcher sheweth that you both trust me and care for me, which with the honour I bear unto your own excellent parts make me in true respect and love prefer you before all men.’⁷³

The friendship between Vere and Essex did not escape the notice of their contemporaries. George Gilpin commented upon it in a letter to Essex: ‘I know you favour the gentleman and hold a singular opinion of him, wishing his good and advancement.’⁷⁴ There is also evidence to suggest that Elizabeth herself was aware of it.⁷⁵ More recent observers have commented upon their attachment, and Pickering, for one, argues that it was based upon a genuine rapport. He claims that the English General was attracted by the Earl’s ‘youthful vigour and engaging personality’, and that Essex, for his part, appreciated Vere’s plain-speaking manner.⁷⁶ MacCaffrey highlights the alignment of the two men’s strategic and military interests, and points out that Vere was one of several English officers serving in the Netherlands who kept the Earl informed of developments in the war there.⁷⁷ Similarly, den Tex stresses that Essex had always been pro-war and had enjoyed close relations with the Dutch statesmen ever since he was himself stationed in the

⁷⁰ HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 24 September 1596, 219

⁷¹ Henry, ‘The Earl of Essex as Strategist and Military Organizer’, 371; HMC, *Sal*, VI, Vere to Essex, 9 March 1596, 90-1; Vere to Essex, 9 April 1596, 140; *CSPD*, (1595-97), 451-2, 477; *Vere’s Commentaries*, 25

⁷² *ibid.*, 45-6. Markham, however, interprets the encounter as an indication of laziness rather than familiarity on the part of the ‘luxurious courtier’. *Fighting Veres*, 238-9

⁷³ HMC, *Sal*, VII, Vere to Essex, 1 April 1597, 139

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, Gilpin to Essex, 12 February 1597, 60. See also: Murdin, *Burghley Papers*, Bodley to Essex, 30 January 1596, 716

⁷⁵ *Vere’s Commentaries*, 66-7; *SP 84*, LVII, fo.188, Elizabeth to Vere, 15 December 1598

⁷⁶ Hasler, *House of Commons*, 555-6

⁷⁷ MacCaffrey, *War and Politics*, 489

Netherlands.⁷⁸ However, while the two men shared both youth and a passion for military exploits, it is unlikely that the strength of their attachment was founded upon mutual respect and admiration alone. Just as Vere was careful to cultivate a good relationship with Burghley in order to enhance his position at Court, so his alliance with Essex was most probably forged and maintained with an eye to its potential usefulness. If Sir Francis was astute enough to perceive the influence that Burghley enjoyed over Elizabeth, he would also have been aware of how greatly she was charmed by the young Earl. It is therefore likely that he used Essex to further his own cause with her.

This contention is supported by Vere's correspondence because it contains certain references to Essex's intervention on his behalf. For instance, in February 1595, the English General incurred his sovereign's wrath over the levying of a number of troops for France and, realising that his explanation alone would not be sufficient to restore him to her favour, he incited Essex to intervene. This apparently produced the desired result because shortly afterwards he wrote: 'For that her Majesty resteth satisfied with my excuse, I do assure myself that your assistance was not wanting, for which I give you most humble thanks.'⁷⁹ Similarly, Essex apparently presented the Queen with a favourable account of Vere's role in the victorious battle at Turnhout in 1597 because he received a letter of thanks from his protégé, saying: 'The favour your lordship hath done me in giving me so large a portion in this late defeat is answerable unto your former care of my reputation, and in the interpreting of discourses put abroad both here and in England you have made evident to her Majesty the endeavours of them that cunningly would have bestowed the commendations on others.'⁸⁰ Realising that Essex shared his enthusiasm for the Dutch war, Vere enticed him to do everything possible to deflect the intrigues of such 'cunning' figures and protect his position in the Netherlands. In fact, if his correspondence is to be believed, he viewed Essex's support as vital to his survival as leader of the English forces. He wrote: 'I doubt if by your good means I be not maintained here my great enemies will loosen me hence as from my surest retreat. I most humbly beseech your honour therefore to care for me as one that wholly dependeth on your favour and that you may wholly dispose of.'⁸¹ This protection no doubt often took the form of guarding Vere against intrigue at court, but it sometimes also involved the prevention of his recall for service elsewhere. In the spring of 1597, for example, Vere implored Essex to prevent the

⁷⁸ den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 321. See also for example: Wemham, *Return of the Armadas*, 150, 193

⁷⁹ HMC, *Sal*, V, Vere to Essex, 11 February 1595, 107

⁸⁰ VII, Vere to Essex, 20 February 1597, 75. Here, Sir Francis was no doubt referring to his great rival, Sir Robert Sidney.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, Vere to Essex, 7 January 1597, 9

withdrawal of himself and his regiment for the proposed siege of Calais: 'It is a thing which I have feared still, and should do more if I were not assured that you would care for me as one that must now rely on your protection. I beseech you therefore to withstand such courses, which I know are only set afoot to ruin my poor fortune.' It would appear that his entreaties reaped the desired reward, for on this occasion he was not recalled.⁸²

As well as relying upon Essex to protect his position in the Netherlands, Vere also seized upon the opportunity to further his career by becoming involved in the expeditions that his patron undertook. In favour of an aggressive foreign policy,⁸³ Essex secured himself the leadership of expeditions to France and Ireland, and also headed two naval ventures against Spain. It was these ventures that Vere championed enthusiastically, clearly hoping to be awarded a high-ranking position in them. In the autumn of 1595, when Essex was planning the expedition to Cadiz, Vere wrote to secure himself a place in it, saying: 'I would desire no more hap in this world than to follow your Honour when you had force fit to command such an enemy. And in the meantime I do comfort myself exceedingly that it pleased your Honour to give me hope that upon any such occasion I shall not be forgotten.'⁸⁴ Vere's persistence finally paid off when the Earl appointed him Lord Lieutenant and Lord Marshal of the expedition in 1596. He was also included in a select council of war which Essex had been instrumental in convening,⁸⁵ and was a valued adviser on strategy. Whilst Vere's *Commentaries* may have exaggerated his role in this expedition, it nevertheless suggests how highly the Earl favoured him. Vere wrote: 'it pleased my Lord of Essex to give me much countenance, and to have me always near him; which drew upon me no small envy'.⁸⁶ He alleged that a quarrel subsequently arose between himself, Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Coniers Clifford as to who should second Essex. The Earl settled this by giving Vere precedence on land and Raleigh precedence at sea. Clifford, a mere Sergeant Major General, was swiftly put in his place, and Vere noted that he had been chosen for the voyage because of his 'long continuance in service', whereas the other high-ranking officers 'were chosen rather for favour'. This favour was apparent throughout the expedition, for Vere noted that Essex frequently sought his advice and gave him important responsibilities.⁸⁷

⁸² *ibid.*, Vere to Essex, 26 March 1597, 131

⁸³ As Hammer remarks: 'Essex and the sizeable number of gentlemen who thought like him believed that England's natural rôle was as the champion of a Europe freed from the domination of Spain, that martial endeavour was a sign of a nation's vitality, and that 'merit' must not go unrewarded.' 'Patronage at Court', 85-6

⁸⁴ HMC, *Sal*, V, Vere to Essex, 14 September 1595, 375

⁸⁵ Its other members were: Lords Willoughby, Borough and North, Sirs Edward Norris, Clifford, Raleigh and Carew, and Mr. Comptroller Knollys.

⁸⁶ *Vere's Commentaries*, 25-6

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 24-45

Essex again included his protégé in an expedition the following year, when he made him Lord Marshal of the Islands Voyage fleet.⁸⁸ However, Vere had apparently come to take his patron's favour somewhat for granted by this time because he complained that he had not been given the higher rank of Lieutenant General as before. Lord Mountjoy received this honour and, after protesting about the 'recuilment and disgrace' that he had thereby suffered, Vere grudgingly agreed to submit to the new Lieutenant General. The matter formed the beginning of a rift between Vere and Essex, and also demonstrated the former's perception his patron's influence over Elizabeth. The Earl had apparently told Vere that Mountjoy's appointment had not been his own choice, but had been 'thrust upon him' by the Queen. However, Vere believed this to be a mere excuse, and commented, 'I was not so ignorant of his lordships power, as to doubt that my Lord Mountjoy or any subject of England could be thrust upon him without his desire and procurement.' He concluded that Essex had 'withdrawn much of his favour from me', and it did seem as if their alliance had ceased to be as fruitful as it had been previously.⁸⁹ From thenceforth it rapidly deteriorated.⁹⁰

Nevertheless, in its heyday, Vere's attachment to the Earl had reaped him quite rich rewards.⁹¹ Strange, then, that it has been argued that there was 'nothing to indicate that Vere ever received any material awards or advancement at Essex's hand'.⁹² Perhaps this observation was based upon the assumption that Vere was politically unaware, and was unwisely drawn to the Earl by

⁸⁸ HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 3 April and 4 May 1597, 259, 276; *CSPD*, (1595-97), Instructions by the Queen to the Earl of Essex, 15 June 1597, 441; Collins, II, 23 April 1597, 44

⁸⁹ *Vere's Commentaries*, 47. Tenison takes Essex's side in this matter, and claims that because Vere 'had been so little at Court', he was 'imperfectly acquainted with the Queen's methods', and therefore did not realise that she could quite easily insist upon a particular commander, especially one who was a regular attendant at court. Tenison, *Elizabethan England*, X, 206, 208. For a similar view, see M. Oppenheim (ed), *The Naval Tracts of Sir William Monson*, II (London, 1902), 47-8; Gleig, *Military Commanders*, 155-6. This was not the only time that Vere was upstaged by Mountjoy. When a defence force was assembled in England in the summer of 1599 to counter the threat of a Spanish invasion, Vere was appointed Marshal of the Horse, but Mountjoy was given a rank above him as Lieutenant. Similarly, a few months later, it was rumoured at court that Sir Francis would be appointed to lead the expedition to Ireland, but this task was eventually given to Mountjoy. *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 9 August 1599, 80; HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 16, 20 and 31 October 1599, 402, 404, 408; Collins, II, Gilpin to Sidney, 28 October 1599, 137

⁹⁰ Further evidence of the rift can be found in Vere's account of the Islands Voyage. Shortly before the fleet returned to England, there was a skirmish with some Spanish ships. Vere claimed that he had warned Essex of the enemy's approach, but that Essex ignored him and instead called for a pipe of tobacco. *Vere's Commentaries*, 62. See also: Oppenheim, *Naval Tracts*, II, 3-4

⁹¹ As well as helping to protect his protégé's position in the Netherlands and furthering his military career by giving him commanding roles in the Cadiz and Islands Voyages, Essex had also gained him entry into political affairs by securing him a parliamentary seat at Leominster in 1593, the borough of which he was High Steward. Hasler, *House of Commons*, 556; Collins, *Historical Collections*, 330; Gleig, *Military Commanders*, 147

⁹² Hasler, 556

his engaging personality and daring military ventures. Yet the available evidence suggests that Vere was in fact very prudent in deciding to attach himself to Essex's cause, and demonstrates his awareness of the situation at court. He perceived the Earl's position of influence with Elizabeth, as well as his interventionist stance, and aimed to make use of both advantages. He did so to good effect, employing his patron as a means of securing the Queen's favour and of enhancing both his career and reputation.

The Earl himself had made a wise choice in his protégé. In a sense, his motives for maintaining this contact were similar to those of Burghley because he relied upon Vere to supply information about both military and political affairs in the Netherlands. The English General was apparently more diligent in supplying Essex with such information than he was with Burghley, however, for there is no evidence of any reprimands for slackness in writing, and Vere seemed to take every opportunity to keep his patron abreast of developments.⁹³ He wrote particularly frequently on the subject of Franco-Dutch relations and the possibility of an alliance being formed between the two sides. He evidently realised that the Earl had a vested interest in such events because of his enthusiasm for English campaigns there, and his dispatches included quite detailed appraisals of Dutch opinions. Vere also mentioned the recurrent rumours of a peace between the Provinces and Spain, and often expressed his anxiety that there was some truth in them.⁹⁴ As well as signalling the utility of their friendship, such letters also demonstrated a strong common interest between them, namely a wish to incite the Queen to take more decisive action against Spain.

Indeed, Essex devoted much of his time to working towards this goal, and it seems that Vere was a willing collaborator in helping him to achieve it. Herein lay the principal benefit of their alliance - at least from the Earl's point of view. In order for his expeditions to succeed, the States General had to agree to the withdrawal of large numbers of English auxiliaries from their provinces, as well as to the contribution of ships and supplies. Perceiving Vere's amicable relations with the States, Essex used him to promote these expeditions and oil the wheels of the

⁹³ For example, during an inactive period of the Rhine campaign in 1595, he wrote, 'How small occasion soever there be, when I have a messenger, I must not forbear to trouble your Honour.' Later that year, he claimed: 'I dare not but write for the discharge of my duty, though I have nothing at all worthy your Lordship.' Indeed, in marked contrast to his correspondence with Burghley, Vere occasionally rebuked his patron for not responding to *his* letters frequently enough. HMC, *Sal*, V, Vere to Essex, 16 August and 7 October 1595, 325, 404; VII, Vere to Essex, 22 January 1597, 34. See also: Murdin, *Burghley Papers*, Vere to Essex, 17 March 1594, 682. His diligence in providing Essex with accounts of events was observed by Gilpin who, in a letter to the same, stated: 'I have of late written seldom for want of matter, and knowing Sir Francis Vere misses no opportunity.' HMC, *Sal*, VII, Gilpin to Essex, 22 April 1597, 169; VI, Gilpin to Essex, 10 February and 31 March 1596, 52, 124

⁹⁴ V, Vere to Essex, 7 October 1595, 405; VII, Vere to Essex, 1 April 1597, 139

often lengthy process of consent, much as Elizabeth did when she wished her troops to be withdrawn. This was true of both the Cadiz and Islands Voyages. Bodley testified to Vere's endeavours on his patron's behalf in the Cadiz expedition. He told Essex that despite his own efforts to secure the States' consent, Vere alone had succeeded in persuading them to allow the withdrawal of English troops.⁹⁵ Vere's intervention was even more valuable to Essex during the preparations for the Islands Voyage because, following the expense and rather limited success of the Cadiz expedition, Elizabeth was more reluctant than ever to consent to another, and it was therefore vital to drum up enthusiasm among the States. The English General did not disappoint Essex on this occasion, and as well as delivering his patron's letters to Oldenbarnevelt, he also used persuasive arguments of his own. He reported that the Advocate had made 'large protestations' of his eagerness to further the voyage, and soon afterwards the States consented to the withdrawal of 1,000 English troops in their pay, as well as contributing a number of ships.⁹⁶

As well as acting as an intermediary for Essex with the States, Vere also promoted his patron's cause at court - although his own absence from there made this a rarity. He was certainly aware of the danger of intrigue, for in a letter to Sidney, written just prior to the embarkation of the Islands Voyage, he expressed concern over the Earl's imminent absence: 'Of my Lord of Essex goyng to sea I am sorrye to heer, unlease I could perswade my sealf thatt before his goyng he would furnyshe the Courtt with offycers; for thatt itt wyll ealse prove his adversaryes worcke whylst he is absent, and I should gness thatt Rawleyghes goyng from the Courtt should be a stratagem to make the Earl careless.'⁹⁷ Although the English General's prolonged absences from Court were unavoidable, on the rare occasions that he did attend, he seemed to have quite an impact.⁹⁸ If his own account is to be believed, the most notable of these was in the summer of 1597, and worked to his patron's advantage. Following the costly failure of the Islands Voyage, Essex was in disgrace with Elizabeth, and Vere was apparently so moved by what he perceived as her unjust accusations that he went in person to try to restore him to her favour. While his own account must be viewed cautiously, it suggests that his intervention on this occasion was of great service to the Earl. According to the account, Sir Francis approached Elizabeth whilst she was walking in the garden, and defended Essex so loudly that the courtiers who were present could hear and were forced to concede that they had wrongfully slandered him. This was an apparently selfless act on Vere's part because it led to: 'the grieving and bitter incensing of the contrary

⁹⁵ Murdin, *Burghley Papers*, Bodley to Essex, 21 March 1596, 754-5

⁹⁶ HMC *Sal*, VII, Vere to Essex, 1 January 1597, 1; *Vere's Commentaries*, 45

⁹⁷ HMC, *D&D*, III, Vere to Sidney, 8 February 1597, 231

⁹⁸ Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia*, 146

party against me'. It seemed to work the desired effect, however, for he noted: 'her Majesty well quieted and satisfied, sate her down in the end of the walk, and calling me to her fell into more particular discourse of his Lordships humours and ambition; all which she pleased then to construe so graciously that before she left me she fell into much commendation of him, who shortly after came to the court.'⁹⁹ Yet it is unlikely that Vere's anxiety to see the Earl restored to favour was based upon a genuine concern for his welfare, especially in view of the rift that had developed between them. A more feasible motive is that he appreciated how the demise of Essex's influence at court had deprived him of a very valuable patron, and had also significantly reduced the power of the interventionists there. In wishing to restore his patron's position at court, Vere was therefore most probably acting out of self-interest.

The months following the Islands Voyage were to witness a quite dramatic demise of Essex and Vere's attachment. Quite why the Earl had chosen Mountjoy instead of Vere to be his Lieutenant General during this voyage is not clear, but his protégé immediately interpreted it as a sign of hostility. Furious that he had been deliberately slighted, Vere seemed to decide immediately that he would abandon his no longer fruitful alliance with the Earl. According to his own account, he petitioned Essex that: 'hereafter, he would be pleased not to use me at all in any action, wherein he was to go chief'.¹⁰⁰ Notwithstanding his obvious aversion, Vere fulfilled his task in the voyage, but his resolve to detach himself from his patron had evidently not faded, for after defending the Earl at court, he wrote: 'I had discovered...his Lordships coldness of affection to me, and had plainly told my Lord himself mine own resolution, in which I still persisted, not to follow his Lordship any more in the warres'.¹⁰¹

While this determination could have sprung from wounded pride, it is perhaps more likely that it was founded upon an astute appraisal of the situation. Realising that Essex, for whatever reason, had seen fit to abandon their alliance, and that he would therefore no longer be able to rely upon

⁹⁹ *Vere's Commentaries*, 65-7. The meeting between Vere and the Queen is not mentioned in any other contemporary source. Camden notes that the Earl's defenders were 'many and divers' during this brief period of disgrace. *Historie*, iv, 107. This would suggest that Vere was, at best, just one of these. Nevertheless, subsequent commentators seem to have accepted the validity of the account given of it in the *Commentaries*. See for example: Birch, *Memoirs*, II, 361-2; Collins, *Historical Collections*, 301-2; Gleig, *Military Commanders*, 159; Devereux, I, 463-5; Strickland, *Life of Queen Elizabeth*, 316; Wernham, *Return of the Armadas*, 193; Tenison, *Elizabethan England*, X, 311-12. Tenison uses the incident to justify his claim that 'Few personages of noble name and undeniable distinction frequented the Court less than Sir Francis Vere; but in nearly every instance his visits were attended with definite results'. N.B. Vere also implied that he persuaded the Queen to appoint him Governor of Brill the following year - again, having gained access to her whilst she was walking in the garden. *Vere's Commentaries*, 69

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, 45-7

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, 67

this source of advancement, Vere was apparently quick to sever their connection and look for other avenues of promotion. However, at least initially, he was unable to offset the damaging repercussions of the breakdown of their attachment. In fact, the Earl seemed to do everything in his power to destroy the credibility of his former protégé. Towards the end of 1598, he was given the command of an expedition to Ireland, and Vere was instructed to organise the levy of 2,000 auxiliaries in the Provinces for this. Sir Francis seemed reluctant to contribute his best troops, and those that he sent were of a poor standard, even though they met with the number prescribed and were also furnished with arms. This could be viewed as a deliberately hostile move because whereas in the past Vere had enthusiastically drummed up support for his patron's enterprises, he now chose to give him as little assistance as possible, and his actions could have been an attempt to reap revenge for the cessation of the Earl's favour. Alternatively, they could have signalled his switch to the patronage of Essex's great adversary, Sir Robert Cecil. This is supported by the fact that the English General ignored Essex's letter requesting the withdrawal of Sir Calisthenes Brooke's company, and chose to retain it, but complied with Cecil's request that Sir John Brooke's company should remain in the Provinces.¹⁰² Vere evidently anticipated Essex's annoyance, but he could surely not have predicted the extent of either its vehemence or damaging repercussions. Infuriated by what he viewed as blatant intransigence by his former protégé, Essex apparently succeeded in alienating the whole Privy Council against him. Vere was sent a succession of sharp reprimands from the Council, accusing him of wilful negligence and disobedience. In the first of these, the author (who was almost undoubtedly Essex), wrote: 'wee cannot perceave what may be the cause of this disorderlie proceeding unlesse wee should thincke that you would heereby serve your own turne and have more respect unto your own private advantage and satisfaction then to her Majesty's service'. He dismissed Vere's claim that it had been the States, rather than himself, who had refused to send the best troops, and alleged that even if this had been the case, it was he who had influenced their decision. This vehement reprimand sparked an immediate and lengthy response from Vere, who continued to insist that he had done everything in his power to levy the troops. Essex's fury was not to be so easily abated, however, and there followed a flurry of accusatory dispatches, each of which Vere attempted to deflect with lengthy justifications of his actions. He insisted that his 'courses' had been 'sinisterly construed', but to no avail, and the eventuality that he must have dreaded above all else was apparently realised: it seemed as if Essex had succeeded in turning the Queen against her General. The last of the Privy Council's dispatches was allegedly written 'by her Majestie's expresse commaundement' in order to let Vere know 'howe highlie she ys dyspleased with your

¹⁰² *SP 84*, LVIII, fo.19, Vere to Cecil, 15 January 1599

proceedinges in so many thinges contrary to those directions you have receaved from us, and that in steede of performyng those thinges you have bene required to doe wee have nothings from you but excuses and appologies.’¹⁰³

While Elizabeth’s displeasure, even if it was genuine, soon dissipated, Vere was never to regain Essex’s favour, and it would appear that their attachment had ended more suddenly than it had begun. The cause of the demise is difficult to decipher. According to Vere’s *Commentaries* and correspondence, he was also mystified as to its origin, and the implication is therefore that it was Essex who, for whatever reason, had tired of their alliance. Severing ties with such an influential patron would certainly not have been consistent with Vere’s accustomed policy of maintaining as many contacts with the Court as possible. However, it does not necessarily follow that it was Essex who caused the breach, and a number of alternative explanations are possible. Vere’s frequent absence from court could have been a significant factor. His contact with Essex had always been maintained chiefly by written correspondence and, considering the often slow conveyance of letters between England and the Netherlands, it would have been all too easy for Vere’s enemies at court to poison his patron’s mind against him. One of the most likely culprits was Sir Robert Sidney, Vere’s great rival both at court and in the Netherlands. Vere certainly believed that Sidney was to blame, as Whyte noted in a letter to his patron: ‘he believes that you were some cause of my Lord of Essex’s unkindness towards him, by your aggrevating of Matters’.¹⁰⁴ While this allegation must rest largely unfounded, it is likely that Sidney, who had always rivalled Vere for Essex’s favour, played a part in stirring up the ill-feeling between them.¹⁰⁵ Vere’s other enemies at court were certainly quick to capitalise upon the rift. For example, Sir Thomas Knollys wrote to Essex: ‘I am sorry to see your kind favours so unkindly requited by him who by your especial graces hath aspired unto the height of that fortune where now (as he thinks) he is settled so surely that, do what he will, he can hardly be removed.’¹⁰⁶ It is rather implausible that Vere had chosen to abandon his patron because he felt secure in the new-found prestige that the latter’s favour had won him: there was no such thing as a secure position at court. What is perhaps more likely is that when it became obvious that his connection with Essex was not as fruitful as it had proved in the past, Vere began to seek alternative means of

¹⁰³ *APC*, XXIX, Privy Council to Vere, 31 January; 8, 20 and 25 February; March 1599, 512, 547-9, 581-2, 607-9, 649-50; *SP 84*, LVIII, fo.66, Vere to Privy Council, 11 February 1599; fo.70, Vere to Cecil, 15 February 1599; *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 15 February 1599, 68

¹⁰⁴ Collins, II, Whyte to Sidney, 12 September 1599, 121

¹⁰⁵ Sidney had certainly succeeded in gaining Essex’s patronage by this time, as the competition for the Governorship of Brill proved. See below, 187-8

¹⁰⁶ *HMC*, *Sal*, IX, Knollys to Essex, 9 February 1599, 64

advancement. This would explain the quite sudden flourishing of his alliance with Sir Robert Cecil. Yet there is another explanation for the demise of Vere's 'friendship' with Essex. He may have anticipated the decline of his patron's influence at court.¹⁰⁷ The Islands Voyage was an almost unmitigated - and very costly - disaster, and even though Vere had allegedly tried to defend Essex's conduct, he must have realised that, as leader of the expedition, he would be subject to most of the blame, and would lose much of his former favour with Elizabeth - who had in any case harboured serious misgivings about the voyage before it had even set sail. In addition, the Cecil party had been actively against the expedition, and if Vere realised this (as he undoubtedly did), then he could have predicted a resurgence of their influence and would have been eager to ally himself with them. If he really had been so astute, then subsequent events were to prove his predictions correct, and it is fortunate that by the time of Essex's imprisonment and later rebellion, Vere's connection with him had apparently ceased to exist. It is of course possible that Vere exaggerated the seriousness of the rift between himself and Essex when he learned of this rebellion, and took measures to avoid his own implication in it. Upon receiving the proclamation which declared Essex to be a traitor, he immediately ordered it to be distributed throughout the Netherlands, and also reaffirmed his absolute loyalty to Elizabeth.¹⁰⁸ It is surely no coincidence that his letters to Cecil suddenly increased during the year of the rebellion: he clearly wished to align himself more firmly with the anti-Essex coalition.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, he was able to remove any lingering suspicions about the duration of his involvement with Essex when he wrote his *Commentaries* some five years after the rebellion, and depicted their attachment as close but fleeting.¹¹⁰ Vere was clearly successful in ensuring that both contemporaries and subsequent commentators did not link him too closely with the Earl following the rebellion, for the popular view of him is as an essentially uncontroversial figure who was devoted to the service of his Queen.

Cecil soon came to replace Essex as Vere's chief patron at court. However, their attachment had begun before the rift with Essex, and Vere's strategy of thus courting the favour of the leaders of the two opposing factions at the same time harked back to his earlier contact with both Walsingham and Burghley. By about the middle of the decade, he evidently perceived the

¹⁰⁷ If this was the case, then Vere was not alone in deserting Essex for this reason. Hammer points out: 'As his political fortunes waned, so did his support.' 'Patronage at Court', 86

¹⁰⁸ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5884 I, 'The Proclamation, of the Queenes Majestie of England, upon the apprehension of the Earle of Essex', 9 February 1600; *SP 84*, LXI, fo.49, Vere to Cecil, 21 February 1601

¹⁰⁹ See Figure 7.

¹¹⁰ *Vere's Commentaries*, 46-7, 67-71

influence that Cecil had come to exert over Elizabeth, and he first sought his intervention regarding the Cadiz Voyage. He asked the Secretary to persuade the Queen to prevent the diversion of the captains from this expedition to the relief of Calais because he felt that this would doom the venture to failure before it had even begun.¹¹¹ Just prior to the Islands Voyage, he again entreated Cecil to act as an intermediary to the Queen, and it was after this latter expedition that his commitment to the Secretary really became noticeable.¹¹² Not surprisingly, it was also at this time that Vere's relations with Essex rapidly deteriorated.

A brief glance at the distribution of Vere's correspondence clearly demonstrates his change of allegiance between 1597 and 1598, and from this latter date onwards, his letters to Cecil were far more frequent than to any other recipient.¹¹³ His new alliance seemed to quickly flourish and soon proved profitable. As with his other connections at court, Vere's affiliation with Cecil was founded upon the supplying of information by one party and the maintenance of Elizabeth's favour by the other. The Secretary's intervention on his protégé's behalf was soon demonstrated, for he was most probably responsible for securing Vere the Governorship of Brill in 1598. The English General was rivalled for this honour by Sir Robert Sidney, whom Essex chose to support.¹¹⁴ Vere's loyalty to Cecil and hostility towards Essex were by now clearly apparent. He claimed: 'as I had good cause to doubt my Lord of Essex would not further me in that suit, so I was as loth to have any thing by his means in the terms I then stood in with his Lordship; much lesse by any other persons that were known his opposers', yet he subsequently approached Cecil to ask for his assistance.¹¹⁵ Both Vere and Sidney presented their causes to the Council,¹¹⁶ and the former claimed that he did so in such a humble and unbiased way that: 'Master Secretary took occasion merrily to say to my Lords, that they might see what a difference there was betwixt the care of Sir Francis Vere, a neutrall man, and that of my Lord Sidney, that spake for his own

¹¹¹ HMC, *Sal*, VI, Vere to Cecil, 18 May 1596, 189

¹¹² *SP 84*, LIV, fo.82, Vere to Cecil, 20 February 1597

¹¹³ See figure 7. N.B. In September 1599, Sir Rowland Whyte observed that 'many kind letters' had passed between Cecil and Vere whilst the latter was in the Netherlands. Collins, II, Whyte to Sidney, 12 September 1599, 121

¹¹⁴ This marked a complete reversal of the situation preceding Lord Sheffield's appointment to the Brill a year earlier. Then, Essex had 'smiled at' Sidney's application for the governorship, and had instead 'delt very earnestly' for Vere. HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 5 November 1597, 302. It has also been suggested that on this occasion, the Earl sought the post for himself. Devereux, I, 401

¹¹⁵ *Vere's Commentaries*, 68-71

¹¹⁶ Vere was also rivalled for this post by Lord Grey, who apparently 'stuck longer to it, and was earnest' than Sidney. *Vere's Commentaries*, 71. This caused a dispute between the two men - one which was to later resurface when Grey took up a command in the Netherlands. See below, footnote 194

Government'. Cecil apparently gave Vere's cause 'his best furtherance',¹¹⁷ and, despite Essex's 'care to hold me back', succeeded in inciting the rest of the Council to agree to the appointment.¹¹⁸

Vere's affiliation with Cecil continued to flourish throughout the remainder of that year and into the next. It proved particularly useful when Vere was seeking Elizabeth's consent for him to accept the States General's offer of the Generalship. She was apparently unenthusiastic about the idea, but Cecil persuaded her of its merits and her consent was subsequently given. Vere humbly thanked Cecil for this, and his words confirmed that he had come to view him as his main advocate and protector at court. He wrote: 'I have infinyte cause of comfort in your honours care of me, by whose only meanes my cause prevaylead agaynst the opposition of no smale personages, who perchance had endeavoured to dyvert her Majesties most gratyous inclynatyon more ought of regard to theyr pryvate ends, then for any publyck effeact.' By 'smale personages', Vere was no doubt referring to Essex, which suggests that by this time he had abandoned all hope of renewing his former attachment, and had directed his energies towards maintaining Cecil's patronage. Grateful for the Secretary's valuable service in the matter of the Generalship, Vere begged him to continue their alliance, and stressed that he would serve his patron in any way possible.¹¹⁹

Sir Francis was not to be disappointed by his patron, and his advocacy proved particularly vital early in the following year. As mentioned above, Essex's dispute with Vere over the withdrawal of troops for Ireland threatened to ruin his standing at court completely. Perceiving Cecil to be Essex's main adversary there, Vere relied upon him to offset the damaging effects of the Earl's activities. In the midst of the controversy, he wrote to Cecil, pleading: 'I see my courses wylbe sinisterly construead, and thearfore am forcead styll to entreat the contynuanee of your favor to the cleeryng her Majesties mynde of any offence conceavead for my carriadge in this searvice

¹¹⁷ Gleig, however, seems unconvinced of Cecil's endeavours on Vere's behalf, commenting that the latter was but 'feebly supported' by him. Gleig, *Military Commanders*, 159

¹¹⁸ *Vere's Commentaries*, 68-71; ARA, Lias. Lop., 4891, Vere to States General, 16 April 1599; HMC, *Sal*, VIII, Conway to Essex, 13 August 1598, 305; *CSPD*, (1598-1601), Grant of the Governorship of Brill to Vere, 8 October 1598. The Court commentator, John Chamberlain, observed how hard Vere had worked to secure the Governorship, claiming that he had used 'much heave and shove' in the matter. *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 3 and 20 October 1598, 46, 49; Vere had hedged his bets somewhat in this affair because, despite their alienation, he had also asked Essex to favour his cause, but his former ally was by then too alienated from him to comply. In fact, such was the degree of this alienation that Vere's appointment was allegedly 'heavily stomached' by the Earl. Camden, *Historie*, iv, 96. HMC, *Sal*, VII, Vere to Essex, 20 February and 2 November 1597, 75-6, 462

¹¹⁹ *SP 84*, LVII, fo 197, Vere to Cecil, 17 December 1598. See also: fo.s 153 and 168, 3 and 29 November 1598

which finishead as I hope itt is, thear is smale lykehood of any other occasyon to geave my enemyes howld of me.’¹²⁰ Again, it appeared that the Secretary acted swiftly and effectively to preserve his protégé’s reputation, for Vere was soon writing to thank him for securing ‘her Hyghnes good opinion’.¹²¹ Later that year, when Vere was in England as part of the defence force that Elizabeth had assembled in preparation for the imminent invasion attempt by Spain, Rowland Whyte noted that Cecil had presented him to the Queen, ‘with whom he was long, and very graciously used’, and that he ‘gives him all Grace.’¹²²

The benefits of this alliance continued to flow for the remainder of Vere’s ascendancy. It is likely that Cecil was amongst those who promoted Vere’s role in the battle of Nieuwpoort, ensuring that the Queen would be impressed by his endeavours.¹²³ Shortly afterwards, Cecil secured a levy of soldiers to supplement the English General’s company at Ostend, and did so again the following year, confiding to his brother: ‘There is no man more interested in his good success than I am.’¹²⁴ He also defended Vere in the controversy that arose with the Earl of Northumberland in 1601-2.¹²⁵ He presented a favourable account of Sir Francis’ actions in a letter to his brother, and was probably also responsible for bringing the Queen herself to a similar opinion.¹²⁶ Later in 1602, he helped to restore Vere to Elizabeth’s favour, from which he had apparently been removed by his enemies at court. They had apparently capitalised upon her disapproval of Vere’s recall of the English troops from the invasion of Flanders, which he insisted he had been ordered to do by the States. Temporarily incapacitated by a bullet wound whilst fighting at Grave, the General asked Captain Robert Wigmore to present his account of events to Cecil, who could thereby pacify the Queen. This was apparently carried out to good effect, for Sir Edward Conway shortly afterwards conveyed Vere’s gratitude to the Secretary: ‘He offers his humble thanks to you as to the only means of bringing his innocency to her Majesty’s knowledge...through all the opposite suggestions.’¹²⁷ Cecil again intervened on Vere’s behalf the following year by supporting his

¹²⁰ LVIII, fo.70, Vere to Cecil, 15 February 1599

¹²¹ *ibid.*, fo.106, Vere to Cecil, 13 March 1599. See also: fo.1, Vere to Cecil, 1 January 1599

¹²² Collins, II, Whyte to Sidney, 12 September 1599, 121

¹²³ Rowland Whyte told Sidney: ‘Sir Francis Vere’s friends in Court commend his great service’. HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 7 July 1600, 472

¹²⁴ *SP 84*, LX ii, fo.278, Vere to Cecil, 19 August 1600; LXI, fo.205, Cecil to Vere, 8 August 1601; *CSPD*, (1601-03), Cecil to Burghley, 15 July 1601, 70

¹²⁵ See below, 211

¹²⁶ *CSPD*, (1601-03), Cecil to Burghley, 15 July 1601, 70

¹²⁷ HMC, *Sal*, XII, Wigmore to Cecil, 28 August 1602, 327-8; Conway to Cecil, 6 September 1602, 353

attempts to secure full jurisdiction over the English auxiliaries, unrestricted by the Dutch authorities.¹²⁸

From the Vere's point of view, therefore, the patronage that he had received from the Secretary was useful - perhaps even fundamental - to the maintenance of his reputation at court and his general standing in the Netherlands. Yet Cecil also benefited from this connection. He could apparently be certain of Vere's devotion to him, for as well as the latter's protestations, his own nephew, Edward, who was serving under the English General, reported that he 'doth both highly reverence you and greatly respect those that belong to you.'¹²⁹ If Cecil could rely upon Vere's loyalty, then it would seem that he could also rely upon his usefulness. As with his former patrons, Vere supplied the Secretary with a stream of information regarding Dutch affairs. For example, during the summer months of 1598, he gave a commentary of the progress of the negotiations for a treaty revision.¹³⁰ Two years later, he kept his patron abreast of the States' opinions regarding the possibility of an Anglo-Spanish peace, as well as their consideration of an alliance with France.¹³¹ Cecil evidently encouraged Vere to supply such information. In September 1600, Vere stated: 'accordyng to your dyrectyones I have sowndead the myndes of some of the cheef of theas men touchyng the renforcyng of her Majesties townes with men and the payment of them.'¹³² Similarly, the following summer, he vowed: 'I doe now take howld of your Honours commaundment to wryte freely of thynges', and went on to give an account of Maurice's plans to invade Flanders.¹³³

It would therefore seem that the alliance between Vere and Cecil was of benefit to both parties. However, it did not escape the intrigues of malevolent persons at court, and as a result, towards the end of Vere's ascendancy there was a deterioration of his relations with the Secretary. The first controversy arose over the English General's treatment of Sir Calisthenes Brooke. Vere evidently did not rate this captain very highly and alleged that he was not committed to the war

¹²⁸ *SP 84*, LXII, fo.s 286, 292 and 303, Vere to Cecil, 7 January, 6 and February 1603; LXIV, fo.90, Vere's Petition to the Privy Council [1603]. See chapter 5, 233-5

¹²⁹ HMC, *Sal*, X, Edward Cecil to Robert Cecil, 9 February 1600, 31. N.B. Vere and Edward Cecil were apparently good friends, and the evidence suggests that Sir Robert certainly believed them to be so. *CSPD*, (1601-03), Cecil to Burghley, 15 July 1601, 69

¹³⁰ *SP 84*, LVI, fo.171, Vere to Cecil, 16 June 1598; fo.s 177 and 181, Vere and Gilpin to Cecil, 21 and 29 June 1598; LVII, fo.1, Vere and Gilpin to Cecil, 1 July 1598; fo.168, Vere to Cecil, 29 November 1598

¹³¹ LX i, fo.106, Vere to Cecil, 20 April 1600

¹³² LX ii, fo.310, Vere to Cecil, 10 September 1600

¹³³ LXI, fo.104, Vere to Cecil, 9 June 1601; BM MS, Cotton Galba D, XII, fo.318, Vere to Cecil, 3 September 1601

effort in the Provinces.¹³⁴ However, his enemies at Court accused him of treating Brooke too harshly, and they implied as much to Cecil. Vere soon heard of this, and immediately wrote to his patron, urging him not to give any credit to these 'synyster suggestiones' which aimed to 'alyenatt your good conceypt of me, in which I have lodgead all my hopes'.¹³⁵ A few months later, Vere's enemies again seemed to have been at work because Cecil received news that the troops at Ostend were in 'extreme pouvertye' and had been subject to the English General's 'undiscreet adventuryng'. Vere denied both of these charges, expressing himself to be 'nott a lyttle sorye' that his patron had heard them, and he was evidently afraid of the effect that they might have: 'I take itt the mallyce of the reaporers poynteathe att me, butt I should be muche more agrieved if I thought your Honour gave creditt thearunto to the deminyshing of your favor and good opinion of me'.¹³⁶ This controversy appeared to subside, but it was rapidly replaced by another of a similar nature to the first. Cecil had evidently recommended a soldier named Connisby to serve with Vere in Ostend, but again the latter disapproved of him, and even accused him of dealing with Spain. He therefore had him arrested, tried and tortured, and finally ordered that he be 'whypead and turnead out of the towne.'¹³⁷ His adversaries at Court were quick to seize upon this opportunity to sever his alliance with the Secretary, and the following month Vere was again offering a justification of his actions and pleading: 'I am exseedyng sorye to undrestand thatt your Honour lykeathe nott of my proceedyng with Connysbye'. He insisted that he had not acted thus for want of due respect to him, but rather because he was too preoccupied with securing the town to have time to 'waye every circumstance'. In his accustomed style, he ended by reaffirming his loyalty and entreating Cecil not to abandon him, protesting that he had 'spryghtly humoread and lovead you' since the beginning of their attachment.¹³⁸ The damage had apparently already been done, however, and from thenceforth Cecil seemed to grow increasingly wary and intolerant of his protégé. In September 1602, he informed Vere that Elizabeth proposed to give a company to Mr. Warbeston and, anticipating his intransigence, he wrote: 'I am the rather induced seriously to advise you not to neclect in this particuler her majesty's satisfacyon', because it would convince her 'that you are apt [to] take any collour to cross her majesty's contentment.'¹³⁹

¹³⁴ *SP 84*, LXI, fo.67, Vere to Lord Cobham, 21 February 1601

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, fo.69, Vere to Cecil, 30 March 1601; fo.36, Gilpin to Cecil, 13 February 1601; fo.43, Brookes to Cecil, 15 February 1601; HMC, *Sal*, XI, Brookes to Cobham, (1)/11 April 1601, 154

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, fo.195, Vere to Cecil, 1 August 1601

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, fo.354, Vere to Cecil, 11 November 1601

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, fo.390, Vere to Cecil, 21 December 1601

¹³⁹ LXII, fo.237, Cecil to Vere, September 1602. The demise of Vere's connection with Cecil was apparently symptomatic of his increasing unpopularity - both in England and, as will be discussed in the ensuing chapter, in

In fact, Vere's alliance with Cecil was arguably neither as close or amicable as his attachment to Essex had been, for while the Secretary undoubtedly intervened on his protégé's behalf and seemed to have a high regard for his military prowess,¹⁴⁰ he apparently had little affection for him, and even less patience for his constant protestations of humble gratitude.¹⁴¹ On one occasion, Vere wrote that he was 'excedyng sorye' that Cecil had refused a token of thanks that he had sent him, but nevertheless persisted: 'I most humbly beseache your Honour nott to barr me uttrely in the satisfying of my sealf with theas gratefull demonstratyones'.¹⁴² The relationship between Vere and Cecil always appeared slightly one-sided in terms of respect and affection - the former demonstrating these to excess and the latter scarcely at all. But Sir Francis seemed stubbornly undeterred by his patron's obvious coolness towards him, and never failed to assure him of his loyalty and devotion.¹⁴³ It is unlikely, however, that Vere's humility was genuine, and one should perhaps view it instead as a means by which he strove to maintain Cecil's favour. After all, the two men had rather less in common than Vere had had with Essex. Cecil shared his father's aversion to active English involvement on the Continent (including the Netherlands), and was inclined to favour peace with Spain.¹⁴⁴ He therefore stood against the very cause for which Vere was fighting, and did not offer him the same opportunities for military advancement that Essex had done. Nevertheless, during the later 1590s, he was arguably the most influential member of both the Privy Council and the Court as a whole, and Elizabeth trusted his judgement and advice. Alliance with him was therefore something of a necessary evil for Vere.

the Netherlands. In February 1602, Vere's cousin, Sir John Holles, reprimanded him for failing to visit at Christmas as promised, and observed: 'I am sorrie by your neglecting your frends, enemies renforce every day against yow'. BM MS, Additional, 32464, fo.18

¹⁴⁰ *CSPD*, (1601-03), Cecil to Burghley, 15 July 1601, 69-70

¹⁴¹ Cecil also complained that he could not read his handwriting, and Vere was therefore compelled to employ someone to write his letters to the Secretary. *SP* 84, LXII, fo.292, Vere to Cecil, 6 February 1602

¹⁴² LVIII, fo.161, Vere to Cecil, 16 May 1599

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, fo.218, Vere to Cecil, 23 July 1599

¹⁴⁴ The contrast between Cecil's and Essex's views on foreign policy is thus aptly summed up by Hammer: 'Essex championed the belief that England's destiny lay with Europe, while the Cecils ultimately sought to safeguard the integrity of the British Isles'. 'Patronage at Court', 74. Nevertheless, perhaps one should not necessarily assume that Cecil's views on England's involvement in Continental warfare were so clear-cut. In a letter to Sidney, dated 12 August 1601, Sir William Browne described a meeting that he had had with the Queen and Cecil, in which they had discussed the military campaigns in the Netherlands. He told how in the course of their discussion, Elizabeth had said to him: 'Doest thow see that little fellow that kneeles there; itt hath bene told you, that he hath bene an Enemy to Souldiours; on my Faith, Browne, he is the best Frend the Souldiers have.' HMC, *D&D*, II, Browne to Sidney, 12 August 1601, 533. This is supported by Cecil's own testimony. In a letter to his brother, written at about the same time, he confessed that while he loved peace, he was disillusioned with 'how little the King of Spain affects it', and with how he used it as a means to 'make us leave the Low Countries' while he himself continued to intervene in Ireland. *CSPD*, (1601-03), Cecil to Burghley, 15 July 1601, 70-1

In spite of its rather shaky foundations, their attachment endured for the remainder of the reign, and this testifies to Vere's skill in using and maintaining his contacts at court. It is possible he believed that the best way of retaining Cecil's patronage was by establishing other contacts within his party. This is suggested by the fact that, from 1599 onwards, he began to court the favour of the Earl of Nottingham who, together with the Secretary and Sir Walter Raleigh, led the anti-Essex coalition.¹⁴⁵ It would therefore seem that he was willing to underplay his own views on policy in the interest of maintaining powerful contacts at court. Vere increasingly began to write to Nottingham and Cecil jointly, and this became particularly noticeable during the year 1601, when these letters comprised more than a third of the total that he wrote to the Secretary. His efforts apparently paid off, for Nottingham proved quite eager to protect Vere's interests at court. During Vere's stay in England in autumn 1599, Nottingham presented him at court and acted as his guardian, deflecting the ill graces of his protégé's adversaries there. Whyte noted that the Lords Mountjoy and Sussex had snubbed Vere and refused to acknowledge his presence: 'which the Earle tooke very ill, and began to chaffe at it.'¹⁴⁶ The following year, Whyte again observed that Nottingham 'doth Sir Francis Vere a great deal of honour', and he was no doubt among those at court who commended the English General's contribution to the Nieuwpoort victory at this time.¹⁴⁷

Vere therefore succeeded in securing and maintaining the patronage of Cecil, as well as of various other influential contacts, and this is all the more admirable in view of his unavoidable and prolonged absence from court. It could be argued that this prevented him from growing as great there as his patrons, for it must have been extremely hazardous to intervene in the volatile sphere of English politics from a distance, considering the slow conveyance of letters and the Queen's tendency to favour those whom she encountered most often. Yet in spite of this absence, it would seem that Vere still managed to gain Elizabeth's favour, and according to the traditional view, their relationship was one of mutual harmony and respect. Markham's interpretation has rested largely unchallenged, and suggests that Vere's devotion to his sovereign was matched by her high opinion of him. He asserts: 'The first romance of Vere's life was his devoted loyalty to

¹⁴⁵ Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham, had served alongside Vere in the Cadiz Voyage, and there is little doubt of the antagonism between him and Essex. They quarrelled upon returning from the voyage, when Elizabeth bestowed the Earldom upon Howard in recognition of his service in that expedition. Adamant that his own contribution had been greater, Essex complained bitterly and protested that the Earldom was rightfully his. The Queen later appeased him by giving him the title of Earl Marshal, but Nottingham immediately objected that he had an hereditary right to this post. Devereux, I, 467-72

¹⁴⁶ HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 12 September, 20 and 31 October 1599, 389, 404, 408; Collins, II, Whyte to Sidney, 8 September 1599, 120; Gilpin to Sidney, 28 October 1599, 137

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, Whyte to Sidney, 7 July 1600, 472

Queen Elizabeth. It may seem that his devotion was poorly requited, but it was not so. The Queen, who was a good judge of character, considered Vere to be the best general in her service.¹⁴⁸ He perhaps based his observation upon Naunton's comment that although Vere only rarely came to court, when he did, 'no man had more of the queene's favour', and that, 'They report that the queene, as she loved martiall men, would court this gentleman as soon as he appeared in her presence.'¹⁴⁹ Much of the contemporary correspondence supports this view. Rowland Whyte, for example, observed: 'her Majesty is often heard to say, that she holds him the worthiest captain of her time'.¹⁵⁰ Bodley was convinced of Vere's devotion to his sovereign, and told Burghley: 'To say but a truth unto your Lordship I doe finde him so considerat and carefull, to doe her Majestie honor in all his actions in these contreis, and his sufficiencie is suche, for the accomplishing of thatt belongeth to his charge, as her Majestie may expect very singular service at his handes.'¹⁵¹

Vere himself often protested his loyalty and devotion to Elizabeth. In a letter to Burghley, written early in 1591, he declared that her recent favour towards him 'hath geaven me exseedng content, and inflamead me with a most zealous desire to deserve by all meanes possible the continuance of her gracious conceypt towards me.'¹⁵² Similarly, in 1599, he referred to 'the zeale I bear to her Majesties prosperytie'. He frequently insisted that the sole purpose of his endeavours in the Netherlands and elsewhere was to serve Elizabeth well, describing this as 'the wholl happines of my liffe.'¹⁵³ Indeed, he rejoiced whenever he received a sign of her favour towards him, and it seemed to inspire him to continue serving her with even more zeal than before. In July 1600, for example, he stated that he had been 'exceedynglye comfortead' by some letters from the Queen, believing that they derived 'from thatt most pryncely favor which I have ever promysead my sealf, and confidentlye relyead on'.¹⁵⁴ The following year, reassurance of her favour was apparently enough to heal the wounds that had incapacitated him during the siege of Ostend, as Captain Wigmore reported: 'Her Majesty's most gracious letters to the noble Sir Francis Vere hath so revived his bleeding spirits as from henceforth he will have little need of other physic.'¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁸ Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 362

¹⁴⁹ Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia*, 146. Furthermore, the very fact that Naunton included Vere in his description of Elizabeth's chief courtiers and favourites suggests that she held a high regard for him.

¹⁵⁰ HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 16 October 1599, 402. See also: *ibid.*, 7 July 1600, 472

¹⁵¹ *SP 84*, XLI, fo.151, Bodley to Burghley, 9 February 1591

¹⁵² *ibid.* fo.126, Vere to Burghley, 3 February 1591

¹⁵³ LVIII, fo.106, Vere to Cecil, 13 March 1599

¹⁵⁴ LX i, fo.228, Vere to Cecil, 15 July 1600

¹⁵⁵ HMC, *Sal*, XI, Wigmore to Cecil, 24 August 1601, 358

Almost exactly a year later, her letters worked a similarly striking effect. Again, he was convalescing after being injured when he received the first of these, reprimanding him for his recent actions at Ostend, and according to Wigmore, this 'extraordinarily afflicted' him. A short while later, when Elizabeth reassured him of her goodwill towards him, his health was apparently restored, as Conway reported: 'there sprang from him so many signs of comfort and so much joy, as he showing no remembrance of his hurt, I had a long time almost forgotten that he had one.'¹⁵⁶ Vere was evidently aware of how tenuous his hold upon her favour was, and there is nothing to suggest that the longer he served as her commander, the less anxious he became about retaining his position. As late as 1597, he confided in Essex: 'I am even now so far in the world that I can be held up only by her Majesty's employments and bounty.'¹⁵⁷

Elizabeth often praised her General highly and seemed to place a great deal of trust in his abilities. As mentioned in the previous chapter, she entrusted him to carry out a number of diplomatic missions, and also valued his skills as a soldier. She relayed her respect for him to the Dutch leaders, and in a letter to Maurice, referred to his 'vertus et valeur'.¹⁵⁸ In a similar vein, she wrote to the States General, saying that there was no need to recommend him to them because they were already 'trèsbien cognu au regard de l'entendement et expérience qu'il a aux affaires de la guerre.'¹⁵⁹ She seemed pleased when she heard that they intended to make him a Colonel in their service, and expressed her satisfaction that they had chosen to honour him in this way. Referring to him as her 'bien aymé serviteur et subject', she went on to praise him highly: 'car comme nous le cognoissons pour gentilhomme si bien accompli en toutes vertues et perfections, tant civiles, qu'appartenantes à la guerre, qu'il seroit chose bien difficile, de trouver aulcun de sa qualité, qui l'advançast en merite'.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, when recommending Vere to the States as her envoy in 1598, she referred to the 'zeste à la preudhomme et fidelité dudict Sieur Veer, dont en toutes ses employements il a tousjours donné de preuves suffisantes, et pour tel nous le vous recommandons.'¹⁶¹ Later that year, she informed them that she had given him the Governorship of Brill, claiming that he was a 'personnage que nous avons jugé trèsdigne de tel Estat'.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ XII, Wigmore to Cecil, 28 August 1602, 327; Conway to Cecil, 6 September 1602, 353

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, VII, Vere to Essex, 20 February 1597, 75

¹⁵⁸ SP 84, XLVI, fo.52, Elizabeth to Maurice, 14 March 1593

¹⁵⁹ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 II, Elizabeth to States General, 31 May 1593

¹⁶⁰ SP 84, XLVI, fo.229, Elizabeth to States General, 27 July 1593

¹⁶¹ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Elizabeth to States General, 7 June 1598

¹⁶² *ibid.*, Elizabeth to States General, 10 October 1598. Camden implies that Vere gained this appointment solely because of Elizabeth's respect for his military endeavours, rather than because of any intervention by his patrons. *Historie*, iv, 96

Elizabeth also let Vere himself know how highly she valued his military skills. When writing to recall him for the Cadiz Voyage, she declared: 'we accompt you amongst our servantes to be of good experience and understanding in Martiall employement'.¹⁶³ After the expedition had returned, Essex reported that the Queen had convened a meeting of 'such persons as were experienced in martial courses, that by them some advice might be given her', and Vere was included in this.¹⁶⁴ In 1597, she warmly congratulated him for the part he had played in the victory at Turnhout, and following his contribution to the battle of Nieuwpoort in July 1600, she ordered Sir Thomas Shirley, the English Treasurer in the Netherlands, to supply him with all his outstanding pay, allowances and entertainments as a recognition of the good opinion that she had of him and of all the services he had done for her.¹⁶⁵

However, if Vere's *Commentaries* is to be believed, the clearest example of Elizabeth's high opinion of her General was his visit to court following the Islands Voyage of 1597. As mentioned above, he attempted to defend Essex's actions in this voyage, realising that he was in disgrace for its failure, and his intervention seemed to have a quite dramatic effect upon the Queen. His account implies that he was close to her, stressing that he went straight to the gardens where he knew she would be, and would use nobody's help to gain access to her. It reports that as soon as she saw him, she called him to her and listened attentively as he defended the Earl's conduct. She allegedly took this speech to heart and went from being 'greatly incensed' against Essex to giving him 'much commendation'.¹⁶⁶ Yet his account is not corroborated by any other contemporary source, and even if it is accurate, it does not necessarily prove that he enjoyed a great deal of influence with the Queen. At this stage, Essex was still high in favour, and the disgrace that he suffered after the Islands Voyage was only likely to have endured for as long as he stayed away from court and allowed his enemies to stir up Elizabeth's anger against him. Vere's defence may well have helped to pave the way for a renewal of her favour towards him when he did return to her presence, but this was perhaps inevitable anyway: he had not yet committed an offence serious enough to cost him her favour for good.

¹⁶³ *SP 84*, LII, fo.15, Elizabeth to Vere, 13 January 1596

¹⁶⁴ *HMC, Sal*, VI, Essex to Cecil, 3 November 1596, 469

¹⁶⁵ *SP 84*, LIV, fo.66, Elizabeth to Vere, 5 February 1597; *LX i* fo.392, Elizabeth to Shirley [c.1600]; *HMC, D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 7 July 1600, 472

¹⁶⁶ *Vere's Commentaries*, 66. Similarly, during the peace negotiations of 1598, Vere reported that he had talked at length with the Queen, and had been 'well heard'. *HMC, Sal*, VIII, Vere to Essex, 10 July 1598, 256

In spite of Vere's testimony, there can be little justification for asserting that the Queen viewed her General as one of her closest favourites, as Markham implies. He claims that by the late 1590s: 'He scarcely needed an advocate, for her appreciation of the merits of her general had been shown by entrusting to him the conduct of intricate negotiations, by giving him command of all English troops in the field, and conferring on him the government of Brill.'¹⁶⁷ While she almost certainly respected him for his military and diplomatic abilities, however, she very rarely consulted him on matters of policy, and instead relied upon him to carry out her policies rather than to advise upon them. In any case, his absence from court made it inevitable that his contact with her would be mainly through intermediaries, all of whom were her close favourites, and even though he often gave the impression that he fell into this latter category, he most probably realised that he could never aspire to the lofty positions enjoyed by the likes of Burghley, Essex and Cecil. The fact that he relied almost exclusively upon his patrons at court to maintain his favour with Elizabeth, rather than writing to her directly, suggests that he realised his influence with her was not as great as he implied.

Indeed, Vere seemed so reluctant to write to his sovereign that he sometimes had to be incited to do so. For example, in the summer of 1594, Burghley notified him of Elizabeth's displeasure at his 'slacknes in wrytinge', but even then Vere delayed his response until December.¹⁶⁸ In fact, the letter that he then wrote to his sovereign is the only one that can be found in the printed and manuscript collections that I have consulted, and as such contrasts markedly to his regular dispatches to the rest of the Court. On this occasion, he wrote to notify her of the outcome of the proposition that she had instructed him to make to the States regarding the withdrawal of troops for France. He attempted to offset some of the damage that had been caused by his long delay in replying to her, and expressed regret that he was 'uncleared of the blame layde one [sic] me, and of the conceipt your Majestie nourrisheth of my evill carriage'. There followed a lengthy justification of his actions and an eloquent protestation of his devotion to her, as he declared himself to be 'your Highnes most faitfull, lovinge, obedient subjecte, and bounden servante, that will ever praye for the preservation of your Majesties liffe and happinesse.'¹⁶⁹ Vere evidently held out little hope that his correspondence with the Queen would restore him to her favour, however, and the following month he reverted to his accustomed policy of using intermediaries to achieve this end. He wrote to Burghley, saying: 'I doe nott knowe howe itt hathe pleasead her

¹⁶⁷ Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 271

¹⁶⁸ *SP 84*, XLIX, fo.90, Vere to Burghley, 10 August 1594

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, fo.257, Vere to Elizabeth, 20 December 1594

Majestie to conceive of me synce my lettre of excuse, butt lyve in good hope thatt by your Honours meanes I shall enjoy her Hyghnes wontead favor'.¹⁷⁰ In fact, Vere was to be kept in suspense throughout that year, and it was only at the beginning of the next, when Elizabeth wrote to recall him for the Cadiz Voyage, that he seemed to have been forgiven.¹⁷¹

It would therefore appear that Vere's accustomed policy of relying upon his contacts at Court to maintain his favour with the Queen was a wise one. He seemed to realise that he was not able to influence her opinion significantly on his own, despite boasting otherwise, and was therefore compelled to capitalise upon his attachment with those who could. This was particularly prudent in view of her rather capricious attitude, which meant that only those who were closest to her could judge how best to present his cause. As such, Vere's contact with his sovereign was therefore somewhat indirect, and, for the most part, this was also true of her contact with him. She seemed to rely upon his patrons at court to convey her messages or decisions to him, and by comparison only wrote to him directly on very rare occasions. When the Queen did write in person to her General, it was almost invariably to ensure that he would secure the withdrawal of her forces from the Provinces. Only on these occasions, when she was particularly anxious that he should act quickly and effectively, did she deem it necessary to do so.¹⁷² She wrote to him during the preparations for both the Cadiz and Islands Voyages in order to enlist his help. At first, the purpose of the Islands Voyage letter seemed to be to congratulate him upon the victory at Turnhout, but her real motive for writing soon became apparent. She told her General that she had written to the States, requesting a contribution of troops for the Voyage, and she incited him to 'putt all furtherance to it which you can yeald, and by all good meanes you may to advance by such credit as you have...the Speedy accomplishing of our sayd demand'.¹⁷³ Likewise, towards the end of 1598, Elizabeth asked Vere to secure the withdrawal of 2,000 troops from the Netherlands.¹⁷⁴ Later that year, the fear of a renewed Spanish invasion attempt had reached its height, and Elizabeth resolved to take defensive measures. Anxious that the States should adhere to the treaty and provide troops and ships for this purpose, she instructed Vere to present her case to them, requesting the withdrawal of her own forces, as well as theirs, and the contribution of sufficient naval support.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁰ L, fo.19, Vere to Burghley, 24 January 1595

¹⁷¹ LII, fo.15, Elizabeth to Vere, 15 January 1596

¹⁷² As with her letters to so many of her subjects, she began those to Vere with the words: 'Trustie and welbeloved we great you well.'

¹⁷³ SP 84, LIV, fo.66, Elizabeth to Vere, 5 February 1597; LII, fo.15, Elizabeth to Vere, 13 January 1596

¹⁷⁴ LVII, fo. 188, Elizabeth to Vere, 15 December 1598; LIX, fo.223, Elizabeth to Vere, [December] 1598

¹⁷⁵ HMC, *Foljambe*, Elizabeth to Vere, 25 July 1597, 69-71

It would therefore appear that the Queen only wrote to Vere directly as an insurance measure: a means by which she could more or less guarantee his compliance with her wishes. This policy was largely effective, for he was less likely to contravene his instructions when he had received them from her hands, rather than via Burghley or Cecil. The fact that she wrote to her General so infrequently, and only when she considered it absolutely necessary to do so, suggests that she did not consider him a close favourite. Vere's reluctance to correspond directly with his sovereign indicates a recognition of this fact. Therefore, although their relationship remained quite harmonious throughout his ascendancy, or at least was not disrupted by any major upsets, it was by no means as strong as its endurance suggests. The English General's enforced reliance upon the leaders of the factions at court had inherent and very real dangers, for if he were to lose their favour, he could all too easily lose that of the Queen, as his rift with Essex proved. This would explain his attempt to limit the danger by attaching himself to opposing figures - at least then, if he lost the favour of one, he could fall back on the favour of the other, as he did with Cecil following the Essex controversy.

The reliance upon intermediaries was not the only weakness inherent in the relationship between Vere and Elizabeth. One enduring source of tension between them was the problem of resources, just as this had beset her relations with Leicester and Willoughby. Vere evidently resented her repeated recall of large numbers of his troops for expeditions and campaigns that he mostly viewed as being of less importance than those in the Netherlands.¹⁷⁶ He realised the danger inherent in objecting to these withdrawals, and tended to obstruct them covertly by sending the weakest forces under his command. He did so towards the end of 1591, for example, when he was ordered to levy troops for France, and incurred the Queen's 'heavy displeasure' by providing a sub-standard body of men.¹⁷⁷ As well as resenting his sovereign's tendency to withdraw her troops from the Provinces, Sir Francis was also annoyed by her apparent reluctance to forward adequate supplies. He perceived this reluctance from the very beginning of his Generalship, and as soon as he had received his commission, he wrote to Burghley, begging him to make the Queen realise that the Provinces were likely to fall into great danger 'if forthwith they be nott soucured with her forses.'¹⁷⁸ The following year, the need for supplies had become so acute that Vere was

¹⁷⁶ *SP 84*, XLVI, fo.177, Vere to Burghley, 16 June 1593. Fortescue clearly empathises with Vere's predicament: 'as fast as he trained them into soldiers, Elizabeth required their services for her own purposes, and frittered them away in petty meaningless operations in France, filling their place with some more of the very scum of the world, which could be swept out of the gaols and taverns at a moment's notice.' *British Army*, 156

¹⁷⁷ *SP 84*, XLVI, fo.21, Vere to Privy Council, 13 January 1592; fo.23, Vere to Burghley, 13 January 1592

¹⁷⁸ XXXIV, fo.94, Vere to Burghley, 21(?) August 1589

willing to risk incurring the Queen's wrath to obtain them, for he wrote: 'if itt may please your Lordship thatt 300 men may be sent over I wyll bear the blame of her Majestie'.¹⁷⁹ Her failure to forward supplies was still causing resentment by the turn of the century. This came to the fore most notably during the siege of Ostend. Vere's frequent requests for aid did work some effect, for in July 1601 Elizabeth sent over 1,000 troops, but she had promised 3,000, and Vere urged her to send the rest as soon as possible.¹⁸⁰ The following month, 800 of these arrived, but Vere complained that they were 'nothyng comparable to the fyrst 1000, and manye of them so unfytt to bear armes, thatt instantlye I dischargead them.'¹⁸¹ Apparently undeterred, he urged his sovereign to send more troops and supplies. The fact that she did not do so made his relations with her somewhat fraught and his task at Ostend extremely hazardous, particularly as the States seemed equally reluctant to adhere to his requests.¹⁸²

Another source of tension between the Queen and her General was her jealousy of his favour with the States.¹⁸³ In particular, she seemed suspicious of the two promotions that this favour had secured him: the Colonelship of 1593 and the Generalship of 1598. By contrast, she was evidently unwilling to bestow high titles upon him. Although she had agreed to his appointment as Sergeant Major General in 1589, throughout his long ascendancy she chose not to enhance his status to that of General or Lieutenant, and this may have caused the ambitious Vere some resentment. In fact, throughout his ascendancy, he was to receive little advancement at her hands. While she did bestow upon him the Governorship of Brill in 1598, this was mainly due to Cecil's intervention, for she had originally intended to give this post to Lord Sheffield.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, towards the end of her life, Elizabeth refused to make her General a peer when she was asked to do so, claiming: 'In his proper sphere, and in my estimation, Sir Francis Vere is above a peerage already. All that could be expected from such an addition would be the entombing of the spirit of a brave soldier in the corpse of a less sightly courtier; and by tempting him from that charge, hazard that repute upon a carpet which his valour has clearly published him in the field.'¹⁸⁵ In fact, as Lawrence Stone has pointed out, Elizabeth had always been reluctant to create peers, and

¹⁷⁹ XXXVIII, fo.184, Vere to Burghley, 17 August 1590

¹⁸⁰ LXI, fo.151, Vere to Nottingham and Cecil, 14 July 1601

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, fo.193, Vere to Nottingham and Cecil, 1 August 1601; fo.300, Vere to Cecil, 14 September 1601

¹⁸² *ibid.*, fo.318, Vere to Cecil, 22 September 1601

¹⁸³ This will be discussed at greater length in the ensuing chapter, 237-40

¹⁸⁴ LVII, fo.112, Instructions for Lord Sheffield, 10 October 1598; fo.145, Oath of Sir Francis Vere on admission as Governor of Brille; LIX, fo.225, Elizabeth to Governor of Brille, 1599; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 II, Elizabeth to States General, 10 October 1598

¹⁸⁵ Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 362-3

she became increasingly so during the last thirty years of her reign, in which time she only created one new peer.¹⁸⁶ The fact that she did not elevate her General to this status should not therefore necessarily be interpreted as a sign that she considered him unworthy of it, or that she wished to curtail his ambitions. She evidently valued his military skills highly and wished him to remain at his post in the Netherlands. Whether Vere saw it in this way is a different matter.

Even though tension was perhaps always present beneath the surface of the apparently harmonious relationship between Elizabeth and Vere, it never became so great as to cost him his position at court or in the Provinces. Indeed, the very fact that his ascendancy endured for so much longer than either of his predecessors' could serve as a testament to his skill in dealing with her. As mentioned above, he was enough of a realist to recognise that he did not enjoy the influence over her that her closest favourites did, and he therefore capitalised upon *their* position in order to enhance his own. This policy proved largely effective and thereby demonstrates Vere's capacity for political strategy. As well as maintaining his favour with the Queen, however tenuous, it also enabled him to intervene in political affairs. Aspiring to a courtier's position himself, he worked hard to maintain close contact with those who could help him to achieve this. They kept him informed of court affairs and matters of policy, and he realised that they would continue to do so for as long as he remained a useful source of information on Dutch affairs. Furthermore, by encouraging him to report back on political as well as military affairs, they enabled him to demonstrate his understanding of such matters, and brought his diplomatic abilities to Elizabeth's attention.

In spite of his distance from court, Vere therefore built up a pattern of close contact with its members, thereby securing his position and gaining him an entry into politics. However, it should not necessarily be assumed that he held onto his position *in spite* of this distance: there is a good case for arguing that he did so *because* of it. Vere's distance from the Court did have its advantages. It perhaps enabled him to gain a clearer perspective of the factions there than if he had been present among them. He had the benefit of receiving correspondence from the proponents of opposing factions, and was therefore able to distinguish between the differing attitudes and priorities of these without having to choose between them. Had he been present at court, it could be reasonably supposed that he would have become embroiled in the factionalism that was dangerously prevalent there during his ascendancy, and it is likely that he would have attached himself more closely to Essex's cause, which could have proved disastrous. In a sense,

¹⁸⁶ Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 97-100

therefore, Vere remained aloof from the volatile factionalism of the court, and was able to cultivate and maintain contacts with opposing parties without being forced to throw in his lot with any of them. The extent to which he did so demonstrated his skills as a political strategist, and as such he could even be compared with Elizabeth herself, who always remained detached from her favourites, in spite of her affection for them. The evidence suggests that Vere was fully aware of the benefits of staying away from court because he did not always attend when visits to England enabled him to do so. A notable example concerns his sojourn in the autumn of 1599. Whyte noted his absence from court in a letter to Sidney: 'He lives very darckly, for he comes very seldome here, and litle Speach of hym.'¹⁸⁷ His decision to stay away was vindicated by the fact that this was a very turbulent time at court, as Essex was rapidly falling from favour and anyone who associated with him was likely to be dragged down with him. Meanwhile, the Cecil faction was striving hard to capitalise upon this advantage, and their animosity against the Earl and his followers was at its height. Caught up in this polarisation of the rival factions, men were being forced to side with one or the other: there was precious little room for compromise. It can surely be no coincidence that it was precisely at this time that Vere chose to stay away from court, and Whyte advised his patron to do the same: 'As God help me, it is a very dangerous Tyme here; for the Heads of both Factions being here, a man cannot tell how to governe himself towards them. For here is such observing and prying into Mens Actions, that I hold them happy and blessed that live away.'¹⁸⁸ The fact that Vere remained largely untainted by the Essex scandal aptly demonstrates how absence from court could be a positive advantage, and one could therefore assume that he did not greatly regret the fact that his service in the Netherlands usually made this a necessity.

The suggestion that Vere's distance from court was in fact an advantage to his position is given added weight by an appraisal of his relations with the most influential Englishmen with whom he served in the Netherlands. More regularly in contact with him than most of his influential patrons at court, these men tended to form opinions of him that were far from favourable. Indeed, during the course of his ascendancy, he managed to alienate most of them at one time or another, and they complained of his high-handed and arrogant manner. This contrasts quite sharply with the humility and deference of the vast majority of his letters to the Court, and suggests that he did not seek the goodwill of his countrymen in the Provinces.

¹⁸⁷ Collins, II, Whyte to Sidney, 29 September 1599, 128

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*, Whyte to Sidney, 12 September 1599, 121

Among the Englishmen there with whom he was in most regular contact was Sir Robert Sidney, the Governor of Flushing. A fellow interventionist, Sidney also attached himself to Essex's cause, but there was apparently no love lost between him and Vere. In fact, the two men serve as an excellent illustration of how fierce the rivalry could be amongst Elizabeth's military men, each anxious to secure the most prestigious ranks and appointments for themselves.¹⁸⁹ Vere's promotion to the command of Elizabeth's auxiliary forces invoked a great deal of resentment amongst those military figures whose rank made them a more obvious choice.¹⁹⁰ Among them was Sidney, and his actions suggest that he aimed to rob Vere of his post. This was to prove a major source of friction between them. Their rivalry was particularly noticeable after the victory at Turnhout in 1597. Both men had played an instrumental role in the battle, and both tried to promote their own contribution at the expense of the other. Vere described his actions in a series of letters to the Court, and entrusted them to Sidney, who was leaving for a visit to England. However, in his *Commentaries*, he claims that Sidney held these letters back and instead delivered his own, which were 'far more partially written', and extolled his part in the victory. This 'art of doubleness' set the seal on their animosity, and Vere proclaimed that it 'changed the love I had so long borne him, into a deep dislike that could not be soon digested.'¹⁹¹ He was true to his word, and the two men remained suspicious of each other and anxious to jockey for supremacy, both at court and in the Netherlands. Towards the end of the century, Sidney was able to capitalise upon the deterioration of Vere's relations with the States by stepping up his efforts to secure the command of the English contingent for himself. Vere was evidently aware of this. Whyte, who was Sidney's main source of information on court affairs, told his patron that during a visit there in 1599, Vere had been complaining that Sidney was scheming to 'have his Comand from him', and was undermining his relations with the States.¹⁹² Indeed, the following year it was rumoured at court that the States had dismissed Vere and conferred the Generalship upon Sidney because of a dispute over accounts.¹⁹³ No doubt Sidney, in conjunction with Whyte, played a part in spreading this rumour, perceiving it as an excellent opportunity to further his own ends.¹⁹⁴ Yet while Sidney may well have aggravated the already tense relations between

¹⁸⁹ Lloyd writes: 'Characterized by strength of personality and independence of mind - the very qualities that made them effective as leaders of men - each of these commanders coveted a command of his own.' *Rouen Campaign*, 57. Similarly, Corbett refers to the 'headstrong and jealous commanders' that Elizabeth had in her service. *Successors of Drake*, 10

¹⁹⁰ For example Sir Edward Norris. BM MS, Cotton Galba D, IV, fo.28, Bodley to [?], 25 January 1589

¹⁹¹ *Vere's Commentaries*, 81; Corbett, *Successors of Drake*, 165

¹⁹² Collins, II, Whyte to Sidney, 12 September 1599, 121; *Vere's Commentaries*, 71

¹⁹³ See chapter 5, 229

¹⁹⁴ HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 3, 19, 26 and 30 April, 3, 13 and 26 May 1600, 453, 456-8, 457, 461, 464; Collins, II, Whyte to Sidney, 6 June 1600, 199. Although Sidney failed to secure Vere's position for himself at

Vere and the States, he apparently failed to inflict any lasting damage upon his reputation at court.¹⁹⁵ Fortunately for Vere, it seems that although both men had succeeded in gaining Essex's favour, he enjoyed more influence with Cecil and Nottingham.¹⁹⁶ This was crucial during the years 1599 and 1600, when Essex's influence was declining, and both Vere and Sidney were anxious to disassociate themselves from him. In the autumn of 1599, Whyte warned Sidney that if he returned to England as he was eager to do, the Queen would suspect that his motive was a desire to be with the disgraced Earl.¹⁹⁷ As mentioned above, Vere had been prudent enough to disassociate himself from Essex some time before, but Sidney tried to stir up trouble for his rival by implying that the two men were still in close contact.¹⁹⁸ Yet Sir Francis avoided the scandal of implication, and was able to wreak his revenge upon Sidney the following year. After the victory at Nieuwpoort, he made certain that his own valiant actions were widely publicised by his friends at court, and that Sidney's absence from the battle did not go unnoticed.¹⁹⁹ This was a clear indication of how eager each man was to enhance his own position at the expense of the other's.²⁰⁰

The animosity that existed between Sidney and Vere contradicts the assertion made by Markham that the latter's relations with the English noblemen in the Netherlands were 'cordial'.²⁰¹ Further doubt is cast upon it by his own admission that Vere's relations with the Governor of Brill, Lord Thomas Burgh, were less than ideal. The antagonism between them arose during the allied

this stage, he did not relent in his attempts to do so. In August 1602, when Vere was seriously wounded at the siege of Grave, Sidney feigned concern for him in a letter to Cecil, then petitioned to take over the command: 'I trust this wovnd wil not make an end of Sir Francis Vere for in troth the loss of him would be great. But if either hee showld dy, or wearied with so many wownds, give over the command heer, I besech your Honour if of her preferment for me bee harde unto yow to compas, that you wil procure mee his place.' *SP 84*, LXII fo.186, Sidney to Cecil, 16 August 1602. Sidney was not the only English nobleman who attempted to usurp Vere's place. It was rumoured more than once that Lord Grey was going over to the Netherlands to take up the supreme command of Elizabeth's forces. This caused a great deal of ill feeling between the two men. *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 20 October 1598, 8 May, 27 June and 15 October 1602, 49, 143, 152-3, 165; Collins, II, Whyte to Sidney, 13 May 1600, 194

¹⁹⁵ Although, as mentioned above, Sidney may well have played an instrumental in causing the rift between Vere and Essex.

¹⁹⁶ Collins, II, Whyte to Sidney, 29 September 1599, 128

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 3 November 1599, 409

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*, Whyte to Sidney, 5, 7 and 12 July 1600, 471-2

²⁰⁰ There is some suggestion that relations between the two men improved after Nieuwpoort, and Whyte reported that it was widely believed at court that they had reconciled themselves to each other. However, the fact that just two years later, Sidney was striving to usurp Vere's command suggests that this was at best a temporary cessation of hostilities. HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 8 August 1600, 476; Collins, II, Browne to Sidney, 5 July 1601, 227; *SP 84*, LXII, fo.186, Sidney to Cecil, 16 August 1602

²⁰¹ Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 201

campaign of 1594, when Count Maurice requested a number of troops from Burgh's company. The Governor consented, but only on condition that they should not be commanded by Vere. This provoked an immediate and indignant response from the English General, who proclaimed: 'I know no reason why he should doe itt, unles his pourpos be to insinnuat hym sealf with the states and the Count by suche courses'.²⁰²

Various other English noblemen in the Netherlands were on less than friendly terms with Vere. One of these was the Earl of Northumberland, who had recently been sent over to the Netherlands, and the vehemence of his dispute with Sir Francis was so great that it spilled over into the Court, where 'backbyteinge' by 'base and factious persons' exacerbated the ill-feeling between the two men. The dispute arose during the siege of Ostend in 1601, when Sir Francis allegedly failed to give the Earl the respect that was due to him. In spite of Vere's protests that his attempts to do so had been rejected, the Earl was incensed by his conduct and challenged him to a duel the following spring when both men were at court.²⁰³ Vere, however, refused to meet Northumberland upon his 'peremptory and foolish summons', and the Queen herself then intervened, commanding the Earl to drop the matter. He duly did so, but not before making one final attempt to discredit his adversary. He proclaimed before a number of courtiers that Vere was 'a knave, a coward that in fleeing like a common buffoon, would wrong men of all conditions, while he had not the courage or honesty to satisfy any.' In response, Vere called Northumberland a 'most lying and unworthy lord'.

The dispute with Northumberland, according to Markham, was symptomatic of the burden that Vere was forced to carry as Sergeant Major General of the English troops in the Netherlands. He argues that he was constantly troubled by useless and vain officers who were forced upon him by powerful relations at court, and who were solely interested in the pursuit of glory and renown.²⁰⁴ By contrast, he claims that the General was revered by the other English officers, notably Sir John Ogle. Yet the available evidence again contradicts him. It would seem that Vere antagonised a high proportion of these officers, and the contemporary correspondence contains

²⁰² *SP 84*, XLIX, fo.154, Vere to Burghley, 7 October 1594

²⁰³ The dispute is well documented. References to it can be found in: BM MS, Additional, 15520, fo.s 61, 62, Northumberland to Vere [1602]; 25247 fo.s 308-11, 'The Manner of the Challenge made by the Earle of Northumberland against Sir Francis Veare' [1602]; Egerton 2592 fo.1, Vere's Reply to Northumberland [1602]; *SP 84*, LXI, fo.300, Vere to Cecil, 14 September 1601; fo.318, Vere to Cecil, 22 September 1601; *CSPD*, (1601-3), 202-5; 'The Earl of Northumberland's Challenge sent unto Sir Francis Veere, in April - on St. George's Day, anno 1602...with Sir Francis Veere's account of the same.' *Somers Tracts*, 487-92; *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 8 May and 17 June 1602, 143-4, 150-1

²⁰⁴ Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 306-8

references to disputes with Sirs Henry Docwra and Thomas Knollys, and Captains Broughten and Ridgeway, among others.²⁰⁵ In fact, Vere's dispute with the latter spilled over into the States General, and caused resentment on both sides. The controversy arose when Vere was asked by the Governor of Bergen-op-Zoom to resolve the complaints about pay which had been voiced by the garrison of the town. He duly went there, but was prevented from settling the matter by Captain Ridgeway, who told the General ('avec une arrent et façon mauvais') that he did not want him to enter the garrison, claiming that he himself had authority from the States to deal with the matter. Vere promptly deprived the captain of his company and urged the States to give him full powers of jurisdiction over the English troops in order to prevent the recurrence of such an incident. Ridgeway also wrote to them, complaining of the harshness and injustice of Vere's actions, and the controversy raged for some time, engendering a great deal of ill-feeling.²⁰⁶ As for Ogle, far from being an ardent admirer of the English General, as Markham suggests, he too had cause to dislike him. In a letter to Cecil, he observed that Vere was 'too apt to believe ill of men', and that he feared he would lose his favour because of this.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, in his account of the battle of Nieuwpoort, included in the *Commentaries*, he expressed his dismay that Vere had not given him due credit for his endeavours: 'we had the leisure (though, I confesse not without danger) to pluck our Captain from under his horse, and mount him again behinde another, as himself hath told in his own relation; wherein I cannot but wonder that it pleased him not to make mention of me, as well as Higham'.²⁰⁸

Ogle's irritation with the English General seemed to reflect a quite widespread feeling among the high-ranking English officers in the Netherlands. Rather than revering him, as Markham would have us believe, these men tended to harbour a resentment towards him which at times was quite open and vehement. This is proven by the fact that Vere was anxious to secure full jurisdiction over the English troops in order to 'bridle factious spirites'.²⁰⁹ The source of this resentment is

²⁰⁵ *SP 84*, LVIII, fo.115, Vere to Privy Council, 26 March 1599; LXII, fo.286, Vere to Cecil, 7 January 1603; HMC, *Sal*, VIII, Docwra to Essex, 18 December 1598, 507-8; IX, Knollys to Essex, 22 January 1599, 36; Knollys to Essex, 22 January 1599, 36-7; Docwra to Essex, 6 February 1599, 59-60; Vere to Nottingham and Cecil, 3 October 1599, 363-4; XII, Ridgeway to Cecil, 9 October 1602, 430-1; Ridgeway to Cecil, (22 January)/7 February 1603, 614-5; HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 6 October 1599, 399; III, Robert Arthur to Sidney, (31 January)/10 February 1603, 4; Browne to Sidney, 18 July 1603, 42-3

²⁰⁶ The Algemeen Rijksarchief contains a full transcript of the controversy, including the testimony given by both parties. ARA, Lias. Lop., 4905 I, Vere to States General, 13 and 22 January 1603; Ridgeway to States General, [February?] 1603

²⁰⁷ HMC, *Sal*, XII, Ogle to Cecil, 3 February 1603, 634-5

²⁰⁸ *Vere's Commentaries*, 106-7

²⁰⁹ *SP 84*, LXII, fo.s 286, 292, 303, Vere to Cecil, 7 January, 6 and 27 February 1603; ARA, Lias. Lop., 4905 I, Vere to States General, 13 and 22 January 1603

not immediately obvious. Markham firmly believes that those men (though few in number) who voiced their dislike of, or dissatisfaction with Vere were jealous of the high position that he had attained, particularly in view of his relatively low birth, and resented being under his command. However, the post that Vere had inherited in 1589 gave him considerably less power over the English forces than either of his predecessors had enjoyed and, moreover, he was to have no jurisdiction over the Governors of the cautionary towns, two of whom turned out to be amongst his principal adversaries. Furthermore, he also invoked the ill-feeling of men who had far less cause to resent him than those members of the English military community who either served under him or had regular contact with him. He had adversaries amongst the Dutch political élite, as will be seen in the ensuing chapter, and even succeeded in antagonising the apparently placid English Councillor of State, George Gilpin.

The dispute between these two men became prominent towards the end of the year 1599, although Gilpin stated that it had begun some months earlier. The origins of the quarrel are, like many of Vere's other disputes, rather difficult to discern. Gilpin himself claimed that he did not know the cause of the 'strangenesse' and 'conceived unkindnesse' that Vere had shown towards him. Sir Francis accused him of encroaching upon his authority, of not giving him the respect that was due to him and, worse still, of conspiring with his enemies at the Hague. He told Cecil: 'Itt is true he doethe me some harme in this state, and hathe the advantage of me because he seateathe in the place, wher I must necessarily have many causes, and he hathe healp of some in this contrye, for I am nott ashamead to saye I have ennemyes, neyther is itt strange, in a place wher I have lyvead so longe. Butt I hope my good cause with those frendes I have, shall hynder hym from effeacting his wyll.'²¹⁰ Gilpin denied all of these charges, and argued that Vere's overwhelmingly ambitious and arrogant nature had increasingly led him to crave more authority than was either justified or advisable: 'I beleve and am certain that he would not have refused any commission that might bringe credit or proffitt, what wronge or harme soever yt were to others.' The Councillor also claimed that Vere was mistreating the soldiers who served him, and that these men were becoming increasingly averse to his command: 'His captaines beginne to speake, and a whole loade of hay will not stoppe the mouthes of those that afore overpassed all with sylence in hope of amendment'.²¹¹ In spite of Gilpin's obvious aversion to Vere at this juncture, he declared that he had tried to resolve their dispute, but to no avail. According to his account, Sir Francis had cast

²¹⁰ *SP 84*, LX i, fo.105, Vere to Cecil, 20 April 1600. See also: fo.119, Gilpin to Carleton, 29 April 1600; fo.135, Gilpin to Cecil, 20 May 1600

²¹¹ HMC, *D&D*, II, Gilpin to Sidney, 19 November 1599, 416; *SP 84*, LIX fo.172, Gilpin to Vere, 26 November 1599; fo. 173, Gilpin to [?], 26 November 1599

his conciliatory letter aside, remarking that he would read it when he had time. The two men subsequently met, but Vere was allegedly 'nothing pleasant', and Gilpin therefore declared that he held out little hope of a reconciliation.²¹² His pessimism was justified because the English General was apparently still complaining about his conduct the following spring, and there is no evidence to suggest that they were ever reconciled to each other.²¹³ In fact, towards the end of 1601, Gilpin claimed that Vere had alienated almost all of his former friends in the Netherlands and was living '*more solito*, feared of many, beloved of none.'²¹⁴ While this may have been an exaggeration, it did have some basis in fact, as there seems to have been an alignment of Vere's enemies in the Netherlands at this stage.²¹⁵ Sir Robert Sidney seized the opportunity to exacerbate Vere's dispute with Gilpin. Almost as soon as the controversy was made public, he consoled Gilpin with tales of his own ill-treatment at the English General's hands, and the Councillor wrote back to him, saying: 'Sir Francis Vere, I fynde, as your Lordship wrytes, and am resolvyd, being the more contented; in that I am not the first that hath bin used with such Ingratitude at his Handes'.²¹⁶ John Chamberlain also implied that Vere's objectionable nature had caused the dispute, and noted that he was 'always picking quarrels' with Gilpin.²¹⁷ While it would be unjust to attribute all of the blame to Vere for such disputes, they do suggest that he felt a certain indifference, or even aversion, towards his compatriots in the Netherlands.

It would appear, therefore, that Vere's relations with his compatriots were rather strained, and they certainly form a marked contrast to his relations with the Court. Whereas with the latter, he was always careful to explain and justify his actions, protest his loyalty and humility, and generally attempt to maintain his patrons' favour, he seemed to be much less eager to befriend those men alongside whom he served in the Provinces. While they may have been exaggerated, the reports of Vere's arrogant and intolerant nature towards these men so often concur that at least some credit should be given to them. The most likely explanation for his attitude centres around the question of priorities. He no doubt believed that it was more important to gain the patronage of those who could most influence his position and offer him the greatest chance of

²¹² *ibid.*

²¹³ LX i, fo.57, Gilpin to Carleton, 3 March 1600. N.B. A meeting between them was reported in March 1602, but the atmosphere was apparently somewhat frosty, and Oldenbarnevelt himself intervened to try to bring them to a reconciliation. The available correspondence offers no clue as to whether this was achieved before Gilpin's death a few months later. HMC, *D&D*, II, Browne to Sidney, 4 March 1602, 571

²¹⁴ *SP 84*, LXI, fo.334, Gilpin to Carleton, 27 October 1601. Compare this with Holles' letter, above, footnote 139

²¹⁵ The growing antagonism between Vere and Maurice, which spilled over into the States General, will be discussed in the ensuing chapter, 218-20

²¹⁶ Collins, II, Gilpin to Sidney, 30 November 1599, 145-6

²¹⁷ *CSPD*, (1598-1601), Chamberlain to Carleton, 2 and 29 March 1600, 407, 415

advancement, than to channel his energies into building up close affiliations with his colleagues in the Provinces, the majority of whom enjoyed a lesser status than his own. The higher ranking officers were, after all, his rivals, and he would therefore have been anxious to enhance his own position at their expense. It was very much a case of every man for himself as Vere and his fellow officers jockeyed for superiority and exploited their connections at court to the full with little regard for, and often in direct conflict with, each other's interests. In such an atmosphere, it was hardly surprising that there was not a great deal of love lost between Vere and his compatriots in the Netherlands. By contrast, it was essential that he made every effort to maintain his favour with his patrons at court, since these men, through their influence with the Queen, ultimately controlled his career.

A close examination of Vere's relations with the English Court has therefore shown him to be astute, perceptive, politically aware, and a skilful manipulator of faction. The evidence suggests that he recognised this institution as being the means by which he could further his military, and possibly even political, career, and he exploited the patronage that was available there with systematic and impressive thoroughness. His achievement in gaining and maintaining the favour of some of the most highly influential men at court - often simultaneously - should not be underestimated. Moreover, the fact that a number of these men were against the very cause that he stood for makes his achievement even more outstanding. He seemed willing to suppress his own opinions under a mask of deference and humility, and even when he gained the patronage of one who shared his views, he did not allow this to cloud his overall judgement of the situation at court, but was instead careful to keep other lines of communication open. Furthermore, even though Vere so often professed both loyalty and an eagerness to serve his various patrons, he did so only for as long as they remained of use to him. If he perceived that their influence over the Queen had declined significantly, as was the case with Essex, he was quick to sever the alliance: sentimental loyalty had no place in the career strategy of an ambitious man such as Vere.

In short, Vere's relationship with the Court was more complex than it appeared. As Naunton implied, he skilfully manipulated court politics by 'another sort of undermining' than that favoured by so many of his contemporaries, who tended to make their mark by creating 'noyse, and alarums of supplantations'.²¹⁸ While one cannot deny that his presence at court was neither frequent or noticeable, its impact upon his career was nevertheless significant. It has too often been supposed that his martial endeavours and excellent character assured his reputation at court

²¹⁸ Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia*, 146

and preserved his position in the Netherlands, and there is a great deal of justification for arguing that these two rewards were attained by his studied efforts to manipulate court patronage and faction. The longevity of his ascendancy in the Provinces and the endurance of his enviable reputation therefore serve as a testament to the success of his endeavours.

Chapter 5

Divided Loyalties

'Le françoys Veer Chevalier...promects d'estre fidèle à Sa Majeste et aux Estats generaulx des Provinces unies des Pays bas'. This declaration was contained in the oath that Vere took upon his admission to the Governorship of Brill in 1598, and suggests an inherent conflict in his role in the Netherlands, for he was to serve both the English and the Dutch. In stark contrast to his two predecessors, he seemed to get on well with the Dutch - both military and political figures alike, and he largely avoided any major disputes and controversies with them. This led contemporaries (as well as more recent observers) to believe that he was so 'pro-Dutch' that his loyalty to English interests was obscured. Among these was Elizabeth herself, and she was clearly uneasy about, even jealous of, her General's apparent closeness with the States. On one occasion, she reprimanded him for displaying 'over-greate forwardnesse in matters concerninge the stattes' and failing to carry out her orders effectively.¹ However, it is unlikely that Vere's commitment to the Dutch ever compromised his loyalty in this way. In fact, there is reason to suppose that if his loyalty was divided at all, then it was between his *own* interests and those of the two countries that he served.

The view that the English General owed more loyalty to the Dutch than to his sovereign largely rests upon the belief that he had a genuine respect and admiration for them, and his relations with the political and military figures of the Provinces are generally interpreted as being overwhelmingly harmonious. Markham certainly adheres to this view, and claims that Vere was 'a persona grata at the Hague'. He adds: 'Vere naturally came to love the cause which was dear to his countrymen, and the people among whom he lived for so many years. They trusted him in return.'² More recent commentators have also accepted this view. Den Tex bases his interpretation upon Markham's account, and argues that Vere was on equally good terms with Maurice and Oldenbarnevelt.³ Read agrees with this, and points out that because Vere had inherited none of the state or prerogatives of a generalissimo, this largely ensured that conflicts

¹ *SP 84*, XLIX, fo.257, Vere to Elizabeth, 20 December 1594

² Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 265, 362

³ den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 45-6, 209. He claims, 'Hij was zowel met Maurits als met Oldenbarnevelt goed bevriend.'

between him and the States General did not arise.⁴ Rowse also argues that the English General got on well with the States and that they ‘trusted him absolutely’.⁵

An exploration of Vere’s relations with the Dutch has yielded some evidence to support these claims. From very early on in his ascendancy, Vere seemed to strike up a strong friendship with Oldenbarnevelt.⁶ This was particularly surprising in view of the fact that the Advocate had included Vere’s name in the list of traitors responsible for the betrayal of Geertruidenberg.⁷ In spite of this, their friendship seemed to rapidly flourish, and den Tex puts this down to Vere’s trusting and impressionable nature, combined with a complete lack of interest in politics and a lower profile than his predecessors had enjoyed, all of which he claims Oldenbarnevelt capitalised upon to the full. For his part, Vere was eager to court the Advocate’s favour because he believed him to be as devoted to the Anglo-Dutch alliance as he himself was.⁸ He also seemed to appreciate Oldenbarnevelt’s predominance in the States General, and was therefore anxious to secure his friendship.

Once formed, their attachment endured for the rest of Vere’s ascendancy in the Netherlands,⁹ and it produced benefits for both sides. Realising how useful such a powerful patron could be, Vere worked hard to build up a close alliance with him. Interestingly, in contrast to his relations with Elizabeth, he mostly dealt with Oldenbarnevelt directly rather than relying upon intermediaries.¹⁰ Perhaps he saw this as the quickest and most effective way of avoiding the lengthy process of delays and deliberations that so often beset the normal process of government in the Provinces. Whatever the case, it was certainly an effective policy, for the Advocate’s intervention was to assist him greatly throughout his career in the Netherlands. This was clearly demonstrated by the preparations for Islands Voyage of 1597. Having been asked to secure the States’ consent for the

⁴ Read, *Walsingham*, III, 360

⁵ Rowse, *Expansion*, 400

⁶ Markham describes Oldenbarnevelt as Vere’s ‘firm and constant friend’, and claims that Vere had always been a favourite of the Advocate. *Fighting Veres*, 265, 362

⁷ *CSPF*, XXIII, ‘Placart of the States General against Geertruidenberg’, (7)/17 April 1589, 205-8. This was a mistake: Vere had been confused with a man named Francis Voor.

⁸ den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 45, 47. N.B. Oldenbarnevelt had in fact been instrumental in sealing this alliance in 1585, and Shaw largely attributes the conclusion of Nonsuch to his efforts. *HMC, D&D*, III, xxi

⁹ As such, it forms a sharp contrast to Willoughby’s relations with the Advocate. Having enjoyed good relations with him for only a fleeting period, by the end of his ascendancy he was threatening to murder him. *CSPF*, XXIII, Willoughby to Burghley, 2 May 1589, 252

¹⁰ See for example: *Bescheiden Bettreffende*, I, Vere to Oldenbarnevelt, 20 September 1593, 251; *SP 84*, LVIII fo.218, Vere to Cecil, 23 July 1599; *LIX*, fo.s 13 and 27, Vere to Nottingham and Cecil, 7 and 13 August 1599; *Vere’s Commentaries*, 72

withdrawal of troops, Vere went at once to Oldenbarnevelt, who assured him that he would 'set matters' in the best way he could, and gave him hope of as many forces and commodities as the Provinces could muster.¹¹ The success of Vere's mission on this, and a similar occasion the previous year, can be at least partly attributed to Oldenbarnevelt's intervention. By helping him in this way, the Advocate was therefore able to enhance Vere's reputation both at the English Court and the Hague. He did so more directly following the battle of Nieuwpoort, when he wrote to Elizabeth, commending the valour of the English, and singling out Vere for particular commendation.¹² More importantly, Oldenbarnevelt was responsible for securing Vere the position of General in the States service in 1598, and perhaps also that of Colonel in 1593.¹³ He also proved useful when Vere attempted to enhance his authority during the last few years of Elizabeth's reign, and it was generally believed that the Advocate was instrumental in pushing this through.¹⁴ Sir William Browne noted: 'it was well enough discovered that it was his Practyse that so much graced Sir Francis Vere above all Men els'. In securing Vere full jurisdiction over the English auxiliaries, Oldenbarnevelt had apparently contravened the wishes of the majority of the States, and he was advised not to 'bend so much' to him. In fact, Browne alleged that by this time, 'Barnevelt only is his Frend', and implied that he was protecting Vere against the rest of the States, namely Maurice's party.¹⁵

While Oldenbarnevelt proved an important ally to Vere, he too reaped some reward from their connection. Vere tended to present the States in a favourable light in his letters to the Court, as will be discussed below, and he often assured his countrymen that they were working hard to comply with the Queen's wishes. The same was true of his portrayal of Oldenbarnevelt. For example, in May 1597, Vere noted that the States had been pressed to 'draw their forces into the field', but Oldenbarnevelt insisted that they should wait for further direction from Elizabeth, who was at this time hesitating about the contribution of troops for a scheme to recapture Calais. In so doing, the Advocate had withstood pressure from the Provinces, most of which were 'banded against him'. Vere therefore advised that the Queen write a letter of thanks to him, and added: 'I am greatly beholden to him, and desire he should know that her Majesty is informed from time to time of his endeavours.'¹⁶ Similarly, in May 1602, shortly after returning from a brief visit to

¹¹ HMC, *Sal*, VII, Vere to Essex, 7 January 1597, 9. See also: Vere to Essex, 7 May 1597, 191

¹² *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 1 July 1600, 102

¹³ *Bescheiden Bettreffende*, I, Conversation between Van de Warcke and Oldenbarnevelt, (22 June)/2 July 1598, 464; *RSG*, VIII, 61; X, 150-1

¹⁴ See below, 233-5

¹⁵ Collins, II, Browne to Sidney, 5 June and 9 July 1602, 255, 228

¹⁶ HMC, *Sal*, VII, Vere to Essex, 7 May 1597, 191-2

England, Vere told Cecil of the provisions that the States had made for the command of the English horse companies during his absence, insisting that they had shown 'theyr care to content her Majestie', and that: 'Monsieur de Barnevelt in perticular hathe been very forwarde in the mattre.'¹⁷

The mutually beneficial and enduring friendship between the English General and the Advocate was apparently close and binding. Vere referred to his Dutch patron in respectful and affectionate terms,¹⁸ and, Oldenbarnevelt, for his part, seemed to esteem his English protégé. Yet the friendship suffered a setback towards the close of Elizabeth's reign. Vere's actions at Ostend excited a great deal of ill-feeling amongst the States,¹⁹ and, according to den Tex, caused the Advocate to drop his English protégé - indeed, there is some evidence to support this.²⁰ In spite of this decline, Vere's association with Oldenbarnevelt had lasted for most of his ascendancy, and appeared both close and amicable. Yet one should not assume that the attachment was founded upon Vere's political naivety and malleable nature, as well as his over-zealous affection for the Dutch cause, as den Tex suggests. It seems more likely that both men maintained their alliance because it was mutually advantageous. Far from being a mere puppet of his Dutch patron, Vere was very astute in striving to cultivate a firm alliance with him, and in making the most of his association with such a powerful patron - a patron who held the reigns of an increasingly coherent government. Just as his contacts with the leading figures at the English Court reaped him rich rewards, so his attachment with Oldenbarnevelt brought forth great benefits. The Advocate assumed the role of Vere's advocate in the States General, thereby helping to safeguard, and indeed enhance, his position in the Netherlands. It is unlikely that he protected Vere's interests for so long out of respect for the friendship that reputedly existed between them. In favour of maintaining the alliance with England, he was anxious to avoid offending the Queen in any way, and it was therefore in his interests to be courteous towards her chief military representative, especially as he had experienced rather strained relations with the previous holders of that post. By securing Vere's goodwill, he was therefore able to use him as a means of presenting both himself and the Dutch cause in a favourable light to Elizabeth and her court. In view of this, while the alliance between Vere and Oldenbarnevelt may well have been as strong as contemporaries held it to be, it should perhaps be viewed more as a mutually beneficial association than a true friendship.

¹⁷ *SP 84*, LXII, fo.82, Vere to Cecil, 26 May 1602

¹⁸ He called him his 'goede vriend'. *Bescheiden Bettreffende*, I, Vere to Oldenbarnevelt, 20 September 1593, 251

¹⁹ See below, 230-2

²⁰ den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 428; HMC, *D&D*, III, Browne to Sidney, 18 July 1603, 42

The majority of contemporary and modern observers have also chosen to view Vere's apparently close association with Maurice as proof of his pro-Dutch stance. Markham certainly believes in the strength of their friendship, arguing that it was based upon a mutual passion for military affairs, and that they were in frequent consultation about matters of strategy.²¹ As is often the case, his account is directly contradicted by Motley's. Motley does concede that the two men were often of the same mind when it came to military matters, but he claims that this was where their affiliation ended, and that Vere 'hated the Nassaus', while 'the Nassaus certainly did not admire him.'²² Markham rejects this, and insists: 'The controversy between Vere and the House of Nassau existed only in Mr. Motley's imagination.'²³ Yet Motley's view is supported by a more recent account. In his biography of Maurice, Kikkert makes a passing reference to the Count's 'violent dislike' of Vere.²⁴ Similarly, Rowse mentions a rift that developed between the two men in 1601, but otherwise concentrates upon their cooperation in the allied campaigns.²⁵ Indeed, the commentators who refer to this rift tend to view it as a temporary set-back in the otherwise harmonious relations that existed between them. Den Tex, for example, asserts that Vere lost respect for the Count after Nieuwpoort and that they clashed during the debates surrounding the best strategy to save Ostend, but that otherwise they were on good terms with each other and cooperated effectively in military matters.²⁶ The widespread belief seems to be that the common interest shared by Vere and Maurice in military affairs led them to strike up a strong and lasting friendship. MacCaffrey refers to the 'comradeship in arms' that existed between them, and argues that they worked in 'comfortable harness' together.²⁷ In a similar vein, Read states that Vere's cordial relations with Maurice enabled them to 'co-operate in a way which redounded to the military prestige of them both.'²⁸

The contemporary correspondence also contains various references to Maurice and Vere's joint military exploits. In March 1592, Bodley noted (not without some resentment): 'Count Maurice

²¹ Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 165

²² Motley, *United Netherlands*, IV, 3, 48-51, 65

²³ Markham, 304n

²⁴ Kikkert, *Maurits*, 71

²⁵ Rowse, *Expansion*, 406

²⁶ den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 45, 209, 427-9

²⁷ MacCaffrey, *War and Politics*, 257-61; *Elizabeth I*, 269. See also: Wernham, *After the Armada*, 208-10, 214, 303-4, 319-20, 347-8, 486-7; Wilson, *Elizabeth and the Netherlands*, 112; Haley, *British and Dutch*, 44; Corbett, *Successors of Drake*, 30; Fortescue, *British Army*, 152

²⁸ Read, *Walsingham*, III, 360

is aboard about some matter of surprise, as we are persuaded, on Maastricht, without the privity of the Council. Sir Francis Vere is with him and imparted nothing to me, whereat I marvel.'²⁹ Thomas Wilkes was apparently also aware of their close collaboration, but rather than viewing it with resentment, he seized upon it as a means of furthering his mission in 1590. He requested Vere to 'seek to work in him a good conceipt of her majestie and her proceedinges, which other men of these countries have travailed often to alter in him', and was evidently confident that Sir Francis would be able to 'do much in [view] of the love he [Maurice] beareth unto you above all others of our nation'.³⁰ Vere duly carried out this task, and reported back shortly afterwards, assuring Wilkes of Maurice's loyalty to England, and protesting: 'I hould him as rare a yong gentleman as is in Europe, and one thatt may prove a good and able servant to her Majestie and the state.'³¹ Vere's favourable interpretation of the Count's attitude could be taken as proof of the amity that existed between the two men.³² It also served as a sharp contrast to the views of his countrymen.³³ Before receiving this latest despatch from Vere, Wilkes had written to Burghley, giving his opinion on Maurice's apparently strong loyalty to France. He implied that the Count was almost undoubtedly in favour of replacing the English alliance with a French one, and observed that he had grown so powerful in the Dutch state that he would be 'likely to carry the Townes and Provinces with him.'³⁴ Other members of the Court were similarly reluctant to alter their somewhat adverse opinion of Maurice, and they therefore accepted Wilkes' interpretation rather than Vere's. Burghley informed the envoy: 'Hir Majestie hath read your lettre to the Conte and his answeare and Sir francis Veeres also, and is of your opinion rather than of Sir Francis for his devocion to hir majestie'.³⁵

²⁹ HMC, *D&D*, II, Bodley to Sidney, 1 and 10 March 1592, 125

³⁰ *SP 84*, XXXVII, fo.316, Wilkes to Vere, 25 June 1590. See also: XXXVIII, fo.15, Wilkes to Burghley, 6 July 1590

³¹ *ibid.*, fo.184, Vere to Burghley, 17 August 1590. See also: XXXVII, fo.316, Vere to Wilkes, (30 June)/10 July 1590; XXXVIII, fo.19, Vere to Wilkes, 7 July 1590; fo.186, Vere to Privy Council, 17 August 1590. See chapter 2, 117

³² This amity was apparently mutual. Van Houte told Willoughby that Vere was 'much respected and loved by his Excellency'. HMC, *Anc*, J. van Houte to Willoughby, (29 January)/8 February 1590, 304

³³ It certainly forms an interesting contrast to the views expressed by Willoughby when he had been in command of the English troops for a similar length of time as Vere had at this stage. He had advised Burghley: 'Maurice is young, hot-headed, courting honour; which, if we but look through our fingers at...baiting his hook a little to his appetite, there is no doubt but he might be caught and kept in a fish-pool, while in his imagination he may judge it a sea. If it fall out not so, it is likely he with his will make us ever fish in troubled waters'. *CSPF*, XXI iv, Willoughby to Burghley, 12 January 1588, 13-14

³⁴ *SP 84*, XXXVIII, fo.s 15 and 78, Wilkes to Burghley, 6 and 10 July 1590

³⁵ *ibid.*, fo.61, Burghley to Wilkes, 16 July 1590

Occurring as it did towards the beginning of Vere's ascendancy, the debate about Maurice's loyalty set a precedent for the remainder of the English General's service in the Netherlands. From thenceforth he was seen by his compatriots as a devotee of the Count, and it seemed to follow from this that he was an advocate of the Dutch cause as a whole. The Queen certainly appeared to be convinced of the closeness of their friendship,³⁶ and capitalised upon it during the course of her General's ascendancy. For example, in the spring of 1593, she sent Vere to confer with Maurice about secret plans for an enterprise to Dunkirk, and clearly believed that they held each other in sufficient esteem to cooperate effectively in this matter.³⁷ Vere's report of his proceedings, however, suggests that Elizabeth may have placed too much confidence in his influence with the Count, because he informed her: 'my reasones wear nott of force, to make him geave the least consent, to undretake the searvice with his owne troupes, neyther to geave me a dyrect answer on [sic] way or other',³⁸ and the enterprise was subsequently abandoned. This apparently did little to alter the Queen's perception of her General's alliance with Maurice, however, for she continued to use him throughout his ascendancy as an intermediary with the Count.³⁹

Sir Robert Cecil used him in much the same way. In the autumn of 1601, for example, he asked Vere to discover whether or not Maurice would be leading the States' army during the Flanders campaign. Vere replied that judging from his 'owne knowleadge of the Prynce Maurice his disposityon in this poynt', as well as the lack of other commanders available to the States, he was certain that Maurice would be the leader.⁴⁰ Similarly, in 1603, Vere informed his patron of the Count's increasing power in the Provinces: 'The Prince Maurice groweth dailie more powerful in this State; in so much as hee sweyeth all, and taketh upon him more princelie greatnes then heretofore', and he implied that this was apparently not the first time that he had provided Cecil with such information.⁴¹ His attachment to Maurice could therefore prove very useful to members of the Court, and they seemed to view him as the best means of gauging the Count's attitudes and assessing his actions.

³⁶ See for example: XLVIII, fo.111, Elizabeth to Maurice, 29 March 1594; LXII, fo. 76, Elizabeth to Maurice, 15 May 1602

³⁷ XLVI, fo.52, Elizabeth to Maurice, 14 March 1593

³⁸ *ibid.*, fo.s 96 and 108, Vere to Burghley, 11 and 24 April 1593; fo.110, Maurice to Elizabeth, (24 April)/4 May 1593

³⁹ See for example: XLVIII, fo.272, Vere to Burghley, 18 June 1594

⁴⁰ LXI, fo.338, Vere to Cecil, 29 October 1601

⁴¹ LXII, fo.303, Vere to Cecil, 27 February 1603

However, there is good reason to suppose that Vere's relationship with Maurice was not as close as his compatriots believed. While it has been assumed - by contemporaries and modern observers alike - that the two men's passion for military affairs formed the basis of a strong and enduring friendship between them, this common interest could also have served as a source of tension. As Sergeant Major General, Vere was subject to the Count's command, and at first he seemed to accept this quite readily. After serving in this capacity for some six months, he told Walsingham that Maurice 'useath us well, and I am perswaded he desireath much to be well thought of in Inglande.'⁴² However, as his ascendancy progressed, Vere seemed to grow increasingly resentful of the Dutch military leader and, as was suggested in chapter 3,⁴³ began to portray him as an indecisive and incapable commander who was overshadowed by his own quick-witted and valiant actions. He seemed very anxious that his own contribution to the allied campaigns in the Provinces should be given more credit than the Count's. This was particularly true after the Turnhout victory, when Vere rejoiced that Elizabeth had chosen to accept his self-congratulatory account of the battle: 'And for thatt itt hathe pleasead her Majestie to my greater comfortt to inclyne to the weall beleevyng of me, nott withstandyng thatt the Cownt Mauryce yealdead no testimonye, and thatt by pamphleatts the reputatyon of that searvice is bestowead ealse whear'. He added: 'if ever I desearvead commendatyonnes itt was thatt daye; which the Cownt Maurice and the reast of the chieffs then present have acknowleadgead to me, how soever sparyng they have been otherwyse in doying me ryght.'⁴⁴

Following the victory at Nieuwpoort in 1600, the aversion between Vere and Maurice became increasingly apparent, and their differences seemed irreconcilable.⁴⁵ They were on opposing sides in the debate over the best way to relieve Ostend. Vere was in favour of a large-scale expedition to Flanders, as was Oldenbarnevelt, but Maurice believed that it would be more effective to channel the allies' resources into a number of diversionary campaigns in other provinces. This conflict of interests lay at the heart of their animosity during Vere's command of Ostend in 1601-2. Before taking up this command, Vere went to England to secure a number of recruits, but insisted that these would not be sufficient to defend the town and that the regiment of his brother,

⁴² XXXVI, fo.140, Vere to Walsingham, 23 February 1590

⁴³ 144-49

⁴⁴ LIV, fo.82, Vere to Cecil, 20 February 1597; fo.66, Elizabeth to Vere, 5 February 1597. It would seem that Maurice was aware of Vere's accusations, because three years later, after the victory of Nieuwpoort, he made a point of telling Elizabeth that the English General's 'good Order and Direction' had helped to secure victory. Collins, II, Whyte to Sidney, 5 July 1600, 204

⁴⁵ Earlier that year, it had been suggested that Maurice had even begun to exclude Vere from his campaigns in the Provinces. *CSPD*, (1598-1601), Carleton to Chamberlain, 29 March 1600, 415

Horace, should be sent there. He made it clear that he would refuse to take up the command if this were not done. Oldenbarnevelt duly gave Maurice orders to this effect, but the Count proved reluctant because he believed the regiment could be put to better use in his own campaign at Rheinberg. Only after receiving a second order did he grudgingly comply, and Sir William Browne noted that this caused 'some Hart burning' between the two men.⁴⁶ The incident was an early indication of the divergence of Maurice's and Vere's interests: a trend that was to become increasingly apparent when Vere was in command of Ostend. While Sir Francis urged the States to forward reinforcements to save the beleaguered town, Maurice demanded more troops for his diversionary campaigns. Both men insisted upon the paramount importance of their own requirements, and conflict between them became inevitable. Vere constantly complained that Maurice was endangering Ostend by diverting the available resources to less urgent causes, and his resentment was particularly clear in a letter that he wrote to the States General in February 1602. He informed them that only part of the troops he had requested had arrived, and lamented that these were weakened by disease and lack of refreshment. He stated that he would therefore need as many troops again to make up for their weakness, but complained that Maurice had told him he would have to be content with those he had.⁴⁷ Vere's resignation of the command of Ostend did little to alleviate the tension that had built up between himself and Maurice. In stark contrast to his earlier attempts to present the Count in a favourable light to his compatriots, he now seemed intent upon discrediting him, and it would seem that he largely succeeded. Browne described a conference that he had had with the Queen regarding the debate over whether to channel the allied forces into the siege of Grave, or concentrate them in Flanders - and, more particularly, Ostend. Maurice had opted for the former, but Elizabeth mentioned that Vere had 'layn all the Fault' upon him for this, and criticised the Count herself for thereby serving 'his owne Turne'.⁴⁸ The two men were clearly hostile to one another during the siege of Grave, and Captain Wigmore noted that Vere was 'nothing well pleased' with Maurice's treatment of him.⁴⁹ Vere attempted to further discredit him later that year, telling Cecil that Maurice had decided to attack Hulst, 'which though yt bee further from the good of Ostend, is nearer his private endes and proffitt'.⁵⁰ By now the animosity that existed between the two men was clearly apparent. Browne related a rumour that was then current in the Provinces: 'I hear that of late Sir Francis,

⁴⁶ Collins, II, Browne to Sidney, 6 July 1601, 228; *Vere's Commentaries*, 119-20; Camden, *Historie*, iv, 197; den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 422-3

⁴⁷ ARA, Lias. Lop., 4902 I, Vere to States General, 14 February 1602

⁴⁸ HMC, *D&D*, II, Browne to Sidney, 12 August 1601, 532-3

⁴⁹ HMC, *Sal*, XII, Wigmore to Cecil, 19 August 1602, 308

⁵⁰ *SP 84*, LXII, fo.259, Vere to Cecil, 19 October 1602

abroad in his coach, met his Excellency's coach, and passed by without saluting him, and that afterwards he sent his excuse, saying that he was sorry, that he saw not his Excellency, as it was on his blind side. I hear that his Excellency's answer was that it was a blind excuse.'⁵¹ Markham dismisses this account, alleging that Browne was 'sadly given to spreading unauthenticated and improbable gossip.'⁵² However, in view of Vere's own professions of resentment towards Maurice, one should perhaps give some credit to the rumour.

The apparently rapid decline of the alliance between Maurice and Vere would seem to suggest that their friendship was never as strong as so many contemporaries believed it to be. While the two men on the whole cooperated effectively in military affairs, there is little evidence to suggest that they held a genuine respect for each other, and their high ranks made them personal rivals rather than close associates. Indeed, particularly towards the end of his ascendancy, Vere did not seem to be able to perceive Maurice as anything other than a threat to his own prestige. In view of this, I am again inclined to give more credit to Motley's interpretation than to Markham's, as it seems to be based upon sound evidence.

Vere's relations with the States General were also less than ideal. However, most modern observers appear to believe that he got on well with them. Den Tex, for example, refers to the 'goodwill' that they felt towards him, and Rowse notes that he gained their confidence and trust.⁵³ There is some justification for this view. The States certainly seemed to value Vere's military skills, as was demonstrated in 1593 and 1598 when they appointed him first Colonel and then General in their service. Sir Francis interpreted the former appointment as an indication of the States' favour and 'good acceptance of my smale searvice', and the Queen viewed it in a similar light, referring to it as 'une recognoissance de vostre bonne affection'.⁵⁴ The States also bestowed a number of other privileges upon him. For example, when he left for England at the beginning of April 1602, they presented him with a gold chain worth 1,500 guilders in order to wipe out any suspicion that they had lost respect for him following his controversial actions at Ostend.⁵⁵ Furthermore, after Vere had resigned his commission in the Netherlands, the States granted him a yearly pension in recognition of the fact that he had for many years 'well trulie comendable and beneficially served the united Lowe Countreys'. The wording of their resolution suggests that

⁵¹ HMC, *D&D*, II, Browne to [?], 29 November 1602, 615

⁵² Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 338-9

⁵³ den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 47; Rowse, *Expansion*, 400

⁵⁴ *SP* 84, XLVI, fo.221, Vere to Burghley, 23 July 1593; fo.229, Elizabeth to States General, 27 July 1593

⁵⁵ den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 429. See below, 230-2

they had bestowed this privilege upon him as a recognition of his dedication to their cause: 'we alwayes have noted in his honor a perfect and stidfast affection in the welfare of the United Lowe Countryes'.⁵⁶ The States also demonstrated their high regard for Vere by giving him a leading role in many of the important campaigns waged during his ascendancy. The most notable of these was the command of the Ostend siege, and he observed that they had bestowed 'very ample powers' upon him.⁵⁷ Their correspondence also suggests that they both esteemed and respected him. In a letter to Elizabeth, for example, they asserted: 'nous en sommes esté bien servis par la grand, vaillantise, et sage conduicte du Sieur Chevalier Veer'.⁵⁸ Similarly, in September 1601, they wrote to express their joy and relief that he had recovered from his injury and had decided to return to his post in Ostend, adding that they reposed their 'utmost confidence' in him.⁵⁹

Judging from his letters to the States, Vere held them in similar esteem. These were always marked with the utmost reverence and humility, and as such are comparable with those that he wrote to the Court. He never failed to express his devotion to the States, but at the same time he was careful to stress that he was first and foremost a servant of the Queen. At the beginning of 1603, for example, he declared that he would 'exposer ma vie pour le service d'ycelles, a cela vouée, entant que le debvoir envers ma souveraigne le peult permettre'.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, both his words and actions suggest that he was strongly committed to their cause. This was particularly apparent on the occasions when he was compelled to leave their service in order to take part in campaigns elsewhere. For example, in June 1597, during the preparations for the Islands Voyage, he wrote to excuse his imminent absence, and assured them that he would serve them diligently when he returned, to compensate for 'le disservice que le pays recevra par mon absence de ma charge.' He concluded: 'Je supplye trèshumblement a vostre Seigneurs de me pardonner ceste hardiesse, et de me contynuer en vostre bonnes graces'.⁶¹ When he was detained in England by the Queen after returning from the voyage, he wrote again for forgiveness, assuring them that he would return to the Provinces as soon as possible.⁶² Vere also took the opportunity to express his commitment to the States General's service when he was appointed Governor of Brill. He

⁵⁶ BM MS, Cotton Titus C, VII, fo.134, States' Grant of a Pension to Vere, 8 June 1606

⁵⁷ *Vere's Commentaries*, 119

⁵⁸ *SP 84*, XLV, fo.361, States General to Elizabeth, (21 November)/1 December 1592

⁵⁹ LXI, fo.290, States General to Vere, (8)/18 September 1601

⁶⁰ ARA, Lias. Lop., 4905 I, Vere to States General, 22 January 1603

⁶¹ Lias. Eng., 5883 I, Vere to States General, 13 June 1597

⁶² *ibid.*, Vere to States General, 6 November 1597. See also for example: 5882 II, Vere to States General, 22 July 1592; 5883 II, Vere to States General, 8 January 1599

declared that he intended to use his new post as a means of strengthening the English troops and making them more useful to the States.⁶³

If Vere did collaborate with the States to the extent that such correspondence suggests, then it is possible that he realised this was the most sensible policy to adopt. Whereas Leicester, and to a lesser degree Willoughby, had caused problems for them by trying to challenge their authority in the Provinces, by the time that Vere took charge of the English troops, this authority had been well enough established to ward off any such challenges in future. Besides, Vere had inherited a less prominent role than either of his predecessors, and was therefore hardly in a position to pose a serious threat to the States. The evidence suggests that he was well aware of this situation, and realised that it was in his own interests to cooperate with them. In short, therefore, Vere's apparently harmonious relations with the Dutch political authorities probably sprang from realism rather than bias.

The lack of the tension that had marred the States' relations with Vere's predecessors did not go unnoticed by contemporaries. Bodley expressed his astonishment that the Hollanders esteemed the English General so highly: 'whereas otherwise their ingratitude is so strange that they shewe very seldome at the best endeavours of any of our nation any loving contentment.'⁶⁴ The Queen also seemed to recognise his harmonious relationship with the States, and she capitalised upon it by encouraging him to act as an intermediary with them, especially when their consent was needed for the withdrawal of troops.⁶⁵ Yet there is reason to suppose that Vere's relations with the States were neither as close or amicable as his countrymen believed. One should not mistake his collaboration with Oldenbarnevelt for good relations with the States as a whole. For example, even though it was the States who bestowed the Colonelship and Generalship upon him, this was probably due to Oldenbarnevelt's intervention, as mentioned earlier. In fact, it seems that Vere's only contact with the States General was through the Advocate's mediation. Of course, living 'almost perpetually in the campe' precluded frequent conferences with the States, but Vere rarely communicated with them through written correspondence.⁶⁶ On the rare occasions that he did write to them, it tended to be because he had been instructed by the Queen to do so - notably

⁶³ Lias. Lop., 4891, Vere to States General, 16 April 1599. See also: 4876, Vere to States General, 3 September 1593

⁶⁴ *SP 84*, XXXIX, fo.63, Bodley to Burghley, September 1590

⁶⁵ See chapter 3, 153-6

⁶⁶ The exception was during his command at Ostend in 1601-2, when he wrote to them frequently, begging them to forward supplies to the beleaguered town. See below, 229-30

during the Cadiz and Islands Voyage delegations, and the Treaty negotiations of 1598. As a result, his relations with the States, although mostly cordial, were formal rather than close, and there is certainly little evidence to substantiate English suspicions of frequent collaboration between the two parties.⁶⁷ Indeed, in the spring of 1600, there was an open rupture between Vere and the States over the pay of the English auxiliaries. Vere accused the States of failing to meet these payments, and even threatened to resign. The States, for their part, were rumoured to have criticised Vere's handling of the accounts, and Whyte claimed that they were so angry with him that they were thinking of transferring the command of the English forces to Sir Robert Sidney. Whyte had spoken to the Dutch ambassador, Noel de Caron, who had allegedly told him that Vere 'grew too stately and ambitious, and, but for the Respect was carried to some of his Friends here [at court] he should find that he had offended the States, by some late Courses'. Furthermore, that: 'the States will trust no more 29 [Vere]', and intended to replace him with Sidney.⁶⁸ This rumour soon took hold at court, and Whyte told his patron: 'it was reported you were gone to camp, being sent for by the States to take command of the English forces, on a rumour that Sir Francis Vere and the States should be at a jar.' As was common in this age of rumour and intrigue, news of this controversy spread rapidly throughout the Court, and at the beginning of May, Whyte informed Sidney: 'It is now publicly reported over court and city that Sir Francis Vere is displaced, and that the States have bestowed the command of the English on you.' Sir William Russell and Lord Sussex were apparently instrumental in spreading the rumour, and both claimed to have seen letters which confirmed it to be true. Sidney no doubt also played a part because he had much to gain from exacerbating the rift between Vere and the States, as well as from discrediting him at court.⁶⁹ However, most of this seems to have been hearsay, and there is no evidence to suggest that the States ever seriously intended to dismiss Vere from his command. Nevertheless, the controversy was symptomatic of the tension that was discernible in Vere's relations with the States during the last few years of Elizabeth's reign.

An even clearer indication of this trend came during Vere's command of the troops in the besieged town of Ostend, when the question of supplies proved a source of tension between them, just as it was in his relationship with the Queen. The dangerous state of the town compelled Vere

⁶⁷ In fact, he seemed reluctant to attend their assemblies. Shortly after his appointment to the Governorship of Brill, for example, he declined their summons on the grounds of an 'indisposition de ma personne'. ARA, Lias. Lop., 4891, Vere to States General, 2 May 1599. See also: Collins, II, Gilpin to Sidney, 13 December 1599, 151

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, Whyte to Sidney, 3 and 19 April 1600, 185-6, 188

⁶⁹ HMC, *D&D*, II, Whyte to Sidney, 3, 19, 26 and 30 April, 3, 13 and 26 May 1600, 453, 456-8, 461, 464; *RSG*, XI, 405, 414, 420, 427-8, 465. See also: HMC, *D&D*, II, Gilpin to Sidney, 22 September 1599, 392; Collins, II, Whyte to Sidney, 6 June and 26 July 1600, 199, 208; Gleig, *Military Commanders*, 166

to write to the authorities of both countries for assistance,⁷⁰ and during the nine months that he was stationed in Ostend, he wrote to the States General more than he had done since the beginning of his ascendancy. As soon as he arrived in the town, he wrote to ask them for the troops that they had promised. When they failed to reply within a few days, he sent a succession of letters, urging them to comply with his requests.⁷¹ The States did send some troops within a fortnight of Vere's first request, but the English General complained because these were less than the number requested.⁷² These first few exchanges between the two parties set the tone for the remainder of Vere's stay in Ostend, as he continued to beg for assistance and they proved reluctant to provide it. When they did forward supplies and reinforcements, these were usually insufficient, and caused the English General to voice his dissatisfaction.⁷³ To make matters worse, he was obviously frustrated that the States seemed more concerned with bolstering the offensive campaigns undertaken by Count Maurice.⁷⁴ As mentioned above, the Count's diversionary campaigns were viewed by Vere with disdain, and the resentment that evolved between the two men spilt over into the States. Maurice succeeded in increasing the body of Vere's opponents there, and it would seem that these had come to outnumber his supporters, namely Oldenbarnevelt and his adherents.⁷⁵

Vere did himself no favours in this respect when, towards the end of 1601, he employed a rather unorthodox strategy to save the beleaguered town. Under constant bombardment from the enemy, Ostend's defences were crumbling, and there were insufficient men to repair them while simultaneously withstanding the attack. Frustrated that his constant pleas for assistance were being ignored by the States, Vere decided to take rather drastic action. He invited the Archduke Albert, leader of the Spanish troops, to treat for peace, and the two men duly exchanged hostages.

⁷⁰ For his requests to the Court, see: *SP 84*, LXI, fo.s 151 and 193, Vere to Nottingham and Cecil, 14 July and 1 August 1601; fo.s 300 and 318, Vere to Cecil, 14 and 22 September 1601; fo.392, Vere to States General, 25 December 1601. N.B. ten Raa and de Bas estimate that the Ostend garrison during Vere's governorship comprised 2,331 men. Shortly after Colonel Dorp had taken over the following spring, this number had risen to 3,344. *Het Staatsche Leger*, II, 65

⁷¹ ARA, Lias. Lop., 4900 II, Vere to States General, 15, 24 and 29 July 1601

⁷² *ibid.*, Vere to States General, 30 July 1601

⁷³ ARA, Lias. Lop., 4900 II, Vere to States General, 31 July and 2, 6, 10, 16 and 23 August, 21 and 29 September 1601; 4901 I, Vere to States General, 18 and 20 October 1601; 4901 II, Vere to States General, 30 October, 1 and 5 November, 13 and 25 December 1601; Vere to States General and Council of State, 16 and 19 December 1601; 4902 I, Vere to States General and Council of State, 5 and 7 January 1602; Vere to States General, 10 January 1602

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, Vere to States General, 14 February 1602; *SP 84*, LXII, fo.44, Vere to Nottingham and Cecil, 21 March 1602

⁷⁵ In this way, Vere became involved in the dispute between Maurice and Oldenbarnevelt that had spilt over into the States General the previous year. *SP 84*, LX ii, fo.278, Vere to Cecil, 19 August 1600; den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 375-6

Sir Francis offered the Spanish hostages a warm welcome and dined with them on Christmas Eve, but ordered repair works to be secretly carried out on the fortifications in the meantime. During the course of the evening, a messenger interrupted them and informed Vere that 1,000 reinforcements had arrived from the States. According to contemporary reports, Vere promptly told the Spaniards: 'We could not now in honour treat with you even to save our lives...You will go to his Highness and thank him for all that he has done, and for waiting so long till those in the town were provided with all necessaries and had repaired their works.' Furious, the Spanish hostages returned to their camp and gave their account of events to the Archduke. Vere no doubt congratulated himself upon the success of his strategy: he had bought the town some valuable time, enabling it to be repaired and reinforced during the respite from the constant enemy bombardments. However, the Spanish were not alone in their fury at the ruse, for it also excited a great deal of ill-feeling in the States General.⁷⁶ Perhaps calling to mind previous English betrayals,⁷⁷ they immediately ordered an investigation into the affair, and dispatched Meynarson and Van Vloeswijck to the town. Vere himself was cross-examined, but he insisted upon the justice of his actions. He also claimed that he had acted with the knowledge and sanction both of his fellow officers and the Council of War. However, he was clearly irritated that his conduct had been thus called into question, and when he was asked about it by a French gentleman sent over by Henry IV, he retorted that the States were to blame because if they had acceded to his urgent requests for supplies earlier, he would not have needed to take such drastic action. Van Vloeswijk seemed willing to think well of Vere's strategy, but was apparently outnumbered by those who believed otherwise. He told the States: 'It would be difficult here to convince people that the General had done anything else but to surrender the town for a ton of gold.' Meynarson was one of these. He suspected Vere's motives for abandoning the outworks shortly before the 'parley' had begun, and seemed to doubt whether he really would have called off the negotiations had it not been for the timely arrival of the reinforcements, particularly as a letter had allegedly been intercepted which signified that the town would be delivered to the Archduke on 27

⁷⁶ By contrast, it seems to have been generally well accepted at court. Sir Dudley Carleton told John Chamberlain: 'The Dutch, whom the affair concerns most, like it not; however, we at Court extol Sir Francis Vere for beating the cautious Spaniard at his own weapon'. *CSPD*, 1601-03, Carleton to Chamberlain, 5 January 1602, 143

⁷⁷ Stanley and Yorke had betrayed Zutphen and Deventer to Spain in January 1587, and Wingfield was suspected of having done the same at Geertruidenberg two years later. Generated by such experiences, rumours of English treachery were quite common in the Provinces, and caused a great deal of resentment between the allies. This was certainly true of the 'parley'. Browne remarked that the Dutch: 'begin to condemn our nation much', and reported that Jacob van Valck, the treasurer of Zeeland, not only suspected that Vere had genuinely intended to treat for peace, but that he had had the full backing of the Queen. Realising that they were so little trusted by their Dutch counterparts, the English bitterly complained about their unjust accusations, and relations between them were soured for a considerable time. *HMC, D&D*, II, Browne to Sidney, 23, 25 (or 26) December 1601, 25 February 1602, 555-6, 570. For other evidence of hostility towards the English soldiery in the Provinces, see: *UHG*, XIX, States of Utrecht to Vere, (23 March)/2 April 1592, 98-9

December. Sir William Browne apparently tried to persuade the States' commissioner otherwise, describing Vere's actions as a 'worthy strategem', but Meynarson replied: 'there are a thousand and a thousand whose harts itt will not sinke into that this was donne for a stratagem, to winne time to make upp the works'.⁷⁸ Several of the officers serving with Vere (including the two English hostages, Captains Ogle and Fairfax), were called upon to give their version of the parley, and they all seemed to corroborate their General's account. However, his reputation had been irreparably tarnished in the States General, and Maurice was able to capitalise upon this to his own advantage in his dispute with Oldenbarnevelt, who by now was one of only few friends that Vere had left in the States. It seemed that the English General's days at Ostend were numbered, and in an effort to pre-empt the inevitable strike, he offered his resignation at the beginning of January 1602. Fearing a backlash from Elizabeth, Oldenbarnevelt refused to let the resignation be accepted, but he nevertheless realised that Vere would have to surrender his command. The problem was later resolved when Vere demanded 10,000 reinforcements for the town, threatening to resign if the States refused to provide these. It is highly unlikely that he expected them to do so, however, and den Tex suggests that he had dreamt up this scheme with Oldenbarnevelt in secret to allow him to be honourably discharged from his command. The demand irritated Maurice extremely because he feared that if it were met, Vere would take the credit for lifting the siege, and, furthermore, that there would be no troops for his own enterprises. However, things settled down slightly after Vere left Ostend for good in February 1602 on the premise that he had been summoned for 'consultations' with the States General.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ In one of his letters to Sidney, Browne was not so quick to defend Vere's actions, and claimed that it was not clear why the English General had undertaken the parley. Collins, II, Browne to Sidney, 23 December 1601, 242

⁷⁹ *SP 84*, LXI, fo.388, Vere to Cecil, 21 December 1601; *ARA*, Lias. Lop., 4901 II, Vere to States General, 25 December 1601; *HMC*, *D&D*, II, Browne to Cecil, 18 and (15)/25 December 1601, 552, 553; Browne to Sidney, 23, 25 (or 26), 31 December 1601; 18 January and 4 February 1602, 555-6; 560, 563-4, 566; 25 February 1602, 570; 'A Letter of the Enterparle' [Undated/signed], 553-4; Van Vloeswijck to States General, (27 December)/6 January 1602, 556-8; *HMC*, *Sal*, XI, Ogle to Cecil, 19 December 1601, 522-3; Collins, II, Browne to Sidney, 25 February 1602, 249; *Winwood Memorials*, I, Winwood to Cecil, 6 January 1602, 371; *CSPD*, 1601-03, J.B. [John Petit] to Mr. Robinson, (31 January)/10 February 1602, 148; *CSPV*, IX, Cavalli to the Doge and Senate, (28 December 1601)/7 January 1602, (11)/21 January 1602, 487, 489; *RSG*, XII, 98; *Vere's Commentaries*, 143-65; Camden, *Historie*, iv, 197-8; van Meteren, *L'Histoire des Pays Bas*, 504-5; *The Triumphs of Nassau*, 313-16; T. Davies, *Extremities Urging the Lord Generall Sir Francis Veare to the Anti-parle with the Archduke Albertus. Written by an English Gentleman of verie good account from Ostend* (London, 1602); den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 428-9. Vere's 'parley' has mostly been portrayed in a favourable light by subsequent English historians, but less so by Dutch. Collins refutes the States General's accusations, and criticises van Meteren for suggesting that Vere might well have betrayed the town if reinforcements had not arrived. Collins, *Historical Collections*, 322-30; van Meteren, 505. More recently, Markham and Rowse have commended his strategy highly, and attack Motley for criticising it. However, they seem to have misinterpreted Motley's portrayal and have taken his remarks out of context. A closer inspection of his narrative reveals that he presented Vere's strategy as unorthodox and surprising, but at the same time cunning and effective. Whereas Rowse claims that he describes the English General's actions as 'gross treachery', in fact Motley was in this instance referring to the Spanish view of it, rather than his own, and he concludes that the ruse proved a 'very successful comedy'. Motley, *United Netherlands*, IV, 72-82; Rowse, *Expansion*, 411-13; Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 319-23

The following year witnessed the further deterioration of Vere's relations with the States, and his demand for full jurisdiction over his own men, unchecked by interference from the Dutch magistrates, was symptomatic of this. This demand was no doubt a reaction to the decline of both his own and the English contingent's importance in relation to the increasing size and effectiveness of the Dutch army. Whereas at the beginning of his ascendancy, the English troops were far superior in quality and quantity to those in the States' service, by the turn of the century, they constituted around one fifth of the now considerable forces that the States had at their disposal.⁸⁰ In addition, Vere's powers had been reduced by the transferral of the English auxiliaries to the States' pay following the treaty of 1598. This deprived him of his former power over military justice and the appointment of captains, but he did not seem to appreciate this, and began to complain about infringements upon his authority. The issue became particularly contentious in June 1600, as a result of a grievance aired by Captain Beeton, whom Vere had cashiered. Beeton complained to the States, and they asked the English General to reconsider. However, Vere justified his actions, saying that he had 'cassé le dict Beeton pour estre homme nullement digné de servir à cest Estat en grade de Capitaine'. He added that he had always had authority to appoint and dismiss captains, and that as he had not abused this, he did not expect it to be infringed upon. Even though he ended the letter in his customarily humble manner, expressing his hope that the matter would not diminish his credit with the States, he clearly

⁸⁰ If we accept that the English contingent under Vere's command, although subject to fluctuations, consisted of around 7,000 or 8,000 men from 1585 to 1603, then it is possible to trace its decline in importance relative to the Dutch army. The best source for this period is ten Raa and de Bas, *Het Staatsche Leger*, which provides estimates for the overall size of the Dutch army, including the English troops, between 1588 and 1601. It states that the figure was 20,509 in 1588, rising to 31,638 in 1595, 35,388 in 1598, and 36,324 in 1601. II, 344-51. From this, it is possible to estimate that at the beginning of Vere's ascendancy, the English contingent made up between a third and a half of the Dutch army, whereas by 1601, it had shrunk to between a quarter and a fifth. Zwitzer's figures more or less concur with this, although the relevant data in his study only covers the period 1595-99. He estimates that in 1595 the total size of the Dutch army was 30,923 men, whereas in 1599 it was 35,408. Although Zwitzer does not offer any figures for the years 1600-3, he claims that by 1607, the size of the Dutch army had risen to 51,468. Given this, and the figures for the earlier period, it could be conjectured that the figure was at least 40,000 in 1603, and if this was the case, the English contingent would have constituted around one sixth of the total forces. *De Militie van den Staat*, 175. The remaining sources relating to the comparative size of the English and Dutch army in the Netherlands are quite vague, and tend to focus upon the field army. Vere himself claimed that by 1589, Maurice could only gather together 1,500 men for a field army, but this is dubious. *Vere's Commentaries*, 1. Wernham states that Vere and the English auxiliaries (which he estimates rarely exceeded 1,500 men) made up between a third and a half of Maurice's field army 'in the early years', thus putting the size of the latter at between 3,000 and 4,500 men. 'Elizabethan War Aims and Strategy', 351. Nickle estimates that in 1591, the Dutch infantry numbered c.8,500 men, but he includes the English contingent in his figures. *Military Reforms*, 185-91. Den Tex is quite vague about the size of the Dutch army, but he does state that in 1590, the English troops 'formed the nucleus, indeed the majority, of the army in the field', and estimates that in 1593, Maurice had just 5,000 men at his disposal. *Oldenbarnevelt* II, 118, 147. In spite of the discrepancy between these estimates, they clearly illustrate the decline of the English contingent's importance relative to the Dutch army: having been crucial during the later 1580s, they were overshadowed by Dutch forces a decade later

resented their interference.⁸¹ At the beginning of 1603, when it seemed likely that a similar matter would occur, he therefore decided to ensure that his authority would not be questioned - either on this or any future occasion.⁸² He informed Cecil that it was crucial for him to have full jurisdiction over his own men in order to fulfil his command effectively and redress the 'malicious workyng' of his enemies, and he was clearly determined to have his way: 'by the goodnes of my cause in the mattres in question, which I doe now perceave wyll nott prevayle, and thatt the causes make nott my ennemyes, butt my ennemyes the causes which they wyll have stoar of and I shall have no remedye tyll I have obtaynead this poynt to doe justice over her Majesties subjeacts. Which I am resolvead to obtayne of the states or to leave this searvice'⁸³ He duly presented his request to the States General and urged them to grant him untrammelled jurisdiction over the English troops, claiming that he had suffered greatly at the hands of certain subversives who had been able to escape his authority. In a long and impassioned speech, he described how his patience had been severely tested by such men, whose actions had led to 'la subversion totale de la discipline militaire', and had caused him 'grande escome et disreputation'. He concluded by expressing his fervent desire to serve the States, and urging them to allow him to convoke an English Council of War through which he could exercise full jurisdiction.⁸⁴ This speech was unusually 'harshe and peremptorie', especially compared to Vere's other, more subtle dispatches, and he told Cecil that it was necessarily so because he found the faction that opposed the measure 'so strong and throughlie bent against mee; that I must either beare disgrace upon disgrace, or take this extreame course for redresse'. Vere clearly believed that Maurice was one of the principal objectors to his proposal because he insisted that he did not intend to stray from the 'lawes and ordinances' of the Provinces, as this was 'well understood by the prince maurice, as the point most debated'.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, he was successful in getting it passed, for at the end of February, he reported that the States had 'in some sort graunted unto my request', and claimed: 'it is an addition to my former authoritie, and sufficient to bridle factious spirites, (which was the thing I onlie aimed at)'.⁸⁶

⁸¹ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5884 I, Vere to States General, 1 June 1600

⁸² This time Vere's accuser was Captain Ridgeway, who was stationed in Bergen-op-Zoom. Lias. Lop., 4905 I, Vere to States General, 13 January 1603

⁸³ *SP 84*, LXII, fo.286, Vere to Cecil, 7 January 1603; LXIV fo.90, Vere's Petition to the Privy Council, [c.1603]

⁸⁴ ARA, Lias. Lop., 4905 I, Vere to States General, 22 January 1603; *RSG*, XXII, 486, 488

⁸⁵ *SP 84*, LXII, fo.292, Vere to Cecil, 6 February 1603

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, fo.303, Vere to Cecil, 27 February 1603. Nickle, however, claims that the States General and Council of State refused to grant his request, and that this ultimately led to his resignation in 1604. *Military Reforms*, 198

Vere's determination to increase his authority stirred up resentment both in the States General and among the English contingent. In June 1602, shortly before the siege of Grave, Browne told Sidney: 'Sir Francis Vere's great Commaund is wonderfully grudged at both by French, Dutch, and English; your Lordship needs not to doubt, but they envy it enough.' He went on to relate a conversation that he had with Valck, who marvelled that the Queen had not reduced Vere's authority by sending over another officer to command her forces jointly with him.⁸⁷ But Browne pointed out that Vere 'undoubtedly, with the power he had gotten among them, did make her believe, that he could, if he were continued absolute in his Commaund, manage Matters for her Service hear as he pleased'. This was backed up by Oldenbarnevelt, who when asked about the great authority that Vere had accrued, remarked that it would be impossible to reduce it now: 'Que voules vous, nous sommes trop avant avec luy pour pouvoir aslur⁸⁸ retranchir quelque chose'. However, Browne then alleged that Oldenbarnevelt was virtually the only ally that Vere had in the States, and that he knew many who were 'nothing affected unto him'.⁸⁹ It would therefore seem that the English General's attempts to enhance his authority had alienated many members of the Dutch political élite, and the situation was no doubt aggravated by his enemies - both in the Netherlands and at court.⁹⁰

By the end of Elizabeth's reign, therefore, the goodwill between Vere and the States had suffered a marked decline, and the gradual deterioration of their relations can be traced back to the few preceding years. However, this did little to change the overwhelming opinion held by Vere's compatriots that he was 'overmuch affected' to the States and to the Dutch cause in general. This view has filtered down to recent studies, and it now seems to be generally accepted that he was committed to the Dutch cause more than to his sovereign's. Den Tex certainly believes this, and asserts that Vere was so devoted to the Dutch that he invoked the displeasure of the English Court, in particular Elizabeth and Burghley.⁹¹ On the English side, Rowse also refers to their disapproval, and points out that Elizabeth became jealous of her General's following the States' service rather than her own.⁹² The notion that Vere's loyalty to the Queen was overshadowed by his dedication to the Dutch is rejected by his biographer. Markham asserts that Sir Francis had a

⁸⁷ He was no doubt referring to Lord Grey, who was rumoured to be going over to the Netherlands in 1602 to take up a position of authority.

⁸⁸ à l'heure

⁸⁹ Collins, II, Browne to Sidney, 5 June 1602, 255

⁹⁰ Most notably Sidney, Whyte and Gilpin. See chapter 4, 209-10; 213-14

⁹¹ den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 46-7, 121-2

⁹² Rowse, *Expansion*, 400



FRANCOIS VEER.
OVERSTE VAN 'T ENGELSCHE KRYGSMAN
IN DIENST VAN DE VEREENIGDE NEDERLANDEN.

Figure 8: Sir Francis Vere

Taken from P.C. Bor, *Nederlandsche Oorlogen*, IV, 180

natural affinity for the Dutch because, as a 'grand old champion of liberty', he appreciated their endeavours and was 'sincerely attached to the cause of civil and religious liberty for which it was his duty to fight.' As a result, he had 'naturally entered heart and soul into the struggle for freedom in the Netherlands, and had formed many warm friendships there.' However, while Markham accepts that Vere's 'strong and natural bias' towards the Dutch incurred the displeasure of the Court, he refutes suggestions that his loyalty to the English cause was in any way compromised, and insists: 'The first romance of Vere's life was his devoted loyalty to Queen Elizabeth.' Nevertheless, he does acknowledge that it may have seemed Vere was 'more anxious to further that cause [i.e. the Dutch cause] than to obey orders that seemed to endanger it', and his concluding remark on the subject shows that he was aware of a certain division of loyalties: 'As a diplomatist, as well as in his capacity of general of the English forces, Sir Francis was first and before all things the faithful and loyal servant of England and of the great Queen, but he was almost equally the champion of freedom.'⁹³ In stressing Vere's strong commitment to both the English and Dutch causes, Markham was probably endeavouring to discredit the view put forward by Motley some years earlier. As well as arguing that Vere's relationship with Maurice was far from ideal, Motley also infers that his attitude towards the Dutch and their cause was less than favourable. He refers to Vere's 'want of true sympathy for the cause in which he fought', and alleges that this, coupled with his inordinate personal and national self-esteem, was 'the frequent source of trouble and danger to the republic.'⁹⁴ His assertions have been largely disregarded by subsequent historians in favour of Markham's account, but the evidence above suggests that they should be given some credit. Furthermore, as will be discussed later, they are supported by the notion that Vere's loyalty was not so much to the Netherlands as to his own interests and strategic outlook.

Many of Vere's compatriots at Court certainly seemed to believe that he held the Dutch cause closer to his heart than the English. The Queen herself was well aware of the harmony that apparently existed between her General and the Dutch, and both she and her ministers capitalised upon this whenever a withdrawal of English troops was required, as already suggested. At no time was this clearer than during the preparations for the Islands Voyage in 1597. At first, it was proposed that the Dutch ambassador, Caron, should be sent over to request the withdrawal. However, it was feared that the States would view him as 'too partial' to England, and would refuse the troops requested. It was therefore decided that Vere should be given the task because

⁹³ Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 180-1, 303n, 350, 362, 459

⁹⁴ Motley, *United Netherlands*, IV, 65

he was 'the fittest person to persuade them to believe in the success of the action.'⁹⁵ Yet as well as being useful, Vere's apparently close relationship with the States also caused resentment at court, particularly for the Queen. From the very beginning of his ascendancy, she was clearly anxious to prevent the diversion of his loyalty from her. In September 1590, she ordered him to ensure that the town of Flushing was provided with reinforcements from his own company when necessary: 'notwithstanding any contradiction or restraint to be made by the States General, or by the Count Maurice, or by the Council of Estates.'⁹⁶ Elizabeth's unease about her General's loyalty was perhaps most notable, however, during the closing months of 1594 when she instructed him to secure the States General's consent for the withdrawal of a number of English auxiliaries for service in France. When Vere failed to satisfy her demand, she severely reprimanded him, and he wrote a long letter of apology in which he tried to justify his actions. He lamented the 'exceedinge grate pointes' with which Elizabeth had charged him, namely: 'wante of consideracion in my proceadinges, slacknesse in obeyinge your commaundements, over-greate forwardnesse in matters concerninge the states, and rashe venturinge of your Majesties subjectes'.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, Elizabeth remained suspicious of her General. In 1598, upon hearing of the States' intention to appoint him a General in their service, she at once objected, and Vere told Cecil that he had learned from Caron 'how earnestly her Majestie withstood my ymployment with the states'. In fact, it was largely thanks to Cecil's intervention that she eventually forgot her objections and agreed to the appointment.⁹⁸ Her objections were not forgotten for long, however. Within a few weeks, it was suggested that the Queen should appoint him Governor of Brill, but she 'fell to objecting' that he 'served the States, and that those two charges could not well stand together.' It seems this was intended as a test of Vere's loyalty to her, for when he then assured her: 'I was willing (if there were no remedy) rather to forsake the States service then to miss the place I was a suitor to Her Majesty for, in hers', she left him 'without any discouragement', and (again thanks to Cecil's intervention) shortly afterwards agreed to the appointment.⁹⁹

The English Queen was not alone in believing that her General was too devoted to the Dutch cause. Indeed, it seemed that most of the Court was of the same opinion. Burghley almost

⁹⁵ *CSPD*, (1595-97), Memorial of business to be submitted to the Queen, [1597?], 564

⁹⁶ *HMC*, *Sal*, IV, Elizabeth to Vere, 7 September 1590, 57

⁹⁷ *SP 84*, XLIX fo.257, Vere to Elizabeth, 20 December 1594

⁹⁸ *SP 84*, LVII, fo.197, Vere to Cecil, 17 December 1598

⁹⁹ *Vere's Commentaries*, 68-9; *SP 84*, LVII, fo.145, Oath of Sir Francis Vere on admission as Governor of Brille, October 1598

certainly was, judging by the volume of letters that Vere sent to him which explained and justified his actions.¹⁰⁰ In June 1597, the whole Privy Council seemed suspicious of him, and reprimanded him for not acting quickly enough upon Elizabeth's instructions.¹⁰¹ While such opinions of Vere may have been based at least in part upon accurate interpretations of his actions, it seems more likely that they were fuelled by the exaggerated and ill-intentioned reports put about by his enemies. One of these was Sir Thomas Knollys, who quarrelled with Vere in 1599, and proceeded to discredit him with the Court - and more particularly with Essex. In February, he told the Earl that Vere was 'so great and so addicted unto the States that he maketh small account of anything set down by your lordship in England. He maketh little esteem of his government in Brill, having not yet been there.' The following month, he wrote in a similar vein to Cecil, arguing: 'I think it is too much for one man to be Lord General for the States in the field and Lord Governor of the Brill for her Majesty.' Evidently determined to completely discredit his adversary, he also wrote to the Queen herself, clearly insinuating Vere's disloyalty: 'whose authority and maintenance from the States is so great and absolute, being lately appointed by them to be their general of all the English in the field, that he maketh small account of your Majesty's town and government of the Brill, being wholly addicted unto the States and their proceedings. He hath not only crost my welfare in these parts, but also your Majesty's special service into Ireland, the Council's determinations in England, and my Lord of Essex's intended journey.'¹⁰²

Judging from Elizabeth's attitude towards Vere, it would appear that Knollys was largely successful in his endeavours. However, it must be supposed that she was either willing to give credit to such rumours or that she was already convinced of Vere's disloyalty because, by contrast, she took precious little account of the reports that she received from her two councillors of State, Bodley and Gilpin, who both testified to his devotion to her service. The former often referred to Vere's loyalty to her, and 'uttermost endeavor' on her behalf. Commenting upon Vere's request to the States for the withdrawal of troops for the Cadiz Voyage, Bodley asserted that even if they were to object to this, their opposition would 'not prevaile with Sir Francis Vere.'¹⁰³ Gilpin largely supported Bodley's claims. In September 1595, for example, he

¹⁰⁰ See for example: XLIX, fo.263, Vere to Burghley, 21 December 1594

¹⁰¹ APC, XXVIII, Privy Council to Vere, June 1597, 183

¹⁰² HMC, *Sal*, IX, Knollys to Essex, 9 February 1599, 65; Knollys to Cecil, March 1599, 124; Knollys to Elizabeth, March 1599, 123-4

¹⁰³ SP 84, LII, fo.38, Bodley to Burghley, 25 January 1596; XLIII, fo.211, Bodley to Burghley, 20 November 1591; XLI, fo.151, Bodley to Burghley, 9 February 1591; XLV, fo.291, Bodley to Burghley, 4 September 1592

informed Essex that the States were likely to appoint Vere to a position of command, but he judged that he would 'refuse it without her Majesty's knowledge and leave first had'.¹⁰⁴ It is surely more likely that these two men, who were in regular contact with Vere, would have been able to assess his priorities and attitudes more accurately than men such as Knollys, who knew far less about both Sir Francis and the situation in the Netherlands.

If the Queen and Court apparently gave little credence to Bodley and Gilpin's testimonies, then they gave scarcely more to those of Vere himself. He frequently justified his actions to them, and was evidently aware that they suspected him of favouring the Dutch cause too greatly. One of the most notable occasions was his reply to the Queen's reprimand of December 1594, regarding the levy of troops for France. He lamented that the notion of his being disloyal had 'taken such roote' in her concept of him that he doubted he could disprove it. Nevertheless, he embarked upon a lengthy explanation of his actions and an eloquent expression of his 'synceritie' and devotion to her service. He pleaded: 'Neyther cane yt be accoumpted pollicye in me (your most gracious Majesties subjecte and most deeply bounden servaunte) when their is question of deserving well betwixte your Highnes and anye other to swarve in ye lest pointe of dewtye and loyall affection, wherby my services, daingers, travayles, and tyme spent in the imployment of the most worthiest Prince lyvinge should be made unworthye of acceptaunce.' He went on to explain his apparent bias towards the Dutch cause, declaring: 'And if at anye tyme I have seemed to be partiall in my dealinges for the Stattes, I protest before God and your Highnes that I have alwayes followed that course, which oute of the knowledge I have of their Estate, I thought fittest for your Majesties service: what favour they have done me, hath byne for your Majesties sake, and that in their service I have not miscaryed my selfe'.¹⁰⁵

From Vere's letters, it would seem that the charge most frequently railed against him was that he had contravened specific orders from England. This was taken as proof of his pro-Dutch stance and his general negligence in promoting English interests. In fact, there are numerous instances when he apparently failed to carry out Elizabeth's instructions to the letter, or contravened them altogether. For example, towards the end of 1590, Vere was instructed to allow Sir Robert Sidney to withdraw some troops from his company or to exchange companies with him. He immediately objected on the grounds that the companies under his charge were based in

¹⁰⁴ HMC, *Sal*, V, Gilpin to Essex, 6 September 1595, 364

¹⁰⁵ *SP 84*, XLIX, fo.257, Vere to Elizabeth, 20 December 1594. See also, for example: XLI, fo. 38, Vere to Privy Council, 14 January 1591; XLIV, fo.21, Vere to Privy Council, 13 January 1592; XLV, fo.189, Vere to Burghley, 22 August 1593; HMC, *Sal*, VIII, Vere to Essex, 30 November 1598, 467

Gelderland and the surrounding area, which meant that it would be impossible to remove them, let alone transport them to Flushing, without a patent from the States. He therefore suggested that the number of men that Sidney required should be drawn from the towns of Bergen-op-Zoom or Ostend.¹⁰⁶ In a sense, this incident set the tone for the rest of Vere's ascendancy. Clearly, he was acting out of self-interest by objecting to the depletion of his own company, but he used the States as an excuse, claiming that it was not in his power to act without their consent. However, instead of transferring the blame from himself to the Dutch authorities, this helped to cultivate the belief in England that he was more considerate towards their interests than those of his sovereign. He received a swift reprimand for opposing his orders, and in spite of his attempts to offset this with an explanation of his actions,¹⁰⁷ the notion that he was both disobedient and disloyal had apparently taken root at Court.

Vere's relatively frequent contravention of the orders that he received from England could be explained by his eagerness to further the Dutch cause, but it does not necessarily follow that this sprang from an unswerving and - from England's point of view - misplaced loyalty to the States. A more convincing argument is that it originated from his views on English strategy. As mentioned in the previous chapter, he belonged to the interventionist alignment at court, which advocated active English involvement overseas and an aggressive policy towards the King of Spain. Vere's activities in the Netherlands fulfilled both of these criteria, and this perhaps explains his active promotion of Dutch interests - both in his participation in the war itself, and in his letters to the Court. These letters were warmly received by the likes of Walsingham and Essex who were themselves leading interventionists, eager to boost England's support for the Dutch war.¹⁰⁸ Vere's close involvement in this war therefore formed the strongest point of contact between himself and these men, but there are grounds for doubting that the polarity of their interests was significantly greater than this. Most interventionists at court seemed to focus their efforts upon advocating aggressive action against Spain in general, whether this involved intervention in the Netherlands, France, or elsewhere. Vere on the other hand only showed obvious and unswerving enthusiasm for the Dutch war, and was on the whole opposed to the diversion of English troops to other venues. It is unfortunate that he tended to limit his opinions on strategy to these two general themes rather than presenting a more detailed and all-

¹⁰⁶ *SP 84, XXXIX, fo.240, Vere to Burghley, 28 November 1590*

¹⁰⁷ *XLI, fo.36, Vere to Burghley, 14 January 1591*

¹⁰⁸ Vere's brief, but close, collaboration with Essex led him to air his views on strategy to a greater degree than at any other time during his ascendancy, and his letters indicate his outlook in an apparently frank and sincere manner. See for example: *HMC, Sal, V, Vere to Essex, 7 October 1595, 404-5; VI, Vere to Essex, 9 March 1596, 90-1; VII, Vere to Essex, 1 and 7 January, 26 March, 24 April 1597, 1-2, 8-10, 130-1, 172*

encompassing view of his strategic outlook. Nevertheless, it is possible to demonstrate that he tended to place the Dutch war at the top of England's priorities, relegating other arenas - most notably France - to a far lower position on the scale of importance.

Most of the available evidence relating to Vere's attitude towards English involvement in military ventures outside the Netherlands concerns the war in France. His enthusiasm for this was at best lukewarm, and he was more often actively hostile. If his correspondence is to be believed, he viewed France as peripheral to the war with Spain, at least compared with the Netherlands. The clearest indication of his strategic perspective can be found in a letter that he wrote to Burghley in June 1593. He urged the sending over of English troops to the Provinces, and claimed that the Dutch were 'so confirmead, well gouvernead, and disciplyned, that with a little healp, they would be made able to overthrow, the whole state of th'ennemy in theas contryes.' By contrast, he argued, English intervention in France would be far more costly and less beneficial to the 'common cause', and wrote: 'In Normandy, and Brytanny, thear can no good be donn for the kyng, without a great army of her Majesties, the expence of much Treasure, and consuming of many men, in neyther of those places shall the kyng sustayne any loss, so long as theas men can hould them busyead heer.' He concluded: 'And this is one syngular poynt of advantage to the cause, thatt the blowes strucken in theas quartres [the Provinces], ar att the very root, whence all the danger spryngeath, when the other ar butt att the very topp branches.'¹⁰⁹ This view was echoed by the States General. In response to Norris' delegation of 1591, requesting troops for Brittany, they urged that it would benefit Henry IV more if the allies were to concentrate all of their resources in the Netherlands, thereby diverting Spanish troops away from France.¹¹⁰

However, perhaps realising that his letters alone could do little to influence the formation of English strategy (particularly in view of his distance from court), Vere sought to promote the Dutch cause at the expense of the French by other means. As discussed in chapter 1, throughout the first half of his ascendancy, Elizabeth's resources were divided between the Netherlands and France, and on the whole she was more enthusiastic about deploying her forces in the latter area of conflict. This often involved the withdrawal of seasoned English troops from the Provinces, and, given Vere's apparent aversion to French concerns, it is not too surprising that he attempted to prevent, or at least limit, these withdrawals. He was assisted in this by the States General's

¹⁰⁹ *SP 84*, XLVI, fo.177, Vere to Burghley, 16 June 1593. Commenting upon this letter, den Tex claims: 'The Netherlands could count themselves lucky to have a commander of auxiliaries who championed their interests so forcefully.' However, he implies that Vere did so out of commitment to the Dutch rather than for strategic reasons. *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 122

¹¹⁰ *UHG*, XVIII, States General's Answer to Norris's Memorial, (1)/11 February 1591, 395-6

somewhat ambivalent attitude towards France. While they were prepared to contribute their own resources to the French King's aid when these could be spared, they were on the whole reluctant to allow the recall of English troops for that purpose.¹¹¹ Vere was therefore able to use their objections to mask his own aversion to the withdrawal of his troops. The fact that he excused his failure to comply with the Queen's requests by claiming that the States would not consent to them may go some way towards explaining the popularity of the view that his devotion to the Dutch cause compromised his loyalty to the English.

On almost every occasion that the withdrawal of his troops for aid to France was requested, Vere either voiced his objection or demonstrated it by more practical - and subtle - means. Towards the end of 1590, Elizabeth proposed a plan for a joint expedition to Flanders, incorporating English, Dutch and German forces, and ultimately aiming to attack Dunkirk, neutralise Parma's army and thus relieve France of his presence. The English contingent was to be led by Vere, the Dutch by Maurice, and the German by Henry IV's envoy, Viscount Turenne. The Queen suggested that Turenne should march his troops through the Netherlands, escorted by the English and Dutch forces.¹¹² Vere pretended enthusiasm for the plan, but was clearly opposed to it, and confessed to Burghley (who was no more enamoured of the scheme himself) that he believed it would be better to concentrate the collaboration of forces in the Provinces and abandon the idea of marching them through to Flanders, and from thence to France. His aversion to the expedition was apparently well known at court, however, and he therefore wrote to the Privy Council, fearing that having heard 'complaynts' against him, they may have conceived an 'ill opinion' of him. He insisted that he had 'never forgot mysealf so farr' as to ignore their orders, in spite of his doubts about the plan.¹¹³ However, Vere was clearly determined to do as little as he could get away with to further the expedition, without bringing upon him the wrath of the Queen and her council, and he therefore set about finding reasons why he had been unable to raise the levies. Favouring his accustomed policy of concealing his own objection behind that of the Dutch leaders, he claimed that he had endeavoured to persuade Maurice to assemble the necessary troops, but that the Count had 'alleaged some reason why the contry wold nott be brought to imploye their forces in Flandres'. As an alternative plan, Maurice suggested engaging the enemy

¹¹¹ N.B. Vere was evidently just as opposed to Dutch intervention in France as to English. In a letter to Burghley at the beginning of 1595, he claimed that the current hardship of the Provinces was due primarily to the succour that they had recently given to France. *SP 84*, L, fo.19, Vere to Burghley, 24 January 1595. See also for example: LI, fo.91, Vere to Burghley, 15 August 1595.

¹¹² *SP 78*, XXII, fo.143, The Queen's opinion on the German Army, 25 November 1590; fo.162, Note on German troops for France, 30 November 1590. For a narrative of the Flanders plan, see Lloyd, *Rouen Campaign*, chapter 3; Wernham, *After the Armada*, chapter 12.

¹¹³ *SP 84*, XLI, fo.36, Vere to Burghley, 14 January 1591; fo. 38, Vere to Privy Council, 14 January 1591

forces in Gelderland, and Vere confessed to be in agreement.¹¹⁴ However, the Flanders plan was eventually abandoned, and from the beginning of 1591, it had in any case been overshadowed by Henry IV's requests for assistance in Brittany. The States General, who had been somewhat cool towards the Flanders plan, openly objected to the proposed withdrawal of 3,000 troops for Brittany. Vere, too, was reluctant to organise the levies as instructed. He told both Burghley and the Privy Council that he would proceed 'with all sincerity', and 'see the execution thereof so far forth as the manner of my employment wyll permitt', but alleged that he could not act upon his orders in person because of a 'hurtt' that he had recently received. He reported that he had therefore forwarded the orders to the places where his companies were stationed so that his deputies there could carry them out.¹¹⁵ The following month, he assured Burghley that the troops would be levied by the appointed time, but added that he feared there may be some difficulty because many of the men were 'loath to goe', and the States were 'resoluead nott to assist us with boates or any other commodities.' He insisted that although he was forced to 'alleadg difficultyes', he was nevertheless an enthusiastic supporter of the Brittany venture, and was devoted to 'the good of my Prince and contrey'.¹¹⁶ The Queen subsequently reduced her demand to 1,500 troops and, commending her decision, Vere immediately proffered suggestions as to how the English forces might be effectively employed in the Netherlands.¹¹⁷

However, towards the end of the year, Elizabeth again announced her intention to recall her troops, their destination being the siege of Rouen in Normandy.¹¹⁸ This time Vere could not use the States' objection as an excuse for inaction, as they had consented to the request comparatively quickly. He therefore sought by other means to limit the damage that the loss of such a large proportion of his forces could wreak. He alleged that he had not been able to send as many troops as the Queen had requested because there been no time to furnish them with the necessary supplies.¹¹⁹ His failure to satisfy her demand brought upon him the wrath of the Queen and her

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, fo.228, Vere to Burghley, 11 March 1591

¹¹⁵ N.B. The companies were stationed in Breda, Doesberg, Arnhem, and Betuwe. *ibid.*, fo. 36, Vere to Burghley, 14 January 1591; fo.38, Vere to Privy Council, 14 January 1591

¹¹⁶ *SP 84*, XLI, fo.153, Vere to Burghley, 9 February 1591

¹¹⁷ XLII, fo.228, Vere to Burghley, 11 March 1591; *UHG*, XVIII, Memorial by Norris, (8)/18 March 1591, 409-11

¹¹⁸ This time the number required was 1,000. *SP 84*, XLIII, fo.183, Elizabeth to States General, 8 November 1591; *SP 78*, XXIV, fo.283, Articles agreed by Beauvoir and de Reau for the sending of 3,400 men to Normandy, 25 June 1591; XXV, fo.70, Instructions for Essex, 21 July 1591; XXVI, fo.78, Henry IV to Elizabeth, (25 October)/4 November 1591; fo.152, Elizabeth to Essex, 9 November 1591; fo.140, Elizabeth to Henry IV, 8 November 1591; XXVII, fo.148, Elizabeth to Unton, 19 February 1592; BM MS, Cotton Galba D, VIII, fo.266, Elizabeth to Bodley, 9 November 1591. For a detailed analysis of the siege of Rouen in its international context, see Lloyd, *Rouen Campaign*; also Wernham, 'Queen Elizabeth and the Siege of Rouen, 1591', 163-79

¹¹⁹ *SP 84*, XLIII, fo.213, Vere to Burghley, 20 November 1591

Council. At the beginning of the following year, he wrote a lengthy letter of explanation, bemoaning: 'her Majesties and your heavy displeasure conceavead against me, for the weaknes of the compaignyes sent into France, and the slacknes in exsecuting the ordres seatt downe by your Honours'. He again alleged that he had not had sufficient time to levy the troops, and that two of the companies were particularly weak because one 'had alwayes livead in Garrison', and the other consisted of new men who, he argued, 'doe decay' rapidly. He added that upon hearing they were to serve in France, a number of the troops had deserted their posts.¹²⁰ The damage had been done, however, and from thenceforth Elizabeth and some of her most influential courtiers seemed to be increasingly doubtful of the English General's loyalty.

This was clearly apparent during the summer of 1592, when the Queen resolved to send more troops to the French King's aid.¹²¹ This time, she and her Council were evidently determined to prevent Vere from sending weak or insufficient troops, for they instructed him to supply a certificate of the strength of the companies when he had levied them. Even so, he was able to get around this by alleging that the bands were too widely dispersed for the commissary to 'fynd the true state of them', and that the captains would not 'fully declare thear wantes'. He protested at length how vital the requested troops were to the campaign in the Provinces, claiming that the States also objected greatly to their withdrawal. Worse still, he proceeded to march a number of them to the siege of Koevorden, rather than conveying them to the place of embarkation, as he had been instructed to do. He argued that he had been 'exseedinglye pressead bothe by the States and the Count' to do so, and added that he hoped the Queen and her Council would 'ratefie and allowe' of his actions, especially in view of the crucial stage that the allied campaign had reached.¹²² However, on this occasion his objections went unheeded, and Elizabeth's demand was eventually met.¹²³ His reluctance to organise the withdrawal of these troops for a campaign that he viewed as being of less importance than the Koevorden siege had been clearer still in the letter that he had written to the States General, informing them of the Queen's demand. In an extremely apologetic tone, he told them that he and Bodley had been instructed to organise the withdrawal, but assured them that he himself would take no part in it, and would instead leave it

¹²⁰ XLIV, fo.21, Vere to Privy Council, 13 January 1592; fo.23, Vere to Burghley, 13 January 1592

¹²¹ BM MS, Cotton Galba D, IX, fo.s 184 and 210, Bodley to Burghley, 1 May and 1 June 1592; fo.s 206 and 288, Elizabeth to Bodley, 9 May and 1 June 1592; *SP* 77, V, fo.78, Instructions for Edward Burnham, 7 May 1592; *SP* 78, XXVIII, fo.29, Beauvoir la Nocle to Burghley, 10 May 1592; fo.206, Answer given to the French Ambassador, (16)/26 June 1592

¹²² *SP* 84, XLV, fo.191, Vere to Privy Council, 23 August 1592; fo.s 80, 130, 201, Vere to Burghley, 13 and 23 July, 29 August 1592

¹²³ *ibid.*, fo.361, States General to Elizabeth, (21 November)/1 December 1592

to those who were more qualified to do so. He added that he hoped the Provinces would suffer 'nulle perte' as a result of the troops' departure, and the matter would be resolved without prejudice to those who wished to serve them.¹²⁴

During the Groningen enterprise in the summer of 1594, Vere received news of the Queen's request for another withdrawal of companies, and immediately pleaded that they might be spared for a period of two months to enable the allied forces to take the town.¹²⁵ The troops that she had requested had been sent over from England for the Groningen siege, apparently under the proviso that Vere would return them again as soon as the town yielded to the allied forces. However, when the siege was successfully concluded, he denied that he had ever made this agreement: 'though itt pleaseathe her Majestie to saye thatt I promisead to retorne them after this searvice, her Majestie mystooke me'.¹²⁶ Not surprisingly, the Queen's response was one of anger and dismay, and she severely reprimanded him for disobeying her orders. He expressed his regret that she had charged him with 'not followinge precisly your Majesties commaundement', and pleaded: 'I most humbly beseche your Highnes to accompte thearof as an errour proceadinge from my synceritie to your service, and so to pardon it.'¹²⁷ Given his attitude towards English involvement in France, it is rather doubtful that Vere had wrongly interpreted Elizabeth's demand, and it seems more likely that this was a means by which he tried to disguise his intransigence.

During the later years of Vere's ascendancy, England's involvement in France was drastically reduced, and the year 1597 saw the last major threat of a withdrawal of English troops from the Netherlands for service there. At the beginning of that year, plans for recapturing Calais were discussed, and Elizabeth instructed Vere to gauge the States' reaction to a withdrawal of both the English troops and their own.¹²⁸ His correspondence to the Court suggests that he proceeded with diligence and alacrity, doing everything in his power to promote the expedition. He claimed: 'I have and will endeavour all I may to make it liked here', and wrote that he had 'dealt very roundly' with Oldenbarnvelt and Buzenval at the Hague to further the matter. However, he was somewhat pessimistic about the enterprise going ahead and, as was by now his custom, he

¹²⁴ ARA, Lias. Eng., 5882 II, Vere to States General, 22 July 1592

¹²⁵ SP 78, XXXIII, fo.354, Beauvoir la Nocle to Cecil, 18 July 1594; SP 84, XLVIII, fo.233, Vere to Burghley, 27 May 1594

¹²⁶ XLIX, fo.90, Vere to Burghley, 10 August 1594

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, fo.257, Vere to Elizabeth, 20 December 1594

¹²⁸ In fact, it is doubtful that the Queen ever seriously contemplated deploying her troops for such a risky venture - one that the French King himself was clearly reluctant to support with his own forces. Wernham, *Return of the Armadas*, 147

disguised his own aversion by alleging that some other party had proved intransigent. This time it was the French, or more particularly Buzenval, rather than the States, who Vere claimed were lacking in enthusiasm for the venture.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, he assured the Court of his unfailing energy in attempting to promote it.¹³⁰ A few weeks later, he told Essex that the French King had finally declared his support for the expedition, and predicted that the States would also be willing to offer some assistance if the Queen would 'urge them to it in time.' However, he was apparently still opposed to it himself, and begged Essex to prevent the recall of his own regiment from the Netherlands, which, he protested, was 'a thing which I have feared still', and would 'ruin my poor fortune.'¹³¹ A short while later, he seemed to have resigned himself to the fact that his recall was imminent, but even though he told Essex that he would 'gladly be a follower of yours in that action', he was obviously still reluctant to join the expedition because he predicted that it would be: 'a work full of travail and difficulties.'¹³² His concern was in fact needless, however, because the plans for the venture were abandoned shortly afterwards.

Vere showed similar reluctance with regard to a later venture in which his patron was involved. In 1598, preparations were underway for an expedition to Ireland, of which Essex was again to be the leader. It was decided that 2,000 English troops would be withdrawn from the Netherlands, and Vere was instructed to organise the levy of these. Clearly loth to do so, he told the States General that he was unable to negotiate with them in person because of some 'indisposition', and had therefore given Gilpin the task of carrying this out on his behalf.¹³³ However, Vere had little choice in the matter, and was forced to help organise the levy. Even so, he was determined to limit the damage that this withdrawal would do to the campaigns in the Netherlands, and therefore ensured that his best troops were not levied, and that those he did assemble were of a decidedly poor standard. This brought upon him the wrath of the Queen, the Privy Council, and more particularly the Earl of Essex, but as far as Vere was concerned, the end result was worth this temporary loss of favour.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ HMC, *Sal*, VII, Vere to Essex, 1 January 1597, 1-2

¹³⁰ See for example: *ibid.*, Vere to Essex, 7 January 1597, 8-10

¹³¹ *ibid.*, Vere to Essex, 26 March 1597, 130-1

¹³² *ibid.*, Vere to Essex, 7 May 1597, 191-2

¹³³ ARA, *Lias. Eng.*, 5883 II, Vere to States General, 8 January 1599

¹³⁴ APC, XXIX, Privy Council to Vere, 31 January, 8, 20 and 25 February, and March 1599, 512, 547-8, 581-2, 607-9 and 649; SP 84, LVIII, fo.66, Vere to Privy Council, 11 February 1599; fo.s 19 and 70, Vere to Cecil, 15 January and 15 February 1599; *Chamberlain Letters*, I, Chamberlain to Carleton, 15 February and 1 August 1599, 68, 78. See chapter 4, 184-5

Vere's attempts to obstruct, or at least to limit, the depletion of the English contingent for service elsewhere betrayed a fervour for the Dutch cause that continued unabated for most of his fourteen-year ascendancy. Yet he also sought to promote this cause by other means. One of these was by persuading Elizabeth to send over troops and supplies on a regular basis. He did so from the very beginning of his Generalship in the Netherlands. Upon hearing of the Queen's decision to appoint him as the leader of her forces, he wrote to Burghley, implying that the Provinces would not be able to withstand the Spanish offensives unless they were aided by more English troops.¹³⁵ He wrote a similar letter to the Privy Council on the same day, attempting to drum up some enthusiasm there for the Dutch campaigns. He stated: 'Count Maurice hath so much to doe and so fewe soldiers thatt [with]owtt the hope of her Majesties supplye we should leave all undun.'¹³⁶ He wrote to them again early in the following year, describing the pitiful state of the English companies, and requesting a levy of 200 hundred soldiers to replenish them.¹³⁷ Vere often tried to substantiate these requests with evidence of how essential the troops were to the campaigns in the Provinces. For example, in March 1593, when the war was centred upon the Rhineland area, he entreated Burghley to secure the 800 men that Elizabeth had promised her allies, arguing that the States would never have so fair an opportunity to 'recover the partes beyond the Rhin', and that: 'The mattre is of smale or no chardge to her Majestie nor bourden to the contrye, the men may be well sparead'.¹³⁸ Another notable example concerns the siege of Ostend. Anxious to secure a substantial levy of English troops for its defence, he wrote a lengthy dispatch to the Council, predicting what the outcome of the siege would be if Elizabeth did not send some assistance. He argued that the town was of such importance to the States that 'in a manner their whole welfare depends upon the conservation thereof', and added that if they were to lose it, they would blame the lack of English support. To give weight to his argument, he went on to detail the effects that would ensue if the enemy were to succeed in taking Ostend, implying that the end result would be the overthrow of the northern provinces. On the other hand, he argued, if the Queen were to send sufficient aid, the enemy would be utterly ruined.¹³⁹ Many more similar dispatches were to follow during Vere's command of the town, in which he rarely failed to insist upon its perilous state and urge an increase of English assistance.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ *SP 84*, XXXIV, fo.94, Vere to Burghley, 21(?) August 1589

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, fo.96, Vere to Privy Council, 21 August 1589. See also: fo.130, Vere to Privy Council, 1 September 1589

¹³⁷ XXXVI, fo.142, Vere to Privy Council, 24 February 1590

¹³⁸ XLVIII, fo.91, Vere to Burghley, 8 March 1594

¹³⁹ HMC, *Sal*, XI, Vere to Privy Council, 28 June 1601, 252-4

¹⁴⁰ See for example: *SP 84*, LXI, fo.s 29, 122, 320, Vere to Cecil, 7 February, 28 June, 30 September 1601; fo.356, Vere to Cecil and Nottingham, 11 November 1601

Vere's frequent requests for assistance therefore suggest a genuine commitment to the Dutch cause and a belief that the war against Spain might be most effectively executed in the Provinces. Yet he evidently realised that if he was to incite the Court to share his enthusiasm and agree to boost the English contingent, it was also essential to keep them informed at all times of the campaigns that were both planned and underway in the Netherlands. In fact, the bulk of his correspondence relates to this theme, and he was always careful to explain exactly how the allied campaigns were advancing the overall strategy of checking Spanish power both in the Netherlands and on the Continent as a whole. This was clearly illustrated by a letter that he wrote to the Privy Council in March 1592. He referred to recent debates in the States General which had resulted in a decision to launch an offensive war that summer, concentrating upon the Rhineland area. He claimed that if this campaign was successful, the allies would be able to clear the enemy out of Friesland, Overijssel and Zutphen, and thereby secure the garrisons and financial resources of those provinces. The result of all this would be that the allies could then 'bring a heavy warr uppon owre foes in Brabant or Flandres, whearby the kinge of France shalbe myghtely solvagead.'¹⁴¹

In keeping the Court informed of the progress of the campaigns in the Netherlands, Vere had to be careful to strike a rather fine balance between making them appear so necessary and advantageous as to warrant English assistance, and avoiding the implication that the Dutch were warding off the threat of Spain so effectively that they no longer relied upon their allies' support. It was therefore common practice for him to couple his accounts of the victories gained in the Provinces with requests for further assistance. After proudly describing the successful relief of Rheinberg in October 1589, he went on to urge the sending over of fresh supplies.¹⁴² Similarly, the following year he predicted that Maurice would engage the Duke of Parma's forces in either Friesland or the Bommelerwaard area, thereby preventing their passage to France, but added that more English troops were greatly needed, and requested a levy of 300.¹⁴³ A decade later, he reported the great advantage that the Dutch had gained at the battle of Nieuwpoort, but shortly afterwards referred to the increasingly potent threat posed by Spain, and begged that the Queen might 'afforde the states any smale souccors.'¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ XLIV, fo.171, Vere to Privy Council, 6 March 1592

¹⁴² XXXV, fo.25, Vere to Walsingham, 8 October 1589

¹⁴³ XXXVIII, fo.184, Vere to Burghley, 17 August 1590

¹⁴⁴ LX ii, Vere to Cecil, 19 August 1600

Vere's commitment to the Dutch war, and his anxiety to increase, or at least maintain, English support of it therefore seemed to demonstrate his enthusiasm for an interventionist strategy. This was further illustrated by his attitude towards Spain. Throughout his correspondence, he referred to the Spanish as the 'common enemy', and the war against them as the 'common cause'. The underlying aim of his strategic outlook was to disable this enemy in the Netherlands, thereby weakening his foothold in Europe, and insuring against any further attempts to invade England after the 1588 Armada. He was therefore altogether opposed to the idea of an Anglo-Spanish peace. Of course, his anti-Spanish stance was also in line with the attitude of the majority of the States, but it perhaps owed more to his general interventionist beliefs than to a blinding commitment to the Dutch war effort. Vere's aversion to the notion of peace with Spain was clear whenever it seemed imminent - which was often during the 1590s. In 1598, the prospect of an Anglo-Spanish peace was particularly real, and during the months prior to, and following, the conclusion of Vervins, its likelihood increased. Sir Francis evidently shared the States' aversion to this peace, and told Essex: 'it is apparent that the men of most authority and credit will continue rather in war than hazard their estate on a forced peace'. Perhaps in an attempt to enhance the credibility of the anti-peace party at court, he went on to assert that if the Queen came to an agreement with Spain, her cautionary towns would be in danger from the States, who would use their forces to claim them back for themselves.¹⁴⁵ He voiced similar fears a short while later, and implied that if an Anglo-Spanish peace was forged, the States would seek a separate peace and abandon their alliance with England.¹⁴⁶ Likewise, in 1600 he claimed that the Anglo-Spanish peace conference at Boulogne was damaging the Anglo-Dutch alliance, and told Cecil that the States 'desyre she would contineaw in war, butt resolve and prosper them seelves to abyde whatt may happen as if the peace wear concludead', adding that he feared they would switch their allegiance to France.¹⁴⁷

Vere was at least equally averse to the prospect of a peace between the Dutch and Spain - indeed, the frequency of his correspondence on this subject suggests that he feared it more than an Anglo-Spanish treaty. He often conveyed his fears to the English Court, and in August 1593 wrote that a rumour of Spanish overtures had caused more 'mischief' in the Provinces than their offensives.¹⁴⁸ Two years later, he claimed that the threat of peace was even greater because the allied war effort had entered a period of decline, as had the French King's cause, and the Queen's

¹⁴⁵ HMC, *Sal*, VIII, Vere and Gilpin to Essex, 21 June 1598, 222-3

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, Vere and Gilpin to Essex, 29 June 1598, 238-9

¹⁴⁷ *SP 84*, LX i, fo.105, Vere to Cecil, 20 April 1600

¹⁴⁸ XLVII, fo.13, Vere to Burghley, 18 August 1593

demands for reimbursement were making the Spanish offers more attractive to the Dutch than they had ever been before. He predicted 'great Jeopardye' and a 'great alteracion' in the Dutch state, emphasising the danger that this would cause to England's security.¹⁴⁹ However, it could be argued that Vere did not perceive the threat of peace to be as great as he inferred, and that his motive in thus arousing English fears was to persuade Elizabeth to drop her demands for reimbursement and continue her commitment to the Dutch war effort.¹⁵⁰

Vere's aversion to peace with Spain, and his efforts to maintain or, better still, increase England's intervention in the Netherlands placed him firmly in the interventionist camp at court. It also contributed to the belief that his actions were inspired by a desire to serve Dutch interests, even though it is perhaps more likely that they were guided by his strategic outlook. Yet it is also possible that in promoting the Dutch war and an aggressive English foreign policy, Vere was aiming to further his own interests. As leader of the English contingent in the Netherlands, his career and reputation were intimately bound up with the progress of the war there, and it was therefore in his best interests to further this war as much as possible. This goes some way towards explaining his aversion to the withdrawal of troops for service in France, which constantly threatened to weaken the allied war effort in the Provinces. However, as well as proving a tiresome diversion, the war in France also offered Vere a chance of advancement. Ever since Elizabeth had committed herself to Henry IV's assistance in 1589, there had been a need for high-ranking English officers to lead expeditions there - Lord Willoughby and the Earl of Essex being notable examples. Why, then, was Vere so obviously uninspired by the prospect of furthering his military career in this theatre of war? He certainly had the opportunity to do so because early in 1591, the Queen gave him the choice of either commanding a regiment in the expedition to Brittany, or remaining in the Netherlands and taking charge of the participating companies when they returned. While expressing his gratitude that Elizabeth had offered him this choice, he politely declined the opportunity to fight in France on the grounds that he had been incapacitated by a recent injury, and told Burghley: 'my wownde is yeatt open and many boanes to come out.'¹⁵¹ It could perhaps be supposed, however, that Vere's refusal stemmed from his belief that the French war did not offer him as good a chance of prestige as the Dutch: after all,

¹⁴⁹ LI, fo.s 136, 179, Vere to Burghley, 14 September and 7 October 1595; HMC, *Sal*, V, Vere to Essex, 7 October 1595, 404-5

¹⁵⁰ *SP 84*, LI, fo.215, Elizabeth to Bodley, 4 November 1595; fo.219, Elizabeth to States General, 4 November 1595. See also for example: LXI, fo.122, Vere to Cecil, 28 June 1601

¹⁵¹ XLI, fo.126, Vere to Burghley, 3 February 1591. His refusal allegedly offended the Queen, and he told Oldenbarnevelt that he considered himself dishonourably discharged for choosing to remain in the Netherlands. Den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 119

he was the supreme English military officer in the Netherlands, whereas in France the best that he could hope for was the command of a company or regiment. Moreover, he would no doubt have been aware that English involvement in France had consumed a huge portion of the Queen's resources while producing largely disappointing results. Her resources had been put to far better use in the Netherlands, and the allied campaigns there during the early 1590s in particular formed a record of almost unbroken success. The potential for glory and renown was therefore significantly greater in the Provinces, and it is unlikely that the French war could have offered Vere a prize that was alluring enough to tempt him away from his already profitable post there.

The same was not true of the Cadiz and Islands Voyages, however, and Vere's reaction to these gives weight to the notion that he was driven to support whichever cause offered him the greatest hope of advancement. It also does much to discredit the view that loyalty to the Dutch and commitment to their cause were his guiding principles. Like the war in France, the two expeditions required the withdrawal of a significant portion of the English contingent from the Netherlands, but this time Vere neither objected nor procrastinated, and promoted both ventures with vigour and enthusiasm. The fact that his patron, the Earl of Essex, had promised him a commanding role in them had evidently compromised his commitment to the war in the Provinces. Perhaps attempting to disguise the selfish motives that lay behind his support for the expeditions, Vere claimed that they would be of enormous benefit to the 'common cause'. Referring to the Cadiz voyage, he told Cecil: 'it shall bring both to her Majesty's subjects and her confederates a confirmation of that belief they were in that her Majesty would royally and mightily prosecute the King of Spain, which is a matter of no small moment in this time, would draw them to second the work begun, and cut off all those doubts and apprehensions of this sudden change which cannot but work exceedingly to the enemy's advantage.'¹⁵² He wrote with similar optimism about the Islands Voyage the following year, and declared to Essex: 'I do assure myself that her Majesty sending a royal army of sea and land forces, all the Spanish ships on this side the straits might be utterly destroyed, to the full assuring of her dominions and overthrow of the Spaniard if she will continue the action.'¹⁵³ Nevertheless, Vere was clearly eager to rally support for these ventures because of the opportunity that they offered to further his own career. This is supported by Vere's obvious anxiety to see the first of these expeditions go ahead at a time when it seemed likely that the assembled troops would be sent to relieve Calais instead. As already discussed, he had never shown much enthusiasm for the French war, and now that this threatened to rob him of

¹⁵² HMC, *Sal*, VI, Vere to Cecil, 18 May 1596, 190 The 'sudden change' that Vere referred to was a proposal to withdraw the Generals from the expedition.

¹⁵³ VII, Vere to Essex, 20 February 1597, 75

his prestigious command in the Cadiz expedition, he fervently urged Essex that Calais could not be saved and that it would be far better to concentrate all of the English resources upon Cadiz.¹⁵⁴ He also petitioned Cecil, protesting how necessary the Cadiz voyage was, and confessing that he was reluctant to lose the command that he had been promised in it: 'I can no more be enemy to my own advancement than he that hath ever endeavoured to make himself capable of good place'.¹⁵⁵ This was the closest he ever came to admitting that he was motivated by self-interest. He certainly worked hard to secure the States General's backing for the voyage, assuring Essex that he had 'used all the good means, I can think of to hasten the matter', and less than a fortnight later, he was able to report that the States had given their consent.¹⁵⁶ Vere was just as eager to promote the Islands Voyage, and for the same reason, as he had again been promised a leading role in it. In stark contrast to his efforts regarding the supply of troops for France, he admitted no delay, and bypassed the States' objections rather than using them as an excuse for failure or inaction. He told Essex that although the States had made some difficulty over sending the requested shipping, he had managed to transfer the matter to Caron's handling, who was more in favour of the voyage.¹⁵⁷

Vere's active promotion of these two expeditions largely contradicts the view that he was motivated above all by a desire to further the cause of the States and the Dutch in general: it was hardly in their interests to be deprived of a significant number of men and ships in order to further ventures on the periphery of the war with Spain, when their own provinces were more directly and heavily involved in this struggle. However, the expeditions were exceptional in the sense that they forced a conflict of interests between Vere and the Dutch. For the majority of his ascendancy these interests coincided closely, as the English General realised that the best route to promotion was through active participation in, and promotion of, the Dutch campaigns. He was understandably eager to take part in the quite dramatic reversal of fortune that was taking place in the Dutch war for most of the 1590s. It was easier for Vere to recognise the advances that were being made than for the English Court, who were slow to acknowledge the Dutch successes, and interpreted his enthusiastic relation of them as a sign of bias towards the States.

¹⁵⁴ VI, Vere to Essex, 9 April 1596, 140

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, Vere to Cecil, 18 May 1596, 189-90

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, Vere to Essex, 7 March 1596, 86; Oldenbarnevelt to Essex, (28 March)/7 April 1596, 119-20; *SP 84*, LII, fo.113, Vere to Burghley, 20 March 1596

¹⁵⁷ LIV, fo.82, Vere to Cecil, 20 February 1597; HMC, *Sal*, VII, Vere to Essex, 20 and 28 February, 26 March 1597, 75, 84, 130; ARA, Lias. Eng., 5883 I, Vere to States General, 13 June 1597

Their interpretation was given weight by the fact that Vere's ascendancy contrasted so markedly with those of his two predecessors. Whereas they had both quarrelled with the Dutch leaders and had held their posts in the Netherlands for only a brief time, he remained in office for more than fourteen years, and for most of that time appeared to cooperate well with both the States and the Dutch in general. This strategy of cooperation no doubt contributed greatly to the endurance of his ascendancy. However, it was also necessary for him to maintain the favour of Elizabeth and her court, for if he lost this, his position in the Netherlands would be in jeopardy. Ironically, it was perhaps more difficult for him to maintain harmonious relations with his countrymen than with the Dutch. As argued in the previous chapter, his distance from court meant that his hold upon the Queen's favour was quite tenuous, and also made him particularly susceptible to intrigue. Furthermore, both Elizabeth and her courtiers seemed to harbour the idea that he was disloyal to them and 'addicted' to the States. This notion provided his enemies with an ideal theme upon which to base their intrigues, and they never missed an opportunity to interpret his actions as serving Dutch rather than English interests. Nevertheless, on the whole Vere managed to preserve his position at court, and although he occasionally invoked the anger or jealousy of his sovereign and patrons, this was never great enough to seriously threaten his ascendancy in the Netherlands. Indeed, rather than falling prey to the inherent dangers of obeying two masters, he seemed to view them both as a source of advancement, and thereby capitalised upon his situation. He did so with a remarkable degree of success. From England, he received his original appointment as Sergeant Major General of the Queen's forces in the Netherlands, was appointed Lieutenant General of the Cadiz expedition, Lord Marshal of the Islands Voyage, and last, but by no means least, Governor of Brill. From the States he received the Colonelship and Generalship, the temporary command of Ostend, and a leading role in many other allied campaigns. Ironically, therefore, while he had embarked upon his service in the Provinces with a significantly less prestigious role than Leicester or Willoughby had enjoyed, he subsequently received more advancement from both sides than either of these men had attained.

Success did come at a price, however. While these various appointments enhanced Vere's prestige, they also led to a sharper division of his loyalty to the English and Dutch than had been apparent at the beginning of his ascendancy. Each new appointment (perhaps intentionally) tied him closer to the authority that had bestowed it and compelled him to carry out their orders or risk a charge of disloyalty. As a result, he was increasingly faced with conflicting instructions from two sides whose interests did not always, or even often, coincide. Compromise was possible only on occasion, and he therefore often had to contravene the wishes of one side in complying with the orders of the other. In choosing which orders to follow, it would seem that he mostly

opted for the course of action that was closely in line with his strategic priorities and best served his own interests, and this, in turn, most often coincided with the interests of the States. It does not follow from this that he was pro-Dutch, but rather that he genuinely perceived the active promotion of their war effort as the most effective strategy for England to adopt, as well as the best way to further his career. The view that he acted out of blinding loyalty to, and admiration for the Dutch must therefore be modified - indeed, his relations with them were not always as harmonious as they appeared. In short, therefore, the Queen need not have feared that her General's loyalty was compromised by his 'addiction' to the States; she might, however, have been justified in feeling uneasy about his determination to promote the cause which fostered his perception of the ideal English strategy, and to pursue the alluring reward of personal advancement.

Conclusion

The fragile alliance between England and the United Provinces was in its eighteenth year when it was thrown into jeopardy by the death of Queen Elizabeth, on 24 March 1603. It was widely known that her successor, James VI of Scotland, enjoyed good relations with the King of Spain and was generally opposed to active involvement in Continental warfare. Since the alliance contradicted both of these principles, the Dutch had cause for concern. In spite of the bickering, resentment and often suffocating interference that they had suffered as a result of their alliance with England, Elizabeth's contribution to their cause had proved vital - especially during the earlier years of their connection. She had aided them, both unofficially and officially, for more than thirty years, contributing substantial financial and military support for their defensive and offensive campaigns. Although Vere's English troops had become gradually less vital to the Dutch as the 1590s progressed, and the supply of money had been severely curtailed (and, after 1598, reversed), by 1603 Elizabeth's assistance still formed a significant part of the Dutch war effort, and they were loth to manage without it. Furthermore, the symbolism of her connection with them had been of fundamental importance. As their only official ally in Europe, she had offered them diplomatic support, and as a Protestant monarch, she had boosted the ideological basis of their struggle against Catholic tyranny. In view of this, the English alliance during Elizabeth's reign had formed a crucial element in the progress that the Dutch had made towards independence, and her death was therefore a serious blow to their cause.

In an attempt to induce the new King to 'continue in war', the States General sent a delegation to England soon after his accession.¹ James' response was amiable but non-committal. He assured the States that he would continue to favour them, but also made it clear that he intended to open negotiations with the enemy.² A little over a year later, the Treaty of London was signed, thus replacing the Dutch alliance with a Spanish one. While this did not terminate England's assistance in the Provinces, it nevertheless signalled a decisive break with Elizabeth's policy of alliance with the Dutch. The new situation looked grim for Vere. The Treaty that he and his fellow activists, and of course the Dutch, had dreaded throughout his long service in the Netherlands had at last been concluded. Furthermore, the transferral of the English auxiliaries to

¹ *SP 84*, LXIV, fo.s 7 and 13, Vere to Cecil, 5 and 24 April 1603; *Bescheiden Bettreffende*, II, 34-51, 53-5, 60-5

² *SP 84*, LXIV, fo.17, James to the States General, 7 June 1603; *CSPD*, (1603-10), 53; *Winwood Memorials*, II, James to States General, 10 August 1603, 1

the States' jurisdiction meant that his position as senior commander, which had for some time suffered a decline in importance commensurate with the growth of the Dutch army, was now threatened with obscurity. This transferral also threatened to enhance Maurice's authority - a prospect that would have seemed particularly unappealing to Vere, given the animosity that now existed between the two men. He therefore decided to cut his losses, and in March 1604, offered his resignation.³ The States expressed regret at his decision, but the provisions that they subsequently made for the command of the English troops suggest that they were not entirely sorry to see him go. They seized the opportunity to make a new 'reglement' of their affairs, and this clearly did not include the appointment of a new English General.⁴

Having abandoned his 'worthy employments', Vere left for England in the summer of 1604 and decided to live in a 'mere private condition' at Tilbury Manor, near to his family home.⁵ However, after barely a year's retirement, he returned once more to the Netherlands, claiming that he wished to carry out his duties at Brill. He clearly hoped to be taken back into the States' service, but they showed no inclination to offer him any such employment.⁶ Nevertheless, perhaps as a form of compensation, they did award him a pension of 3,000 florins (c.£300) per annum.⁷ Vere returned to England shortly afterwards, and was granted the Governorship of

³ He did, however, retain his position as Governor of Brill for the rest of his life, and this subsequently passed to his brother, Horace. Sawyer, *Winwood Memorials*, III (London, 1725), Winwood to Cecil, 6 September and 8 October 1609, 64, 80. For Vere's resignation, see: Collins, II, Browne to Sidney, (10)/20 October 1603, 279; HMC, *Sal*, XVII, Vere to Cecil, 22 August 1605, 386; Sawyer, *Winwood Memorials*, II, Privy Council to Winwood, 11 December 1603, 10; Cecil to Winwood, 15 February 1604, 16-17. Markham puts forward a more idealistic explanation for his resignation, claiming that ill health, the Queen's death and the 1604 peace had 'taken the heart out of his work.' *Fighting Veres*, 345. For a similar view, see S.A.A. Majendie, *Some Account of the Family of De Vere, The Earls of Oxford, and of Hedingham Castle in Essex* (London, 1904), 60. Yet the peace was concluded *after* Vere decided to resign, and it is unlikely that his apparent grief at Elizabeth's death (see *SP* 84, LXII, fo.309, Vere to Cecil, 24 March 1603; LXIV, fo.7, Vere to Cecil, 5 April 1603) robbed him of all incentive to continue in a post that had long brought him substantial rewards.

⁴ In response to the Laird of Buccleuch's petition to succeed Vere in this capacity, the States insisted: 'Though the English had heretofore enjoyed over them a particular general, that was brought in first by a special treaty and continued since in acknowledgement of Sir Francis Vere's long and worthy services.' From thenceforth, the command of the English auxiliaries was divided between four colonels, and although Vere's brother Horace was to enjoy seniority over the others (these being: Sirs Edward Cecil, John Ogle and Edward Harwood), his position was not comparable with that of the former General. HMC, *Sal*, XVI, Winwood to Cecil, 21 and 31 March [1604], 45, 46; Sir Edward Cecil to Robert Cecil, 30 March 1604, 45; HMC, *D&D*, III, Browne to Sidney, 12 May 1602, 28

⁵ Collins, II, Vere to Cecil, 9 August [1604], 215; HMC, *The Manuscripts of the Earl Cowper, K.G., preserved at Melbourne Hall, Derbyshire*, I (London, 1888), Naunton to Coke, 29 October 1605, 58

⁶ HMC, *Sal*, XVII, Vere to Cecil, 22 August and 5 September 1605, 386, 414; XVIII, Vere to Cecil, 15 December 1605, 553-4; HMC, *D&D*, III, Browne to Sidney, 6 November, 7, 10, 12 and 20 December 1605, 7 January, 1 and 17 February, and 8 and 24 March 1606, 225, 233-36, 239, 244, 248, 253, 257; Collins, II, Browne to Sidney, 2 November 1605, 316; Sawyer, *Winwood Memorials*, II, James to Council of State, 14 November 1605, 175; James to Maurice, 14 November 1605, 176

⁷ This was to pass to Vere's second cousin, the eighteenth Earl of Oxford, if he outlived him. He did so by seventeen years. BM MS, Titus C, VII, fo 134, The States General's grant of a pension to Vere, 8 June 1606; HMC, *Sal*, XVIII, Vere to Cecil, 31 May [1606], 154; HMC, *D&D*, III, Browne to Sidney, 15 June 1606, 283-4

Portsmouth - a post which he retained for the rest of his life.⁸ In October 1607, he married Elizabeth Dent,⁹ but their union was short-lived because he died less than two years later, on 28 August 1609, and was given a soldier's burial the next day at Westminster Abbey.¹⁰ Yet Vere had lived long enough to hear of the Twelve Year Truce - the 'crowning of his life's great work'¹¹ - which had been concluded just four months before.¹² If he felt some satisfaction that the Dutch had at last attained a position of sufficient strength to enable them to conclude a truce with Spain, then this was at least partly justified. He had satisfactorily fulfilled his dual role as Elizabeth's chief commander and General in the States' service, and under his direction the English contingent had become a vital component of the Dutch war effort, enabling them to achieve many significant advances against the enemy. The period of Vere's achievement had not, however, extended to the conclusion of his service in the Netherlands. His greatest work there had been achieved during Elizabeth's lifetime, and his career under James I had been something of an anti-climax to a service that had spanned almost two decades and won him a reputation that was to remain more or less intact for the next four centuries.

It has not been my intention to destroy this reputation, but rather to qualify it, and to demonstrate that the widely accepted interpretation provided by Markham more than a century ago is misleading. Although Vere was undoubtedly a capable soldier and led Elizabeth's troops effectively for fourteen years, the role that he played in the Dutch war has been exaggerated. The existing correspondence has shown that Vere was anxious to promote his own contribution to each campaign, and the *Commentaries* (in conjunction with Markham's account) is largely to blame for giving subsequent generations a distorted impression of his military role. A systematic appraisal of the contemporary accounts on both the Dutch and English side for three of the major campaigns in which Vere was involved has yielded little to support his narrative, and has in fact contradicted many of the claims that it makes. Any suggestion that Vere's influence was pervasive in the Dutch campaigns as a whole, rather than being largely confined to the English contingent, is therefore misleading and has little apart from his own testimony to support it.

⁸ CSPD, (1603-10), 320-1; HMC, *Sal*, XVIII, Ersfield to Cecil, 21 June 1606, 176-7. It was rumoured that in addition to this post, he would be made a Privy Councillor when he arrived in England, but this did not happen. HMC, *Report on the Manuscripts of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, Preserved at Montagu House, Whitehall*, I (London, 1899), More to Winwood, 10 May [1606], 106

⁹ She was the step-daughter of Julius Caesar, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and, aged just sixteen, was Vere's junior by approximately thirty years.

¹⁰ His magnificent tomb was modelled on that of Engelbert of Nassau, at Breda.

¹¹ Markham, *Fighting Veres*, 362

¹² RSG, XIV, 743-5; HMC, *Sal*, XXI, Edmondes to Cecil, 13 April 1609, 42

While he was undoubtedly a skilful soldier and the most competent General since the conclusion of Nonsuch to lead Elizabeth's troops, his military role has too often been over-emphasised.

Yet if this thesis has aimed to play down one aspect of Vere's role in the Netherlands, it has attempted to enhance another. In only perceiving Vere as a military figure, most modern historians have either dismissed or disregarded his involvement in political affairs. Those who refer to this do so only in passing and give the impression that he had no interest, ability or authority in such matters. However, I have suggested that they are wrong on all three counts. Admittedly, Vere's position in the English and Dutch political scene was comparatively low-key. He was not of the political calibre that Leicester had been, and did not enjoy the status at court which would have tailored his expectations or experience to a key role in either English or Dutch politics. Furthermore, the ill-fated intervention of high-profile English representatives in the past had predisposed both the Queen and the States General to limit his activities to the military sphere. In terms of Anglo-Dutch relations, as well as political life both at court and at the Hague, Vere was therefore a pawn rather than a key player.

However, if his position in the spectrum of political relationships was comparatively low-key, it was nevertheless significant. The leadership of the English contingent in the Netherlands was still a prominent role, and it compelled Vere to establish and maintain relationships with the highest political figures in both countries - and ultimately, of course, with the Queen herself. One might suppose that he did so effectively because Elizabeth increasingly encouraged his involvement in political matters during the 1590s, and by the end of his service as her General, his military responsibilities had become enmeshed in a web of political and diplomatic duties. Ironically, while his official capacity denied him any political authority in theory, in practice he came to enjoy a significant degree of influence in such matters, and in a sense replaced Bodley as the main political commentator in the Netherlands after 1596. This gave him a degree of leverage in his relationships with both the Court and the Dutch. He seemed to relish the opportunity to pursue his ambitions and prove his aptitude in this sphere, although he was mostly careful to play down such aspirations because he was well aware of the objections that these would occasion from both sides. Ambitious he may have been, but Vere was also astute enough to know his place, and was content to pursue his political career in the comparatively humble status that had first recommended him for the leadership of the English troops. Even so, his political status was gradually enhanced during the period 1589-1603, and as a result, his relationships with his contacts in the political world shifted in an important respect. He may have continued to express the deference and humility that marked his correspondence with these figures in the early years of

his Generalship, but he had undoubtedly grown more confident and skilful in dealing with them, and had therefore justified Elizabeth's reliance upon him as a political, as well as military, servant.

While his relationships with the political figures in England and the Netherlands therefore altered during his ascendancy, however, there was a sense of continuity in his position. He remained in command of Elizabeth's troops for much longer than either of his predecessors, and became a permanent feature of the English and Dutch political scene as a result. This also set him apart from many of his contemporaries (particularly those at court), for this was an age of fluctuating fortunes and tenuous positions, and it was all too easy to suffer a loss of favour or a decline in status. The fact that Vere maintained, and even enhanced, his standing in the political spectrum therefore seems all the more impressive.

An exploration of the dual nature of Vere's role has therefore led to an assessment of his relations with the political and military figures in both England and the Netherlands - another aspect of his career that has been largely neglected by historians. With regard to the English Court, I have argued that in spite of his absence from there, Vere was very careful to cultivate and maintain as many lines of communication with it as possible, and to secure the patronage of its most influential patrons. He was not blinded by political prejudice in his choice of patron, and maintained allegiance to pacifists and interventionists alike. He also chose to distance himself from the personal rivalries which dominated the Elizabethan political scene during the 1590s, and did not throw in his lot with one particular 'group' or 'alignment'. The fact that he not only held onto his command for so long, but also won various promotions during his service in the Netherlands, gaining a reputation that was the envy of many, and emerging more or less unscathed from court intrigue, all testify to the success of his strategy. This is particularly impressive when one considers that his long ascendancy coincided with a decade in court history that has recently been singled out as remarkable for the level of factional strife and intrigue that it witnessed.

Vere's relationship with each of his main patrons at court varied slightly. With Burghley and Cecil this relationship was essentially borne of necessity; with Walsingham and Essex there was greater collaboration and polarity of interests. Nevertheless, an overview of all of Vere's relationships with the Court reveals a number of common characteristics. As the leader of Elizabeth's troops in the Netherlands, it was hardly surprising that Vere would be called upon to keep her chief ministers informed of military, and to a lesser extent political, affairs there. In this

respect, his contact with them was of an official nature. Yet he also used this to further his own cause because in return for keeping his patrons *au fait* with events, he expected, and usually received, their intervention on his behalf in a variety of matters. In essence, therefore, the nature of Vere's relationship with the Court was reciprocal. Yet it also had another dimension. While some (perhaps most) of Vere's letters to the Court derived from his official capacity, others were written with a view to securing their continued favour by assuring them of his loyalty to their cause. The frequency of the latter could give an indication of how secure Vere felt in his relationship with the Court at any given time. Thus, for example, following the withdrawal of Essex's patronage, Vere stepped up his correspondence with Cecil on an unprecedented scale, prompting the Secretary to complain impatiently of his constant protestations of loyalty and gratitude.

Yet perhaps the most significant aspect of Vere's relationship with the Court was the way in which he relied upon each of his patrons as a medium to Elizabeth. This suggests that he realised that he did not command enough influence with her to maintain a more direct contact, and the evidence suggests that he was right. While she undoubtedly held a high regard for his military skills, there is little to suggest that she regarded him as one of her favourites. This marked a significant shift in the relationship between the leader of the English contingent in the Netherlands and the Court. The Earl of Leicester had been a close favourite of the Queen, and had therefore corresponded with her directly during his service in the Netherlands. Willoughby had also enjoyed her favour, although to a lesser extent, and his contact also tended to be direct. However, Vere was of a significantly humbler status, and from the outset relied upon intermediaries in his dealings with Elizabeth. This suggests he realised that he was not one of her favourites and could not greatly influence her opinion or secure her favour on his own. Yet if his relationship with the Queen was therefore detached, he did share an important characteristic with her: the ability to remain aloof from factionalism at court. Here, Vere enjoyed an advantage over her in his physical distance from the Court. However, he also seemed to cultivate a detachment from his patrons, thereby allowing him to avoid becoming embroiled in the factionalism that was rife there during the 1590s, and to switch allegiance when necessary. His skill in doing so was one of the greatest achievements of his career strategy, as well as one of the most significant features of his career strategy.

Vere enjoyed similar success in his relations with the Dutch. In fact, these relations bear comparison with his contact with the English Court in various respects. Again, Vere's relationship with the military and political authorities was largely dictated by his official

capacity: as leader of the English contingent (which, after all, comprised a significant portion of the forces that the States had at their command), it was inevitable that he would come into frequent contact with these authorities. Furthermore, his relationship with Oldenbarnevelt was based upon reciprocity, because in return for promoting the Dutch cause to the English Court, Vere secured the patronage of the Advocate, and there is little doubt that he owed his promotions to the latter's intervention with the States. In addition, like his contact with the English Court, his relations with the Dutch appear to have been mostly cordial and harmonious - in stark contrast to the experience of his predecessors. However, this is where the main similarities between the nature of Vere's contact with the Dutch and with the Court ends. On the whole, Vere corresponded very little with the Dutch authorities. Of course, this can be partly explained by the fact that the Dutch did not require him to keep them abreast of developments in the campaigns that were being waged in their Provinces. Nevertheless, because Vere was most often 'at camp', if he wished to stay in regular contact with the political authorities at the Hague, he would have to do so by written correspondence. It is therefore rather surprising that his letters to them are so scarce. With the exception of the brief period when he was in command of Ostend, he apparently chose not to write to the States, and instead focused his attention upon Oldenbarnevelt. This fact carries enormous significance because it suggests that Vere had an understanding of Dutch politics, and of the way in which the usually lengthy process of consultation and consent could be bypassed by dealing directly with the figure who effectively held the reins of power.

Vere's infrequent contact with the States suggests that he was not so 'addicted' to them as the English seemed to believe. His open rupture with them towards the end of Elizabeth's reign, together with his strained relations with Maurice throughout his ascendancy, casts further doubt upon this assumption. Yet in attempting to modify the popular notion that Vere was so 'pro-Dutch' that his loyalty to Elizabeth was compromised, it is not enough to demonstrate that his relations with them were less collaborative than was so commonly believed. I have therefore also explored alternative reasons for Vere's active promotion of the Dutch cause. One of these was his strategic outlook. It is unfortunate that Vere did not make explicit his views on the *overall* strategy that he believed England should pursue. Instead, he tended to limit his comments to the tactics and strategy that were being employed (or that he believed *should* be employed) in the Dutch war itself, rather than in the wider, international war against Spain. In so doing, he has left his wider strategic stance open to conjecture. Nevertheless, from his correspondence, it is clear that he believed England's interests and security lay in supporting the Dutch war, and that she should concentrate her resources in that arena rather than frittering them away in the 'topp branches' of the war against Spain, namely France. Yet there are inherent dangers in

conjecturing Vere's overall perception from the few references that are made in his correspondence. This is proven by the existence of evidence which seems to contradict the notion that he exclusively advocated English intervention in the Netherlands. In chapter 5, I demonstrated how Vere actively promoted the Cadiz and Islands Voyages, even though these involved the weakening of the allied war effort in the Provinces. This has led me to conclude that Vere was concerned above all with serving his *own* interests, for the two voyages offered him an even greater chance of preferment than the Dutch war, and he therefore sacrificed his commitment to the latter in order to ensure that the expeditions received ample support from the Netherlands forces. Nevertheless, on the whole Vere's interests and strategic priority were closely tied up with the Dutch war, and it was a combination of these factors which incited him to promote the Dutch cause so actively. This casts doubt upon the popular notion that he was driven by a blinding loyalty and devotion to the Dutch cause, and that this compromised his loyalty to Elizabeth.

Having outlined Vere's strategic perception, it would be useful to consider what role - if any - he played in the *making* of strategy. Again, the available sources offer little clue, and one is forced to construct an appraisal that is largely based upon conjecture. Given their general neglect of Vere, it is not surprising that historians have tended to ignore this facet of his role. The one notable exception is L.W. Henry who, as mentioned in chapter 4, claims that Vere was crucial to Essex as a military adviser. This is supported by the fact that Vere was included in a select Council of War that was convened to discuss the strategy for the Cadiz expedition. His *Commentaries* also suggest that he was often called upon by Essex to offer his strategic insight during this and the following year's venture. However, these were just two expeditions, and one could suppose that Vere's role as Essex's adviser on strategy declined simultaneously with the demise of their affiliation. One must therefore consider how important Vere's contribution to the making of strategy was to the Court as a whole, and for larger issues than specific expeditions. The evidence does not suggest that his role in this respect was crucial, and this perhaps why Vere commented so rarely upon strategic matters in his correspondence. He did not tend to act as an adviser, except when he urged the maintenance or increase of English assistance, and even then his advice was usually disregarded, as demonstrated by the diversion of troops to France in spite of his insistence that this venue was at best peripheral to the war with Spain. Nevertheless, Vere did perhaps make an indirect contribution to the making of strategy by providing the Court with detailed information on the campaigns in the Provinces, thereby helping the Queen and her ministers to decide whether it would be possible to concentrate English forces elsewhere. This was particularly important during the early 1590s, when Elizabeth's intervention in France was at

its height. On the whole, though, Vere did not appear to have much impact on the making of English strategy. One might suppose that he would have had more influence if he had been present at court, considering his reputation for military excellence, but his prolonged service in the Netherlands made this impractical.

If Vere's absence from court was an important reason for his comparative exclusion from the making of English strategy, one would expect that he was able to play a more active role in this respect in the Netherlands. However, the evidence again yields little to support this. As discussed in chapter 3, while Vere gave the impression that the Dutch leaders - in particular Maurice - relied upon him as an adviser on strategy, the other sources do not support this. Vere may well have been present at some of the debates which preceded major campaigns, but there is little apart from his own testimony to suggest that he made a valuable contribution to these. In fact, he tended to be the advised rather than the adviser, and his anxiety to suggest otherwise probably sprang from his rivalry with Maurice and his determination to discredit him wherever possible.

While Vere did not seem to have played a crucial role in the making of strategy, his overall contribution to the military and political scene should not be understated. In drawing together the main threads of my argument, it has become clear that his pivotal role in the Dutch war propelled him into political circles, and that his abilities in both spheres secured him a successful career. During his ascendancy, he also became a key figure in the relations between the allies, and it is these which have provided the context for my study of Vere. His ascendancy coincided with a transitional period of the alliance, but I have found that while the allies may well have grown accustomed to one another, there is little evidence to suggest a steady progression towards an equal, mutually beneficial and reciprocal attachment, as MacCaffrey and others suggest. Familiarity bred contempt rather than respect, and the bickering and resentment that had marked the alliance during the first few years of its inception continued throughout the period of Vere's service. The influence exerted by Spain and France exacerbated the tension between the allies, and both sides were suspicious of each other's intentions with regard to these two European powers - not without reason. It was, however, Spain which exerted the predominant influence upon the alliance - as well as upon Europe as a whole. The threat of Spanish hegemony loomed large throughout the latter half of the sixteenth century as, spurred on by spiritual sanction and temporal necessity - embodied by the two words 'reputación' and 'conservación' - Philip II strove to extend and preserve the boundaries of what had become a global empire. This threat was fully appreciated by Elizabeth, who had only reluctantly entered into open war with Philip on behalf of

the Dutch in 1585, and during the next eighteen years was forced to confront his power not just in the Netherlands, but also in France, Ireland, Spain, and even outside Europe. During this time, she was also plagued by the threat of renewed invasion attempts, and was clearly eager to secure her kingdom by coming to terms with Spain. Her attempts to do so caused great alarm for the Dutch throughout the period of Vere's ascendancy and greatly undermined her attachment with them. Yet there was also a prospect of peace between the Provinces and Spain, and this carried very real dangers for England's security - dangers which Elizabeth was all too aware of. While the Dutch strenuously resisted Spanish overtures during her lifetime, the prospect that they would eventually agree to such a peace was becoming ever more likely as they gained military strength and political cohesion, and the war in the Provinces drifted ever closer to a stalemate situation.

However, the threat posed by Spain, although undoubtedly great, should not be over-emphasised. She was racked by internal conflict and bankruptcy during the later sixteenth century, and her unwieldy empire was becoming increasingly burdensome to maintain and defend. Opposition in Castile to Philip II's expansionist policies grew particularly vehement during the last years of his reign as the strain of the war fell ever more heavily upon the taxpayer. This opposition was a decisive factor in the formation of a less aggressive foreign policy under Philip III, which began to take root during the closing years of Elizabeth's reign, as demonstrated by the peace talks at Boulogne and Bergen-op-Zoom, and found expression in the Treaty of London in 1604. Yet in spite of the structural weaknesses of the Spanish empire, she was still the foremost power in Europe by the beginning of the late seventeenth century, and as such had lost little of her imposing influence upon the relations between the allies. Furthermore, the key factor in this influence was the way in which the English and the Dutch perceived her. The evidence does not suggest that they were aware of the extent of her increasing vulnerability, or of the commensurate demise of the threat that she posed to them. Yet the way in which they each responded to this threat tended to be diametrically opposed. Elizabeth apparently never gave up hope of making peace with Spain, whereas the Dutch on the whole remained doggedly opposed to such an idea (at least during Vere's ascendancy), and instead preferred to channel their energies into warding off the Spanish threat by force of arms. In the last resort, therefore, Spain's influence was negative: she may well have united the allies in the first place, but as the 1590s progressed, she highlighted the incompatibility of their outlook and priorities, and continually threatened to sever their connection. In view of this, and the various other causes of hostility, the Anglo-Dutch alliance was at best a fragile attachment, and could quite easily have collapsed during Elizabeth's reign, just as it did less than a year after her death.

By depicting the period 1589-1603 as one of turbulence and dissatisfaction in the relations between the allies, I have suggested that little had changed since the conclusion of Nonsuch in 1585. However, I have also referred to this period as being one of transition. This may seem contradictory, and in a sense it is. The relative position of the allies gradually shifted as the 1590s progressed: the Dutch grew in military and political cohesion, as well as in prosperity, and the balance of power between their forces and those of Spain in the Provinces began to shift in their favour. Yet Elizabeth showed little inclination to acknowledge them as equal allies, even though she increasingly treated them as such and demanded their own troops and ships for her defence, as well as a reimbursement of the large sums that she had contributed to their cause. This was a constant source of annoyance and anxiety for the Dutch, and largely precluded understanding and harmony between the allies. I have therefore concluded that rather than being the 'moderately happy married couple' referred to by den Tex, the English and the Dutch were an ill-matched pair who often seemed on the brink of divorce during Vere's ascendancy, just as Lord Willoughby had predicted in 1589.

What began as an apparently narrow subject has therefore turned out to have wide-ranging implications, and there are various avenues that I have been unable to explore within the scope of this thesis. For example, the Anglo-Dutch alliance during the highly transitional and significant period of Vere's ascendancy could be examined in more depth than I have had space for. This promises to yield a great deal of interesting material - particularly if a thorough review of the Dutch sources was attempted. Another possibility would be to set the theme of Anglo-Dutch relations in an international context. Although I have referred to the influence exerted by France and Spain, I have not attempted a thorough appraisal of the way in which the alliance was affected by developments occurring in Europe as a whole. Alternatively, further research could be carried out on Vere himself, for the current thesis and Markham's biography have by no means exhausted this subject. Such a study could incorporate a more comprehensive review of Vere's career, including his service in France, Poland, the Cadiz and Islands Voyages, and his Governorship of Portsmouth. This would offer the potential to explore the wider theme of military change and the differing experiences of it within the various arenas in which he served - most notably, of course, in the Netherlands. This scope for further research accentuates the neglect that both Vere himself, and the Anglo-Dutch alliance during the later years of Elizabeth's reign, have suffered. If this thesis has gone at least some way towards redressing the balance, then it has achieved its objective.

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