

Abstract (EN)

Ideological Intervention in the Early Modern Period. The Case of the Dutch Republic and the Estates of Cleves-Mark in the 1640s and 1650s

1648 is traditionally considered a major break in international relations. This thesis deals with the Dutch interventions in Cleves-Mark in the period before and after the Treaties of Westphalia and sets out to test some of these traditional assumptions. Rejecting the concept of the “Westphalian” sovereignty, it advocates a relational view based on mutual recognition. Accordingly, it focuses on the negotiations of the three subjects under scrutiny – the Dutch Republic as the intervening power, the Estates of Cleves-Mark as instigators and beneficiaries of the intervention, and the Elector of Brandenburg as the legitimate ruler – about their sovereignty, as they took shape in the arena of the “courtly public”, especially in diplomacy.

In the first part I argue that the Dutch Republic reacted very conservatively to the pressure to legitimize its role as a new member of the highly monarchical “courtly public”. I also examined the impact of the domestic political system and diplomatic ceremonial on the external performance of the Dutch Republic, thereby uncovering the particular role of the Province of Gelderland. In three case studies of direct diplomatic contacts with the Elector of Brandenburg as the ruler of Cleves-Mark, I demonstrated the ability of the province of Holland to instrumentalize the means of communication of monarchical culture in order to block political projects and undermine the collaboration between the Republic, and the Elector. In sharp contrast with the attitude of Holland, the success of the Electoral diplomacy was mainly achieved through close collaboration with the representatives of the Province of Gelderland.

In the second part I examined the types that can be discerned in the Republic’s intervention: protection of foreign subjects against of the ruler, protection of foreign subjects against of third parties, and protection of its own subjects. Thereby I concentrated on the arguments used by The Hague to legitimate them.

Analysing the arguments by which the Estates of Cleves-Mark hoped to gain Dutch support, by which the Dutch legitimated their actions towards third parties and by which the Elector tried to counter these, I uncovered the crucial role of the Treaty of Xanten (1614), which served as the basis for the Dutch role as guarantor in the territories of Jülich-Cleves. At the same time I found considerable concern that the Republic might opt for isolationism after concluding peace with Spain. While the Estates and the Elector shared this concern, their underlying reasoning was very different. The failure of the Republic to successfully mediate in the war of 1651 that opposed the Elector of Brandenburg

to the Count Palatine of Neuburg proved a turning point. It resulted in a loss of Dutch legitimacy and an increased authority of the Emperor and of the Treaties of Westphalia.

Next I investigated the role that ideology played in activating and practicing Dutch involvement. This led to the conclusion that republicanism hardly played any role, neither when the Estates were asking for support, nor when the Dutch legitimated their interventions in diplomatic circles. The appeal to a shared political culture was stronger in the public arena, which I have considered as a typical part of the Dutch political system.

In the third part I concentrated on evaluating the strategies that the Estates and the Elector used in order to achieve their goals in the Dutch political system. The Estates concentrated on legally based arguments toward the Estates-General and were able to see these accepted by ruling body of the Republic. They were also the initiators of the Dutch mediation in 1651.

I found the appointment of the diplomatic agent Leo van Aitzema to be a key part of their strategy. His contribution consisted in facilitating a small actor like the Estates the entry into the Dutch political system by sharing his contacts and information networks and through his status as resident of the Hanseatic League. The repeated use of commissions by the Estates-General, on the other hand, was found to lessen the prospects of the Estates for achieving their goals. As a consequence of the lack of manpower on the part of the Estates-General, the proposals of the Estates were relegated to a commission whose agenda was primarily determined by the Elector. Unlike the Elector, the Estates were moreover not allowed to enter into direct talks with these commissions. As such they were dependent on negotiations that proceeded about them but without them.