

‘Permanent and inviolable’: Oliver Cromwell and the idea of Anglo-Dutch Union in 1653

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It is very easy to think about the relation between European powers in the seventeenth as being centred on war rather than political cooperation. On and off, England was at war with Spain, France and the Netherlands; indeed there were three Anglo-Dutch wars between the 1650s and the 1680s. More generally, of course, this was the period of the Thirty Years War, a deadly religious and geopolitical war that was one of the longest and most destructive in European history, and it is even plausible to refer to an eighty year war involving Spain and the Netherlands, beginning with the Dutch revolt in the 1560s, and although the English were less involved in such wars than some other European powers, this was controversial because some contemporaries argued that England ought to have been more involved, beyond which the war obviously affected relations between states of all kinds.

At the same time, it is also tempting for historians to stress the importance of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. This is not because Westphalia brought an end to European wars; there were many more conflicts, not least because of the fear that Louis XIV sought to make France an dominant ‘universal monarchy’. Nevertheless, Westphalia is sometimes regarded as a significant turning point, which created the basis for national self-determination, and the modern state system, involving a new system of political order – Westphalian sovereignty – which was based on the concept of co-existing sovereign states. Aggression between such states, on this view, was held in check by a balance of power between states that did not interfere in the domestic affairs of other states. Each prince or state, in other words, had exclusive sovereignty over lands, laws, people and religion. Westphalia is often seen, therefore, as bringing an end to attempts to impose supranational authority on European states, and as the origin of later system of nation states, which prevailed until at least 1945 at least. It might even be argued that the decades after 1945 witnessed attempts to create a federal European political system that explicitly involved rejecting the Westphalian system precisely because it was based upon competition rather than cooperation, and left insufficient room for a ‘community of states’.

The aim of this paper, by contrast, is to move away from warfare and peacemaking in order to explore cooperation between states, and indeed the possibility for something like ‘integration’. This will be done by focusing on Anglo-Dutch relations, and on Cromwell’s attitude towards an Anglo-Dutch *union*, not least in a context in which a growing number of English commentators looked admiringly at Dutch economic, political and religious culture. My aim will be to suggest that Cromwell had some interesting ideas about the possibility for ‘a more strict and intimate alliance and union’, and indeed ‘one commonwealth’, and to suggest that these ideas are significant even though they did not come to fruition. This will involve looking closely at evidence relating to Cromwell’s participation in formal negotiations to end the first Anglo-Dutch war, as well at his informal conversations with Dutch diplomats. These have not been thoroughly examined or properly understood, not least because the contemporary language can be confusing, not least in the sense that ‘coalition’ sometimes meant what we would call ‘union’, while ‘union’ sometimes meant something more like ‘alliance’.

By way of background, it is worth setting the scene by doing three things: introducing the first Anglo-Dutch war; demonstrating how it has been discussed by historians; and noting how Cromwell's attitude has been debated. In terms of the war, therefore, fighting began in May 1652, at the Battle of Goodwin Sands, and war was declared the following July. This was followed by English naval victories at Kentish Knock in October, but also defeats at Dungeness and Leghorn (Livorno) in 1653, before the English regained the ascendancy with the Battle of Scheveningen (or the Battle of Texel) in the summer of 1653. The war eventually came to an end following the dissolution of the predominantly warlike Rump Parliament, and as a result of protracted discussions in the second half of 1653, which concluded with the Treaty of Westminster (April 1654). Historiographical discussions of the war, meanwhile, have been dominated by issues relating to its causes rather than to the discussions which led to its end, and debates have centred upon whether or not it sprang from economic competition. Many historians – Charles Wilson, J. E. Farnell, Robert Brenner – therefore, saw the war in the light of the passage of the Navigation Act in October 1651, and as a means of combating the economic threat posed by the Dutch Republic. This consensus was challenged, however, by Steve Pincus, who set the war in the context of fruitless attempts in 1651 to secure 'a more intimate alliance and nearer union' with a 'sister republic'; attempts which came to nothing because of irreconcilable views regarding the 'sovereignty of the seas'. The importance of Pincus's intervention is that it identified a significant mismatch between the English, who sought closer political union, and the Dutch, who sought an alliance which would lead enhance trade, and also that it drew attention to 'apocalyptic' republicans who came to fear that the Dutch were neither good Protestants nor good republicans. According to Pincus, therefore, it was such men, rather than aggressive merchants, who inspired the Navigation Act, which represented a 'punitive move against a corrupt polity', and which ultimately led to war. Moreover, while Pincus recognised that ideas about 'nearer union and confederacy' survived in some quarters – even to the extent of seeking free trade and free movement of people – he emphasised a significant change of mood across England, and a popular mood that was increasingly hostile to the Dutch.

In terms of Cromwell, meanwhile, attention has tended to focus on whether he sought war or peace with the Dutch. Pincus regarded him as someone who, by 1653, was 'willing to accept peace', but only if the Dutch displayed 'evidence of contrition', and who was not 'ideologically opposed to the war'. According to Pincus, therefore, Cromwell was 'committed' to the view that the Dutch had gone astray, and that they should not be punished excessively.¹ Austin Woolrych, meanwhile, placed more emphasis on the idea that peace with the Dutch became the 'touchstone' of Cromwell's 'personal initiative in foreign affairs'; that he was increasingly involved in Anglo-Dutch affairs, and that he often worked behind the scenes to prevent talks from collapsing in the face of opposition from within the Council of State and from Fifth Monarchists. Woolrych even recognised that Cromwell was at least somewhat supportive of a 'coalition' which might involve common citizenship and 'a partial fusion of sovereignties'.² The aim of this paper is to try and make sense of such apparent disagreements, and to develop a clearer picture of Cromwell's position, while also recognising that the Dutch suspected him of not having thought very deeply about such issues, and that his public pronouncements may have involved trying to navigate choppy waters in terms of hostility to the Dutch on the part of radicals like Thomas Harrison and Christopher Feake. Ultimately, the aim will be to suggest that, while Cromwell may not have been wedded to the idea of union, and may have regarded it as a means to achieve peace,

¹ Pincus, 122, 126.

² Woolrych, 279, 280.

security and the advancement of a Protestant and anti-Spanish interest, he may also have viewed some kind of union as being the most likely means of promoting such interests.

II

That Cromwell was interested in the Anglo-Dutch war had been clear for some time, in ways which do not immediately suggest that he was a peacenik, and which reveal a degree of hostility. In May 1652, for example, he was delegated to visit Dover, reporting back to the Commons on military developments and the state of the English fleet, and apparently referring to the 'imperiousness' of the Dutch as causers of the war.³ During the spring of 1653, Cromwell's rare visits to Parliament related to the war, and if he and others were inclined towards peace by this stage, he was still involved in organising the war effort. **In March 1653, therefore, his letter to William Sydenham related to the recruitment of land forces for 'sea service' with the Fleet.**⁴ Indeed, it is worth noting the striking declaration issued in Cromwell's name on 12 June, after the English victory at the Battle of the Gabbard, ahead of a day of thanksgiving on 23 June. **This victory made possible a blockade of Dutch ports and provided the impetus for the Dutch to despatch a negotiating delegation to England, which duly arrived on 17 June.**⁵ In it, Cromwell described the triumph as 'a most signal, and every way, a most seasonable mercy', adding that it was also 'seasonable', in 'abasing pride, haughtiness and fleshly confidence, and in discovering hypocrisie'. Cromwell concluded, indeed, that 'it was an Answer to the Faith and Prayers of Gods People, and to their great hopes and expectations from the Lord'.

It is this evidence which provides the context for the talks which began in London in June 1653, involving Lambert, Lawrence and Montagu, and Beverning, Nieupoort, Van de Perre and Jongestal. They were undertaken at a time when radicals like Thomas Harrison were not just opposed to peace but also thought that the Dutch 'must be destroyed', and when the Dutch delegation was uncertain about Cromwell's position (some thought he had dissolved the Rump because they were too inclined to peace), and may also have been somewhat divided, with perhaps only Beverning inclined towards 'a perfect amity and indissoluble union'. What quickly emerged was that Cromwell – who attended the first meeting 4 days before the opening of Barebone's – was difficult to read, and that the English position involved a curious mixture of hardline demands (for reparations, control of the cautionary towns, and an admission of aggression) and a revival of ideas about union. According to the latter, each state would retain its local laws and institutions, but also create common citizenship, common trading privileges and equal rights to reside in either country and hold property, with at least some kind of joint sovereign body.⁶

³ JHC, 7:135; CSPD 1651-2; *Mercurius Politicus*, ? (20-27 May 1652, E665/14), p. 1624; *Perfect Diurnall*, ? (24-31 May 1652, E795/11), p. 1911.

⁴ Woolrych, 56; BL, Egerton MS 2126, fos 25r-6v. Endorsement: My Lord Generall for recruiting in the Isle of wight the last of March 1653.

⁵ *A Declaration from the Generall and Council of State to incite all the good people of these nations to thankfulness and holy rejoycing in the Lord* (London, for Giles Calvert, Henry Hills, and Thomas Brewster, 1653, E775aA; 669.f.17/13).

⁶ Woolrych, 282; GCP, ii. 345.

Cromwell's position at this point is not immediately clear, although reference was made to 'unhandsome' expressions made to Beverning. (Pincus, 122) His position became clearer, however, in a speech to the Dutch commissioners on 29 June, and it was far from conciliatory.⁷ Cromwell told the commissioners, therefore, that

You have appealed to the judgment of Heaven. The Lord has declared against you. After the defeats you have undergone, your only resource is to associate yourselves with your formidable neighbour to work together for the propagation of the kingdom of Christ, and the deliverance of the people groaning under oppression.

[The Dutch reacted badly to this meeting, and two of the commissioners, Nieuport and Jongestal, decided to return to the United Provinces to consult the States General.] Cromwell's position, however, may not have been as hardline as it appeared. Key here is the support that he gave – in a letter written on 9 July – to William Penn, who had been targeted by the hardliners for his decision to lift the blockade of the Dutch ports. (BL, Add. MS 70,100, fos. 190r-91v). In it, Cromwell recognised that Penn's decision had been controversial, noting that it was 'not a little murmured in this place that the fleete came off from the enemies coast at this tyme', adding that this was done by 'some whoe neither love you nor us, nor this cause', and confirming his own support for the decision, by saying that 'I beleive you satisfied your judgments in itt'. At the same time, he also explained that the Dutch commissiors 'may bee a little high upon itt', and made it clear that such confidence would 'returne upon their owne heads in the end'. At the same time, Cromwell may also have worked behind the scenes to prevent all of the Dutch commissioners from leaving, and convincing them that there was still mileage in negotiating.

As such, it is worth examining closely what happened next, beginning with the speech that Cromwell made to the Dutch commissioners on 13 July, as recorded by Dutch and sent back to States General.⁸ Here, after noting that his personal preference had been for negotiation in writing rather than in person – as 'the most secure and most expedient way of negotiating' – he promised to enter into the spirit of 'oral conferences', and to 'propose his opinion honestly and as if talking before the Supreme God'. What became clear was that – just as today – there was a debate about what should be discussed in what order. The Dutch, naturally, didn't want to dwell on the issues of 'satisfaction' (i.e. reparations) and 'security', but sought instead to proceed to the issue of 'alliance and closer union'. Here, Cromwell professed to be ambivalent, noting that 'it did not make much difference which point was dealt with first', although he added that 'on this occasion the responsibility for the war had above all to be taken into account as being the fundamental part of the whole work'. He noted the problem that existed, therefore, because the Dutch persisted in claiming to be innocent, while the English 'called the Lord God to witness to this our declaration', and believed that 'the Lord had shown to a certain extent his mercy', although not to the extent that the English had 'become proud or conceited because of this.' As such, Cromwell backed the idea that it was necessary for the English to seek satisfaction for the 'great inconveniences' that they had suffered, and that they would have suffered without God's help. He also explained that, having supported the idea of reducing the size of the English navy, Dutch aggression ensured that the English were 'forced to put the navy on a better footing'. Insisting that the English had obeyed the

⁷ Sirtema de Grovestins, *Historie des Luttes Et Rivalités Politiques Entre Les Puissances Maritimes* (8 vols, Paris, 1851-4), 1:204.

⁸ H. Scheurleer, *Verbael Gehouden door de Heeren H. van Beverningk W. Nieupoort, J. van de Perre, en A. P. Jongestal als Gedeputeerden en Extraordinaris Ambassadeurs van de Heeren Staeten Generael der Vereenigde Nederlanden, aen de Republyck van Engelandt.* (1725), pp. 41-3.

'rules of war', and that he saw no need to 'cause ruin to the Dutch', he explained that England required a 'decent satisfaction', if not perhaps 'large sums', 'by which the way could be cleared for the work on the principal points'. If the Dutch resisted, however, he believed that the English could legitimately 'demand it from them and... receive it'. At another point in the speech, Cromwell insisted that he had 'full information on the acts of aggression from the narratives of innumerable reliable persons', and from 'the written accounts of the two captains of the two ships', explained his concern that the negotiations would 'get stuck *in limine*', and pointed out that it would not be 'too onerous' for the Dutch 'to pay the satisfaction' which the English 'thought ought to be done beforehand'.

On the issue of 'security', meanwhile, Cromwell said that the English were aware of the Dutch situation, internally and externally, adding that there was also fear of resurgent Orangism, and that 'there were spirits in their own country who now indeed pretended to seek an accommodation with England, but only with the intention of gaining time, and of restoring matters, merely in order, within a brief period, perhaps within a single year, to overturn everything again, for reasons not unknown to the deputies themselves'. As such, he explained, the Dutch needed to think about more than 'mere considerations of profit and friendship based on worldly motives', adding that God had 'delivered' the Dutch out of 'Spanish slavery' and that the English 'honored and loved them', but also that people sometimes became 'careless, and did not sufficiently apprehend the intrigues which were used against them'. This task, he said, was one that was 'better understood' in England than in the United Provinces.

Such claims seem to support Pincus's suggestion that Cromwell focused on 'satisfaction and security', on how the 'humours and spirits of many of the governors in the Netherlands were against this commonwealth', and on Dutch 'miscarriages', and that he not only expressed hostility to the House of Orange but also threatened that 'we might prosecute our revenge'. (Pincus 136) At the same time, however, Cromwell's larger point was that it was necessary to concentrate on 'the preservation of freedom and the outspreading of the kingdom of Christ', and that some way needed to be found for building an agreement which respected 'the form and character of the respective governments' at the same time as being 'permanent and inviolable'. He also noted that 'it had often happened that, after a quarrel friendship became stronger and faster than before'; adding that 'neither of them knew what God the Lord... might intend to accomplish by the two republics'.

More importantly, perhaps, Cromwell's private conversations were much less combative, not least the one he had with Beverning in St James's Park the following day, 14 July, ahead of the next formal meeting on 15 July.^{9,10} On this occasion, Cromwell had been in the park with another of the commissioners, Sir Charles Howard, and having met Beverning by accident he then sent his other officers and guards away, before defending his recent actions (in dismissing the Rump), and insisting that he sought 'a good and durable peace', because 'he knew well what management the Papists everywhere employed to attain their object'. He then explained that many people in England were unhappy that the Dutch 'had overreached them everywhere in commerce' (even though Dutch 'industry was not to be begrudged' per se), and that Dutch had exploited England's 'domestic troubles'. He also expressed the fear that the Dutch might have 'hidden secret schemes', which they 'intended to cover by a display of friendship and alliance'. Nevertheless, Cromwell insisted that 'explicit rules' were needed to ensure 'the welfare of commerce and navigation', and to 'adjust and regulate our common interests in commerce and navigation if we wanted to live in peace and unity'. And he pointed out that 'The world was wide enough for both;

⁹ H. Scheurleer, *Verbael Gehouden door de Heeren H. van Beverningk W. Nieupoort, J. van de Perre, en A. P. Jongestal als Gedeputeerden en Extraordinaris Ambassadeurs van de Heeren Staeten Generael der Vereenigde Nederlanden, aen de Republyck van Engelandt.* (1725), pp. 45-7.

¹⁰ *GCP*, 3:43-4; Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism*, pp. 139-41.

and if the two peoples could only thoroughly well understand each other, the two countries could overrule all others and control the markets and dictate the conditions'.¹¹

The problem for the Dutch was how to reconcile this kind of line with the stance taken by the English commissioners in public on 21 July, wherein they reiterated the need for 'satisfaction', but approached the issue of 'security' by means of a 'revolutionary proposal': 'this state is willing to expect the said security by uniting both states in such manner as they may become one people and commonwealth for the good of both'.¹² What they had in mind was not so much a 'league' between sovereign states, but rather 'the making of two sovereign states one', as a federation, in which the domestic laws of each country would remain unchanged, but in which they would be 'so united as to be under one supreme power, to consist of persons of both nations according as shall be agreed upon and to have and enjoy the like privileges and freedoms in respect of habitations, possessions, trade, ports, fishing, and all other advantages whatsoever in each other's countries, as natives without any difference or distinction'. This was what De Witt called 'a single and unified sovereign government, composed of representatives selected equally from the two nations', or a 'single Anglo-Dutch state'.¹³

The Dutch response to such ideas – on 27 July – was not positive, and such a union – based upon 'mingling the sovereignties' – was described as 'impossible and unreasonable'. Having fought against Spanish rule, and created a confederation (with the Treaty of Utrecht) which protected local sovereignty, they could not 'join ourselves more straightly to others than we are amongst ourselves'. (Pincus, 140-1) As such, the Dutch sent back two of their representatives (Nieuport and Jongestal) to the United Provinces for further consultations and advice, perhaps anticipating the dissolution of Barebones and the emergence of a new policy (early August).¹⁴ But at this stage it seems likely that Cromwell was instrumental in keeping open channels of communication, and although Pincus suggests that it would wrong to overestimate his support for peace without security, and without the expulsion of the Prince of Orange, at this stage, close attention needs to be paid to his ongoing talks with Beverning, in relation to the possibility for 'one supreme authority to have the direction of all matters relating to the strict union for mutual defence of both states'. It is no coincidence that such channels of communication involved Beverning, given that he evidently felt that if the Dutch 'would agree to an union after the same form as we have in the United Provinces ourselves, that we should be soon agreed'.¹⁵

Cromwell's next contribution to these discussions involved another two-hour conversation with Beverning in St James's Park, on 6 August, which is recorded – in three different versions – in letters sent by Beverning to Nieuport, to Jongestall and to the States

¹¹ c July 1653 Oliver Cromwell reported conversation with Dutch commissioners in letter from Beverning to de Witt.¹¹ Cromwell did highly insist upon it...; shall be able to judge further of the whole business'

¹² Pincus, 137-8; SP 105/98, fo. 18v, 19v.

¹³ Pincus, 138-9; Rawl.A4, p. 290; SP 105/98, fos. 19v-21v; Bodl. MS Clar 46, fo. 188.

¹⁴ *GCP*, 3:44-5; Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism*, p. 141-2; Woolrych, *Commonwealth to Protectorate*, pp. 282-3, 286-7.

¹⁵ Pincus, 149-50; *GCP*; Woolrych, 281-2; *GCP*, ii. 341-3; *TSP*, i. 382, 386-7, 394-5, 410, 438; *PRO* 31/3/91, fos. 66, 69.

General, at least two of which were intercepted by John Thurloe.¹⁶¹⁷¹⁸ This meeting, involving Cromwell 'without anybody more', saw Cromwell (or '297' as he was referred to in the cipher) speaking in English ('so distinctly pronounced that I could easily understand him'), and Beverning replying in Latin, and it involved Beverning raising 'questions & objections to intice & allure 297 out further', namely about 'whether the Intention... was to have any footing in our Countrey', or to 'encroach upon the sovereignty of the Netherlands'. To this, Cromwell replied 'no, neither upon our soverainties or priviledges', either of the republic or its towns and provinces. Cromwell gave 'no distinct answer', however, to a question 'whither the pretended Allyance & union should comprehend the protection of all those from without who should desire our Amitie'. And when asked whether 'we should have common priviledges & soverainities', Cromwell replied that such questions 'required some tyme to consider of & could not be answord extempore', adding that 'he did discourse with me but as a perticular man, without having any order thereunto'. Cromwell seems to have been uncomfortable about discussing the 'coalition' (i.e. union), Beverning noting that he said 'not a word' on this issue, but was much more comfortable reflecting on 'Union' (i.e. an alliance) 'for a great while together', albeit without concluding anything'. Finally, however, he felt compelled to give a clearer opinion, and at this point he seemed to suggest that there ought to be a kind of supreme direction, which would have control over matters concerning the points of mutual protection against aggression, making reference to the Amphictyonic Leagues in ancient Greece,¹⁹ involving 'common friends and enemies and a common board', but without infringing upon the sovereignty of each member. When it was pointed out that this was a somewhat different idea to the one proposed by the Council of State. Cromwell 'confessed that he had not considered the affair so closely and promised to think it over', and pointing out that the idea for a more ambitious union was only a suggestion, and a matter for discussion. Finally, Cromwell 'discoursed on the advantages of the league to be expected by the Dutch, the opportunities offered by the English and Scottish ports, of the fisheries, of the similarity in customs and taxes, of the laws regulating the sale of landed property, of the ways of investing mony, the navigation of the British islands etc'.

Beverning could not help concluding that Cromwell was not 'well informed', not least on the privileges and advantages that already 'enjoyed by the English in the Netherlands'. Beverning reflected to his fellow countrymen that 'truly I know not almost what to advise' (Woolrych, 282-3) Nevertheless, it is notable that at much the same time Cromwell told one envoy that he was minded to drop the idea for a 'coalition', so long as a firm peace and Protestant alliance could be obtained. (PRO 31/3/91, fo. 96). By September 1653, indeed, the Dutch were fairly confident that the English sought 'no more than an accommodation', and believed that Cromwell, at least, had accepted that 'the word coalition should be no more named'. (Pincus 152) Nevertheless, they also believed – and heard from men like Vermuyden – that he was proposing something like an offensive and defensive alliance, in which each state would be 'governed by their own laws independent from one another', but one which would involve a joint navy and a permanent Anglo-Dutch board of commissioners or arbitrators resident in each country. (Pincus, 153; GCP, ii. 350-1; TSP, i, 157, ii. 125-6).

By this stage, therefore, it seems clear that Cromwell was determined to reach an agreement with the Dutch, in order to ensure the promotion of a Protestant foreign policy. In persuading Whitelocke to undertake an embassy to Sweden in early September, therefore, he

¹⁶ Bodl. MS Rawl A5, fos 123r-24v; H. Scheurleer, *Verbael Gehouden door de Heeren H. van Beverningk W. Nieupoort, J. van de Perre, en A. P. Jongestal als Gedeputeerden en Extraordinaris Ambassadeurs van de Heeren Staeten Generael der Vereenigde Nederlanden, aen de Republyck van Engelandt.* (1725), pp. 143-6.

¹⁷ GCP, 3:45-8; Bodl. MS Rawl. A5, fos 102r-v..

¹⁸ TSP, 1:418.

¹⁹ A reference to the religious and political associations between various tribes during the Archaic period of Greek history, as described by both Thucydides and Strabo.

emphasised the need to settle the ‘matter of trade’, not least because the Dutch had been making approaches to the queen (‘tampering with the queen’), but also referred to the ‘Protestant interest’. (BL, Add. MS 4902, fos 5r-6r, 9v-10v). At this stage, therefore, Cromwell was still issuing mixed messages. In their discussions in October, it became clear that Whitelocke saw his mission as being to gain control of the Sound ‘against the Dutch and Danes’, and Cromwell confirmed his fear that ‘the Dutch will endeavour to overreach us, and it were good to prevent them, and... to serve our own interest’, although it seems likely that in part this was intended – as Whitelocke said – to ‘bring the Dutch to reason’. (BL, Add. MS 4902, fos 24r-25r)

Nieuport and Jongestal return with new instructions on 25 October. Cromwell involved hereafter, but quietly, doubtless because of divisions in council and radicals in Barebones (TSP, i. 500-1, 519, 521, 535, 540-3; GCP, ii. 363; PRO 31/3/91, fo. 108; PRO 31/3/92, fos. 2, 18; Abbott, iii. 109, 111-12, 121-5; CSPD 1653-4, p. 201) Jongestal and Nieuport return in October with instruction to reject proposed union, but to seek close alliance.

English proposals indicate retention of Navigation Acts

Agree not to mention control of trade outside Europe.

Snags: Dutch want Danish involved; Cromwell seeks exclusion of Prince of Orange.

Secret direct negotiations between Cromwell and De Witt, through Beverning, led to agreement on exclusion of Orange, but without knowledge of States General.

OC sent confidant to envoys on 10 November to urge patience. Conference on 17 November, when England content to work towards firm and close league, less than union (but see TSP, i. 601); OC also wanted secrecy; Dutch shocked by terms, because of reference to reparations, exclusion of Prince of Orange, and refs to ‘British seas’ etc. Beverning felt conned by Cromwell (Woolrych, 323; GCP, ii. 364-5; TSP, i. 616)

17 November 1653 Speech by Oliver Cromwell at a conference with the Dutch commissioners.²⁰ The hopes of those who sought peace with the Dutch were raised by the return of Nieuport and Jongestal from the Hague on 25 October, as well as by the election of a new and much more moderate council of state (1 November), and although talks were delayed as the new councillors set to work, as well as by Cromwell’s ill-health, he and Hugh Peter²¹ urged the commissioners to be patient (10 November), and talks resumed on 17 November, with Cromwell in the chair.²² The Dutch, whose hopes rested in no small part

²⁰ H. Scheurleer, *Verbael Gehouden door de Heeren H. van Beverningk W. Nieuport, J. van de Perre, en A. P. Jongestal als Gedeputeerden en Extraordinaris Ambassadeurs van de Heeren Staeten Generael der Vereenigde Nederlanden, aen de Republyck van Engelandt.* (1725), pp. 187-96.

²¹ Hugh Peter.

²² TSP, 1:582-4, 600-1; Woolrych, *Commonwealth to Protectorate*, pp. 312-13, 322-4; Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism*, pp. 156-8; Scheurleer, *Verbael Gehouden door de Heeren H. van Beverningk W. Nieuport, J. van de Perre, en A. P. Jongestal*, pp. 182, 187-8.

upon Cromwell's support for peace, were unimpressed by what they heard in his speech and the ensuing debate, as recorded in their official report for the States General.²³

'He spoke of the affection and the inclination of the Parliament for a good peace and a permanent union between the two republics, and said that they had earlier proposed a coalition between the two nations, - one in which all the mutual interests of state and of the nations would be combined without any distinction in such a way that no differences or misunderstandings on these points could be feared or expected. But that, because this proposition did not please us, we for our part proposed a union, league and confederation as close and strong as had ever been established between two sovereign republics. That they were content discuss in a friendly way our proposals, protesting before God who knows their hearts and before whom it was not hidden that they hated war and were seeking peace especially with our state, and that they it wanted to confer with us in all honesty and frankness... And that, although they believed they had good reasons to continue to insist on the preliminary points of security and satisfaction which had been the last points discussed before the dissolution of the former government, they were nevertheless willing to give further opening of the considerations, recommending a strict secrecy such as they themselves maintained.

'His Excellency said with a new protestation of candour and frankness that our common intention ought to be to direct the negotiations in such a way that not a union or peace for a short period would be the result, but a permanent one between the two states and nations. And that they considered it necessary to eliminate from the start all points that could eventually lead to new disputes or animosities. That it had to be stated in clear and positive terms what was the right and prerogative of each party. And that they considered it necessary therefore that their right and dominion in the Narrow Seas be established, as well as their rights on the point of fisheries; and that it was necessary that we should declare our opinion concerning these points freely and openly, mixing with this some remarks concerning satisfaction and security, but concluding finally that once the questions of the sea and fishery were adjusted, the rest of the work would be facilitated.

The Dutch commissioners then conferred together, before answering that they would not detract from the respect and privileges which had been enjoyed by the former government of England, but that first the articles of the union should be agreed upon, and that afterwards all points concerning commerce and fishery should be discussed. Cromwell answered:

'Having profusely explained once more their claims concerning the dominion of the seas and the fisheries, they declared that they could not understand that we had accepted one of the two articles proposed by them, but that we had only spoken in general terms, and they wanted to put it down in clear and positive terms.

The Dutch replied that they could order their ships to pay due respect to foreign flags, but the seas of the world were open to everyone. To this Cromwell replied:

'that our argument did not fit in his scheme because if his coalition had been accepted, all interests of government and nation without any exception would have been mutual, but that, as we had not accepted his coalition but were speaking of another union in which the interest of each party should remain distinct, time and again new conflicts would arise if we did not make full use of this occasion to eliminate all causes of conflict.

Optimism faded at meetng on 18 November. Cromwell long speech saying that, since Dutch had refused 'coalition and mingling of sovereignties', the two republics were 'as distinct in interest, and as having peculiar rights and privileges belonging to each other'. (Pincus, 158; Citing Bodl. Rawl.A8, pp. 170-2) Insistence agt Prince of Orange.

²³ See also TNA, PRO 31/3/92, fo. 46.

18 November 1653 Oliver Cromwell.²⁴ The hopes for an amicable settlement with the Dutch took a clear turn for the worse on the second day of the conference, when the English presented the draft of a treaty, and when clear signs emerged that men like Cromwell found it hard to resist pressure from radical hardliners who were hostile to a negotiated peace on anything other than the harshest of terms. The Dutch were shocked by the demand for reparations, the requirement regarding the permanent exclusion of the House of Orange from Dutch political life, and the demands made regarding the ‘British seas’, and the day ended somewhat acrimoniously.²⁵ Once again, Cromwell’s contributions to the discussions were recorded in the official Dutch report on the conference, a version of events which is supported by other onlookers, including the French ambassador.²⁶

Dutch repeated their desire for friendship, peace and union, declaring their good intentions but insisting that that they would not conclude a union which would affect the sovereignty of the republic. Cromwell answered:

as the Dutch were interpreting the proposed coalition in their own way, and had gone back to the *retro-acta* he would do the same and had to declare that the Council had hoped to find the means of a union that would give security and be permanent and would not exist only in appearance and in words, and that would not only take away the present differences of opinion but also would provide for the future and regulate all troubles and eventual new disputes. Those means undoubtedly existed in the coalition as proposed by the English because in this the whole sovereignty and government with everything which depends upon it would be made common between the two republics and nations, with the sole exception of the administration of justice according to the municipal laws. But because we had refused this proposal and had preferred a close union and confederation, keeping distinct the interest of each party, the Council had allowed themselves to be persuaded. Now the means had to be found to eliminate all present and future inconveniences and to assure confidence. The proposition of mutilated coalition which we now made appeared to spring from insufficient instructions to conclude anything.

‘he had no other intention than peace and security’

The Dutch deputies apparently responded by insisting that they had instructions to offer to the English government a defensive alliance and that the union would serve this purpose.

Cromwell replied: ‘that in reality ‘twas nothing else but a repetition of his first answer. That the Council had proposed the coalition with the intention of including the demanded satisfaction and security, that our parallel between coalition and union was totally incorrect, and that those special words of sovereignty were not very important. He considered them only a feather in the hat and that the burden of government was only a bubble [bauble].

it ought to be our principal aim to obtain security against this house of Austria and to organize our affairs in such a way that we did not need to fear anybody’s power and that we could dictate the law concerning commerce to the whole world.

²⁴ H. Scheurleer, *Verbael Gehouden door de Heeren H. van Beverningk W. Nieupoort, J. van de Perre, en A. P. Jongestal als Gedeputeerden en Extraordinaris Ambassadeurs van de Heeren Staeten Generael der Vereenigde Nederlanden, aen de Republyck van Engelandt.* (1725), pp. 187-96.

²⁵ Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism*, pp. 158, 160, 162-3; Woolrych, *Commonwealth to Protectorate*, p. 323; *GCP*, 2:364-5.

²⁶ TNA, SP 105/98, fo. 41; TNA, PRO 30/3/92, fos. 46-7; TSP, 1:616; Bodl. MS Rawl. A8, pp. 170-2. For the draft treaty, see: TNA, SP 105/98, fos. 32-6.

Dark mood by late November (Pincus, 160) Why did English, having appeared to moderate their position, taken such a hard line? Cromwell seemed still inclined to peace. (Pincus, 162) Perhaps Cromwell unusually still pro peace; i.e. stood alone in face of resurgence of radicals?

25 November report of Harrison preaching agt Cromwell and peace with Dutch.(Woolrych, 325)

29 November 1653 Oliver Cromwell conversation with Christopher Feake (Bodl, MS Rawl. A9, p. 9). Central to this animosity were suspicions that Cromwell favoured an unacceptably lenient peace treaty with the Dutch, notwithstanding the plain talking of his speech to the Dutch commissioners on 17 November.

After dissolution of Barebones, picture looked more promising, as Cromwell recognised. (Pincus, 168)

Treaty of Westminster codified aims of Cromwellian moderates, with secret article about Orange, although 'did not provide for an offensive alliance, or much physical security for the future of peaceful relations between the 2 regimes' and union was 'not even hinted at' (Pincus, 180) Less bothered by union than by securing peace, in order to undermine Spanish interest. 'Neo-Elizabethan' (Pincus, 189, 191)

During 1653, Cromwell played increasingly important role in negotiations; divisions over time; some opposed. New alliance? Pooling of sovereignty?

Cromwell concerned about 'the preservation of freedom and the outspreading of the kingdom of Christ', and a 'permanent and inviolable' settlement (July)

However, it is possible to argue that these phenomena raised political issues and complications, and that finding solutions to these problems led to something other than straightforward determination to protect national sovereignty.

- Participate in Dutch institutions;
- work through Dutch constitutional channels,
- cooperate with Dutch authorities.

Crucially, not about a noble vision of European cooperation and integration, as we see in 18th century, and in 20th century post 1945 and in 21st?

A willingness to think beyond national sovereignty; pragmatically European.

- Part of the importance here is recognising that we can see this if we look for it.
- If we look beyond wars, and debates about relationship: sovereignty of the seas; sovereignty on land IN PRACTICE
- Means that we CAN rethink pre-1648 reality.
- Means that post-Westphalia system also needs to be re-thought: Westphalia system did not end political cooperation

- Perhaps then, we don't need to think about political cooperation – as has tended to happen – along lines dominated by Westphalia
- Solution to 'problem' of Westphalia system might not be obvious, i.e. the need for supranational entity?
- They were dealing with real issues that have modern parallels, and which we tend to think of as problems of a globalised world
- Citizenship
- Movement of people
- Economic activity and regulation
- Information and media across boundaries

Cromwell not really interested in union, but in peace? But amazing how far he was prepared to go; it's true he was not wedded to union, but certainly saw its potential advantages. Was not only solution, and could drop it, but it had attraction of permanence. Also, watching his back re. 5M.

If not union, then need to protect interests in other ways. Means less than ends.