

Chapter 16

Arms Exports and Export Control of the Dutch Republic 1585–1621



Michiel de Jong

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Abstract The Dutch Republic underwent a process of state formation, accelerated economic growth and military reforms during the Eighty Years War. In particular between 1585 and 1621, Dutch merchant-entrepreneurs built up a burgeoning arms industry and sector of arms exports. These exports required a system of passports, still an under-researched theme in current literature, organized by the States-General and admiralties in order to support exports to neutral and allied states, but to forestall these did not fall into enemy hands. In particular, the system of passports shows how merchants, acting as intermediaries between allies and the States-General and the admiralties, could meet the volatile demand of war materials. As a result, the supply side of the export market was oligopolistic, but the composition of the group of oligopolists varied depending on the region and the prevailing market conditions in question. From this study it can be concluded that the system of export control had only a limited effectiveness regarding the creative arms exports to Spanish Habsburg destinations, due to divergent central and local interests. However, the major part of the Dutch arms exports flowed to allies such as France, Venice, Sweden and the German protestant states. Dutch merchants provided them with batches of strategic materials and total package-deals of armaments for entire army and navy units. From

M. de Jong (✉)

Faculty of Military Sciences, Netherlands Defence Academy, PO Box 90002, 4800 PA Breda, The Netherlands

e-mail: mag.d.jong.01@mindef.nl

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R. Beeres et al. (eds.), *NL ARMS Netherlands Annual Review
of Military Studies 2021*, NL ARMS,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6265-471-6_16

1621, the States-General supported these transactions by supplying war materials from the state arsenals fostering timely and largescale deliveries, meeting volatile demand conditions.

Keywords Arms · export · control · Dutch Republic · Eighty Years War · The Netherlands

16.1 Introduction

The current post-Cold War world and Early Modern Europe share two geopolitical and -military conditions: multipolarity among major powers and the significant role of entrepreneurs in the supply and service of their armed forces. One will also observe that the majority of the current European states, including The Netherlands, were founded in Early Modern Europe. After the start of the Dutch Revolt a burgeoning arms industry and trade sector was built up in a young Dutch Republic in the middle of interrelated processes of economic growth, military reforms and state formation between 1585 and 1621. Although this arms industry and trade managed to serve a domestic market on which the Dutch state army, the admiralties, and the Dutch East India Company formed important factors of demand, the arms export rapidly developed too. The arms exports of the Dutch Republic underwent an enormous growth supported by the import, processing and transit of raw materials, semi-finished and finished products and the building of the domestic industry. Parallel to the growth of this sector, the state authorities of the young Republic, in particular the States-General and the admiralties, tried to control it by means of a system of passports and sureties in order to regulate the flows of export.

Starting out from this context, this chapter aims to determine the origins and effects of the Dutch state policy to control arms exports in relation to the development of the Dutch arms market between 1585 and 1621. Firstly, this chapter explains how this system worked and what goals the States-General and the admiralties aimed to achieve. Secondly, the significance of arms exports for allies, neutrals and opponents of the Republic is discussed. From a broader strategic perspective, armaments and a number of goods for dual use, civil and military use, were also a matter of concern for the Dutch authorities, in particular regarding the army and naval campaigns of the Spanish Habsburg Empire and their allies around the Republic. The States-General not only perceived Habsburg threats in the campaign theatre of the Netherlands, but also within European and overseas theatres, and took threats towards their allies into account too. The first two topics lead to a third one: to what extent was the Dutch state policy for arms export control effective? In order to assess its effectiveness, the arms exports on France, the biggest ally, and those on the Spanish-Habsburg territories, the enemy of the Dutch Republic, are discussed. These examples illustrate how far government regulations on arms exports extended and influenced these. The divergent interests of the States-General and the admiralties also had important implications for these government regulations and thus for the development of the Dutch arms

exports. Finally, this chapter aims to determine the effects of the development of the Dutch arms exports and system of export control on the market organization of entrepreneurs on the supply-side. In doing so, this chapter determines whether opportunities occurred for monopolies and oligopolies on the supply side and which significance the arms export and the state authorities attempts to regulate it, had on the development of the Dutch arms industry.

16.2 Regulation of Arms Exports

The government of the Dutch Republic set the boundaries within which the Dutch arms exports developed. The States-General decided quite early on to control and regulate the export of arms. After the establishment of the admiralties in 1586, these councils and the States-General gradually created a system for the issue of passports by resolution for the export of armaments, shipbuilding materials and victuals.¹ Kernkamp was the first historian to write about these exports and this licensing system in his study of the contraband trade between the Republic and the Southern Netherlands, Spain and Portugal. However, he focused on the trade in victuals and shipbuilding materials, but not specifically on the arms trade. In more recent contributions Vogel has provided more insight in the Dutch arms exports and government regulations during the Eighty Years War.²

How did the arms export passport system work? The granting of passports was linked to the payment of export duties on enemy (license fees) and neutral destinations (convoy fees). Depending on the port of departure, merchants of arms had to submit requests to one of the admiralty colleges.³ In 1597 five admiralties each controlled a district of seaports and rivers in order to tax the riverine and seaborne trade for the equip a part of the state fleet and to protect convoys of merchant vessels *en route* to European ports. Consent or permission was then granted on such a petition by the Councils of Admiralty, after which the specified goods could be exported. Clauses were added to the consents that were intended to regulate legal arms exports.

As example I take the petition of Pierre de Jourdaen, a Middelburg merchant. On 21 July 1590, he requested to export three dozen muskets and arquebuses, and armour and forks to Caen. The Admiralty of Zeeland granted him permission, provided that he would pay the convoy duties on these arms and a deposit for their market value. Within two months he had to rejoin the Admiralty College in Zeeland, with

¹ The admiralties and the States-General were the most important institutions that issued passports. To a lesser extent the Council of State and the Stadholder held the right to issue passports. Before 1586 also the States of Holland and the States of Zeeland issued passports for the exports of war materials. For example: ZA ASZ 469: Resoluties Staten van Zeeland (Res.SZ) 08.08.1584, f.110v, 18.09.1585, f.127.

² Kernkamp 1931–1934; Vogel 1997, pp. 197–210; Vogel 1993, pp. 13–21. A very insightful study of the Dutch trade of shipbuilding materials from Northern Europe to Spain offers the recent dissertation of Jiménez Montes 2020.

³ Merchants also had to request passports for the export of shipbuilding materials and victuals.

a certificate of delivery of the weaponry, signed by the governor or city council of Caen. He would lose his deposit if he did not comply with these rules. The limited shipping time aligned with the estimated maximum duration of the return trip to Caen. These timeslots varied according to the destinations: six weeks for a return journey to London, and three months for one to La Rochelle or Bordeaux.⁴ In view of the high deposits, sometimes amounting to the double market value, it can be assumed that the consents led to actual arms exports.

On the basis of such passports, I have investigated the Dutch export of arms, semi-finished products for arms, and raw materials for gun founding and gunpowder production, in particular from the Zeeland and Amsterdam admiralties, that accounted for the biggest export flows. The issued passports of the States-General in their resolutions provide for back up information for a few years in which no admiralty records were available.

From 1600 onwards merchants were obliged, based on resolution, to first request a passport for the export of arms at the States-General before applying for a similar passport at a Council of the Admiralty. At times the admiralties issued large numbers of passports when the demand for arms abruptly increased to certain destinations. Not infrequently they issued passports without prior consents of the States-General.⁵ The opportunity to collect additional revenues were simply too tempting and several admiralties sometimes acted explicitly against the prevailing regulations of the States-General.

Whereas the admiralties were led by financial interests, for every request the States-General took the national strategic interest into account. The deliberations leading to their decisions, often short, sometimes more elaborate accounts, were inserted in their resolutions. They prohibited the export of war materials to enemy destinations. In the case of a neutral destination, as shown in the example above, clauses of a limited shipping time, a deposit and proof of delivery to the specified destination had to prevent that war materials ended up in Spanish-Habsburg territory. Arms exports served the foreign policy of the Dutch Republic if the foreign buyer pursued an objective that was in line with the interests of the States-General. With these interests in mind, the States-General made it compulsory from 1600 onwards that passports and consents had to be applied for first from them and only secondly from the admiralty under whose district the port of export resorted.

Whether or not a request for arms export was consented upon depended on the export bans of the States-General. These bans were made public through placards and forwarded by letter to the admiralties. Sometimes the admiralty asked for advice at the States-General, if these prohibitive regulations could not provide clarity over a certain request. In case of uncertainty, arms could be exported without consent, or, in other words, as disguised illicit trade.

⁴ NA AA 2448: Res.Adm. Zeeland 06.08.1590, 01.04.1591, 30.12.1591, 11.09.1592, 21.09.1592.

⁵ Vogel 1993, p. 16. NA AA 2447, 2448: Res.Adm. Zeeland 13.06.1584–31.12.1595. Examples are the exports to France in the years 1590–1598 and to England in the years 1639–1648. De Boer 1941. A thorough insight in the activities of the various state institutions of the Dutch Republic offers: Groenveld 1984. About the Dutch arms export to England: Edwards 2000.

The divergent interests of the admiralties and the States-General illustrate the difficulty of developing and delimiting the power and competences of the central state institutions in relation to the regional institutions in the Dutch Republic. There was a certain imperfection in the formation of the Dutch state, because local authorities took limited notice of higher authorities and local interests prevailed. However, the States-General tried to improve their control on arms exports, and to curtail the admiralties' interests. This shows the dynamics of action and reaction in the state-building process of the Dutch Republic.

16.3 Extent of Exports

The series of admiralties' consents only indicate the minimum scale of the arms exports. First of all, due to more focus on other matters, not all requests and consents were recorded in an admiralty's resolutions. Secondly, only fragmented or summarily updated resolutions exist for the admiralties of the Noorderkwartier, Friesland and Rotterdam. Most of the flows of armaments, however, were exported from ports under the jurisdiction of the admiralties of Zeeland and Amsterdam and fortunately their resolutions cover most years of the Eighty Years War. The requests and consents recorded in the resolutions of these two admiralty boards therefore clearly reflect the main trend in the Dutch arms exports.

Table 16.1 shows the estimated value of arms exports via both admiralties. The quantities stated in the requests and consents were combined with the serially available price data of deliveries to the Zeeland arsenals for the State army and the admiralty of Zeeland. These data reflect the prices for arms on the Zeeland and Amsterdam markets in the period under scrutiny.⁶ After 1600 only a small flow of armaments was exported via Zeeland and almost all exports originate from the district of the Amsterdam admiralty. This trend reflects the relocation of merchants' activities after the fall of Antwerp from Vlissingen and Middelburg to Amsterdam and the diminished economic significance of Zeeland at the end of the sixteenth century.

The arms exports peaked between 1590 and 1595, 1604 and 1612, and 1616 and 1621, and reflect the increased and steep demands in certain European areas due to wars. Table 16.2 differentiates the export flows of arms via the Amsterdam admiralty per area.

During the first export boom arms exports mainly went through Zeeland waters to both territories of the French king Henry IV and of the rebellious League. Various French companies, regiments and admiralties continued to be important buyers of Dutch gunpowder, sulphur, saltpetre, firearms, bladed weapons and guns.⁷ Although difficult to calculate, Dutch merchants ran an important transit trade to the Spanish

⁶ ZA ARC 10–360: Rek.ontv.gen. te lande 1573–1621. ZA ARC 614–640: Rek.ontv.gen. te water 1586–1621.

⁷ Vogel 1993, pp. 16–17. NA AA 2447, 2448: Res.Adm. Zeeland 13.06.1584–31.12.1595.

Table 16.1 Arms exports of the Dutch Republic via the admiralties of Amsterdam and Zeeland, 1585–1621 (in carolus guilders)

Year	Zeeland admiralty	Amsterdam admiralty	Year	Zeeland admiralty	Amsterdam admiralty
1586	–	–	1604	1392	5112
1587	–	–	1605	0	87623
1588	5666	3316	1606	0	227909
1589	21762	2252	1607	1061	143799
1590	16511	7775	1608	679	155737
1591	48781	2548	1609	1080	20076
1592	25509	7077	1610	0	125038
1593	23037	13313	1611	0	111528
1594	17712	19562	1612	1046	23899
1595	8189	–	1613	2	32783
1596	–	–	1614	519	38888
1597	–	–	1615	70	19929
1598	–	–	1616	0	8065
1599	–	8351	1617	8250	74212
1600	–	21345	1618	0	69993
1601	–	7041	1619	900	110
1602	260	20136	1620	–	71000
1603	675	7404	1621	–	57172

Note No figures available for the open years

Source NA AA 2447–2454: Resolutions Admiralty of Zeeland 13.06.1584–30.12.1621; NA AA 1334–1367: Resolutions Admiralty of Amsterdam 04.02.1586–21.12.1621

Southern Netherlands and the Iberian Peninsula via North-French ports such as Dieppe, Boulogne, Calais; Rouen and Le Havre east of the Seine estuary; and ports in Southwest-France such as Bayonne, La Rochelle, Bordeaux.

The Italian territories developed into a second important market for war materials mainly due to the great orders of the Republic of Venice in the years 1606–1608 and 1616–1619. In those years, Venice fought defensive campaigns against the Habsburg and Ottoman forces in Europe and thus became an attractive ally for the Republic in the Eastern Mediterranean. In an imminent conflict between 1606 and 1608 with the Papal States, Venice purchased weapons for the first time on a large scale, in particular saltpetre, sulphur and gunpowder. The war of Venice against the Austrian Habsburg Empire and the privateers supported by Vienna, the Uskokens, again resulted in large orders from 1616 onwards for gunpowder and saltpetre and the equipment for rented and bought warships. After Venice, Livorno, the free port of the Duke of Tuscany, and Genoa followed as important arms export destinations.⁸

⁸ Geyl 1913; Vogel 1993, p. 19; Engels 1997, p. 87.

Table 16.2 Arms exports of the Dutch Republic via the admiralty of Amsterdam, according to export destinations, 1585–1621 (in carolus guilders)

Year	France	Italy	Northern Germany	Sweden	Baltic	Denmark	England	Muscovy	Malta	Barbary	Other
1586	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1587	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1588	–	–	616	–	–	–	2700	–	–	–	–
1589	1349	–	903	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1590	3950	–	1593	–	2116	–	116	–	–	–	–
1591	78	–	2470	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1592	1894	–	–	5183	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1593	11920	–	1393	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1594	15252	–	200	–	2375	–	250	–	–	1485	–
1595	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1596	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1597	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1598	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1599	–	–	4497	–	–	875	1180	–	–	1800	–
1600	1161	–	8525	–	8363	–	816	1800	–	–	–
1601	805	–	4390	223	626	228	771	–	–	–	–
1602	2340	16	10125	990	–	–	6638	27	–	–	–
1603	108	–	39	–	2000	153	5104	–	–	–	–
1604	440	–	3858	72	653	–	90	–	–	–	–
1605	1680	–	–	74000	–	–	1783	10160	–	–	–
1606	5610	194870	12618	6	180	14445	–	180	–	–	–

(continued)

Table 16.2 (continued)

Year	France	Italy	Northern Germany	Sweden	Baltic	Denmark	England	Muscovy	Malta	Barbary	Other
1607	1270	127902	1116	8096	109	–	–	4611	–	–	695
1608	58136	49805	20246	22235	–	605	503	2445	1290	473	371
1609	2440	5282	358	–	400	1105	–	5285	–	3710	1125
1610	–	39471	83103	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2464
1611	1750	–	76045	623	–	32510	–	–	–	–	600
1612	3126	–	646	–	7482	–	–	1140	–	–	11505
1613	10433	3940	3461	–	5600	3225	1952	2941	–	–	1430
1614	25968	–	284	–	30	–	900	5901	5805	–	–
1615	4218	–	448	–	–	–	3222	–	12041	–	–
1616	6000	–	1680	–	–	–	–	–	–	385	–
1617	5850	–	7466	37725	–	–	25170	–	–	–	–
1618	36551	–	643	6300	–	4500	–	20000	–	–	2000
1619	–	–	–	–	–	110	–	–	–	–	–
1620	–	–	66500	–	–	–	–	4500	–	–	–
1621	47600	–	–	–	–	–	4500	–	–	272	4800

Note No data available for 1586, 1587, 1595–1598. Other destinations were: Guinea (1607, 1618, 1621), Spanish territories (1609, 1610, 1612: 5235, 1613) and unknown (1608, 1612: 6270).

Source NA AA 1334–1367: Resolutions Admiralty of Amsterdam 04.02.1586–21.12.1621

A third sales market formed the North German ports of Emden, Bremen and Hamburg. Dozens of muskets and arquebuses were sold to their local bourgeoisie. Many Amsterdam merchants supplied the local merchant navy in Emden with arms, in particular iron cast guns. Bremen and Hamburg served as destinations for war materials for Brunswick-Lunenburg and Brandenburg, allies of the Dutch Republic during the War of the Jülich Succession (1610–1614) and the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). However, the Hanseatic ports of Bremen and Hamburg also fulfilled an important transshipping function to enemy ports such as Bilbao, Santander, La Coruna, Seville, Lisbon and Malaga.

After the top three of export markets Sweden and Danzig, Königsberg and Lübeck followed. Within these Hanseatic ports the merchant navy were in demand for iron and bronze cast guns, and the local bourgeoisie imported firearms and side arms. From 1592 onwards Duke Charles of Sweden, even as France, bought complete packages of firearms, bladed weapons, powder and ammunition for the equipment of regiments and companies.⁹ The Swedish demand for war materials increased during the Kalmar War against Denmark (1611–1613). However, in 1612 the States-General temporarily prohibited exports to Sweden, but a year later these exports rose steeply again. When the Danish king also tried to import weapons and troops raised in Northern Germany via Frisian ports, the States-General prohibited this in 1612.¹⁰ After 1613 arms exports to Denmark via Amsterdam resumed, but these exports only grew substantially during the Danish intervention in the Thirty Years' War (1620–1625).¹¹

Between 1585 and 1621 the demand on the English market concentrated on armour parts, sword blades and rapier hilts, which were transported to London for their assembly into full-fledged weapons. Iron cast guns were not in demand, as English gun founders provided these relatively cheaply. After the peace with Spain in 1604, the English demand for weapons from the Republic decreased.

Among the more irregular, yet at times large, clients were Malta, Moscow and Barbary. Mainly consignments of sulphur and the muskets for the gunpowder industry and the Moscow bourgeoisie were exported to Muscovy. Malta, the privateer base

⁹ An example is the export delivery of 65 muskets, 280 arquebuses, 1.000 helmets, 140 harnesses, 300 pikes, 150 rapiers and cutlasses and 330 pounds of matches in: NA AA 1338: Res.Adm. Amsterdam 27.06.1592. An example of another package-deal to Sweden: 2.000 muskets, 1.000 harnesses, 2.000 rapiers, 500 cavalry arms, 10.000 pounds of gunpowder and 100.000 pounds of matches: NA AA 1363: Res.Adm. Amsterdam, 09.06.1617. For the French export see for example: NA AA 1335–1338, 1340, 1343: Res.Adm. Amsterdam 06.06.1589, 10.07.1589, 11.09.1590, 12.05.1592, 08.04.1593, 20.07.1593, 12.07.1594, 11.11.1597.

¹⁰ NA AA 2452: Res.Adm. Zeeland, 26.03.1612 A request to the admiralties via a letter of the States-General of 17.03.1612, whereupon in accordance with a resolution of the king of Denmark the States-General decided to forbid the trade to Sweden. NA AA 1358: Res.Adm. Amsterdam, 28.08.1612 A request to the admiralties via a letter of the States-General of 09.08.1612, whereupon in accordance with a resolution of the king of Sweden the States-General decided to forbid the trade to Denmark. NA AA 1358: Res.Adm. Amsterdam, 27.04.1612 Copy of a letter of the States-General of 10.04.1612 whereby the 'toevoer van krijgsvolk en commoditeiten van oorlog' was banned to both states. See also: NA AA 1358: Res.Adm. Amsterdam 24.03.1612.

¹¹ NA AA 1357, 1360: Res.Adm. Amsterdam 28.09.1611, 20.12.1611, 30.10.1613, 17.10.1614.

of the Johannite Order, was not only a major buyer of shipbuilding materials, but also of cannon balls and gunpowder.¹² However, Dutch merchants also supplied Malta's archenemies, the Barbary corsairs and Morocco, with war supplies as part of a Mediterranean triangular trade. Holland and Zeeland ships transported war materials, including Italian sulphur and provisions, to privateer bases such as Safi, Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, shipped captured batches of sugar and brazil wood to Livorno, Tuscany's free port, and closed the triangle by shipping Levant goods such as silk and raisins to Western European ports.¹³

The export peaks correlate with the volatile war conditions for France, Venice, the German Protestant states, Denmark and Sweden. From 1590, the friendly relationship of the States-General with France developed into an alliance in which the Dutch Republic, in addition to subsidies and troops, exported and supplied war materials to the French king. From the Twelve Years' Truce (1609–1621) onwards, the Dutch Republic developed or continued alliances with Venice, the German Protestant states, Bohemia, England, Sweden and at times with Denmark.¹⁴ Dutch arms exports to these states were, as Vogel concludes, closely related to the Dutch *raison d'état*.¹⁵ This phenomenon was part of the intensification of the Republic's diplomatic relations with other European powers and the gradual maturing of this young state. This process ran parallel to what Barbour calls the intensification and expansion of Dutch trade, including the arms trade.¹⁶ Those merchants who specialized in the support of these allies could continue their contacts in the arms trade and became more regular suppliers.

16.4 Products

One of the comparative advantages of the Dutch Republic as an arms market was the availability of a versatile range of armaments on the supply side. In particular the package deals for companies, regiments or fleet units of European allies were a

¹² The data on the export markets presented here are based on the requests and consents in: NA AA 2447–2454: Res.Adm. Zeeland 13.06.1584–30.12.1621. NA AA 1334–1367: Res.Adm. Amsterdam 04.02.1586–21.12.1621. NA AA 1334–1367: Res.Adm. Amsterdam 04.02.1586–21.12.1621. For Malta see: NA AA 1352, 1354, 1360–1362: Res.Adm. Amsterdam 03.04.1606, 09.05.1606, 20.11.1608, 13.05.1614, 31.03.1615, 19.10.1616.

¹³ Zeeland with its deep coastal waters and an important transit function in the arms trade formed an attractive base towards the Southern Atlantic and Mediterranean. Thus, we encounter early examples of requests and consents to Barbary. On 28 September 1592, Eustaes Trevasche, a London merchant, successfully asked permission to export 8000 pounds of sulphur to Barbary on the condition he did not visit any Spanish fortresses in Northern Africa. NA AA 2448: Res.Adm. Zeeland 28.09.1592; Heeringa 1910, pp. 1108–1110; De Jong 1998, pp. 46–47.

¹⁴ De Jong 2005, Chap. 9.

¹⁵ Vogel 1997, p. 199.

¹⁶ Barbour 1963.

very attractive selling point.¹⁷ These involved enormous amounts in order to equip complete units. An early example is a delivery in 1592 to a Swedish regiment of 1,500 men for the war against Muscovy. It consisted of 200 muskets, 800 arquebuses, 1,000 helmets, 350 complete harnesses (with thigh and arm pieces), 1,000 pikes, 500 rapiers and cutlasses, and 30 drums.¹⁸ In the Republic, foreign powers equipped their recruited troops with gunpowder, fuses, bullets, firearms, bladed weapons, helmets and armour. These successful packages stimulated the Dutch arms industry to coordinate the production and unite the supply of its various components. Starting out from the customer's wishes these package-deals were created in close interaction between supply and demand. The rise of these deals and its component parts were undoubtedly an incentive for standardization of troops and their equipment in European armies.

How were the package deals obtained? These were produced in the industrial centres in Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht. The organization of production aligned with the supply via the import of raw materials, auxiliary materials and fuels, and semi-finished products. Merchant entrepreneurs organized trade with the supply areas, the domestic industry and the export markets. Musket, sword and armour makers were active in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Delft, Dordrecht and The Hague. They assembled parts of firearms from Liège, Brunswick and Suhl with locally produced stocks into muskets, arquebuses and pistols. Sword makers and armour makers processed sword blades and hilts, and armour parts from Liège and Solingen into finished products.¹⁹ Bullets were crafted by blacksmiths using English, Swedish and Spanish iron or imported directly from Sweden, Poland and Brunswick. In Gouda and Utrecht, matches were spun from local hemp or imported Baltic hemp.

Various merchants were able to organize these packages of arms, based on imported, assembled and finished materials, such as Ghijsbrecht Cornelisz. van Culenberch from Utrecht and Wouter Buys from Middelburg did in the same way as their deliveries of armour, helmets, pikes, muskets and arquebuses for the Dutch State army.²⁰ Standardization of the armament of the Dutch state army played an important role in the delivery of packages and this development became known to foreign buyers and suppliers at an early stage. In 1604, the German Emperor was permitted by the States-General to buy 3,000 arquebuses, "made in the Dutch way" and Liège musket makers were familiar with muskets according to the Dutch model.²¹

The largest sums in arms exports, however, comprised warships and stocks of strategic materials. For example, Caspar van Ceulen exported 600,000 pounds of

¹⁷ Vogel 1993, p. 14.

¹⁸ Vogel 1997, p. 200.

¹⁹ Kist et al. 1974; Gaier 1976.

²⁰ De Jong 2005, Chap. 1.

²¹ Vogel 1993, p. 18; Yernaux 1939, p. 279.

gunpowder, 100,000 pounds of sulphur and 100,000 pounds of matches to the Venetian Republic in 1606–1608 for its war against the Papal States and, through consultancy of the States-General, free of convoys, licenses and tolls.²² Strategic commodities such as sulphur and saltpetre were transited from respectively Italy and Sweden, and from Lorraine, Poland and, after 1622, India. Amsterdam merchants with shares in the gunpowder industry dominated this transit trade of sulphur, saltpetre and gunpowder.

The equipment of the merchant navy abroad formed a third category and concerned the transit of English and German iron cast guns.²³ Finally, there existed a more small-scale export of dozens of firearms and bladed weapons to clients from La Rochelle to Archangel.

16.5 Government Arsenals

Not only its versatile range, but also its relatively short supply lines and subsequent timely deliveries made the Dutch arms market attractive for foreign demand. Agents, trade factors and ambassadors supported deliveries with letters of recommendation in order to obtain the necessary passports. With the consent of the States-General, these export batches were sometimes supplemented or even delivered entirely from the provincial and admiralty arsenals of the Dutch Republic.²⁴ The advantages for arms merchants were huge: they did not have to keep stocks, they could deliver quickly and on a regular basis, and put together versatile total packages for complete army and naval units. Therefore, these total packages were also created through an intensive and flexible interaction between private individuals and the public sector. The interests of the Dutch Republic were also served: the arms trade served to support anti-Habsburg allies, generated revenues from import and export duties, and old stocks were timely sold in accordance with reduced numbers of army companies and warships during the Twelve Years' Truce.

From 1600 onwards, a comparison between the passports of the admiralties with those of the States-General on the same arms transfers is possible. The requests and consents of the admiralties almost always mention the merchants and arms involved and sometimes the ambassador's recommendations. The related first passports from the States-General only occasionally mention the merchants, but do include per arms batch partly or complete sales from the state arsenals and the ambassador's recommendations. It appears that deliveries from state arsenals for arms exports, however, only started to play a significant role after 1621. Before 1621 such deliveries only occurred sporadically. It means that the exports rose independently during the

²² NA AA 1352–1354, Res.Adm. Amsterdam 04.09.1606, 07.08.1607, 23.07.1608. In comparison: Abraham Verbeeck exported 5000 pounds of matches and 2000 pounds of gunpowder to Venice: NA AA 1354: Res.Adm. Amsterdam 21.11.1608.

²³ The German iron cast guns were also called 'Suyrlandse', or of Sauerland origin.

²⁴ Vogel 1993, pp. 14–16.

Twelve Years' Truce. Together with the demand from the Dutch merchant navy and Dutch East India Company, the three sectors compensated to a certain extent for the falling orders for army and fleet. This prevented adverse effects on employment and continuity of the arms industry.

16.6 Trade with the Enemy

Trade with the enemy was a well-known phenomenon during the Eighty Years' War.²⁵ What was its importance for the Dutch arms exports? As stated earlier, arms exports to Spain headed for ports in Northern Spain and Southwest France, while those to the Spanish Southern Netherlands and the Spanish territories in the East-Netherlands ran via ports in Northern France and the North-German territories. Another detour was possible to Hamburg and Bremen, from where a transit route, with papers from the Hanseatic League, or in Hanseatic ships, headed for Spain and Portugal too.

Around 1585, the Dutch opportunities to export arms to Spanish territories were influenced by turbulent, international trading conditions. After the signing of the Treaty of Nonsuch on 10 August 1585, Queen Elizabeth had sent English troops commanded by Sir Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, to the relief of the Dutch provinces. English garrisons held Brielle, Flushing and Rammekens as sureties for the Dutch repayments of these troops. Moreover, the Earl of Leicester became governor-general and supervisor of the collective war effort of the Dutch provinces in 1586, which enabled him to control the young Dutch admiralties and thus all flows of Dutch export trade.²⁶

Since 4 August 1586 the Earl of Leicester had banned all trade on Spanish territories, the French ports east of the Seine estuary and all German ports west of Bremen. Nevertheless, the Zeeland admiralty continued to permit the export to Spain of bronze and copper for the founding of bronze guns. After repeated English protests and complaints from the States-General, the Zeeland admiralty banned this arms trade in 1590. Yet, several merchants continued their now illicit exports, declaring false destinations such as La Rochelle, Bordeaux and Bayonne in their requests.²⁷ In addition, bronze, copper and gunpowder were transited over Bayonne via sea or land routes to Bayona, Laredo and San Lucar in Spain. Frequently Zeeland merchants participated in the transit of these war materials to Bilbao and San Sebastian.²⁸ False Dutch passports or foreign passports were also used to sail on to Spanish ports.²⁹ Another method was to hide the war materials under different, preferably heavy, cargo and

²⁵ Kernkamp 1931–1934.

²⁶ Israel 1995, pp. 219–228.

²⁷ NA AA 2447: Res.Adm. Zeeland 28.11.1586.

²⁸ Wernham 1969, pp. 224, 390.

²⁹ Wernham 1969, pp. 439–440.

to export it under a different name, which seriously hampered visitations at sea of Dutch or English admiralty ships.³⁰

In addition to these tricks, good trade contacts and provision of information were indispensable for arms exports to the Spanish market. Regular correspondence with consortia and trade agents in the Spanish ports informed the Zeeland and Dutch merchants of precise data. For example, Hans Vlack, a merchant from Goes, asked his son, being his agent in San Sebastian, to write regularly what types of weapons and ship equipment were most in demand and to specify their measures and weights in order to ensure quick delivery.³¹ Vlack also corresponded on arms and ammunition with Jan Verhagen and Jan van der Bogaarde in Bilbao, who supplied directly to the proveedor, the ammunition master of the Spanish navy! Apparently, such consortia accounted for a substantial part of the deliveries to the Spanish armed forces.³²

Weapons were exported to the Southern Netherlands too. However, offices of the Zeeland admiralty and state fortresses, the blockade fleet of the admiralties of the Flemish coast and Dunkirk privateers prevented access to Antwerp and Flanders. However, Abbeville, Boulogne, Calais and Dieppe in Northern France provided a good alternative in times of peace between France and Spain, from here good country roads led into the Southern Netherlands. No wonder merchants regularly applied for passports at the Zeeland Admiralty to export weapons to these specific ports.³³

However, the significance of the arms trade in the Southern Netherlands should not be overestimated due to the near location of the large arms industry of neutral Liège. The phenomenon observed by Israel that the trade in victuals on the enemy via Northern French ports increased or decreased respectively with increasing or decreasing license fees on the trade flows via the Meuse and Rhine, or closing and opening these rivers, probably did not apply for the arms trade to the Southern Netherlands.³⁴

At the start of the Twelve Years' Truce, the conditions for arms trade to Spain and the Southern Netherlands seemed more favourable. In 1610 and 1612 Amsterdam merchants promptly applied to the admiralty of Amsterdam for the export of salt-petre and sulphur to Spanish destinations. Yet, the States-General and the Amsterdam admiralty turned down similar requests for gunpowder export, after gathering intelligence that these were intended for a fleet in Havana and a naval squadron in Lisbon, because the hostilities with the Habsburg Empire continued overseas.³⁵

³⁰ Wernham 1969, p. 223.

³¹ Wernham 1969, p. 224.

³² Wernham 1969, p. 390.

³³ In the period between 1604 and 1621 no request for Dover in England were found. The arms trade via Dover to Flanders would after 1621, and interrupted through the English-Spanish War of 1625–1630, increase enormously. Kepler 1972, p. 279, 282; Taylor 1972, pp. 236–260.

³⁴ Israel 1980, pp. 462–463, 489–491.

³⁵ NA AA 1356, 1358: Res.Adm. Amsterdam 15.03.1610, 14.02.1612.

16.7 Exports to France

A major part of the arms exports opted for France. Only France regularly purchased large quantities of war materials for their army and navy in the Republic. The civil war between the Catholic League and the Protestant king Henry IV made France an attractive export market. The States-General regarded France, that is to say the Protestant camp of Henry IV, as their main ally and sent substantial subsidies to the royal French forces between 1593 and 1598. After the peace of Vervins between France and Spain (1598) and the Triple Alliance between England, France and the Republic, French subsidies between 1600 and 1609 played a major role in the payment of, in particular the French regiment of, the States army.³⁶

The French purchases on the Dutch market took place in a decentralized and centralized manner. French governors, captains and superiors purchased war materials themselves from French and Dutch merchants. The French ambassador supported all their requests for arms export from the States-General and the admiralties with letters of recommendation. Moreover, the French king ordered large amounts of arms centrally from the Dutch Republic. This resulted in a regular export of a wide range of raw materials and semi-finished and finished products, including thousands of pounds of gunpowder, sulphur, saltpetre, lead, bullets, iron and bronze cast guns, hundreds of pieces of armour, bladed weapons and firearms. Carlo Cipolla attributes their extensive French purchases on the Dutch market to the destructive impact of the Wars of Religion. He assumes that during the war experienced craftsmen fled France *en masse* leading to severe losses of production capacity of the French arms industry.³⁷ However, the import of gunpowder, saltpetre and sulphur to ports such as Dieppe, Caen, La Rochelle and Bordeaux indicates the existence of local powder mills. Although semi-finished products such as sword blades, blades of rapiers and armour plates were sometimes exported as well, mainly complete bladed weapons and firearms predominated in export to France between 1590 and 1621. This proves Cipolla's point: the French industry could still supply gunpowder to the French army and naval forces, but lacked producers of swords, arquebuses and muskets.

From 1588 a major part of the arms to France were exported via Zeeland waters to Caen, Grandville and Dieppe in Normandy, St. Malo and Rosco in Brittany, Calais and Boulogne in the North and Southwestern ports such as La Rochelle, Bordeaux and Bayonne. Consequently, this trade was mainly a Zeeland-French affair in which merchants from Middelburg, Vlissingen, Caen and Dieppe participated. As was common practice, the arms trade followed in the wake of other trades of existing merchant networks. The Rotterdam banker and merchant Johan van der Veecken remitted money to Paris and sent weapons for the Protestant troops to Dieppe during 1595–1598 through his brother-in-law Nicolaas Quingetti in Paris. Earlier, before 1595, he paid his brother-in-law the salary of the agent of the States-General in

³⁶ Vogel 1993, pp. 16–17.

³⁷ Cipolla 1996, pp. 66–67.

France by exchange. Likewise, Wouter Buys of Middelburg relied on his brother in La Rochelle for the arms sales to the royal French army.³⁸

The armed forces of the League formed an attractive sales market too for English, Dutch, Zeeland and Hanseatic merchants. After Leicester's political failure in 1588 and the foundation of the Dutch Republic, the English authorities remained keen to stop the illegal arms export to the League. In Zeeland, a network of spies informed the English governor of Flushing, Sir Philip Sidney, on this smuggling trade of mainly Zeeland ships to the League and Spanish territories. In turn he regularly informed the Lord High Admiral and the Lord Treasurer. The Lord High Admiral sent English warships in order to intercept these ships, and agents of the Zeeland traders in Dover, the States of Zeeland and the Dutch Republic often contacted the Lord Treasurer to represent the interests of Zeeland merchants whose war materials had been intercepted.³⁹ These correspondence channels show how the trade to the League was organized.

Thus, a considerable number of French destinations, mentioned in the merchants' requests for export to France at the Zeeland admiralty, can be seriously questioned. In 1589 three ships from Middelburg and Flushing unloaded supplies and ammunition in Le Havre, a League port opposite the royal port of Caen. A year later three ships of Cornelis Meunicxs of Middelburg unloaded their cargoes of ammunition, instead of Bordeaux, in the League ports of St. Malo and Nantes.⁴⁰ The timeslot in the clause of the passports provided for sufficient time, and attestations to be submitted with the request could be falsified. In practice, the Zeeland Admiralty tolerated arms smuggling and Meunicxs ship went unpunished after its return in Zeeland. The admiralty's ships even escorted seventeen ships, including ones of Zeeland, to Le Havre, instead of Caen.

After French and English complaints, the States-General banned these trade flows in several edicts. License fees were levied on the export to all French destinations, instead of the convoy fee for royalist destinations. And from 1591, arms merchants needed to supplement their requests with letters of recommendation. Nevertheless, the Zeeland admiralty did not care to enforce these measures. Joos Nevejans of Middelburg lacked a letter of recommendation, but was permitted to export 4,000 pounds of gunpowder, 200 arquebuses, 60 dozen gunpowder bottles to Caen. Consignments of weapons, bronze and copper were also granted without further ado for League ports in Brittany. Other examples show that also the States of Zeeland and the city council of Middelburg protected the interests of the Zeeland arms dealers.⁴¹ The regional interests prevailed, even where they clashed with those of the States-General, and this shows that the aspect of state formation was still incomplete.

The French king also had financial motives for his objections to arms exports to the League. In 1591 he tried to concentrate this arms trade in the royalist ports of

³⁸ NA AA 2447: Res.Adm. Zeeland 22.08.1588.

³⁹ Wernham 1969, pp. 125, 178, 224, 229, 289.

⁴⁰ Wernham 1969, pp. 125, 178, 224, 229, 289.

⁴¹ NA AA 2448: Res.Adm. Zeeland 21.01.1591, 23.03.1591. Wernham 1969, pp. 125, 223–224.

Caen and Dieppe in order to collect an impost, similar to the license fees, on all arms and victuals trade between his subjects and the League rebels. Its revenues were to finance his army. The French king asked England, Hamburg, Saxony and the Republic, and especially the magistrates of Vlissingen and Middelburg, to stop their exports to the League and help to organize a blockade of the two main enemy ports of Rouen and Le Havre. The measures of the States-General mentioned above fitted in this context, but admiralties abstained from enforcement.⁴² All this shows how inadequate the organization of the state and the scope of the central government still were in the midst of all kinds of conflicts of interest.

With the peace of Vervins between France and Spain and the breakup of the League in 1598, the arms trade to France had passed its provisional peak. However, France remained an important export market for Dutch war materials. After 1621, in particular after the start of the start of French war against the Spanish (1635–1659) and the Austrian Habsburg Empire (1635–1648), arms exports to France increased enormously.⁴³ This shows the volatility in the exports for arms merchants to an important ally. Only in 1621 after the restart of the subsidies from France and the support policy of the States-General from the state arsenals the French market offered sufficient guarantees to large arms dealers.

16.8 Entrepreneurs

In contrast to the domestic market of the State army, admiralties, and Dutch East India Company, no ubiquitous arms dealers were active in the Dutch arms exports. Several dozen merchants were engaged in arms exports, but each accounted for only a few percent of the annual exports. Via Zeeland dozens of merchants from Zeeland, Holland, France, Liège, the German areas and England exported semi-finished and finished products from industrial centres in the hinterland such as Dordrecht, Utrecht, Solingen and Liège. Exports via Amsterdam were dominated by dozens of merchants from that city.

Several merchants temporarily gained a prominent position in a niche export market. The volume of Dutch arms exports was volatile due to the peaks in demand that depended on country-specific war conditions, and of which those exports to Spain and France testify. Van der Kooy has pointed out the importance of regional specializations in the Amsterdam staple market.⁴⁴ Merchants with specialized knowledge and an extensive network within a specific region or state were able to respond well and supply the erratic regional demand thanks to their position within the regional economy. This offered them temporary advantages, because with the end of hostilities the demand for war materials stopped as well.

⁴² Wernham 1969, pp. 223, 229, 289.

⁴³ Vogel 1993, pp. 16–17; Beks 1993, pp. 36–41.

⁴⁴ Van der Kooy 1931.

Merchants as representatives or commercial agents of foreign authorities that maintained a highly branched interregional network were particularly well placed to operate on the volatile international arms market. Paul de Willem, Thomas l'Hermitage, and Jacob and Abraham Symonsz acted as agents of the kings of Denmark, England and the duke of Brunswick-Lunenburg respectively. They were the forerunners of the later more famous largescale arms dealers such as Louis de Geer for Sweden and Gabriel Marselis for Denmark and Muscovy. A sound network, experience and a specific orientation on certain regional sales markets played a crucial role. In a sense, in particular those suppliers to major states that became involved in the Thirty Years' War managed to rapidly expand their arms exports.

Entrepreneurs with major interests in the gunpowder industry may also be counted among the more prominent and wealthy arms dealers in exports. Gunpowder producers such as Abraham Verbeeck and Jacques Emmerix of Amsterdam between 1600 and 1608 exported tens of thousands of pounds of gunpowder, sulphur and matches to England, Venice, Muscovy and France. Jan Raij of Amsterdam controlled the sulphur trade to France during the Twelve Years' Truce. Caspar van Ceulen of Amsterdam supplied Venice with 600,000 pounds of gunpowder, 200,000 pounds of sulphur and 100,000 pounds of saltpetre, as mentioned earlier, and temporarily accounted for 61 % of the estimated turnover in the Amsterdam arms exports.⁴⁵ They all turned out to be merchants who maintained extensive networks in Europe, traded in other products as well to areas of their arms exports such as Italy and Moscow, and as a result, were well aware of the dynamic local market situation.

But these merchants also formed stars that only lit up temporarily in the sky. The supply of different war materials per region was concentrated at a limited number of suppliers, which meant that there was an oligopolistic market form. The decisive factor for those few suppliers' ability to participate was their specialized knowledge of highly differentiated foreign markets.

16.9 Conclusion

Arms exports from the Republic increased in the dynamic years of 1585–1621. Clear peaks occurred in those years when foreign demand rose steeply due to wars. Arms were mainly exported to Dutch allies: France, Venice, the German Protestant states and Sweden. From 1621 onwards, the States-General occasionally supported arms exports by supplying war materials from the state arsenals. By means of a system of passports, they tried to control arms exports, taking into account the national strategic interests and those of their allies. The States-General banned arms exports to the Spanish Habsburg Empire. In spite of all these measures, Dutch merchants managed to exports to enemy ports through the declaration of false destinations on passports, via transit ports in neutral territory, and via assistance of local consortia and agents within their networks. In these illegal arms exports, although probably relatively

⁴⁵ NA AA 1346–1354: Res.Adm. Amsterdam 01.01.1600–29.12.1608.

small in size compared to the permitted flows of export, the interests of local Dutch authorities, opposed to the interests of States-General, played a major role. The major part of the legal exports formed total packages of gunpowder, matches, firearms, bladed weapons, pikes, armour and helmets for army regiments and companies, and strategic raw materials such as sulphur and saltpetre.

During this period, a small group of entrepreneurs supplied the domestic market of the state and provincial arsenals, the admiralties and the Dutch East India Company and held dominant positions for years. This was not the case with arms exports. There were, however, traders who, on the basis of their specialization and network by region, temporarily had a significant share in the arms exports. Entry was therefore possible, but required specialist knowledge of the local economy. Some merchants gained a temporary strong position in exports to a niche market as a commercial agent or factor of a European state, usually an ally of the Dutch Republic. Traders with major interests in the gunpowder industry also temporarily held strong positions in the export of strategic raw materials to various European markets. But all this never led to a permanent situation, given the temporary length of European wars in these decades and the resulting volatile demand for war materials.

To conclude, the arms exports fell into the hands of a limited number of arms dealers, a group of varying composition. The structure of the export market as a whole was oligopolistic, but the composition of the group of oligopolists varied depending on the region and the prevailing market conditions in question.

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Michiel de Jong is assistant professor of Military History and Strategy at the Faculty of Military Sciences of the Netherlands Defence Academy. He holds a Ph.D. in history from Leiden University. His research interests include counter-terrorism in France, Italy, Spain and Latin-America, as well as economic, maritime and military history of the Netherlands and Europe in general. He is the author and co-author of several books, and has contributed articles to peer-reviewed journals and books.

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