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The Dutch Wars Of Independence: Warfare And Commerce In The Netherlands 1570-1680 (Modern Wars In Perspective)



Synopsis

In *The Dutch Wars of Independence*, Marjolein Houtart assesses the success of the Dutch in establishing their independence through their eighty years struggle with Spain - one of the most remarkable achievements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Other rebellions troubled mighty powers of this epoch, but none resulted in the establishment of an independent, republican state. This book: tells the story of the Eighty Years War and its aftermath, including the three Anglo-Dutch Wars and the Guerre de Hollande (1570-1680). explores the interrelation between war, economy and society, explaining how the Dutch could turn their wars into commercial successes. illustrates how war could trigger and sustain innovations in the field of economy and state formation ; the new ways of organization of Dutch military institutions favoured a high degree of commercialized warfare. shows how other state rulers tried to copy the Dutch way of commercialized warfare, in particular in taking up the protection for capital accumulation. As such, the book unravels one of the unknown pillars of European state formation (and of capitalism). The volume investigates thoroughly the economic profitability of warfare in the early modern period and shows how smaller, commercialized states could sustain prolonged war violence common to that period. It moves beyond traditional explanations of Dutch success in warfare focusing on geography, religion, diplomacy while presenting an up-to-date overview and interpretation of the Dutch Revolt, the Anglo-Dutch Wars and the Guerre de Hollande.

Book Information

Series: Modern Wars In Perspective

Hardcover: 248 pages

Publisher: Routledge; 1 edition (March 3, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0415734223

ISBN-13: 978-0415734226

Product Dimensions: 0.8 x 6.2 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.2 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #829,590 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #129 in [Books > History >](#)

[Europe > Netherlands](#) #2270 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Military](#) #4271

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Customer Reviews

"This work is a brilliant success at marrying the latest scholarship and wonderfully clear narrative and synthesis. 't Hart clearly answers one of history's mysteries: how did the northern Netherlands forge a nation out of disparate units; successfully battle the superpower of the 16th century, Spain; build the most successful commercial state in Europe; and experience a Golden Age, all while fighting an 80-year war? Indispensable for collections in early modern Europe, military, or state formation history. Summing Up: Essential." --J. J. Butt, James Madison University, in CHOICE

Marjolein 't Hart is head of the research department on the history of the Netherlands at the Huygens Institute (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences) in The Hague and Professor History of State Formation in Global Perspective at VU University Amsterdam. She has published extensively on the early modern history of the Netherlands (in comparative perspective), including books on warfare and state formation (1993) and financial history (1997).

The Dutch Wars of Independence: Warfare & Commerce in the Netherlands, 1570-1680, Marjolein 't Hart, Routledge (Modern Wars in Perspective), 2014, 232pp (+xiv) This book is an interesting and readable study of the Dutch Revolution in warfare and finance that underpinned the Dutch Wars of Independence. I have read books on military history since I was a schoolboy, and the older I got, the more I became interested in the how and why, rather than the what, and fortunately for me, so did many of my generation, leading to the large numbers of books that have appeared by writers of my age (and thereabouts) that look into those areas - as well as those providing a more rounded narrative of traditional military history rather than just repeating the purple prose of an earlier generation. Obviously my generation has provided both a market for these new studies, as well as the workers in the academic trenches to write them. Although I found this book both readable and interesting, I have read a lot about the subject and period, so I was able to pick it up and put it down and still follow what was going on without any trouble. I accept that someone coming in with little background knowledge might find it a bit harder. This is not a military history of the period as such. There is an introductory chapter setting the scene for the Dutch Revolt and the Military Revolution, and the first chapter is a narrative of the military events of the period covered by this book; the subsequent chapters look at particular aspects of the subject, though in a chronological order, so a narrative of sorts is maintained. However, this is more of a study of HOW the Dutch organised themselves as a state, or collection of states, and organised themselves to conduct a war (and build an empire when no-one was looking) than being just an account of how campaigns were

conducted and battles were fought. If you are interested in the military history of the Dutch Wars then this is actually an important book, because the "Dutch way of warfare" supplanted the quasi-medieval methods employed by other states, and allowed the Dutch to persevere in their wars with their neighbours and to overcome them, despite the wealth of the Indies flowing into their opponents' treasuries. It wasn't all plain sailing, and some of the states of the Netherlands prospered while others suffered, though the style of organisation that they evolved meant that the Dutch people who revolted when the Spanish government imposed a 10% sales tax on them, were prepared to pay far more than that in taxes to their own revolutionary government. The Dutch method of public finance that evolved meant that because taxation was open and visible to the population, it was seen to be (relatively) fair, and the government could raise money at low interest rates because there was public confidence that the interest payments would be met, and that as the general public was able to invest in the Government bonds that backed the public loans, the public would in effect be paying some of their taxes back to themselves. The test of the Dutch method of public finance came when the Dutch leader William III of Orange became King William III of England, and the Bank of England was founded on the Dutch model to finance Britain's wars from the end of the 17th century onwards. For a more military-oriented study of the period, see *The Dutch Army and the Military Revolutions, 1588-1688 (Warfare in History)*. However (and possibly ironically), the first chapter of that book is an in-depth study of exactly (and I mean exactly) how the method of payment of the companies of soldiers in the Dutch army was arranged. That chapter goes into long and excruciating detail (which Dr. Eet Hart's book doesn't venture into), and I really had to struggle with it - however, having read it, I then knew that I would never have to read it again, for I now knew that the Dutch army would be paid whatever happened, and that I would never have to consider the subject ever again. The rest of the book was then plain sailing and dealt with military stuff. Both books are recommended though, as they illustrate complementary aspects of the same subject. Start with the one that interests you more, and then explore the background of the subject in more depth in the other volume.

Recommended further reading:

- The Dutch Army and the Military Revolutions, 1588-1688 (Warfare in History)*
- Exercise of Arms: Warfare in the Dutch Revolt (1568-1648) (History of Warfare)*
- An Apprenticeship in Arms: The Origins of the British Army 1585-1702*
- The Complete Soldier: Military Books and Military Culture in Early Stuart England, 1603-1645 (History of Warfare)*
- The Military Revolution in Sixteenth-Century Europe*
- The First Part of the Principles of the Art Military Practiced in the Warres of the United Netherlands, Under the Command of His*

Hignesse the Prince
The Commentaries of Sr. Francis Vere Being Diverse Pieces of Service,
Wherein He Had Command / Written by Himself in Way of Commentary; Published by WStuart
Tracts, 1603-1693: An English Garner (Classic Reprint)
Pike and Shot Tactics 1590-1660 (Elite)

I rarely say such words, but DO NOT BUY THIS BOOK. Period. This is not a history research, but a jingoism under the mask of science. Published in a respectable series by a decent publisher, it is priced as though it were an academic study, but do not be deceived. The whole book is devoted to proclaiming how awesome the Dutch rebels were, so every chapter is full of ungrounded generalisations. The author did not do her own research but copy-pasted bits from here and there, sometimes even from third-hand books (like Tallet's or Hale's works on war and society) which makes her book a fourth-hand account. Such a collection could be justified by an original synthesis like McNeill or Tilly became famous for, but there is nothing original here. Even the main thesis (that the war was profitable for the Dutch) does not stand and gets modified (after all, single persons prospered while the country suffered). What even more hilarious is how she discards recent research that is not to her liking, like works of Tracy or Drelichman and Both, without any evidence. There is too much uncritical praise to the Dutch (like the claim that they had tolerance for every religion or nation) and too little comparison to experience of other states, which were not that much different. Parker's book on the Spanish Army of Flanders is an example how to do it the right way. Spanish cruelties of war get extensive coverage, while the Dutch are praised for discipline in scorched earth policy and in punishing the Southern Provinces for loyalty to the king. The author's understanding of warfare and strategy is very poor (especially of the impact of new fortifications; or she mistakenly says that only Dutch warfare was called then The School of War, while that name was given to the Eighty Years War in general and adventurers flocked to study in both Armies). But the best part is where she claims that the war was good for peasants because in the end survivors got larger land plots. Hard to argue with that kind of logic.

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