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Raymond Kubben, *Regeneration and Hegemony: Franco-Batavian Relations in the Revolutionary Era, 1795-1803*. Leiden and Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2011. vii + 787 pp. Bibliography and index. \$212.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-90-04-18558-6.

Review by Ian Germani, University of Regina.

Reading Raymond Kubben's book on the relations between revolutionary France and the Batavian Republic is a forbidding challenge. This is not just because of the book's length or subject matter, although without doubt reading a case study of more than seven hundred pages on the relationship between power and law in interstate relations is not a prospect that will set many hearts racing. The real challenge is coping with Kubben's English prose, which impedes rather than facilitates the comprehension of what is otherwise in many ways an impressive work of scholarship. It may seem churlish to begin a review with complaints about style, but in this case it seems appropriate.

Throughout the book, the author's use of language is an obstacle to the comprehension and appreciation of his ideas. The main problem is one of syntax. The phrasing of sentences and the ordering of words appear unnatural to a native speaker of English. The reader constantly has to resist the urge to reach for the red pen and to correct the phrasing: to change, for example, "By no means, this study is the first..." (p. 49) to "This study is by no means the first..."; or "states will conduct in similar ways" (p. 61) to "states will act in similar ways" or "states will conduct themselves in similar ways." There are particular stylistic quirks that appear with maddening frequency. The author likes to end sentences with "though" and to begin them with "Thereto." He is fond of saying "by consequence", when he means "consequently" or "as a consequence." Words are frequently used incorrectly: "endemic" (p. 45) instead of "intrinsic"; "bilateral" (p. 124) instead of "bicameral"; "satisfying" (p. 159) instead of "satisfactory." The consequence of this inappropriate use of words is to distort or obscure meaning. Did Kubben really mean to say that "the imperial dignity was imposed on Napoleon" (p. 8) or did he intend to say "the imperial dignity was assumed by Napoleon"?

An author writing a major study in a second language deserves some respect and sympathy. He might have been helped out, however, by the diligent efforts of a copy editor whose first language was English. Kubben's problems of style are compounded by some unfortunate choices. The names of political institutions are kept in the original language, whether French or Dutch--*Assemblée nationale* or *Staten Generaal*, for example--when translating them into English might have made for easier reading. French quotations are generally kept in the original. Dutch ones are translated, but the translations are sometimes questionable, as is apparent even to a non-speaker of Dutch. The abbé Sieyès (the accent is missing in all Kubben's references), referred to as "mijnheer de abt" in a Dutch text, is identified as "Mr. abbot" in the English translation (p. 212). Finally, referring to a "2do-list" (p. 481) might be appropriate in a text message, but surely not in a scholarly monograph!

The stylistic balance sheet is not entirely negative. The book is logically organized and there is a useful conclusion to each chapter which summarizes the main arguments. The final chapter is also preceded by an unusual prologue in which Kubben, imagining the reflections of Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck following the signing of the Treaty of Amiens, displays some of the creative talents of an historical

novelist, although even this passage is somewhat marred by the stylistic problems identified above. It is, for all that, an important passage, getting to the heart of the dilemma that is the central theme of the book: whether the Batavian Republic's dependence upon revolutionary France for its liberation from Orangist rule did not come at too high a price. Were the hegemonic aspirations of revolutionary France not themselves responsible for the frustration of Dutch hopes for national regeneration?

Looking beyond his struggles with language, therefore, it is apparent that Kubben tackles an important aspect of international relations during the revolutionary era. Specifically, he presents an analysis of the relations between revolutionary France and the Batavian Republic from 1795 to 1803. This is represented as a case study in the relationship between major and minor powers and of how great powers might fulfill their hegemonic aspirations while preserving the "legal assumption" of an international system comprised of equal and autonomous states (p. 4). Kubben explores this problem through the legal treaties and conventions negotiated between the French and Batavian republics following the French army's crossing of the frozen Rhine and its occupation of Holland in 1795. His argument is that, throughout the period down to the signing of the Treaty of Amiens in 1802, the independence and equality of the Batavian Republic were preserved, in legal form at least.

The preservation of this status was desirable from the French point of view both for reasons of ideology and for those of power politics. The independence of the sister republics was consistent with the revolutionary discourse of liberty, as Batavian patriots did not hesitate to point out to their French allies. It was also more likely to win the acquiescence of Prussia and Austria, great powers whose interests revolutionary France was not yet strong enough to disdain altogether. Most importantly, preserving the formal independence of the Batavian Republic was facilitated by the ability of French diplomats to get what they wanted by exploiting the factionalism of Batavian politics. Kubben's contribution to the theory of international relations is the argument that, in revolutionary times, states with hegemonic aspirations can exploit political loyalties that transcend state or national frontiers to fulfill those aspirations without overtly challenging a pluralistic international system in which all states are legally equal and autonomous.

This is not to say that Franco-Batavian relations did not deviate from this pluralistic model in significant ways. Kubben demonstrates that French diplomats found various reasons at times to shift those relations away from equality in the direction of hierarchy, with France inevitably on top. One justification, applied in particular during the period between the initial occupation and the signature of the Hague Treaty of 16 May 1795, was the notion of a transitional stage, before the Batavian Republic truly existed, during which French territorial demands could be asserted without concern for the principle of Batavian sovereignty. The war situation also served to justify French tutelage. The "lifeguard" principle frequently came to the fore. According to this, just as a swimming lifeguard must above all protect his own life to save that of a drowning person, so French security interests had of necessity to take precedence over Batavian freedom because of the latter's dependence upon French protection.

The heart of Kubben's work, following chapters which provide an introduction to the theory of international relations as well as a useful survey of the evolving foreign policy of French revolutionary governments, is an analysis of the negotiations which led to the signing of the treaty of alliance between the French and Batavian republics on 16 May 1795, as well as of the debates and disputes that ensued. Based on an exhaustive investigation of successive treaty drafts, subsequent conventions between the two states, as well as of the correspondence of diplomats and officials, this analysis focuses in turn upon political, financial, military and territorial issues. Kubben's mastery of his sources, both primary and secondary, is impressive. His interpretation of the 1795 treaty offers an important revision of Anglo-American, Dutch and even French historiography which has tended to see the treaty as a conqueror's peace and a humiliation for the Batavian Republic. Kubben shows that the treaty negotiations were

initiated by envoys from the Dutch States General and that a treaty of alliance was desired more ardently by the Batavians than by the French. Fears of a Prussian-supported Orangist restoration, which the French admittedly did nothing to dispel—they kept secret from the Batavians a peace clause in the Treaty of Basel signed between France and Prussia in 1795—persuaded the leaders of the Batavian Republic that their survival depended upon an alliance with France. Furthermore, despite their complaints about the behavior of French soldiers, so long as war continued the Batavians demanded a French military presence. Their chief complaint was not that there were too many French troops serving on Batavian soil, but that there were too few. For their part, the French were concerned to make sure the Batavians fulfilled their obligation to pay for 25,000 French troops, whether or not those troops actually served on Batavian soil.

This is not to say that the Batavians were so determined upon an alliance with France that they were prepared to accept any terms whatsoever. During the negotiations which preceded the signature of the Hague Treaty, the French made significant territorial claims, insisting that French security required the acquisition of Dutch Flanders, as well as the islands in the Scheldt estuary, including Walcheren, where the port of Flushing was situated. They denied that these claims were a violation of Batavian sovereignty on the grounds that the Batavian Republic had no legal existence prior to the treaty, which itself was to define the new state's territorial limits. The Batavians did not accept this interpretation of the treaty as constitutive and their envoys were fiercely determined not to cede any of the territory which had belonged historically to the seven United Provinces. Ultimately, they conceded Maastricht, Venlo and Dutch Flanders, as well as the sole right of France to maintain a garrison in Flushing, but beyond this they jealously asserted their claims to sovereignty, disputing the jurisdiction of French courts over prizes taken by privateers operating from Flushing, as well as of French customs agents. The provisions for the shared administration of Flushing seem to have worked about as well as the administration of the port of Danzig during the 1930s; even the right to mow the grass on the Flushing docklands was cause for dispute!

The Batavians were surprisingly assertive not only in their negotiations with France but also in their dealings with other powers. In part three of his book, Kubben looks at the role of the Batavian Republic in relation to the various peace negotiations, principally those at Udine, Lille, Rastatt and Amiens. Given its auxiliary role in the conflict between France and Austria, the Batavian Republic did not ask to participate in the bilateral negotiations between those states which concluded with the Peace of Campo Formio (1797). The Batavian Republic was a participant in its own right, however, in the war with Britain and claimed a place in the negotiations at Lille (1796) and Amiens (1802). On the first occasion, it was unsuccessful; however, in the course of the failed negotiations its interests were not in fact sacrificed. On the second, it was recognized as an equal participant in the negotiations, but was compelled by France and Britain to sacrifice its colonial interests in order to achieve a general peace. In between those occasions, the Republic sought to pursue its own interests through the services of an unofficial agent and then an official envoy at the Congress of Rastatt.

Although these efforts were ultimately fruitless, they are nonetheless fascinating for what they reveal about the Batavian Republic's war aims. One does not often think about the war aims of minor powers during this or perhaps during any period. Kubben demonstrates that the Batavians jumped at the first opportunity to achieve territorial compensation for their losses in the Hague Treaty. Specifically, they envisaged territorial aggrandizement to the south, attendant upon the partition of Austrian Flanders and, more hopefully, along the eastern frontier with Germany, chiefly at the expense of Prussia. These annexations were to be justified in terms of military and economic necessity, as well reflections of the Republic's "natural frontiers." Shifts in Batavian political leadership led to shifts in foreign policy aims. The radical faction briefly in power from 22 January 1798 to 10 June 1798 was more inclined than its rivals to throw in its lot with France. It therefore spent less time

worrying about how to make its eastern frontier independently secure and more time trying to add to its economic value as a French ally.

Kubben's analysis of Rastatt effectively supports his principal argument that there was a clear intermingling of international and domestic politics during this period. French strategy was in fact based upon this premise and called for continuous intervention in the domestic politics of the sister republics. Other historians have looked more closely at the political divisions that facilitated such intervention in the Batavian Republic.^[1] Kubben explicitly declines to consider the mechanics of this intervention, but he is ultimately convincing in his argument that covert manipulation of domestic politics allowed revolutionary France to pursue its aims without making an overt bid for hegemony at a time when it was not yet strong enough to do so. His contribution to our understanding of the dynamics of the international system during the revolutionary era is an important one. For that reason, it is unfortunate that it has not been presented in a more readable form.

NOTE

[1] Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands, 1780-1813* (New York: Knopf, 1977).

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