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Graeme Callister, *War, Public Opinion and Policy in Britain, France and the Netherlands, 1785-1815*. York, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. xiv + 348pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. €88.39 (hb). ISBN 978-3-319-49588-0; €88.39 (pb). 978-3-319-84193-9; €71.68 (eb). ISBN 978-3-319-49589-7.

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In 1806, Napoléon Bonaparte made the Netherlands a puppet kingdom of France and installed his brother Louis onto the throne. That year, as the novice monarch sought to learn a modicum of the language and history of the country he was meant to rule, a diplomat informed him that Holland had long been a “*pomme de discorde*” (p. 2) between France and England. How apt was this formulation? Were the Netherlands really the territorial equivalent of the golden apple of the Greek goddess Eris, so powerful in its capacity to provoke conflict that it caused the Trojan War? How did successive Dutch governments and peoples in the tumultuous period of 1785-1815 view themselves and how was this reflected in the country’s foreign policy? How did French and British diplomats view national identity at home and in the Netherlands? How much did public opinion influence approaches to Holland over time?

In *War, Public Opinion and Policy in Britain, France and the Netherlands, 1785-1815*, Graeme Callister takes on the challenging task of examining national identity, public opinion, and policy-making in these three national contexts as they connected in the nexus of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. Given the robust historiographies and contentious debates on each of these discrete subjects, attending to so many variables at once was a bold choice. Callister is well-aware of this complexity and brings to bear erudition and subtlety in navigating these contested topics. He also narrows the field of inquiry to some extent by focusing on foreign policy and “how the Dutch were perceived as a nation, a people and as a political entity, at both governmental and popular levels, in the three countries throughout the period” (p. 3). He does this with the aim of “draw[ing] wider conclusions about the relationship of international affairs to national opinions and identities at the end of the long eighteenth-century” (p. 3).

Part of Palgrave MacMillan’s “War, Culture and Society, 1750-1850” series edited by Rafe Blaufarb, Alan Forrest, and Karen Hagemann, Callister’s book is structured as follows. The introduction presents a conceptual framework in which the author revisits the disputed categories of the nation, the public sphere, and public opinion. While more seasoned historians may find this review section a bit rudimentary, it provides useful critical grounding for scholars less familiar with these topics. Most importantly for his analysis, Callister draws a distinction between two types of public opinion: latent and active. Latent public opinion indicates “the sum

of generally accepted social norms, stereotypes or preconceptions, including what might be called ‘common knowledge’” (p. 20). Active public opinion, on the other hand, constituted responses to specific events and circumstances amalgamated into a dominant narrative. This modality of public opinion “was much more the product of targeted debate and public discussion” of the Habermasian type, “relying less on stereotypes and received ideas than on individual interpretations” (p. 21). As the book unfolds, Callister shows that latent public opinion—especially dated notions of Dutch Golden Age glory, its maritime and mercantile prowess—most influenced foreign policy in both France and England, as opposed to ephemeral quarrels that flared up regarding current events of the day.

The second chapter completes the book’s foundational structure by offering an overview of Anglo-Franco-Dutch relations during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and a précis of Netherlands’ role in Europe from 1785 to 1815. Callister traces the changing political structures of the individually sovereign, federated states of the United Provinces whose collective head was the Stadholder, a position long held by successive princes of Orange. The chapter elucidates the varying influence of Britain and France in a dizzying era of change in the Netherlands: from the Anglo-Dutch Wars and the Glorious Revolution, the French-supported Patriot unrest of the 1780s, the restoration of the Stadholder and British alliance in 1787, the “Batavian Revolution” and re-establishment of French ties of 1795, through Bonaparte’s Kingdom of Holland of 1806 and direct French rule (1810-1813) to the return of the Prince of Orange in 1814 and the establishment of the British-allied Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1815. Scholars of France and its empire who are less familiar with the Dutch lens on the era will find this summarizing chapter quite helpful.

The subsequent chapters of the book delve into the three countries in more detail and are structured in three pairs, investigating the Netherlands, France, and Britain in turn. The first chapter in each pair treats public opinion and national identity as domestic phenomena for each country. For the chapters on France and England (five and seven respectively), Callister also discusses French and British impressions of the Netherlands. The second chapter of each national pair “analyse[s] the links between public opinion, identity and foreign policy for their respective countries, examining military and political decision-making across regimes and administrations, and tracing the direct and indirect influence of public opinion” pertaining to the Netherlands (p. 3). Chapters five and six on France rely on a number of expected works in the French historiography on the Revolution and national sentiment (though very little engagement with French military historiography) to which Callister adds his research on perspectives concerning the Dutch. He concludes that “the view of the Netherlands in French public opinion in the thirty years straddling 1800 was multifaceted, occasionally contradictory, but often highly stereotyped” (p. 165). Callister’s findings, which are based on solid archival work, ultimately lead him to agree with Simon Schama’s assertion that “French policy in general was ‘based on minimal understanding’ of the Dutch” (p. 179), which led Dumouriez to exaggerate and Napoleon to undervalue Holland’s place in the European balance of power. While the English maintained the same clichés regarding the Netherlands, their views differed due to the sense of natural Anglo-Dutch allegiance born of the Glorious Revolution and shared Protestant religious views. These assumptions drove a false confidence on the part of foreign secretary Lord Carmarthen, who served in the role from 1783 to 1791 and erroneously believed throughout his term that Britain would easily succeed in driving a wedge between the Netherlands and France. Overall, French historians with expertise in this epoch will have more to gain from the chapter pairs on the Netherlands and Britain and may find the chapters on France less satisfying. In the context of

this comparative study, Callister is pressed to field the level of granularity to which we are accustomed, nor does he engage with important interventions on *causes célèbres*, war, public opinion, diplomacy, and problematics of representative democracy by Sarah Maza, Tabetta Ewing, Lisa Jane Graham, Katlyn Carter, and others that would have brought greater nuance to his conceptual frameworks and analyses.[1]

What is the verdict of Callister's study of international affairs and their linkage to "national opinion and identity"? Foreign policy between the Netherlands, France, and Britain "was formed from a complex interaction of strategic necessities, political ideology, personal experience and the expectations created by the underlying themes of latent public opinion" (p. 292). This meant that if public opinion held any sway at all in foreign policymaking, which most often it did not, only hackneyed stereotypes seem to have been taken into consideration. Active public opinion in the vein of Voltaire's crusades against the *infâme* and other *causes célèbres* seldom held influence in the arena of foreign policy. Callister relays that this type of public opinion was always factional in character and was weaponized only when useful to legitimate particular decisions, largely in the sphere of domestic policy. The book's conclusion discusses its main findings and closes with Callister's remark that "the longevity and power of national stereotyping and latent perceptions perhaps should not be underestimated" (p. 303). This phrase is the best approximation of the book's claims. Callister's bibliography conveys an impressive knowledge of Dutch, French, and British historiographies and primary sources, yet the book does not advance overarching arguments for each chapter or for the monograph as a whole. Similarly, in terms of scholarly debates, Callister tends toward historiographical expository rather than position-taking. The ambitious comparative framework may be constricting in this regard, but at times, this leaves the reader searching to identify fresh takeaways from the book's analyses.

Did the Netherlands represent an explosive "*pomme de discorde*," a seemingly small entity with an outsized capacity to drive and deepen imperial conflict between France and Britain? Not really, although Voltaire's characterization of the Netherlands as merely a land of "*canaux, canards, canaille*" roguishly diminished its importance. Holland was indeed seen as a strategic ally and/or possession for France and Britain during the consecutive governments of 1785-1815. However, it was of course only a piece of a much larger puzzle of global war, trade, exploitation, and diplomacy. Placing foreign relations between the Netherlands, France, and England in this broader geopolitical context would have offered more original insights into the stakes of political and military calculations of the time.

Relatedly, historians may also have a serious reservation regarding the narrow, Eurocentric conceptualization of national identity, one that Callister does not problematize in relation to global imperial warfare and expansion. Indeed, there is hardly a mention of any geography outside of Europe, let alone Indigenous allies and enemies around the world, nor is there an engagement with normative visions of white, male, Christian Europeaness as they are solidified in relation to disenfranchised and subjugated groups such as women, Jews, or the enslaved. This is a serious omission when studying national identity constructs during this period of the first global wars, chattel slavery, the Haitian Revolution, and major debates about rights, privileges, and their limits in domestic and colonial contexts.[2] It is no longer tenable to examine national identity of imperial, enslaving powers—France, Britain, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, and others—from within a myopic European bubble. We can no longer simply ignore the minoritizing, exploitative, and genocidal politics of exclusion upon which national identity, citizenship, rights, and European capitalist regimes were constructed.

These issues notwithstanding, and thinking within the paradigm that Callister sets forth for his project, *War, Public Opinion and Policy in Britain, France and the Netherlands, 1785-1815* offers a valuable overview and insights into perceptions of the Dutch during this period. The book constitutes a strong foundation for further study and should be required reading for French historians interested in Franco-Dutch relations during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras.

NOTES

[1] See, for example, Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995); Tabetta Ewing, *Rumor, Diplomacy, and War in Enlightenment Paris* (Oxford, UK: Voltaire Foundation for Enlightenment Studies, 2014); Lisa Jane Graham, *If the King Only Knew: Seditious Speech in the Reign of Louis XV* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000); Katlyn Carter, "Publicity, Politics, and the Emergence of Representative Democracy," *Perspectives on Europe* Vol. 44/1 (Spring, 2014): pp. 66-70.

[2] Callister's analyses would have benefited immeasurably from an engagement with the rich, dynamic historiography on Dutch colonialism, slavery, anti-Blackness, and racism, including Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving, eds., *Dutch Racism*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2014); Diennek Hondius, *Blackness in Western Europe: Racial Patterns of Paternalism and Exclusion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014); Kwame Nimako and Glenn Willemsen, *The Dutch Atlantic: Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* (London: Pluto Press, 2011); J. C. H. Blom, R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, I. Schoffer, eds.; trans. Arnold Pomerans and Erica Pomerans, *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, 2nd ed. (Oxford; Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007); Alan F. Benjamin, *Jews of the Dutch Caribbean: Exploring Ethnic Identity on Curacao* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); Allison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World: The Evolution of Racial Imagery in a Modern Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Johannes Menne Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Nigel Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Other significant works have also been published in the same year or after Callister's book came out such as Diennek Hondius, Nancy Jouwe, Dineke Stam, Jennifer Tosch, *Dutch New York Histories: Connecting African, Native American and Slavery Heritage = Geschiedenissen van Nederlands New York: verbonden met Afrikaans, inheems Amerikaans en slavernij-erfgoed* (Volendam: LM Publishers, 2017); Dirk Van Waelder, "De Spaanse en Oostenrijkse Nederlanden in contact met de Ottomanen (17de en 18de eeuw): media, opinies en beeldvorming over de Ottomanen" (Ph.D. dissertation, KU Leuven, 2017)--title translated as "The portrayal of the Ottomans in the Spanish and Austrian Netherlands of the Habsburgs (seventeenth and eighteenth century): printed materials, opinions and imaging of the Ottomans"; and Felicia J. Fricke, *Slaafgemaakt: Rethinking Enslavement in the Dutch Caribbean* (Champaign, IL: Common Ground Research Networks, 2020).

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