History as diplomacy in early modern Europe.
Emanuel van Meteren’s Historia Belgica and international relations, 1596–1640

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The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were a golden age for history-writing in Europe. Propelled not only by the upheavals of religious war and state-building, but also by a burgeoning print industry, European historiography entered a phase in which the production of historical works reached extraordinary levels, in an unparalleled diversity, to reach an unprecedented number of readers in a variety of languages. Histories of contemporary conflicts and civil wars make up an important part of this production. Building on the fundamentals of humanist historiography, and propelled by an urgent sense of aiming to capture the overwhelming amount of circulating political and religious information in almost ‘instant histories’, historians throughout Europe busily compiled ever-expanding archives on ongoing and recent wars. In these decades, a generation of scholars such as Jacques-Auguste de Thou (1553–1617), William Camden (1551–1623), Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas (1559–1625) and Emanuel van Meteren (1535–1612) produced massive histories of the religious wars of their times, from their own regional and ideological perspectives, but with a shared source-centered, empirical approach.

1 On humanist history, e.g. Anthony Grafton, What Was History? The Art of History in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Ulrich Muhlack, Geschichtswissenschaft im Humanismus und in der Aufklärung: Die Vorgeschichte des Humanismus (München: Beck, 1991). On ‘instant history’: Philip Benedict, Graphic History: The Wars, Massacres and Troubles of Tortorel and Perrissin (Genève: Droz, 2007).

2 Paulina Kewes (ed.), The Uses of History in Early Modern England (San Marino: Huntington Library, 2006), esp. 31–67. On Camden: Patrick Collinson, ‘One of Us? William Camden and the Making of History: The Camden Society Centenary Lecture’, Transactions of the Royal Society (1998); on De Thou: Ingrid De Smet, Thuanus: The Making of Jacques Auguste de Thou (1553–1617) (Genève: Droz, 2006); on Herrera: Richard Kagan, Clo and the Crown: The Politics of History in Medieval and Early Modern Spain (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 150–200.

This article was made possible with the support of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research and the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Studies. I thank the guest editors, Jan Bloemendal, James Parente and Nigel Smith, as well as Lisa Kattenberg, Nina Lamal, Dirk van Miert and two anonymous reviewers for their comments on earlier drafts.

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The history of historiography has long had relatively little interest in these writings, which were considered to be stylistically and politically less interesting than later Tacitean histories such as the Earl of Clarendon’s history of the English Civil Wars or P. C. Hooft’s history of the Dutch Revolt. While scholars of Latinate, humanist history-writing such as Anthony Grafton have always recognized that their subject was an international one, the often vernacular contemporary histories of the European wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have mostly been analysed in neat national compartments conforming to the (civil) conflicts they describe. Partly this is so because the histories of the likes of Camden and Van Meteren did in fact turn out to be fundamental to the rise of national historical cultures, partly because historians of historiography have simply disregarded their international afterlives.

Yet historians of contemporary European conflicts, even if they wrote in the vernacular on a regional or national subject, in fact participated in an international historiographical culture that thrived on exchange. They often were cosmopolitans who inspired each other and were in regular contact. Patrick Collinson’s observation that the ‘insular detachment’ of English history ironically began with the internationalist William Camden, who wrote for a European audience, applies to many of Camden’s generation, especially also on the continent. Histories that laid the foundations of national historiographies, and which were predominantly read by national readers in later centuries, were avidly read by a wide range of European readers in the period in which they appeared, either in French or Latin, or in the numerous vernacular translations and adaptations that found their ways into seventeenth-century libraries. History may have vernacularized in this period, but translation guaranteed that it frequently did so in various vernaculars simultaneously. It is significant that the main exception to this rule, De Thou, had to stipulate in his testament that his work could not be translated.

This article seeks to develop a new approach to the vernacular histories of sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe by studying Emanuel van Meteren’s monumental *Historia Belgica*, the first history of the Dutch Revolt, in the international context in which it belongs. It aims to show how we might understand early modern history-writing as an aspect of diplomacy: a mode of writing and reporting that was deeply embedded in diplomatic culture and that aimed to shape, and was shaped by, the rapidly evolving international

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3 *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, for example, is organized according to national historiographies. José Rabasa et al. (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, Vol. 3: 1400–1800 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

4 This disregard was fed by an interest in identity and memory, which steered scholarly interest towards urban and national, rather than transnational, approaches. Cf. Raingard Esser, *The Politics of Memory: The Writing of Partition in the Seventeenth-Century Low Countries* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Stefan Berger, *Writing the Nation: National Historiographies and the Making of Nation States in 19th and 20th Century Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008); Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz, *Nationalizing the Past: Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010).

5 Collinson, ‘One of Us?’, 140.
relations in an age of religious war. History-writing, I argue, was one of the most prominent kinds of public diplomacy and should therefore be treated as an inherent part of the history of diplomacy.\(^6\)

In making this argument, this article draws on three developments in the study of early modern history-writing. Firstly, recent work by scholars such as Paulina Kewes and Dan Woolf has focused on ‘the uses of history’, initiating a more functionalist approach that has allowed the study of works outside the national canons, including those of foreign histories.\(^7\) While still interested mainly in English historical culture, these scholars have recognized that foreign histories and historians were prominently present in most vernacular cultures and deeply affected early modern historical and political thinking. Secondly, early modern history-writing and publishing has in recent decades come to be seen as part of a culture of political information. The thin line between political news and history, long recognized especially in the study of the English Civil Wars, has in recent years been analysed afresh, driven by the interest in news culture.\(^8\) Due to the recent attention to what Philip Benedict has termed ‘instant history’, seventeenth-century history-writing is now seen as a subset of political information, a stage in the news-cycle in which diplomatic newsletters, *avisi*, corantos, newsbooks and *Messrelationen* fed into each other, and history books were the archives in which all that information could be stored and weighed. The episodic character of the new printed news genres allowed authors and publishers to compile their histories slowly, in serial fashion, while making a profit on each of the various steps in the cycle in which they were active. As Shapiro has argued, this wealth of information, often competing, resulted in a new ‘culture of fact’, in which readers could verify the credibility of reports in the court of print.\(^9\) Finally, there has in recent years been some tentative interest in early modern history translation. Peter Burke, Hugh Dunthorne and Nina Lamal, the only scholars who have explicitly studied the translation and circulation of history books, have approached the subject, in Burke’s words, ‘as evidence of what readers in different

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\(^6\) Helmer Helmers, ‘Public Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe: Towards a New History of News’, *Media History*, 22 (2016), 401–20.

\(^7\) Kewes, *Uses of History*; Daniel Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500–1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). On official state historiography, e.g. Kagan, *Clio and the Crown* and Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, *History at the Court of Christian IV* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculaneum Press, 2002).

\(^8\) See e.g. Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641–1649* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 269-313; Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Noah Millstone, ‘Historians of the Present’, in Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation and the Invention of Politics in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 165–94. Bernard A. Vermaseren, ‘Van nieuwsbericht tot geschiedwerk’, *Het Boek*, 28 (1944–1946), 241–57.

\(^9\) Barbara Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England 1550–1750* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), esp. 34–62 and 86–104; on credibility: David Randall, *Credibility in Elizabethan and Early Stuart Military News* (London: Routledge, 2008).
countries found particularly interesting or alien in other cultures in the early modern period'.

Each of these developments has brought the history of historiography closer to the history of international relations. That this has seldom been made explicit is partly due to ideas about the book market. For Burke, Dunthorne and Lamal, whether histories were printed in other languages was ultimately driven by what readers wanted to read, and thus, by the market. In many cases, this is a legitimate assumption. Yet in stressing the predominance of the economics of the book trade, they disregard the ways in which history was supposed to do political work. Many works of history were top-down products, initiated by authorities or interest groups quite unrelated to the book trade. The international circulation of history, then, was the product of a complicated dynamic between ideological and market forces. Van Meteren’s *Historia Belgica*, which became the main history of a country that barely existed when Van Meteren began writing, and that was in the process of becoming a main European hub of news and print, eminently illustrates this.

The remainder of this article consists of three parts, each of which focuses on one aspect of Van Meteren’s history as an inherent part of the history of diplomacy and international relations. The first rebrands the historian Van Meteren as an information broker, who traded his intelligence in an international Protestant network. The second section deals with the international circulation and adaptation of the *Historia Belgica*, which was adapted in widely divergent ways to appeal to foreign readers. The final part addresses ways in which the diplomatic world responded to the work. Together, they show that Van Meteren’s *Historia Belgica* was a work of European significance, which emerged from a diplomatic culture and did much to shape the reputation of the new Dutch state.

1. **VAN METEREN AS A TRADER IN DIPLOMATIC INTELLIGENCE**

Few have suffered more from the national approach to early modern historians and their histories than Emanuel van Meteren, one of the most important and influential historians of the Dutch Revolt, and one of the few who lived through it himself. Born in Antwerp in 1535 into a Lutheran family, Van Meteren was in his thirties when the Revolt broke out. At forty, after a short spell in prison, he fled Antwerp with his cousin, the famous geographer Abraham Ortelius. He settled in London, where he started compiling information on the escalating conflicts in the Low Countries. The result of this labour,

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10 Hugh Dunthorne, ‘Histories and Their Readers’, in Dunthorne, *Britain and the Dutch Revolt, 1560–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 30–60; Nina Lamal, ‘“Translated and Often Printed in Most Languages of Europe”: Movement and Translations of Italian Histories on the Dutch Revolt’, in Sara Barker and Matthew McLean (eds.), *International Exchange in the Early Modern Book World* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 124–46; Peter Burke, ‘Translating Histories’, in Peter Burke and R. Po-Chi Hsia (eds.), *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 125–41, here 125.
which occupied him for the rest of his long life (he died at the age of 76 in 1612) was the monumental *Belgische ofte Nederlantsche historie van onsen tijden* (1599), later known as *Commentarien* or *Memorien*, but which will here be referred to with the Latin title *Historia Belgica*. This book was a hit. A particularly telling illustration of Van Meteren’s popularity, besides the numerous editions of the work, is the fact that the seventeenth-century Amsterdam bookseller Colijn called his shop ‘in Emanuel van Meteren’, implying that his sign depicted either the face or the book of the famous historian. This success is remarkable because the *Historia* was an extremely detailed and well-documented account, which grew over the years to comprise no fewer than 840 pages in folio. Despite its length and its plain ‘merchant’ style, as Van Meteren himself called it, his history has been used and praised by historians of the Dutch Revolt ever since. Van Meteren became enshrined in the pantheon of Dutch historians, a place he has not relinquished. The few studies on Van Meteren’s work have therefore situated him mainly in the national historiography of the northern Netherlands, where he was not born and never lived.

Van Meteren never wrote for a national audience, and his work reached a wide range of European readers. Indeed, it ranked amongst the international bestsellers in its genre. First published in German, *Historia Belgica* would remain available in five languages throughout the seventeenth century, of which German was by all standards the most prominent. The USTC lists some 111 editions published between 1596 and 1647. Of these, only 24 are in Dutch. German was not only the first language in which the book appeared, it was also the language in which the most editions were printed: no fewer than 74. There are also eleven editions in Latin and two in French. While these numbers are somewhat inflated due to doubles, they exclude several partial translations in English (discussed below), and do not reflect the many histories that drew directly upon Van Meteren’s account, such as the French-language *Guerres de Nassau* by the Dutchman Willem Baudartius, or indeed Jacques-Auguste de Thou, who, like Walter Raleigh, relied on Van Meteren for his favourable account of the Dutch Revolt, which De Thou of course situated in a wider narrative of the French religious wars.

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11 Petrus J. Blok and Philipp C. Molhuysen (eds.), *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, 10 vols. (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1911-1937), X, 192.

12 Wouter Verduyn, *Emanuel van Meteren* (‘s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1996); Leendert Brummel, *Twee ballingen ’s lands tijdens onze opstand tegen Spanje: Hugo Blotius (1534–1608), Emanuel van Meteren (1535–1612)* (‘s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), 81–172; Antoon E. M. Janssen, ‘A “trias historica” on the Revolt of the Netherlands: Emanuel van Meteren, Pieter Bor and Everhard van Reyd as Exponents of Contemporary Historiography’, in Alastair C. Duke and Coenraad A. Tamse (eds.), *Clio’s Mirror: Historiography in Britain and the Netherlands* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1985), 9–30. Van Meteren is surveyed in a national framework in Eelco Haitsma Mulier and Anton van der Lem, *Repertorium van geschiedschrijvers in Nederland 1500–1800* (Den Haag: Nederlands Historisch Genootschap, 1990). Only recently has Jasper van der Steen discussed Van Meteren as part of a ‘memory war’ between northern and the southern Netherlandish historians. See Jasper van der Steen, *Memory Wars in the Low Countries*, 1566–1700 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 57–61.

13 De Thou mentioned Van Meteren as his main source for his account of the Dutch Revolt in books 59, 60, 64, 65, 66, and 68 of *Historiae sui temporis*. 
Van Meteren was a truly transnational figure. Living in London for most of his life, he thrived in the international Protestant community that was welcomed under Edward VI. Educated by Immanuel Tremellius, the exiled Protestant from Strasbourg who became Regius professor of Hebrew in Cambridge, and patronized by Giovanni Battista Bartolotti, the Bologna Protestant who acted as his godfather after the tragic death of his parents at sea in 1550, Van Meteren developed a highly international correspondence network that included scholars, merchants and statesmen and was heavily skewed towards the Protestant diaspora. Unfortunately, much of his archive has been lost, but from what remains, and his magnificent *Album amicorum*, we can see the outlines of a great network. William of Orange’s right-hand man, Marnix van St Aldegonde; Christiaan Huygens the elder, secretary of the Dutch Council of State and former secretary to William of Orange; and the merchant and diplomat Daniel van der Meulen were among his correspondents in the Low Countries. In London, his acquaintances numbered amongst many others the English secretary of State, William Cecil, the diplomat Daniel Rogers (his cousin), the author and intelligencer Richard Hakluyt and Sir Walter Raleigh.

This network provided the information Van Meteren needed for his history. When questioned by the States General during the controversy that accompanied the publication of the 1599 Dutch edition of *Historia Belgica*, he was forced to provide the States with a list of his informers in the Dutch Republic. While naturally hesitant to disclose his sources, Van Meteren did eventually produce a list, although it was probably pruned to protect certain friends. The people he mentioned included members of the High Council: Jacob Valcke (diplomat and treasurer of Zeeland); a counselor of William Louis, stadholder of Friesland, and a member of the household of Thomas Cecil, the governor of Brielle and later Lord Burghley. He did not mention his contacts in England nor Christiaan Huygens, who may well have been his most important informer. It was to the latter he asked in 1605 ‘to send me some material [‘stoffe’] that the world [emphasis added] may need to know about, even if it were at my expense, such as acts, contracts, discourses and stories, which you deem to be obsolete, and which your office allows [you to share]’. He added that he specifically lacked information on Flanders and negotiations with France: ‘Everything that occurred between England and our lands I have already worked through [‘doormoddelt’] here [in London], thanks to [English]
friends’. These friends had provided him with ‘amazing’ information ‘no one in our lands has ever seen’. 18

Van Meteren’s central position in a network dealing in political information was just as essential for his work as a consul for the Flemish/Dutch merchant community in London as it was for his history. The strong connection between Van Meteren’s consular activities and his history-writing has never been recognized. Historians have traditionally emphasized that Van Meteren was an historian foremost, who neglected his trade because of his historical interests and also happened to be consul. 19 In fact, however, Van Meteren’s consular work seems to have been foundational for his historical work rather than the other way around. As Maurits Ebben and others have emphasized, the boundaries between early modern consular networks and regular diplomacy were fluid. Consuls were expected to provide information to the resident ambassador and the government, and in that sense, their work was similar to that of other diplomats, although they generally lacked the access of the accredited ambassador. 20 In the case of the fledgling Dutch Republic, which in the 1580s did not yet have an established network of diplomatic representatives, their tasks could at times include diplomatic work. The earliest Dutch diplomatic agents in London, Joachim Ortel (1581–90) and Noel de Caron (1591–1624) closely cooperated with Van Meteren. 21 Especially in Ortel’s case, this fact is important, because Ortel was also Van Meteren’s distant cousin and brother-in-law.

Ortel was appointed as the London agent for the provinces of Holland and Zeeland in October 1581. 22 He had been a high army official in the Prince of Orange’s army before he settled in London, and it may have been Ortel who introduced Van Meteren to Marnix in 1583. His commission tied Van Meteren even more strongly to Anglo-Dutch diplomatic networks, and greatly improved his access to diplomatic intelligence. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that Van Meteren started his historical work in 1583, the very same year in which he became consul, and shortly after his brother-in-law’s arrival in London in June 1582. Contrary to the arguments of twentieth-century Dutch historians, Van Meteren’s correspondence network, his consular activities, his history-writing and presumably also his trade interests were deeply interrelated.

When Van Meteren, in a letter to Daniel van der Meulen, described himself as a ‘compiler of occurrences’ (‘vergaderer van occurrentieën’) we should

18 Ibid., 185.
19 See e.g. Brummel, *Twee ballingen*, 121; Janssen, ‘A “trias historica”’, 21; Verdun, 66–8. Ruytinck started the myth when he wrote that Van Meteren ‘even neglected his trade’ in order to write his history (Ruytinck, ‘Leven en sterven’, ss1v).
20 Maurits Ebben, ‘Uwer hoog moogenden onderdaenstien dienaers: Nederlandse consuls en Staatse diplomatie in Spanje, 1648–1661’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 127 (2014), 649–72, esp. 650.
21 Van Meteren to Huygens, 21/31 August 1605, printed in Brummel, *Twee ballingen*, 184.
22 Resolutiën Staten van Holland (13 October 1581), *Register 1580–1582*, 892. On the same day, Dirck Clementsz Coornhert was sent to the Hansa.
realize that this was not a harmless hobby, but the serious occupation of a trader in intelligence. Spying was somewhat of a family business for Van Meteren. Hakluyt complained that Van Meteren’s cousin Ortelius came to London in 1577 for no other purpose than ‘to pry and look into the secrets of Frobisher’s voyage’, and with Ortel, also a distant relation of Ortelius, Van Meteren seems to have formed a diplomatic tandem, a major part of whose trade consisted of the very political information he required for his history. In this aspect at least, Van Meteren was much more similar to later intelligencers such as Lieuwe van Aitzema (for whom history was also a by-product of trading in political information) than to the humanist Hooft, with whom he is frequently compared.

While the sources on his activities are scarce and scattered, it is clear that in his capacity as consul, Van Meteren regularly provided the States and particular functionaries with information that was used for trade purposes or in diplomatic negotiations. Thus on the request of the States of Zeeland, Van Meteren acquired Hakluyt’s intelligence on the northern passage to the East. He paid Hakluyt a handsome sum of 20 marks, for which he claimed expenses of 25 pounds to the States of Zeeland. Much later, we find other indications of Van Meteren’s business in political and economic information. On 12 May 1611, the States awarded 300 guilders to Van Meteren for the services he had offered to the Dutch embassy, and especially for the good intelligence he had provided. Like all diplomats, Van Meteren ran a political news service that may have been part of this trade. News made up the most part of his correspondence, and he provided it in a standardized manner typical of diplomatic newsletters. One particularly interesting letter from February 1601 survives in the correspondence of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt in which the main news item was the recent collapse of the Essex rebellion and the treatment of the ‘conspirateurs’. The seventeenth-century editions of the Historia reported on the Essex rebellion extensively, maintaining some of the phrases in this letter, which is again an indication of the overlap between Van Meteren’s history-writing and his diplomatic work: the latter fed the first. In a letter to Christiaan Huygens Van Meteren asserted that the States General’s official

23 Van Meteren to Van der Meulen, 9 March 1592. Cited in: Z. W. Sneller, ‘Brieven van Emanuel van Meteren en van Pieter Bor’, Bijdragen en mededelingen van het Historisch Genootschap, 56 (1935), 266.
24 Cited in Mary Fuller, ‘Richard Hakluyt’s Foreign Relations’, in Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst (eds.), Travel Writing, Form, and Empire: The Poetics and Politics of Mobility (London: Routledge, 2008), 45.
25 For Aitzema, see: Gees N. van der Plaat, Eendracht als opdracht : Lieuwe van Aitzema’s bijdrage aan het publieke debat in de zeventiende-eeuwse Republiek (Hilversum: Verloren, 2003). For comparisons with Hooft, e.g. Janssen, ‘A “Trias historica”’.
26 S. P. L’Honoré Naber, Reizen van Willem Barents, Jacob van Heemskerck, Jan Cornelisz. Rijp en anderen, Vol. 2 (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1917), 201–10.
27 Dodt van Flensburg, Archief voor herelijken en wereldsche geschiedenis V (Utrecht: Van der Monde, 1839), 241.
28 Van Meteren to Oldenbarnevelt, 16/26 February 1601. National Archive The Hague 3.01.14, inv. 2006.
29 Van Meteren, Historie (1614), fol. 463v–465v.
agent in London, Noel de Caron, envied him for his intelligence. Van Meteren appeared eager to write more often to Huygens, and it seems as if, in competition with Caron, he was trying to whet Huygens’ appetite for his news in exchange for information from Huygens. In addition to his Dutch contacts, Van Meteren also supplied information to other diplomatic agents such as Philibert du Bois, who was in the service of several German princes.

The information Van Meteren possessed was both socially and economically valuable. His diplomatic and historical work was, as Sjoerd Levelt put it, ‘a lucrative business enterprise’. There was a lively trade in information in London in the late sixteenth century, and there are strong indications that Van Meteren was a key player. While his archive is lost, we know that he possessed many diplomatic documents, both Dutch and foreign. He had access to the correspondence of another historian-diplomat, William of Orange’s secretary Jacob van Wesembeke, which was sold at some point to Sir Thomas Bodley (this is why it is currently held in the Bodleian library). They were purchased by Bodley as part of a wider collection of documents on the Low Countries many of which are cited verbatim in Van Meteren’s history, suggesting that they all passed through his hands. Another batch of documents made it into the hands of Robert Cotton, and are currently in the British Library. While historians have long thought that Van Meteren’s papers were sold after his death, his surviving letters to Cotton clearly show that he was actively marketing them himself. Far from being the history enthusiast Dutch historians have portrayed him to be, Van Meteren was a full participant on the intelligence market, and his intelligence service allowed him to compile the information for his history as a part of his main job.

Van Meteren was no De Thou, whose legendary library filled a city palace, but in the course of his career, he must have acquired a formidable number of documents containing political and foremost diplomatic intelligence. In the short obituary that was added to many seventeenth-century editions of the Historia Belgica, Van Meteren’s friend Simeon Ruytinck noted that Van Meteren ‘frequently received elaborate instructions from the hands of the ambassadors of foreign princes [in London]’. Sometimes, Ruytinck asserts, the foreign ambassadors invited him, but Van Meteren also called on them uninvited,

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30 Van Meteren to Huygens, 21/31 August 1605, printed in Brummel, Twee ballingen, 181–5.
31 Du Bois’ newsletters from Van Meteren: Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt (LASA), Z70, A9a, nr. 239, I and II.i.
32 Sjoerd Levelt, Jan van Naaldwijk’s Chronicles of Holland: Continuity and Transformation in the Historical Tradition of Holland during the Early Sixteenth Century (Hilversum: Verloren, 2011), 15–16.
33 Stephen Alford, The Watchers: A Secret History of the Reign of Elizabeth I (London: Penguin, 2012).
34 Bodleian Library, MS St Amand 4. Fruin, ‘Prins Willem I in het jaar 1570’, De Gids, 61 (1897), 3–5.
35 Bodleian Library MSS St Amand 3, 4, and 5, which contain among other sources cited in Historia Belgica: St Amand 4.5 ‘A Letter of Complaint from the States to the Earl of Leicester’ (in Van Meteren, Memoriën der Belgische ofte Nederlandsche historie, van onzen tijden (Delft: Jacob Vennecool, 1599), fol. 258D–260A); Amand 4.6 ‘A Declaration of the States to Bockhurst’ (in Memoriën, 1599, fol. 260C–261D); St Amand 4.11, ‘A letter of Leicester to the States’ (in Memoriën, 1599, fol. 275b).
'and they never refused him, which was remarkable'. On closer inspection, the ambassadors’ interest in Van Meteren may not have been as remarkable as Ruytinck asserted. As a trader in information, Van Meteren could be a valuable ally either to obtain or broadcast it. When they provided him with their instructions, they ensured that Van Meteren would represent their state in a controlled, and presumably favourable manner, either by passing them on to his correspondents, or by publishing them in his history. Managing information properly, knowing which items to publish, which to share, which to sell, and which to keep, was key to the successful balancing of his overlapping roles as diplomatic agent, spy, news agent, merchant and historian.

2. HISTORIA BELGICA’S INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATION HISTORY

Besides Van Meteren’s activity in diplomatic information networks, the publication history of *Historia Belgica* itself offers compelling reason to analyse the work from a transnational perspective. This history is terribly complex. So numerous were the editions in various languages that it has proved difficult to catalogue them all, and unknown copies emerge with some regularity. One thing is certain though: from the very first moment publication was considered, the history was intended for an international audience. Van Meteren initially wanted to publish his work in Latin, for the purpose of which he developed a contact with the Leiden professor and university printer Franciscus Raphelengius. In 1584 Marnix van St Aldegonde wrote to Van Meteren that he had heard someone was working on a Latin translation. A Latin manuscript did in fact circulate, but a publication in print did not appear at that moment. Van Meteren consequently attempted to have his work published in French, but this, too, failed.

Helped by Ortelius, Van Meteren entered into a contract with Frans Hogenberg, the Dutch *emigré* publisher and engraver in Cologne. By 1590, his Dutch manuscript had been translated into German. It took until 1593, however, before the German translation was finally published in Hamburg with Hogenberg’s engravings. The first Latin edition followed in 1598. Only afterwards, in 1599, was Van Meteren’s original Dutch version published in Delft, closely followed by the second abridged English translation by Thomas Churchyard. An official French version, translated by Jean de

36 Ruytinck, ‘Leven ende Sterven’, fol. Ssssv.
37 Verduyn, *Emanuel van Meteren*, 153.
38 Verduyn, *Emanuel van Meteren*, 150.
39 *Historia, und Aectreffung, fürnemlich der Niderlendischer geschichten* (Ursel: Heinrich, 1593). On Hamburg as the actual place of publication, see Brummel, *Twee ballingen*, 84.
40 *Historia Belgica nostri potissimum temporis* (1598). Translator and place of publication unknown.
41 Thomas Churchyard and Richard Robinson (tr.), *A true discourse historical* (London: Lownes, 1602). On Churchyard, see Matthew Woodcock, *Thomas Churchyard: Pen, Sword, and Ego* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 259–60 on Churchyard’s translation of Van Meteren.
la Haye, appeared relatively late in 1618 when Van Meteren had already died.\footnote{Res. St. Gen. II, iii, 390; Jean de la Haye (tr.), Histoire des Pays-Bas d'Emanuel de Meteren (’s-Gravenhage: Van der Wouw, 1618)}

Because of the complex international publication history, no exhaustive comparative analysis has hitherto been made of Historia Belgica’s evolving content as it traversed political and linguistic boundaries. Brummel has compared various Dutch editions (focused on Van Meteren’s main text, not additions after his death), showing the significant emendations that were made both by Van Meteren himself and by his publishers.\footnote{Brummel, Twee ballingen, 149–71.} Brummel has also pointed out some of the differences between the earliest German and Latin editions and the first Dutch edition.\footnote{Brummel, Twee ballingen, 82–92.} In the present context, it is the book’s international evolution that is of interest, because this would have influenced how foreign audiences would interpret the Dutch Revolt.

Adaptations of the Historia Belgica were made early on. The 1598 Latin edition added material to the German edition based on Van Meteren’s text. Van Meteren himself was shocked by the ‘falsehoods’ and ‘additions of Papist authors in Latin meant to kill my name’.\footnote{Van Meteren to Paludanus, 11 September 1599. Cited in Brummel, Twee ballingen, 92.} Remarkably, the additions that are most easily established do not seem to be ostensibly ‘Papist’ at all. For example, the Latin edition added a passage on a plot against Maurice, additional letters and ordinances by the late Spanish governor Archduke Ernest of Austria, and nineteen pages to update the 1596 German edition.\footnote{Historia Belgica (1598), 575–6, 585–6, 604–23.} Unfortunately, Van Meteren does not specify which passages he considered so harmful, but they did motivate his decision to publish the authorized Dutch version of Historia Belgica under his own name in 1599. The various seventeenth-century translations that built on this edition tended to be Protestantized rather than Catholicized. I want to highlight three widely diverging routes along which Van Meteren’s work now developed.

Firstly, in the Netherlands, the book was soon appropriated by the Dutch state. After a lengthy censorship procedure, the States approved the publication of the emended version. After Van Meteren’s death, his further expansions were also censored by the state before the book was printed in Dutch by the States’ printer, Hillebrandt Jacobsz van der Wouw, in 1614. The States now fully embraced the book, ordering Van der Wouw to deliver sixteen copies of the augmented history: fourteen for the delegates present that day, one for the States’ secretary, and one to permanently display on the high altar of state, ‘the table in their High and Mightinesses’ assembly’.\footnote{Dodt van Flensburg, Archief, VI, 360.} By the end of 1614, then, Historia Belgica had been elevated to the official state history of the Dutch Revolt. This was all the more remarkable, because at this time, Hugo
Grotius, the state historian, had already finished his *Annales*, which were not printed until 1658.\(^{48}\) Subsidized by the state, Van der Wouw was now commissioned to make a French translation of the work based on the approved 1614 edition, for which purpose he hired the services of the exiled Huguenot Jean de la Haye. This expensive official version was aimed at a European rather than a French audience, and does not seem to have been a great success: It was reprinted only once, and would remain the only available French text besides Baudartius’ *Guerrres de Nassau* (1616), a Reformed, Orangist adaptation of Van Meteren.

In later Dutch versions, *Historia Belgica* was gradually nationalized. The book lost its rather neutral tone and international scope, ever more strongly expressing the official Protestant story of the Dutch state which Van Meteren himself had resisted. This is especially clear in the adaptation by another state historian, Willem Baudartius, which appeared in 1618.\(^{49}\) Baudartius not only introduced changes desired by the Reformed church, but argued that Van Meteren’s account was too long, ‘partly because he is a bit too long-winded, partly because he tends to recount what happened in other kingdoms and countries in Christendom’.\(^{50}\) By removing passages critical of the Calvinists, and a great many of Van Meteren’s sections on diplomacy and parallel developments in England, France and the Holy Roman Empire, Baudartius lifted the Dutch Revolt out of its European context. Whereas the Revolt had been an epiphenomenon of a universal pattern for Van Meteren, it was a regional event for Baudartius.

In England, by contrast, Van Meteren was translated on the initiative of Englishmen devoted to the Dutch cause, whose interest tended to be focused on the English material in *Historia Belgica*. The first was Richard Hakluyt, who, remarkably, translated Van Meteren’s account of the 1588 Armada into English to be included in his *Principall Navigations* of 1598.\(^{51}\) Hakluyt possibly used the 1598 Latin edition, but since he was a friend of Van Meteren’s, it is more likely that he used a manuscript provided by Van Meteren himself. Since Walter Raleigh, also a friend, similarly relied on Van Meteren for the general background of the Armada in his *History of the World* (1617), Van Meteren’s sources must have been extraordinarily accurate for this pivotal episode in the Anglo-Dutch battle against Spain.

The other English translators also had a close personal involvement with the Anglo-Dutch alliance. Thomas Churchyard, a former agent of William of Orange, claimed to have been an ‘eye witnes’ of most actions described in the translation. Churchyard, whose translation appeared in 1602, explicitly wanted to extol the ‘exploys done by mightie Governours and valiant

\(^{48}\) Jan Waszink, ‘Tacitisme in Holland: de *Annales et Historiae de rebus Belgicis* van Hugo de Groot’, *De zeventiende eeuw*, 20 (2004), 262.

\(^{49}\) Willem Baudartius, *Emanvelis van Meteren Historie* (Amsterdam: Cloppenburgh, 1618).

\(^{50}\) Baudartius, *Emanvelis van Meteren Historie*, *2v*.

\(^{51}\) Mary Fuller, ‘Richard Hakluyt’s Foreign Relations’, 45.
Souldiers’. To contribute to their ‘everlasting fame’, he did little more than excerpt all the passages about English actions in the Dutch wars. Edward Grimston, himself a former soldier in the States Army, initially translated a French-language history of the Dutch Revolt written by another fascinating figure, François le Petit, but had been criticized for the lack of attention in this history to the exploits of the English. Grimston used Van Meteren to remedy the problem. Exactly because of England’s deep involvement in the Dutch Revolt, English translations foregrounded the importance of the Anglo-Dutch alliance and the English military intervention, which must have appealed to the many Englishmen still serving in the States’ army. For the early translators this was surely meant to foster Anglo-Dutch identities, but that was not necessarily the effect. When Hugo Grotius’ *Annales* were translated during the second Anglo-Dutch War, the translator commented that the history showed that the Dutch had grown insolent, because they owed their independence to the blood shed by English soldiers.

The book’s evolution in Germany was completely different. German editions tended to expand rather than contract. The 1640 German edition published by Johannes Jansonius in Amsterdam as *Meteranus Novus, das ist: Warhafftige Beschreibung deß Niederländischen Krieges* is a case in point. This expensive four-volume folio edition featured Van Meteren’s original thirty-two books covering the history of the Dutch Revolt until 1612, which it extended to 1638, including numerous engravings of the main contestants in Europe’s wars. German readers were presented the Revolt and the Dutch war against Spain in its international contexts, with ample attention for occurrences ‘in dem gantzen Römischen Reich und anderen Königreichen (...) zugetragen’ (‘that happened in the entire Roman Empire and other kingdoms’). Whereas Baudartius had tried to limit Van Meteren’s international scope, the German continuation provided in *Meteranus Novus* added significant sections on occurrences within the Holy Roman Empire, effectively fusing the Dutch conflict with Spain with the history of the Thirty Years War. Through such acts of translation, Van Meteren became part of various vernacular Protestant historiographies in Europe.

### 3. *HISTORIA BELGICA’S* IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Van Meteren’s history was published, and read, throughout Europe, but does that mean the work actually functioned in international relations? Van Meteren himself surely intended his book to have an international impact. Whether or not he was a former Familist like his uncle Ortelius (the issue has...
been debated), \(^{55}\) he did have irenic views, and like De Thou and Grotius, he claimed to promote peace by offering a moderate, non-partisan account of the war in the Low Countries. While this assertion was a commonplace, Van Meteren took it further than most. He attacked extremists on both sides, and in his 1599 preface to the 1599 edition of the *Historia Belgica* he even stated that he would have preferred to have published his history after ‘a general conference of authors about these wars and upheavals of both parties’.\(^{56}\) This conference, of course, never materialized, but it was for an exchange of ideas and mutual understanding that he wanted an international audience for his book. Van Meteren’s stated intentions, however lofty, did not conceal his firmly Protestant credentials, and his aim to be non-partisan was recognized by few. The 1599 version of *Historia Belgica* was little liked by orthodox Calvinists and Catholics in the Dutch Republic alike, and came to circulate in Europe as a pronouncedly Protestant book. It was as such that the book was received abroad.

Translators’ dedications, which steered the history’s interpretation and impact among foreign readers, clearly showed that they saw it as a Protestant history. In England, translators of histories of the Dutch Revolt almost always sought the patronage of noblemen who were known to be well-disposed to the Dutch cause: the Sidneys, the Dudleys, the Seymours. The Van Meteren translations fully conform to this pattern. It is significant, for instance, that Churchyard’s translation was dedicated to Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford (1539–1621), who was at the centre of a group of pro-Dutch, Protestant nobles that also patronized Van Meteren’s friend, the exiled Flemish artist Lucas d’Heere. Such dedications indicate distinct efforts to express and bolster international Protestant identity. Occasionally, there is also a topical subtext to the dedication. This is the case with the dedication of the 1610 Latin edition of Van Meteren, of which only one copy survives, addressed to Joachim Ernst of Brandenburg-Ansbach and Wolfgang Wilhelm of the Palatinate, the rival possessors in the Jülich succession conflict raging at that very moment.\(^{57}\) The Jülich clash was at that point a proxy war for the Dutch Revolt because Jülich was considered to be strategically vital to the survival of the Dutch Republic. It is as if the anonymous publisher wanted to remind both contenders of that fact by giving them a copy of Van Meteren’s book.

Yet intentions bring us only so far. It is notoriously difficult to trace the impact of a book on public opinion, and this is certainly the case when we are dealing with international opinion, and a book that was continuously being

\(^{55}\) Van Meteren’s membership in the Family of Love was propounded in Jan van Dorsten, *The Radical Arts: First Decade of an Elizabethan Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 32–7 and challenged convincingly in Ole Peter Grell, *Calvinist Exiles in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge, 1996), 110–3.

\(^{56}\) Van Meteren, *Memorien* (1599), *3r.

\(^{57}\) ‘Een onbekende Latijnse editie van het werk van Emanuel van Meteren’, in Erik Geleijns, Linde Hurkmans et al. (eds.), *Janboel: Opstellen aangeboden aan Jan Bos bij de afronding van het Masterplan Short-Title Catalogue* (Den Haag: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 2009).
abbreviated, augmented and otherwise altered to boot. To a certain extent, we can trace the many copies moving through Europe as they ended up in numerous libraries in Germany, England and France. With Johannes Arndt and Hugh Dunthorne, we can assume that *Historia Belgica* led at least some of its international readers to identify with the Dutch Revolt and support the Dutch cause.\(^{58}\) But that is about as far as we can get. We can see the effort to affect opinion but not the result.

The only concrete responses to Van Meteren abroad can be found in diplomatic correspondence. First of all, there were complaints by Protestant dignitaries such as the English ambassador and the Count Philip Ernest of Hohenlohe-Langeburg. The latter argued that the author’s portrayal of him had deeply impaired (‘grotelicke verkort’) his name and honour.\(^{59}\) The complaints focused on Book XIV, in which Van Meteren recounted the conflict between Leicester, Elizabeth’s governor-general of the United Provinces and Hohenlohe in 1587. That Hohenlohe was offended is understandable, given that in the initial version of *Historia Belgica*, Van Meteren mentions that during his fourteen years of service, the count had spent in excess of 150,000 dollars on top of his regular wage with little to show for it.\(^{60}\)

Even more recent history caused a stir in Anglo-Dutch relations. Van Meteren’s publication of secret documents pertaining to the Anglo-Dutch negotiations of 1598 alerted both the English ambassador and the States General and led to one of the most drastic censorship measures the *Historia Belgica* suffered (as noted above, the States only embraced the censored version in 1614). Van Meteren’s book was seized and the (few) offending passages were eventually redacted out.\(^{61}\) This was too late, for the entire section in the meantime already circulated as a pamphlet entitled *Het Boeck der Secreten* (*The Book of Secrets*).\(^{62}\) Fearful of damaging their relations with England, the States expended much time and effort to suppress this pamphlet. The affair had a significant impact on the future of Dutch editions of the *Historia Belgica*. In 1603, the States forbade Van Meteren’s printer Jacob Vennecool to print anything regarding England, Scotland or Ireland, before it was ‘arbitrated’ by the Assembly.\(^{63}\) Throughout the seventeenth century, Dutch censorship would remain at its most vigilant when ambassadors complained and international relations were deemed to be at stake, and this was no exception.\(^{64}\) The status

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\(^{58}\) Johannes Arndt, *Das Heilige Römische Reich und die Niederlande 1566 bis 1648: Politisch-konfessionelle Verflechtung und Publizistik im Achtzigjährigen Krieg* (Köln, etc.: Böhlau, 1998), 226–7; 301-2. Dunthorne, *Britain and the Dutch Revolt*, 30–60.

\(^{59}\) Resoluties van de Staten Generaal (RSG) I, x, 827.

\(^{60}\) Van Meteren, *Memorien* (1599), fol. 257r.

\(^{61}\) Brummel, *Twee ballingen*, 105.

\(^{62}\) Knuttel 1077. *Het Boeck der Secreten* (1599).

\(^{63}\) RSG XII, 652–3.

\(^{64}\) Joop Koopmans, ‘Dutch Censorship in Relation to Foreign Contacts’, in Hanno Brand (ed.), *Trade, Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange: Continuity and Change in the North Sea Area and the Baltic, c.1350–1750* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2006), 220–37.
and importance they accorded to Van Meteren’s history was exceptional however. Bewilderingly, the High and Mighty Lords in the States General (as well as their colleagues in the States of Holland) took the effort to censor the book themselves.65

The most consequential responses to Van Meteren are to be found in Catholic archives, however, and they illustrate how it was read as a Protestant history. In Spain, Philip II’s Junta Grande was deeply worried by the appearance of French and Dutch histories of the Dutch Revolt, especially those that circulated internationally. As a result, both Van Meteren and other historians whose work circulated across borders, such as Jean-François le Petit, appear on the Spanish Index. More important than the official repression of the work were the responses to it. From the late 1580s onwards, political authorities in Spain had become deeply sensitive to the need for renewed official history-writing in response to histories that appeared abroad.66 The Cortes of Castile issued no fewer than fifteen requests for a new official history to the king, and officials at the highest levels were engaged in drawing up plans for it. Cristóbal de Moura, the king’s secretary in Portugal, wrote a request to Philip asking that ‘history be written to respond to foreign accounts’, because ‘foreign writers, who are neither constrained nor supportive, and who write without the fundament of truth… have judged your Majesty’s actions not as your piety and holy zeal deserve […] and they will not stop the damage’.67 A counter-history, both on the kingdom and on the ‘peripheries’ (‘los rincones’) was required ‘for people to gain reason’.68 Moura especially referenced William of Orange’s Apology and Louis Turquet de Mayerne’s Histoire général d’Espagne (General History of Spain, 1587), but Van Meteren fitted the bill as well: he too wrote without constraint and lacked the foundations of truth (Catholicism) Moura deemed necessary for good history.

Of course, like its Protestant counterparts, this new, official Spanish history was meant to be translated. As Giovanni Botero put it in his Della ragion di stato (Reason of State, 1589), knowledge of a monarch’s accomplishments should be spread across the globe, and Philip’s official chronicler in Latin, Calvete de Estrella, had the specific mandate to translate histories for distribution abroad.69 It was no doubt with Botero’s advice in mind that Philip’s Secretary of State Juan Idiáquez emphasized that the new history needed to be

65 RSG X, 826–7.
66 Kagan, Clio and the Crown; Kira Kalina von Ostenfeld-Suske, ‘Official Historiography, Political Legitimacy, Historical Methodology, and Royal and Imperial Authority in Spain under Philip II, 1580-1599’ (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 2014), 66-99. See also: Lisa Kattenberg, ‘The Power of Necessity: Reason of State in the Spanish Monarchy, ca. 1590–1650’ (PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2018).
67 Moura to Philip II, BNM Ms. 18768, fol. 1. Cited in Ostenfeld-Suske, ‘Official Historiography, 67.
68 Ibid., fol. 3, cited in Ostenfeld-Suske, ‘Official Historiography’, 97.
69 Manuel Días Gito, ‘Un epigramma y una carta del humanista Calvete de Estrella’, in José María Maestre et al. (eds.), Humanismo y pervivencia del mundo clásico II, Vol. 3 (Cádiz: Publicaciones Universidad de Cádiz, 1996), 1335–42.
Van Meteren himself was aware of these efforts, and (correctly) noted in the 1611 Dutch edition of the *Historia Belgica* that the King had commissioned the Italian Girolamo Conestaggio to write a history of the Dutch Revolt for 600 ducats per annum. Like Van Meteren’s history, Conestaggio’s *Delle guerre della Germania inferiore* (*On the Wars of the Low Countries*, 1614) was aimed at both domestic and international audiences, and it was clearly in dialogue with *Historia Belgica* (*History of the Netherlands*). In the southern Netherlands, the need to counter *Historia Belgica* was felt even more acutely than in Spain. Histories by Florentius van der Haer (*De initiis tumultuum Belgicorum*, The Beginnings of the Dutch Revolt, 1587) and Cesare Campana (*Assedio e racquisto d’Anversa*, The Siege and Conquest of Antwerp, 1595) appeared, but lacked the multilingual reach Van Meteren achieved. In 1595, when Van Meteren’s history had already been circulating in manuscript for more than ten years, Antonio Querenghi was charged with writing a *Belgica Historia* from the point of view of the Spanish commander, Alessandro Farnese. This came to nothing, apparently because Querenghi did not have sufficient access to sources. Van Meteren’s central information position as a consul and information broker outside the reach of the government was a distinct advantage in this clash of historiographies.

The conclusion of the Spanish-Dutch truce gave a new impetus to the production and translation of history. On 17 December 1609, the canon, philologist and historian Aubertus Miraeus wrote to the Antwerp deacon Johannes del Rio that he had advised the Archdukes’ envoy Petrus Peckius to publish a history of the Dutch Revolt to counter the ‘tendentious’ histories of Van Meteren, Le Petit and others. It transpired that the president of the Archdukes’ privy council, Jean Richardot, had already made plans in that direction and had approached a printer to publish French translations of work by Van der Haer (*De initiis tumultuum Belgicorum*, 1586), Campana (*Assedio e racquisto d’Anversa*, 1595) and Martín Antonio del Río (*Comentarios de las alteraciones de los estados de Flandes*, 1601). This project apparently came to nothing, although a Latin edition of Del Río’s Spanish work was published in Cologne as *Historia Belgica* in 1611. Thus, between the new Dutch Republic in the north and the southern provinces that remained loyal to Spain emerged

70 Cited in Ostenfeld-Suske, *Official Historiography*, 99.
71 Cees Reijner, ‘Een Italiaanse verdediger van de Opstand? De internationale controversie rond het werk van Girolamo Conestaggio’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 125 (2012), 172-87.
72 Reijner, ‘Een Italiaanse verdediger’. Conestaggio’s book was printed in Venice (1614), Cologne (1615) and Leiden (1634).
73 Bernard A. Vermaseren, *Katholieke geschiedschrijving in de XVIe en XVIIe eeuw over den Opstand* (Maastricht: Van Aelst, 1941), 215-20; 240-6; 298-9.
74 Jos Andriessen, *De Jezuïeten en het samenhorigheidsbesef der Nederlanden, 1585–1648* (Antwerpen: De Nederlandse Boekhandel, 1957), 173-4.
75 Andriessen, *De Jezuïeten*, 173-4.
what Jasper van der Steen has called a ‘memory war’, which was particularly fierce during the Twelve Years Truce. 76

4. CONCLUSION

Van Meteren’s generation saw the advent of a popular game of early modern rulers: history vs counterhistory, and this was a notable development in the history of historiography. It is important to repeat Richard Kagan’s assertion that such histories were not simple propaganda aimed at deception and distortion: none of the historians involved in this European memory war invented facts. 77 Van Meteren’s work was part of what Barbara Shapiro has called a ‘culture of fact’ that was deeply affected by international relations. It was mainly in the selection and demonstration of facts that he deviated from pro-Spanish historians, and only in dialogue with them does his bias really stand out. The historical conference Van Meteren desired, then, took place in the European public sphere, where readers in Britain, the Holy Roman Empire, France and the Low Countries could confront, use and rework the various accounts of the Dutch Revolt in whichever language they preferred.

For good reasons, early modern history has often been analysed in relation to law. 78 In an international context, we should also see historians as diplomats, whose task, like lawyers in court, it was to present their client, in this case a state, or a cause, in the best possible light, but without the manifest distortions and falsehoods we associate with propaganda. Like law, diplomacy was a field in which many, if not most, early modern historians were active. Van Meteren’s proximity to diplomacy is paralleled in the lives of many famous and forgotten early modern historians, including Philippe de Commynes, Machiavelli, Johannes Sleidanus, De Thou, Michael Aitzinger and Guido Bentivoglio – who were all diplomats themselves, and at least in the cases of Sleidanus, De Thou and Bentivoglio used their diplomatic dispatches as building blocks for their work. They intended their publications to have an impact on international relations, and their histories should therefore be treated as the public side of their work as diplomats. This also means taking the translation and international circulation of history books seriously.

Once we open our eyes to Van Meteren’s international afterlife, we can clearly see how he and his various translators and adapters in diverse languages sought to influence international relations. Regardless of how successful they were, this was an major function of their histories, which has been

76 Van der Steen, Memory Wars.
77 Kagan, Clio and the Crown, 4–6.
78 Notker Hammerstein, Jus und Historie: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des historischen Denkens an deutschen Universitäten im späten 17. und im 18. Jahrhundert (Göttingen, 1972); Kagan, Clio and the Crown, 9; De Smet, Thuanus, 203–4.
largely filtered out of the history of historiography. Indeed, the work of some historians has been forgotten exactly because they did not fit the national model of historiography. For centuries, transnational historians such as Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato (1606-78), who sold his services to many states desiring official histories, were largely forgotten, their contemporary importance and interest only to be rediscovered very recently. Of course, like Van Meteren’s work, many history books also had a national reception that may or may not be as interesting as the international one. Yet the Van Meteren case clearly prompts us to add new, transnational perspectives to the existing ones, since history, like diplomacy, was often practiced across boundaries through the dynamic interplay of multiple political actors.

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70 Maria Golubeva, Models of Political Competence: The Evolution of Political Norms in the Works of Burgundian and Habsburg Court Historians, c.1470–1700 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 89–90.
Abstract

The history of historiography has tended to disregard translations of early modern European vernacular histories. Whereas sixteenth- and seventeenth-century histories frequently circulated in various languages, scholarship has predominantly analysed them in national historiographical silos. This article argues that this practice has led us to underestimate the role vernacular histories could play in international relations. By analysing the case of Emanuel van Meteren’s history of the Dutch Revolt, which was translated, adapted, and reprinted in various European vernaculars, it aims to show how we might understand early modern history-writing as an aspect of diplomacy: a mode of writing and reporting that was deeply embedded in diplomatic culture and that aimed to shape, and was shaped by, international relations. To achieve this, the article 1) shows how Van Meteren’s historical work was an outcome of his trade in diplomatic intelligence and his position in diplomatic networks; 2) outlines the complicated international afterlife of his Dutch text; 3) analyses the book’s impact on international relations. All three aspects, it is suggested, are typical for the kind of annalistic history-writing Van Meteren practiced. His case might therefore serve as a model for further research into the role of history-writing in early modern (public) diplomacy.