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3 Imagining Europe

The Peace of Ryswick (1697) and the Rise of European Consciousness

Lotte Jensen

Abstract

This chapter focuses on the European community as it was imagined in 1697 by Dutch authors celebrating the Peace of Ryswick. The aim is threefold. Firstly, to show that the concept of 'imagined community' can be stretched in a temporal way, as it provides us with a useful tool to discern the rise of imagined communities, more particularly the rise of national and European communities, in the early modern period. Secondly, to demonstrate that the European community was imagined in a variety of ways and dispersed into several different imagined communities that were defined by in- and exclusion of other denominations. Thirdly, to show that there was a strong interplay between the national and European levels. A close reading of the Dutch writings published to celebrate the Peace of Ryswick reveals that these publications expressed a strong sense of a shared European identity. Nevertheless, the majority primarily served as a means to propagate national sentiments, supporting the political and religious views of King/Stadtholder William III. History played a key role in the creation of this Dutch sense of exceptionalism within a larger European framework.

Keywords: Peace of Ryswick, national identity, Europeanism, imagined community, Dutch history, King/Stadtholder William III

Europe, world's pride, whose heart was trampled
by infuriated plagues of war
plunged into a sea of disasters,
buffeted from day to day by thundering gusts

in the crashing of the breakers against the coast
wounded by the murder weapon, sinks powerless down to the earth
[...] Ah! She calls [...]
I descend in the eternal grave, my glory has gone.¹

With this dramatic scene the Dutch bookseller and poet François Halma opened his ode to the Peace of Ryswick in 1697. Europe is about to descend into the grave: all her powers are gone, and her former glory has vanished. All hope seems to be lost, but then the poem takes a new turn. Europe begs the princes and rulers of Europe to stop shedding their fellow Christians' blood. Instead they should join forces to combat their common enemy, the Turks. In the end, Europe's wish is fulfilled: the European leaders make peace at Ryswick, and a new period of prosperity dawns. What is more, Europe forecasts a bright future, in which Istanbul, the Islamic capital of the Ottoman Empire, will once again fall into Christian hands.

Halma's poem celebrated an important event in European history: the Peace of Ryswick. This international peace agreement ended nine years of bloody warfare between France and the Grand Alliance, consisting of Austria, several German principalities, Spain, England and the Dutch Republic. During this war, several major battles took place, including at Fleurus (1690), the River Boyne (1690) and Namén (1695).² Although secret negotiations had already started in 1693, peace was not achieved until the end of 1697.³ In the treaty between Spain and France it was stated that 'the bloodiest war, which had grieved Europe for such a long time' had finally come to an end.⁴ War nevertheless continued in the central and eastern parts of Europe, where

1 François Halma, *Europe herstelt door de Algemeen Vrede* (Utrecht 1697), A 2: 'Europe, 's waerelds Pronk, door woedende oorlogsplaagen, / Op 't hert getrappelt, en gedompelt in een zee / Van rampen, dag op dag van bulderende vlaagen / Geslingert in 't geklots der barning op de ree [...]: / Door 't moordrapier gewond; zygt magteloos ter aarde [...] Ach! roept ze [...] Ik daale in 't eeuwige graf. myn glory is vergaan.'

2 On the Nine Years' Wars, see: G. Clark, 'The Nine Years War, 1688-1697', in: J.S. Bromley (ed.), *The New Cambridge History, Volume 6: The Rise of Great Britain and Russia 1688-1715/25* (Cambridge, 1970), 223-253.

3 H. Gabel, 'Politik zwischen Wunsch und Wirklichkeit. Wilhelm III, die Niederländische Republik und der Friede von Rijswijk (1697)', in: Simon Groenveld, Maurits Ebben and Raymond Fagel (eds), *Tussen Munster & Aken, De Nederlandse Republiek als grote mogendheid (1648-1748)* (Maastricht, 2005), 39-45. On international relations in general during the Peace of Ryswick, see: H. Duchhardt (ed.), *Der Friede von Rijswijk 1697* (Mainz, 1998).

4 *Traité de Paix, Fait, conclu & arrêté à Rijswijk en Hollande, les 20. du mois de Septembre, 1697. Entre les Ambassadeurs & Plenipotentiaires de sa majesté tres-chrestienne d'une; Et les Ambassadeurs & Plenipotentiaires des seigneurs Estats Generaux des Provinces Unies du Pays-Bas de l'autre part* (La Haye 1697), 1: 'la plus sanglante Guerre dont l'Europe ait été affligé depuis long temps'.

the Ottoman Empire was trying to expand its territory. After the Siege of Vienna by the Turks in 1683, these wars reached a new zenith in the 1690s.⁵

Halma's concept of a European peace was based on the idea of a 'pax christiana universalis', a general Christian peace. In his eyes, the coalition of European princes had to protect Europe against the permanent threat of the Turks. His poem fits into a large body of early modern writings in which the terms 'Europe' and 'European' play a significant role. As the historian Peter Burke has convincingly argued, from the sixteenth century and onwards Europe was a community with which people could identify.⁶ The terms 'Europe' and 'European' were most frequently used in relation to the Turkish threat: being European primarily meant being Christian and not Muslim. These and other uses make clear that 'Europe' was more than a geographical term alone. It also expressed a form of collective consciousness or a sense of group identity, very similar to, for instance, class consciousness or national consciousness.⁷ Burke published his observations in 1980, three years before the introduction of the term 'imagined community' by Benedict Anderson. However, Burke's remarks about a collective European identity match astonishingly well with the concept of the 'imagined community', at least if one is prepared to broaden the scope both temporally and geographically. Both authors make use of a discursive approach, focusing on the way printed matter was pivotal in shaping communal bonds amongst inhabitants of the same territory. However, while Anderson solely applied the term to national communities in the mass media of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Burke's study concerns early modern conceptions of Europe in sources which obviously had much lower circulation figures.

Since Burke's study, many overviews about the emergence of European consciousness or identity have appeared.⁸ Whether they begin in Antiquity, the Middle Ages or the Early Modern Period, they all have in common that they consider Europe as a political and cultural idea, which changed over times. Consequently, if one wishes to map the changes and continuities in

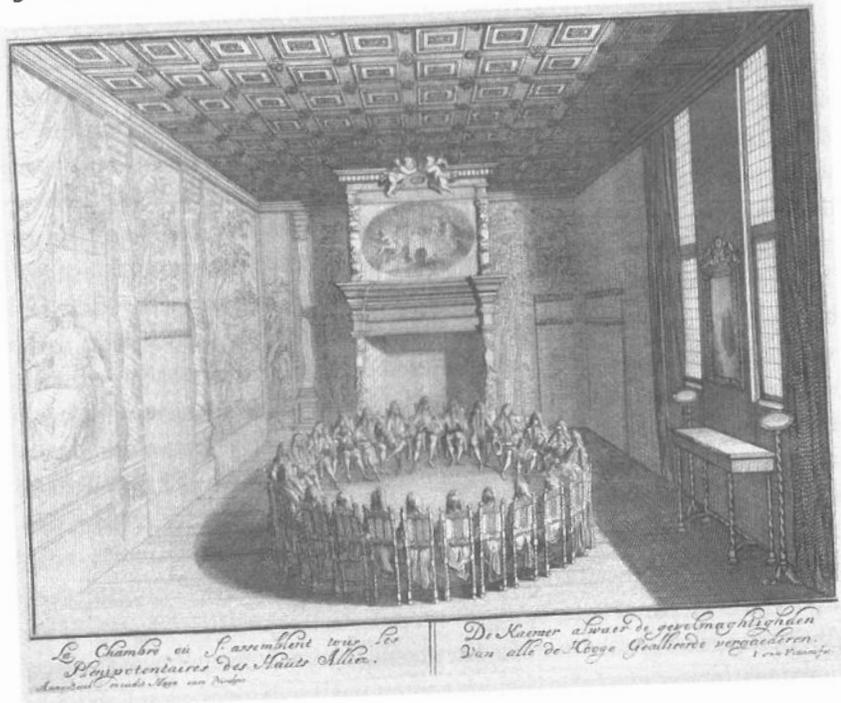
5 The wars ended with the Peace of Karlowitz (1699). On these wars, see: J. Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire, Volume 2: The Peace of Westphalia to the Dissolution of the Reich, 1648-1806* (Oxford, 2012), 42-45.

6 P. Burke, 'Did Europe Exist before 1700?', *History of European Ideas* 1 (1980), 21-29.

7 Burke, 'Did Europe Exist before 1700?', 21.

8 See, amongst others, G. Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (Basingstoke, 1995); K. Wilson and J. van der Dussen (eds), *The History of the Idea of Europe* (London, 1995); R.M. Dainotto, *Europe (in Theory)* (Durham/London, 2007); P. den Boer, *Europa: De geschiedenis van een idee*, 4th, rev. ed. (Amsterdam, 2005); A. Drace-Francis, *European Identity: A Historical Reader* (New York, 2013); P. Pasture, *Imagining European Unity since 1000 AD* (Basingstoke, 2015); M. Wintle, *The Image of Europe* (Cambridge, 2009).

Figure 3.1 Negotiating peace at the House of Nieuburch in Ryswick (1697).



Source: Jan van Vianen, *Atlas van Stolk*.

Figure 3.2 Fireworks to celebrate the Peace of Ryswick of 1697.



Source: Laurens Scherm, *Rijksmuseum Amsterdam*.

European consciousness, a thorough analysis of the contemporary discourses is required as well as a historical contextualization. This chapter focuses on the European community as it was imagined in 1697 by Dutch authors celebrating the Peace of Ryswick. The aim is threefold. Firstly, to show that the concept of 'imagined community' can be stretched in a temporal way, as it provides us with a useful tool to discern the rise of imagined communities, more particularly the rise of national and European communities, in the early modern period. Secondly, to demonstrate that the European community was imagined in a variety of ways and dispersed into several different imagined communities that were defined by in- and exclusion of other denominations. Thirdly, to show that there was a strong interplay between the national and European levels.⁹ On closer inspection, these visions of Europe were as much influenced by national perspectives as by European ideals; these often entered into a dialogue with another. Celebrating European peace, paradoxically, primarily served as a means to propagate national sentiments. The 'European identity' was, on the one hand, framed in terms of religion (Christianity versus Islam), which provided the public with a sense of timelessness. On the other hand, there was no doubt which nation was best suited to lead this fight against the 'pagans'; the connection with particular political circumstances suggested a far more dynamic conceptualization of time. In other words: history played a key role in the creation of a form of Dutch sense of exceptionalism within a larger European framework.

This can be demonstrated by a close reading the writings published to celebrate the Peace of Ryswick in the Dutch Republic. However, before discussing the contents of these peace writings, some general remarks about the use of the terms 'imagined community' and 'Europe' must be made.

The imagined European community

In his seminal book *Imagined Communities*, Anderson perceived modern nations as political imagined communities that were shaped by the vernacular 'print-communities' of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁰ He

⁹ Astrid Erll has convincingly argued that scholars should take into account the interrelatedness of the regional, national and supranational levels in community building. See: A. Erll, 'Regional integration and (trans)cultural memory', *Asia Europe Journal* 8 (2010), 305-315, accessed 4-11-2015, doi: 10.1007/s10308-010-0268-5.

¹⁰ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1987), 49. The term 'print-communities' is used by A. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 2013), 86.

argued that the convergence of capitalism and print technology made the emergence of these imagined communities possible. Despite not knowing their fellow-members personally, members shared the same images of their community, which were spread through mass media such as newspapers and books, offering them a sense of 'a deep, horizontal comradeship'.¹¹ Hence, the nation was essentially a cultural artefact, which owed its existence to recurrent images and discourses. Anderson explicitly situated these developments in modern times, thus considering the nation as a quintessentially modern phenomenon.

However, in recent years, the 'modernist paradigm' has been challenged by a growing number of scholars who situate the origins of nationalism and nationhood in earlier times. They in particular point to nations that took the form of a national cultural and political community from a very early stage, such as Sweden, England, Spain, Iceland and the Dutch Republic.¹² In the early modern period, unifying images of these nations were disseminated through a wide range of media, creating a sense of nationhood. Burke recently emphasized the importance of early modern print culture, in particular printed religious texts, sermons and catechisms, in the formation of imagined communities based on a common language – indeed now explicitly using Anderson's concept.¹³ In a similar vein, Andrew Hadfield pointed to the importance of the printing press in the development of a public sphere and a shared national identity in seventeenth-century England. If one acknowledges that the printing press played an essential role in the formation of public opinion and shaping supra-local communities in the early modern period, then it is only logical to apply the concept of the 'imagined community' to earlier periods as well.¹⁴ Of course, these early modern 'imagined communities' were of a completely different nature than those of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For one thing, the circulation of printed material was much lower than in modern times.¹⁵ However, the idea that the imagined community is shaped in vernacular print-communities also makes the concept suitable for premodernists, at

11 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 16.

12 For a recent overview of the discussion between the 'modernists and traditionalists', see L. Jensen, 'The Roots of Nationalism: Introduction', in: L. Jensen (ed.), *The Roots of Nationalism: National Identity Formation in Early Modern Europe, 1600-1815* (Amsterdam, 2016), 9-27.

13 P. Burke, 'Nationalisms and Vernaculars, 1500-1800', in: John Breuilly (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism* (Oxford, 2013), 5.

14 On the rise of public opinion in the early modern period and the role literature played in that process, see J. Bloemendal, A. van Dixhoorn and Elsa Strietman, *Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Low Countries, 1450-1650* (Leiden, 2011).

15 See, for instance Burke, 'Did Europe Exist before 1700?', 29.

least if one is prepared to use the term in a more loose, metaphorical sense, without requiring large circulation figures as a prerequisite.¹⁶

Along the same line, one could stretch the concept geographically and consider Europe as an imagined community. Concepts of Europe were abundantly present in early modern writings, as becomes clear from a growing body of historical works about the development of Europe as a geographical, political, juridical and cultural entity.¹⁷ The emergence of European consciousness is usually situated in the late fifteenth century, when the term 'Europe' began to be used more frequently, primarily as a Christian commonwealth. During the Renaissance and Enlightenment the idea of superiority entered the discourse; seventeenth- and eighteenth-century intellectuals expressed a strong sense of belonging to a highly civilized European culture. Through this constant production of both visual and textual images of Europe, European awareness was generated, based on some persistent continuities (such as its Christian character) but also changing significantly throughout the ages.¹⁸

In the early modern period the term 'Europe' was, broadly speaking, used in three different contexts.¹⁹ In the first place there was a Christian and anti-Turkish context. The constant threat of invasion by the heathen Turks, especially after the fall of Belgrade in 1521, demanded the European princes and rulers to maintain peace amongst themselves and unite forces against the infidel Turks. Humanists like Erasmus and Vives, for instance, propagated the union of Christians and defined Europe in opposition to the Turks.²⁰ In 1603, Maximilien de Béthune, minister of the French king and a Huguenot, drew up a European peace plan, pleading for a Christian Europe that did not include the Ottoman and Russian Empires.²¹ The Christian and anti-Turkish concept of Europe was given an extra impulse in the 1680s, when the Ottomans managed to expand their territory in Eastern and Central Europe.

The second context entailed the relationship between Europe and other cultures that had been discovered through exploration and trade voyages, such as Brazil, North America, India and Peru. Travellers reflected upon

16 Cf. A.D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover, 2000), 58.

17 See, for instance, P. Pasture, *Imagining European Unity since 1000 AD* (Basingstoke, 2015), and Wintle, *The Image of Europe*.

18 See also M. Wintle, 'The History of the Idea of Europe: Where Are We Now?', *Perspectives on Europe* 43 (2013), 8-12.

19 Burke, 'Did Europe Exist before 1700?', 24-26.

20 Burke, 'Did Europe Exist before 1700?'; Pasture, *Imagining European Union*, 21.

21 Pasture, *Imagining European Union*, 28.

their European identity in relation to these new worlds, often expressing a sense of superiority. Growing internal political tensions in Europe triggered the third context. One of the greatest threats to European peace came from within: from the 1670s, the European nations were permanently embroiled in conflict, mainly driven by the French King Louis XIV's ambitions. One of his fiercest opponents was the Dutch stadtholder William III, who in 1688 became the King of England, Scotland and Ireland. He adopted a political strategy emphasizing his role as the 'protector and liberator of Europe'. According to William, peace could be assured only once a territorial barrier in the Spanish Netherlands had been established.²² In contemporary diplomatic discourses Europe was perceived as a political system of different states and nations, rather than a Christian unity. This shift from thinking in terms of a 'respublica christiana' towards a balance of power rapidly gained ground at the end of the seventeenth century and profoundly changed the system of international relations in eighteenth-century Europe.²³ The three different contexts in which the term 'Europe' was used co-existed for a long time. Although diplomats started putting more emphasis on the idea of Europe as a power of balance, their writings were still very much inspired by Christian ideas in general or the idea of Europe as a Christian unity in particular.

General outlines like these are usually based upon texts produced by a small group of elite authors, such as Erasmus, Vives, Montaigne, and Rousseau, and a select number of diplomatic sources. One might therefore ask how far European awareness stretched: was it restricted to a few intellectuals or extended further? Burke's thesis is that the concept of Europe became more common in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. He points to popular songs, diaries, and periodicals from this period that show a frequent use of the term.²⁴ Peace writings also offer an excellent opportunity to gain more insight into the spread of European consciousness in the early modern period. These writings are doomed to be forgotten because of their ephemeral uses, but they are an important source to form an impression

22 W. Troost, 'To Restore and Preserve the Liberty of Europe': William III's Ideas on Foreign Policy', in: David Onnekink and Gijs Rommelse (eds), *Ideology and Foreign Policy in Early Modern Europe (1650-1750)* (Ashgate, 2011), 283-285.

23 E. Luard, *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations, 1648-1815* (Basingstoke, 1992), 8-21; R. Lesaffer, *Europa: een zoektocht naar vrede? 1453-1763 en 1945-1997* (Leuven, 1999), 354-355; W. Schulze, 'Europa in der frühen Neuzeit – Begriffsgeschichtliche Befunde', in: H. Duchhardt and Andreas Kunz (eds), *Europäische Geschichte als historiographisches Problem* (Mainz, 1997), 57-58.

24 Burke, 'Did Europe Exist before 1700?', 26-27.

of public opinion in earlier days. Although it is difficult to establish the exact impact of these publications, they do give us some insight into the preoccupations and ideas of a group of people broader than the elite thinkers alone.²⁵ Persons with various backgrounds wrote these texts; amongst the authors we find a bookseller, an organist, the director of the Amsterdam Theater, an alderman and several poetesses. A closer look at these texts reveals a strong sense of Europeanness, but European unity was imagined in a variety of ways.

The Peace of Ryswick and European thought

The Peace of Ryswick incited many Dutch authors to write appraisals: around 40 works were published, including poems, treatises, sermons and theatre plays. They were written by a wide range of authors, who came from different regions of the Republic. Approximately one-fifth were published in Amsterdam, while the rest appeared in cities such as Groningen, Dordrecht, Middelburg, The Hague and Leiden.

These writings reveal a great interest in European affairs. Authors reflected upon the present state of Europe, as well as its past and its future, thus expressing a growing sense of 'Europe' as an international community. If one looks at the contexts in which Europe is mentioned, one is struck by the fact that it is employed predominantly in a Christian and anti-Turkish context. The second context (superiority in relation to other continents) appears only very sporadically, while the idea of Europe as a political conglomeration and the idea of a balance of power are totally absent.

The notion of a Christian Europe set against the Turkish threat was rooted in a longer tradition. 'Europe' was already being used in a similar sense during earlier peace celebrations, such as the Peace of Münster (1648) and the Peace of Nijmegen (1678). In 1697, however, this theme dominates the celebratory writings. The remarks of the mayor and poet Pieter Nuyts are characteristic of the general mood. He speaks of 'Islamic swines' who had coloured their territory red with Christian blood. It was paramount to stop

25 On pamphlets and the rise of a public sphere, see for example A. Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1997). For an overview of the Dutch developments: J. de Kruijff, M. Meijer Drees and J. Salman, *Het lange leven van het pamflet: Boekhistorische, iconografische, literaire en politieke aspecten van pamfletten 1600-1900* (Hilversum, 2006). For an overview of peace writings and the shaping of European and Dutch identities, see Lotte Jensen, *Celebrating Peace. The Emergence of Dutch Identity, 1648-1815* (Nijmegen 2017).

these 'barbarians', who were standing at the gates of Austria and other parts of the Holy Roman Empire, by any and all means. Consequently the European princes had to make peace and protect 'the people of the European states'.²⁶

The authors agreed that Europe had to unite as Christians to stand up against the Ottoman Empire. However, in reality there was no such thing as one, united Christian community. Since the Reformation, Christianity had become internally divided into Catholicism and Protestantism. This 'christianitas afflicta' posed a serious threat to European peace.²⁷ Catholic princes were opposed to Protestant rulers, who in turn were strongly divided internally as well. Generally speaking, three different positions can be discerned in the celebratory writings on Ryswick. The first is the most tolerant, presenting a European peace that includes all Christians. Christianity here refers to the sum of Christian people, without any exceptions or hierarchical differences. The second position gives priority to Protestants, claiming that they are the true Christians. In order to defeat the Turks, however, a Christian union with the Catholics is necessary. The third position leaves no room for Catholics and defines the idea of a united Europe exclusively from a Protestant perspective.

The most tolerant position was adhered to by only a handful of authors, while the most exclusionary image of Europe as a union of Protestants dominates the discourse. Most Dutch authors apparently defined a 'pax christiana universalis' from a Protestant perspective, considering European peace primarily as a victory of the Protestant William III over the Catholic Louis XIV. Their Protestant Europeanism went hand in hand with an Orangist attitude, supporting the interests of the Dutch stadtholder. In other words, their Protestant religion not only played a role in creating a self-image of national unity, but also in their concept of Europe.²⁸

The work of François van Bergen, a lawyer from Middelburg in the province of Zeeland, provides a good example of the first position, the most tolerant one. He published a long treatise, entitled *Vreugde-Reden* (Oration of Joy), in which he presents a lengthy list of the benefits of universal and eternal peace amongst Christians. He considers peace as the 'best triumph of all triumphs, and the ultimate victory over all victories'.²⁹ His description

26 Pieter Nuyts, *Vredezing* (Amsterdam 1697), 7, 20.

27 Schulze, 'Europa in der frühen Neuzeit', 39.

28 On the importance of religion in the shaping of a national self-image during the years 1672 to 1713, see D. Haks, 'The States General on Religion and War: Manifestos, Policy Documents and Prayer Days in the Dutch Republic, 1672-1713', in: David Onnekink (ed.), *War and Religion after Westphalia, 1648-1713* (Farnham, 2009), 155-175.

29 François van Bergen, *Vreugde-Reden* [...] Middelburg 1697), 1: 'Overwinster van alle Overwinningen, en Zége-praalster over alle Zégepraalen'.

of peace reveals how deeply connected were the vocabularies on war and peace, as peace was defined as the result of a hard-won battle.

Van Bergen presents an extensive and learned overview of classical and Christian authors who had engaged with the issue of peace. First, he offers a series of comments by classical thinkers, including Herodotus, Ovid, Boethius, Cicero, and Tibullus; then these ideas are placed in a Christian context with fragments taken from the works of Justinian, Augustine, Mantuan and Erasmus. Van Bergen also quotes the Italian humanist Francesco Guicciardini, who argued that war violated the tenets of Christianity and that a general peace amongst the Christian princes was necessary to maintain piety and virtue in society.³⁰ By quoting the classical and Christian authors so extensively, Van Bergen situates the Peace of Ryswick in a long tradition of peacemaking, thereby putting the current developments in a moral and Christian perspective. He ends his treatise by thanking God, the greatest Prince of Peace, who demands that his servants live in harmony and peace.

Van Bergen also wrote a long poem on the Peace of Ryswick, in which he cherished the benefits of peace. All the traditional advantages of peace are mentioned, such as the renewed blossoming of trade and the arts and sciences. Prosperous times are to be expected not only in the Dutch Republic but in all European nations, including France, Ireland, Scotland, Austria, the German states and Britain. In the words of the author: 'I feel the resurrection of entire Europe'.³¹ This optimistic and peaceful message, however, does not apply to the Turks. On the contrary. Europe must direct all its efforts at 'destroying the Empire of the Ottomans'.³²

The same combination of promoting peace amongst Christians, while at the same time calling for military action against the Turks, can be found in the writings of the couple Anna Maria Paauw and Christoffel Pierson. They imagined a united and peaceful Europe that unanimously stood up against the Ottoman Empire. In 1693 Paauw had written a fierce complaint about the discord between the Christian princes of Europe (*Europaas-Klagt over de oneenigheyd der Kristen Vorsten*), in which she supported William III in his fight against Louis XIV. On the occasion of the Peace of Ryswick she no longer felt the need to take sides but called for Christian unity and military action against the Turks.³³ Her husband went even further by expressing

30 Van Bergen, *Vreugde-reden*, 8.

31 Ibid., 24.

32 Ibid., 22.

33 Anna Maria Paauw, *Vree-bazuyn: Uytgegalmt, Wegens de Gelukkige herstelling van Europaas eendracht, Voltrokken, op des selfs Algemene vrede* (Rotterdam 1697).

his hopes that the medieval crusades would be revived and that Istanbul and Jerusalem would once again become Christian cities. Achieving this goal would require a sustained European peace.³⁴

Celebrating peace in general terms and refraining from mentioning any particular names could also be a way of avoiding topics that were politically charged from a national perspective. During the Nine Years' War, the support for the bellicose William III diminished significantly in some cities of the Republic. In Amsterdam, for instance, high taxes had turned the people against his rule and had even led to a popular revolt in 1696. At the Amsterdam peace celebrations, the role of the stadtholder therefore was remarkably limited.³⁵ Whether the above-mentioned writers, who published their works in the cities of Middelburg, Rotterdam and Gouda, were also influenced by such considerations is hard to tell. The treatise of Van Bergen, however, seems a genuine plea for a universal Christian peace.

True Christians

Dutch authors expressed the second position – true Christians are Protestants, but peace with Catholics is necessary to counter the Turkish threat – more often. They imagined Europe as a safe haven for Protestants but emphasized the necessity of Christian unity for both ideological (the war against the Turks) and pragmatic reasons. The above-mentioned Halma, for instance, propagated an alliance between William III and Louis XIV, not only because their union would strengthen Europe in its struggle against the Turks but also for commercial trade reasons: 'Now you can send fleet after fleet to the shores and harbours of France, / With stiff clotted cream, the fruit of the Dutch cow.'³⁶ He hoped that the Dutch stadtholder and French king would live in peace and 'true alliance', although only one of them professed the true religion, namely William III: 'God's community considers him as the protectionist of true religion.'³⁷ The fairly obscure poet Hendrik Hasmoor also praised the Catholic princes, in particular Louis XIV

34 Christoffel Pierson, *Op het sluyten van De Eeuwige Vreede, In 't jaar 1697* (Gouda 1697).

35 K. van der Haven, "'Dat heeft men uw Beleid, uw groot Beleid te danken": theatervieringen van de Vrede van Rijswijk (1697), in Amsterdam en Hamburg', *Holland* 35 (2004), 313-326.

36 Halma, *Europe herstelt*, 8: 'Nu zend gy vloot op vloot naar Vrankryks kust en haven, / Met styfgeronnen room, de vrucht van Hollandsch koe.'

37 Halma, *Europe herstelt*, 8: 'waare bondschap', 12: 'Godts Kruiskerk ziet op hem als haar Geloofsverweerder.'

and Leopold I, for contributing to peace, but also saved most of his praise for 'Britain's very famous King William, the Dutch glory and honour'.³⁸

Pieter Rabus equally emphasized the importance of peace amongst the Christian princes and rulers in his work. Rabus was a self-made intellectual from the city of Rotterdam, who is known for having established the first learned periodical in Dutch, *De Boekzaal van Europe* (1692-1702). Rabus despised dogmatism in religious matters, on both the Protestant and Catholic sides. He propagated an enlightened view of religion, based upon the critical use of reason. He was, however, very outspoken in his political convictions.³⁹ He whole-heartedly supported William III, as also becomes clear in his celebratory poem on the Peace of Ryswick, *Vrede- en vreugdezang*. The Dutch stadtholder was portrayed as the great hero of European warfare, who excelled in the Battle of Boyne, where he defeated the English King James II, and in the reconquering of Namén in 1695. According to Rabus, William III should be seen as the hero and great liberator of Europe, who had paved the way to stability and peace in Europe. Rabus' celebration of William III, however, did not lead to strong anti-Catholic statements. On the contrary. He stated that Christians should unite in order to counter the more acute problem of the Turkish threat that was endangering the stability of Europe.

The third and least tolerant position was dominant in the celebratory writings on Ryswick. Most Dutch authors interpreted the European peace in Protestant terms and considered it as a victory of the Protestant King William III over the Catholic French King Louis XIV. The composer and poet Johan Snep expressed this point of view most explicitly. He recited a long poem on the Peace of Ryswick in the provincial town Zierikzee in Zeeland, on 6 November 1697, which had been officially designated by the States-General as a national day of prayer. These prayer days created a sense of community on a supra-regional level and went hand in hand with all sorts of social events, such as church services, meals, musical and theatrical performances and fireworks.⁴⁰

Snep's poem comprised more than five hundred verses and was entitled: 'Vrede der Christenheyd. Geslooten op het kasteel tot Rijs-wijk, Den 20 September 1697' (Peace of Christianity. Conducted at the Castle of Ryswick, 20 September 1697). The title suggests solidarity amongst all Christians,

38 Hendrik Hasmoor, *Oorlog en vreede Of d'Oorlog door Vreede verjaagt. In 't Jaar 1697* (Amsterdam 1697), 13: 'Eng'lands hoog beroemde Koning, / Wiljam, Hollands roem en eer.'

39 On Rabus' religious and political viewpoints: P. Rietbergen, 'Pieter Rabus en de Boekzaal van Europe', in: J. Bots (ed.), *Pieter Rabus en de Boekzaal van Europe 1692-1702* (Amsterdam, 1974), 1-109.

40 D. Haks, *Vaderland en vrede 1672-1713: Publiciteit over de Nederlandse Republiek in oorlog* (Hilversum, 2013), 87-90.

but in reality, Snep directed his attacks at the Catholic French and their ambitious King Louis XIV. The established peace was, in fact, a triumph for William III:

Now one can see the pride of France trampled underfoot,
Murder and fire, and fierce combat expelled
The bloody flags displayed at rest,
The entire Christianity has bound itself with precious oaths
And kissed sweet Peace all together.⁴¹

This fragment makes clear that true Christians were Protestants and that the Catholics were to be despised. The Dutch Republic had a special role to fulfil in Europe's history, as it revealed the other nations the right direction in religious matters. Snep expressed a sense of superiority by claiming that the Dutch God's Chosen People (Dutch Israël). This idea was also often propagated by ministers from the Reformed Church as Cornelis Huisman has shown in his study on national consciousness in Reformed circles in the eighteenth century.⁴²

Snep also presented an extensive overview of the history of the Dutch Republic, starting with the Eighty Years' War against Spain and ending with the treaty of Ryswick. The Revolt was represented as a struggle for the freedom of religion, led by the heroic William of Orange against the 'monstrous' Duke of Alba. With the help of God, the Dutch had managed to liberate themselves from oppression and had settled peace at Münster in 1648. Those who died in their fight for freedom should be considered as God's Chosen People and martyrs, who had spread the 'true seed of the church'.⁴³ Snep continues by discussing the disasters of the year 1672, when both France and the bishop of Münster attacked the Dutch Republic. Once again, God sending a new stadtholder, William III, who took the lead in the struggle against France, saved the Republic. As a second 'Hercules', William III had gained important victories, defeated the Catholic King James II and planted the Orange flag at the Castle of Namen in 1695. According to Snep, this last

41 Johan Snep, *Vreugde-galmen, Ter Gedagtenis van de Algemeyne Vrede der Christenheyd* (Middelburg 1697), 4: 'Nu siet men Vrankryks trots, en hoogmoed met de voet / Verbrijsseld, Moord en Brand, en felle Krijg vertreden, / De Bloedige Banier, te pronk elk is in rust, / De gantsche Christenheyd, heeft sig met diere Eeden / Verknogt, en soo al t'saem, de lieve Vrêê gekust.'

42 C. Huisman, *Neerlands Israël: Het natiebeseft der traditioneel-gereformeerden in de achttiende eeuw* (Dordrecht, 1983), 52-60.

43 Snep, *Vreugde-galmen*, 8. Cf. Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, ch. 50, 13: 'The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.'

event should be considered a turning point in the nation's and Europe's history. It forced France to accept peace and a set of humiliating conditions:

The French crown had to throw everything up again
What it had swallowed, and now the head of King William is decorated again
See there the Christian nations
And all the princes of Europe making peace.⁴⁴

Peace was made between the Christian nations, which basically meant that William III had taken back what he was entitled to.

Snep's attack on France did not stand by itself but can be witnessed in the writings of many other Dutch authors as well. Their anti-French feelings went hand in hand with anti-papist utterances and laudations of William III who had defended true Christian principles. To reinforce their statements they often compared Louis XIV with the mythological figure Phaeton, who overplayed his hand by wanting to drive his father's chariot. He lost control and was killed by Jupiter with a thunderbolt.⁴⁵

Concluding remarks

Dutch authors who celebrated the Peace of Ryswick expressed a strong sense of a shared collective European identity, in which being Christian and opposing the Turks were the binding forces. They unanimously pleaded for a European peace, in order to unite the European princes and rulers in their fight against the infidel Turks.

Their visions, however, were not identical. The European community was imagined in a variety of ways, ranging from a very tolerant, pan-Christian ideal image to a less tolerant view. A minority included all Christians in their imagined Europe, while most emphasized the superiority of Protestantism and excluded Catholics from their ideal European community. They were mainly driven by national sentiments and were fierce supporters of the King-stadtholder William III. They defined European peace in terms of a victory of William III over the French king, which gave these texts a rather bellicose, aggressive character. Their Europeanism served, in fact, as a means

44 Snep, *Vreugde-galmen*, 24: 'de France Kroon weer alles uyt moest braaken, / 't Geen hy had ingeslokt. En dus op nieuw geçierd, / Het Hoofd van Koning Wilm, siet daar de Christen Landen; / En al de Vorsten van Europa tot verdrag'.

45 See, for instance, Cornelis Sweerts, *De triumfeerende vrede* (Amsterdam 1697), 5.

to propagate Orangism on a national level. Europe was basically used as an extension of their nationally oriented political and religious views.

Despite these differences, there was also a general sense of relief that nine years of warfare had come to an end. However, the hopes for a better future and a united Europe soon vanished into thin air. Only a few years after the treaties of Ryswick were signed, the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713), broke out. France, Spain, Cologne and Bavaria found themselves opposed to Britain, the Dutch Republic, most states of the Holy Roman Empire, Portugal and Savoy. Again, major battles were fought, for example, at Höchstädt (1704), Ramillies (1706), and Oudenaarde (1708). In 1713 peace was made in Utrecht, and this time, the treaties would indeed bring an end to the French aspirations of establishing a 'universal monarchy'.

When comparing the Dutch celebratory writings of Ryswick and Utrecht, two differences stand out. Firstly, William III plays only a minor role in the occasional writings of 1713. His death in 1702 marked the beginning of the so-called second stadtholderless period (1702-1747), and this is reflected in his absence from most of the texts.⁴⁶ Secondly, the notion of a European community being held together by the Turkish threat has disappeared completely. This absence can be explained by the fact that in 1699 the Peace of Karlowitz had been signed, ending the Austro-Ottoman War and the acute threat of a Turkish invasion. Instead, Europe was being defined more in terms of a collection of competitive states, in which the Dutch Republic stood out. In other words, between 1697 and 1713 the concept of Europe as a Christian union ('pax christiana universalis') was replaced by a vocabulary that focused more on the idea of Europe as a political community.⁴⁷

This shift can also be seen in the studies on European thought in relation to peace and international relations of Burke, Duchhardt and Schulze.⁴⁸ Hence, it is not this shift that is most remarkable but the fact that this conceptual change is also visible in the occasional, ephemeral writings of that time. Overviews of early modern concepts of Europe tend to focus on a small group of elite thinkers and politicians, but these sources reveal

46 Although some authors, like Coenraet Droste, Jacobus de Groot and François Halma, grabbed the opportunity to make an Orangist statement. See L. Jensen, 'Visions of Europe: Contrasts and Combinations of National and European Identities in Literary Representations of the Peace of Utrecht (1713)', in: R. de Bruin et al. (eds), *Performances of Peace: Utrecht 1713* (Leiden/Boston, 2015), 169-171.

47 Jensen, 'Visions of Europe', 173-177.

48 Burke, 'Did Europe Exist before 1700?', 27; H. Duchhardt, *Frieden im Europa der Vormoderne. Ausgewählte Aufsätze 1979-2011*, ed. and intro. Martin Espenhorst (Paderborn, 2012), 114-115; Schulze, 'Europa in der frühen Neuzeit', 57-58.

that European awareness was more widespread. The imagined European community was present in the minds of many others as well, including an organist from Middelburg, a poetess from Rotterdam and a bookseller from Utrecht. Moreover, they gave the public a dynamic vision of Dutch exceptionalism within a larger European framework, which was connected to particular political events and a particular time frame. This makes it even more plausible to apply Anderson's term of the imagined community to premodern times.

About the author

Lotte Jensen is Professor in Dutch Cultural and Literary History at Radboud University Nijmegen. Jensen's research is concerned with the role of literature and historiography in processes of national identity formation during the period 1600-1900. Her publications include *De verheerlijking van het verleden. Helden, literatuur en natievorming in de negentiende eeuw* (Vantilt, 2008), *Verzet tegen Napoleon* (Vantilt, 2013), and *Celebrating Peace: The Emergence of Dutch Identity, 1648-1815* (Vantilt, 2017). She was co-editor of *Free Access to the Past: Romanticism, Cultural Heritage and the Nation* (Brill, 2010), *Performances of Peace: The Treaty of Utrecht (1713)* (Brill, 2015) and editor of *The Roots of Nationalism: National Identity Formation in Europe, 1600-1815* (Amsterdam University Press, 2016).