

## Anglo-Dutch Wars

Conflict over trade routes and dominance of the seas erupted between England the Dutch Republic and resulted in three wars from 1652–1674. The Dutch, more interested in trade than colonizing in contrast to their European competitors, had established themselves as the dominant middlemen for trade in the Atlantic Ocean with one of the largest mercantile fleets. Initially united in their Protestant faith and anti-Spanish stance, the English grew to see Dutch primacy in the Atlantic as a threat to English national security. At the time of the first Anglo-Dutch war, the Dutch out-traded all other European nations combined. This was especially the case after the English Civil War (1642–1652), during which the Dutch secured the upper hand. Following the English Civil War, England passed the Navigation Acts to hamper Dutch trade. These acts were designed to protect English trade with their colonies in the Americas and stated that goods could only be imported into England on English ships, thus cutting out direct trade between colonies and the Dutch. Since the Dutch made most of their money by carrying goods for other nations, the Navigation Acts had a significant impact. The Dutch responded by declaring war on England in protest of the policy, initiating the first Anglo-Dutch war in 1652. Fighting naval battles in the English Channel, and the Mediterranean and North Seas, the English captured over 1000 Dutch ships. The first war ended with the Treaty of Westminster in 1654. The Dutch, however, immediately began bolstering its navy to make up for the lost ships.

The English sparked the second Anglo-Dutch war, waged from 1665–1667, by attacking Dutch ships and seizing Dutch forts in West Africa. The English also seized the Dutch North American colony of New Amsterdam in 1664, which they renamed New York. The Dutch responded by attacking and seizing English trading posts in Surinam and South America. After several naval battles, the Dutch launched an attack on the English fleet at the mouth of the Thames River, destroying fifteen ships and emerging victorious. A peace treaty, concluded between the two nations in 1667, allowed the English to keep the North American colony they seized, New York, while the Dutch kept the trading posts they seized in Surinam. The English also tempered the harmful Navigation Acts to accommodate Dutch trade. Another war over trading dominance, however, was soon to come.

The third Anglo-Dutch war had less to do with colonies and trading posts than the previous war. This time the issue was closer to home. The English King Charles II signed a secret pact with the French King Louis XIV in support of the latter's claim to lands in the region of the southern Netherlands. King Charles II pledged the English navy to invade the Dutch Republic by sea as French armies invaded by land. The Dutch successfully repelled English attempts by sea, damaging many ships in the English fleet. With repair costs mounting on top of war costs, the English Parliament forced King Charles II to abandon the war effort in 1674 and make peace.

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Even though the Dutch Republic claimed a number of victories, the Anglo-Dutch wars ultimately weakened Dutch dominance of Atlantic trade. These conflicts also altered naval warfare and resulted in new battle tactics. For example, the English arranged their heavily armed ships in a straight line to prevent Dutch ships from maneuvering and boarding. This arrangement created more distance between enemies and relied more heavily on canon fire. By the end of the Anglo-Dutch wars, this formation became the standard in naval warfare.

