



K O N I N K L I J K E N E D E R L A N D S E  
A K A D E M I E V A N W E T E N S C H A P P E N

**The Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for History awarded to Geoffrey Parker**

Ladies and gentlemen,

What did the Vietnam War and the Dutch Revolt against Spain – better known here as the Eighty Years War – have in common? According to Geoffrey Parker, both involved large, powerful nations investing huge resources in trying to overcome resistance in much smaller countries – and ultimately failing.

In the nineteen-sixties, the war in Vietnam inspired Geoffrey Parker to investigate the Dutch struggle for independence. As he was born and bred in the United Kingdom rather than in the Netherlands or Spain, his view of the conflict was free of national prejudices. In fact, his transnational perspective was unique at that time. His subsequent survey of the conflict between the Netherlands and Spain became a classic, and since then no other historian has dared to undertake a similar study.

Geoffrey Parker continued to focus on the history of warfare. He recognized how military innovations significantly changed European history during the sixteenth century, just as they do today.

At the time, for example, Dutch towns were quick to follow the Italian model of building star-shaped fortifications, which were able to resist encircling armies for some time. It was a clever invention that made it very costly for Spain to retake Dutch towns.

Geoffrey Parker also uncovered how military commanders such as Maurits, Prince of Orange, and his cousin Lodewijk of Nassau employed science, engineering and Roman military text books to develop new methods of warfare. Those innovations helped the Dutch to gain their independence from the Spanish Habsburgs.

He also argued that emerging European nation states were able to extend their power by learning to build sailing ships large enough to carry heavy cannons. Whatever area of history he examines, Geoffrey Parker always takes a transnational approach. He was among the first to practice what we now call 'World History': examining history from a global perspective.

He has recently embarked on a study of how global climate changes impacted on our past. It is an intriguing issue, and we are curious to see how his work will again help to change the details of history books.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in celebrating Noel Geoffrey Parker as winner of the 2012 Heineken Prize for History.