

# Faithfull Allies?

*Dutch reactions to the American Vision of German Rearmament,*

*1945-1955*



Protest Graffiti stating: "No German Rearmament" on the Korte Prinsengracht railwaybridge, Amsterdam 1951. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Nu en Toen", 2011, <http://www.nuendoen.nl/fotos/191129/02-03-195109006-geen-duitse-herbewapening.html>

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## Acknowledgments

"The man who has no sense of history, is like a man who has no ears or eyes."<sup>2</sup>

Adolf Hitler

History is a good starting point for these acknowledgments since I studied history for my Bachelor degree. But it has been a long ride past many different studies and institutions, too long the government would say. And although I have no idea how, I am sure I will find a way to repay society for their contribution to the best time of my life (so far).

Germany has been a constant in my studies, this being the second master thesis to have her in a starring role. Recently I have 'acquired' a German niece and I would like to dedicated this thesis to her. I would also like to dedicated this thesis to that other constant in my life, my parents without them I would have never had the opportunities I have now.

Off course this thesis would have not come to be if I was without academic guidance, for that I would like to thank Jaap Verheul and Jack Thompson.

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<sup>2</sup>Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1936-1945 Vergelding*, ed. Margreet de Boer (Utrecht: Spectrum, 2000), 112

## 1. Introduction

"For the first time in its history The Netherlands are completely anti-German."<sup>3</sup>

J.L Heldring

Not surprisingly, the attitude of the Dutch public towards their former enemy after the Second World War was inauspicious. Apart from the Soviet Union, Poland and Germany, the Netherlands had suffered more than any other European nation.

In 1949 the American government for the first time officially voiced the need for Germany to contribute to the European defense. Despite the anti-German state of mind among the Dutch and their fellow Europeans, the Dutch government supported the American initiative to rearm the *Bundes Republik Deutschland* (BRD) in no less than ten years after the German army had devastated Europe.<sup>4</sup>

Foreign minister Dirk U. Stikker was very aware of the attitude of the Dutch public towards Germany in those days, but in a speech directed to the gathered representatives of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in New York in September 1950, he was surprisingly pragmatic: "The Dutch really had no reason to like the Germans, and in fact they did not (...) but 80% of the members of parliament would agree to American rearmament of Germany." Stikker told

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<sup>3</sup> J.L Heldring, in: Friso Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak: Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1989), 34

<sup>4</sup> America and the US, these terms will be used to signify the United States of America and D.A Hellema, *Frontlijn van de Koude Oorlog De Duitse herbewapening en het Atlanisch bondgenootschap* (Amsterdam: Jan Mets, 1984), 35

the representatives: "Germany should take its share of the defense of Europe". In addition, he pleaded for continuing American military aid and presence in Europe: "Nobody in the Netherlands believes that the defense of Europe could be made by the continent alone."<sup>5</sup>

These remarks raise several questions. If the Dutch public attitude about the Germans was so dissenting, why did the government want to rearm them? The American initiative of rearming Germany, as will be shown in this thesis, quickly found support amongst a large part of the Dutch government. What were the reasons for this? How did the reactions of the Dutch government and public evolve? Were the Dutch just following the American lead, were they just being good Allies? What visions lay behind this American initiative? These are some of the guiding questions driving this thesis.

This thesis will cover the period of 1945 until 1955, the period when ideas about German rearmament took flight and when serious talks and steps towards that end were made. The discussions covered in this thesis will sometimes fall outside of the set period, since visions are developed over a longer period of time. The period discussed in this thesis ends with the entry of the BRD into NATO, completing the process set in motion by the American government. This thesis will concentrate on the expression of public opinion through newspapers and polling data. Alongside with the public, the Dutch government will be represented through various sources of government officials.

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<sup>5</sup> Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak: Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 98 and *Ibid*, 99

The main question that guides this thesis is the following: How did the Dutch react to the American initiative of rearming Germany and how can this reaction be explained? This research question will be further introduced after the academic context has been examined.

This introduction will proceed with an overview of the historical background, in order to place the events discussed in this thesis in the correct context. Subsequently, the academic discussions surrounding the topics related to this thesis will be explored. Finally, the main research question will be introduced.

## 1.a Historical Background

"This war is not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory imposes on it his own social system."<sup>6</sup>

Joseph Stalin

In 1943 Adolf Hitler gave a speech in the Berlin *Sportpalast* where he spoke of the world after the war: "In this war there will be neither victors nor vanquished, but only survivors and annihilated".<sup>7</sup>

After the war his Germany had become the annihilated and the Allies were the survivors. However, within a few years the East and the West would be locked in a new conflict and Germany would (again) be called upon to stem the proverbial red tide.

In a number of conferences held during and after the war, the Allies tried to decide on the fate of Germany and Europe for the next fifty years. The visions of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin were very different but during the Yalta Conference they could agree on a common policy. The uneasy alliance preserved throughout the war, but the relationship with the Soviets soared. After the unconditional surrender of Nazi-Germany and the subsequent occupation of Germany, the different visions of the Allies crystallized very quickly into the ideological struggle of the Cold War. Germany, the centre of the previous wars, would be the focal point of this next conflict as well.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> David Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe* (London: Longman, 1992), 5

<sup>7</sup> Richard Overy, *Why The Allies Won* (London: Pimlico, 1996), 306

<sup>8</sup> Leiby, *The unification of Germany, 1989-1990*. and Henry A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon&Schuster, 1994), 394-422

The onset of the Korean War<sup>9</sup> in 1950 created a situation in under-defended Europe that America wanted to address. To the American government it became ever more apparent that the BRD should be remilitarized and brought into NATO in order to withstand the militant Communism that was seen in Korea.<sup>10</sup>

The Europeans were reluctant and the French tried to beat America to the punch and keep German rearmament under their control. The French proposed their idea of the European Defense Community, but this plan collapsed and the BRD was brought into NATO. European fears were stifled by the assurance that NATO would, as the first secretary-general of NATO stated, "Keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down." This thesis focuses on the reaction of the Dutch on these developments.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 473-492

<sup>10</sup> Philip D. Zelikow and Rice Condoleezza, *Germany unified and Europe transformed : A study in statecraft* (Cambridge: Harvard U.P, 1996), 10-15

<sup>11</sup> David Reynolds, *The origins of the Cold War in Europe. International perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 13 and Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 514-516 and Juergen C. Doerr, *The big powers and the German question, 1941-1990 : a selected bibliographic guide* (New York: Garland, 1992), 323-331

## 1.b Academic context

"In some countries German rearmament might run into political problems, but in the Netherlands the public opinion will only be positively affected if Germany is involved in the defense of Europe."<sup>12</sup>

Dirk Stikker

The general attitude towards German rearmament of Dutch officials and the Dutch public can be described as positive. From 1945 to 1949 the attitude of the Dutch public changed to become ever more positive towards their former enemy to the east. This does not tell the whole story; there were many opponents in the government and the public who did not want their powerful neighbor to rearm itself. The academic context of this story will be explored in this section.<sup>13</sup>

First, this thesis will address the academic discussion on American visions of post-war Europe. From these visions post-war policy came forth. How does the academic discussion treat the development of these visions? Exploration of these visions will give more insight in the formation of post-war attitudes in the US towards Germany and Europe. Finally, this chapter will cover themes considering the German rearmament, the Dutch reaction, and Dutch foreign policy . The goal here is to discover the academic consensus and the disagreements on the Dutch reaction to German

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<sup>12</sup> Dutch Foreign minister Dirk Stikker, in a conversation with British foreign minister Ernest Bevin in: Wielenga, *Van Vijand tot Bondgenoot: Nederland en Duitsland na 1945*, 46

<sup>13</sup> J C H Blom, "Jaren van tucht en ascese Enige beschouwingen over de stemming in Herrijzend Nederland(1945-1950)" 1, no. 1 (1975): 300-333, [http://www.knhg.nl/bmgn2/B/Blom\\_J.\\_C.\\_H.\\_-Jaren\\_van\\_tucht\\_en\\_ascese\\_Enige\\_beschouwin.pdf](http://www.knhg.nl/bmgn2/B/Blom_J._C._H._-Jaren_van_tucht_en_ascese_Enige_beschouwin.pdf), 320-333

rearmament. These questions will show how this thesis fits in these scholarly discussions and how it can provide new insights and add to these discussions.

## American visions

The initiative to form post-war Europe lay with the main victorious nations which were the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Soviet Union. In post-war Europe the United States became the main initiator of Western Allied policy. These initiatives sprang from the visions from representatives in the administrations of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman (some of which can be traced back to older ideas of Americans about Europe). This thesis will explore the academic discussion on these visions.

Geir Lundestad's view on European-American relations differs from the standard; he disagrees with the crisis perspective that is mainly used to describe the relation. His focus lies on the strong ties between Europe and America from a cultural, economical and military perspective. Comparatively, NATO was a strong alliance and the bond between Western Europe and America was solid, although not without its crises. David Ellwood gives more attention to the economic side of the ideas regarding the future of Europe. The first post-war ideas focused primarily on economic

issues, such as free-trade, and less on security.<sup>14</sup>

Lundestad stresses the American post-war integrationist ideas concerning Europe, the integrationists saw a United States of Europe as the solution to the 'European problem'. In this view, America would be the ultimate arbiter and pacifier in Europe. Ellwood indicates that on the American side, the positive outlook on European integration developed much later. In the first post-war planning it was feared that these developments would overshadow the effectiveness of the United Nations.

John Lamberton presents a more detailed description of the views of three important policymakers, namely those of Franklin D. Roosevelt, George Kennan and Dean Acheson. The different opinions inside the administrations are shown and Lundestad's portrayal of the positive American outlook on NATO and European integration is put in doubt. FDR, Kennan and Acheson never envisioned that the American government would become so entangled in European affairs, although they had a different rationale for this stance on American isolation or insulation from Europe. Ellwood indicates that the American government experienced difficulties with FDR's plans when the reality of the Cold War slowly caught up with these idealistic plans. The US post-war policy finally crystallized into the Truman Doctrine which incorporated Kennan's containment ideas.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe*. and Lundestad, *The United States And Western Europe Since 1945 From "Empire" by Invitation to Transatlantic drift*.

<sup>15</sup> Harper, *American Visions of Europe*.

According to Lamberton, FDR at first wanted a weak Europe and a divided Germany. Europe could then be pacified by the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union. FDR's view horrified Kennan who had a dislike for the Soviet Union and communism and did not want Germany or Europe to be split up. Ellwood describes the same discrepancies between the visions of FDR and Kennan. Kennan saw the need for Germany to be strong and to take the lead, although he realized fully that this might be an unpopular message: "I am afraid that while we cannot say so, what we have to do is to persuade the Europeans to find a way to permit Germany's leadership to become manifest without involving military and political controls of a nationalist Germany over the other countries of Europe."<sup>16</sup>

Both men never wanted an alliance such as NATO. But while FDR took a moral 'New World' stance, Kennan had a more realist 'Old World' view on the situation. Acheson's ideas can be placed somewhere in between, believing in an (economically) united Europe but without pressure from the US or control by the UK or France. On this topic Kennan commented: "Our position here should be to encourage, help, to constantly remind, to urge all the speed that is possible, but basically to understand."<sup>17</sup> Ellwood is in agreement with the views of Lamberton and indicates that even after the pact was signed, America saw it as psychological support for its new European allies.

Acheson and his colleagues gradually were drawn into the Cold War, fearing not so much a direct attack of the Soviet Union but more the loss of their European Allies due to lack of

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 218

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 288

confidence in the US. Europe was central, indispensable as component of the world economy, a geopolitical entity and its fate was vital to the US. Acheson, just as Kennan, saw Germany as the shield behind which Europe could recover but he did not want Germany to lead. Ellwood, Lamberton and Lundestad all agree that the "logic" of the Cold War dictated the chosen path of rearming Germany and rebuilding Europe. The Cold War and declining European power, got in the way of idealistic views and America entangled herself with the Continent. Something neither FDR, Kennan nor Acheson had wanted.

## German rearmament and the Dutch reaction

As noted above , the various visions of American policymakers did not become reality. Instead, they chose to push for a full integration of West-Germany, including an army. An interesting theme in the publications on German rearmament are the similarities Dutch scholars discern in the thoughts of the Americans and British on German rearmament. Duco Hellema, for instance, is one of the Dutch scholars who has published on the subject of German rearmament. He paints a picture of Anglo-Saxon allies who wanted to keep the *Wehrmacht* intact as long as possible during and right after the war.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Hellema, *Nederland in de wereld : buitenlandse politiek van Nederland in de 20ste Eeuw*; Hellema, *Neutraliteit & vrijhandel: De geschiedenis van de Nederlandse buitenlandse betrekkingen*; Hellema, *Frontlijn van de Koude Oorlog De Duitse herbewapening en het Atlanisch bondgenootschap*.

Lundestad also stresses the early American initiative, especially from 1949 onwards, to rebuild Germany to give it independence and finally an army. The change in defensive strategy of Europe from one on the fringes to a more forward strategy on the Elbe, the outbreak of the Korean War and the constant disappointment with European rearmament made the American government push for German rearmament. This same point of view is voiced by van der Harst, Hellema and Wielenga. The American initiative and the reasons mentioned above are the academic consensus regarding this topic.<sup>19</sup>

The academic consensus on the Dutch reaction to German rearmament is best described as the following: The Dutch quickly realized that they needed Germany first of all economically, but also militarily for their own reconstruction and also to move the possible Cold War battleground from Dutch territory to that of Germany. In a number of publications this view is agreed upon such as in the previously mentioned works by Friso Wielenga, Duco Hellema and Jan van der Harst but also in the thesis by M.A Rouw.<sup>20</sup>

Another interesting theme is the view on the public opinion which can be found in the publications of Wielenga and Hellema. The general view was that the Dutch public had a very

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<sup>19</sup> Wielenga, *Van Vijand tot Bondgenoot: Nederland en Duitsland na 1945*. and Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak: Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*. and Jan Van der Harst, *The Atlantic Priority* (Florence: European Press Academic Publishing, 2003), 16

<sup>20</sup> Rouw, "De Duitse herbewapening: een onderzoek naar de houding van de westerse landen, met name Nederland, ten opzichte van de Duitse herbewapening, na de verwerping van de Europese Defensie Gemeenschap, september - oktober 1954."

adverse attitude towards the Germans after the Second World War but both scholars show that this was not the case.<sup>21</sup>

## Dutch foreign policy

A heavily debated theme in the literature is the assumption that the Dutch were a faithful American ally and therefore a supporter of the American initiative to rearm Germany. A defender of this assumption is M.A Rouw, who describes the Dutch policy as one of wait and see. He also points out that the Dutch, from the start, were in favor of the creation of the United Nations and against European integration since that would serve as an alternative to Atlantic ties. The reasoning behind this was the fear that the Americans would leave the Europeans to fend for themselves once the integration was complete.<sup>22</sup>

Hellema and Wielenga have a different view on the Dutch-American relation. They describe the Dutch government as actively trying to influence the four and later three powers to follow their line: the Dutch pursued their own path in the Indonesian conflict, were outright negative towards the United Nations and were not convinced of the Allied approach to the Cold War and Germany.<sup>23</sup>

Van der Harst adds to this line of reasoning by depicting the attitude of that government in the

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<sup>21</sup> Wielenga, *Van Vijand tot Bondgenoot: Nederland en Duitsland na 1945*.

<sup>22</sup> Rouw, "De Duitse herbewapening : een onderzoek naar de houding van de westerse landen, met name Nederland, ten opzichte van de Duitse herbewapening, na de verwerping van de Europese Defensie Gemeenschap, september - oktober 1954."

<sup>23</sup> The four powers are: United States, France, The UK, USSR, with the USSR being dropped.

years 1945-1951 as reluctant to rearm in the context of NATO. Wielenga and Hellema share the same attitude, the reasoning behind it is a more contested area. Wielenga and Hellema agree that the disinclination was caused by the state of the Dutch economy, the trouble in Indonesia and reliance (at first, until the Soviets developed a nuclear device) on American nuclear deterrence. They see the issue as being connected with the Dutch demands for fast German economic and military buildup. Van der Harst, on the other hand, sees the influence of the neutrality tendency in Dutch foreign policy surfacing in this reluctance.<sup>24</sup>

In recent years The Netherlands have been identified as the 'good' ally of the American government with interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Dutch have always, as they perceive it, fostered a 'special relationship' with the America. The Dutch reaction towards German rearmament, its foreign policy and whether or not the Dutch are such 'good' allies to the America, can be better understood if one takes into account three tendencies which strongly influenced the Dutch foreign policy throughout its existence and especially after the Second World War, a period which is often described as a turning point in its foreign policy direction. The three tendencies are: neutrality, Atlanticism and Europeanism.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Van der Harst, *The Atlantic Priority*, 16

<sup>25</sup> Kim Van der Wijngaard, *Bondgenootschap onder spanning Nederlands-Amerikaanse betrekkingen, 1969-1976* (Hilversum: Verloren b.v., 2011), 9-17 and Rouw, "De Duitse herbewapening : een onderzoek naar de houding van de westerse landen, met name Nederland, ten opzichte van de Duitse herbewapening, na de verwerping van de Europese Defensie Gemeenschap, september - oktober 1954.", 5-10

The first tendency starts when The Netherlands skyrocketed from its creation in the Eighty Years' War<sup>26</sup> to a position of wealth and power, wheeling the balance of power to protect its own existence. From this position it turned to neutrality to protect its interests, believing that peace, free trade and the management of its colonies were more than enough to secure its wealth and stability. In the second half of the 19th century until the Second World War this attitude was fueled by a feeling of moral supremacy, the idea that the Dutch resolved their conflicts without violence, using international law and seeing economic dependence as the way to pacify the world.<sup>27</sup>

Scholars disagree when this tendency ended. Most scholars see neutrality as a mentality, Rouw claims it did not end until the Dutch joined the Pact of Brussels in 1948, committing itself to an alliance for the first time since the Napoleonic wars. Hellema describes the ending of the neutrality mentality during the Dutch government's exile period in London, where it actively sought to start an alliance system, where he sees the start of Atlanticism and the focus on the Atlantic ties to provide the Dutch with their security and their free trade.<sup>28</sup>

The second tendency is Atlanticism, which is best described as the belief that the best course

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<sup>26</sup> The war of independence of the Netherlands

<sup>27</sup> Hellema, *Neutraliteit & vrijhandel: De geschiedenis van de Nederlandse buitenlandse betrekkingen*. and Hellema, *Nederland in de wereld : buitenlandse politiek van Nederland in de 20ste Eeuw*, 9 and Rouw, "De Duitse herbewapening : een onderzoek naar de houding van de westerse landen, met name Nederland, ten opzichte van de Duitse herbewapening, na de verwerping van de Europese Defensie Gemeenschap, september - oktober 1954.", 6-10 and Jan Albert Schoneveld, "Tussen Atlantica en Europa: Over de opkomst en ondergang van de Spagaat in de Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek" (Universiteit Leiden, 2000), 2-3 also Ibid, 17-30

<sup>28</sup> Hellema, *Neutraliteit & vrijhandel: De geschiedenis van de Nederlandse buitenlandse betrekkingen*, 114-117 and Rouw, "De Duitse herbewapening : een onderzoek naar de houding van de westerse landen, met name Nederland, ten opzichte van de Duitse herbewapening, na de verwerping van de Europese Defensie Gemeenschap, september - oktober 1954.", 10-12

in Dutch foreign policy is to seek American (and British) support and to come to agreement with and follow its lead in international politics to secure some influence in the world. It is translated into several policies, for example the military alignment with America, which means relying on American equipment and training. As stated above, the period when Atlanticism entered into Dutch foreign policy is a contested subject. Hellema places the entry during the period of exile in London, van der Harst sees the prime of the American relation set in after the Soviet nuclear bomb in August 1949. Most scholars agree that the period of German rearmament from 1949 until 1954, when the BRD was admitted into NATO, was a period of realignment in Dutch foreign policy which ended the tendency of neutralism and gave birth to Atlanticism. In that same period, however, a different point of view arose: Europeanism. At first it was seen as a competing view, but it would turn into a parallel development.<sup>29</sup>

Europeanism finds its roots in the need to put an end to the largest conflict on the European continent, namely that of France and Germany, a conflict that sparked numerous wars from the end of the empire of Charlemagne onward into the modern era with two world wars. To bring rapprochement between the two warring nations the European Coal and Steel Community (ESCS) was set up, to put supranational control on the production of coal and steel. The United States was very much in favor of European integration, many Americans hoped to see the emergence of a United States of Europe. This would make Europe an easier partner to deal with and would put an

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<sup>29</sup> For more information on Atlanticism and the issues surrounding it see: Kranenburg, *De Atlantische Gemeenschap*.

end to conflicts in the region.<sup>30</sup> It is assumed that the Dutch were European enthusiasts of the first hour, joining all initiatives and being one of the largest (per capita) contributors to the EU. This notion is contested in the scholarly world; most scholars agree that the Dutch pursued European integration on trade related issues. But on supranational initiatives such as the EDC they were fervent skeptics, fearing for their sovereignty and the influence of larger nations.<sup>31</sup> Some scholars such as Hellema and Wielenga show the differences in attitudes within the Dutch government and point out that the Dutch parliament was much more enthusiastic about European initiatives than the cabinet. Hellema and Wielenga use this to explain the different directions the Dutch took on European initiatives. Hellema and also Samkalden point out that, even though the Dutch government in general was against any supranational structure, they did support it for different reasons.,for example to promote their idea of a European trade union, or to gain more influence on matters concerning Germany.<sup>32</sup> After the failure of the EDC, the focus of European integration was on economic integration, something which the Dutch had been in favor of. The Dutch then turned into European forerunners, although never abandoning the Atlantic ties for European integration.

The overlap and sometimes tension between Europeanism and Atlanticism in Dutch foreign policy is sometimes called a policy split. At the core of this split is the following question: Is

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas A. Schwartz, "The 'Skeleton Key'- American Foreign Policy, European Unity, and German Rearmament, 1949-1954," *Central European history* 19, no. 4 (1986): 373

<sup>31</sup> Hellema, *Nederland in de wereld : buitenlandse politiek van Nederland in de 20ste Eeuw*, 132-135

<sup>32</sup> Hellema, *Neutraliteit & vrijhandel: De geschiedenis van de Nederlandse buitenlandse betrekkingen*, 150 and I Samkalden, "A Dutch retrospective view on European and Atlantic co-operation," in *European and Atlantic co-operation : the Dutch attitude*, ed. Jaquet Louis George Martin (The Hague: Nederlands Genootschap voor Internationale Zaken, 1965), 626-650

European political cooperation a way to strengthen the Atlantic ties or is it to be used to gain a more independent position between the superpowers? The two options are both being used in Dutch foreign policy to keep its maneuvering space as large as possible. These options ensure the status quo which guarantees the Dutch will not be overshadowed by their larger European neighbors.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Schoneveld, "Tussen Atlantica en Europa: Over de opkomst en ondergang van de Spagaat in de Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek.", 1-16

## 1.e **Relevance**

The debate about Europeanism and Atlanticism is still present in current Dutch foreign policy:

Should The Netherlands follow America's lead or join the European Union in matters of foreign policy? But can this policy split be used to explain the Dutch reaction to Germany's rearmament?

Were the Dutch really the faithful followers of the Americans? To be able to answer these questions, this thesis will, as broadly as possible, chart the Dutch reaction to the American initiative to rearm Germany. This broadly described reaction will include the public via newspapers articles, polling data and the responses of government officials. Next, the Dutch foreign policy tendencies will be used as an analytic tool to help understand the Dutch reaction.

This thesis will contribute to the existing academic discussion on the Dutch reaction by using a combination of this broadly described reaction together with the use of the policy split as an analytic tool. This will shed new light on the academic discussions on the Dutch reaction to German rearmament and answer the above stated questions. As can be seen in the academic context in the previous section, ample research, primarily in Dutch, has been done on the Dutch side of the German rearmament question. The research done so far, lacks the combination of the aforementioned elements. It lacks a broad description of the Dutch reaction and the use of the foreign policy tendencies. The use of these elements will ensure a fresh look on this heavily researched issue and provide new insights which in turn can add new perspectives to the ensuing academic debate. These elements are enclosed in the simplified main research question: How did the

Dutch react to the American initiative of rearming Germany, and how can this reaction be explained?

As for the relevance of this thesis outside the academic world it can be stated that German military involvement in the world is still very precarious, as a recent incident in Afghanistan where a German ordered airstrike killed 100 civilians (the most casualties inflicted by the German army since World War Two) indicates. This reveals the topic of Germany having and using its military is very controversial.<sup>34</sup> The Netherlands has been a faithful ally to America but the relation under George W. Bush has shown signs of strains. In recent years The Netherlands has clearly overstretched itself in the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, and it will be interesting to see what recent budget cuts on defense will do to the good relations between The Netherlands and America. The topic of this thesis reveals the interplay between the diverse Allies after the war. This can shed light on current debates on relations between Germany, The Netherlands and America. Germany in recent years has swayed from being one of the best allies of America in Europe to one of the most critical of America's actions. While The Netherlands seem to value Atlantic relations over European relations, when it comes to crises the information distilled from this thesis will be interesting in regards to the course this dynamic relation took after the war.

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<sup>34</sup> Gebauer, "Aftermath of a Afghanistan Tragedy: Germany to pay \$500.000 for Civilian Bombing Victims."

## 1.g Structure

This thesis is chronologically ordered. It will start off by further introducing the main subject, German rearmament and give it a historical context. After this background has been properly sketched, the academic context of the thesis will be discussed, it will become clear where this thesis fits into the already present academic debates. Next it will move on to the relevant contribution this thesis has to offer to the scientific and public domains. All these elements sum up the introduction to this thesis.

This introduction will be followed by the main content of this thesis, which is divided in three chapters each describing a chronologically marked period starting with the period 1940 until 1949 next the period 1949 until 1954. The last period is the shortest but also the most important in light of the end result it starts in 1954 and ends with Germany's acceptance into NATO on the 6th of May 1955. After each chapter an analysis of that chapter follows, it contains an more detailed description of the motives and rationale of the main actors. Next to this the Dutch foreign policy tendencies will be used to further explain the behavior of the Dutch government in that period.

At the end of this thesis in the conclusion a overall picture will be painted of the American initiative to rearm Germany and in particular the Dutch reaction and explanation of that reaction.

## 2.a Exile, Postwar policy 1940-1949

When the Germans overran The Netherlands on the 10th of May 1940 in just 5 days, the Queen and much of the Dutch government fled the country to London. As the Russians and British fought for their very survival, the tables slowly turned against the Germans and plans for a post-war era were made. Starting as early as May 1941, the Dutch politicians joined their peers from other nations in discussions and planning sessions concerning reconstruction and other post-war issues.<sup>35</sup> In exile, the politicians looked beyond the Allied victory into what the future might hold for the recovering nations of Europe. In this chapter the developing visions of the Dutch and their peers will be discussed, followed by an analysis using the foreign policy tendencies. It will become clear that the Dutch, even during the war, developed ideas that envisioned a rebuild and revitalized German nation as soon as possible.

The second part of this chapter is dedicated to an analysis of this period: motives of the most important actors will be traced and the role of The Netherlands will be analysed with the help of the foreign policy tendencies

In the study groups (groups of experts formed from all the exiled nations in London) formed by a 'workgroup', future and present government officials participated in discussions regarding subjects such as the post-war world order. It was concluded by the participants (especially by most Dutch)

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<sup>35</sup> Johan Willem Beyen, *Het spel en de knikkers : een kroniek van vijftig jaren* (Rotterdam: Donker, 1968), 145-147 and Hellema, *Neutraliteit & vrijhandel: De geschiedenis van de Nederlandse buitenlandse betrekkingen*. 113 and Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe*. 3-12

should do without the 'one-world-illusion' of the American government: The League of Nations, it had proven itself to be too weak to prevent conflicts. Regional cooperation was better suited for resolving security issues, but it had to be balanced inside an international framework.<sup>36</sup>

In this spirit, Dutch foreign minister, E.N van Kleffens tried to take the initiative on the post-war world order and on 28th of May 1942 he launched a plan. This plan foresaw the pre-war Dutch neutrality policy as bankrupt and it tried to keep the Dutch influence in the world as large as possible. A number of alliances all over the world, the most important being the one between the nations on the Atlantic Ocean, would secure peace and should allow states to protect their interests in their part of the globe. The Dutch would enter three of five alliances since it was represented with its colonies in those areas; after all The Netherlands still had a colonial empire. Van Kleffens did not see decolonization on the horizon, but he did see the importance of the Atlantic ties and the alliance what would become NATO.<sup>37</sup>

Not everybody in the Dutch government in exile agreed, the new foreign minister at that time C.G.W.H. baron van Boetzelaar van Oosterhout kept faith in the 'one-world-illusion' and since America pursued this option, the Dutch followed. They kept their faith until the failed 4 power conference in London 1947.<sup>38</sup>

Germany was of course the dominating topic of debate during these years of exile in

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<sup>36</sup> Beyen, *Het spel en de knikers : een kroniek van vijftig jaren*, 145-153 and Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe*, 8-12

<sup>37</sup> Hellema, *Neutraliteit & vrijhandel: De geschiedenis van de Nederlandse buitenlandse betrekkingen*, 113-118

<sup>38</sup> H.J.G. Beunders and H.H. Selier, *Argwaan en Profijt: Nederland en West-Duitsland 1945-1981* (Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1983), 8-9 and Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak : Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 79-80

London. The study groups discussed what policy the Dutch government should follow after the Allies had liberated Europe. They discussed possible annexations but could not reach any agreement: most of the government officials were very mild in their ideas of about the treatment of Germany after the war. The way the Dutch representatives viewed Germany is well summarized by the future Prime-Minister, Willem Drees: "Through our geographical location are we destined to be a link (...) between Germany and the sea lanes, we ourselves have to maintain an extensive trade with Germany. It is therefore in Europe's interest as it is even more in our own nation's interest that Germany is allowed to economically recover, so that it is economically activated again, in the hope that it can be spiritually activated as well."<sup>39</sup> This somewhat pragmatic and mild view of Germany's treatment after the war was not shared at that time by the Dutch living under German rule. The attitude of the exiles in London also changed, when in the last years of the war, the battlefront extended over The Netherlands with the failure of Operation Market Garden. Destruction and famine were wreaking havoc on the Dutch population.<sup>40</sup>

Finally on the 5th of May, after a long cold winter, the northern part of The Netherlands was liberated and the country was free again. There were more pressing problems than the status of Germany and especially the Dutch public had something else on its mind: revenge. The days after

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<sup>39</sup> Wielenga, *Van Vijand tot Bondgenoot: Nederland en Duitsland na 1945*, 19-20 and Beyen, *Het spel en de knikers : een kroniek van vijftig jaren*, 145-207

<sup>40</sup> J.L Heldring, in: Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak : Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 34 and Beunders and Selier, *Argwaan en Profijt: Nederland en West-Duitsland 1945-1981*, 8-13

liberation were taken up by *bijltjesdag*.<sup>41</sup> A poll done in November 1945 leaves no doubt what was on the mind of the Dutch people. To the question: “Do the worst offenders need to be punished by death?”, 73% percent answered yes. Nevertheless, there was room for reconciliation as the answers to the next poll question show: “Could political prisoners, after completing the duration of their imprisonment, return to society?” 68% answered yes. The Dutch government actively tried to steer the public away from revenge, to the awesome task of rebuilding the country. An important newspaper at that time put the spirit of this policy as following: "The attention of the Dutch people is taken up by revenge, which is on the top of the agenda, when instead there should be the directive: reconstruction and recovery of our people's strength."<sup>42</sup>

Presumably the Dutch public, and maybe the government as well, knew nothing of the proceedings in Germany concerning its government and its army. There the Western Allies, especially the British with their fervent anti-communist leader Winston Churchill, left the 'new' German leadership under Reichspräsident Karl Dönitz alone for the first few weeks. They did the same with the Wehrmacht units that were captured, or that surrendered. It would take until the summer of 1945, months after the capitulation of Nazi-Germany for the British to dissolve 'their' German divisions. Reluctantly, the British ended the Donitz government and its German army under pressure of General Eisenhower who was bound by the Yalta agreement with the Soviet Union.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Bijltjesdag, were the days after liberation were collaborators were punished by the public

<sup>42</sup> Blom, “Jaren van tucht en ascese Enige beschouwingen over de stemming in Herrijzend Nederland(1945-1950).”

<sup>43</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1936-1945 Vergelding*, ed. Margreet de Boer (Utrecht: Spectrum, 2000), 1097-1110, and Hellema, *Frontlijn van de Koude Oorlog De Duitse herbewapening en het Atlanisch bondgenootschap*, 12-19 and Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*.

The Americans and British still kept using German prisoners of war for a diversity of tasks. These *Dienstgruppen* or 'Labor service units', were used primarily for military tasks and set up as Para-military units. Dutch newspapers of that time seemed to report these developments objectively, prisoners of war in The Netherlands were used in mine clearing detachments at that same time. The stationing of these units led to numerous troubles with the local population, German soldiers were, as could be expected, not popular.<sup>44</sup>

For the Dutch government the period until 1947 was one of waiting, as it tried to be involved in the decisions made on Germany, especially on economic issues which were so important for the reconstruction of The Netherlands. But despite numerous attempts issuing reports and asking to be invited to the various conferences, sometimes in accordance with the newly created Benelux, they were rejected. Aside from this barring from the decisions on Germany, their demands for annexations and reparation payments were laid aside by the British and American governments.<sup>45</sup>

By the end of 1947 Dutch policy only kept their annexation, judicial and payment demands alive, since budging now would be seen as defeat.<sup>46</sup> In the end, it was agreed that harsh treatment of Germany was not only harmful to Dutch interests, but would also leave it more vulnerable to communism or some form of '*Alleingang*'<sup>47</sup> which would lead to a renewed threat. The idea that

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<sup>44</sup>Hellema, *Frontlijn van de Koude Oorlog De Duitse herbewapening en het Atlanisch bondgenootschap*. 36-39 and A.N.P, "Honderdduizend man verrichten arbeidsdiensten." and Hollestelle, "Himmelfahrt kommando: Duitse krijgsgevangenen op Walcheren."

<sup>45</sup> Wielenga, *Van Vijand tot Bondgenoot: Nederland en Duitsland na 1945*, 21- 61

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 33-34 and Beunders and Selier, *Argwaan en Profijt: Nederland en West-Duitsland 1945-1981*, 18-21

<sup>47</sup> German word for the neutral option for Germany, siding with neither bloc

Germany needed to be rebuilt as soon as possible, to fend off a Soviet threat, combined with Dutch recovery is the most important factor that determined Dutch policy towards its neighbor. It must be noted that most Dutch politicians were not very convinced of the Soviet military threat and saw the threat more as a societal and economical one.<sup>48</sup> The Dutch public on the other hand had a more negative view of the intentions of the Soviet Union, over a period of several years polls were conducted (see Appendix I and II).

These polls clearly show that the Dutch public's fears were moving away from their neighbor to the Soviet Union, even before any major crisis had caused tension to spark between the Allies. In only three years time the Soviet Union developed into the new enemy. The following crises would only serve to underpin this image.<sup>49</sup>

While the Dutch public was clearly warming up to the idea of a revived Germany, the Western Allies were by now also actively committed to the reconstruction of Germany and the rest of Europe. Their cooperation with the Soviets had run into the ground and soon the first crisis would begin to develop, namely the Berlin blockade of 1948. From 1947 onwards the British and the American policy towards Germany would be very much in line with what was being conceived in The Hague. The Dutch government however wanted more than the Allies, such as a return of sovereignty on

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<sup>48</sup> Wielenga, *Van Vijand tot Bondgenoot: Nederland en Duitsland na 1945*, 21-23 and *Ibid*, 40 and Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak: Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 40-41

<sup>49</sup> Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe*, 98-111

economic matters to the newly founded Bundesrepublik Deutschland, since the autarkic policies of the occupational authorities were hurting the recovery of the Dutch economy.<sup>50</sup> No longer would there be an element of revenge or punishment of Germany in the policies of the Western Allies. Ideas such as the far flung Morgenthauplan (which would turn Germany into a purely agrarian state) would be pushed aside.<sup>51</sup>

The American government launched the Marshallplan (European Recovery Plan) to build up Europe and Germany to make sure communism would not spread amongst the devastated European nations. The rejection of this plan by the Soviet Union and its (by now) satellite states in Eastern-Europe, caused an ever growing rift between the Allies. It meant that a joint policy on Europe would not be a possibility.<sup>52</sup>

This rift inadvertently increased the Dutch influence over German policy since it put the Dutch policy in line with what the Allies were planning. The Allies now needed the cooperation of all states in Europe and the Benelux as organization was seen as a forerunner for European integration, something which the Americans were all in favor of. Something almost all of the Dutch public and government agreed upon was improving and strengthening the economic ties with Germany. In 1947 more polls were conducted and they show that the Dutch public saw the need for

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<sup>50</sup> Founded in October 1949

<sup>51</sup> Wielenga, *Van Vijand tot Bondgenoot: Nederland en Duitsland na 1945*, 226 and Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak: Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 26 and Robert McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European defense after World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 28 and Hellema, *Neutraliteit & vrijhandel: De geschiedenis van de Nederlandse buitenlandse betrekkingen*, 126-130

<sup>52</sup> McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European defense after World War II*, 5, 14 and Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe*, 79-97

German recovery as the only way to Dutch recovery. even though they were quite negative of the German people. This economic approach to Germany would overshadow the negative feelings. Partly as a result of this attitude the economic relation between Germany and The Netherlands changed dramatically over the following years. By 1949 most of the trade issues were resolved in that year the American government, on behalf of the BDR, signed a new trade agreement which was very favorable to the Dutch.<sup>53</sup>

As stated before, the Dutch government and the general public were increasingly convinced of the danger of the Soviet Union and communism. This became even more apparent when the Montgomery-plan for the defense of Europe was revealed. This defense would start at the rivers the IJssel and the Rhine: the territories east of this line would be evacuated, which would mean total chaos. Refugees would be crossing the defensive lines, where the heaviest of the fighting was expected. It would also mean giving up Dutch and German territory without a fight and it would turn The Netherlands into the warzone of the Third World War. Foreign Minister Stikker was shocked and was now convinced that the defensive line should be pushed east as far as possible, which meant Germany needed to be involved in Europe's defense, but how? This was not clear. In 1949, government official Hans Max Hirschfeld produced a detailed rapport for the cabinet concerning which policy the Dutch government should follow on the matter of Germany. This

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<sup>53</sup> Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak: Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 80-83 and Wielenga, *Van Vijand tot Bondgenoot: Nederland en Duitsland na 1945*, 30

rapport will be discussed in the next chapter since this rapport and the discussion following it would have lasting influence on Dutch policy. The pressure to rearm Germany would build up in the following year and the Korean War would become its main catalyst.<sup>54</sup>

## 2.b Analysis

The Dutch policy towards Germany by this time was a convoluted mixture of the need for revenge, economic interests and the security issue of preventing any new danger arising from its neighbor.

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<sup>54</sup> Dirk U. Stikker, *Memoires Dirk U Stikker* (Rotterdam: Nijgh&Van Ditmar, 1966), 250-251 and McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European defense after World War II*, 10

These contrasting ideas made it rather difficult to form a consistent policy. This policy had to, on the one hand, seek revenge through reparations and annexations which they tried to arrange with the help of the Allies and later bilaterally. On the other hand it had to make sure Germany was treated kindly by the Allies and that it could be rebuilt as quickly as possible. First, the plea for German recovery was solely directed towards the economy, although officials were quick to discuss a defense contribution as well. The Dutch, as will become clear in the next chapter, were forced to accept and promote Germany rearmament. The most prominent reason for this is the slow own economical recovery and inability to rearm. The Indonesian conflict would also demand a lot of effort and attention. As explained, the Dutch government wanted the defensive line of NATO as far to the east as possible in order to keep The Netherlands from becoming the warzone of the next conflict. This meant they had to agree to Germany being involved in the defense of Europe. Although the public opinion supported German rearmament as well, the huge annexation plans of 1945 were not shared by the greater public. Furthermore, the annexation plans were kept alive and The Netherlands annexed small parts of Germany but they would not be the main focus of Dutch policy. Recovering strong economic ties was popular among the population and would be the main focal point of Dutch policy.<sup>55</sup>

The Dutch in the years from 1945 until 1949 were coming to grips with their changed

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<sup>55</sup> Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak : Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 20-21 and Beunders and Selier, *Argwaan en Profijt: Nederland en West-Duitsland 1945-1981*, 14 and Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak : Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 38-64

position in the world. Some in the public and in politics still thought the Dutch were a 'medium sized' power which should focus on its colonies and neutrality. But most realized neutrality had failed and a new orientation was necessary to preserve some influence in the world. Atlantic ties with the UK and America became the lifeboat with which the Dutch tried to maintain their international influence. They needed that influence to get the Allies to change their policies towards Germany and bring them in line with Dutch needs. By committing to the Allies in the form of NATO, neutrality was out the door and the colonial holdings would follow it. The Americans had a negative view of the Dutch ability to keep communism out of the Indonesian archipelago and were negative of imperialism in general. But not they would not give up their *Gordel van Smaragd* without a fight, the Dutch tried to maintain control over their Indonesian holdings and kept pursuing their own naval orientation in NATO rearmament, both matters were much to the annoyance of the American government.<sup>56</sup> However, by 1949 it was clear that the Atlantic ties were the best way to ensure the survival of Dutch interests. The Dutch now focused on leading the smaller nations, they formed the Benelux and wanted to prevent being overshadowed by its large neighbors. In the following years, Atlanticism would be accompanied by Europeanism as well.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Schoneveld, "Tussen Atlantica en Europa: Over de opkomst en ondergang van de Spagaat in de Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek.", 30-35 and Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak : Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 79-82

<sup>57</sup> Rouw, "De Duitse herbewapening : een onderzoek naar de houding van de westerse landen, met name Nederland, ten opzichte van de Duitse herbewapening, na de verwerping van de Europese Defensie Gemeenschap, september - oktober 1954.", 18 and Stikker, *Memoires Dirk U Stikker*, 159

### 3.a **Europe's failed baby steps**, *The European Defense Community*

Fear for Germany had not subsided in 1949, but many things were changing. As described in the previous chapter, military leaders in the Western Allies almost all agreed on the necessity of shoring up Europe's defense and that the only way available was using the BRD's military potential. As previously mentioned, the British and American political leadership were in accord with their

military. In The Netherlands there was still debate but the necessity was dawning on the Dutch: The IJssel-Rhine line, the pressure of the defense budget and the need for Germany to retain sovereignty in order for economic ties to be restored and shield it from communism all weighed in on the Dutch politicians.<sup>58</sup>

Pressure was not only building in the Netherlands. The United States was increasingly concerned with the lag in European defense buildup. In addition, they were also worried about the rising costs that the defense was bringing for the American taxpayer. A new strategy was developed to counter communism, which now possessed nuclear weapons, and it was laid out in the famous NSC-68 rapport. In the following chapter, it will become clear that the Dutch were forced to join the French initiative of establishing a European Defense Community. Eventually, this initiative would fail and bring about a crisis in German rearmament. As with the previous chapter, the description of the period will be followed by an analysis that uses previously introduced policy tendencies.<sup>59</sup>

A number of factors caused the heightened fear of communism which some, such as the Dutch cabinet, still did not see as a military threat. One of the factors was the development of an atomic bomb by the Soviets in September 1949. The Soviet Union had a vast numerical superiority in Europe, and the Dutch and the French had to deal with their own colonial wars.. Combined with

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<sup>58</sup> Henk Van Beek, "Historische Hindernissen en Praktische Problemen: De moeizame ontwikkeling van de Europese defensiesamenwerking 1945-Heden" (Utrecht, 2007), 15-17

<sup>59</sup> McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European defense after World War II*, 9 and 39-49



to join NATO and add its military resources to the defense of Europe, so that a forward defense on the Elbe could be set up.<sup>63</sup>

At the same time, the Dutch public became more instilled with fear of the Soviet Union as an imminent threat. Next to this, as seen in the previous polls, the Dutch were feeling more and more sympathetic towards the German people. The same cannot be said of the Dutch esteem of the Russians, whom they were starting to conceive more negatively as the polling data from 1949 suggest (see appendix III). These polls show the growing distrust of and fear for the Soviet Union, which in part can be explained by already existing abhorrence of communism before the war and by the Soviet suppression of the revolts in Berlin, Prague and Budapest.<sup>64</sup>

The Korean War of July 1950 would push the Dutch towards the insight that the Cold War conflict was military and action towards Europe's defense was needed as soon as possible. The war would become the trigger for Germany's rearmament in the eyes of both the Europeans and American governments. Korea demonstrated the Kremlin's world-dominating intentions to the world. In a message from the Dutch embassy in Oslo, it was stated that the fear that the communist threat was not just hypothetical and this view became widespread in all of Western Europe. The analogy between Korea and Germany was striking to the West (albeit superficially). Both divided undefended

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<sup>63</sup> McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European defense after World War II*, 1-20

<sup>64</sup> Blom, "Jaren van tucht en ascese Enige beschouwingen over de stemming in Herrijzend Nederland(1945-1950).", 324-329

countries, with the communist side being militarily superior.<sup>65</sup>

Europe's defense had been regulated by the pact of Brussels of 1948, which was signed by the Benelux, the UK and France. The pact was already an example of the fact that the focus of the military threat was no longer Germany, since the pact was not specifically aimed at Germany. Furthermore, to progress European integration, the Western Union had been created together with the pact. The American government supported this, as shown by the US High Commissioner for Germany: John J. McCloy, who emphasized on numerous occasions that a unified Europe could withstand the communist tide.<sup>66</sup>

The German Chancellor Konrad H.J. Adenauer had raised the question of some form of rearmament in 1949. He had always seen a military force as a big step towards sovereignty but now he was convinced of a real communist threat. He used Korea as leverage: "Stalin was planning the same procedure for West-Germany as had been used in Korea".<sup>67</sup> He was strengthened in this conviction when GDR leader Walter Ulbricht said that the BRD was about to share the same fate as South Korea. The Chancellor was still thinking about a 'police' force, similar to the force that had been set up by the Soviets in the GDR.<sup>68</sup>

The mental link that Adenauer made between the faith of his nation and South Korea,

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<sup>65</sup> Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, " Bericht Ambassade Oslo, 2 Augustus 1950 ", Archief Min Buza 1945-1954, Archief nmr. 17876, Nationaal Archief, Den Haag and McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European defense after World War II*, 20-25

<sup>66</sup> Schwartz, "The 'Skeleton Key'- American Foreign Policy, European Unity, and German Rearmament, 1949-1954.", 373

<sup>67</sup> Konrad Adenauer in: McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European defense after World War II*, 23

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 20-25

however flawed, would also be made by Dutch newspapers. *Trouw* reported: "The time had come for German rearmament as we are facing the same ruthless enemy as in the days of Hitler." *NRC* contemplated that: "After the recent political and economic linking up of Germany with the West it was now time for a military link up as well."<sup>69</sup>

In the summer of 1950 in Washington D.C., the decision was made that Europe's defense needed a rearmed Germany. President Truman came to the realization that Germany was needed for the Europe's defense to have any effect against a Soviet onslaught. He concluded: "Without Germany, the defense of Europe was a rearguard action on the shore of the Atlantic Ocean. With Germany, there could be a defense in depth, powerful enough to offer effective resistance to aggression from the East. The logic behind this situation is very plain. Any map will show it, and a little arithmetic will prove what the addition of German manpower means to the strength of the joint defense of Europe."<sup>70</sup>

To convince reluctant European allies, German rearmament was put in a package deal. This included: the provision of an American as Supreme NATO Commander, increased financial aid, the integration of alliance forces, and the sending of more U.S troops to the European area. The reasons were put as following: to balance the conventional numerical superiority of the Soviet Union before American atomic superiority could be neutralized; to counter rearmament of the communist satellite

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<sup>69</sup> Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak : Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 96 and "Tweede Pearl Harbor", *Trouw*, 27-7-1950 and "Duitslands Herbewapening", *NRC*, 28-7-1950

<sup>70</sup> President Truman in: McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European defense after World War II*, 26

states; and in particular to deter an attack by the GDR; to tap German manpower resources, considered not only quantitatively necessary but qualitatively superior as well. Another factor was Germany's geographical location as President Truman so astutely noted. There were political arguments as well: Germany was no longer a danger, equal treatment of Germany would lead to a German army and the key factor was Allied willingness to rearm. Another interesting consideration had effect on the American insistence on German rearmament; the American opinion tended to favor the Germans. They were seen as strong anti-communist, not susceptible to hostile propaganda. This was a contrast to France that had a chronically unstable political system and a large communist party. The Americans also wanted to cement Germany even further into Western Europe. The French and British also saw Germany's lack of military spending as an unfair economic advantage, something the Dutch agreed with.<sup>71</sup>

The debate would not end with this decision. Even if the military leaders might have agreed on the necessity of German rearmament, many civilian leaders in America feared that it might disturb the fragile democratic state or revoke militarism and nationalism.<sup>72</sup>

Despite the debates, the US representatives went to Europe to broker the deal. US foreign minister Dean Acheson found an ally in the Dutch foreign minister Stikker. At a NATO meeting at the instigation of Acheson, Stikker opened the discussion about the rearmament of Germany and

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 28-29 and Lundestad, *The United States And Western Europe Since 1945 From "Empire" by Invitation to Transatlantic drift*, 38-40

<sup>72</sup> Schwartz, "The 'Skeleton Key'- American Foreign Policy, European Unity, and German Rearmament, 1949-1954.", 371

moving the defense line eastwards.<sup>73</sup>

Although no European nation was overly excited by the prospect of a German army, the French were outright negative of the plan. Fearing German domination, they launched their own plan to keep the initiative (the Pleven-plan), hence keeping Germany under their control as much as possible and stall the whole development as much as possible. At the same time, General Dwight Eisenhower was frustrated with the slow pace of European armament programs, hearing the same complaints and requests from twelve different countries. A message from the Dutch embassy in Washington corroborates this impatience. It refers to an article in the New York Times, in which the rearmament of Europe is called a debate without end. Agitation about the slow pace of European decision making and the need to cut defense spending, made Eisenhower interested in the Pleven-plan and what would be called the European Defense Community. Just as McCloy, Eisenhower wished to see Europe united. Eisenhower said: "if European unity can be solved, all lesser problems would disappear".<sup>74</sup>

The Pleven-plan was launched in October 1950, French Prime Minister Pleven proposed an alternative solution: an integrated European army on battalion level, based on the European Coal Steel Community model. It would be an army with its own budget, minister of Defense, and its own

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<sup>73</sup> Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak : Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 97

<sup>74</sup> Schwartz, "The 'Skeleton Key' - American Foreign Policy, European Unity, and German Rearmament, 1949-1954.", 380 and Hellema, *Frontlijn van de Koude Oorlog De Duitse herbewapening en het Atlanisch bondgenootschap*, 42-45

representative body.<sup>75</sup>

The American government and most European nations thought of the idea as ridiculous, but it was pursued nevertheless. Initially, the Americans themselves were outright negative about the Pleven plan but it was seen as the only way to get the French to agree with the idea of a German army. At first, two tracks of negotiations on a German army were developed, namely one for a more independent army in Bonn. The other track consisted of the EDC negotiations in Paris. In late August 1951 the Truman administration, mostly at the instigation of McCloy and Eisenhower, adopted the EDC and it became part of the American policy for Europe.<sup>76</sup>

The Dutch government was not very enthusiastic about the EDC and at first did not join the negotiations. Amongst the public and in parliament however there were many who dreamed of European unity on this level. Right after the war, Resistance movements all over Europe (including the Dutch) expressed their hopes for a united Europe. Dutch newspapers reveal the public's enthusiasm for a joint European nation. Newspaper *Trouw* had been a long time supporter of a European army. *De Volkskrant* criticized the government for its absence at the negotiations and

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<sup>75</sup> A. Maurits Van der Veen, "Defending Integration or Integrating Defense? Ratifying the EDC in Belgium and the Netherlands" (University of Georgia, 2009), 3

<sup>76</sup>Minsterie van Buitenlandse Zaken, " Bericht Ambassade Washington D.C: Impatience with Europe, 18 December 1950 ", Archief Min Buza 1945-1954, Archief nmr. 17876, Nationaal Archief, Den Haag and Hellema, *Frontlijn van de Koude Oorlog De Duitse herbewapening en het Atlanisch bondgenootschap*, 46-49 and Schwartz, "The 'Skeleton Key'- American Foreign Policy, European Unity, and German Rearmament, 1949-1954.", 379-381 and Van der Veen, "Defending Integration or Integrating Defense? Ratifying the EDC in Belgium and the Netherlands.", 2, 18-20 and Lundestad, *The United States And Western Europe Since 1945 From "Empire" by Invitation to Transatlantic drift*, 79-89

spoke of: "the most daring attempt at bringing European unity and peace."<sup>77</sup>

Although the Dutch government was not enthusiastic, it was well aware of American pressure to find a solution to the slow rearmament of the European nations. From correspondence with the embassy in Washington D.C on the EDC, it is clear that the Americans put a lot of faith in the EDC project and failure would have dire consequences.. An important document with regard to the Dutch reaction to the EDC and German rearmament is the Hirschfeld report. In this report civil servant Hans Hirschfeld, working at the foreign ministry, laid out the future policy with regard to Germany. The report enveloped a wide range of topics ranging from advice on economic policy to security issues. It argued for the need of a strong Germany to shield itself and Europe from communism but also to help revive The Netherlands economically. The report pleaded for a strong unified Western-Europe with support of the US. The chain, however, is only as strong as its weakest link, which is why Germany also needed a strong army. The reasons for this policy were put as follows: "A political and economic weak Germany on this side of the Iron Curtain, a German people filled with political and social unrest, despised and hatred towards the West, would be a dangerous liability to Western Europe in the Cold War.". The report thought that the Soviet threat was greater and more imminent than any German threat. There was also the danger of a new Rapallo, namely a deal between the USSR and Germany where Germany would become neutral. This was one of the constant fears of the Dutch government and the Dutch public and a big push factor when it came to

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<sup>77</sup> Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe*, 18 and "Europees leger", Trouw, 10-10-1950 and "Europa's leger", De Volkskrant, 12-10-1950 and Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak: Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 104 and Stikker, *Memoires Dirk U Stikker*.

Germany rearmament.<sup>78</sup>

The report was not greeted with praise. Many in the government thought its recommendations went too far and that it came too soon for Germany. Many critics agreed that the approach was too one-sided, their distrust of Germany was simply too strong.<sup>79</sup>

The resulting discussion surrounding the Hirschfeld report ended up determining the Dutch policy course in the case of German rearmament. The Dutch would continue to support and push for economic and political revival of Germany but would not actively push for rearmament. Many were afraid once Germany had the cover of an EDC, it would seek to reunite its nation with force if necessary and would plunge Europe in a new war. As stated before, the public and parliament were much more enthusiastic. In May 1950 NIPO polled on this subject and 42% of the respondents were positive of the BRD entering a European army, 36% was opposed and 22% did not know.<sup>80</sup>

Not only was the Dutch government forced by the positive attitude of their population and parliament to reconsider the EDC, the pressure by the American government also kept growing. The Dutch government experienced a number of problems with the EDC. Like most other smaller nations, they feared that the supranational structure of the EDC threaten their independence in foreign policy. Initially, the supranational part of the EDC was a problem for the Dutch government

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<sup>78</sup> Rapallo was the agreement between the USSR and Germany before World War Two that enable the military buildup of German forces and a way out of the Versailles Treaty restrictions on the German army. and Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, " Bericht Ambassade Washington D.C, 14 Augustus 1952 ", Archief Min Buza 1945-1954, Archief nmr. 17876, Nationaal Archief, Den Haag and Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak: Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 84-86

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 86-90

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 97

because it wanted to pursue a more neutral course between Europe and America. Later, it became a problem because the link between NATO and EDC was unclear and the Dutch government wanted strong ties with America. In economic areas, the Dutch were in favor of integration and even a supranational structure as is evident by their acceptance of the European Coal Steel Community finally founded in 1952. What is more, the Dutch government did not like the discriminatory measures that France incorporated in the EDC. The Dutch feared it would be dominated by the French and that a strengthened Germany could potentially take over that dominant position.. The EDC missed America or the UK to balance out the continental powers. German dominance would be even more problematic in conjunction with the fear of a unification war started by the BRD. The fear for the German longing for unification would not subside. An example of the fear for a unification war or a deal with the Soviets can be found in *De Volkskrant* it wrote: " German reunification? Of course with the devil if need be". This quote illustrates the supposed attitude in Germany to unification and the problems that any deal with the USSR would bring. Nevertheless, the negotiations on the EDC would continue under American pressure.<sup>81</sup>

During the years of negotiation, the EDC was heavily debated and contested by supporters and opponents, the latter being the majority in almost all nations. At Peterbergs in Germany another conference was held simultaneously with the EDC negotiations, which would determine the future of the BRD. It would speak out on German rearmament and the route via NATO was considered the

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<sup>81</sup> Van der Harst, *The Atlantic Priority*, 140-160 and, "Duitse Dromen", *De Volkskrant*, 8-4-1950

best however in light of the strong French objections, the EDC track was pursued. The negative attitude of the governments towards the EDC could not be sustained with mounting American pressure. The Americans saw the EDC as the only way to get the French to go along with German rearmament and the Americans held all the cards with Marshall help and the protective nuclear umbrella as trump cards.<sup>82</sup>

A number of things changed in the nations during the years of negotiating. The Netherlands reevaluated their stance on the EDC and when it was time to ratify the treaty they were one of the first nations to do so. This change in posture is explained in part by the American pressure and the realization that, in order to keep some influence on the outcome, the Dutch government needed to be cooperative. Another factor is the change of foreign minister from Dirk Stikker to Johan W. Beyen. Beyen was an European integration enthusiast while Stikker was very skeptical.<sup>83</sup>

The Dutch government, often in the form of the Benelux, tried to make the most of the EDC treaty. They had a number of goals, they wanted to remove as much of the supranational elements of the EDC as possible. Next, they opposed any discriminatory measures for Germany and they wanted a clear and strong tie to NATO. They also wanted a strong connection between the EDC, the UK and America.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Van der Veen, "Defending Integration or Integrating Defense? Ratifying the EDC in Belgium and the Netherlands.", 8-11 and Van der Harst, *The Atlantic Priority*, 150,171

<sup>83</sup> Van der Veen, "Defending Integration or Integrating Defense? Ratifying the EDC in Belgium and the Netherlands.", 12-15 and Beyen, *Het spel en de knikkers : een kroniek van vijftig jaren*, 206-226

<sup>84</sup> Rouw, "De Duitse herbewapening : een onderzoek naar de houding van de westerse landen, met name Nederland, ten opzichte van de Duitse herbewapening, na de verwerping van de Europese Defensie Gemeenschap, september - oktober 1954.", 13-19 and Van der Harst, *The Atlantic Priority*, 150-170

The end result, which was ready for ratification by the national parliaments in January 1954, was much more to the taste of the Dutch. Some of the supranational elements had been removed, America and the UK had signed assistance treaties and were thus linked to the EDC and many of the discriminatory elements towards Germany had been excluded. Parliament and public were, despite the previously mentioned fears, positive.<sup>85</sup>

Although the Dutch started with a negative attitude towards the EDC, the Dutch parliament was one of the first to ratify the treaty. The objections to the treaty were discussed, but they were not completely overcome in the end result. The discussions surrounding the ratification process make clear that the Dutch parliament and government supported the EDC because it was seen as the only way France would accept a new German army. They also wanted to please America in order to prevent their withdrawal from the continent. This possibility was made very explicit by the American foreign Minister Foster Dulles who, displeased with the slow progress of the EDC, threatened to withdraw US military support from Europe.<sup>86</sup>

Despite the Dutch quick ratification and the American pressure, the curtain would fall for the EDC on 30th of August 1954. During the ratification in the French *Assemblée* the Gaullist faction pushed for cancellation of the voting process and was successful. This was a curious situation as the whole process was started by and for the nation that in the end did not support its own

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<sup>85</sup> Rouw, "De Duitse herbewapening : een onderzoek naar de houding van de westerse landen, met name Nederland, ten opzichte van de Duitse herbewapening, na de verwerping van de Europese Defensie Gemeenschap, september - oktober 1954.", 19-20

<sup>86</sup> Van der Veen, "Defending Integration or Integrating Defense? Ratifying the EDC in Belgium and the Netherlands.", 18-19 and Van der Harst, *The Atlantic Priority*, 177

creation. The crux of the problem for France is exemplified by the Gaullist faction calling out to the supporters of the EDC to sing: *Deutschland über alles*. The hopelessly divided French were not ready to trust their archrival and neighbor.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Van Beek, "Historische Hindernissen en Praktische Problemen: De moeizame ontwikkeling van de Europese defensiesamenwerking 1945-Heden.", Hellema, *Frontlijn van de Koude Oorlog De Duitse herbewapening en het Atlanisch bondgenootschap*, 53-60 and McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European defense after World War II*.

### 3.b Analysis

In this analysis the previously described period will be analyzed to find motives for the actions conducted by the main players. The Dutch behavior will be subjected to the foreign policy tendencies, which will shed more light on the chosen course of action.

The period described above was one of hope, fear and disappointment. The EDC was a French project and it was clearly intended to slow down and control German rearmament. The American decision to rearm Germany made it no longer possible to ignore the rearmament. In order to keep it as much under French control as possible, the EDC was invented.

All nations saw the EDC for what it was, a French ploy, but it was seen as the only way the French would accept the desired German rearmament. It also stirred up the already present European federalist spirits, lingering in the European nations. The Americans were also receptive for this European spirit hoping it would give them a stronger and less diverse ally across the ocean.

For some nations the supranational EDC was unacceptable. For the UK and the Scandinavian nations it was also unacceptable that the EDC would be based on the French army model and not the Anglo-Saxon model they used.

These objections were shared by the Dutch government who also feared that the UK would withdraw from the continent. The supranational character, it was feared, would make The Netherlands lose even more influence and it would not be able to pursue its own course in foreign policy. German rearmament would only be slowed down by the EDC (it was clear France was its own worst enemy), the link with NATO was not clear and thus the danger existed the Americans

would withdraw as well. The discriminatory measures versus the Germans incorporated in the EDC, would make Germany a second class partner and that could cause new resentment towards the West. At all costs, should it be avoided that Germany would seek an agreement, a new Rapallo, with the Soviets which could possibly lead to a united but neutral Germany (controlled by the Soviets). This was made worse by the fact that Adenauer had associated himself strongly with the EDC and a failure would mean that his political rivals of the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD) could gain more support and take over. The SPD propagated unification and it would not hesitate to make a deal with the USSR to gain it. The Dutch government's policy and attitude towards the Germans became less and less about revenge for the past and more focused on the future of both nations.<sup>88</sup>

When looking at the foreign policy tendencies, the first thing which stands out is that, with the introduction of the EDC, Europeanism enters the Dutch views on German rearmament. There was a lot of support for European federalism resistance movements all over Europe expressed their hopes for a united Europe. The American government was in favor, in particular General Eisenhower and High Commissioner McCloy. The Dutch parliament and large parts of the population were in favor of a federal Europe. The Dutch government was divided. Some ministers were in favor while others opposed. The attitude of the Dutch government changed dramatically when the American

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 215-228

governments threw itself behind the EDC proposal as the only way to get the French along with German rearmament. At this point Atlantism and Europeanism intersect. Until this time, the EDC represented Europeanism without a clear link with America and Atlanticism. Although EDC opposers still feared that the EDC would mean the end of Atlanticism, fearing the Americans would withdraw after signing.

Although the Dutch government went on to participate in the negotiations after the American support for the EDC, it was very negative and wanted to limit the supranational parts of the treaty. The Dutch government needed to keep a link with America and keep Atlanticism alive, therefore the EDC also needed a clear link with NATO, or America directly. A link with America would provide smaller nations such as The Netherlands more influence since it would counter the influence of the big neighbors France and Germany. More evidence for the primary importance of Atlanticism can be found in the quick ratification of the EDC treaty, the Dutch parliament did this to ensure more influence with the American government by doing them a favor . During the negotiations the Dutch government tried to downplay the Europeanism of the EDC and make it more in line with the Atlanticism tendency. In the next chapter, it will become clear that Dutch Europeanism with regards to German rearmament would be in decline and Atlanticism in the form of NATO would become the biggest influence on the Dutch government once again.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Stikker, *Memoires Dirk U Stikker*, 150-180

#### 4. **The Enemy of one's enemy...becomes a friend, *the German army enters NATO***

The French *'non'* to the EDC left Europe and the United States in disarray. Disillusioned and divided, Europe had to find a new way to shore up its defenses against an apparently stronger and growingly militant communist enemy. This time, it would not be the Americans who would take the lead in German rearmament but the British with their foreign minister Anthony R. Eden.

Although many in Europe were disillusioned by the failure of the EDC, most European governments did not mourn the passing of this grand project. The Dutch were no different, they feared more for unnecessary delay in the rearmament than the downfall of this French ploy. In fact they would be very pleased with Eden's proposals, Germany would enter NATO. The British as well as the Americans would remain on the continent to safeguard their European allies from Germany but also from the Soviets.

After the description of the period in the following chapter there will follow an analysis which will make use of the policy tendencies.

After the failure of the EDC many in Europe and America feared the fall of Adenauer's western orientated government. It was feared the SPD would take over and set out on a neutral foreign policy, aimed at unity and an agreement with the Soviets. This did not happen, Adenauer's position was shaken but he remained in power and he used the crisis to put pressure on the West to quickly find a new solution. Threatening the Western leaders with an *'Alleingang'*, something the Dutch government and the French government had feared all along (*'Rapallo syndrome'*). Adenauer had to

keep the pressure since after the death of Stalin in March 1953 East-West relations improved and thus the urgency of rearmament seemed to seep away.<sup>90</sup>

Although the irritation with the French rejection was widespread and many talked of putting France on a sidetrack, it was decided to keep her from complete isolation. The American government was so frustrated that foreign minister John F. Dulles even threatened Europe on the 28th of September 1954 with withdrawal of troops and military support in his famous 'agonizing reappraisal'. American frustration over the obstructive behavior of the French government led to two options, one was to broker a bilateral deal with the BRD to circumvent France. The other was taking the BRD into NATO, the British government would go on to help the American government to get France along with this option. The most important obstacle was France, Eden knew the objections of France and its fear of German supremacy in Europe. The British government on the other hand had always been in favor of a rearmament of Germany. Rearmament was not only favored on military grounds but also to help cut British expenditure.<sup>91</sup>

Thus the leadership of NATO transferred to London for at least a short while, since Eisenhower and Dulles had not recovered from the blow of the EDC debacle. France was indeed

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<sup>90</sup> Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak : Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 110-113 and McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European defense after World War II*, 212

<sup>91</sup> Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak : Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 117-118 and Rouw, "De Duitse herbewapening : een onderzoek naar de houding van de westerse landen, met name Nederland, ten opzichte van de Duitse herbewapening, na de verwerping van de Europese Defensie Gemeenschap, september - oktober 1954.", 43-48 and Hellema, *Frontlijn van de Koude Oorlog De Duitse herbewapening en het Atlanisch bondgenootschap*, 67-69 and McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European defense after World War II*, 231-236 and Beyen, *Het spel en de knikers : een kroniek van vijftig jaren*, 231-235 and Hellema, *Frontlijn van de Koude Oorlog De Duitse herbewapening en het Atlanisch bondgenootschap*, 62-65

intimidated by the American government's threats of a unilateral deal with the BRD. Fearing no say at all in German rearmament the French government was receptive for Eden's proposals, which were mainly based on German demands for equal treatment. Eden took a first step by using the Brussels defense pact from 1948 as a building block, it would be turned into the Western European Union (WEU). Germany would join this pact and then become member of NATO. He got all the European nations back to the conference table in London on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 1954. With American and British pressure, Eden put a promise of keeping their forces stationed on the continent on the table. When the German delegates offered to withhold any nuclear weapon ambitions they might have, the French could no longer delay the process. Another objection of the French was taken away, by putting limitations on the BRD's weapon production, there would be no development of nuclear biological or chemical weapons, no large warships and no long-range missiles or bombers.<sup>92</sup>

With these checks in place France agreed to the BRD's entree into NATO, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 1955 the agreements were signed to bring the BRD in the WEU and NATO. A large difference with the EDC deal was that the BRD, much to Adenauer's delight, received almost full sovereignty.<sup>93</sup>

The Dutch government was very pleased with this final outcome, it had always been in favor of the BRD entering NATO and although as one newspaper put it: "The flame of European integration

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<sup>92</sup> Van Beek, "Historische Hindernissen en Praktische Problemen: De moeizame ontwikkeling van de Europese defensiesamenwerking 1945-Heden." and Hellema, *Frontlijn van de Koude Oorlog De Duitse herbewapening en het Atlanisch bondgenootschap*, 66-70

<sup>93</sup> McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European defense after World War II*, 237-238

nowhere burned brighter as it did in The Netherlands”, this European spirit could first and foremost be found in the enthusiasm for economic integration. Not just the government was in favor for a NATO solution to German rearmament. As a poll from November 1950 shows, 49% was in favor of a German army but 31% was against it. In August 1951 a slightly different question was asked, namely if the Dutch were in favor of German entry into NATO, 49% was in favor and only 14% was against it. In *Trouw* the end of the EDG was described as following: " (...) it is horrible for Europe (...) but worst of all is the delay of rearmament, the shape of rearmament was of secondary importance."<sup>94</sup>

The Dutch government had (officially) been steering towards the NATO solution since foreign minister Stikker spoke to the NATO assembly in 1950. It had been very negative of the discriminatory measures the French proposed in the EDC treaty. Fearing new resentment towards the West from the Germans. The result of which could be a rapprochement with the Soviet Union and a neutral united Germany. This was seen as hurtful to Dutch interests, since then it would be the eastern frontier of NATO and also it would negatively affect its trade with its neighbor. The Dutch public was, as has been shown, for the most part positive of German rearmament. Although it did have its concerns as an article in the newspaper *Het Parool* shows. Discussing the new German army, it treated the delicate matter of old Wehrmacht officers returning to service. But also the political rights and duties of soldiers. A somewhat peculiar point of interest were the new uniforms

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<sup>94</sup> "Nederland en Europese eenwording", *Wijksche Courant*, 1-1-1954 and Wielenga, *Van Vijand tot Bondgenoot: Nederland en Duitsland na 1945*, 50 and "'Westelijke samenwerking", *Trouw*, 9-1-1954

the German army would be wearing, it was made clear in the article that the typical German helmet would not return. Signaling that the war wounds were far from closed.<sup>95</sup>

Serious opposition against the looming return of the German army, came from peace movements and communists. It even came to an anti-Wehrmacht petition, organized by an organization called *Dat nooit weer*. It eventually gathered 215.000 signatures but popular support against the BRD's entry into NATO never really materialized. *Trouw* warned its readers not to trust such petitions, they were communist ploys. *De Volkskrant* even called signing such a petition as detrimental to the foundations of the European civilization.<sup>96</sup>

German Chancellor Adenauer spoke the following words to the representatives of the NATO members at the signing ceremony: " You will realize that this moment fills me with deep emotion. The German people have paid harshly for the horrors which were committed in their name by evil leadership and have paid these horrors with unlimited suffering. Today, everywhere in Germany, peace and freedom are felt to be the greatest treasures as was true in the best periods of her history." The French band refused to play the national anthem of the BRD, so a British band played *Deutschland über alles*. With this last act of defiance of the French the chapter of Germany's rearmament was closed, at least until the question of unification was reintroduced in the 1980's.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> "Adenauer wil spoed met Duitse herbewapening", Het Parool. 6-6-1955

<sup>96</sup> Wielenga, *Van Vijand tot Bondgenoot: Nederland en Duitsland na 1945*, 192-193 and "Ze deugen niet", *Trouw*, 12-10-1955 and "Nederlaag", *De Volkskrant*, 5-3-1955

<sup>97</sup> BBC, "1955: West Germany accepted into Nato."

## 4.b Analysis

It is quite fascinating that after such a long debate and struggle the final chapter of German rearmament was completed within a year. After the defeat of the EDC, the UK picked up the issue of German rearmament. The American government, bitter as it was from the failure of the project they invested so much effort in, relinquished its leading role. This does not mean it did not want the Germans to rearm anymore, they would if it was necessary to continue without French support, in the form of a bilateral treaty with the BRD.

The British government had its own reasons for taking over the torch, Churchill had always been a fervent anti-communist from the start of the October Revolution onwards. It also saw a German army (as did the Dutch) as a way to cut defense spending. It did however cost the British a promise to the French to keep part of its army on the continent. Right from the start of negotiations, Eden cornered the French when he uttered the promise of continuing British and American military presence in Europe. The French now had assurances against German resurgence. Adenauer used the failure of the EDC and the supposed crisis his leadership was in to put pressure on the reluctant French. The French and most other NATO countries were afraid the SPD would take over from Adenauer and set the BRD on a neutral course between the West and the East. Finally undercutting them totally was Adenauer's promise to not pursue a number of weapons, which would be observed by the WEU.

Although it does seem quite a feat that this final episode was so short, it can be explained.

In this thesis it is shown that the NATO solution had been on the shelf ever since NATO was founded and even before that there had been support for German rearmament. This support came from the American and British government, support from all the military leadership in Europe and support from a number of other nations such as The Netherlands. The NATO solution had always been the favorite of most of the European and the American government officials. It provided a clear link with the America and the UK, which secured military backup for the continent. This link also balanced out France and Germany, which the smaller nations preferred. In this view the EDC had just been a unnecessary delay, this was not true since it did strike a chord with many people in Europe. Nevertheless the NATO solution joined together with the BRD's entry into the WEU was a satisfactory outcome for all.

For the Dutch government and large segments of the public, as the polling data in the above chapter shows, this was a satisfactory outcome as well. The Dutch government and a majority of parliament had been in favor of the NATO solution. Even during the debates (and the negotiations) on the EDC a majority of parliament and the government wanted a clear link to NATO. Although a number of issues with the EDC were settled, NATO was still preferred by the Dutch government. But even this solution had its caveats to the Dutch government, the most prominent being the previously discussed 'Rapallo syndrome'. The ghost of a new Rapallo kept wondering the halls of power in The Hague all through episode of German rearmament. It worked in two ways, it

heightened fear for a neutral Germany but it also stimulated to finding a solution to its rearmament. Unification in another sense also caused some fear to stir up, namely the fear of being drawn into a unification war after Germany was allowed into the Western alliance. With these push- and pullfactors in place, there was more than enough momentum for German rearmament to be accepted in The Netherlands.

The foreign policy tendency at work in this chapter of German rearmament is off course Atlanticism in the form of NATO. Considerable support existed for the EDC but with that projects failure, Europeanism was confined to the area of economic integration. Up until this day European defense cooperation initiatives have not caught on, signifying the difficulties inherent in such a project. A protagonist of this attitude towards the European project was foreign minister Stikker. He stated that there was quite allot of grassroot support for European integration. However he only saw integration in the economic realm, such as a common European market, as a viable option.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Stikker, *Memoires Dirk U Stikker*, 150-175



German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer at the NATO entry ceremony<sup>99</sup>



History in the making: On 23 October 1954 the North Atlantic Council invited Germany to join the Alliance .<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Public Diplomacy Division, "NATO Declassified."

<sup>100</sup> Helga Haftendorn, "Germany's accession to NATO: 50 years on."

## 5. Conclusion

"We had nothing to offer but our territory. We were an occupied nation; we had no sovereignty and we carried the burden of the Third Reich. Our future partners had to get used to the idea that a former German officer was sitting at the conference table and he also wanted to be listened to."<sup>101</sup>

It would take many years before the first German *Bundeswehr* soldiers would leave German territory. In 1994 the constitution of the reunited Germany was changed to make it possible for combat action outside of Germany. In 1955, however, the BRD could begin to stiffen NATO's faltering defense on its own territory and although it was still treated with caution then, now Germany has long since become an accepted member of NATO. Adenauer had to overcome foreign and domestic opposition, if he wanted a military and the sovereignty that comes with it. Polls show that by the end of the 1940s, almost two-thirds of the German population opposed remilitarization. The polls also show that in the early 1950s no less than 72 percent rejected any German military involvement. A German woman commenting on the news of the creation of the Bundeswehr said: "If you've lost your husband and your only brother and if you are left alone with three kids, you don't want to hear about remilitarization. The mere thought of my two adolescent sons having to wear that gray uniform makes me want to scream out: no, no, no!"<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Herzog, "We Had to Start From Scratch" - Fifty years ago, West Germany established a new army, the Bundeswehr."

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

But Adenauer would not have accomplished his wish of a sovereign and armed West-Germany without support of the Cold War superpower America. In this thesis I have shown that it was America and the UK that, even during the war, contemplated a speedy return of the Wehrmacht. But as has been recounted, American President Roosevelt's plans for the post-war world did not foresee the Cold War struggle with the USSR. Accordingly, punishment and revenge were predominant sentiments in the immediate postwar treatment of Germany, leaving no room for an army. This changed quickly after the death of FDR and the fast developing conflict with the USSR. When the Korean War rose to a climax in 1950, Europe was still struggling economically and militarily. NATO, which was created in 1949, was still in its infancy and mostly an empty shell. To many it became clear that Germany's military potential was needed to balance out the Soviet forces waiting on the other side of the Iron Curtain.

The biggest hurdle German rearmament had to take was French opposition. Not surprisingly, France did not want a resurgent Germany on its border. Not only was France afraid of renewed German aggression; they also feared German dominance in Europe. Therefore, France wanted to constrain its neighbor as much as possible. Trying to outflank Germany's entry into NATO, France ignited the flame of Pan-Europeanism. It built on the successful creation of the ECSC and created the idea of the EDC, hoping it could control German rearmament or at the least slow it down.

At first, the initiative was treated with skepticism on both sides of the ocean. But with Pan-European spirits flaring up on both sides of the ocean, the project gained American support. With that support, the reluctant European governments joined the negotiations and, after three years of

debate and amendments, they were ready to ratify the treaty. At this point, France pulled out of the treaty; there was just too much internal opposition to the supranational organizational structure of the EDC and the recreation of a German military.

When this project failed a deadlock ensued and British foreign minister Anthony Eden helped. He carefully analyzed the situation and proposed the right alternatives for France. With American and British troops safeguarding the Continent against any German threat and Germany being banned from developing a number of weapons (which was overseen by the WEU). Adenauer got his army and an almost sovereign nation in return. Germany could possibly become the battleground of World War Three, but at least it now had an army to protect itself.

The Dutch were very content with the final outcome of German rearmament. Germany's entrance in NATO removed the possibility of The Netherlands becoming a future warzone. It brought relief for the Dutch economy in the sense that it removed some of the need to rearm, Germany would now help Europe to bring its army numbers up to the NATO agreements. The regained sovereignty of Germany also meant it was easier to negotiate trade agreements with the neighbor. Which the Dutch economy desperately needed since it was highly dependent on trade with Germany.

The NATO solution entailed a clear link with America and the UK. The Dutch thought America was the only nation in the world that could give them security against threats such as Germany or the USSR. Therefore they wanted a clear link between America and German rearmament. But there were other reasons as well. First of all, NATO was a medium through which

the Dutch could still exert some influence over the policies of America, ipso facto on the policies considering Germany. It also gave some stature to The Netherlands, which it was searching for after the loss of its colonies. Lastly, NATO and with it the UK and America balanced the influence of the continental powers such as France. These were the main reasons the Dutch were NATO enthusiasts. they saw no real alternative for German rearmament, besides Germany's entry in NATO.<sup>103</sup>

We now turn to the foreign policy tendencies influencing the Dutch actions regarding German rearmament . The Dutch government set a neutral course after the Napoleonic wars, focusing on its colonies and concentrating on its maritime ambitions. Neutrality survived the First World War, but was shattered by the German invasion in 1940. It was clear that the Dutch government needed to search for a new course. The Dutch officials realized that The Netherlands could only survive another conflict by giving up neutrality and seeking alliances, especially since the Dutch colonial empire was crumbling.. They therefore signed the pact of Brussels in 1948, the first time they officially gave up neutrality. The Dutch realized that America, with its military might, was the only nation that could keep them safe. Besides safety, the Dutch also needed America's money for reconstruction. And so, Atlanticism came into being. This does not mean, however, that the Dutch subjugated to all American demands to the Americans. They had several conflicts, including on

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<sup>103</sup> Schoneveld, "Tussen Atlantica en Europa: Over de opkomst en ondergang van de Spagaat in de Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek.", 33-34

about the Dutch maritime ambitions and their colonies. Americans wanted to curtail these ambitions which the Dutch naturally resisted. After the loss of Indonesia, however, the Dutch focused even more on Atlanticism, it was the only way to recover and gain influence and status among the world's nations.<sup>104</sup>

Atlanticism would have triumphed sooner if the French did not launch their Pleven plan. It introduced Europeanism into the realm of German rearmament. Although the EDC gained quite some support amongst Americans and Europeans alike, it was not enough and with the failure of the EDC, Europeanism vanished from the discussion about German rearmament. However, Europeanism was still kept alive in the economic area, resulting in the European Union of today. The Dutch welcomed this economic integration because of their geographical location, it would become a great source of economic growth.<sup>105</sup>

Atlanticism triumphed with Germany's entry into NATO, it would also be the start of an ever growing orientation of the Dutch towards America. American armaments would be preferred over European, as the choice not to participate in the Eurofighter in 1986 illustrates. Initiatives of America in global politics would be followed, for example with the stationing of missiles on Dutch territory in the 1980's or in more recent times the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. This brings us to our time and the time beyond, next some ideas on the future of NATO, Germany and The

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<sup>104</sup> Wielenga, *West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak: Nederland en de Bondsrepubliek 1949-1955*, 105 and Schoneveld, "Tussen Atlantica en Europa: Over de opkomst en ondergang van de Spagaat in de Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek.", 30-35

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

Netherlands.

## The Future

With the current economic crisis, Germany has generated newfound confidence which derived from its economic strength. It now has the courage to step out of the shade and leave behind the tragedies of the previous century. They now pursue their national interests in a way unthinkable somewhat years ago. But this resurgence has been limited to economic policies within the EU. However, it is not unthinkable that, if this newfound confidence survives the crisis, military prowess will also follow. As has been said in the introduction of this thesis, each time the *Bundeswehr* takes even the slightest action, incidents quickly escalate because of Germany's past. But as the memory of the war fades away and the first hand war generation passes into oblivion, the sensitivities surrounding Germany's military will also diminish.

The relation of Germany and America, which had always been good, since the Second World War has endured some crises lately. However, the strong ties between Germany and America are not so self-evident in the new century. Consider for instance, Chancellor Gerhard Fritz Kurt Schröder's speech at the forum of transatlantic cooperation: "NATO is no longer the primary venue where transatlantic partners discuss and coordinate strategies." The current Chancellor Angela Dorothea Merkel, is also more reserved and pragmatic towards ties with America. This will probably not change and the days when Germany would blindly follow American policies are over. Germany's newfound confidence and America's relative decline in economics and military might

work to stimulate this trend.<sup>106</sup>

The Dutch have prospered behind NATO's shield and Germany's *Wirtschaftswunder* helped to give the Netherlands its current prosperity. In the near future, the Dutch will probably keep focused on NATO and America in military matters. It will also try to limit the EU's tasks to economic policies instead of expanding its military tasks. As seen in the extension of Dutch participation in Afghanistan with the police training mission in Kunduz. In matters of economy, Germany and The Netherlands are the hand and the glove and this will most likely remain the case as geography dictates a close relationship. The current Euro crisis shows that Germany and The Netherlands see eye to eye in economic and in this case specifically monetary matters.

The arrangements made in 1954 kept Germany under Western influence. The successive path made Germany and Europe prosper, the success of the capitalist world drove communism into the ground. This made it possible for the locked off East to join in with the capitalist West, making united Europe possible. It is hard not to look back at the story of German rearmament anachronistically and claim that there really was no other better way it could have turned out.

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<sup>106</sup> Helga Haftendorn, "Germany's accession to NATO: 50 years on." and Hawley, "German Foreign Minister 'Has Lost All Authority'." and Hans Hoyng, Hans-Jürgen Schlamp, Gregor Peter Schmitz, "Self-Important Approach Worries Berlin's Allies."

## 6. Appendix I

**8-12-1946 Do you think one or more of the 'Big Three' pose a threat to world peace?**

Nation:	
Russia	55%
USA	5%
GB	1%
GB and Russia	1%
Russia, USA and GB	2%
Russia and USA	2%
GB and USA	2%

Total of confirming answers: 68%

**7-29-1946 What is your opinion of the foreign policy of Russia?**

Is it directed at conquest and expansion: 58%

Is it directed at its own security: 21%

No opinion: 21%

**Poll date: 8-6-1947**

**Question: Are there nations who want to control the world?**

Yes: 84%

No: 6%

No opinion: 10%

**Question: If Yes, which?**

Russia: 59%

USA: 37%

Other nations: 6%

**Poll date: 2-10-1948**

**Question: Would Russia/USA start a war or only go to war after being attacked first?**

Nation:	Russia	USA
Answers:		
Start a war:	57%	16%
Only after being attacked first	27%	60%

No opinion	16%	24%
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**Poll date: 8-14-1948 (Same question as in 1947)**

**Question: Are there nations who want to control the world? If yes, Which?**

Russia: 75%

Germany: 14%

USA: 26%

Other nations: 7%

No nations: 8%

Source: NIPO in J C H Blom, "Jaren van tucht en ascese Enige beschouwingen over de stemming in Herrijzend".<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Blom, "Jaren van tucht en ascese Enige beschouwingen over de stemming in Herrijzend Nederland(1945-1950)."

## 7. Appendix II

**Question: Do you think that our country, just like before the war, should conduct lots of trade, and economically cooperate with Germany?**

Yes, do business: 77%

No: 11%

No opinion: 14%

**Question: What is your opinion on the German people?**

Poll date		6/2/1947	2/25/1948	1/7/1950
Answers:	Friendly	29%	27%	36%
	Unfriendly	53%	50%	36%
	No opinion	18%	23%	28%

Source: NIPO in Wielenga, *Van Vijand tot Bondgenoot: Nederland en Duitsland na 1945*.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Wielenga, <i>Van Vijand tot Bondgenoot: Nederland en Duitsland na 1945</i>. 20

## 8. Appendix III

### 2-25-1947 How do you feel about the Russian people?

Friendly: 27%

Unfriendly: 48%

No opinion: 26%

### 1-7-1950 How do you feel about the Russian people?

Friendly: 19%

Unfriendly: 54%

No opinion: 27%

### 1-8-1949 Poll on traits of following peoples

Trait:	Dutch	American	Russian
Peaceful	75%	44%	78%
Hard Working	68%	54%	41%
Wise	54%	37%	54%
Progressive	47%	63%	17%
Brave	41%	28%	24%

Controlled	40%	18%	3%
Practical	40%	68%	7%
Generous	25%	44%	3%
Spoiled	15%	17%	11%
Imperious	5%	18%	57%
Stupid	1%	1%	49%
Cruel	0%	2%	61%

Source: NIPO in Blom, "Jaren van tucht en ascese Enige beschouwingen over de stemming in Herrijzend Nederland(1945-1950)." <sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Blom, "Jaren van tucht en ascese Enige beschouwingen over de stemming in Herrijzend Nederland(1945-1950)." 328

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