



**Universiteit Utrecht**

**International Relations in Historical Perspective**

Master of Arts (MA) Thesis

## **WALKING ON THE PENTAGON'S LEASH?**

DUTCH POLICY REGARDING THE KOREAN WAR FROM 9 APRIL 1951 TO 24  
JANUARY 1955 AS AN EXPRESSION OF A CHANGE IN ITS FOREIGN POLICY

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## ABSTRACT

The picture on the previous page captured the dramatic scene with Dutch soldier Leendert C. Kemper, who died after an enemy mortar barrage on Hill 975 during the Korean War on 17 May 1951.<sup>1</sup> He is one of the 125 Dutch soldiers who died during this violent conflict on the Korean peninsula that waged between the communist North Korea and American backed South Korea from 25 June 1950 to 27 July 1953. It is not often known in the Netherlands that nearly 5.000 soldiers served in Korea from December 1950 to January 1955 during the first and only United Nations peace-enforcing mission. Existing literature reveals that the Dutch cabinet was not willing to participate in the Korean War, but eventually decided to send a battalion of volunteers and a total of 6 warships to Korea after pressure from the United States. The Dutch foreign policy was in a process of change from an independent course, based on colonial views, towards Atlanticism during this period. The Netherlands objected the US policy regarding the Korean War several times up to April 1951 and feared that its interests regarding Netherlands New Guinea would be harmed. The limited existing literature state that the Netherlands almost completely withdrew from the Korean question after this period and mostly followed the Atlanticist course of the US. Nevertheless, the war dragged on for 2 more years and Dutch troops stayed in Korea to January 1955, but no thorough research has been conducted about this period. Therefore, the following research question was analysed: *How did Dutch policy regarding the Korean War from 9 April 1951 to 24 January 1955 reflect a change in orientation in its foreign and defense policies?* The Dutch policy regarding the Korean War could indeed be considered as an expression of a change in its orientation in foreign and defense policies during this period. The Netherlands did confront the Americans several times regarding its Korean War policy, Dutch diplomats did not completely stay aloof and the Netherlands interest in Asia also played a role to shape the actions and reactions of the Dutch cabinet and diplomats from April 1951 to January 1955. So, the Asian perspective was still present, while the Dutch cabinet and diplomats followed the Atlantic course more deliberately after April 1951.

*Key words: Netherlands, Korean War, Military Intervention, Foreign Policy, Atlanticism*

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<sup>1</sup> Photographed by war correspondent Wim Dussel, collection Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie (Netherlands Institute for Military History, hereafter; NIMH).

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Last but not least, I want to thank my dear family and friends for their support, who stimulated me to follow my own path as a student and soldier these last years. It is our obligation to learn from the past, pass this knowledge on to the future generations and to defend our freedom and democratic values from aggressors, which has unfortunately become apparent again by the recent war in Ukraine.

“Lest we forget”

Koen Monnickendam

Eemnes, 27 May 2022



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*Picture page 6: Fully packed private first class Theo A.J. Langenberg during the Korean War in December 1950. Photographed by war correspondent Wim Dussel, NIMH.*

## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>DIO</b>	<b>Directie Internationale Organisaties (Directorate International Organisations)</b>
<b>DOA</b>	<b>Directie Oost Azië (Directorate East Asia)</b>
<b>EDC</b>	<b>European Defence Community</b>
<b>FE</b>	<b>Far East</b>
<b>FRUS</b>	<b>Foreign Relations of the United States Series</b>
<b>GA</b>	<b>General Assembly of the United Nations</b>
<b>NATO</b>	<b>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</b>
<b>NDVN</b>	<b>Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties (Netherlands Detachment United Nations)</b>
<b>NIMH</b>	<b>Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie (Netherlands Institute for Military History)</b>
<b>NNG</b>	<b>Netherlands New Guinea</b>
<b>MFA</b>	<b>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</b>
<b>PermRep</b>	<b>Permanent Representative to the United Nations</b>
<b>PM</b>	<b>Prime Minister</b>
<b>POW(s)</b>	<b>Prisoner(s) of war</b>
<b>ROKS</b>	<b>Republic of Korea Soldiers</b>
<b>SU</b>	<b>Soviet Union</b>
<b>UK</b>	<b>United Kingdom of Great Britain</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>
<b>UNCURK</b>	<b>United Nations Commission for Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea</b>
<b>UNKRA</b>	<b>United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency</b>
<b>UNSC</b>	<b>United Nations Security Council</b>
<b>US</b>	<b>United States</b>

# INTRODUCTION



## Dutch participation in the Korean War

70 years ago, the Korean peninsula was torn apart and ravaged by a war that lasted since the summer of 1950. South Korea was attacked by the communist North Korea of Kim Il Sung on 25 June 1950 and lost almost all territory. As the first 'hot' episode of the Cold War started, the United States of America (hereafter; US), who backed South Korea, was eager to counter the communist expansion due to its *containment* politics.<sup>2</sup> The US turned to the United Nations Security Council (hereafter; UNSC) and was able to get support on 25 and 27 June for resolutions to condemn the aggressor and start a military intervention. This was the build-up to an international coalition of sixteen countries under the flag of the United Nations (hereafter; UN), but led by the US, to help South Korea with this first 'peace-enforcing' UN-mission.<sup>3</sup> Quickly, the US intervened but they valued that it would be important to extend the coalition. Six European countries eventually joined the coalition, including the Netherlands. The latter was not keen to join the Korean War after five years of occupation and the decolonisation war in the Dutch East Indies. The government had other priorities, but the Americans pressed the Dutch to contribute to this first UN-mission.<sup>4</sup> They wanted boots on the ground and asked for ground forces.<sup>5</sup> Eventually, the Dutch government decided to send a naval ship and a battalion of volunteers to Korea, who formed the Netherlands Detachment United Nations (hereafter; NDVN). Nearly 5.000 Dutch soldiers served in Korea from 1950 to 1955 of which 120 died and five are still missing, making it the deadliest UN mission for the Netherlands.<sup>6</sup>

The Korean War is often described as a 'forgotten war' in the Netherlands and the US, and some Dutch Korean War veterans viewed themselves as members of a 'forgotten battalion.'<sup>7</sup> Several explanations could be found but there seems to be less extensive interest in, and coverage of the conflict compared to World War Two and the Vietnam War. The attention for this conflict changed a bit recently as there is more recognition

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<sup>2</sup> Pieter Caljé and Jaap den Hollander, *De lange twintigste eeuw: van 1870 tot heden* (Houten: Spectrum, 2013) 348.

<sup>3</sup> Ruud Hoff, *Internationale machtsverhoudingen na 1945* (Meppel: Boom Onderwijs, 2008) 52.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Elands e.a., *Vechten, verbeelden, verwerken: Nederland en zijn Korea-veteranen* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2000) 15.

<sup>5</sup> Christ Klep & Richard van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul: De Nederlandse militaire deelname aan vredesoperaties sinds 1945* (Den Haag: Sdu, 2005) 36.

<sup>6</sup> M.D. Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties in Korea 1950-1954* (Den Haag: Staatsuitgeverij, 1960) 437-440.

<sup>7</sup> See for example: Bernadette C.M. Kester, Herman Roozenbeek and Okke Groot, *Focus op Korea: de rol van de Nederlandse pers in de beeldvorming over de Korea-oorlog 1950-1953* (Den Haag: Sdu uitgevers, 2000); Klep and Van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul* and Stiphout, *De bloedigste oorlog*.



from the Dutch government. Although a cease fire was signed in 1953, the Korean War has not officially ended and is still important for the current geopolitical situation in Asia. Gaining more knowledge about the Dutch policy regarding the Korean War is therefore insightful and will show how the Netherlands dealt with this issue in relation with other nations and within the UN arena. This is not only interesting due to the reorientation of its foreign policy in the 1950s, but also with the current crisis in Ukraine and the seemingly dependence on the US as a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (hereafter; NATO) ally during a major military conflict.

There seemed to be a shift in Dutch foreign policy from neutrality politics to Atlanticism during the Korean conflict. This shift towards the US was not easy because the Netherlands seemed to struggle with her new role as a former colonial power and did not immediately accept the American hegemony on all points. The latter refers to the dependence and adaptation of American economic, military, and foreign policy. It was visible during the first phase of the Korean War when the Netherlands confronted and challenged the American policy several times from June 1950 to April 1951. For example, when the Dutch cabinet did not want to militarily join the conflict and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dirk Stikker tried to prevent Chinese involvement in the Korean War multiple times. The latter was the result of the American policy regarding the Korean War, but this will be elaborated in the historiography section. Nevertheless, the remaining three years of the Dutch participation in the Korean conflict has been overlooked.

Academic literature on the Dutch participation during the Korean War is scarce. The same observation could be made for other Dutch literature on the conflict, like personal accounts from soldiers, journalists, and chaplains. This existing literature tends to focus on the first year of the conflict (1950-1951).<sup>8</sup> An explanation for this focus could be related to the nature of this phase of the Korean War. The first Dutch battalion engaged large scale (enemy) offensives and was confronted with fierce fighting on changing frontlines from December 1950 to July 1951. The frontline stabilized from July 1951 onwards and mayor frontline changes did not occur. Ruud Hoff writes for example that

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<sup>8</sup> See for example: Alfred van Sprang, *hevve no: een Nederlandse oorlogscorrespondent beschrijft zijn ervaringen in Korea* (Den Haag: N.V. Uitgeverij W. van Hoeve, 1951); Willem van der Veer, *Wij bidden om de dageraad: Kruisvaarders naar Korea* (Amsterdam: Scheltens & Giltay, 1951); Wim Dussel, *Tjot: Nederlanders in Korea* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij v/h C. de Boer Jr., 1952); Phillipus P. Meerburg, *Legerpredikant in Korea* (Wageningen: N.V. Gebr. Zomer en Keunings Uitgeversmij, 1952); Wim Hornman, *Ik wil leven* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 1952); Stiphout, *De bloedigste oorlog* and Frans van Dreumel, *We liepen naast de vijand: dagboek van een Korea-veteraan (1950-1951)* (Leeuwarden: Uitgeverij Elikser B.V., 2011).

“the fighting in Korea ended in July 1951,” but this is not correct.<sup>9</sup> The intense fighting continued for two more years, and the Dutch detachment served in Korea to November 1954, while the Royal Netherlands Navy patrolled to January 1955. It is therefore relevant to analyse the Dutch policy regarding the Korean War from April 1951 onwards and see if this reflects a change in orientation in its foreign and defense policy. Certainly in relation to the Dutch reorientation on the world stage during this period, and its relations with the US as a UN and NATO member.

To add to the historiography, the following research question is necessary to unravel: *How did Dutch policy regarding the Korean War from 9 April 1951 to 24 January 1955 reflect a change in orientation in its foreign and defense policies?*

To answer this research question, the first chapter will discuss the historiography of this topic and history of the Korean War from 25 June 1950 to 9 April 1951. This includes the prelude to the Korean War, the geopolitical situation and how the Dutch policy was regarding the Korean conflict from 25 June 1950 to 9 April 1951, in relation to a change in orientation of its foreign policy. This will be based on secondary literature as explained in the methodology section.

The following sub questions will be applied at three time periods (9 April 1951 to 2 September 1952; 2 September 1952 to 27 July 1953, and 27 July 1953 to 24 January 1955), which will be explained and discussed in the methodology section:

- How did the Dutch defense policy regarding the Korean War, in relation to the military situation in Korea, reflect a change in orientation of the Netherlands foreign policy?
- How did the Dutch government react and act on events during the Korean War and was this a reflection of a change in orientation of the Netherlands foreign policy?
- How did Dutch diplomats react and act on events during the Korean War and was this a reflection of a change in orientation of the Netherlands foreign policy?

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<sup>9</sup> Hoff, *Internationale machtsverhoudingen na 1945*, 52.



*Dutch soldiers of the NDVN pose with flags of the UN, US and South Korea after their arrival in Taigu in December 1950 (NIMH)*

### **Methodology and primary sources**

To understand the complex context of the Korean War and the Dutch military involvement, an introductory chapter will be used before the main analysis takes place. It is necessary to understand the prelude to the Korean War, the geopolitical situation and how the Dutch policy was regarding the Korean conflict from the start of the war on 25 June 1950 to 9 April 1951 when the commander in chief in Korea was fired, and a new phase started.

The aim of the main research is to unravel if the Dutch policy regarding the Korean War reflect a change in orientation in its foreign policy from 9 April 1951 to 24 January 1955. To unravel the latter issue, it is necessary to focus on three dimensions that are related to the Dutch policy regarding the Korean War. This involves the military, political and diplomatic dimension. Military history is often isolated analysed in the academic world as a research field from other branches of history. This is also the case regarding most of the existing literature about the Dutch participation during the Korean War. A

problem with this division is that political and diplomatic actions are not coupled with the military situation on the ground, and this can lead to an incomplete analysis and faulty explanations. According to Jan Hoffenaar, it is necessary to use an integrated approach to analyse and understand violent conflict in order to “make a full contribution to general historiography.”<sup>10</sup> It is for example important to explain why there was a lack of interest about the conflict in the cabinet, while the war and suffering of Dutch soldiers raged on in Korea. Therefore, the military dimension (including the military situation on the ground) is taken into account, together with the political and diplomatic dimension, and these three dimensions are reframed as three sub-questions to get a comprehensive analysis.

Firstly, the military dimension involves the military mission in Korea and how the Dutch government dealt with decisions and defense policy regarding this issue in relation with the military situation in Korea and demands of the US. Secondly, the political dimension involves the policy and reactions of the Dutch cabinet and ministers of foreign affairs regarding the Korean War in relation with the US and other debated topics during the weekly meetings. Thirdly, the diplomatic dimension involves the actions and reactions of diplomats to the Dutch policy regarding the Korean War. This involves the Dutch representative to the UN (PermRep), the Dutch ambassador to the US, and representatives of the United Nations Commission for the Unification & Rehabilitation of Korea (hereafter; UNCURK) and the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency (hereafter; UNKRA).

These three sub-questions will be applied at three periods to answer the research question and determine if there is a change of the Dutch policy regarding the Korean War in relation with its foreign policy. The first period will be from 9 April 1951 till 2 September 1952, which covers almost the entire period of Prime Minister (hereafter; PM) Willem Drees' second cabinet. This includes the start of the cease fire negotiations in July 1951 and the Dutch non-permanent seat in the UNSC in 1951 and 1952. Subsequently, the second period is from 2 September 1952 till 27 July 1953, which covers the period of PM Drees' third cabinet till the cease fire and continuing cease fire negotiations. The third period is from 27 July 1953 till 24 January 1955, which covers the period of PM Drees' third cabinet from the cease fire till the end of the Dutch mission in Korea. This includes a special Korea conference from April to June 1954. These three periods are chosen because they demarcate several key moments during the Korean War, which could have had a

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<sup>10</sup> Jan Hoffenaar, “Militaire geschiedschrijving in de 21e eeuw,” *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 133 (2021): 4, 687.



notable change on the Dutch policy regarding the Korean War. For example, the new cabinet of PM Drees in September 1952 with different ministers of foreign affairs and the cease fire of 27 July 1953, which marked a new phase in the Korean conflict.

Secondary literature will be used for the context of events during these three periods. This will include a brief overview of the major developments during the war and Dutch forces in Korea. The latter will be based on the standard work "Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties in Korea 1950-1954" from M.D. Schaafsma (1960) and "N.D.V.N. Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties in de Koreaanse Oorlog" from Françoise M. Appels (2015). This will also be used to answer the sub question about the military dimension of the Dutch policy regarding the Korean War. Primary sources will also be used to answer the sub questions. In case of the Dutch defense policy regarding the Korean War, documents from the archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter; MFA) about military assistance and expenditure during the Korean War will be used from the National Archive. The reports about the weekly minister council from the NIMH are used to find out how the Dutch cabinet reacted and acted on events during the Korean War. The used quotes are translated from Dutch. Primary sources from the archive of the MFA and the NIMH are used to analyse how diplomats reacted and acted on events, and what the Dutch policy was. This includes reports from the Dutch PermRep to the UN, correspondence with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, diplomats, reports from Dutch representatives about the cease fire negotiations, and reports from Dutch representatives of the UNCURK and UNKRA.

In contrast to the existing literature, primary sources from the US will also be used. These are from the Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter; FRUS) series on the Korean War and can be useful to see how American diplomats wrote and reported about the Dutch attitude and policy regarding the conflict in Korea. This research does not have the scope to fully analyse the American perspective and policy on the Korean War, but this will be used to better understand the Dutch perspective in relation with the US, which is the main goal. Dutch documents about the American policy regarding the Korean War are therefore taken into account. The next chapter will provide a historiographic overview of the conflict, illustrated by several pictures from Dutch war correspondent Wim Dussel.

*Picture page 13: Private Lucas Grasso (later killed in action) helps a wounded comrade after the attack on the Dutch battalion near Hoengsong in February 1951. Photographed by war correspondent Wim Dussel (NIMH)*

25 JUNE 1950 – 9 APRIL 1951



## Chapter 1 – Historiography & context from 25 June 1950 to 9 April 1951

Before it is possible to explain the historiography regarding the Dutch foreign policy during the Korean War, it is necessary to understand the context and origin of this conflict. This and the Dutch participation in the conflict will be explained in this first chapter.

World War Two had a major impact on the European and global power relations according to Ruud Hoff.<sup>11</sup> The multipolar system of European powers shifted towards a bipolar system after the war as the US and the Soviet Union (hereafter; SU) became the two dominant powers of the world.<sup>12</sup> World War Two seamlessly changed into the Cold War and the role of European states was diminished. Hoff writes that the US presented itself as the defender of the free Western world against the expansionism of the communist SU in Europe.<sup>13</sup> The US worked politically, economically, and militarily closely together with its western European allies and Eastern Europe was under influence of the SU according to Caljé & Den Hollander.<sup>14</sup> Initially, this division was not so clear outside of Europe and after Japan's defeat in World War Two, a power vacuum arose in several parts of Asia, which could not be filled anymore by old colonial powers like the United Kingdom of Great Britain (hereafter; UK), France, and the Netherlands according to Hoff.<sup>15</sup>

The Netherlands tried to regain control of the Dutch East Indies in a tough and bloody war against Indonesian fighters who fought for an independent Indonesia from 1945 to 1949. The sovereignty was handed over to the United States of Indonesia in December 1949, except of Netherlands New Guinea (hereafter; NNG), which remained a Dutch colony till 1962, and was a dominant foreign policy issue in these years according to Duco Hellema.<sup>16</sup> He writes that the relations and negotiations between Indonesia and the Netherlands were, who formed the Netherlands-Indonesian Union, "hindered by severe conflicts" after 1949 and a solution about the sovereignty question regarding NNG was not reached.<sup>17</sup> The Dutch view and course hardened under Joseph Luns due to his conservative view to retain the Dutch colony NNG. He became Minister of Foreign Affairs on 2 September 1952 and the cabinet decided one month later that NNG would remain of

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<sup>11</sup> Hoff, *Internationale machtsverhoudingen na 1945*, 21.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Caljé and Den Hollander, *De lange twintigste eeuw*, 344-345.

<sup>15</sup> Hoff, *Internationale machtsverhoudingen na 1945*, 48.

<sup>16</sup> Duco A. Hellema, *Neutraliteit & vrijhandel: de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse buitenlandse betrekkingen* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 2001), 170.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

the Kingdom of the Netherlands, so the negotiations stalled until March 1954.<sup>18</sup> Indonesia wanted to resume the talks and this led to results when the agreement of 1949 was reviewed half a year later, but this was eventually never ratified by Indonesia, who unilaterally decided to leave the Netherlands-Indonesian Union in 1956.<sup>19</sup>

### **A new course**

The Netherlands was in a process of reorientation on its foreign policy after World War Two and shortly after the Indonesian war of independence. Joris Voorhoeve state that the 'neutral tradition' of Dutch foreign policy ended in 1948 after more than 100 years when the Netherlands joined the Brussels Pact and became a NATO member one year later.<sup>20</sup> The Netherlands completed the shift towards cooperation with the US in the following years, which led to the formation of the 'international-idealistic' foreign policy tradition.<sup>21</sup> Hellema does not agree with the definition of a change in 'tradition' but he writes that the Netherlands changed its [neutral] foreign politics course, due to the changing environment, and shifted to a multilateral, Atlantic way between 1948 to 1952.<sup>22</sup> Examples are economic integration, US defense cooperation and relations with Germany.

According to Hellema, the Netherlands had trouble to adapt to the changing international situation and the "lack of support from great powers" [US and UK], regarding the Dutch East Indies, which resulted in resentment against the US at the end of the 1940s.<sup>23</sup> The Dutch policy regarding Indonesia played a role in the shift towards Atlanticism and how the Dutch viewed their position on the world stage from 1948 onwards according to Hellema.<sup>24</sup> Their views on the Marshall aid and role within NATO were mostly influenced by the motivation to "reinforce" the Dutch position regarding the "Indonesian question".<sup>25</sup> Hellema state that the decolonisation was not easily accepted in the Hague and the American policy was therefore not followed on all terrains.<sup>26</sup> He writes that the Netherlands became dependent on the US because of economic, military and

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 185-186.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 186-187.

<sup>20</sup> Joris J.C. Voorhoeve, "Peace, profits and principles. A study in Dutch foreign policy," (Den Haag/Boston/Londen: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979) 42-54 and 248 in: *Nederland gidsland: ontstaan en zin van een betwist begrip*, Christen Democratische Verkenningen (Eds) Jan D. Snel (Amsterdam: Boom, 2014) 65.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Hellema, *Neutraliteit & vrijhandel*, 186-187.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 171-172.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 155-156.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 172.



political considerations.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, Hellema adds that these changes [regarding its relations with the US] took time, as it did not immediately “produce” new civil servants, politicians and policy. Consequently, this delay led to several collisions with the US in the 1950s.<sup>28</sup> Wim Klinkert and Gerke Teitler seems to agree that this shift towards the Western alliance was not coming along without discussion and opposition, because the Netherlands had resentment regarding the American pressure to give up the Dutch East Indies.<sup>29</sup>



*US President Truman signing the North Atlantic Treaty under supervision of representatives from the eleven allied countries on 24 August 1949 (Wikimedia Commons)*

There seemed to be a shift in Dutch foreign policy from neutrality politics towards Atlanticism in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The latter concept is not clear cut and has several definitions, but it revolves around the notion that there is a (justified) close

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 173.

<sup>29</sup> Wim Klinkert and Gerke Teitler, “Nederland van neutraliteit naar bondgenootschap: het veiligheids- en defensiebeleid in de twintigste eeuw” in *De Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek in de twintigste eeuw*, ed. Bob de Graaff, Duco Hellema and Bert van der Zwan (Amsterdam: Boom, 2003), 26.

relationship and cooperation between European countries and Northern America regarding political, economic and security matters, who have mutual interests due to “common heritage and a shared destiny”.<sup>30</sup> It can specifically be seen as; “a collective term for the identities of *European* NATO members who wish to ensure US involvement in Europe and safeguard NATO’s position as the cornerstone of European security and its defence policy”.<sup>31</sup> The Netherlands became one of the founding NATO members in 1949.

Atlanticism is related to other political developments in the late 1940s. US President Harry S. Truman produced a foreign policy that later would be described as the “Truman doctrine”.<sup>32</sup> The world could be divided in so called free Western democratic states and dictatorships according to Hoff. Truman vowed in 1947 that the US would defend the freedom of democratic states everywhere in the world as described by Caljé & Den Hollander.<sup>33</sup> This is also known as containment politics. The essence of this containment is that the US would help every ‘free’ country with economic and military means to defend those countries against international communism.<sup>34</sup> The expansion of communism was visible in 1949 with the rise of two China’s in Asia. These were the communist Peoples Republic of China reigned by Mao Zedong and the nationalist Republic of China under leadership of Chiang Kai-shek. The communist movement of Mao Zedong seized power in China in a short period of time and Chiang Kai-shek was forced to move to Formosa (now Taiwan) together with his followers.<sup>35</sup> When the communist ideology seemed to spread to the Korean peninsula, the US was eager to stop it according to Hoff.<sup>36</sup> See note 37 for the history of the split between North and South Korea.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Nina Græger and Kristin M. Haugevik, “2. Defining Atlanticism” in *The revival of Atlanticism in NATO?: Changing security identities in Britain, Norway and Denmark*, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (2009), 12-13.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Hoff, *Internationale machtsverhoudingen na 1945*, 36.

<sup>33</sup> Caljé and Den Hollander, *De lange twintigste eeuw*, 339.

<sup>34</sup> Hoff, *Internationale machtsverhoudingen na 1945*, 36.

<sup>35</sup> Caljé and Den Hollander, *De lange twintigste eeuw*, 347.

<sup>36</sup> Hoff, *Internationale machtsverhoudingen na 1945*, 52.

<sup>37</sup> The Korean Peninsula was invaded by the Japanese Empire in 1910 and occupied for 35 years by Japanese forces. Japanese rule came to an end when Soviet forces liberated the North and American troops liberated the South during the World War Two. Both the SU and the US agreed that they would temporarily govern ‘their’ part of the Korean Peninsula. Korea would be united when free elections took place. The country was split in two and divided along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. The unity of the Korean Peninsula became a utopia when the two Koreas grew further apart. South Korea quickly shifted its economy towards the capitalist model and was formally democratic, but the system had autocratic features. An example is the influence of the Army and the attitude of President Syngman Rhee. Rhee did not tolerate criticism but was backed by the US because South Korea was both economically and military a stronghold against uprising communist movements in East-Asia. On the other hand, North Korea became a communist peoples republic based at Stalin’s model under guidance of Kim Il Sung, the late grandfather of current North Korean leader Kim Yong

## The Korean War

North Korean leader Kim Il Sung tried to unify South with North Korea in the summer of 1950, when his troops invaded the South. The 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was crossed on 25 June and almost the entire country became under control of North Korea within a few weeks. The US, driven by its containment politics, supported the South Korean military immediately, but this was not enough during this first phase according to Kester, Roozenbeek and Groot.<sup>38</sup> The UNSC came together to condemn the military confrontation on the same day of the invasion. North Korea was labelled as the 'aggressor' and the UNSC asked for a withdrawal of North Korean troops on 25 June.<sup>39</sup> The UNSC also adopted a resolution two days later, which made it possible to launch a military intervention with approval of the UN.<sup>40</sup> Unprecedented, because the SU delegate for the UNSC could not veto these resolutions. He was not present as a protest against the nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek, who held the Chinese seat in the UNSC instead of Mao Zedong's communist China. So, both the SU and China could not veto the resolution.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, it was possible to form an international coalition force with sixteen countries that would fight with South Korean troops against North Korean forces, including the Netherlands.

But this decision of the Dutch cabinet to militarily intervene was hotly debated and took more time than the swift reaction of the UNSC. It seemed that the Dutch ministers were not thinking about Dutch participation in the conflict during the first week.<sup>42</sup> Objections to send troops were linked to socio-economic issues according to Robert Stiphout. He writes that the Dutch were tired after 10 years of war on Dutch and colonial soil.<sup>43</sup> Rebuilding Dutch society could be seen as the main priority and interest of the Netherlands in 1950 due to a shortage of houses and scarcity of jobs for the growing labour force. Thus, the Dutch cabinet was not in favour of joining the Korean conflict and therefore raising the Defence budget. This is supported by Klep & Van Gils, who adds that the "restructuring" of the Army played a role as well.<sup>44</sup> They and Stiphout write that a

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Un. The country became a totalitarian state which was governed from the top and the autocracy of Kim Il Sung lead to a 'personality cult.' See Appels, *N.D.V.N.*; Hoff, *Internationale machtsverhoudingen na 1945* and Kester, Roozenbeek and Groot, *Focus op Korea*.

<sup>38</sup> Kester, Roozenbeek and Groot, *Focus op Korea*, 13-15.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>40</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 10-11.

<sup>41</sup> Caljé and Den Hollander, *De lange twintigste eeuw*, 347; Hoff, *Internationale machtsverhoudingen na 1945*, 51 and; Klep and Van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul* 34.

<sup>42</sup> Stiphout, *De bloedigste oorlog*, 19; Klep & Van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 36;

<sup>43</sup> Stiphout, *De bloedigste oorlog*, 27.

<sup>44</sup> Klep & Van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 36.

lobby was setup in the United Nations for an international coalition a few days after the war started and American diplomat George Kennan approached NATO members to stress that action was needed and prevent the spread of communism.<sup>45</sup>

The Dutch cabinet decided on 3 July 1950 to send the warship *Hr.Ms. Evertsen* to Korean waters, but Kester, Roozenbeek and Groot write that this proposal of the Netherlands was seen as “too symbolic” by Washington and the UN.<sup>46</sup> They add that the Dutch cabinet did initially not give in and felt supported by Dutch public opinion because a lot of Dutch people were not in favour of sending ground troops to Korea, which is supported by Schaafsma.<sup>47</sup> But the lobby continued via public opinion and direct contact with American officials throughout July, who opted for an infantry battalion of approximately 1.000 soldiers. The US Ambassador to the Netherlands stressed for example that it would be very important for the United States and internationally that “the Dutch flag is also present in Korea.”<sup>48</sup> This seemed to be effective, and the Dutch cabinet approved the recruitment of volunteers for Korea in August 1950.



*PM Drees inspects the Dutch volunteers before their departure to Korea on 24 October 1950 (NIMH)*

<sup>45</sup> Stiphout, *De bloedigste oorlog*, 20.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. and; Kester, Roozenbeek and Groot, *Focus op Korea*, 14.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. and Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties*, 18.

<sup>48</sup> Stiphout, *De bloedigste oorlog*, 17.

The volunteers formed the NDVN, which was founded on 25 September 1950.<sup>49</sup> More than 1.600 people applied but the strength of the detachment was not enough for an infantry battalion after a thorough selection. Other defense personnel joined to reinforce the unit and 636 soldiers were eventually ready to set sail to Korea on 26 October 1950.<sup>50</sup> See note 51 for more context about these volunteers.<sup>51</sup> They were addressed by PM Drees who stated two days before their departure; “You go, not because we wish conflict or war, you go to secure world peace all the better”.<sup>52</sup> It is doubtful if this was the real reason to send the volunteers. According to Martin Elands, the Dutch government joined the war mostly out of practical reasons to preserve the Marshall aid, secure the allied solidarity within NATO and protect Dutch interest in Asia (in particular the American support to keep NNG).<sup>53</sup> The latter is also reiterated by Anselm van der Peet, who adds that the Royal Netherlands Navy was in favour to participate to “secure” Dutch interests on sea.<sup>54</sup> He writes that “prestige” also played a role because of her special status and interests in the Pacific, besides the traditional argument to be a protagonist for international justice.<sup>55</sup> According to Van der Peet, the Dutch government emphasized to follow her own course to “prevent that Asian countries (and especially Indonesia) identified the Dutch contribution with American Cold War thinking”.<sup>56</sup>

### **A critical ally?**

Klinkert and Teitler argue that the Netherlands regularly exposed itself as a critical ally of the US in the 1950s. They write that this was visible with the American policy during the Korean War because the Netherlands felt “needlessly burdened” with its fragile relation to Indonesia [due to the unresolved NNG question] and objected against the Americans

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<sup>49</sup> Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties in Korea*, 19.

<sup>50</sup> Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie, Informatiebrochure Korea-oorlog, *Defensie* (3 March 2021), Retrieved from: <https://www.defensie.nl/downloads/brochures/2021/03/03/korea-oorlog>.

<sup>51</sup> The Dutch battalion existed out of a colourful company of volunteers. Some soldiers went to Korea out of ideological considerations, others for the adventure or to escape their home-situation, but most of the guys left because of practical reasons to build a future with their earned salaries if they came back. Most volunteers served in the Dutch East Indies and were experienced veterans. Military experience was a hard demand for the first detachment, but the fight against Indonesian guerrilla fighters was different from the conventional war in Korea. See Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 233 and Elands, *Vechten, verbeelden, verwerken*, 16.

<sup>52</sup> Klep & Van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 37.

<sup>53</sup> Elands, “Vechten, verbeelden, verwerken,” 15.

<sup>54</sup> Anselm J. van der Peet, *Out-of-area: De Koninklijke Marine en multinationale vlootoperaties 1945-2001*, (Franeker: Van Wijnen, 2016) 204.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*



several times.<sup>57</sup> According to Klinkert & Teitler, this was one of the reasons that the Netherlands was not enthusiastic to contribute a lot to the conflict on the Korean peninsula. The analyses of Jaap de Moor is in line with this view and elaborates on the Dutch Korean policy and US-relations during the first phase of the Korean War (from June 1951 to April 1951). De Moor writes that the Netherlands was a “critical and unwillingly ally” who was not eager to join the coalition, objected against the crossing of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel to beat North Korea, came up with alternative plans to prevent Chinese involvement and pressed for negotiations.<sup>58</sup>

The Dutch remained critical after the summer of 1950 when it objected to the Americans with their shift towards a *roll-back* policy according to Klep & Van Gils and De Moor.<sup>59</sup> Without notice, the US decided in October 1950 that the total defeat of North Korea would be the end goal of military operations. This meant that the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, which was the initial border between North and South Korea, would be crossed to steam-up towards the Chinese border. The Dutch cabinet was against this policy and considered it as a “fatal step” because it was in violation with the resolutions of 25 and 27 June.<sup>60</sup> More importantly, the MFA was convinced that the crossing of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel would drag China into the war with hundreds of thousands of troops. Klep & Van Gils write that the Netherlands considered this state to become the “cornerstone of its Asia policy.”<sup>61</sup>

At this moment, Minister of Foreign Affairs Dirk Stikker objected against this US policy and the Dutch ambassador to the UN tried to prevent Chinese involvement by presenting an alternative plan to halt at the border and start negotiations.<sup>62</sup> The Americans reacted furiously as De Moor writes and the Dutch initiative was off the table, so the troops of General MacArthur, who was the commander in chief in Korea, steamed up towards the Chinese border. Stikker came up with another alternative and pleaded for a buffer zone along the Chinese border, but it was too late because 300.000 Chinese ‘volunteers’ attacked the American troops on 26 November 1950 and pushed them back beyond the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>63</sup> This was three days before the first Dutch troops of the NDVN

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<sup>57</sup> Klinkert and Teitler, *Nederland van neutraliteit naar bondgenootschap*, 26.

<sup>58</sup> Jaap A. de Moor, “Aan de Amerikanen overgeleverd. Nederland, de Verenigde Staten en de oorlog in Korea, 1950-1953” in *De Koude Oorlog: maatschappij en krijgsmacht in de jaren vijftig*, ed. Jan Hoffenaar and Gerke Teitler (Den Haag: Sdu, 1992), 176.

<sup>59</sup> Klep & Van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 37 and; De Moor, “Aan de Amerikanen overgeleverd,” 167.

<sup>60</sup> De Moor, “Aan de Amerikanen overgeleverd,” 167.

<sup>61</sup> Klep and Van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 38.

<sup>62</sup> De Moor, “Aan de Amerikanen overgeleverd,” 168.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* and Klep and Van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 38.

arrived in Korea, which was placed under US command and incorporated in the 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the American 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division.<sup>64</sup>

The Dutch soldiers got their baptism of fire in tough conditions shortly after their arrival in Korea (see note 65),<sup>65</sup> and the second phase of the war started when the Chinese troops began with their offensive against UN forces. As a result, the first months of 1951 were characterized by chaos and a frontline that shifted several times. The NDVN got a big blow when Chinese troops approached the command post in Hoengsong unseen and attacked in the night of 12 February 1951. Due to inaccurate American intelligence, two Chinese units were not detected and killed seventeen Dutch soldiers, including the battalion commander Marinus den Ouden and chaplain Herbert Timens.<sup>66</sup>



*The NDVN was confronted with the first Chinese prisoners of war (POWs) in January 1951 (NIMH)*

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<sup>64</sup> NIMH, Informatiebrochure Korea-oorlog, 6.

<sup>65</sup> The Dutch were confronted with frontal attacks and incoming artillery and mortar fire, which resulted in a lot of casualties. Climatological circumstances were also of influence on the soldiers. Korea is a rough, hilly country and the temperature can easily drop to minus 30 degrees Celsius during the winter. See Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 16 and Dussel, *Tjot*, 45-46.

<sup>66</sup> Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties*, 103.

The battle continued and the NDVN got the order to recapture Hill 325 (named after the altimeters) near the town of Wonju. This height was essential for the defence of the city and the Dutch soldiers were able to recapture the hill after three attempts and heavy losses. Even cooks and writers of the support company were employed during this last attack and the American President awarded the entire Dutch battalion with the *Distinguished Unit Citation* for their actions.<sup>67</sup> Almost 200 of the 636 soldiers were out of action after this heavy fighting and the NDVN was reinforced with Dutch and South-Korean soldiers.<sup>68</sup> The latter group were called *Republic of Korea Soldiers* (hereafter; ROKS) and these ROKS would form an important part of the NDVN as the Ministry of War was struggling to find enough volunteers.<sup>69</sup> These reinforcement detachments did not only exist out of Dutch volunteers, but also soldiers from Suriname and NNG.

The Dutch objections against the American policy on Korea became stronger as Stikker concluded that a political deal with China, to accept the split of North and South Korea, was the main interest of Western Europe due to its future relations with Asia and own defense.<sup>70</sup> According to De Moor, the Netherlands and the UK worked together to prevent an UN resolution of the US to condemn China as aggressor, which they labelled as unacceptable. This anti-China resolution was eventually adopted with Dutch support on 31 January 1951, because the Netherlands knew that abstinence “would fall very badly” by the Americans, according to Klep & Van Gils.<sup>71</sup> De Moor writes that internal resistance in the MFA arose against the Dutch objections of the American policy regarding Korea. The head of the Directorate International Organisations (DIO) wrote for example that the continuing Asian perspective “severely harmed” the relations with the US and should be stopped to safeguard US support for the defense of Europe.<sup>72</sup> There is not a clear cut definition in the existing literature for this Asian perspective, but it revolves around the notion that the actions and policy from the MFA were influenced by its relations with Indonesia and to protect Dutch interests regarding NNG. This definition will be used when the Asian perspective is mentioned in the text.

Concerns about a new counter offensive of UN troops beyond the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in February 1951 were shared by Stikker, who was still against the *roll-back* policy and

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> NIMH, Informatiebrochure Korea-oorlog, 8.

<sup>69</sup> Appels, N.D.V.N., 42-43, 176.

<sup>70</sup> De Moor, “Aan de Amerikanen overgeleverd,” 171.

<sup>71</sup> Klep and Van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 39.

<sup>72</sup> De Moor, “Aan de Amerikanen overgeleverd,” 172-173.

vowed for negotiations with China.<sup>73</sup> President Truman eventually fired MacArthur in April for his reckless plans to beat North Korea and China. According to De Moor, this political crisis in the spring of 1951 showed Stikker that the Netherlands and other allies were fiercely criticised by the American press and public opinion, which were influential in American politics. He got convinced that the US policy regarding Korea had to be publicly backed out of tactical reasons, so the Netherlands had to follow the American politics because it was dependent on US financial and military support.<sup>74</sup> De Moor writes that the “Asian perspective” on the MFA was waning and that the Netherlands discovered that the margins of an independent foreign policy had disappeared, which is reiterated by Van der Peet.<sup>75</sup>

Klep and Van Gils write that the cabinet asked several times for a swift cease fire but that the Netherlands almost completely “withdrew” from the Korean question after the resignation of MacArthur in April 1951.<sup>76</sup> Van der Peet agrees with this and state that the conflict almost disappeared of the political agenda in The Hague.<sup>77</sup> Klep and van Gils follow this line and add that the Americans did not really matter. The cease fire negotiations were forthcoming, and they did not want to allow “small partners,” like the Netherlands, to join this process.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, there seems to be no thorough analysis regarding the Dutch the Korean War policy from 9 April 1951 up to 24 January 1955 when the Dutch military mission in Korea ended. This tendency to focus on the first phase of the Korean War is also visible in other Dutch literature regarding the Korean conflict as discussed in the introduction about the academic relevance of this research. Therefore, these years will be analysed, starting with the period from 9 April 1951 to 2 September 1952 in the next chapter.

*Picture page 25: Patrol of Dutch soldiers near the 'Punchbowl' in July 1951. Photographed by war correspondent Wim Dussel (NIMH)*

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 173-174.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 174 and; Van der Peet, *Out of Area*, 232.

<sup>76</sup> Klep and Van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 39.

<sup>77</sup> Van der Peet, *Out of Area*, 232.

<sup>78</sup> Klep and Van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 39.



9 APRIL 1951

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2 SEPTEMBER 1952





## Chapter 2 – 9 April 1951 to 2 September 1952

The Dutch MFA expressed in July 1952 that they did not want to give the impression that the Netherlands had to “walk on the American leash” regarding its Korean War policy.<sup>79</sup> This indicates that the Dutch government was still critical towards the US and did not follow an Atlantic course. To find out if the Dutch policy regarding the Korean War was an expression of a change in foreign and defense policies, it is necessary to look at the highest political level and analyse how the Dutch cabinet discussed the Korean War and which decisions were made from 9 April 1951 to 24 January 1955. This is important before the diplomatic dimension can be analysed and see how Dutch diplomats acted and reacted. In the following paragraph, the minutes of the council of ministers will be reviewed from 9 April 1951 to 2 September 1952 as this period covers the reign of cabinet Drees II up until its fall. But for a comprehensive approach it is also necessary to look at the major developments and the Dutch participation during the Korean War, which will also be taken into account. It will become clear that the intense military situation on the ground did not necessarily correspond with the interest and attention of the cabinet in the Korean War during this period. This is in line with the existing literature, but it will be visible that the Dutch diplomats were more engaged with the Korean War than suggested before.

### **Military and political dimension**

The Dutch cabinet was not eager to militarily join the Korean conflict and confronted the American policy regarding the Korean War several times from 25 June 1950 to 9 April 1951 as described in the historiography chapter. It was for example visible in the reaction of the cabinet when General MacArthur wanted to bomb airfields in China. Minister of Foreign Affairs Stikker instructed the Ambassador in Washington on 9 April 1951 to make clear to the State Department that it was “desirable” that “General Mac Arthur deals only with strategy and not politics”.<sup>80</sup> This was at the time that MacArthur suggested to use nukes on North Korea and an explanation for this strong Dutch objection could be out of fear that the conflict would escalate further with China. MacArthur was coincidentally fired the same day by President Truman, but the question of the Korean War and the Dutch

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<sup>79</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 22699, 8 July 1952.

<sup>80</sup> Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie, Den Haag, De Koninklijke Marine genoemd in de notulen van de Ministerraad, Toegang 068, inventarisnummer 12, 9 April 1951.

participation was after this episode limited discussed in the council of ministers from 9 April 1951 to 2 September 1952. Twelve out of the seventeen references were about the period up to October 1951 when the first Detachment served in Korea, which is in line with existing literature about extensive coverage of only the first year of the Korean War.

Interesting, because the military situation on the ground was still intense for the Dutch troops from April 1951 onwards. The Dutch destroyer *Hr.Ms. Van Galen* relieved the *Hr.Ms. Evertsen* on 18 April 1951 and patrolled the Korean waters in the west near Incheon. The destroyer sailed to the east coast in July and supported the bombardments there on the North Korean industrial city Wonsan.<sup>81</sup> Meanwhile, the NDVN got six weeks rest after the intense first months in Korea due to the Chinese 'spring offensive' against UN forces, but was engaged in heavy fighting again near Inje from the end of May to early June 1951 as illustrated by this secret code telegram: "The enemy losses were 250 to 300 men" and "The overtired Dutchmen fought with the bayonet".<sup>82</sup>



*Dutch soldiers rest on top of Hill 975, which they climbed twice and occupied on 17 May 1951 (NIMH)*

<sup>81</sup> Van der Peet, *Out of Area*, 229-234.

<sup>82</sup> Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Code-archief 1945-1954, nummer toegang 2.05.117, inventarisnummer 22701, 2 June 1951.

The Dutch soldiers covered the retreat of UN forces but were separated from their vehicles and regiment. A 'hunger trip' of two days followed to reach their own lines because there was not enough food available.<sup>83</sup> The NDVN was confronted with heavy fighting by Chinese attacks a few weeks later. In total, twenty Dutchmen were killed, 36 soldiers got wounded and one man was taken POW during these actions in Inje.<sup>84</sup>

It seems that the Dutch cabinet primarily discussed technical and practical matters instead of discussing the Korean War as a political question from April 1951 to September 1952. This is illustrated by the following observation. Twelve out of the seventeen references were about matters like sending reinforcements (with or without conscripts),<sup>85</sup> the return of the first detachment<sup>86</sup> or financial issues<sup>87</sup>. The latter topic is discussed multiple times and show that the Dutch cabinet was worried about the costs of the military participation in the Korean War. An example is a discussion on 4 June 1951 about a daily fee that the Americans charged for "maintenance" for every Dutch soldier in Korea.<sup>88</sup> PM Drees mentioned that the presented memorandum was "not meant as a budget item" but "to give an impression of the high expenses".<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, the previous discussions about these costs indicate that the Dutch cabinet viewed the military deployment mostly as a cost item. One explanation could be that the Netherlands did not want to participate in the Korean War. This could also be explained by a broader perspective, which becomes visible in the meetings of the council of ministers during this period. The Dutch cabinet was concerned about expenditures for the Armed Forces because the US pressed the Netherlands to increase them for the benefit of Europe's defence.<sup>90</sup> This was discussed several times in the council and the ministers stated that this was not possible as illustrated by this remark of PM Drees on 3 September 1951: "However, it must be irrevocably clear for the Americans that the Netherlands cannot spend anything more".<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Leen Schreuders, *Ooggetuige van de oorlog: Frontervaringen in Korea* in Elands, *Vechten, verbeelden, verwerken* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2000) 52. Picture photographed by Wim Dussel, collection NIMH.

<sup>84</sup> Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties*, 180.

<sup>85</sup> Discussed in the council of ministers on 9 April 1951, 16 July 1951, 1 October 1951 and 12 November 1951.

<sup>86</sup> Discussed in the council of ministers on 13 August 1951 and 24 September 1951.

<sup>87</sup> Discussed in the council of ministers on 9 April 1951, 16 April 1951 and 4 June 1951.

<sup>88</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 13, 4 June 1951.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Discussed in the council of ministers on 3 + 24 September 1951, 8 October 1951 and 19 November 1951.

<sup>91</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 14, 3 September 1951.

The Dutch cabinet was not willing to fulfil the American wish for the Atlantic Pact to spend more on defense, but the ministers were aware of its dependency on the US. During the council meeting of 16 May 1951, Minister of War and Navy Kees Staf pointed out that American support (in regard with a defense infrastructure plan) was not only financially important but also from a defense perspective, because the US would be “actively involved to defend our country”.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, the Dutch cabinet was not willing to blindly follow the foreign policy of the US. For example, it had reservations about the expansion of the “Atlantic Pact” (NATO) with Greece and Turkey.<sup>93</sup> Minister of Foreign Affairs Stikker opted to follow the course of Denmark and Norway to object against admission of these two countries because the “character of the Pact would be changed and weakened” and it could “provoke” the SU.<sup>94</sup> The council decided that Stikker could go ahead but two ministers insisted that the Dutch position should be carefully brought forward and prevent to “antagonize” the US, as well as Greece and Turkey.<sup>95</sup>

The Korean conflict was only discussed a few times as a political question from 9 April 1951 to 2 September 1952, which indicates that the Dutch cabinet was not so interested in the conflict anymore (see note 96).<sup>96</sup> This seems to support the existing literature that the Netherlands barely interfered with the Korean War from 9 April 1951 onwards. Nevertheless, the council of ministers agreed that the Netherlands would not raise the question to recognize the communist Chinese government in the UN as they did previously due to the “attitude of communist China in Korea.”<sup>97</sup> Interesting because the US was against recognition. So, the Netherlands might have changed its position to be a supporting ally of the US and this could be an expression of the change in its foreign policy.

Some major military and geopolitical developments took place during this period. In the aftermath of the disastrous spring offensives for the communists, the time had come to negotiate about a cease fire according to Françoise Appels. US President Truman and the Joint Chiefs of Staf wanted to end the war in Korea as soon as possible and deemed the

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<sup>92</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 13, 16 May 1951.

<sup>93</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 13, 28 May 1951.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 9 July 1951.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> While it seemed that the Dutch cabinet did not really bother about the NDVN, Minister Staf expressed his concerns on 18 June 1951 about messages that the NDVN was repeatedly transferred to other army units under US command, which operated in the most dangerous areas. He promised to find out what was going on and address the matter to the Dutch Embassy in Washington. This was the only intrinsic concern about the Dutch detachment during the period April 1951 to September 1952. See NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 13, 18 June 1951.

<sup>97</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 13, 4 June 1951.

communist threat in Europe more important as a focal point.<sup>98</sup> US General Van Fleet did not agree with this decision, because he wanted to beat the communist forces after the successful UN offensive in May 1951. But General Ridgway, who was the commander in chief, followed Truman's politics.<sup>99</sup> The negotiations started in Kaesong, which was supposed to be in no-man's-land but was in fact controlled by North Korea.<sup>100</sup>



*The "United Nations House" in Kaesong, during early armistice talks in July 1951 (Britannica)*

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<sup>98</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 266.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Van Sprang, *hevve no*, 76-77 and Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 266.



Dutch journalist Alfred van Sprang was one of the twenty reporters and wrote about his interaction with Chinese and North Korean journalists; “What white is for us, is black for the communists. On such a basis, there is very little room for exchange of views. And it will presumably not be much better inside [at the negotiation table].”<sup>101</sup> Van Sprang was right and the negotiations stalled after 8 days, because the communists demanded that all foreign forces withdrew from Korea immediately. On 26 July 1951, the negotiations were resumed and both parties agreed to talk about several agenda items, including a truce line and demilitarized zone, a settlement about a cease fire and armistice, and a settlement about POWs.<sup>102</sup> But the negotiations stalled again when the communists proposed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as the truce line. The UN forces did not accept this because this line was not defensible and feared that the negotiations were misused, because the communists’ forces had suddenly recovered and were reinforced.<sup>103</sup>

The Dutch soldiers were deployed in the *Punchbowl*-valley to support the pressure of UN forces on the communists to help the stalled negotiations.<sup>104</sup> Thus, the NDVN attacked Hill 1120 a few weeks before the departure of the first detachment in the summer of 1951. They were met with heavy Chinese resistance and another twelve NDVN soldiers died after two weeks of fighting.<sup>105</sup> The frontline stabilised near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel from this moment on and the third phase of the Korean war had started. Major shifts of the frontline were over, but the fighting continued unabated, and the collection of intelligence got a prominent role during this phase.<sup>106</sup> The understaffed battalion (see note 107)<sup>107</sup> was initially forced to move fast and ad hoc due to the major offensives of the

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<sup>101</sup> Van Sprang, *hevve no*, 77.

<sup>102</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 267.

<sup>103</sup> Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties*, 190-191.

<sup>104</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 267.

<sup>105</sup> Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties*, 197-208.

<sup>106</sup> NIMH, Informatiebrochure Korea-oorlog, 9.

<sup>107</sup> Meanwhile, the Joint Chiefs of Staff deemed it “reasonable” to ask for an increase of additional forces “specifically in the Netherlands and Belgian battalions now in Korea” on 16 August 1951. The US Ambassador to the Netherlands did this request in November 1951 and asked for a “brigade-sized” detachment [approximately 5.500 soldiers], “regardless of the outcome of the present armistice talks”. Secretary-General of the MFA, Hendrik Boon, informed the ambassador that there should be no doubt about the “principal willingness” of the Netherlands to contribute, but that it was already exceedingly difficult to fill a battalion with [~750] volunteers. Boon also stated that it would give “constitutional difficulties” to send conscripts instead of volunteers, so this request was not granted by the Netherlands, but the US ambassador already expected this outcome. See *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, Korea and China, Volume VII, Part 1*, eds John P. Glennon, Harriet D. Schwar and Paul Claussen (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), document 519 and NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 22701, 1 and 2 November 1951.

war, but the Dutchmen stayed longer on the same location in trenches from July 1951 onwards.<sup>108</sup>

Meanwhile, the destroyer *Van Galen* patrolled in Korean waters and returned to the east coast in October 1951, where it was involved in bombardments on industrial complexes after she was struck by a Typhoon.<sup>109</sup> The Dutch battalion came into action again in October 1951 to recapture a ridgeline above the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel after spending time as a reserve unit in the rear for a few months. This operation got the nickname *Heartbreak Ridge* due to fierce enemy resistance and this is illustrated by the loss of ten Dutch and two South Korean soldiers who were killed in action due to a Chinese counteroffensive on 9 and 10 October.<sup>110</sup> The NDVN was ordered to eliminate enemy resistance in this area and to execute ambush patrols against infiltrators in the following weeks.<sup>111</sup> These actions supported a better negotiation position for the UN and the talks were resumed on 25 October in Panmunjom. But they stranded soon (for months) as the communists tried to exploit the talks again to reinforce their troops and the intense war dragged on in central Korea between Chorwon and Gimwha-eup in the South and Pyongyang in the North.<sup>112</sup>

After a period of rest, the NDVN was active in this 'Iron Triangle' from December 1951 onwards, where several occupied ridges had to be recaptured to improve their own frontline positions. Battalion commander Christan decided to operate as aggressively as possible to deter the enemy from this moment on.<sup>113</sup> To achieve this, patrols were conducted almost continuously, often with offensive missions. These were also useful to collect intel and making POWs besides scaring the enemy. This strategy was successful but the deployment in the Iron Triangle resulted in eight Dutch soldiers who were killed in action and 77 wounded.<sup>114</sup> The NDVN was then ordered to guard POWs on the island Koje-Do but returned to the Iron Triangle again in August 1952.<sup>115</sup> In Korean waters, the Royal Netherlands Navy destroyer *Van Galen* patrolled in December 1951 near 'Route Cigarette', where it attacked enemy targets on islands and the mainland.<sup>116</sup> The *Hr.Ms. Piet Hein* succeeded the *Van Galen* on 28 February 1952 and also became part of Task Group

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Van der Peet, *Out of Area*, 235.

<sup>110</sup> Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties*, 224.

<sup>111</sup> NIMH, Informatiebrochure Korea-oorlog, 10.

<sup>112</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 268.

<sup>113</sup> NIMH, Informatiebrochure Korea-oorlog, 10.

<sup>114</sup> Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties*, 274.

<sup>115</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 100-106.

<sup>116</sup> Van der Peet, *Out of Area*, 234.

95.1. It patrolled in Korean waters throughout 1952 and repeatedly attacked enemy railways.<sup>117</sup>



*Dutch soldiers in position in the 'Iron Triangle' area near Kumwha in December 1951 (NIMH)*

The Dutch cabinet did not discuss the Korean conflict as a political question from June 1951 to July 1952 despite the intense military situation in Korea. On 14 July 1952, the ministers talked about a common statement of the sixteen countries that fought under the flag of the UN in case of a possible cease fire in Korea. Some ministers had doubts that in case of a breach of the cease fire, the fighting should only take place within the Korean peninsula, because they deemed this unrealistic.<sup>118</sup> They seemed to be in favour of changing the common statement. PM Drees stated that the change to prevent a war is bigger if leaders of “aggressive countries” know that an attack would result in a united

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 237-239.

<sup>118</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 16, 14 July 1952.

reaction of all the other countries but said that it would be of “little influence” on the course of events if the Netherlands did not sign the agreement.<sup>119</sup> Stikker deemed the latter not desirable and the council eventually decided that it would not try to change the common statement.<sup>120</sup> An example that the cabinet wanted to form a united front with the other countries and did not try to pursue its own wishes like during the first phase of the Korean War. It is also illustrative how Drees viewed the role of the Netherlands on the world stage as he thought that the Netherlands would not be able to make a difference regarding the Korean question. An explanation for this change, compared to the more critical attitude during the first phase, is that Drees and the cabinet experienced that the Americans were not willing to compromise and barely changed their policy regarding Korea based on objections or suggestions from their allies.

In conclusion, the Korean conflict was not a hotly debated topic in the council of ministers from April 1951 to September 1952 and can only partly be explained by the geopolitical and military developments, because these continued unabated. The cease fire negotiations and stabilisation of the front could have waned the (already existing) limited interest of the cabinet. This could also be an expression of a change in its foreign policy as it would more or less follow the course of the American policy regarding Korea from April 1951 onwards as described by De Moor, Klep & Van Gils and Van der Peet.<sup>121</sup> It is remarkable that two topics were dominant regarding Dutch foreign policy: the relationship with Indonesia and the question of NNG; and the possible formation of a European Army as part of the European Defense Community. The ministers devoted a lot of time about these topics during the meetings. It seems that the ‘Asian perspective’ (to protect its relationship with Indonesia and to defend its interests regarding NNG) had not waned on the highest political level and the Dutch cabinet mostly followed the American course, which supports the existing historiography.

### **Diplomatic dimension**

Although the Dutch cabinet was not really interested in the Korean War and seemed to follow the American course, this does not mean that Dutch diplomats were not engaged with the Korean conflict during the reign of PM Drees’ second cabinet. The first most

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> De Moor, “Aan de Amerikanen overgeleverd,” 174; Klep and Van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 39 and Van der Peet, *Out of Area*, 232.

notable diplomatic event after 9 April 1951 was the start of the negotiations about a cease fire and armistice in July 1951. These negotiations between the UN and communist delegations started after intense battles in Korea.<sup>122</sup> According to Minister of Foreign Affairs Stikker, the Unified Command was “entrusted” to the US, who contributed the most to the UN forces.<sup>123</sup> Therefore, the “belligerent members of the UN” agreed that the “military delegation” consisted out of representatives from the American armed forces.<sup>124</sup> This means that the Netherlands and her other allies in Korea accepted that the US took the lead and follow their policy in principle.

Nevertheless, the Dutch diplomatic delegation to the UN and other diplomats did not stay aloof and were engaged with the negotiations. At the UN in Washington, PermRep Daniel Johannes von Balluseck and acting PermRep Joseph Luns stayed in touch with other delegations and put forward the view of the Netherlands Government to the US State Department.<sup>125</sup> Examples are the approval about an armistice by the General Assembly of the UN (hereafter; GA),<sup>126</sup> and a “cool-off period” about the Korean question due to the cease fire negotiations that Von Balluseck proposed to the US PermRep to the UN on 6 July 1951.<sup>127</sup> According to Deputy US PermRep to the UN Ernest Gross, Von Balluseck deemed this important in relation to the question of China’s representation at the UN as “it would be most unfortunate if, when it arises, there becomes manifest a sharp division of opinion between US and many of its closest free-world friends”.<sup>128</sup> Von Balluseck seemed to prevent this and expressed his hope that the US would change its view but Gross deemed this not realistic considering the US anti-communist attitude.<sup>129</sup>

This telegram of Gross about his meeting with Von Balluseck illustrates that the latter thought that the Americans were “taken too though a line” and that “statements by American leaders were viewed in the eyes of Europeans as overemphasizing the Communist risk and urging too strongly necessity to maintain rearmament effort”.<sup>130</sup> This refers to the pressure of the US on the Netherlands to build up their defense strength and

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<sup>122</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 266-267.

<sup>123</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 22706, 21 July 1951.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *FRUS*, Korea and China, Volume VII, Part 1, 411 and NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 26442, 14 August 1951.

<sup>126</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 26442, 14 August 1951.

<sup>127</sup> *FRUS*, vol. VII, Korea and China, Part 1, 411.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*



spend more on defense, which the Dutch cabinet did not want. According to Gross, the Dutch PermRep also wanted to lift the strategic embargo against the communists as it would be helpful for the negotiation to make peace, but the US PermRep disagreed.<sup>131</sup>



*UN commander in Korea, General Mark Clark, (middle) talking to Von Balluseck (left) during an informal meeting on 5 May 1952 with representatives of the nations who have contributed either fighting forces or medical aid in Korea (United Nations Photo)*

Another example that Dutch diplomats did not completely stay aloof is that Nicolaas de Voogd, who was the Dutch Consul General in Beijing, addressed his major concerns to Stikker about the negotiations and how the UN delegation operated on 14 August 1951.<sup>132</sup> He wrote in his telegram, which consisted of 31 observations, that “constructive complacency” from the UN side was recommended to reach an armistice or cease fire with Beijing and Moscow. The head of the Directorate East Asia (DOA) from the MFA, Meijer, agreed with De Voogd. He decided to “break his silence” about the negotiations and inform Minister Stikker about their objections against the “current

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 22706, 14 August 1951.

negotiation methods” used by the UN [read US] delegation.<sup>133</sup> These were not according to the “norms” and the unwillingly attitude towards the Chinese delegation would ground the negotiations, which the “Soviet-block” could exploit for their propaganda.<sup>134</sup> According to Meijer, the observations of De Voogd had to be notified to the US State Department and British Foreign Office.<sup>135</sup>

No sources from the code-archive of the MFA have been found who indicate that this message was passed to the US State Department. It seems that Minister Stikker had not instructed the Dutch Embassy in Washington to do so. Stikker only gave instructions to Ambassador Van Roijen on 23 August 1951 to ask the State Department if they deemed it “satisfying” if he would make a statement regarding the demarcation line when the negotiations would be resumed.<sup>136</sup> This intention of Stikker seems to be instigated to help the stalled negotiations in Kaesong, but also to comply with the American course of action.

These episodes illustrate that several Dutch diplomats were engaged with the armistice negotiations in the summer of 1951 and that they were critical towards the American strategy, which had to be changed in their opinion, although Minister Stikker seemed not willing to confront the Americans. Acting PermRep Luns observed in October 1951 that there was not much interest anymore in the Korean question in “UN circles”, even though intense and bloody fights took place in Heartbreak Ridge against the communist forces.<sup>137</sup> He described it as “fatigue symptoms” and wrote that reactions were “almost apathic”, which he compared with the situation in World War One.<sup>138</sup> This was also visible in the decreasing interest of the Dutch cabinet in the Korean question after the summer of 1951.

Nevertheless, the Korean question was on the agenda at the sixth meeting of the GA and the Dutch delegation was instructed on 6 November 1951 to keep in touch with Belgium and the other representatives of the “Western Union”.<sup>139</sup> They should coordinate to follow the course of these countries and other signatories of the North-Atlantic Treaty regarding “important political questions”, but had to take the views of the “smaller partners” in mind compared to the “big powers”.<sup>140</sup> The delegation was also instructed

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 17 August 1951.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 23 August 1951.

<sup>137</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 26442, 10 October 1951.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 25922, 6 November 1951.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

that it should not emphasize the differences between the Western countries and the SU, to prevent that the GA would be characterised as a “propaganda-congress” against the SU. This instruction can be seen as a warning for the tough attitude of the US towards communist countries and their proposals, which the Netherlands was not fond of.

While PermRep Balluseck tried to persuade his US counterpart in the summer to change his view about the recognition of communist China instead of Chiang Kai-shek's republican Chinese seat, the Dutch delegation to the UN was instructed to “resist” against such submission in the UN, even when there would be a cease fire agreement.<sup>141</sup> So, the Netherlands seemed to follow the American policy in this regard. This was also visible with the instruction regarding a meeting of the Korean question about a rapport of the UNCURK. The delegation should follow the UN goals for unification but also agree with a temporary truce line, and this truce line needed to be military defensible (near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel) to prevent another attack from the communists.<sup>142</sup>

The delegation was also instructed that the UNCURK could be replaced by a smaller commission, but that Dutch membership for such a commission was “little appreciated”, indicating that there was not much interest in the Korean question but an explanation could not be found.<sup>143</sup> This is an interesting change in Dutch policy regarding this issue, because Minister Stikker instructed the Dutch representative at the UNCURK, Abraham Gieben, in May 1951 that the presence of the Netherlands in this commission should not be “underestimated”.<sup>144</sup> Especially because other Asian countries would monitor the given aid to Korea and would be cautious that it will not change in an “American profit colony” when the country was reconstructed after the war.<sup>145</sup> Gieben was critical about the results of the UNCURK in Korea because the UN had the obligation to rebuild the South Korean Republic, but most aid was “in practice” given to UN forces, which was “in fact” the US Army.<sup>146</sup> This gave an impression of “American imperialism” according to Gieben and the non-American countries got the “uncomfortable feeling” to “walk on a leash” of the Pentagon.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 26452, 28 May 1951.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 7 December 1951.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 7 and 13 December 1951.

Gieben pleaded to book results on non-military terrain and create a single UN body in Korea with all competence.<sup>148</sup> The impact of his strong words can be regarded as an important signal to the cabinet. Stikker was clear with his instructions in May and demanded that Gieben followed them, indicating that his input was not taken into account, but this was different in December 1951. Gieben held a 'causerie' for the Dutch delegation for the sixth GA and his experiences seemed to be valued by the delegation. They had to follow the instructions of the cabinet, which were in line with the suggestions and views of Gieben.<sup>149</sup>



*Gieben (left) visited the NDVN and commander Den Ouden (middle) in January 1951 (NIMH)*

The image of the Netherlands seemed also to play a role regarding the question of common statement of the sixteen countries after a possible cease fire in July 1952. The Directorate International Organisations did not really matter if such a statement would be handed to the Secretary-General by the US PermRep at the UN.<sup>150</sup> Nevertheless, they

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 25922, 6 November 1951.

<sup>150</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 22699, 8 July 1952.

shared the thought of other countries that own initiative towards others would “reinforce the impression” that the Netherlands did not “walk on the American leash”, indicating that such an impression would not be good for the Netherlands.<sup>151</sup>

It seems that Dutch diplomats were critical about the policy of the US regarding the Korean War and tried to change its views on several issues up until the summer of 1951. From that moment on, there seemed to be fewer objections, but the Dutch diplomats were still engaged and talked to other delegations about the Korean question to be informed and prepare for the seventh GA from July 1952 onwards.<sup>152</sup> The Dutch Ambassador to the US, Herman van Roijen, regularly attended a “Korean briefing meeting” about the military and political situation in Korea, which was hosted by the US State Department in Washington.<sup>153</sup> This illustrates that the Dutch diplomats did not stay aloof after the summer of 1951 and nuances the statements of De Moor, Klep & Van Gils and Van der Peet that the Netherlands almost completely withdrew from the conflict during this period. But it is true that Dutch diplomats followed the course of the US most of the times from the fall of 1951 to September 1952. They voted consequently in line with the US and other allies on the Korean question in UN (commission) sessions<sup>154</sup> and proposals from the US.<sup>155</sup>

This shift to be a more compliant ally of the US can partly be explained by the military and geopolitical developments during the conflict because the cease fire negotiations started in July 1951 and the front stabilised at that moment, which could be an incentive to follow to US policy regarding the Korean War as interest in the conflict waned. This can be regarded as an expression as a change in Dutch foreign policy, which was roughly taking place from the late 1940s to the early 1950s. The latter is in line with the historiography and argumentation of Hellema, but this analysis show that Dutch diplomats (and therefore “the Netherlands”) were more engaged with the Korean question than mentioned in the existing academic literature.

*Picture page 42: Dutch soldiers check their weapons in reinforced positions in hilly terrain, somewhere in 1953.*

*Photographed by war correspondent Jan Rups (NIMH)*

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 25925, 14 and 17 July 1952.

<sup>153</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 17924 and 22706.

<sup>154</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 25923, 3 March 1952.

<sup>155</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 17924, 31 January 1952.



2 SEPTEMBER 1952 - 27 JULY 1953



## Chapter 3 – 2 September 1952 to 27 July 1953

Minister of Foreign Affairs Luns stated in June 1953 that participation of the Netherlands in a political conference to solve the Korean question “should not be encouraged”.<sup>156</sup> An interesting statement for a country that was militarily involved in the Korean War. Was this because of a lack of interest or to protect Dutch interests? This chapter will overview the period from 2 September 1952 up to the armistice in Korea on 27 July 1953. It covers the start of Prime Minister Drees third cabinet to the end of the fighting in Korea. The main goal of this chapter is to analyse how the cabinet and diplomats acted during this final phase of the Korean War. It is important to discover if there were any changes, compared to the previous period, in the foreign and defense policies under this new cabinet to answer the research question. The political and diplomatic dimension will be analysed again to accomplish this, but the military dimension is integrated with the political dimension to understand the geopolitical events and military situation on the ground from September 1952 to August 1953, which could influence foreign and defense policies regarding the Korean question. This chapter will reveal that diplomats were still engaged with this issue, but they had to deal with instructions from the cabinet to follow the American course. The NNG question influenced Dutch policy regarding the Korean War and this Asian perspective had not waned at the MFA as stated by several academics.

### Military and political dimension

The second cabinet of PM Drees was under resignation from 25 June 1952 onwards but was succeeded by his third cabinet on 2 September 1952 after winning the national elections. A new cabinet meant a new team of ministers, except of Minister Kees Staf who remained in charge of the Ministry of War and Navy. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dirk Stikker, was replaced by two ministers due to internal political troubles.<sup>157</sup> Joseph Luns became responsible for bilateral relations and non-European questions, like Indonesia, NNG and the Korean War, and Johan Beyen was responsible for multilateral relations and primarily focussed on European integration.<sup>158</sup> This division symbolised the split in Dutch foreign policy from 1952 onwards, with a process of adaptation to the modern world and Atlanticism on the one hand, and colonial resentment regarding the Indonesian and NNG

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<sup>156</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 19, 15 June 1953.

<sup>157</sup> Hellema, *Neutraliteit & Vrijhandel*, 179.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. and Albert Kersten, *Luns: een politieke biografie* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2010) 98.

question on the other hand according to Duco Hellema.<sup>159</sup> But this does not mean that Luns was not engaged with multilateral relations and that he was not in favour of the UN. He was acting PermRep for the Netherlands at the UN before and had stated in an interview on 3 May 1951: "According to my experience, the Netherlands is far ahead of most other countries with international thinking, objectivity, and interest for international cooperation. Hence the basic interest of the Dutch people in the U.N."<sup>160</sup>

While the Korean conflict was not discussed in the council of ministers for months, the war and Dutch participation had appeared on the agenda again, two weeks after the start of the new cabinet. The cause did not have its origin in major developments during the war, but because of Minister Luns, who visited the US in September 1952. He spoke with Secretary-General of the UN Trygve Lie about the war in Korea, who suggested that more European troops should be sent to Korea in return for possibly more American aid.<sup>161</sup> Minister Luns denounced the latter issue and said that the Netherlands did not receive specific aid for their participation in the Korean War, but that the Netherlands was in fact obliged to pay the Americans 30 million dollars due to a "deal" between US Minister of Foreign Affairs Dean Acheson and Dutch Ambassador to the US Herman van Roijen.<sup>162</sup> This raised concern by the prime minister, who seemed not to be aware of this deal and deemed this figure "yet very high".<sup>163</sup> So, Minister Luns thought it was desirable to find out what was going and Minister Staf informed the council a week later that nothing had been paid yet but that the costs of 10 dollars per day for every soldier was for "Dutch account".<sup>164</sup>

This issue illustrates again that the council of ministers was mostly focussed on the cost aspect of the Dutch participation in Korea. An explanation can be found in the meeting of 8 September 1952 when the ministers discussed the maximum defense budget. Minister of Agriculture, Johan van der Kieft, shared his objections to raise the "defense ceiling" to 1.5 billion Guilders after 1954 and feared that the expenses would be "unlimited" for several years.<sup>165</sup> Minister of War Kees Staf pointed out that the Dutch government had to fulfil the obligations that it had made as a NATO member, and the

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<sup>159</sup> Hellema, *Neutraliteit & Vrijhandel*, 180.

<sup>160</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 25708, 3 May 1951.

<sup>161</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 17, 15 September 1952.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. and NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 17, 22 September 1952.

<sup>165</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 17, 8 September 1952.

defense of the Netherlands must be seen as an “important factor”.<sup>166</sup> This did not convince Minister of Finance Sicco Mansholt, who stated that the cabinet had agreed to hold on to a four-year financial ceiling in the coalition agreement. This discussion illustrates that some ministers in the Dutch cabinet were more engaged with party politics and rigid financial ceilings, than to fulfil national obligations, which could have resulted in the tendency of the cabinet to focus on the costs of the Dutch UN mission in Korea.

There was a lack of intrinsic interest from the cabinet in the NDVN, which was visible in the meeting on 22 September 1952. Minister of War and Navy Staf told the other ministers that the US State Department was worried that the Netherlands did not put much effort to keep up the strength of the detachment in Korea.<sup>167</sup> So, Minister Luns asked Staf if this could be contradicted, but the State Department was right. The Ministry of War had trouble to find enough volunteers throughout the war and there was not enough interest and support for the Dutch detachment in Korea.<sup>168</sup> Battalion commander Christan had raised his “serious concerns” about the lack of personnel to the General Staff in the Hague for months but got no reply.<sup>169</sup>

The bloody stalemate in Korea continued during and after the summer of 1952. The NDVN had returned to the ‘Iron Triangle’ on 19 August 1952 and the new battalion commander, Cornelis Schilperoord, was faced with Chinese attacks against the Dutch positions near the *T Bone-ridge* in the following weeks, which were encountered by the Dutch detachment.<sup>170</sup> Soldier Jan Mus wrote on 7 October 1952 in his diary: “There came a Chinese attack: 7 outposts of ours were taken by the chinks, but 4 were regained again (...) Both sides fired more than 6.000 shells (...) The tension is very high!”<sup>171</sup> The tested technique of reconnaissance and ambush patrols continued till the end of 1952 due to aggressive activity of Chinese and North Korean troops, but costed the lives of fifteen NDVN soldiers, including three ROKS.<sup>172</sup>

During this same period, Minister of War Kees Staf stated in the meeting of 22 September that it would be desirable that a representative of the Dutch government would go to Korea. Not because of intrinsic motivation but “since other countries showed

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 42-43, 54, 70-71, 88.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>170</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 106-113.

<sup>171</sup> Jan Mus and Cor Smith, *Dagboek van een Koreaveteraan: Korea 1952-1953* (Unpublished diary, 2010) 45.

<sup>172</sup> NIMH, Informatiebrochure Korea-oorlog, 11.



special interest for Korea.”<sup>173</sup> The cabinet decided that Secretary of State Ferdinand Kranenburg should go to Korea. Kranenburg would be the first representative in two years, which illustrate the lack of interest during this period.<sup>174</sup> Kranenburg visited the NDVN on 23 and 24 October 1952,<sup>175</sup> and recalled more than 30 years later: “Then the idea just came to me. You cannot just let them muddle through there in that harsh climate and in this miserable war, because it is a dirty war. Someone should take note of that.”<sup>176</sup>



*Secretary of War Kranenburg (middle) was sent off by Minister of War Staf (right) to Korea (NIMH)*

While his intentions might have been sincere, Kranenburgs' words did not represent the entire story, because it was the decision of the cabinet to send him to Korea. The above-mentioned minutes from the council reveal that the motivation was extrinsic to create a positive image of Dutch engagement regarding its participation in the Korean

<sup>173</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 17, 22 September 1952.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 17, 3 November 1952.

<sup>176</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 118.



War towards its allies. An explanation could be that the Americans were worried about the strength of the Dutch battalion in Korea, which was confronted with a structural lack of volunteers and the Americans already asked the Dutch cabinet to increase the strength of its battalion in November 1951 (see note 107). Minister of War Staf stated in the meeting of 22 September 1952; “that abroad there is a fear that the Dutch detachment in Korea will importantly remain under strength”.<sup>177</sup> This probably triggered the Dutch cabinet to send a representative to Korea in order to save face. This whole episode illustrates that the cabinet was most interested in what the US and other countries thought about the Dutch participation, which could be seen as an expression of a change in its foreign policy towards Atlanticism, instead of following an independent course.

Meanwhile, the Royal Netherlands Navy destroyer *Hr.Ms. Piet Hein* did something remarkable and became a member of the *Trainbusters club*, because it was able to destroy a North Korean train on the east coast in November 1952.<sup>178</sup> The destroyer was succeeded by the frigate *Hr.Ms. Johan Maurits van Nassau* on 18 January 1953, which lost telegraphist Cornelis van Vliet a month later due to friendly fire during an evacuation operation.<sup>179</sup> The frigate patrolled in Korean waters up to and after the armistice. Although Foreign Minister Luns seemed not deeply engaged with the Korean question (see note 180),<sup>180</sup> he asked the new US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, on 8 February 1953 to “be consulted before any action is taken which might spread the conflict in FE [Far East].”<sup>181</sup> Luns talked about the issue of a change in orders for the Seventh Fleet due to a possible military operation of Chiang Kai-shek against the Chinese mainland. He wanted to be involved because Dutch forces were present in Korea and an escalation would have (geopolitical) consequences for the Dutch as well when the Royal Netherlands Navy would be involved.<sup>182</sup> An explanation might be that the Luns did not want to get involved in another war because it could harm relations with Indonesia. A war would also be expensive, which seemed still to be an issue as stipulated before.

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<sup>177</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 17, 22 September 1952.

<sup>178</sup> Van der Peet, *Out-of-area*, 239-240.

<sup>179</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 280.

<sup>180</sup> The political biography about Luns of Albert Kersten support this observation because the Korean question is barely discussed.

<sup>181</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Western European Security, Volume V, Part 2*, eds John A. Bernbaum, Lisle A. Rose and Charles S. Sampson (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), document 277.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

The NDVN had moved to the front again on 27 January 1953 after a short period of rest with their division.<sup>183</sup> It remained quiet till March due to the weather and terrain conditions but the battalion was confronted with Chinese attacks from 15 to 18 March.<sup>184</sup> The outpost Nudae was attacked three times but the Dutchmen repelled every attempt as described by Jan Mus on 17 March 1953: "We were able to give fire support and shot lots of flares. The Chinese attack is repelled with a lot of casualties on their side."<sup>185</sup> Consequently, the outpost was reinforced with extra obstacles. The Chinese tried to conquer Nudae for the fourth time but failed again.<sup>186</sup> In total, nine NDVN soldiers were killed in action during these attacks.<sup>187</sup>

General Dwight D. Eisenhower was installed during this period as the new American president and the Soviet dictator Stalin had passed away in March 1953. This positively impacted the stalled cease fire negotiations. The lingering trench war had exhausted China and North Korea, but Stalin demanded to continue the fight and that all POWs returned in contrast of the UN proposal, who gave the prisoners the choice.<sup>188</sup> His successors did not follow this policy and were willing to seriously talk about an armistice, which was supported by Eisenhower who wanted to end the conflict as soon as possible due to the costs.<sup>189</sup> Both parties signed agreements, like operation *Little Switch*, to exchange wounded and sick POWs in the following weeks.<sup>190</sup>

In June 1953, an armistice seemed finally in sight after two years of difficult negotiations, but South Korean President Syngman Rhee threw a spanner in the works. He unilaterally released Chinese POWs and stalled the negotiations between the UN and communist negotiators.<sup>191</sup> The Dutch cabinet was not really engaged with these negotiations and seemed to be more interested in the economic consequences of a change of Russia's politics, which could lead to a decrease of armament and defense expenditures due to the less tensions, than its political consequences. Minister Luns stated in the meeting of 8 April 1953 that "enforcement of a united front" would be "the only correct

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>184</sup> NIMH, Informatiebrochure Korea-oorlog, 11.

<sup>185</sup> Mus and Smith, *Dagboek van een Koreaveteraan*, 93.

<sup>186</sup> Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties*, 346-348.

<sup>187</sup> NIMH, Informatiebrochure Korea-oorlog, 11.

<sup>188</sup> Van der Peet, *Out-of-area*, 240 and Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 268.

<sup>189</sup> Van der Peet, *Out-of-area*, 240.

<sup>190</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 268-269.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 269.

politics” for the Netherlands and the Western powers, indicating that the Netherlands would follow the Atlantic course.<sup>192</sup>



*Dutch soldier Arie Biever (middle) was released after 2,5 years captivity as POW in May 1953 (NIMH)*

The ministers were more interested in the consequences for the economic politics than the cease fire and POW negotiations, because the defense expenditures would be temporised in the Netherlands and other western countries.<sup>193</sup> They also discussed what a cease fire in Korea meant for the economy on the long and short term.<sup>194</sup> The Minister of Finance stated in the same meeting that the prices for raw materials would drop, which was favourable on the short term, but could also impacted the employment opportunities in the Netherlands. The question of defense expenditures was a recurring issue during this period, and once again coupled with American financial aid and the question of

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<sup>192</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 18, 8 April 1953.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

Indonesia.<sup>195</sup> The Asian perspective had not waned under Minister Luns due to its policy and interest in the Indonesian and NNG question,<sup>196</sup> and also seemed to have played a role regarding the Dutch foreign policy regarding the Korean War. Luns addressed the council of ministers on 15 June 1953 and informed the council that the US had plans for a general conference about the FE, which would include the Netherlands and other countries who fought under the UN flag in Korea.<sup>197</sup> He stated that participation of the Netherlands “should not be encouraged”. The latter implies that the Netherlands only would join the conference if the US and other western countries pressed the Dutch government to go, which would be illustrative for the more Atlantic course of its foreign policy. The council followed his advice and added that “only a very stringent proposal to that end would be considered by the Government.”<sup>198</sup>

But the lack of will to participate at such a conference on the FE could also be an expression of its interests in NNG and the difficult relationship with Indonesia. In particular as the Dutch policy on this issue had hardened under Luns<sup>199</sup> and the cabinet did not want to discuss these matters on such a conference. The latter became clear during a meeting of the council of ministers on 27 July 1953, the same day that the armistice was signed between the communist troops and UN forces. Minister Luns deemed participation of the Netherlands “not attractive” because it was expected that “sideways all kind of other issues” would be involved during the talks.<sup>200</sup> PM Drees deemed participation even “unwanted” as the Netherlands would “not have any real influence” on the issue and was not clear why the Netherlands should involve itself with such “difficulties”.<sup>201</sup> These views highlight how the cabinet viewed its role on the world stage and that the colonial and Asian perspective played this role regarding Dutch policy on the Korean War.

While the Dutch cabinet was not really engaged anymore with the Korean conflict, the Dutch battalion stayed in ‘rest’ behind the frontline from 8 April to 12 July 1953. It settled in the *Betuwekamp* and relocated to the *Julianakamp* near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel on 3 May.<sup>202</sup> There was hardly any real ‘rest’ because the NDVN trained throughout almost the entire period and had to participate in several heavy exercises with the Americans. These

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<sup>195</sup> Discussed in the minutes of the council of ministers from 12 January 1953 and 23 March 1953.

<sup>196</sup> Hellema, *Neutraliteit & Vrijhandel*, 179, 180 and 185.

<sup>197</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 19, 15 June 1953.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Hellema, *Neutraliteit & Vrijhandel*, 185.

<sup>200</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 19, 27 July 1953.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties*, 352.

exercises were so intense that one soldier died, and eleven men were injured.<sup>203</sup> The NDVN moved to the frontline again on 13 July and was confronted with the last major Chinese attacks of the Korean War, which was the biggest offensive since 1951.<sup>204</sup> The Chinese tried to conquer as many territorial gains as possible during these 'truce offensives' before a cease fire was announced. The Dutchmen were attacked by a major Chinese force on Hill 340 but were able to repel the attack.<sup>205</sup> It was necessary for the Dutch soldiers to call in artillery fire on their own positions due to the dire situation, which killed a lot of Chinese troops. Their corpses could not be recovered for another two days, so the hill was renamed as *Stinky Hill*.<sup>206</sup>



*Dutch fortified positions near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in Korea, somewhere in 1953 (NIMH)*

On 25 July 1953, a patrol walked into a Chinese ambush as described by major-chaplain Jan Koppert in his diary: "I could not suspect that a drama took place up front

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 353.

<sup>204</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 140, 146.

<sup>205</sup> NIMH, Informatiebrochure Korea-oorlog, 11.

<sup>206</sup> Linde van Deth, "Gevechten op 'Stinky Hill'." *Veteraneninstituut* (July-August 2013), <https://www.nlveteraneninstituut.nl/verhalen-van-veteranen/gevechten-op-stinky-hill/>, accessed on 28 March 2022.



due to the calm night (...) A platoon of the C. Company bumped into the Chinese, who lay in ambush (...) Only one men came out unharmed (...) We count 5 killed and 6 injured".<sup>207</sup> Two other soldiers ended up as POWs during this last action of the NDVN in Korea.<sup>208</sup> Just two days later, on 27 July 1953, an armistice was signed between the communist and UN forces after three years of war.

In conclusion, the Dutch cabinet did not seem to have had a lot of interest in the Korean War as a political question from September 1952 to August 1953, which was similar to the previous cabinet of PM Drees. It was not intrinsically interested in the Dutch participation but deemed the costs more important and seemed to follow a more Atlantic course regarding its policy on the Korean War, although the Asian perspective was still present. They feared that Dutch interests regarding NNG might be harmed by active involvement in the political conference. The latter observation nuances the existing literature of De Moor, and Van der Peet about Dutch policy regarding the Korean War after 1951. They stated that the Netherlands was a loyal ally of the US, who contributed with their armed forces, and the Asian perspective was becoming less dominant on the MFA.

### **Diplomatic dimension**

While the new cabinet was installed and started in September 1952, Dutch diplomats in Washington at the UN and elsewhere, were busy with the preparations for the forthcoming seventh GA in October 1952. The Dutch delegation had started with their preparations in the summer of the same year. It received instructions on 14 October from the cabinet (drafted by the head of DIO).<sup>209</sup> Regarding the Korean question, the delegation had to approve the policy of the UNCURK of the previous year. Nevertheless, the delegation was instructed that the Netherlands should try to "withdraw" from UNCURK if this would be possible.<sup>210</sup> This indicates that there was still not a lot of interest to be involved with this UN commission. Furthermore, the Dutch delegation had to support every constructive initiative to reach a cease fire soon, and support resolutions which

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<sup>207</sup> Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie, Den Haag, Losse stukken, Toegang 057, inventarisnummer 5841, *Dagboek van veldprediker ds. J.C. Koppert betreffende zijn uitzending met het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties naar Korea*, 145.

<sup>208</sup> Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties*, 363.

<sup>209</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 25925, 13 October 1952.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

approved the policy of the Unified Command at the cease fire negotiation and POW question in Panmunjom on behalf of the UN.<sup>211</sup>

During the first session of the seventh GA, the Dutch delegation followed the latter instruction indeed and supported a co-sponsorship regarding a draft resolution of the US to reach an armistice on 22 October 1952.<sup>212</sup> A few weeks later, the delegation also supported a resolution of India, which proposed several solutions to solve the issue of the North Korean and Chinese POWs who refused to be repatriated.<sup>213</sup> Dutch PermRep Von Balluseck, talked several times with the 20 other co-sponsors of the US draft resolution and seemed to be in favour of the Indian proposal.<sup>214</sup> Minister Beyen agreed with some objections of the Unified Command before a green light was given to support the resolution.<sup>215</sup> This indicates that the Netherlands followed the policy of the US regarding the Korean question at the first session of the seventh GA.

Nevertheless, the latter observation is more nuanced. Minister Luns was present in Washington for the GA and got a code telegram from Minister Beyen on 6 November. Beyen wrote about his and PM Drees thoughts regarding the Korean question, which could be useful if Luns spoke again with US Minister of Foreign Affairs Dean Acheson. They talked about the situation in Korea, the European Defence Community (EDC), Tunisia and the situation in NNG. The latter issue seemed to be important to Luns as he “urged the Secretary that the U.S. oppose at this time any further proposals in favour of renewing negotiations between the Netherlands and Indonesia with regard to Western New Guinea”.<sup>216</sup> The latter would worsen the situation according to Luns, but Acheson stated that it was not the policy of the US to interfere in this issue.<sup>217</sup> This could be an explanation that the Netherlands still confronted US policy regarding the Korean War several times. According to Beyen, their point of view was that the Netherlands had “to cater the Americans regarding Korea” as far as this would be “reasonable and responsible”, and that “we, also recognizing our responsibility to the armed forces, therefore have to be prepared to take appropriate measures”.<sup>218</sup> Beyen and Drees saw the “stubborn Chinese

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 22699, 22 October 1952.

<sup>213</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 25927, 9 September 1953.

<sup>214</sup> *FRUS*, vol. VII, Korea and China, Part 1, 340 and 345.

<sup>215</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 22699, 23 November 1952.

<sup>216</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, East Asia and the Pacific, Volume XII, Part 2*, eds Carl N. Raether and Harriet D. Schwar (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1987), doc. 234.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 22701, 6 November 1952.

refusal" (to come to terms about an armistice) as the justification for such "sharpening" and the Netherlands should be willing to discuss "effective measures".<sup>219</sup> The latter seemed to be important for Beyen, because he had some reservations about a possible blockade of the Chinese coast by the US, which would be possible due to the continuing stubborn Chinese position regarding the negotiations. Such a measure would have "serious consequences" ("also militarily") and Beyen deemed this not desirable considering these "current circumstances."<sup>220</sup> He asked Luns to bring this subject up to Acheson and the underlying message seem to be that Luns had to influence the Americans to prevent a blockade of the Chinese coast. Luns did not have the opportunity to meet with Acheson again, but this example illustrates that Minister Beyen was still willing to bring the Dutch point of view regarding the Korean question up to the Americans in 1952.



*Dutch destroyer Hr.Ms. Piet Hein patrolling in Korean waters, somewhere in 1952 (NIMH)*

The second session of the seventh GA took place from February to April 1953. A Polish proposal was discussed, which was strongly rejected by Dutch PermRep Von

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

Balluseck and others, and this resulted in the unanimous adoption of a Brazilian resolution.<sup>221</sup> The latter supported the exchange of sick and wounded POWs, expressed the hope that the negotiations in Panmunjom would lead to a cease fire and agreed to hold a third session of the Seventh GA if an armistice was signed.<sup>222</sup> When the armistice negotiations seemed to come to an end in June 1953, the Dutch delegation to the UN was instructed to follow the course of the Americans and support their proposals. As for example illustrated by this message from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to Washington on 19 June 1953: "You can, if you deem it useful, show the US authorities that we fully understand the necessity to decide and act fast regarding the situation in Korea. Furthermore, you can show the Dutch support for the Unified Command" [who led the armistice negotiation].<sup>223</sup> This indicates that the Netherlands followed an Atlantic course and was a loyal ally of the US during the end phase of the armistice negotiations.

The Dutch PermRep Von Balluseck was still engaged with the Korean question in 1953 and spoke extensively with other delegations to be informed and know what their point of view was regarding the armistice, and when the Korean question had to be discussed in UN fora after the cease fire.<sup>224</sup> This included talks with the US, the UK, Canada, Brazil, Norway and the Secretary-General.<sup>225</sup> He documented their views comprehensively in a ten page report, which he sent to the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs who could use this information to formulate positions from the Dutch point of view on topics like the political conference, which was briefly addressed in the previous paragraph.

Minister Luns drafted a reply regarding his thoughts about a possible political conference on 15 June,<sup>226</sup> and his instructions were sent to Von Balluseck one day later. Minister Luns instructed Von Balluseck that Dutch participation had to be "discouraged," and only a very stringent request by several "big powers, including mostly England" could change his mind.<sup>227</sup> Luns had several practical objections but the earlier observations, about the explanation for these objections, are amplified here. It is crystal clear that Luns

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<sup>221</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 25928, 13 April 1953.

<sup>222</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 22699, 9 September 1953.

<sup>223</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 26444, 19 June 1953.

<sup>224</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 25927, 10, 15, 23 and 24 July 1953; and NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 26444, 13 June and 15 July 1953.

<sup>225</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 26444, 13 June 1953.

<sup>226</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 22699, 15 June 1953.

<sup>227</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 26444, 16 June 1953.

deemed the Korean question “epineus” [difficult].<sup>228</sup> Therefore, there would be no “clearly identifiable reason” for the Netherlands to mingle in this “ungrateful problem” according to Luns.<sup>229</sup> But the real motivation seemed indeed related to Asia and specifically the situation in NNG. Minister Luns wrote to the Dutch PermRep; “finally I want to avoid that as a result of Dutch participation, the NNG question, due to the conference, eventually only sideways, will be discussed but the Dutch Government is not willing to do so”.<sup>230</sup> Von Balluseck followed this course, which is illustrated by a meeting he had with his Australian counterpart on 23 June 1953. The Dutch PermRep wrote to Luns that he informed his colleague that the Netherlands did not desire “membership of the political conference” corresponding with “Your Excellency’s” instructions.<sup>231</sup>

This confirms the observation of Hellema that the Asian perspective (safeguarding its relationship with Indonesia and protect Dutch interests in NNG) was still important for Luns and the foreign policy of the Netherlands, which also influenced Dutch policy regarding the Korean question in 1953. This nuances the view of existing literature that the Asian perspective had waned from April 1951 onwards and adds that the Dutch policy regarding Korea was influenced by Dutch interests in East Asia. Nevertheless, these observations about Dutch diplomats also confirms the existing lexicon that the Ministers were not really interested in the Korean conflict and instructed Dutch diplomats to follow the course of the US. Once again, these views must be nuanced because Dutch diplomats, like Von Balluseck, were engaged with the Korean question during sessions of the GA due to intensive contact with other delegations and stood not only on the side-line. Thus, they were not necessarily uninterested regarding the Korean question, but they had to deal with instructions from the cabinet. This is not much different than during the previous period, although the space for own initiative seemed to have waned compared to the period from April 1951 to September 1952. The next chapter will analyse the last period after the armistice from 27 July 1953 to the end of the Dutch participation in the Korean War on 24 January 1955.

*Picture page 56: Return of the Hr.Ms. Johan Maurits van Nassau in Amsterdam from Korean waters on 6 February 1954 (NIMH)*

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 23 June 1953.



27 JULY 1953 - 24 JANUARY 1955



## Chapter 4 – 27 July 1953 to 24 January 1955

The Korea conference still dominated the discussion within the Dutch cabinet and diplomatic core, but the withdrawal of Dutch troops became more pressing after the armistice in July 1953. Minister of War and Navy Kees Staf challenged the American wish to keep forces in Korea because he wanted to send the last Dutch warship to somewhere else. What was the reason for this stance to challenge its ally at the end of 1954?

The preceding chapters of this research analysed the Dutch policy regarding the Korean War during the violent conflict itself. They reveal a lack of interest from the Dutch cabinet, which followed the Atlantic course more deliberately after 9 April 1951, but also based its policy on their interests in East Asia, which had to be followed by Dutch diplomats. This chapter will overview the period from 27 July 1953 up to 24 January 1955. It covers the phase after the armistice up to the end of the Dutch participation in Korea, which is barely analysed before as a relevant phase of the Korean conflict. The main goal of this chapter is to analyse how the cabinet and diplomats acted during this period after the Korean War when the fighting had ended, but the political question was not resolved, and Dutch troops were still present on Korean soil and waters. It is important to discover if there were any changes in the foreign and defense policies under this third cabinet of PM Drees, compared to the previous period, to answer the research question.

This chapter will show that the withdrawal of Dutch troops and the political 'Korea conference' were the most pressing issues during the last phase of the Korean conflict. The Netherlands was still protecting its interests in Asia, but it did not seem to have changed its 'multilateral' and 'Atlantic' course during the Korea conference. Although the Dutch cabinet did not want to be involved in the conference, Dutch diplomats did not stay aloof when they had to and were still trying to defend Dutch interests.

### **Military and political dimension**

After a three year long bloody war, an armistice was signed between the warring parties on 27 July 1953. The Dutch battalion commander, lieutenant colonel Schilperoord, was present at the ceremony that lasted for only ten minutes.<sup>232</sup> He was informed that both parties immediately had to withdraw their forces two kilometres behind the truce line, so

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<sup>232</sup> Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties*, 363.

that a demilitarized zone of 4 kilometres was created within 72 hours.<sup>233</sup> Although there was a cease fire, the Korean conflict had not ended for the Dutch troops. The UN forces did not trust the communists and feared that they would be able to suddenly attack their positions. This is illustrated by a statement from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division to their troops that was published in the NDVN news bulletin one day after the armistice was signed: "Do not make the mistake to assume that, purely because the communists were eventually willing to agree with an armistice, they also have agreed to end their aggression against us and our allies".<sup>234</sup> Therefore, vigilance was emphasized to the Dutch soldiers in the same statement: "Nobody knows how long the political conference, which follows, will last until there is a satisfactory solution. Meanwhile, we stay at our positions, the rifle near the foot, we must be ready for every situation, which can occur."<sup>235</sup> This political conference was already on the agenda as described in the previous chapter and will be analysed further in this chapter.

Battalion commander Schilperoord handed over the command of the NDVN to Cornelis Knulst on 3 August 1953 and two Dutch POWs were released by the Chinese on 25 August. The Dutchmen were ordered by the new commander to reinforce their defensive positions and build new trenches near the demilitarized zone in the weeks.<sup>236</sup> The NDVN was mainly deployed to guard a part of the 'frontline' near Chorwon in the remaining time.<sup>237</sup> Because the training exercises were not very effective, the decision was made that the Dutchmen would rotate and stay two weeks in Training Camp Haridong and two weeks near the frontline.<sup>238</sup> Meanwhile, the Dutch battalion had time for some rest and recreation, which could be in Seoul or at the "Holland House" in Tokyo, where Dutch soldiers were able to get out of the warzone since 1951.<sup>239</sup> There was also time to honour their falling comrades during commemorations at the UN cemetery near Pusan as major-chaplain Koppert experienced on 18 November 1953: "Touching are the reactions of some. A Surinamese kneels at the grave of his compatriot, embraces the cross, and get photographed like this."<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> NIMH, Informatiebrochure Korea-oorlog, 11.

<sup>234</sup> Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie, Den Haag, Vredesoperaties Korea Nederlands Detachement van de Verenigde Naties 1950-2003, toegang 558, inv.nr. 82.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties*, 383.

<sup>237</sup> NIMH, Informatiebrochure Korea-oorlog, 11.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>239</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 198.

<sup>240</sup> NIMH, Losse stukken, 057, inv.nr. 5841, 196.



*Sergeant Jan Nicolaas Plant (middle) and private Gerrit van Leeuwen (right) were released as POW and exchanged with Chinese and North Korean POWs in 'Freedom Village' on 25 August 1953 (NIMH)*

Overviewing the period from the armistice on 27 July 1953 up to the end of the Dutch participation during the Korean conflict on 24 January 1955, two subjects dominated the discussions within in the council of ministers regarding the Korean question (see note 241 for one exception).<sup>241</sup> These were an international political conference and the withdrawal of Dutch forces from Korea. A split between the interests of the Dutch cabinet, regarding its Asian perspective and process towards Atlanticism, was noticeable again during this period. In the analysis of the previous period, it was clear that the Dutch cabinet was not willing to participate in a possible international conference about the "Far East" to discuss the Korean question. PM Drees, Minister of Foreign Affairs Luns and the council deemed it unwanted because other issues (read Indonesia and NNG) could be discussed and the Netherlands was not into such discussions. This view was reiterated during the meetings of 24 August and 9 November 1953.<sup>242</sup> Nevertheless, the

<sup>241</sup> Besides a discussion about the financial contribution of the UNKRA on 19 and 27 July 1954. Other countries intended to decrease their contribution to UNKRA, but Minister of Foreign Affairs Beyen pointed out "the big moral and political interest that was involved with the reconstruction of Korea."

<sup>242</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 19-20, 24 August 1953 and 9 November 1953.

Netherlands had made clear to the other allied countries who fought in Korea, in August 1953, that it had the "right" to attend such a conference but did not communicate that it would not participate.<sup>243</sup>

The council decided to follow the same course as the US regarding the issue of allowing the SU to participate at a Korea conference, but it had other views regarding the participation of India at the conference.<sup>244</sup> The US was against India's participation and tried to influence the Netherlands to vote against India's presence.<sup>245</sup> South Korean President Syngman Rhee had made it clear to the US that South Korea would not participate at the conference if India would be present, and the US supported this view.<sup>246</sup> The British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd thought that Rhee played "a game of bluff" to strengthen his position.<sup>247</sup> He deemed the participation of India important, because the Korean question was in first instance an "Asian problem" and it would be good if the talks were headed by a non-communist Asian alliance.<sup>248</sup> Minister Luns had instructed the Dutch delegation to the UN that it should vote in favour for India's participation at the conference if the disagreement between the US and England was resolved, and should otherwise abstain.<sup>249</sup> Thus, the Dutch cabinet did not follow the US course completely regarding the Korean question and seemed to follow a more multilateral course to involve other powers, like India, to find a solution for the Korean question.

The possible political conference about Korea was not discussed in the council anymore until March 1954. Behind the international scenes, plans were developed to hold a political conference in Geneva about the Korean question and the situation in Indochina (Vietnam), where France was fighting a tough war in her colony against the communist forces of Hồ Chí Minh. The Dutch cabinet was still not enthusiastic to participate but Minister Luns expected on 8 March 1954 that eleven out of the sixteen countries, who fought in Korea under the flag of the UN, would go.<sup>250</sup> In this case he deemed it better "that also the Netherlands will go" but Luns wished to send one of the smallest delegations present there.<sup>251</sup> PM Drees raised the question if the Dutch delegation could be formed by

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<sup>243</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 19, 19 August 1953.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 19, 24 August 1953.

<sup>246</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 25927, 9 september 1953.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 21, 8 March 1954.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.



only one envoy, which illustrates that the Dutch cabinet was not eager to get involved in this conference. This became clear a few weeks later when Minister Luns explained to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs that the Netherlands do not wish to attend a conference about the FE “unless absence would be [considered as] a demonstration”.<sup>252</sup> The Dutch cabinet discussed participation with a small delegation on 29 March again and Minister Luns stated that he could attend the conference for several days.<sup>253</sup> Nevertheless, the ministers seemed more concerned about the costs of the conference than the Korean question itself.<sup>254</sup> The conference was mentioned for the last time on 17 May 1954 when Minister Luns briefly informed the Dutch cabinet about his visit at the conference.<sup>255</sup> He said that there was “no start yet of a chance of a bearable agreement” about Korea and the two points of view remained diametrically opposed to each other.<sup>256</sup>

The minutes of the council of ministers clearly shows that PM Drees and Minister Luns were more interested in the Dutch interests in NNG and the question of Indochina (see note 257).<sup>257</sup> PM Drees deemed “the situation in Indo-China in essence much more serious” than the Dutch participation in Korea during the meeting of 4 January 1954. According to Drees, this was the “focal point” of the communist aggression at this moment and he feared that France would not win this battle, which would be problematic for entire Southeast Asia.<sup>258</sup> This illustrates that Drees followed the American Cold War discourse regarding the global communist threat here. So, the PM urged that the Netherlands would internationally support France in Indochina “and not only financially.”<sup>259</sup> An interesting statement, because the cabinet seemed very concerned with the costs regarding the Dutch participation in the Korean War from 1950 onwards. An explanation could be that the fall of Indochina to the communist side was considered a bigger problem by Drees in 1954 than the invasion of South Korea by the communist North in 1950, because the threat for other countries (a domino effect) became apparent.

The statement of Drees implies that he was willing to militarily support France, but this was not the case as became clear during the meeting of 21 April 1954. He feared that

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<sup>252</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 21, 22 March 1954.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 29 March 1954.

<sup>254</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 22, 12 and 21 April 1954.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 17 May 1954.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> This is especially visible during the discussion in the council of ministers about the Netherlands FE policy on 21 April 1954.

<sup>258</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 21, 4 January 1954.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

the Americans would ask the Netherlands to join the battle in Indochina.<sup>260</sup> Although Drees was not against this kind of assistance, he deemed it practically not possible.<sup>261</sup> The PM stated that the Netherlands would not militarily intervene because one could not expect the Netherlands to send conscripts after Indonesia, and Korea showed that it was barely possible to form even one battalion of volunteers.<sup>262</sup> Minister Staf agreed and stated that the Dutch contribution to the fight in Korea was “virtually symbolic”.<sup>263</sup> While the latter can be debunked by the accomplishments of the NDVN during the Korean War, it illustrates how Minister Staf viewed the Dutch participation.

The withdrawal of Dutch forces from Korea was the second (relatively) dominant issue (see note 264)<sup>264</sup> regarding the Korean question during the meetings in the council of ministers from July 1953 to January 1955. Minister of War and Navy Staf discussed a withdrawal of the NDVN for the first time on 28 December 1953 when the US decided to withdraw two divisions from Korea.<sup>265</sup> He noticed that the Dutch battalion was part of the American 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division and it would be logical that “our battalion should return as well then”.<sup>266</sup> Minister Luns promised to ask the Dutch Ambassador to the US what the Americans thought about this suggestion<sup>267</sup> and informed the council a week later that “the American government had expressed the expectation that the other countries would not withdraw their forces from Korea”.<sup>268</sup> PM Drees judged that the Netherlands should follow this course and not withdraw the “relatively small detachment from Korea”.<sup>269</sup> Thus, the Dutch cabinet seemed willing to follow the policy of the US and Atlantic course regarding this issue.

This seemed to be the case, but the colonial/Asian perspective popped up again at the final stage of the Dutch participation during the Korean War. The Dutch cabinet was intensively engaged with the situation in NNG throughout the Korean conflict and was at the end of 1954 deeply concerned about its defense capabilities there due to infiltrations

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<sup>260</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 22, 21 April 1954.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Relatively dominant because the Korean question was not extensively discussed in the council of ministers during from 27 July 1953 to 25 January 1955.

<sup>265</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 20, 28 December 1953.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 21, 4 January 1954.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

by Indonesian soldiers.<sup>270</sup> Meanwhile in Korea, the daily activities became monotonous after the armistice for the Dutch soldiers and the NDVN stayed in the 'line' up to 10 June 1954.<sup>271</sup> The costs of the Dutch participation in Korea had played a significant role throughout the entire war as observed before. Now the fighting had stopped, the Dutch government had abolished the daily 8 dollar 'action fee', which caused outrage as it was not enough to cover the soldiers daily expenses.<sup>272</sup> "The Hague" was initially not willing to give in, but eventually decided that the soldiers would receive half of this amount after continues protest from the NDVN.<sup>273</sup> The battalion became under command of Jacobus Raaijmakers on 8 July 1954 and resided in Camp Kaiser.



*Lieutenant colonel Knulst (left) hands over the command of the NDVN to lieutenant colonel Raaijmakers (right) on 8 July 1954 (NIMH)*

<sup>270</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 24, 15 November 1954.

<sup>271</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 148-158.

<sup>272</sup> NIMH, Losse stukken, 057, inv.nr. 5841, 176.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 183 and 190.

Minister Staf discussed the gradual withdrawal of the American 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division from Korea on 23 August 1954 and deemed it desirable that the NDVN would end its participation as well, which can be seen as a practical argument to do so.<sup>274</sup> So, the battalion stayed in Camp Kaiser till 30 September 1954, were the Americans relieved the NDVN officially of their tasks in Korea.<sup>275</sup> The Dutch soldiers left the country via Pusan to Japan, were the journey towards the Netherlands continued. The Royal Netherlands Navy stayed a few months longer in the waters of Korea. Similar to the NDVN, the tasks for the *Hr.Ms. Maurits* and her two successors became less exciting and more monotonous after the armistice.<sup>276</sup> The frigate was succeeded by the *Hr.Ms. Dubois* on 5 November 1953 and stayed in Korea for ten months, before the *Hr.Ms. Van Zijll* began her five month journey on 9 September 1954.<sup>277</sup> The so called 'war guard' was lifted and both frigates were mainly busy with patrols to control the compliance of the armistice.<sup>278</sup>

Staf wanted to keep the frigate *Hr.Ms. Van Zijll* in Korean waters and stated that "this is also useful as reserve for the defense of New Guinea." The Dutch cabinet decided to agree on both issues and not withdraw the NDVN and Navy at the same time from Korea,<sup>279</sup> which was rooted out of fear for a negative reaction from Washington according to Anselm van der Peet.<sup>280</sup> The US State Department requested the Dutch government in October 1954 to keep a "token force" in Korea and not withdraw all Dutch forces, which would be necessary in order to safeguard the "United Nations [multilateral] character" of the troops in Korea.<sup>281</sup>

Nevertheless, the Minister of War and Navy pleaded on 6 December 1954 that the Netherlands "must urge" to the Americans that the remaining "Dutch frigate should be withdrawn from Korea" to "expand patrols near the coast of New Guinea opposite of the close by Indonesian islands".<sup>282</sup> Ministers Luns and Beyen decided almost two weeks later that the frigate *Hr.Ms. Van Zijll* would return from Korea for "a necessary destination elsewhere" and informed the American *Unified Command* of its decision.<sup>283</sup> This illustrates

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<sup>274</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 23, 23 August 1954.

<sup>275</sup> Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties*, 397-400.

<sup>276</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 281 and Van der Peet, *Out of Area*, 245-246.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Van der Peet, *Out of Area*, 245-246.

<sup>279</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 23, 23 August 1954.

<sup>280</sup> Van der Peet, *Out-of-area*, 247.

<sup>281</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 17910, 21 October 1954.

<sup>282</sup> NIMH, KM in de Ministerraad, 068, inv.nr. 24, 6 December 1954.

<sup>283</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 22701, 14 December 1954.

the real motivation and still present colonial/Asian perspective to defend Dutch interest in NNG.<sup>284</sup> This issue nuances the claims of the existing literature that the Netherlands almost completely withdrew from the Korean question and mostly followed the course of the US after 9 April 1951. The withdrawal of Dutch troops shows that Dutch interest in Asia had not completely waned and was still apparent for the cabinet to shape its foreign policy regarding the Korean question, even if the policy of the US had to be challenged. The *Van Zijll* ended her mission on 24 January 1955, marking the end of 4,5 year of Dutch participation in the Korean War.<sup>285</sup>

### **Diplomatic dimension**

Diplomatically, there was one dominant issue regarding the Korean question from 27 July 1953 to 24 January 1955, besides the sessions in UN fora for Dutch diplomats. This was the political conference that was coming up to discuss the situation in Korea.

The armistice agreement of 27 July 1953 recommended both parties to hold a political conference within three months, and talk about the withdrawal of foreign troops, the 'Korean question' and other affairs that were related with the conflict.<sup>286</sup> As observed before, the Dutch cabinet was not eager to participate in such conference, but there was disagreement in the Dutch MFA about Dutch attendance, in prelude to the 'Korean Negotiations' in Washington from 15 to 17 August 1953 and the third session of the seventh UN GA. Dutch PermRep to the UN, Diederik van Lynden, wrote on 28 July 1953 that "competent" departments of the Directorate East wanted to include in the instructions that the Netherlands "was" interested to participate, but that the head of the Directorate International Organisation, Connie Patijn, resisted "quite firmly" against this.<sup>287</sup> This resulted in a position that the Netherlands was principally not willing to participate. Van Lynden described that the MFA was reconsidering this instruction to the UN delegation due to the opinion of Herman van Roijen, who was the Dutch Ambassador to the US.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Appels, *N.D.V.N.*, 281.

<sup>286</sup> Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties*, 369.

<sup>287</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 26444, 28 July 1953.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.



*US PermRep to the US Lodge (left) with Minister of Foreign Affairs Luns (right) during the Seventh GA of the UN on 3 February 1953 (United Nations Photo)*

The position of the Dutch cabinet and MFA seemed eventually to change in the following weeks, because the Dutch (and Belgian) delegation refused to co-sponsor a resolution of the US on 15 August at the 'Korean Negotiations' if not all states with armed forces in Korea would have the "right to participate".<sup>289</sup> This major modification was approved by the sixteen countries after long discussions, but Dutch PermRep Von Balluseck and his Belgium colleague managed to establish a level playing field for all countries, because "all candidate participants equally contributed to the total and shared

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<sup>289</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Korea, Volume XV, Part 2*, eds Edward C. Keefer (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1984), document 749 and NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 26444, 15 August 1953.



the same responsibility".<sup>290</sup> The Netherlands and Belgium explained that they preferred a conference with only a few countries, but that they also had the right to participate when ten out of the sixteen countries, who contributed forces to Korea, were also allowed to participate.<sup>291</sup> Von Balluseck stated that he could only co-sponsor other resolutions if more countries would join and got an "agitated" reaction from US PermRep to the UN Henry C. Lodge Jr.<sup>292</sup> Minister Luns informed the US Ambassador to the Netherlands that he was also not amused about the warnings from Deputy Representative in the UNSC John C. Ross, and that the Dutch policy regarding these issues should give enough confidence "for complete trust from American side".<sup>293</sup> The latter issue illustrates that the Dutch diplomats did not stay aloof regarding the political conference and were still trying to defend Dutch interests to be treated as an equal partner. But the Dutch delegation mostly followed the American course (during votes) at the seventh third session of the seventh UN GA in August 1953.<sup>294</sup> See note 295 for more context about the eight UN GA in September 1953.<sup>295</sup>

A multilateral approach of the Dutch diplomats as representatives of the Netherlands was visible during both GA's. An example is the statement of PermRep Von Balluseck during the seventh GA about the Netherlands "full support for the 15 powers resolution" and the participation of countries like the SU and India at the political conference.<sup>296</sup> It seemed that the Netherlands was in favour that the big powers would try to solve the Korean question together and it would be good if other countries could participate if they were able to contribute to a solution, and their presence was not unwanted by other countries.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 26444, 15 August 1953.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid., 18 August 1953.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 17 August 1953.

<sup>294</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 25927, 9 september 1953.

<sup>295</sup> The first session of the eight GA started only one month after the seventh had ended in August 1953. The general instructions for the Dutch delegation were almost the same as for the seventh GA, but there was a change of position regarding UNCURK. Instructions from the cabinet asked to support UNCURK in its existing form. This was different from instructions for the previous GA but can be explained by the political conference. The cabinet deemed it more useful to "wait for the outcome of the political conference" before other action was taken. Furthermore, the delegation was instructed to inform other countries that the Netherlands was "in principle willing to participate in the reconstruction of Korea." See NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 25933, 15 September 1953.

<sup>296</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 25927, 9 september 1953.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

Although the Dutch government managed to “act independently,” she was still not eager to participate at the political conference according to Luns.<sup>298</sup> This reluctant position did not change drastically in the following months, but the Dutch cabinet eventually decided to join the conference when it became clear that other countries would go, as described in the previous paragraph. The conference would be held in Geneva and Dutch PermRep to the UN Von Balluseck stated to his US counterpart on 2 April 1954 “that it would be extremely difficult to achieve anything at the Geneva Conference; that his government was not at all anxious to participate but felt that they should”.<sup>299</sup>

This was also corroborated by the instructions from the cabinet that the Dutch delegation received in Geneva, which was drafted by the MFA. The Netherlands should “only play a minor role” during the political conference and the economic aspect (regarding trade with communist countries) was subsidiary to the political aspect of the conference.<sup>300</sup> The third point of the instruction illustrates how the Netherlands viewed its role regarding the Korean question and its role on the world stage in 1954: “The Netherlands accept that, due to her general position in the world and due to the geographic place of both conflicts [Korea and Indochina], the main responsibility to maintain collective security rests with the US”.<sup>301</sup> Consequently, the Dutch delegation was instructed that “in general, American leadership can be accepted”.<sup>302</sup> This means that the Netherlands would follow the Atlantic and American course regarding the Korean question during the political conference, although the Dutch delegation was instructed that it could still hold on to the original position regarding the status of communist China in the UN.<sup>303</sup>

It seemed that the American policy was indeed supported during the political conference (which started at 26 April 1954) as illustrated by a telegram from the US delegation in Geneva about the Seventh Plenary Session on Korea: “Luns, Netherlands Minister for Foreign Affairs, followed with a deliberate defense of the US and UN”.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 26444, 20 August 1953.

<sup>299</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, United Nations Affairs, Volume III, eds Ralph R. Goodwin (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1979), document 486.

<sup>300</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 17076, 23 April 1954.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, The Geneva Conference, Volume XVI, eds Allen H. Kitchens and Neal H. Petersen (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1981), document 106.

Minister Luns was present in Geneva and his speech on 4 May 1954 was indeed outspoken and appealed to the communist representatives to change their attitude during the conference for the sake of achieving results, because their current positions made this impossible.<sup>305</sup> According to him, the Netherlands was represented at the political conference to “maintain the principle of collective security” and to “realize the ideals of the [UN] organisation”.<sup>306</sup> This refers to the view that the unification of Korea could only happen after free elections, and Luns reiterated that the “Netherlands Government will not be found guilty of having failed to render full justice to this principle”.<sup>307</sup>



*Delegations at the start of the Korea conference in Geneva on 26 April 1954 (British Pathé YouTube)*

The Americans were very pleased with the cooperation between the Dutch and US delegations during the political conference in Geneva, according to Dutch Ambassador to the US Herman van Roijen on 1 July 1954: “[Under Secretary of State Walter] Bedell Smith immediately notified me with much appreciation about the support and cooperation, that the American delegation and himself in particular, received from the side of Luns and Bentinck [Deputy Head of Dutch Delegation] in Geneva”.<sup>308</sup> It seems that the Dutch

<sup>305</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 26470, 4 May 1954.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid. and *FRUS*, The Geneva Conference, vol. XVI, 106.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 17076, 1 July 1954.

delegation mostly followed the American course during the political conference, but they were not really fond of the American plan to abort the Korea conference in June 1954.<sup>309</sup> Nevertheless, the delegation did not see a “useful alternative” and decided to adopt a wait-and-see attitude after instructions of the Government,<sup>310</sup> because they agreed that the attitude of the communist countries, to reject the authority of the UN and an arrangement for free elections, was not acceptable.<sup>311</sup>

An explanation for this attitude of the Netherlands could be that the sixteen countries, who contributed forces to the Korean War, tried to act together (as discussed in April 1954) and follow the same course during the conference, because they regularly met to discuss their line of behaviour and drafted collective declarations.<sup>312</sup> This was not easy as there were several internal disagreements. For example about the aforementioned proposal to abort the Korea conference on 4 June, but also earlier when several smaller countries (including the Netherlands) had the need to submit proposals, because they wanted to balance the course of South Korea.<sup>313</sup> Their opinion was that the South Korean proposal to solve the Korean question, by holding elections in North Korea for the “open places” in the South Korean congress after all foreign troops had left North Korea, was “too tight and sterile” and would not be productive to solve the Korean question at the conference.<sup>314</sup> The Dutch delegation shared the same opinion but eventually followed the American course, who supported the South Korean proposal.<sup>315</sup>

The NNG question also played a role for the Netherlands during the conference, although the official instruction point about this subject was deleted in the end rapport.<sup>316</sup> Minister Luns deemed this still a prominent issue as illustrated by a conversation between him and Walter Bedell Smith on 13 May 1954. Smith told Luns that he regarded the Dutch as one of its “staunchest allies in Europe” and that it was “regrettable to have to tell one of our closest European allies that it was not possible to invite their participation in alliance in Asia for reasons which were apparent to him”.<sup>317</sup> Luns “understood this completely” but said that the Dutch had “large investments and interests in Southeast Asia

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 12 June 1954.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid. 3 June 1954.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid. and NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 17076, 3 June 1954.

<sup>313</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 26468, June 1954.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> *FRUS*, The Geneva Conference, vol. XVI, 475.

which they were prepared to defend".<sup>318</sup> More specific, Luns told Smith "that they would not let New Guinea go" and added that they "were sending additional forces to [the] area".<sup>319</sup> Luns got support from the Australians for this position.<sup>320</sup> The Americans did not want to interfere between the Netherlands and Indonesia regarding the NNG question as they had stated before,<sup>321</sup> so the Netherlands did not seem to have to worry about this. This could be an explanation for the staunch Dutch position to defend its interest in NNG during this period and its deliberate defense of the US during the Korea conference, because American involvement and disapproval regarding the NNG question was not feared. Washington would not automatically choose for Indonesia according to Albert Kersten, but he writes that Luns made "extensively use of the press" to defend the Dutch views, and stress his "full confidence about the determination of the West to repel the communist threat in Southeast Asia".<sup>322</sup> Indonesia was seen as a "pro-communist" country by big powers as the US<sup>323</sup> and this reaction of Luns could be explained as a strategy to weaken the support of the US for Indonesia, which would be positive for the Dutch position regarding the NNG question. Nevertheless, Netherlands Minister Jacobus G. de Beus warned the MFA on 6 August 1954 for the "reviving tendency" of the US State Department to dissociate itself from "Colonialism", which could be important if the "New Guinea question would come up again".<sup>324</sup>

The "failed" Korea conference ended on 15 June 1954, with no solution for the Korean question to end the war for good and the cooperation between the sixteen countries slowly ended as well.<sup>325</sup> The Korean question was discussed again in the ninth GA in September 1954. Instructions for the Dutch delegation were short and concise. They had to "approve" the policy of UNCURK and to "promote" the attempts for the unification of Korea "just as the Netherlands did during the Conference."<sup>326</sup> Furthermore, the delegation had to make clear that free elections should be held under supervision of the UN. They followed and deliberately supported the American course during the GA. Dutch PermRep Von Balluseck stated that the Dutch delegation was "impressed by the

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 17076, 16 June 1954.

<sup>322</sup> Kersten, *Luns*, 121, 124.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 6 August 1954.

<sup>325</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 26468, June 1954.

<sup>326</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 25950, 21 September 1954.

arguments” of the US PermRep regarding its policy on the Korean question, which entailed that no action could be taken “unless the political or military position changes fundamentally”.<sup>327</sup> He also made a strong argument to continue with the UNCURK; “So UNCURK should continue as a direct link between Korea and the United Nations” as it served a “just and rightful purpose” to promote unification in Korea.<sup>328</sup> According to Von Balluseck, the Netherlands had taken “a sustained and active interest in the subsequent attempt to reach a peaceful settlement of the question” and stressed the Dutch “particular responsibility” as a member of UNCURK.<sup>329</sup> This seems to be a plea that the Netherlands was always engaged with the Korean question, but this research have shown that this was not necessarily the case. Nevertheless, the Korean question was not extensively discussed anymore after the GA. Two exceptions were the American plan to abolish the Neutral Nations Supervisory Committee in October 1954 and withdrawing Dutch troops from Korea in November as discussed before.<sup>330</sup>

During the ninth GA, the multilateral course of the Netherlands was also visible. Minister of Foreign Affairs Luns stated on 27 September 1954 in the GA that “The Netherlands Government will carry their share” to resolve international problems and that there are “large field where the United Nations can achieve much and where there can be no substitution for our Organization”, although Luns made clear that this should not concern the NNG question because it was a matter between The Netherlands and Indonesia.<sup>331</sup> The Netherlands Government had already announced the candidacy of diplomat Eelco van Kleffens as President for the ninth GA in March 1954,<sup>332</sup> which can also be regarded as an expression of multilateralism. There was a lot of discussion within the US Department of State in the following months about US support for Van Kleffens candidacy. He was regarded as a good and capable man, but the US was worried to weaken its influence on Arab and Asian countries if they would support the Dutch Van Kleffens, because the US had already vowed to support the Belgian candidate for de UNSC.<sup>333</sup> So, the US was hesitant to announce its loyalty. Van Kleffens was eventually chosen as President during the ninth GA when his opponent from Thailand withdrew.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 19771, 6 December 1954.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 22710, 23 and 27 October 1954.

<sup>331</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 19771, 27 September 1954.

<sup>332</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-1954, United Nations Affairs, vol. III, 294.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>334</sup> NL-HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken / Code-Archief 45-54, 2.05.117, inv.nr. 19771, 23 February 1955.



In total, 120 Dutch soldiers died in the Korean War, including two sailors, and five soldiers are still missing in action.<sup>335</sup> A total of 459 soldiers got wounded during the conflict from 1950 to 1955. One in every six Dutchmen died or got wounded in Korea, which makes this the bloodiest UN mission of the Netherlands. Unfortunately, the care from the Dutch government and Ministry of Defence was not sufficient after the Korean War. A lot of veterans developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder due to their experiences in Korea and had to deal with this situation with limited support. This changed recently when the Dutch government adopted a 'veterans' policy' to tackle these problems.<sup>336</sup>



*Three-star General Matthew Ridgeway, commander of the 8<sup>th</sup> US Army, salutes the Dutch Flag during the burial of the Dutch commander lieutenant colonel Marinus Den Ouden on 8 March 1951 (NIMH)*

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<sup>335</sup> Schaafsma, *Het Nederlands Detachement Verenigde Naties*, 440.

<sup>336</sup> Nota 'Veteran care' from the Minister of Defence (1 June 2011) retrieved from: <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-30139-92.html>

In conclusion, the Korea conference dominated the Dutch diplomatic effort regarding the Korean question from 27 July 1953 to 24 January 1955. The Netherlands was initially not willing to join the conference but decided to participate because their allies would go. It seems that the instructions of the Dutch cabinet were mostly followed by the diplomatic delegation, and they supported the American course during the Korea conference, which could be seen as an expression of its change in foreign policy towards Atlanticism during this period. The principle of 'multilaterism' was also visible because the Dutch delegation pleaded consistently for supervision by the UN regarding free elections and unification of Korea. The NNG question illustrate the focus of the Netherlands to protect its interests in Asia, but it did not seem to have changed its 'multilateral' and 'Atlantic' course during the Korea conference. Although the Dutch cabinet did not want to be involved the Korea conference, Dutch diplomats did not stay aloof when they had to and were still trying to defend Dutch interests. This nuances the existing literature that the Netherlands was barely engaged anymore with the Korean question and Dutch participation after 9 April 1951.

*Picture page 75: A tired Dutch soldier climbs a 'tjot' (mountain) in the hilly Korean terrain, somewhere in 1951. Photographed by war correspondent Wim Dussel (NIMH)*

# CONCLUSION



## Conclusion

The Korean conflict and the Dutch military participation has not been extensively researched in the Netherlands. This can partly be explained by the focus on World War Two and the decolonisation war in Indonesia, which ended only half a year before the start of the Korean War on 25 June 1950. The invasion of the communist North Korea into the (US supported) South marked the start of the first 'hot' episode during the Cold War. The US, driven by its new containment politics, stepped in with its military to contain this communist expansion in the Southeast Asia, but needed more support. They turned to the UNSC and were able to condemn North Korea as aggressor, and to start the first (and only) UN peace-enforcing mission in history to help South Korea. A few countries decided to help, but the Dutch cabinet was not eager to send troops as well due to multiple socio-economic and practical objections. Nevertheless, the Americans wanted a broader international coalition to fight in Korea and pressed the Netherlands to send ground forces. Eventually, the Dutch cabinet gave in and decided to send a warship and a volunteer battalion to Korea, which arrived in November 1950. Nearly 5.000 Dutch soldiers served in Korea and 125 died during the conflict, making it the bloodiest UN mission the Netherlands ever took part in.

Existing academic literature reveals that the Dutch cabinet did not want to participate in the Korean War and stayed a critical ally of the US and its policy regarding the conflict up to April 1951. The Dutch cabinet objected several times against American plans to cross the 38th parallel to beat North Korea, came up with alternative plans to prevent Chinese involvement in the war and pressed for negotiations with the communists. An important reason for this attitude was that the Netherlands wanted to protect its interests in Asia because of its difficult relations with Indonesia due to the status of its colony NNG. According to Klep & Van Gils, De Moor and Van der Peet, this changed after April 1951 when the American commander of the UN forces, General MacArthur, was fired, the cease fire negotiations had started and the frontline stabilised as well in July 1951. From this moment on, the Asian perspective on the Dutch MFA was waning (because the Netherlands became dependent on the US and had to review its role as a neo-colonial power), the Netherlands almost completely withdrew from the Korean question and the Atlantic course of the US was mostly followed according to the existing literature.

Nevertheless, the military conflict raged on for two more years and Dutch soldiers stayed in Korea to January 1955. There seem to be no thorough analysis regarding the Dutch Korean War policy from 9 April 1951 when MacArthur was fired up to 24 January 1955 when the Dutch military mission in Korea ended. This tendency to focus on the first phase of the Korean War (June 1950 to July 1951) is also visible in other Dutch literature regarding the Korean conflict. Therefore, it is important to add to the historiography and see if the observations of the limited existing literature about this period can be corroborated or should be revised. The following research question has been analysed to accomplish this: *How did Dutch policy regarding the Korean War from 9 April 1951 to 24 January 1955 reflect a change in orientation in its foreign and defense policies?*

The title of this thesis is 'walking on the Pentagon's leash?' which refers to a statement of Abraham Gieben in December 1951, who was the Dutch representative at the UNCURK during the Korean War. Gieben was critical towards the policy of this UN commission because most of the aid, which was destined to rebuild the South Korean Republic, was in his observation actually used for the US Army. He wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Dirk Stikker that the non-American countries who fought in Korea, like the Netherlands, had the uncomfortable feeling to walk on the leash of the Pentagon. This example illustrates the view of the existing academic literature that the Netherlands mostly had to follow the policy of the US regarding the Korean War after April 1951 due to a change of its foreign policy towards Atlanticism.

But this thesis shows that this view is more nuanced. Although it is true that there was not much intrinsic motivation for the Dutch participation in Korea and the costs of this military intervention seemed to be more important for the Dutch cabinet, the Netherlands did confront the Americans several times regarding its Korean War policy, and Dutch diplomats did not completely stay aloof from April 1951 to January 1955. Dutch diplomats were for example critical on the US attitude during the start of the cease fire negotiations in July 1951 and tried to show multiple times that they did not walk on the American leash from April 1951 to September 1952. They were more engaged with the Korean question during this period than mentioned in the existing literature.

With the start of the second cabinet Drees on 2 September 1952, new ministers took office and there was more interest in the Dutch participation during the Korean War than before in the first weeks, but this interest quickly disappeared, while the Asian perspective was still very important for the Dutch cabinet during this period. The

ministers seemed not very interested in the Korean question as observed in the existing lexicon and instructed Dutch diplomats to follow the course of the US. Dutch diplomats were not necessarily uninterested regarding the Korean question, but they had to deal with these instructions from the cabinet. This is not much different than during the previous period, although the space for own initiative seemed to have waned from September 1952 to July 1953 compared to the previous period.

While an armistice was signed on 27 July 1953, the Korean conflict had not ended, and Dutch troops stayed in Korea till January 1955. Some important issues were discussed within this period, including the question of an international political conference to solve the Korean question and the withdrawal of Dutch troops. These issues nuance the claims of the existing literature that the Netherlands almost completely withdrew from the Korean question and mostly followed the course of the US after 9 April 1951. It is true that the Dutch cabinet was not very engaged with these issues, but the Dutch diplomats mostly followed the instructions of the Dutch cabinet, and they supported the American course during the Korea conference, which could be seen as an expression of its change in foreign policy towards Atlanticism during this period. The principle of 'multilateralism' was also visible because the Dutch delegation pleaded consistently for supervision by the UN regarding free elections and unification of Korea.

The Netherlands interest in Asia also played a role to shape the actions and reactions of the Dutch cabinet and diplomats from 27 July 1953 to 24 January 1955. This was especially clear regarding the NNG question, which influenced the Dutch policy regarding the Korean War multiple times when Joseph Luns became Minister of Foreign Affairs on 2 September 1952. Examples are the unwillingness of the Dutch cabinet to participate at the 1954 political Korea conference in Geneva to prevent difficult discussions with other nations about the NNG question, and the withdrawal of the Dutch warship to defend its interest in NNG at the end of 1954.

To answer the research question, the Dutch policy regarding the Korean War could indeed be considered as an expression of a change in its orientation in foreign and defense policies from 9 April 1951 to 24 January 1955. As Hellema observed, Dutch foreign policy during the early 1950's was marked by a split in colonial resentment and an Asian perspective to protect its interests in NNG on the one hand, and a shift towards Atlanticism on the other hand. The US kept aloof regarding the neo-colonial ambitions of the Netherlands (and other nations) during the Korean War, because the containment of



communist expansion was deemed more important. This could have been a barrier for the shift of Dutch foreign policy towards Atlanticism as the protection of interests in NNG was intensified when Minister of Foreign Affairs Luns took office in September 1952. But this seemed not the case because the MFA and several diplomats already saw it coming in 1954 that the US position would change towards anti-colonialism. The cooperation with the US and European nations on other terrains also continued during this period, so a shift of Dutch foreign policy towards Atlanticism seemed inevitable. The principle of multilateralism and cooperation with other countries in fora like the GA of the UN was also present during the Korean conflict. The Dutch policy regarding the Korean War and the actions and reaction from the Dutch cabinet and diplomats showed the same characteristics during this period.

This thesis also corroborated earlier observations that the lack of interest from the Dutch government in the military mission and its soldiers in Korea resulted in several operational problems on the ground. For example, the structural lack of reinforcements, which hindered operations and adequate equipment for the conditions in Korea. This must be a lesson for the current government when it decides to send Dutch troops to a conflict. It is important to stand up against an aggressor, like the current situation in Ukraine, but the support and right tools must be provided by the government. Unfortunately, the war in Afghanistan and the deployment of Dutch troops there showed similar problems due to a lack of political interest to provide the necessary, workable tools and to provide adequate (mental) care after the mission. The latter was also not sufficient for veterans from the Korean War and later conflicts.

*Picture page 80: A Dutch soldier writes a letter, probably destined for the homefront, somewhere in 1951. Photographed by war correspondent Wim Dussel (NIMH)*

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*Picture page 85: A Dutch soldier, probably with battle fatigue, after the Battle of the Soyang River, somewhere in May 1951. Photographed by war correspondent Wim Dussel (NIMH)*



