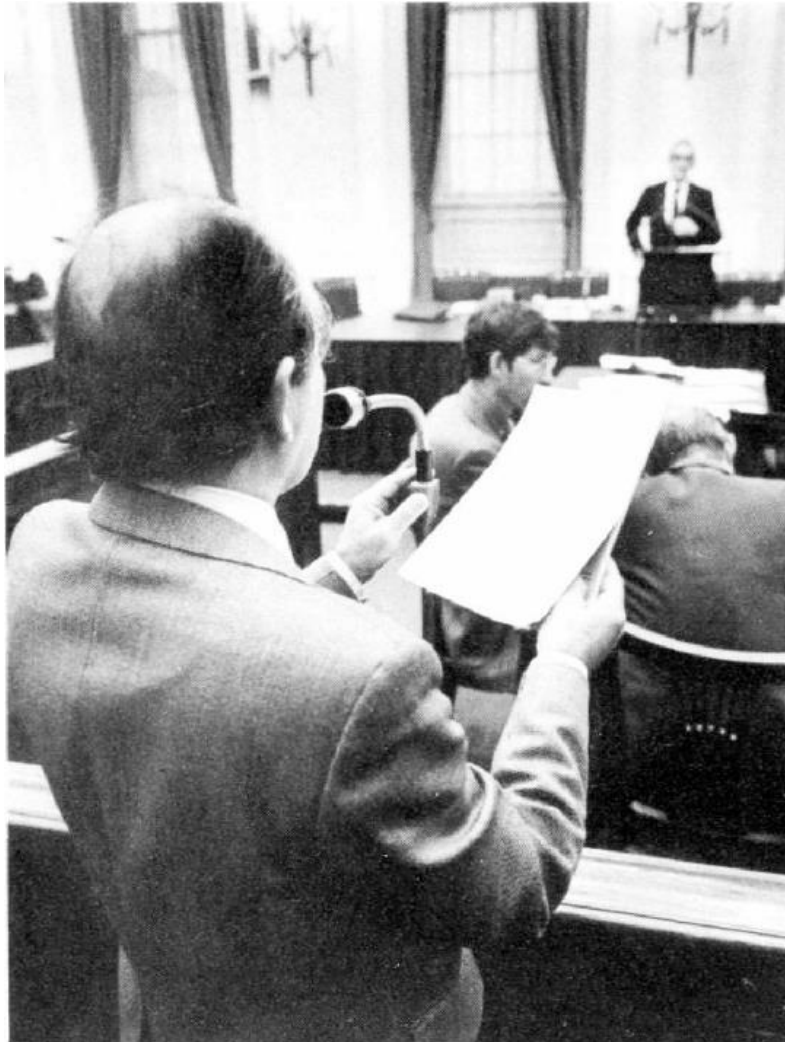


# Dutch Judgement

*A Constructivist Analysis of the Parliamentary Debates on Spain's Accession to NATO in the Netherlands 1981-1982*



Mister Waltmans (PPR) interrupts the speech of Minister Van der Stoel  
“Handelingen 25ste Vergadering – Donderdag 3 december 1981,”  
*Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal* (2023), 770.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis covers the debates on Spain's request to join NATO that took place in the Dutch Parliament in 1981 and 1982. While current historiography overlooks changes in the perception of NATO as well as the Netherlands' role in NATO during the Cold War, the research conducted in this thesis points out that these changes did in fact occur. It uses a constructivist framework and discursive analysis to uncover identity construction in the debates and finds that the entrance of the baby boomer generation into politics and the rise of the peace movement had caused NATO to become controversial. Left wing parties constructed an identity of NATO as an antidemocratic and a militarist organisation and argued that allowing Spain as a member would have negative effects on democracy in Spain as well as peace in Europe. The centre right responded to this by rejecting these assertions and by constructing an identity of NATO as a community of Western democracies that would be a means for the Spanish people to solidify its democracy and as a security guarantor that would allow Spain to embed its security policy in the international community. From this it becomes clear that the perceived role of NATO had changed both on the left and on the right. This finding encourages scholars to further trace changes in the identity of NATO during the Cold War era.

**Key Words** NATO, Spain, the Netherlands, Cold War, Constructivism, Discursive Analysis, Democracy, Security, Parliamentary Debates

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## List of Abbreviations

- ARP** *Antirevolutionaire Partij* (Anti-revolutionary Party)
- CDA** *Christen-Democratisch Appel* (Christian Democratic Appeal)
- CHU** *Christelijk-Historische Unie* (Christian Historical Union)
- CPN** *Communistische Partij Nederland* (Communist Party of the Netherlands)
- D'66** *Democraten '66* (Democrats '66)
- EEC** European Economic Community
- IAEA** International Atomic Energy Agency
- IKV** *Interkerkelijk Vredesberaad* (Interdenominational Peace Council)
- KVP** *Katholieke Volkspartij* (Catholic People's Party)
- NATO** North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
- NPT** Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
- PPR** *Politieke Partij Radikalen* (Political Party of Radicals)
- PSOE** *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party)
- PSP** *Pacifistisch-Socialistische Partij* (Pacifist Socialist Party)
- PvdA** *Partij van de Arbeid* (Labour Party)
- UCD** *Unión de Centro Democrático* (Union of the Democratic Centre)
- US/USA** United States of America
- USSR** Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
- VVD** *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy)

# List of Persons

TK - Member of the Dutch Lower House of Parliament (Tweede Kamer)

S - Member of the Dutch Senate

List of Functions not Exhaustive

**Agt, Dries van** (1931 – 2024) – KPV/CDA

Dutch Minister of Justice (1971 – 1977)

Prime Minister of the Netherlands (1977 – 1982)

**Brinkhorst, Laurens Jan** (1937 - ) – D'66

Dutch State Secretary of Foreign Affairs (1973 – 1977)

TK (1977 – 1982)

Leader of the D'66 Fraction in the Dutch Lower House of Parliament (1981 – 1982)

**Broekhuis, Bert** (1943 - ) – PvdA

TK (1981 – 1982)

**Boer, Joep de** (1924 – 2006) – KVP/CDA

TK (1977 – 1989)

**Franco, Francisco** (1892 – 1975)

Head of the Spanish State (1939 – 1975)

**Frinking, Ton** (1931 – 2022) – KVP/CDA

TK (1977 – 1993)

**Haig, Alexander** (1924 – 2010)

NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe (1974 – 1979)

US Secretary of State (1981 – 1982)

**Jong, Piet de** (1915 – 2016) – KVP

Prime Minister of the Netherlands (1967 – 1971)

**Luns, Joseph** (1911 – 2002) – NSB/KVP

Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs (1956 – 1971)

Secretary General of NATO (1971 – 1984)

**Ploeg, Ad** (1927 – 1994) – VVD

TK (1972 – 1982, 1986 – 1989)

**Schaper, Herman** (1949 – 2021) – D'66

TK (1981 – 1982)

**Schreuders, Gijs** (1947 – 2020) – CPN

TK (1982 – 1983)

**Spek, Fred van der** (1923 – 2017) – PSP

S (1963 – 1967)

TK (1967 – 1986)

Leader of the PSP Fraction in the Dutch Lower House of Parliament (1978 – 1986)

**Stoel, Max van der** (1924 – 2011) – PvdA

S (1960 – 1963)

TK (1967 – 1973, 1977, 1978 – 1981)

Dutch State Secretary of Foreign Affairs (1965 – 1966)

Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs (1973 – 1977, 1981 – 1982)

**Uijen, Frans** (1927 – 2019) – PvdA

S (1977 – 1983, 1986 – 1991)

**Uyl, Joop** (1919 – 1987) – PvdA

TK (1956 – 1963, 1967 – 1973, 1977, 1978 – 1981, 1982 – 1987)

Party Leader of the PvdA (1966 – 1986)

Prime Minister of the Netherlands (1973 – 1977)

Deputy Prime Minister of the Netherlands (1981 – 1982)

**Waltmans, Henk** (1930 – 2013) – KVP/PPR

TK (1972 – 1977, 1977 – 1982)

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Expect Change

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 1982, four left wing parties representing 53 out of 150 members of the Dutch Lower House of Parliament (the Tweede Kamer) voted against accession of Spain, which had recently transitioned to democracy after years under the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).<sup>1</sup> A few days later, these parties did the same in the Senate, where they represented 30 out of 75 members.<sup>2</sup> By far the largest of these parties was the Labour Party (*Partij van de Arbeid* – PvdA), which paradoxically helped to establish NATO in 1949 and now took part in a government that was a proponent of NATO expansion. Furthermore, it was the PvdA's own foreign minister, Max van der Stoep, who defended NATO expansion against his own party in Parliament.

Three decades after NATO had been established, one of the largest parties in one of the Alliance's founding member states had turned against NATO's agenda – a position it valued so much it even broke ranks with its own government. The vote showed that NATO had become controversial on the left. The benefits of the Alliance were challenged by a mainstream party and NATO's position in the political arena was in flux at the height of the Cold War.

Aside from on its own merits, this moment is notable due to the challenge to the established historiography that it represents. The basis of this challenge lies in the way the identity of NATO as well as the role of the Netherlands within NATO have been perceived and constructed. Virtually all scholarly works on the Atlantic Alliance that engage with the organisation as a whole, as opposed to singular military operations or isolated security questions, imply a static role for NATO during the Cold War. Similarly, scholars studying the identity of the Netherlands within NATO tend to downplay change during the Cold War. The Dutch parliamentary votes on Spain's accession to NATO point out that this is unjustified.

Two kinds of academic works exist on the identity of NATO as a whole: those focussing on traditional security questions and those focussing on the role of democratic values. As an example of the first group, Duffield focusses on the question why NATO continued to exist once its primary threat, the USSR, collapsed. He argues that the Alliance continued to grant security against regional threats and that it acted as a stabilising factor in Eastern as well as Western Europe.<sup>3</sup> He thus focusses on the identity of NATO as a security entity that adapted to new strategic challenges. In the other group, Schimmelfennig analyses the role norms and values played in the expansion of NATO after the Cold War. He comes to the conclusion that, although it is impossible to say to what extent exactly, the shared norms of democracy and rule

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<sup>1</sup> "Handelingen 68ste Vergadering – Donderdag 29 april 1982," *Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal* (2020), 3217.

<sup>2</sup> "Handelingen 19de Vergadering – Dinsdag 11 mei 1982," *Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal* (2020), 454.

<sup>3</sup> John S Duffield, "NATO's Functions after the Cold War," *Political Science Quarterly* 109, no. 5 (1994), 763-787.

of law eased the accession of newly democratised former Warsaw Pact members to NATO.<sup>4</sup> He therefore defines the identity of the Alliance as broader than purely security.

Aside from the question which of these approaches is more appropriate to study the Atlantic Alliance, it is striking that both groups take the fall of Communism as their starting point. This approach appears logical at first glance, as the end of the Cold War was an enormous geopolitical shift, but it creates the narrative that the identity of NATO was static during the Cold War. Both groups seem to agree that the identity of the Alliance was primarily determined by the Soviet threat during the Cold War.

While discussing the identity of the Netherlands within NATO during the Cold War, scholars have also stressed continuity despite the increased NATO-scepticism that came to the forefront during the early nineteen eighties. Based on opinion polling and interviews, analysts like Domke, Eichenberg and Kelleher stress that there was no real loss of consensus on NATO among both the Dutch public and foreign policy elites during that time.<sup>5</sup> Eichenberg concludes from polls that Dutch public opinion on NATO resembled that in other European countries and the Netherlands was therefore not an outlier in terms of NATO-scepticism.<sup>6</sup>

Using a qualitative approach, Van Staden argues that NATO-scepticism during the nineteen eighties was insignificant compared to the Netherlands' overall loyalty to the NATO Alliance, because it was temporary and did not gravely alter government policy.<sup>7</sup> Overall, Van Staden argued, the Netherlands had been a loyal ally to NATO and most of all the United States: "in the whole postwar period, one may conclude, the Netherlands had no difficulty in relying strongly on the USA, which was regarded as a benevolent distant power."<sup>8</sup> This is echoed by Hellema, who argues that the Cold War was primarily a period of stability for Dutch security policy as an ally of the United States.<sup>9</sup>

It becomes clear from the above that authors like Van Staden paint a picture of the Netherlands as an unconditionally Atlanticist country and dismiss any opposition as historically insignificant. This is odd, as the question of Spanish accession to NATO uncovered that the Dutch Parliament seriously debated changing its position. Similarly, the historiography on NATO as a whole implies a static identity that cannot explain why the Dutch left turned against the Alliance's interests in 1981 and 1982. From this it becomes clear that the reasons why such a large part of the Dutch Parliament voted against NATO expansion must be investigated, and that the outcome of this investigation can uncover a subtle change in NATO's identity during the Cold War that is not covered by current historiography.

This thesis therefore concerns itself with the debates that took place in the Dutch Tweede Kamer in 1981 and 1982 and the debate that took place in the Dutch Senate in 1982 concerning Spain's bid to join NATO. It uses a constructivist framework to point out that the identity of

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<sup>4</sup> Frank Schimmelfennig, "NATO's enlargement to the East: An analysis of collective decision-making," *EAPC-NATO Individual Fellowship Report 1998-2000* (1998), 2-73.

<sup>5</sup> William K. Domke, Richard C. Eichenberg, and Catherine M. Kelleher, "Consensus Lost?: Domestic Politics and the 'Crisis' in NATO," *World Politics* 39, no. 3 (1987), 404.

<sup>6</sup> Richard C. Eichenberg, "The Myth of Hollanditis," *International Security* 8, no. 2 (1983), 157-159.

<sup>7</sup> Alfred van Staden, "Small State Strategies in Alliances: The Case of the Netherlands," *Cooperation and Conflict* 30, no. 1 (1995), 31-32.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>9</sup> Duco Hellema, "De Historische Betekenis van de Nederlandse Toetreding tot de Navo," *Atlantisch Perspectief* 23, no. 2 (1999), 12.



NATO was challenged by a left wing world view. Building on this observation, it encourages scholars to study changes in the way the Alliance was perceived that occurred while the Cold War was still ongoing. To achieve this end, it studies primarily the PvdA and the other parties that opposed NATO expansion: the Dutch Communist Party (*Communistische Partij Nederland* – CPN), the Pacifist Socialist Party (*Pacifistisch-Socialistische Partij* – PSP) and the Political Party of Radicals (*Politieke Partij Radikalen* – PPR).

The following chapters provide an answer to the following research question: how did opponents of Spain's bid to join NATO construct an alternative identity of the Atlantic Alliance during debates in the Dutch Parliament in 1981 and 1982? The rest of this introduction further expands on the constructivist framework used in this thesis and lays out the thesis' structure and methodology.

## 1.2 Constructivism as a Framework

Prior to the introduction of constructivist thought within the study of International Relations, the identity of states was seen as a given. Both the schools of Realism and Liberalism were based on the premise of rationalism and took the self-interested state as their starting point.<sup>10</sup>

This premise was challenged by Constructivist scholars like Wendt. Wendt argues that the self-help oriented international system described by Realists and Liberals does not follow logically from anarchy, but is instead the result of a process.<sup>11</sup> This process, Wendt argues, entails a continuous interaction between states that creates a shared meaning on which these states base their identities. These identities constitute certain roles or expectations of behaviour that determine a state's interests.<sup>12</sup> The self-help system deemed self-evident by Liberals and Realists, Wendt concludes, is therefore an institution based on identities that states ascribe to themselves and other states.<sup>13</sup> Before interaction with other states takes place, Wendt notes, only the domestic structure of governance and a desire to survive exist.<sup>14</sup>

Since Wendt first presented his theory in 1992, other scholars have taken up his mantle and refined Constructivist thought within International Relations. Recently, scholars like McCourt and Epstein have called for a new form of Constructivism that is more concerned with the study of Constructivism as an ongoing process, the role of academics in constructing identities and the use of language. It is this framework that functions as the foundation of this thesis.

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<sup>10</sup> Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Makes of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992), 391-392.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 394.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 397-398.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 399-400.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 402.

According to McCourt, academics have focussed on the role of identity in a state's behaviour without acknowledging that this identity is the product of an ongoing process of construction. In other words, they have focussed on the effects of construction and not on construction itself. To prevent this, McCourt finds, scholars should not account for political outcomes by stating a states' identity, but instead trace that identity's origin, development and effect.<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, McCourt warns for the role that academics themselves can have in the construction process. By describing certain identities, ideas and values, he argues, scholars can reinforce them and make them into reality.<sup>16</sup> The academic world should therefore be reflective of its own role. Instead of stressing stability in identities and thereby reinforcing them, scholars should focus on changes in identities, ideas and values and analyse how these changes influence actions. According to McCourt, change is the norm and stability the outlier.<sup>17</sup>

The final part of McCourt's Constructivism that functions as the basis of this thesis is the role of language. For this, McCourt leans on Epstein.<sup>18</sup> Epstein criticises Wendt and argues that he removes a part of the identity of the state from the Constructivist dynamic by holding on to the 'essential state': the state that exists prior to the interactions described above. This is a problem, because it renders Wendt unable to fully explain change in the international system as the nature of the state is made to be fundamentally stable. Additionally, Epstein argues that Wendt ignores the process in which the essential state is formed by language and fails to acknowledge the role of language in construction.<sup>19</sup>

Epstein rejects Wendt's essential state and proposes a Constructivist model based on language. She substantiates her argument by using the works of Lacan and Hobbes. Before language is developed, she deduces, humans cannot understand each other and there is no meaning. Language is therefore the starting point of Constructivism, as there can be no identity creation if humans are unable to convey meaning to each other.<sup>20</sup>

Academics should, according to Epstein, study language at both the individual level and the state level to gauge construction processes. Since Epstein's model rejects the essential state, her methodology creates room to study the manner in which individuals contribute to the construction of state identity and therefore contribute to state behaviour.<sup>21</sup>

The Constructivist framework laid out by McCourt and Epstein fits the research conducted in this thesis for three reasons. First of all, It follows the notion that change is continuous. This thesis views the outcome of the debates held in the Netherlands in 1981 and 1982 on Spain's bid to join NATO, that the Netherlands held on to its role as a loyal NATO ally, as a triumph of the existing self-image of the Dutch state over a challenge rather than a given. The use of continuous change also constitutes an innovation compared to the historiography laid out in the first part of this chapter. Academics who have previously studied NATO and the

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<sup>15</sup> David M. McCourt, *The New Constructivism in International Relations Theory* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2022), 75-76.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 77-79.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>19</sup> Charlotte Epstein, "Theorizing Agency in Hobbes's Wake: The Rational Actor, the Self, or the Speaking Subject?," *International Organization* 67, no. 2 (2013), 298-300.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 301-302.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 313.

role of the Netherlands within NATO, namely, have assumed their subject to be unchanging. Even Schimmelfennig, whose use of norms and values mirrors a constructivist attitude, neglects to lay out the origin and development of these norms. By studying the changes in worldview that occurred during the Cold War, academics can better understand NATO's metamorphosis after the fall of the Soviet Union, too. This thesis contributes to that process.

The second reason why the abovementioned framework fits this thesis is the attention that McCourt pays to the reinforcing role of academics in construction. Academics like Duffield Schimmelfennig, Van Staden and Hellema have reinforced a static identity of NATO and Dutch policy within NATO. This thesis seeks to challenge that view by highlighting the alternatives to staunch NATO membership that were presented by the Dutch left.

Finally, Epstein's use of language in construction is a fitting methodological framework for the analysis of parliamentary debates. Parliament – a word derived from the middle English 'parlement', meaning discussion or discourse – is the ultimate example of an institution in which meaning is created and actions are taken through speech.<sup>22</sup> In Parliament, after all, political parties are expected to speak directly to society and to disseminate their world view to voters. This dissemination is at the heart of the identity construction that precedes policy. Additionally, Epstein's study of the individual level corresponds with this thesis' study of individual parliamentarians, albeit united in a political party. In a democracy such as the Netherlands, parliamentary debates can provide useful insights into the views uttered through language by individual constructing actors that will eventually decide how a state operates on the international level.

### 1.3 The Road Ahead – Structure and Methodology

The main body of this thesis, consisting of chapter two and chapter three, analyses the parliamentary debates on Spain's accession to NATO using Epstein's language-based Constructivist framework. This means that the focus of analysis lies on identities that individuals aim to create through their speech and on the implied and explicit effect of that identity creation. The debates in question took place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December, 1981, and the 28<sup>th</sup> of April, 1982 in the Tweede Kamer and on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May, 1982, in the Senate.<sup>23</sup>

Chapters two and three each cover a different category of identity creation, each of which was prominent in both the debates and the existing historiography on NATO. Chapter two concerns discourse on the state of democracy in Spain. It answers the following research question: how did opponents of Spain's bid to join NATO construct identity based on the ideal of democracy, and how did the proponents react to them? Chapter three zooms in on discourse concerning security. It answers the following research question: how did opponents of Spain's bid to join NATO construct identity based on security issues, and how did the proponents react

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<sup>22</sup> "Parliament," *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, September 29, 2024, accessed October 6, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Parliament>.

<sup>23</sup> "Handelingen 25ste Vergadering – Donderdag 3 december 1981," *Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal* (2023), 755-864; "Handelingen 67ste Vergadering – Woensdag 28 april 1982," *Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal* (2020), 3155-3196; "Handelingen 19de Vergadering," 439-456.

to them? In each chapter, identity discourse used by opponents of NATO expansion is first laid out using exemplary quotes. Then, the meaning and the implied policy consequences of this discourse are analysed. The same is done for the discourse used by proponents of NATO expansion that mostly served as a reaction to the opponents' rhetoric.

Before this is done, however, chapter one historicises the debates and answers the following research question: what historical context precedes the debates covered in this thesis? The chapter starts with a brief overview of the history of democratisation leading up to Spain's bid to join NATO. Then, it places the Dutch actors that would decide on this membership bid in historical context. The main parties involved in the Dutch parliamentary debates on Spain's bid to join NATO are sorted in three categories: the left wing opposition, consisting of the CPN, the PSP and the PPR, the PvdA, and the centre right, consisting of the Christian Democratic Appeal (*Christen-Democratisch Appel* – CDA), Democrats '66 (*Democraten '66* – D'66) and the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* – VVD).<sup>24</sup> The chapter provides historical context of these parties and their views on NATO and concludes with a brief overview of the electoral campaign and cabinet formation of 1981.

Finally, the conclusion of this thesis reflects on the findings from this research and recommends that more research on the development of the perceived identity of NATO as well as the Dutch role within NATO during the Cold War should be conducted. After all, studying changing rhetoric even in places where academics do not suspect change can lead to a more nuanced understanding of the development of the Atlantic Alliance over time. This thesis is a starting point of that expedition.

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<sup>24</sup> The smaller Christian parties SGP, RPF and GPV fall outside of the scope of this thesis due to their limited followings, which mostly consisted of strictly religious Christian communities.

## 2.0 Chapter One: Setting the Scene

### 2.1 A New Generation

As is the case with any historical event, the debates concerning Spain's bid to join NATO that occurred in the Dutch Parliament were grounded in historical context. In 1981 and 1982, a new generation that was born after the end of the Second World War had made its way into politics and greatly altered the Dutch decision making machine. They were influenced by the reignition of the Cold War and the peace movement that swept Western Europe at the time. The 'baby boomers' were a protest generation that demanded more involvement in public institutions such as universities, better care for the environment, women's rights and a move away from nuclear energy. This generation created new movements such as D'66, the PPR and New Left in the PvdA, forcing the status quo to adapt.<sup>25</sup>

This chapter provides an overview of the protagonists of the debates that is divided into three categories: the left wing opposition, the PvdA and the centre right. While the first group, consisting of the CPN, the PSP and the PPR, increasingly coalesced around anti-war issues, the PvdA transformed into a more left wing, NATO-sceptic party. The centre right, consisting of the CDA, the VVD and D'66, was a more loosely connected category.

As the framework of this thesis is constructivist, this overview primarily highlights the parties' ideological perspective. The way these parties viewed the world naturally influenced the way they viewed Spain, the Atlantic Alliance and the Dutch state. Without having broader insights into a party's ideological roots, it may therefore be hard to comprehend the identity creation performed by the party in a debate.

This chapter starts by providing a history of Spanish democracy. Accession to NATO was highly controversial in Spain itself, which influenced the debates in the Dutch Parliament as well. It then lays out the ideological background of the centre left, the PvdA and the centre right. Finally, the chapter discusses the electoral campaign of 1981 and the cabinet formation process that preceded the debates covered in this thesis.

### 2.2 Division in Spain

The defence cooperation between Spain and the West had a complicated history prior to Spain's accession to NATO. Immediately after the Second World War, the United States and Britain tried to isolate the Franco regime internationally due to the aid it had given to the axis powers. This attitude quickly changed when the ascend of the Cold War and the Korean War highlighted the strategic necessity of military bases in the Mediterranean for the United States. In 1953, the United States reached a deal with the Franco regime, which allowed the US to use

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<sup>25</sup> Gerrit Voerman, "Communisten, pacifistisch-socialisten, radicalen en progressieve christenen. De voorlopers van GroenLinks," in Paul Lucardie and Gerrit Voerman (eds.), *Van de straat naar de staat?: GroenLinks 1990-2010* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2010), 16-17.

Spanish military bases in exchange for an economic stimulus.<sup>26</sup> Although this change in American policy allowed Spain to take part in numerous international organisations, European countries like the Netherlands continued to block Spain from joining NATO.<sup>27</sup>

After the death of Franco in 1975, the United States supported the ensuing democratisation process by encouraging democratic actors and by ratifying an official bilateral treaty. Despite this, the Spanish public remained sceptical of the US because its previous deals with the Franco regime. This dynamic worsened in 1981, after the Spanish military attempted a coup by storming Parliament. US Secretary of State Alexander Haig failed to clearly condemn the military, because he was improperly informed at the time. This led the Spanish left to conclude that the US had been behind the coup.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, Spain continued to integrate more into the international community after its democratisation. In 1977, Spain was accepted into the Council of Europe and in 1979 accession talks with the European Economic Community (EEC) were opened.<sup>29</sup> In 1980, Spain announced its intention to join NATO. The Spanish government presented this bid as a product of Spain's stabilised democracy and as a part of Spain's integration into Europe. The move had become possible after democratisation had taken away the concerns of the European countries that had previously blocked Spanish membership of NATO.<sup>30</sup>

Similar to the relations between Spain and the United States, NATO membership was anything but uncontroversial in Spain. The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español* – PSOE) was against membership and preferred for Spain to remain neutral.<sup>31</sup> It contested the governing party Union of the Democratic Centre (*Unión de Centro Democrático* – UCD)'s ambition to join the Alliance. The PSOE argued against the UCD that NATO membership would not make Spain safer, as antagonising the USSR may draw Spain into nuclear war. Additionally, the PSOE argued against the UCD's stance that membership was a logical extension of existing agreements with the United States by stating that NATO membership would end Spain's official neutrality. The PSOE also contested the UCD's assertion that NATO would solidify Spain's democracy by highlighting that undemocratic nations like Portugal, Greece and Turkey were also part of NATO.<sup>32</sup>

The economic stimulus provided by the United States to the Franco regime through the base agreement as well as the failure by the American government to denounce the military coup of 1981 had created deep scepticism of the United States and by extension NATO on the Spanish left. While the Spanish centre right saw NATO as a means to integrate Spain into Europe and the Western security structure, the left contested these points. The arguments used by the PSOE to counter the UCD's ambition to join the Alliance, later chapters show, mirror the arguments used in the Dutch Parliament as well.

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<sup>26</sup> Morten Heiberg, "A Long and Winding Road: An International Perspective on the Fall and Rise of Democracy in Spain in the Twentieth Century," in Lars K. Bruun, Karl Christian and Gert Sørensen (eds.), *The Palgrave Macmillan European Self-Reflection between Politics and Religion. The Crisis of Europe in the Twentieth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 85-86.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 86-87.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-89.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Carothers, "Spain, Nato and Democracy," *The World Today* 37, no. 7/8 (1981), 198.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 298-299.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 299-300.

## 2.3 The Small Parties: the Left Wing Opposition

Although the left wing opposition can appear to be a homogeneous, NATO-sceptic, anti-nuclear movement, the three small parties that made up this category had distinctly different historical roots. The oldest of the three, the CPN, was founded in 1909. After the Russian revolution, the party quickly adopted the USSR as a model nation, focusing almost solely on socio-economic topics like workers' rights.<sup>33</sup>

The PSP was founded in 1957 as a third way between the PvdA, which was in favour of Atlanticist foreign policy, and the CPN, which had close ties to Moscow. The PSP as a movement based itself on pacifism, humanism and socialism. The party did not endorse a specific kind of Marxism or anarchism, but based itself on non-violence. Its members were more highly educated and held office jobs.<sup>34</sup> In the nineteen sixties, the party would become more popular due to its opposition to the Vietnam war and nuclear weapons.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, the PPR was formed after a split from the Catholic People's Party (*Katholieke Volkspartij* – KVP) in 1968. The party defined itself as having a Christian radical mentality instead of an ideology. It quickly lost its Christian influence, but its party programme remained somewhat consistent: the PPR wanted democratisation in the government as well as the private sector, solidarity with the poor at home and abroad, disarmament and the preservation of the environment. Although the party was ideologically close the PSP, it focussed more on parliamentary work and worked together closely with the PvdA.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the three parties' different historical origins and world views, the entering of the baby boomer generation into the public debate brought them closer together. Progressive youth movements brought more educated people into the CPN in the late nineteen sixties, shifting its focus away from the working class and bringing it closer to the PSP.<sup>37</sup> In 1977, the CPN started working together with the Interdenominational Peace Council (*Interkerkelijk Vredesberaad* – IKV) and the Catholic peace movement Pax Christi on actions against nuclear weapons.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, the PPR radicalised after the failure to form a second Den Uyl cabinet. The party, which had been a product of the baby boomer generation as well, rejected NATO membership in 1977, bringing it closer to the PSP and by extension to the CPN.<sup>39</sup>

The PPR, the PSP and the CPN increasingly found each other in social movements like the anti-nuclear movement and demonstrations against the NATO double-track decision of 1979, which foresaw the placement of ballistic missiles in Europe. This led to an increase in political cooperation between the parties. In 1981, the three parties created electoral alliances on the local level for the first time.<sup>40</sup> For the national elections of the same year, the CPN and the PSP created an electoral alliance while the PPR remained in its alliance with the PvdA.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Voerman, "Communisten, pacifistisch-socialisten, radicalen en progressieve christenen," 19.

<sup>34</sup> Sjaak van der Velden, *Links: PvdA, SP en GroenLinks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 170-171.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-174.

<sup>36</sup> Voerman, "Communisten, pacifistisch-socialisten, radicalen en progressieve christenen," 18.

<sup>37</sup> Van der Velden, *Links: PvdA, SP en GroenLinks*, 163-164.

<sup>38</sup> Matthijs van der Beek, "Beyond Hollanditis: The Campaigns against the Cruise Missiles in the Benelux (1979-1985), *Dutch Crossing* 40, no. 1 (2016), 41-42.

<sup>39</sup> Voerman, "Communisten, pacifistisch-socialisten, radicalen en progressieve christenen," 20.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-23.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

## 2.4 The Big Party: the PvdA

Other than the left wing opposition, which consisted of smaller parties that operated in the margins of Dutch politics, the PvdA was an institution that played a decisive role in Dutch political history. From 1946 until 1958, the PvdA led governments that stood at the basis of the modern Dutch welfare state.<sup>42</sup> It was also during this time that the Dutch government became a founding member of NATO. Right after the Second World War, the party denounced communism, championed NATO and positioned itself as a strong US ally.<sup>43</sup> Influenced by events like the partition of Germany and violent Soviet interference in Czechoslovakia, NATO membership was virtually unchallenged within the PvdA throughout the nineteen fifties.<sup>44</sup>

This dynamic changed in the nineteen sixties. In 1966, the group New Left published the manifesto *Tien past Red (Tien over Rood)*, which called for recognition of the German Democratic Republic, Condemnation of the Vietnam War, and the cutting of ties with the fascist regimes in Spain and Portugal. Spain should never be allowed to join NATO, the manifesto argued, and the Netherlands should leave the Alliance if Portugal remained a member.<sup>45</sup> Another baby boomer movement, New Left was a group that consisted of young people that were discontent with global inequality and wars in the global south. The rise of New Left caused a crisis within the party, as its leadership was not used to interference in its policies by the rank and file members.<sup>46</sup>

The struggle between the party leadership and young, more activist members continued throughout the nineteen seventies. The discontent among the members went hand in hand with anti-American sentiment sparked by the war in Vietnam, the Watergate scandal and alleged American involvement in a coup in Chile.<sup>47</sup>

In 1972, the PvdA congress adopted a resolution that made NATO membership conditional on the removal of nuclear weapons from the Netherlands and the removal of dictatorships from NATO. This moment constituted a significant shift: PvdA members called the link between NATO and security into question for the first time, instead labelling nuclear weapons as the primary security threat.<sup>48</sup> The members went on to articulate the most extreme anti-nuclear policy of any European Social Democratic party ever in 1975, before deciding not pursue conditional NATO membership after all in 1979. This by no means meant that nuclear scepticism was on the return among the membership, however. In 1981, PvdA leader Joop den Uyl only got the party members to accept the continuation of some nuclear tasks by the Dutch armed forces by threatening to resign.<sup>49</sup>

While the party leadership continuously fought the rank and file members when it came to NATO and nuclear weapons, party elites proved effective to keep Franco's Spain out of the Alliance. In 1968, then member of Parliament Max van der Stoep, who would later defend Spain's bid to join NATO as foreign minister, succeeded in pressuring Joseph Luns, then foreign

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<sup>42</sup> Van der Velden, *Links: PvdA, SP en GroenLinks*, 120-121.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>44</sup> Wim Visser, "De NAVO-discussie binnen de Partij van de Arbeid 1949-1981," *Groniek* 73 (1981), 33-34.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>46</sup> Van der Velden, *Links: PvdA, SP en GroenLinks*, 129-130.

<sup>47</sup> Visser, "De NAVO-discussie binnen de Partij van de Arbeid 1949-1981," 35-36.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-37.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-39.



minister in the cabinet De Jong, to declare that Spain would not join NATO as long as it was a dictatorship.<sup>50</sup> After taking power in 1973, Den Uyl and his cabinet were against rapprochement between NATO and Spain as long as Spain did not hold free elections.<sup>51</sup> With this significant track record of standing up for Spanish democracy, the PvdA voted against Spain's accession to NATO in 1982 regardless of the fact that the Franco regime had ended.

## 2.4 The other Side: the Centre Right

Opposite to the parties mentioned above in the debate concerning Spain's accession to NATO stood the centre right. This final category consisted of three parties that had fewer communalities than the left, but none the less found each other in their support for the Atlanticist status quo. The largest party, the CDA, came from a confessional and pragmatist tradition. Its predecessors, the KVP, the Anti-revolutionary Party (*Antirevolutionaire Partij* – ARP) and the Christian Historical Union (*Christelijk-Historische Unie* – CHU) combined always controlled a majority in Parliament in the period directly following the Second World War. Therefore, at least two of them were always needed to form a coalition government.<sup>52</sup> This arguably made the confessional parties an even more powerful institution than the PvdA.

These three parties controlled a political system that was focussed on governing from the centre and making deals with stakeholder groups. This system, however, came under pressure in the nineteen sixties as the more secular baby boomer generation turned away from the confessional parties. Faced with new political blocs on the left, the three parties joined forces in order to remain an influential factor. In 1977, the KVP, the ARP and the CHU first competed in the elections as the CDA.<sup>53</sup> In an age of polarisation between left and right, the CDA was able to regain appeal as a stable bloc in the centre that was also open to non-denominational voters.<sup>54</sup> In 1981, it became the largest party under the leadership of Dries van Agt. As the CDA stood in a tradition of centrism and viewed stability as vital to good governance, it did not want to disturb the NATO status quo.

One of the parties that emerged in the nineteen sixties to challenge the dominance of the confessional parties was D'66. Founded, as its name suggests, in 1966, the party wanted to insert a new competition of ideas into the old form of governance through structural change, for example by directly electing the prime minister. The party wanted to transcend traditional left-right differences as well as the confessional, liberal and socialist blocks.<sup>55</sup> Although D'66 was founded by the baby boomer generation and had previously worked together with the PPR as well as the PvdA, it took a more status quo oriented approach to Spain's bid to join NATO.

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<sup>50</sup> Stefanie Massink, "A Critical Ally (1949-1977): The Dutch Social Democrats, Spain and NATO," in Laurien Crump & Susanna Erlandsson (eds.), *Margins for Manoeuvre in Cold War Europe: The Influence of Smaller Powers* (London: Routledge, 2019), 72-73.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 74-75.

<sup>52</sup> Ken Gladdish, "The Dutch Political Parties and the May 1986 Elections," *Government and Opposition* 21, no. 3 (1986), 320-321.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 325-330.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 325-327.

Finally, the VVD was arguably the biggest beneficiary of the rise of youth movements on the right. Founded after the Second World War as a liberal breakaway faction of the PvdA, its vote share more than doubled between 1971 and 1982 as it served as a counter weight to the left during an increasingly polarised period. The party, which was both economically and socially liberal, appealed to young people and new voters who were faced with economic malaise and wanted to decrease the size of government.<sup>56</sup> Being almost the opposite of the left wing opposition, the VVD was also a fierce proponent of NATO expansion.

## 2.5 Conclusion

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of May, 1981, the parties described above competed in a parliamentary election. While the CDA campaign was focussed on avoiding blunders and controversy, the VVD engaged in a populist campaign centred on security. The PvdA aggressively campaigned against the right, although it avoided being too polarising and alienating itself from possible coalition partners.<sup>57</sup>

After the election, the PvdA lost significantly, while D'66 gained. The coalition of CDA and the VVD that had constituted the first Van Agt government no longer had a majority. During the coalition talks that followed, the PvdA and D'66 wanted to govern with the CDA, but the CDA doubted the merits of this cooperation. In the end, because the PvdA and the VVD excluded each other and D'66 excluded the VVD, a coalition between the CDA, the PvdA and D'66 quickly became the only option.<sup>58</sup>

Social unrest over nuclear missiles, meanwhile, did not go away. In October 1981, 400,000 joined a demonstration in Amsterdam as part of an international campaign against nuclear weapons. Various civil organisations joined the cause as well and spoke out against the placement of nuclear missiles.<sup>59</sup>

It was in this polarised climate that the Dutch Parliament debated Spain's bid to join NATO. The dawn of progressive youth movements had influenced all parties on the political spectrum. The CPN and the new party the PPR increasingly moved towards the PSP, holding a NATO sceptic, pacifist world view. The PvdA changed from within and abandoned its previous unconditional support for the United States. Instead of viewing NATO as a net benefit for Dutch security, the party now saw nuclear missiles as the primary threat. The VVD, which campaigned on security and a commitment of the placement of cruise missiles in the Netherlands, grew in popularity by presenting itself as a right-wing counter weight to these new left wing dynamics. The CDA, meanwhile, reinvented itself as a party that above all valued centrism and stability. Finally, D'66, a new anti-establishment party born out of the baby boomer generation, caused the two institutions the CDA and the PvdA to join forces in an unstable coalition. While tensions in the Netherlands were further heightened by anti-nuclear protests, the new democratic

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<sup>56</sup> Gladdish, "The Dutch Political Parties and the May 1986 Elections," 332-333.

<sup>57</sup> Jan Ramakers, "Een kabinet dat er nooit had mogen komen," in Carla van Balen and Alexander van Kessel (eds.), *Kabinetsformaties 1977-2012* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2016), 81-82.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 84-86.

<sup>59</sup> Van der Beek, "Beyond Hollanditis," 46.

government in Spain applied to join NATO despite widespread US-scepticism on the left following an attempted military coup. The following chapters lay out how this turn of events translated into the debates in the Dutch Parliament.



The anti-nuclear weapons protest in Amsterdam on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November, 1981

Rob Bogaerts, 1981, *Municipality of Amsterdam*, accessed 21 December, 2024,

<https://www.amsterdam.nl/nieuws/achtergrond/drukste-plek-ooit/>.

## 3.0 Chapter Two: Democracy at Stake

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter shows that in 1981 and 1982, the Dutch Parliament was a colourful spectrum of various political parties with each their own ideological background. During the debates on Spain's bid to join NATO, these parties constructed opposing identities of the Atlantic Alliance. This chapter concerns 'constructions of democracy', meaning the way the parties labelled institutions as either democratic or antidemocratic.

While debating the question of NATO expansion, all parties agreed to the notion that democracy was an ideal, but they contested the manner in which this ideal would be upheld. The left wing opposition and the PvdA, who opposed Spanish NATO-membership, constructed an identity of NATO as a force that worked against democracy. The centre right and minister Van der Stoel considered NATO a tool to integrate Spain into a community of democracies.

The following paragraphs lay out and analyse the discourse used by these groups, the constructions that follow from this discourse and the implied actions that follow from these constructions. While the first part of the chapter covers the left wing opposition and the PvdA, the second part covers minister Van der Stoel and the centre right. The quotations used were selected for their representativeness of the parties that they represent, as well as for their clarity and conciseness. They are sorted thematically in order to sketch a clear contrast between the two opposing views on NATO that came to the fore during the debates.

### 3.2 NATO as a Threat to Democracy

Naturally, the four parties that opposed NATO expansion did not hold completely identical positions. Although the PvdA was somewhat more moderate than the CPN, the PSP and the PPR, the parties all constructed an identity of the Alliance as antidemocratic by using three types of argument, sorted here in the following categories: democracy at home, democracy abroad and militarism.

#### **Democracy at Home**

The first of these arguments was that NATO overruled democratic decision making in the Netherlands. Members of Parliament argued that the Dutch government set in motion the ratification process of Spain's accession to the alliance too hastily, impeding on Parliament's right to properly discuss the issue. Broekhuis (PvdA) asked the following question: "the governments of the NATO member states, including the Dutch government with support of a majority of the chamber, seem to be in an extraordinary hurry to ratify the NATO protocol, certainly when one considers that the accession of other countries to other organisations often

takes years. {...} I ask again: why this hurry?"<sup>60</sup> Broekhuis underlined his suspicions that NATO was separate from other international organisations and, using the word 'hurry', implied that this undermined the diligence of the process.

Other speakers echoed the notion of haste and explicitly stated that this speed was meant to undermine public debate in the Netherlands. Waltmans (PPR) said the following:

Still the question rises why there should be such a hurry with the accession of Spain to NATO. In May, shortly before the elections and while the full attention of the Tweede Kamer was focussed on the election campaign, the government – the cabinet of CDA and VVD – somewhat secretly and quietly established in a NATO context that Spain would be allowed to join NATO if a clear majority in Spain would vote in favour.<sup>61</sup>

Van der Spek (PSP) described a similar sentiment:

I find it very unjust that the government considering the invitation has decided without there having been a comprehensive discussion inside and outside of the parties about this important problem. I find namely that we are dealing with increasing democratisation of foreign and defence policy outside of the parties in the sense that more people involve themselves in it, also as action groups concerning foreign policy, development aid and peace, for which I point to the recent {anti-ballistic missiles} demonstration. I find it bad that this is, as it were, ignored by this quick decision by the council of ministers.<sup>62</sup>

Waltmans and Van der Spek implied that, if the enlargement process had been more transparent, the Dutch electorate and the growing peace movement would have rejected it. From this it follows that the interests of NATO do not have popular support and therefore have to be 'rushed' through Parliament 'secretly and quietly' in order to avoid public scrutiny, making the Alliance antidemocratic in nature. Later, Van der Spek once again described this effect and linked it to the anti-nuclear movement as well:

The NATO structure, the membership of the NATO, strengthens an undemocratic state of affairs with many decisions. I only point to the placement of nuclear weapons in the Netherlands then, naturally also elsewhere. There was nothing known about this. The populations have not been consulted in it. NATO with her rigid view of the enemy strengthens an authoritarian, closed society, in which democracy is second place to militarism and nationalism.<sup>63</sup>

## **Democracy Abroad**

The opponents of NATO expansion not only portrayed the Alliance as defying democracy in the Netherlands, but also as threatening the young Spanish democracy. The most obvious way in which this occurred, according to these four parties, was by defying the will of the majority of Spaniards, similar to the situation they had described concerning the Netherlands. As the previous chapter of this thesis describes, the PSOE opposed NATO accession. The left wing parties in the Netherlands argued that the Spanish population was on

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<sup>60</sup> All citations in this thesis were translated by the author; "Handelingen 67ste Vergadering," 3168.

<sup>61</sup> "Handelingen 25ste Vergadering," 760.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 764.

<sup>63</sup> "Handelingen 67ste Vergadering," 3157-3158.

the side of the PSOE and that the UCD was, despite following technically constitutional procedures, not taking this into account. On the Spanish government's decision to join the Alliance, Uijen (PvdA) said the following.

The Spanish constitution knows a procedure, in which a qualified majority could be needed to reach such a decision. This procedure has not been followed. The socialist party in Spain and also other parties have asked for it and they have tried everything to start the procedure, that accession to NATO would only be possible with a qualified majority. They have also asked for a referendum, another option that is provided in Spain. The government has not responded to that. {...} If the Minister speaks of a parliamentary majority, he is right. Simultaneously we note, however, that our sister party does not want this and that opinion polls indicate, that a large majority in Spain is against this accession.<sup>64</sup>

This sentiment was echoed by Van der Spek (PSP).

{L}et there be no doubt that large parts of the Spanish population do not want that Spain joins NATO. I point to a poll, in which 49% of the population spoke out against accession and only 26% was in favour {...} It is politically sad in a world where governments are in power that in no way take the desires of their peoples into account. It is a scandal that systems are not there for the populations, but the populations are there for the systems.<sup>65</sup>

Schreuders (CPN) made his accusation against the Spanish government even more explicit.

We are no admirers of a referendum. The Spanish constitution, however, knows that possibility. {The Spanish government} has refused on the ground of the results of the opinion polls to use that possibility. That means: the means that the Spanish democracy knows have not been used with regard to the question of NATO accession. {...} A society that has a large need for reconciliation in order to strengthen democracy, is deeply divided due to the plan to join NATO. This, and not remaining outside of NATO, favours the extreme right.<sup>66</sup>

The opponents of NATO enlargement thus accused the Spanish government of destabilising Spain's young democracy by taking an unpopular decision. Although the PvdA, the CPN, the PPR and the PSP agreed that technically the Spanish government had followed the constitutional procedure, they implicitly labelled the government as irresponsible for not seeking a 'qualified majority'. In their eyes, such a large part of Spaniards rejected NATO that the government should have opted for 'reconciliation' with the PSOE or called a referendum. Instead, the Dutch left felt that the Spanish government chose to support the 'system' at the expense of the people, deliberately avoiding a referendum because they knew that such a referendum would block accession to NATO. This would create division that would harm the fragile Spanish democracy and embolden the far right. The four parties thus constructed an identity of NATO that was antidemocratic, as the will of the people and the stability of Spanish democracy itself lost out to the interests of the Alliance.

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<sup>64</sup> "Handelingen 19de Vergadering," 452.

<sup>65</sup> "Handelingen 67ste Vergadering," 3158.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 3179.

## Militarism

Lastly, the opposition to NATO expansion, albeit the left wing opposition somewhat more explicitly than the PvdA, constructed a view of the Atlantic Alliance's military structures as divorced from or even working against democratic institutions. The CPN, the PSP and the PPR believed military structures to be inherently antidemocratic, and therefore feared the influence that NATO membership would have on Spain. Van der Spek (PSP) described the link between NATO and militaristic, antidemocratic forces as follows.

Accession of Spain will not lead to more democracy and less militarism, on the contrary. Greece has, believe it or not, committed a fascist coup with the NATO plan Prometheus back then. The fascist Portugal has been for 25 years, while signing all the nice phrases in the preamble etcetera, a committed member of NATO and a loyal member. Turkey has a military dictatorship as a NATO member that is established among other with NATO material.<sup>67</sup>

Van der Spek referenced other countries that were or became dictatorships while being a NATO member and argued that the military forces that took power in these countries did so with resources provided to them by NATO. The Prometheus plan mentioned by Van der Spek, for instance, was a contingency NATO plan meant to prevent a communist takeover in Greece that was used by the Colonels Regime to topple Greek democracy. The preamble that he referred to was that of the NATO treaty, which states that the member states "are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law."<sup>68</sup> He thus argued that these values could not counter antidemocratic military forces in member states. Formulated even more sharply, Van der Spek could have meant that the preamble was meant to conceal the antidemocratic effects of the Alliance with non-binding platitudes.

The opposition feared that a similar dynamic would unfold in Spain, as becomes clear from the intervention by Schreuders (CPN).

The question is not whether NATO can improve democracy in Spain; the question is – in our opinion – whether democracy in Spain will be resistant to NATO. {...} In which circles moved the conspirators who aimed a pistol at the heart of Spanish democracy last year? One can point them out: a number of high officers who prepared a coup are currently on trial. The officer class, the military leadership that was formed and moulded in the Franco era, is not known for a democratic disposition and by respect for the principles of the Spanish constitution. {...} Isolating the officer class and the military leadership in Spain is in our opinion not at all an undermining of democracy but a protection of it. In the reverse the following is true: that what one takes in in NATO is not a reinforcement of the democratic element; that what one takes in are exactly the militaristic powers in that country, that formed the basis for the long time Franco dictatorship and that expected from NATO a reinforcement of their position of power.<sup>69</sup>

The parties that opposed Spain's accession to NATO built on their pre-established belief that NATO emboldened antidemocratic forces. They argued that the Alliance would strengthen

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<sup>67</sup> "Handelingen 25ste Vergadering," 764.

<sup>68</sup> "The North Atlantic Treaty," 4 April, 1949, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation*, accessed 24 November, 2024, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/stock\\_publications/20120822\\_nato\\_treaty\\_en\\_light\\_2009.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/stock_publications/20120822_nato_treaty_en_light_2009.pdf).

<sup>69</sup> "Handelingen 67ste Vergadering," 3160-3161.

Francoist forces in Spain as well and used the failed coup of 1981 as an example of antidemocratic sentiments in the Spanish military. By voicing these concerns, the parties integrated an active threat into their constructed image of NATO as a force against democracy. Not only, they found, was the process to make Spain a member of NATO democratically flawed. The membership of NATO would present a danger to Spanish democracy by favouring the militarist, fascist establishment of the Franco era as well.

### **The Consequences**

The PvdA, the CPN, the PSP and the PPR all used discourse during the debates that attached great value to democracy and painted NATO as an organisation that undermined the democratic process. The interests of NATO, they argued, led the Dutch government to rush the expansion of the Alliance through Parliament in order to avoid public scrutiny from the growing peace movement, and made the Spanish government use the smallest majority possible to apply for NATO membership in order to avoid the Spanish population that rejected membership. In both these cases, military interests were portrayed as having triumphed the will of the people.

In the view of these parties, only military officers and politicians in service of military interests were in favour of NATO expansion, while common citizens and activists opposed it. Even worse, they argued that NATO membership emboldened an antidemocratic military class that had successfully led dictatorships within NATO and would undermine democracy in Spain, too. The fact that Spain was a young democracy that had experienced a military coup a year earlier underlined this fear.

Seen from this perspective, the policy decisions that had to be taken in 1982 were obvious. The fragile democracy in Spain and the democratic system in the Netherlands had to be protected from militarist interests. As the Dutch people were increasingly NATO-sceptic and the Spanish people rejected the Alliance outright, NATO expansion had to be stopped.

### **3.3 The Community of Democracies**

The centre right that supported Spain's bid to join NATO did so from the more technocratic standpoint that often characterises those who represent the dominant line of thought. The CDA, the VVD, D'66 and minister Van der Stoel took a more nuanced approach than their opponents and did not argue definitively that NATO membership would be beneficial to Spain's democracy. Instead, they rebutted the concerns articulated by the PvdA and the left wing opposition and created an identity of NATO as a tool that could strengthen democracy in Spain. As was the case on the other side of the debate, the parties took slightly different approaches to this. While D'66 seemed susceptible to some of the arguments provided by the opponents of NATO expansion but deemed the arguments in favour more consequential, the VVD wholeheartedly supported Spain's accession to NATO.



## Rebuking the Left

During the debates, the centre right and minister Van der Stoel countered the arguments laid out in the previous section of this chapter. Van der Stoel found the accusation of having rushed ratification through Parliament without following the proper procedure to be baseless. “Mister Van der Spek deems it unjust that the government has decided without consulting the Parliament. I have informed the parliamentary committee. Additionally, the decision making process on the Dutch side is only completed after the ratification has been enacted. Both chambers of Parliament have to provide their agreement for this.”<sup>70</sup> With this rather short statement, the minister made clear that the ratification process had been regular in his eyes.

On the parliamentary procedure in Spain itself, Van der Stoel and the parties had more to say. They countered the opposition’s call for a ‘qualified majority’ by underlining that Spain had followed a constitutional procedure prior to its application for membership of NATO, and by stating that any objections to this procedure made by the Netherlands would be unwarranted foreign interference. Van der Stoel said the following.

In Spain, the constitutional procedures have been followed, however. The roads that the democratically created Spanish constitution indicates were followed. Both houses of the Spanish Parliament have declared themselves in favour of accession. This declaration has to be respected as a declaration by Spain. If the Spanish Parliament has spoken, then it is not up to us to assess that and ask ourselves, if that is really what is wanted in Spain.<sup>71</sup>

De Boer (CDA) echoed this sentiment. “After having been under guardianship internally for such a long time, it cannot be done to the newly reborn Spanish democracy that she is hurried or put under guardianship from the outside in any way. We have to respect decisions that have been made in a legal way according to the Spanish law and Parliament as such, until the contrary would become apparent.”<sup>72</sup> Ploeg (VVD) even went a step further, rejecting the premise of a referendum altogether: “{t}he Spanish Parliament has declared itself with a majority in favour of accession to NATO. {...} I regret {...} that mostly the Spanish social democrats prefer a referendum to find out whether or not the Spanish people wish accession to NATO. I think that this is a weakening of the democracy, a weaking of the Parliament in Spain.”<sup>73</sup> This statement is a good example of the way the VVD polarised against the left at the time.

All speakers used language strongly accentuating the constitutionality and legality of the accession process in Spain. The VVD outright rejecting the possibility of a referendum, none of the parties agreed with the frame laid out by the opposition that the Spanish government needed a ‘qualified majority’. Due to the fact that Spanish democracy was still young and therefore vulnerable, their insistence that the Spanish constitutional process should be respected carried more weight. Implicitly, namely, this allowed them to label anyone who doubted the legitimacy of Spain’s bid to join NATO as undermining Spanish democracy. The vulnerability of Spanish democracy may also have been the reason why these parties primarily focussed on legitimising Spain’s accession process instead of that in the Netherlands: for the centre right, it was not at all in doubt that the Dutch parliamentary system functioned as it should.

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<sup>70</sup> “Handelingen 25ste Vergadering,” 771.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 761.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 763.

<sup>73</sup> “Handelingen 67ste Vergadering,” 3173.

Most centre right parties did not address the antidemocratic military elements that could be emboldened by NATO membership. This could be because, similar to the state of Dutch democracy, they deemed the functioning of the system to be self-evident. Brinkhorst (D'66) questioned the correlation between the Alliance and the advent of dictatorships.

Even though the function of guaranteeing democracy within NATO is limited in nature {...} still it has to be noted that NATO has never blocked a democratisation process when they really occurred in {Greece, Turkey and Portugal} from the base up. While they remained full members of NATO, both Greece and Portugal eventually turned into democracies.<sup>74</sup>

Brinkhorst essentially made NATO outcome-neutral in terms of emboldening antidemocratic forces, stating that although democratisation often has to come from civil society, NATO does not hinder these processes.

### **The Case for NATO and Democracy**

While making the case in favour of Spain's accession to NATO, Van der Stoel and the centre right constructed a similar nuanced identity for the Alliance. Instead of arguing out of complete certainty, like the other side had done, they admitted that they could not vouch for NATO's ability to further democracy in Spain. Rather, NATO membership was seen as a means to bring Spain into the value community of the democratic West. This resembled the way in which the Spanish UCD government had presented its membership bid as well. The centre right made the success of this integration of values contingent on democratic forces in Spain itself.

Frinking (CDA) said the following about this: "NATO is no guarantee for democracy. After accession, however, there exists the possibility, as the government also states, to insist on the basis of the preamble to the NATO-treaty and the Ottawa declaration on adherence to the principles of democracy, personal freedom and the rule of law."<sup>75</sup> Frinking thus did not label NATO a definitive safeguard for democracy, but rather a forum of democratic nations that shared common values. In contrast to the opposition, Frinking argued that the preamble to the NATO treaty did have a normative function, along with the Ottawa declaration, article 12 of which describes the member states' "dedication to the principles of democracy, respect for human rights, justice and social progress."<sup>76</sup>

Van der Stoel made a similar statement.

It seems to me that the generation that is now getting in charge in Spain in the post-Franco period wants to get rid of this isolation, and wants to seek more connection with Western Europe. {...} I also mean that this cannot surely secure this young and not so firmly established democracy. It may, however, still be assumed that the intensification of contacts between Spain and the European countries could contribute to that that democracy is more firmly established in that country.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> "Handelingen 67ste Vergadering," 3162.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 3156.

<sup>76</sup> "Declaration on Atlantic Relations issued by the North Atlantic Council," 19 June, 1974, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation*, accessed 24 November, 2024, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_26901.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_26901.htm).

<sup>77</sup> "Handelingen 19de Vergadering," 449.

Crucially, Van der Stoel and his fellow proponents of NATO expansion felt that the positive normative effect of NATO membership on Spain was not only caused by the Alliance's declared values, but rather on the Spaniards' willingness to accept these values as part of a Western community of democracies. NATO was framed to be a method to end 'isolation' and facilitate contacts between pro-democratic forces.

While NATO membership had no certain and measurable positive effect on Spanish democracy in the eyes of Van der Stoel and the centre right, a rejection of Spain's application would almost definitely embolden the far right and therefore weaken democracy. This was consistent with the argument that Spanish democrats wanted to join NATO, as a rejection would be a loss for them and undermine their position in the face of Francoist factions. The following sentiment was articulated multiple times by Van der Stoel and – as cited here – Schaper (D'66).

{W}here NATO cannot guarantee the preservation of democracy in Spain, in the reverse the risk seems certainly present that a rejection by NATO of the request of the Spanish government, such as it is supported by the {Spanish Parliament} and seen also in the context of the problems regarding the accession to the {European Community}, will bring about a nationalist backlash, with which the extreme right will take advantage.<sup>78</sup>

Just like the other side of the debate, therefore, the proponents of NATO expansion warned for an acute danger to Spain's democracy. In their case, however, this danger would come about if the Netherlands decided to reject Spain's membership.

### 3.4 Conclusion

Each side of the debate constructed an identity of NATO, Spain and the Netherlands that was antithetical to the other and called for completely different measures to be taken. While opponents believed that NATO was a force against democracy, proponents feared that harm would be done if Spain would be denied membership. A clear difference in argumentation style can be seen: while opponents of NATO expansion provided a cohesive, ideological world view, the proponents resorted to technocratic arguments and estimations instead of certainties. In the end, the centre right was proven right: Spain joined the Atlantic Alliance without experiencing an autocratic backlash. The next chapter lays out how this dynamic unfolded regarding security issues.

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<sup>78</sup> "Handelingen 25ste Vergadering," 766.

## 4.0 Chapter Three: Defining Security

### 4.1 Introduction

As chapter one indicates, the debates on Spanish accession to NATO occurred during a time characterised by increased polarisation around peace issues. Particularly the parties belonging to the left wing opposition increasingly connected through the peace movement and grassroots activism. This extra-parliamentary involvement mirrored the way the left wing opposition as well as the PvdA uttered security discourse that fundamentally broke with the status quo inside the chambers of Parliament, too.

This chapter concerns itself with ‘constructions of security’, meaning the way the parties furthered or rejected a worldview that NATO was a security threat. Opponents to Spain’s accession to the Atlantic Alliance labelled it a dangerous provocation and warned that Spain could become a nuclear power within NATO. Similar to the previous chapter, the centre right and minister Van der Stoel responded to this in a technocratic manner: rejecting the premise presented by their opponents without presenting a clear alternative vision. Only the CDA argued that NATO expansion would lower the risk of war. During the Tweede Kamer debate in 1982, the other centre right parties finally also offered a security argument in favour of expanding the Alliance by arguing that NATO membership would dissuade Spain from acquiring nuclear weapons.

The following paragraphs lay out this debate using the same format as the previous chapter. This means that quotes are sorted and analysed thematically, starting with the contributions of the CPN, the PSP, the PPR and the PvdA and followed by the rebuttal by D’66, the CDA, the VVD and Van der Stoel.

### 4.2 Threats to Peace

Other than when they discussed constructions of democracy, the left wing opposition and the PvdA did not differ significantly regarding their constructions of security. All four parties labelled NATO expansion as a dangerous exercise and as a provocation of the USSR, similar to the argument made by the PSOE in Spain. Their arguments can be broken up into two parts: their assessment of the general security situation and their assessment of Spain’s refusal to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

#### **The Balance of Power**

The CPN, the PSP, the PPR and the PvdA judged Spain’s accession to NATO to be an act of aggression that would threaten the peace. They made this clear by enumerating the tactical advantages that they argued the Alliance would gain at the expense of the Warsaw Pact. Waltmans (PPR) said the following.

Because of the accession of Spain, NATO gains control through that country over a strategically important part of Europe, situated between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, and the ability of control over important sea, air and land connections between the United States, Europe and Africa. That is not insignificant. Due to the gradual integration of the Spanish armed forces into NATO, the disadvantage of NATO in the field of land defence compared to the Warsaw Pact will be diminished, at least for an important part.<sup>79</sup>

Van der Spek (PSP) did the same.

It seems to me that Spain will be assigned two real tasks. First, the Spanish islands, like the Canary Islands, will be able to fulfil a good function with the transportation of American armed forces and American military equipment, primarily to the Middle East. These islands are situated more advantageously than the Portuguese Azores. Because of the Spanish membership of NATO, this {alliance} will control the entire Mediterranean Sea area and North Africa militarily. You could say that that the already much reinforced, soft underbelly of Europe now, is being even more reinforced. Second, Spain can become a new storage facility for military equipment of mainly the United States. {...} In this way the international relations will be influenced in a real way.<sup>80</sup>

By stating at length these new military advantages, the speakers created an image of NATO as a player making multiple offensive manoeuvres on a chess board at once. They used language of increased ‘control’ and ‘reinforcement’, implying that these new military possibilities would be an act of militarist imperialism. Van der Spek specifically mentioned the Middle East, implying that Spain could be used to facilitate an invasion into the Arab world.

Notably, the United States featured prominently in this discourse. This mirrored the discourse used by Spanish opponents of NATO, who claimed that the Alliance primarily served American military interests. The notion that NATO only served American imperialism and threatened security in Europe was made explicit by Schreuders (CPN): “{the division of the world into two blocs} is characterised by the rigid logic of the arms race, by the subordination of the own security and independence to the doctrines and power politics of the United States here and the Soviet Union there{.}”<sup>81</sup>

These ‘power politics’ were by no means without danger, the parties argued. Uijen (PvdA) said the following about the possible consequences of NATO expansion.

To our conviction, looking among others at the period now ongoing for years already of deteriorating relations and increasing tensions between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, an expansion of the military blocs at this moment, in the present case a unilateral expansion of the NATO bloc, more than ever carries in it the danger of further deterioration of the international climate and with that an increase of the danger for the peace in the world.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> “Handelingen 25ste Vergadering,” 762.

<sup>80</sup> “Handelingen 67ste Vergadering,” 3158.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 3159.

<sup>82</sup> “Handelingen 19de Vergadering,” 446.

By labelling the accession of Spain to NATO as a ‘unilateral expansion’, Uijen continued the frame laid out above of an aggressive manoeuvre. He and other speakers placed this move in a context of heightened tensions, alluding to the ongoing debate on nuclear missiles in Europe, and argued that expanding NATO was an irresponsible provocation that could lead to war.

Although none of the speakers specified how the USSR would attack NATO after Spain had become a member, they did envision a more concrete response from the eastern bloc. While Van der Spek (PSP) hypothesized about Cuba, Vietnam or Yugoslavia joining the Warsaw Pact, Waltmans (PPR) laid out the following scenario: “{w}ho and what would stop the Soviet Union to as a result of the accession of Spain to NATO also proceed with the expansion of the number of Warsaw Pact states, for example {by furthering} with a government in Kabul now agreeable to them the accession of Afghanistan?”<sup>83</sup> NATO expansion thus not only threatened world peace, these speakers argued, because of its aggressive nature, but by possibly drawing even more countries into the arms race as well.

### **The Nuclear Threat**

The social polarisation around nuclear issues that defined the early nineteen eighties not only formed the backdrop of the debates on Spanish accession to NATO. It also affected the way in which the opponents of NATO expansion defined the security risks attached to such a move. According to the PvdA, the PPR, the PSP and the CPN, there was a real risk that Spain would become a nuclear power.

Schreuders (CPN) feared that NATO would place nuclear weapons in Spain.

Additionally, a country is added on the southern flank of Europe where the NATO nuclear weapons can be placed. This possibility, this risk has been kept open very pointedly in the Spanish Parliament. An attempt to at least exclude this danger at the accession, has failed. It has only been noted that a decision to install NATO nuclear weapons has to be approved by the Spanish Parliament. The entire nuclear terrain thus lays fallow.<sup>84</sup>

With this statement, Schreuders echoed the construction of NATO expansion as a provocation described above, but included the danger of NATO nuclear weapons as a threat to the peace. This, of course, enlarged the possible negative consequences of NATO expansion even further: it could lead to a world ending escalation.

Broekhuis (PvdA) went further than that and attributed sinister intensions to the Spanish government.

At the end of last year reports appeared that Spain would be capable to create nuclear weapons. It would even have the capacity at its disposal to make 10 nuclear weapons per year. Though the Spanish minister of Defence confirmed that Spain has the necessary technology at its disposal, he denied the existence of plans to do something with that. According to the reports cited here, Spain could use nuclear weapons against eventual Moroccan attempts to conquer the enclaves Ceuta and Melilla. Possibly that is one of the reasons why Spain has until now held open the possibility to make nuclear weapons by not

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<sup>83</sup> “Handelingen 25ste Vergadering,” 764; Ibid., 762.

<sup>84</sup> “Handelingen 67ste Vergadering,” 3160.

signing the NPT. {...} From what does the Dutch Government derive her positive interpretation of the in itself vague concession of the Spanish Government?<sup>85</sup>

Essentially, Broekhuis questioned the trustworthiness of the Spanish government. He and other speakers constructed an identity of Spain as a semi-rogue state that refused to reign in its nuclear potential and might undertake nuclear attacks on its enemies. The UCD government, in short, could not be trusted to be acting in good faith. The implication that such a government should not be allowed to lead Spain into NATO was obvious. If Spain would get caught up in a nuclear conflict, after all, this conflict would quickly escalate all over the Atlantic world. Van der Spek (PSP) echoed this.

Spain is not a party to the non-proliferation treaty. The motion in the {Spanish Parliament} back then {introduced by the left} in which the Spanish government was asked not to approve the placement of nuclear weapons in Spain, was defeated. Another motion was adopted, in which the possibility of placement of nuclear weapons was kept open. Additionally, Spain is technically and industrially capable, to produce an own nuclear weapon. The current Spanish government has made all kinds of reassuring statements, but I find that insufficient, still not regarding the possibility that there could come other governments.<sup>86</sup>

## The Consequences

The constructions of security created by the left wing opposition and the PvdA mirrored their constructions of democracy in a crucial way. The PvdA, the PPR, the PSP and the CPN portrayed NATO as an organisation that put the interests of the few before that of the many. The security of Europe, and by extension peace worldwide, was threatened by the militaristic tendencies of the United States. The accession of Spain, they argued, was a prime example of this dynamic, as it could provoke conventional or even nuclear war. To paint this picture, the parties used discourse broadly associated with the opposite of security: that of danger, risks and untrustworthiness. The only logical policy that could follow from this worldview was to protect the security of people everywhere. An escalation had to be prevented and NATO should not be expanded.

## 4.3 No Cause for Alarm

Just like their opponents were united on the issue of security, D'66, the VVD, the CDA and minister Van der Stoel rejected the other side's discourse in unison. The following sections lay out their rebuking of the left wing opposition and the PvdA, the CDA's positive case for NATO expansion, and the centre right's portrayal of NATO as a safeguard for nuclear security.

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<sup>85</sup> "Handelingen 67ste Vergadering," 3170.

<sup>86</sup> "Handelingen 25ste Vergadering," 764.

## Keeping the Balance

With a certainty that they could not muster while addressing constructions of democracy, the centre right insisted that Spain's accession to NATO would not fundamentally alter the balance of power. Minister Van der Stoel had the following to say.

Regarding the relationship NATO Warsaw Pact I would like to point out once again, that it cannot be said that the power relations are really influenced, also and primarily because, like multiple speakers have already explained, Spain was, albeit indirectly, involved with the Western security system.<sup>87</sup>

Van der Stoel here alluded to the prior military cooperation between the United States and Spain laid out in chapter one. He backed this argument by stating technical ways in which NATO and Spain were already integrated. Crucially, he made clear that this was the view of the Soviet Union, too.

If I read the considerations on the side of the Eastern bloc, I have the impression that there they duly – more than mister Uijen {a member of his own party!} according to his plea {–} recognise that Spain has consistently been closely aligned with the Western defence. Mister Uijen finds this exaggerated, but to illustrate I point to the fact, that the supreme commander of the NATO forces in Europe was simultaneously commander of the American forces in Spain.<sup>88</sup>

On the reaction from the USSR, Van der Stoel also had this to say.

Mister Brinkhorst {D'66} has asked in this context what were now the reactions of the Soviet Union and the allies. The previous year they have pointed to the consequences that an accession of Spain to NATO would have. After that there can be noted, except for a single article in the Soviet press, a large silence. It is possible that reactions will yet come but for now there are no indications for that.<sup>89</sup>

With these statements, Van der Stoel countered the discourse of risks uttered by the opponents of NATO expansion by declaring Spain's accession to be a non-issue. In his world view, the move would not at all change the status quo and the Soviet Union was seemingly not planning to retaliate at all. Because of the lukewarm reaction by the USSR, the idea of Spanish NATO membership causing a war was declared implausible.

The minister's allies from the centre right, meanwhile, quickly dismissed the points raised by the left wing opposition and the PvdA, too. Schaper (D'66) pushed back in the following way.

Let me put first that my fraction finds many of the arguments that have been brought up against the Spanish accession to NATO not strong and sometimes quite far-fetched. The argument that an accession contains a disturbance in the power balance between East and West – this is said among others by the Soviet Union – are in our opinion flawed. Like I just said already, Spain is now already closely connected to the defence of Western Europe. The comparison to Yugoslavia seems to me to be completely unjustified, too. The relation

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<sup>87</sup> "Handelingen 25ste Vergadering," 769.

<sup>88</sup> "Handelingen 19de Vergadering," 540.

<sup>89</sup> "Handelingen 67ste Vergadering," 3177.



between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union is completely different than that between Spain and the United States.<sup>90</sup>

Ploeg (VVD) put the same message more succinctly: “{t}hat an accession would disturb the East-West relationship, is nonsense in my opinion. Then again, Spain already has a bilateral bond with the United States now.”<sup>91</sup>

By using words like ‘far-fetched’, ‘flawed’, ‘unjustified’ and ‘nonsense’, the centre right made clear that they did not concede any rhetorical ground to their opponents. Almost mocking in tone, they implied that scenarios sketching a provocation of war in Europe or the expansion of the Warsaw Pact were unserious and misguided. In reality, these parties believed, there was no reason to worry.

Notably, while D’66 and the VVD spent most of their speaking time dismissing their opponents, the CDA took a slightly different approach. Frinking (CDA) made clear that Spain’s accession to NATO would in fact prevent war by adding to the Alliance’s deterrence. Additionally, he championed multilateralism as a way to prevent escalation.

NATO is a defence organisation, that wants to implement controlled security policy and aims for an as low as possible level of armament and wants to give content to détente through dialogue and cooperation. Accession of Spain to NATO is, apart from using the right to be a party of an alliance, also a contribution to a regional organisation on the road to the broadest possible relations that guarantee peace and security.<sup>92</sup>

There was thus, also a positive security case to be made for NATO accession. Embedded with the Alliance, Spain would be less likely to engage in risky unilateral policy. NATO, the CDA thus argued, was a stabilising factor and therefore a power for peace. These arguments largely remained unused by other centre right parties, however. D’66, the VVD and Van der Stoel adopted a similar line of thinking only on the issue of nuclear weapons.

### **Nuclear Security through multilateralism**

In essence, the difference between the views of the proponents and the opponents of NATO expansion regarding the threat of nuclear weapons in Spain was characterised by the trust that these parties had in the Spanish government. While the left wing opposition and the PvdA stressed the untrustworthiness of the UCD government, the centre right believed that Spain was a willing ally acting in good faith. De Boer (CDA) said the following.

Though Spain has as of yet not yet signed the non-proliferation treaty, it has subjected its nuclear energy installations to the control of the IAEA {International Atomic Energy Agency}. The Spanish government has declared itself against the making of its own nuclear weapons as well as against the placement of new nuclear weapons on Spanish soil. Additionally, she has declared herself willing to reassess the position towards the non-proliferation treaty in the context of the accession to the alliance.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> “Handelingen 25ste Vergadering,” 765-766.

<sup>91</sup> “Handelingen 67ste Vergadering,” 3173.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 3156.

<sup>93</sup> “Handelingen 25ste Vergadering,” 763.

De Boer thus created an image of the Spanish government that focussed on the steps that Spain took towards signing the NPT. Spain had opened itself up to IAEA scrutiny and hinted that it would sign the treaty when it joined NATO. These steps, De Boer implied, justified faith in Spain's good intentions.

Van der Stoel insisted even more strongly on the trustworthiness of the Spanish government.

It pleases me to now be able to observe that Spain has on one side got all installations in the nuclear area under IAEA control and on the other side turns out to be willing, to reconsider her standpoint regarding the non-proliferation treaty when the accession of Spain to NATO is effectuated. That does not yet mean the same as a definitive 'yes'. My impression is, however, – and I myself do not find that this is a rash impression – that this concession comes very close to a 'yes'.<sup>94</sup>

Notably, the IAEA inspections and the non-proliferation treaty were means with which the centre right thought any fear for Spanish nuclear weapons could be dismissed. By seeking to cooperate within these two international institutions, the centre right argued, Spain had effectively countered the left wing opposition and the PvdA's image of Spain as a rogue state.

This is why Van der Stoel brushed off the other side's warnings of a nuclear armed Spain with the same certainty as the centre right dismissed the idea that NATO expansion was a provocation: "I have with some amazement heard the nuclear weapons with which Spain would be equipped be summed up. I have also heard remarks about plans of Spain to produce nuclear weapons. I want to say expressively, that there are no nuclear weapons on Spanish soil."<sup>95</sup> Using somewhat mocking and in any case dismissive phrasing, the minister made clear that he saw no validity at all in the world view of the opponents of NATO expansion.

During the debate in the Tweede Kamer on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April, 1982, the centre right specified that what they saw as the positive role of NATO in nuclear arms control more clearly. They no longer only stressed the trustworthiness of the Spanish government, but also attributed to the Atlantic Alliance a moderating effect similar to the CDA's argument that multilateralism would prevent escalation. Brinkhorst (D'66) articulated this vision as follows.

We too find the accession to the non-proliferation treaty desirable, because we think one can speak of a certain encapsulation effect, if Spain feels less as an 'outcast' {English in original}, like is the case for many countries that have not signed the non-proliferation treaty. Those are almost one by one countries that are situated in some way outside of the normal pattern of countries.<sup>96</sup>

Similar to the identity of NATO created by the centre right as a tool to integrate Spain into a community of democracies, D'66, the VVD and the CDA argued that NATO could integrate Spain into the 'normal pattern of countries'. This meant that Spain would submit itself to international security institutions like the IAEA and the NPT and avoid becoming a rogue nuclear state.

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<sup>94</sup> "Handelingen 25ste Vergadering," 770.

<sup>95</sup> "Handelingen 67ste Vergadering," 3175-3176.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 3163.

Contrary to the centre right's constructions of democracy, however, their constructions of security did not only attribute a socialising factor to NATO. The Alliance was not only a forum that could be used by Spain to synchronise its security policy with the international status quo, but also a security guarantor that took away the need for Spain to engage in nuclear policies. Max van der Stoel explained this.

A second consideration {for the Dutch government not to demand that Spain signed the NPT before joining NATO} was, that we ought to realise that precisely the best way to secure the accession to the {NPT} treaty, would be the membership of NATO. The lacking of protection of the membership of the alliance has been a primary consideration for the rejection, until now, to accede to the non-proliferation treaty.<sup>97</sup>

NATO membership would, therefore, enable the Spanish government to pursue a multilateral course and prevent nuclear provocations. In the world view of the centre right, this gave NATO a more active role to push Spain into the community of Western nations in the field of security than it had regarding democratic values. In the case of democracy, namely, the initiative lay primarily with the Spanish people, while in the realm of security NATO could give Spain the protection that it needed to change its policy. It would, for example, not need to create a nuclear weapon as a deterrence against Marocco, as the opponents of NATO expansion had warned for. Instead, it could rely on the principle that an attack on one NATO member state constituted an attack on all.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

Also keeping the findings of the previous chapters in mind, from this chapter it becomes clear that trust, or a lack thereof, was a corner stone of the identity creation by the proponents and opponents of NATO expansion, respectively. While the left wing opposition and the PvdA created an image of the inclusion of Spain in Atlantic Alliance as dangerous, unpredictable and irresponsible, the discourse used by the centre right and minister Van der Stoel was centred around trust that NATO expansion would not result in turmoil. Obviously, these distinctly different constructions had two opposing goals: while the left wing opposition and the PvdA disseminated the view that not expanding NATO was the only reasonable option, the centre right and Van der Stoel dismissed their objections and even argued that NATO membership would dissuade Spain from acquiring a nuclear weapon and become an unpredictable state, thus making the world safer. The course of history has proven this latter group right. After Spain joined NATO, no reaction from the Soviet Union came and the Warsaw Pact did not expand. Additionally, Spain joined the non-proliferation treaty in 1987 without ever having produced a nuclear weapon.

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<sup>97</sup> "Handelingen 67ste Vergadering," 3175-3176.

## 5.0 Conclusion

### 5.1 Like Night and Day

The debates that took place in the Dutch Parliament in 1981 and 1982 on Spain's bid to join NATO were a paradox. The parties that wanted the international status quo to remain the same defended their position by challenging the dominant view of the Atlantic Alliance. Those who wanted to change the geopolitical map of Europe by adding Spain to NATO uttered almost solely technocratic, status quo oriented arguments.

The manner in which the debates unfolded laid bare a challenge of one world view by another. On the offensive were the PvdA, the PPR, the PSP and the CPN, who formulated a clear and coherent, albeit somewhat fantastic, worldview. These parties created constructions of democracy and security that placed NATO, the UCD government in Spain, and to a lesser extent the Dutch government on the wrong side of history.

NATO, these parties argued, was an institution that served (American) military interests at the expense of ordinary people. By adding Spain as a member, the Alliance ignored the will of the Spanish people in the same way it ignored the will of the Dutch people by placing nuclear weapons in the Netherlands. This would be a double undermining of Spain's young democracy, as it would also empower antidemocratic forces in the military. Similarly, NATO served American strategic interests while provoking the USSR and making war in Europe more likely. Both the Dutch and Spanish governments were complicit in this process, because they rushed the procedure for NATO expansion through their Parliaments while avoiding public scrutiny. Moreover, the Spanish government was an irresponsible element that might acquire nuclear weapons.

The only logical course of action to take on the basis of this world view was to reject Spain's accession to NATO. Enlargement of the Alliance would mean, after all, an undermining of Spanish democracy as well as a danger to peace. These constructions were, however, the product of an ideological precondition. The four parties that opposed NATO expansion, formed by the rise of peace movements and the entrance of the baby boomer generation into politics, sketched doom scenarios that are inconceivable in hindsight. Especially their predictions that Spanish accession into the Alliance would cause the accession of Afghanistan into the Warsaw Pact and that Spain would create a nuclear weapon were rightly dismissed by minister Van der Stoel as wild speculation.

The worldview that their opponents, the CDA, the VVD, D'66 and Max van der Stoel, created to support NATO expansion was also lacking. They rarely argued in favour of the position that allowing Spain into the Alliance - let alone the membership of the Netherlands itself - constituted a concrete benefit to the Netherlands or to the World. These parties evidently assumed that the benefits of the NATO status quo spoke for themselves. Additionally, they ignored valid arguments that authoritarian regimes like Greece and Portugal were never penalised as NATO members and the link between democracy and NATO was therefore questionable. Their continued assertion that the accession of Spain to the Alliance would not

alter the balance of power in Europe was also unfair, as Spain would never have applied for membership if it did not entail some strategic advantage.

Whereas the critiques of the left wing opposition and the PvdA were aimed at the Alliance and militarism in general as well as Spanish accession specifically, the centre right and Van der Stoep only focussed on the specific case at hand. Using mostly technocratic language, they conveyed significantly less certainties and broad ideological pictures. Instead, they framed NATO as a socialising tool that would codify Spain's movement into the community of free Western nations. In their world view, the Spanish government was a dependable and willing partner, and international institutions like NATO, the IAEA and the NPT were exclusive clubs that a country could only join if it shared certain values. The anchoring in international alliances would aid Spanish democrats and dissuade Spain from acquiring nuclear weapons. NATO membership was thus welcomed, not as a one size fits all solution but as part of a larger process.

## 5.2 What to Make of It

As made clear by McCourt, academics should avoid becoming constructing actors. Despite this, many authors writing about NATO have through their works reinforced the idea that the position of the Netherlands within the Alliance was immune to change. This fits in the broader of historiography of NATO, which has mostly let changes within the Alliance during the Cold War go unnoticed.

Following constructivist thought, this thesis makes clear that change can take place in unexpected places. In 1981 and 1982 in the Netherlands, the country deemed by Van Staden to be a loyal NATO ally, a frontal attack on status quo thinking took place in Parliament. Using language that created a contrasting world view and called for a reversal in foreign policy, the four parties that voted against Spain's accession into NATO were a bellwether of a larger development. A new generation with a different outlook on foreign and security policy had entered the political arena. This shows that, even though the argument can be made that Dutch foreign policy during the Cold War was relatively consistent, NATO's position in the public debate was continuously in flux.

Arguably the more important point by McCourt, however, is that academics should explain the absence of change. In this case, those who wanted to alter Dutch foreign policy did not secure a parliamentary majority, however culturally and academically significant their efforts may have been. Especially to the CDA and the VVD, the identity constructions produced by their opponents would have sounded as though they originated on another planet. Given that Spain's accession to NATO was essentially a minor geopolitical event and neither side had an incentive to come out of the trenches, the left's discourse remained doomed to the minority. The nature of the question at hand – a simple yes or no to NATO expansion – did not leave any room for compromise of nuanced political movements, either.

Despite this, the debates uncovered the emergence of a new identity of the Alliance within status quo thought, too. Although it is difficult to discern a comprehensive centre right image of NATO – a finding that is reflected upon below – the discourse that NATO was a socialising tool points to a move away from a purely military identity of the Alliance. The

prominence of norms and values in NATO expansion described by Schimmelfennig can be more clearly explained using this observation. This democracy based identity of NATO, namely, did not appear out of thin air after the Cold War. It was present already in 1981.

In general, the debates also uncover a broader truth about the conception of NATO in the Netherlands. Between the establishment of the Alliance in 1949 and Spain's application to join it in 1981, the way the Dutch political system approached NATO had become more critical. NATO was no longer an uncontroversial security guarantor, but an entity that was publicly scrutinised in the chambers of Parliament. The parties that rejected NATO expansion had questioned the Alliance's merits, and those on the centre right had no choice but to engage with these criticisms publicly.

Looking again at the period after the Cold War, it becomes apparent that the existential questions regarding NATO that policy makers as well as academics discussed in the nineteen nineties were not unprecedented. Ten years prior, when the idea that the Soviet Union would collapse was yet unfeasible, there were already discussions on the role of NATO, albeit among a political minority. These are both prime examples of reasons why scholars should trace mutation in NATO identity prior to the fall of the Berlin wall in order to more firmly grasp the ways in which the Alliance developed during its entire history.

### 5.3 Unanswered Questions

Although this research says a lot about the way the identity of NATO was debated during the late Cold War, there are many inquiries still to be pursued. First of all, this thesis does not provide a comprehensive, chronological account of the Dutch parliamentary process that ended in the ratification of Spain's accession to the Atlantic Alliance. Because of its focus on discursive analysis, it lacks insight into the process that went on outside of the Tweede Kamer and the Senate. Accounts of the deliberations from within the PvdA, the party that argued against its own minister, and D'66, which decided to remain loyal to the government coalition despite its involvement in the peace movement, would be especially promising.

Additionally, a ratification process similar to the one described in this thesis took place in 14 other countries, leaving ample opportunity for comparative analysis. The unpopularity of the UCD government's decision to apply for NATO membership in the first place also warrants further research, as does Spain's entry into the EEC that took place in 1985 after years of negotiations. Accession to the EEC, after all, represented the same entry into the community of democracies espoused by the centre right.

The largest blank spot of this thesis, however, concerns the world view of the centre right. As the first section of this conclusion mentions, the CDA, the VVD, D'66 and Max van der Stoep at least most of the time did not take the time to lay out a positive vision of NATO itself nor the Dutch membership of the Alliance. This may have been because, at the time of the debates, NATO had been a part of the international status quo for decades and the centre right did not feel that the Alliance was inherently threatened. Although the left polarised NATO, the centre right was unprepared or unwilling to respond with an ideological argument.

Possibly, the centre right's world view was determined by NATO's function of deterrence against the Soviet Union, the ongoing Cold War and polarisation against the anti-nuclear protests of the peace movement. Alternatively, NATO's role as a community of democracies that became prominent after the Cold War may already have played a large role. Remarks that point to these hypotheses were made by some speakers, but it was not made explicit enough by the parties to make an authoritative conclusion. This is especially the case for D'66 and Van der Stoel, who participated in the debates in a split between the government coalition and the peace movement. Whatever core beliefs these parties may have held, it can be said that during the debates in 1981 and 1982, they were internalised in such a way that the CDA, the VVD, D'66 and Max van der Stoel could fall back on technocracy to successfully defend Spain's accession to NATO in both houses of Parliament. Given the abhorrence of Soviet interventions within the PvdA described by Visser that led that party to openly embrace NATO, it is likely that this muted approach by the centre right had also been a move away from a more explicitly anti-communist endorsement of the Alliance.



All in all, the debates covered in this thesis also uncover another change. Despite their large ideological cleavage, the elected representatives of all parties engaged in civilised and informed debate. They stood for their ideals and eloquently and eruditely conveyed these in the chambers of Parliament, all the while treating their opponents with dignity, respect and humour. Especially gifted orators like Max van der Stoel and Fred van der Spek contributed to the width and the depth of the parliamentary process. To the modern day researcher, the contrast between this era and the current political climate, too, feels like night and day.



Max van der Stoel in 1984

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## 6.0 Notes

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