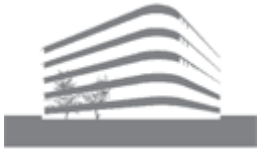

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THE ROLE OF A SMALL STATE IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY: THE CASE OF THE NETHERLANDS

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1. The background*

This lecture is about the role of the Netherlands in Europe. It will be as much on images as on actual facts. There is, after all, in the relation between old states and the new agencies of international and supranational organization in Europe, still a great deal of symbolic politics. This is certainly true in the eyes of mass publics and outside observers who are not directly involved in the myriad political and administrative actions which make up the reality of European integration. Comparisons on the role of different countries are also easier, and probably more telling, at the level of images. What image, then, did the Netherlands have?

Until 1940 Dutchmen had tended to think of their country as a 'middle power,' and if it were called a small state, then at least as a large small state. Such sentiments were, of course, rooted in history. There was a time, notably in the 17th century, when the Dutch Republic seemed to stand at the center of what some social scientists were later to call the 'World System.'[1] For a long time afterwards the Netherlands had remained what some Dutchmen called 'the smallest of the large colonial powers.' During the negotiations which led up to the establishment of the United Nations, the Netherlands consciously assumed the role of what I have called elsewhere 'The Champion of the Smaller Powers'[2] Dutchmen occasionally remind others that cooperation and integration among western powers were really pioneered by the

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* An earlier version of the lecture prepared for delivery at Harvard University was read by L. van der Poelle who offered important additional information as well as criticism and corrections. Phillippe Schmitter offered useful editorial suggestions.

[1] E.g. I. Wallerstein, The Modern World System. New York and Orlando: Academic Press, 1974-1988, 3 Vols.

[2] H. Daalder, 'The Netherlands and the World 1940-1945', in: J.H. Leurdijk ed., The Foreign Policy of the Netherlands. Alphen aan den Rijn: Sijthoff, 1978, pp. 49-88. The Leurdijk volume contains a number of 'classic' studies in the area of Dutch foreign policy in English. Particularly important is the chapter by J.C.

three states which decided already during the Second World War to enter into a closer union which was to become known as BENELUX. They were members of the Pact of Brussels which preceded NATO, and made up one half of the original six members of the initial European Communities. If others point to the small size of the Netherlands in the later enlarged and merged Communities, let alone in OECD and NATO, Dutchmen like to draw attention to the economic weight of the country which is a very substantial actor in international trade. Was the Netherlands until quite recently not the largest single foreign investor in the United States? Does the country not qualify in monetary conferences as one of the world's ten richest nations, even though presumably wrongly excluded from the Economic Summit of the Seven? Is the Netherlands with over fifteen million inhabitants not the largest of the smaller nations on the Western European scene? Of course, the gap between it and the next runners-up (Portugal, Greece and Belgium all having close to ten million inhabitants) is rather smaller than with the next-largest country which is Spain with some forty million in population!

Of course, even Dutchmen are clearly aware that the Netherlands after all is a small country. Its one-time status as a major colonial power has not strongly or lastingly influenced the self-image of Dutchmen. Even those who recall the great exploits of the 17th century readily emphasize that the Dutch Republic was very small in both territory and population, even in its most powerful years. One finds little nationalist rancor or nostalgia in the Netherlands. Most Dutchmen identify strongly, on the contrary, with a long-standing tradition of 'peace' and 'internationalism.' As early as the 17th century, the leading maxim was 'to live in peace with every one and to trade freely.' Ever since Grotius, many Dutch have believed that they have a special role to play as the guardians of international law. There was a long period of self-

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Boogman, 'The Netherlands in the European Scene 1813-1913.' It also contains a select bibliography by V.S.E. Falger on pp. 339-350. For a more extensive bibliography in Dutch, see J.H. Leurdijk *et al.*, Biblioprafíe van de Buitenlandse Politiek van Nederland 1945-1980. Leiden: Instituut voor Internationale Studiën, Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, 1985.

chosen neutrality in both the 19th and 20th century[3] which did not die easily: even when the Germans had invaded the Netherlands in 1940 and bombs rained on London, the Dutch Foreign Minister in exile, E.N. van Kleffens, wrote a book entitled The Rape of the Netherlands[4] to complain that the Germans had dared to invade the country which houses the International Court of Justice in its Peace Palace, a country at that which had so scrupulously observed its obligations as a neutral power. A definite 'moral,' not to say 'moralist,' stance remained long after the realities of power politics had been brought home and the Netherlands came to join all manner of international organizations. Within NATO the Netherlands prided itself for being the most faithful ally of the United States.[5] Within the European Communities it saw itself as the more genuine supranationalist power. More recently, it became an early champion of the New World Economic Order, claiming a special role in forging a North-South Dialogue,[6] parallel to its claim to a special mission for peace. Whenever the Dutch Foreign Ministry and the established, somewhat narrow foreign policy elite embraced a 'realist' position in foreign policy, they met resistance from an increasing number of activist groups who lectured them on the imperative of moral choices. Dutch foreign policy traditions have witnessed in fact a confluence of forces of time-honored neutrality, of a self-consciously missionary calling from the Churches (which concerned themselves much more directly with worldly issues than they previously did, while fully retaining the posture that they represented the Elect), and a vociferous New Left which has been particularly active in opposing modern arms and in pleading the case of Third World countries. In short, Dutch traditions in international relations

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[3] See for instance A. Vandenbosch, Dutch Foreign Policy since 1813: A Study in Small Power Politics. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1959.

[4] London: The Netherlands Publishing Cie, 1941.

[5] See A. van Staden, Een Tiouwe Boudgenoot: Nederland en het Atlantisch Bondgenootschap 1960-1971. Baarn: Ambo, 1974 (a key chapter of this book was translated and published as 'The Role of the Netherlands in the Atlantic Alliance,' in: Leurdijk ed., op. cit., pp. 137-165.

[6] The Dutch Economist and Nobel Prize winner Jan Tinbergen was an indefatigable proponent of the need for such an order. His one-time student Jan Pronk became Minister for Development in the 1973-1977 Den Uyl Cabinet, and returned to Dutch politics after a sojourn in Geneva to take up the same post in the cabinet formed in November 1989.

are summed up rather nicely in the title of a book by Joris Voorhoeve (who was the Leader of the Dutch Liberal Party until recently) entitled Peace. Profits and Principles: A Study of Dutch Foreign Policy.[7]

All this sounds as if the Dutch regard the world as their parish. But for most Dutchmen 'Europe' remains much closer to home.[8] Within Europe, the Netherlands occupies a rather special geographic position, situated between three larger powers (France, Britain, and Germany), at the estuaries of three major European rivers (Rhine, Meuse and Scheldt) which have been claimed, however, at one time or other by both the French and the Germans to be specifically theirs.[9] The Netherlands had traditionally relied on the special interest of Britain to see that these estuaries would not fall in the hands of a single large continental power.[10]

The Netherlands has no direct frontier with France, being separated from it by Belgium. At one time the Congress of Vienna of 1815 had joined (or more correctly: had sought to rejoin) the Northern and Southern Netherlands into one Kingdom, on the assumption that such a larger unit might help to contain a renewed French expansionism. But the large European powers were disillusioned with this idea almost as soon as it was implemented. Although

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[7] This study originally written as a Ph.D. dissertation for an American university was published in 1979 by Nijhoff, The Hague. See also the series of essays by C.B. Wels, Aloofness & Neutrality: Studies on Dutch Foreign Relations and Policy-Making Institutions. Utrecht: Hes, 1982.

[8] In a review of Voorhoeve's study E.H. Kossmann has rightly underlined that the presumed abhorrence of power politics which ostentatiously developed as part of three traditions: 'a neutralist-abstentionist tradition,' 'a maritime commercialism' and 'an internationalist idealist tradition' referred only to politics in Europe only. 'Power politics outside Europe was for long acceptable. The Netherlands snuggled comfortably under British supremacy at sea during the greater part of the 18th and 19th century, and felt itself secure for many years after 1945 under the American umbrella. And it did not itself desist from power politics in the conquest, defense and consolidation of its colonial empire.' E.H. Kossmann, 'De Deugden van een Kleine Staat,' in Politieke Theorie en Geschiedenis: Verspreide Opstellen en Voordrachten. Amsterdam, 1987, pp. 388-394, (translation of citation on p. 389 by HD).

[9] In his days Napoleon preferred to speak of the Low Countries as the 'deposit' of three French rivers. Certain German writers have on the contrary regarded the Netherlands as the sediment of the Rhine being a truly German stream.

[10] Dutch rhetoric has also spoken in the days of neutrality of the moral duty of the Dutch to act as 'a trustee' to guard the peace in 'Europe's storm center'. For details see the study mentioned in footnote 2.

the Dutch King, William I, resorted to a ten days war in 1831 and dragged his feet for almost a decade before recognizing the independence of Belgium in 1839, few Dutch have regretted the dissolution of a hardly consummated union of the Low Countries. Nevertheless, the separation of the Netherlands and Belgium did leave certain problems of boundaries and political identity. Three provinces (Limburg, Brabant and Flanders) were divided between the two states. In 1918 leading Belgian politicians expressed certain annexationist desires, but these soon came to nought. There have been other conflicts between the two countries, notably on securing waterways for inland shipping between Antwerp and Germany. On the Dutch side, a 'little Netherlands' tradition has generally prevailed, coupled with the presumption (not without arrogance) that it is better to work with the existing Belgian state (however divided and bilingual) than having a 'special relationship' with one's Flemish cultural and linguistic brethren.

The border with Germany has remained roughly unchanged for centuries. Some drastic plans for obtaining reparations for the massive destruction of life and capital which the Netherlands suffered during the 1940-1945 occupation, by annexing substantial parts of German territory (including in one version even the Ruhr area) hardly survived beyond May 1945. Instead a few villages were annexed to straighten borders in some localities, but even these annexations were tacitly annulled once West-Germany returned as a regular international actor on the European scene. At the same time, there has been a permanent awareness of the economic importance of the German Hinterland for the Dutch economy (notably of course for the Rotterdam harbor area). Germany has long been the largest trading partner of the Netherlands. German-Dutch financial and economic ties have been extremely close, whatever distances may have existed, and persisted, in personal and cultural terms.

The special geographic location of the Netherlands has also influenced the Dutch position in Europe in other ways. In older days there was a marked differentiation between

'sea' and 'land provinces,' the former 'sea provinces' being the more urbanized, richer and oriented towards international commerce; the latter 'land provinces' remaining more rural and backward, being treated by the provinces of Holland and Zeeland mainly as bastions against possible attack over land. Most of these differences disappeared with modernization and national integration, yet some traces remained. Especially the southern, generally Catholic, provinces are still 'nearer' to Germany and Belgium than the other parts of the Netherlands, and they show more support for an 'integral' federalism in which regions would count more than existing national states. The idea of creating a new European core between Liège-Hasselt, Aachen and Maastricht may be somewhat fanciful; it is, however, actively promoted by Limburg politicians. 'Europe' thus takes on a special importance for those Dutch who live nearest other European countries. To give another example: Philips, with its headquarters in the southern city of Eindhoven,[11] is a more visible 'European' industry than other (partly) Dutch multinationals such as Royal Dutch Shell or Unilever. Rural areas in the north, east and south experience the effects of the European agricultural policies in what is always the Dutchman's most sensitive spot, his wallet. Even within such a small country there have been economic tensions between a 'continental European' and a 'global' perspective on international affairs.

Finally, lying at the mouth of several European rivers which serve as important means of transportation and source of water supply, the country has become increasingly sensitive about developments that have made these rivers also the sewers of Europe. The desire to have Rhine water as Rein (i.e. clean) water, as well as protests against the location of nuclear power plants near Dutch frontiers, have provided social movements with environmental concerns that cross international borders, even though recent studies suggest that the greatest polluters in the estuary may be the Dutch themselves!

[11] Philips (especially when represented by its articulate former President, Wisse Dekker) has pressured the Dutch government more than any other single interest to promote European integration, notably in fields such as standardization and research. The Single Market was regarded as the only feasible instrument which would allow European firms to meet Japanese and American competition.

2. Good Europeans

'Europe' has hardly been a controversial political issue in the Netherlands, neither in the building period of the 1950s, nor in the restless 1960s and stalemated 1970s, nor in more recent years of Europhoria. As early as 1952 the country changed its constitution so as to ensure that international treaties would override national laws; it even allowed the setting aside of constitutional clauses provided new international agreements were supported by a two-thirds vote in parliament. Treaties establishing and extending the authority of various European organizations were accepted by parliament with no, or only nominal, opposition. Both at the elite and the mass level support for 'Europe' has tended to be widespread. Parties have invariably embraced 'Europe,' with only some skepticism from small dissident Calvinist splinter parties on the right, and equally small groups on the far-left of the political spectrum. The Eurobarometer surveys show invariably high public support of European integration compared to other European countries. How can one explain this?

One reason may be the manner in which Dutch neutrality was forcibly ended in 1940. Before then 'national' interest might seem to warrant neutrality, but since then there has been no other basis for secure national existence than through collective security and strong international organization.[12] This led to support for global organizations such as the UN and its specialized agencies, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and GATT, as well as for organizations with an Atlantic Scope, such as the Marshall Plan organization and the OECD and NATO, and for European organizations such as the Council of Europe, the initial European Communities and the WEU. All Dutch politicians hailed the 1948 Congress of Europe held in The Hague. All leading politicians joined the Comité-Monnet in the crucial

[12] For the transition from neutrality to deliberate alliance policies, see S.I.P. van Campen, The Quest for Security: Some Aspects of Netherlands Foreign Policy 1940-1945. The Hague, Nijhoff, 1958.

1950s,[13] and if some were more ardent believers in Europe than others, none opposed it. One persuasive argument in favor of these efforts was the conviction, repeatedly stated, that only such organizations and genuine regional integration could prevent a revival of armed conflict between the larger European powers that surround the country.

But there was, of course, more than the trauma of neutrality ended by external force. The traditional international orientation of the Dutch economy was another significant factor. For a small state, large markets remained vital. European cooperation could supply these, provided its growing organizations did not develop into closed economic blocs that separated the country from other trading partners. Within the European Communities, the Netherlands has, therefore, been a constant champion of an 'open' Europe.

Internationalism and, even more, supranationality has rated high on Dutch value scales. Dutch politicians were traditionally amongst the most active proponents of 'federalism' and 'supranational' arrangements. (Allow me to interject an anecdote at this point, which might serve as a typical illustration. The Dutch Socialist, Marinus - note that first name! - van der Goes van Naters, was a particularly early and active 'supranationalist' in the European Movement and what then was still called the Consultative Assembly of the Coal and Steel Community. In the early 1950s he designed a new European organization which would have established the Saar region as the first 'European' territory, under a supra-national High Commissioner. When people began to realize that the first holder of that paramount office was to be the author of the plan, they nicknamed him San Marino.) Supranationalism was regarded a good in itself, because it was the instrument which would 'tame' power politics.

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[13] One of Jean Monnet's right-hand men was the Dutchman, Max Kohnstamm, who was after 1945 for a time Private Secretary to Queen Wilhelmina, and then became a top official of the European Coal and Steel Community. He resigned that post to work for European unity in the Comité-Monnet. Kohnstamm was much later to become the first President of the European University Institute in Florence. Another Dutch European of the first hour was Henri Brugmans, the long-time Rector of the Collège d'Europe in Bruges.

On closer analysis, however, European supranalionalism presented three very real political problems:

Firstly, not all Dutchmen proved to be equal believers in European unity for its own, abstract sake. Some wished to see a concrete tit-for-tat in economic pay-offs. Those who advanced such arguments were often decried by the more ardent Dutch Europeanists as 'village politicians' and 'footdraggers.' Between government and parliament, and within parliament, these differences could lead to tensions, with convinced Europeanists accusing their opponents of being 'petty nationalists.'

Secondly and more significantly, the Dutch position had a patently contradictory element. While pleading for supranationality and federalism as a way to contain 'power polities,' Dutchmen of all persuasions were anxious to have Britain join Europe, even though British leaders of all parties had made it abundantly clear, long before Mrs. Thatcher's advent to power, that they were against any real transfer of sovereignty. After 1958 Dutch politicians were particularly adamant in their pressure for English inclusion. They acted as the most outspoken antagonists of De Gaulle whom they irately regarded as a French nationalist using (or rather: misusing) the remaining instruments of international organization for his own purposes. Once Britain had joined the Communities, the joint opposition of French and British politicians to any further extension of supranational elements was experienced by the more active 'Europeanists' in the Netherlands as an undeserved cold shower.

Thirdly, the 'European' position came in conflict with another tenet of Dutch politics: that of the country's clear preference for an Atlantic defense organization over any European solution, whether political or military. Special 'European' defense arrangements, plans for a closer political union of some European states or a European directorate claiming a special role in foreign policy and security decisions were strongly resisted. For they would jeopardize the accepted leading role of the US in such matters. They would do away with the principle of equality of states within European

equality of states within European organizations. And they would nullify the rights of states to decide on their own foreign policy. Strains between 'Atlanticists' and 'Europeans' could occasionally become quite marked, in parliament and in the foreign policy establishment. The Atlanticists generally retained the upper hand, to the anger of the more outspoken members of what one leading Dutch Atlanticist, politician and scholar alike, Ernst van der Beugel, once called the 'European Church'[14] in the Netherlands.

3. Dutch representation in various community organs

In the Netherlands, there is a widespread belief that Dutchmen are comparatively rather effective in the day-to-day working of international organizations. One reason for this could be that nationals of a relatively small country would normally find it easier to divest themselves of specific nationalist interests than nationals of larger states. Another is that Dutchmen, at least for themselves, are convinced that they speak foreign languages rather better than most other Europeans. (However, there is also a widespread impression that Dutchmen make better Rapporteurs than Presidents of committees; the Belgians, for instance, have played the latter, chief executive role with more flair. Dutchmen may have been better in resolving specific tasks, than in matters requiring general imagination.)

Whatever the truth of such stereotypes, what can we say about the role of Dutchmen in the various organs of the European Community?

1. The Council of Ministers. As long as unanimity was required for all decisions in the Council of Ministers, Dutch members had (at least formally) an equal vote, on a par with any other member-state. That was a factor of greater importance, however, in the earlier days of the Communities than during the recent period. Not only is one vote out of six more than one vote

[14] See E.H van der Beugel in H. Daalder and N. Cramer eds., Willem Drees. Houten: De Haan, 1988. Van der Beugel discusses the role in foreign affairs of the Dutch Socialist W. Drees who was Prime Minister for ten crucial years (1948-1958). Drees, like his foreign minister Joseph Luns (1952-1971) and Van der Beugel himself who was Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs from 1956-1958, were generally regarded by avid Europeans as lacking in European enthusiasm.

out of twelve, but there was also closer consultation at the time with the other two Benelux partners than would seem to be the case at present.[15] More importantly, however, the Dutch took an outspoken position against De Gaulle's insistence on keeping Britain out of the Community, or admit that country only to the European waiting room. Dutch influence in this respect grew particularly from 1956 when Joseph Luns began his long period of office as Dutch Foreign Minister. He had already been a Minister without Portfolio in the Foreign Office from 1952. Ironically, in that year the Socialist Prime Minister of that time, W. Drees, had resisted Luns' appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs (which would have placed him in charge of European matters) because he did not wish to see a development in which ail six ministers of foreign affairs were Catholics and Europe were in fact to turn in L'Europe Vaticane.[16] Drees' objection had disappeared in 1956. Luns would remain Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs in cabinets of different political composition until 1971 when he became NATO Secretary-General.

The increasing role of the Heads of State or Government meeting in the European Council has caused constant complications in the Netherlands. In a country with a strong collegial tradition of cabinet responsibility, the idea that the Prime Minister should be regarded as having a more important mandate in international decision-making than the foreign minister is not easily accepted: descriptions of the latter as an 'aid' to the Prime Minister, often found in

[15] The practice of having informal consultations among the Benelux partners before meetings of EC bodies has not disappeared. Moreover, the alphabetic accident of six months' rotation of countries in the Chair of the Council of Ministers has Luxembourg and the Netherlands following one another. Since the smaller country lacks sufficient personnel the practice has grown that Dutchmen chair certain meetings in their place when necessary. In the case of other absences any of the three Benelux states may act as a substitute or spokesman for the other two (information supplied by L. Van Derpoelle).

[16] The solution chosen in 1952 was that European affairs would be the responsibility of the non-partisan Minister of Foreign Affairs, J.W. Beyen, while Luns as Minister without Portfolio would mainly occupy himself with other international issues. Irony has it that Beyen was later to convert to Catholicism and he proved a much more 'European' sympathizer than the generally Atlanticist Luns. Asked why the Netherlands needed two ministers of Foreign Affairs, Luns is reputed to have remarked that for a small country the world outside is all the larger. The experiment with two Ministers of Foreign Affairs in one Department has not been repeated. Its problems may have been one reason why political pressure for the appointment of a separate Cabinet Minister for European affairs has always been resisted.

the American press, are indeed far from the mark. As recently as 1990 there was a substantial public row between the Prime Minister, Ruud Lubbers, and the Foreign Minister, Hans van den Broek - both of the same Christian-Democratic party, both very much in favor of 'Europe' - over the precise role the Prime Minister was to play. The strong insistence on the part of the Foreign Minister on his traditional rights tends to conflict increasingly with the need to reach agreement among domestic interests on positions to be taken by the Dutch in international fora. The latter has strengthened the hands of the Prime Minister called to take on a prominent coordinating role among the relevant ministers.

Some Dutch Prime Ministers have taken their European role with increasing gusto. Few Dutchmen must have expected that the prominent Prime Minister at the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, Dries van Agt, would become so enamored of the international circuit that he would eventually prefer a post of diplomatic representative of the EC in Tokyo, and in 1989 an equally unexpected promotion to the same position in Washington, instead of a continued domestic career. His successor as Prime Minister, Ruud Lubbers, is now in his tenth year of office, as is the Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek. Such long tenures have made both men familiar figures in Euro-summit meetings, as well in the bilateral consultations with ministers of leading European states. They have sought to play a mediating role, notably in smoothing controversies between Mrs. Thatcher and other European heads of government. There is now wide-spread speculation, at least in the Netherlands, that Lubbers is the most likely candidate to succeed Jacques Delors as President of the European Commission. This is not gainsaid by the interesting minuet currently being played by the Belgian Prime Minister, Wilfried Martens, and the Dutch Prime Minister, Ruud Lubbers, each one insisting that the other is the better and more likely candidate!

As for other Dutch ministers, the increased importance of Council meetings has become obvious in many fields of policy. First, Ministers of Agriculture and Finance, but

soon also Ministers of Transport, Social Affairs, Health and Ecology, Justice, Education and others move increasingly into the regular European circuits, most notably via the Council of Ministers. We shall return to the domestic complications such developments are causing in a later section.

2. The Commission. The position as Dutch member of the Commission has been a prestigious and coveted post. Not least because of his long tenure and special skills, the role of Sicco Mansholt in the elaboration of a common agricultural policy during the first decade of the EEC was crucial. In all parties, ministers or ex-ministers have thought of a Brussels 'commissionership' as a significant promotion. Their designation (and, generally, also their reappointment) has raised little domestic political conflict. Some (including the present commissioner Frans Andriessen, a former leader of the Christian-Democrats and an ex-minister of Finance) have served a sufficiently long time to acquire substantial portfolios. Andriessen's role as Commissioner in charge of external relations has gained unexpected weight lately given the need for the Communities to develop a common policy in response to the rapid changes in Eastern Europe.

3. The EC bureaucracy. Any 'general' estimate of the role of Dutchmen in the Brussels bureaucracy is clearly speculative at best. Whereas one could point to some senior officials with long periods of service in important divisions, the policy of ensuring a rough proportionality of nationals of all member-states within the Eurocracy makes this hardly noteworthy. But one problem is noteworthy indeed: for all their alleged language skills, Dutch candidates for bureaucratic positions have not scored too well in comparison to nationals from other countries in competitive examinations. In fact, the practice of holding such entrance examinations is unknown in bureaucratic recruitment in the Netherlands itself, and a hesitation on the part of Dutchmen to submit themselves to them may be one reason why the Dutch do not fill the share of appointments and promotions they might have legitimately claimed. More generally, the day-to-day working of the European bureaucracies would seem to reflect administrative and legal

traditions of other countries more closely than the much looser ones normally found in Dutch ministries. Although there are, of course, increasingly intense administrative and personal contacts between Dutch officials and officials of the Community, the number of persons transferring from senior domestic posts to European posts would appear to be limited. To some extent, therefore, recruitment of Dutchmen for official positions in Brussels takes place in different circuits, in which either political factors or prior international educational experiences of younger candidates appear to play a decisive role.

4. The European Court. To speculate on the particular role of Dutch judges in the European Court would be rash. So far, only two distinguished jurists (A.M. Dormer and T. Koopmans, both men with a substantial academic background) have completed service in the Court, with a third Dutch Judge just beginning a period at the Court. They have been supported in their task by the circumstance that Dutch legal studies and practice have traditionally been open to other systems of law, given a strong influence notably of French and German legal traditions in the development of Dutch law and jurisprudence, and a clear awareness of alternative common law traditions. The activism of the European Court appears to have influenced a turn towards a similar judicial activism of judges in the Netherlands itself.

5. The European Parliament. There have been Dutchmen in Strasbourg and Luxembourg from the earliest days of the Common Assembly. In the 1950s leaders of Dutch parties frequently chose to combine membership of the national parliament with membership of such international parliamentary bodies. Strasbourg provided in fact an informal meeting place for contacts across Dutch parties in a manner that political strife in The Hague did not. One can trace the importance of this factor in some political careers. Dutchmen who were 'European' politicians have been relatively acceptable candidates for ministerial posts in coalition cabinets.[17] An early example was Marga Klompé, a Catholic deputy who soon became known

[17] The Dutch parliamentary system of government does not require ministers to be members of parliament before they are appointed, and demands them to resign from parliament after acceding to a ministerial post.

in Strasbourg as Madame de Klompadour,[18] but then fully transferred her activities to national politics in The Hague where she became the first woman cabinet minister in 1956. Another example is Barend Biesheuvel who first went to Brussels as a spokesman for agricultural interests in the Economic and Social Committee, but then began a political career both in Europe and at home which was proved him to be of Prime Ministerial material. He in fact served as Prime Minister from 1971-1973.

As long as the 'European' mandate rested on membership of the national parliament the chance that domestic heavy-weights would be active on the international scene, and vice versa, was substantial. The increase of work for members of the European Parliament, and hence the need for longer absences from domestic tasks, began to pose substantial problems, however. There was need for a specialization of tasks. An increasing distance developed between 'national' and 'international' deputies.[19] If this problem was 'solved' by the introduction of direct election of the European Parliament and the separation of 'national' and 'European' mandates, this was done at the expense of widening the gap between national and European members of parliament.

Members of European Parliament are elected on the basis of a list-system of PR.[20] Few of them are well-known, and less is known about their work. European elections are fought by

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[18] Lest the pun is not immediately clear: the name Klompadour carries the connotation of a Madame de Pompadour in wooden shoes ('klompen' in Dutch).

[19] For a study of the background of recruitment of Dutch members of various European and other international representative assemblies in the 1950s, see H. Daalder, 'The Netherlands,' in: Kenneth D. Lindsay ed., European Assemblies in Action. London: Stevens, 1960, pp. 115-132.

[20] As the Netherlands has only 24 members in the European Parliament, the effective threshold for election under a nation-wide P.R. system is substantially higher than for the national parliament where 1/150 of the valid national vote is sufficient for a list to obtain a member in parliament. This fact has led to the presentation of joint lists by smaller parties on both the left and the right. 'Green' or 'Rainbow' concerns provided the umbrella which united Communists, Pacifist-Socialists and smaller radical-Christian parties for the 1989 European elections. Its success became a stimulus for the presentation of a similar Green-Left list in the later national elections in 1989 which led to a formal merger of these parties in 1991.

the same parties as national elections, and are dominated by national politics. But they do not create the same interest and commitment on the part of either parties or voters as national elections do. Political events in the European Parliament are noted rarely in the media. They seem to be of little concern to the members of the national parliament. They are virtually insignificant for the ordinary voter: voter turn-out for European elections began low and seriously declined in the second and third 'direct' election of the European Parliament.

At the same time, however, 'Luxembourg' or 'Strasbourg' have not become an 'end' - not even a luxurious end - to political careers. Relatively close cross-partisan contacts of Dutch members of the European Parliament have been maintained, notwithstanding the larger importance which party groups have acquired in Strasbourg. In the recruitment of cabinet ministers and junior ministers detachment of local strife can be as much an advantage as a disadvantage, and international expertise is deemed an important quality in ministerial recruitment. In the last cabinet to be formed, in November 1989, no fewer than three 'Europeans' returned to national politics: two women deputies as cabinet ministers, for Welfare, Culture and Health, and for Transport, and Piet Dankert, a Socialist former President of the European Parliament who became responsible as Undersecretary at the Foreign Office for coordinating day-to-day Dutch policy in the different bodies of the European community.

4. The problem of coordination

The determination of Dutch positions, notably in the context of the work of the Council of Ministers, became a problem of considerable conflict early in the development of European decision-making, and has remained a problem to the present.

Traditionally, the department of Foreign Affairs was in charge of all international negotiations. Yet, its claim to do so was increasingly contested, as more and more matters of domestic concern came up for international decision-making. This had been true even before

World War II, notably regarding matters of foreign trade. The Ministry of Economic Affairs has felt for a long time that the personnel of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whether in The Hague or in foreign embassies, was insufficiently equipped to deal with economic issues, which for a country having over half its national income pass across frontiers was indeed of vital importance. Since the late 1940s The Ministry of Defense claimed its own role within NATO and other international organizations concerned with security matters. Many of the erstwhile tasks of the Ministry of Agriculture became subject to international and even supranational regulation. EC policies became eventually important for practically all domestic departments. The practice of having different ministers forming the European Council of Ministers depending on the issues to be settled implied an even greater erosion of the once exclusive control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If other departments argued that this department lacked the specialized staff to deal with issues of vital importance to their own competencies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs countered with the argument that even in apparently 'technical' and 'domestic' issues important problems of foreign policy might be at stake. Some in the Ministry looked favorably at the idea of strengthening its own staff, so as to have adequate in-house expertise in different fields of government policy. Others regarded this as imposition and costly duplication, requiring new and unwonted forms of coordination.

The matter was formally settled by establishing a Committee on European Affairs within the cabinet, with the Prime Minister in the chair. Under that committee another committee, mainly composed of civil servants of the main ministries concerned, was to draw up guidelines for Dutch representatives in all Community committees. The Committee would be presided over by the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, with the Foreign Office also serving as the secretariat and the channel of communications to Dutch representatives abroad. But at the same time, the sensitivities of the department of Economic Affairs was so great that a special clause provided for the Minister of Economic Affairs (who through rank and cabinet membership was the more senior member of the government) to take the

chair instead of the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs whenever he was present himself. Strains have continued, and are in fact inherent in the combination of continued international procedures of decision-making with increasingly transnational concerns of domestic ministries. The role of the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs became so important that, although not a member of the cabinet, he became the most constant attender of junior ministers at cabinet meetings.

5. High and Low Politics

Seen from the perspective of ordinary Dutchmen the developments within the European Communities offer an apparent paradox. On the one hand decision-making within the European Communities, and the increasing shift of powers to EC-organs, have come to affect an ever-widening array of once domestic issues. This implied that more and more matters were removed from potential 'Dutch' control. One should expect a corresponding increase in interest and organization to influence decision-making 'beyond the Nation-State.'[21] Such an increase is indeed found at the level of government and the more important interest group organizations. At the same time, many European matters have become so specialized and technical that ordinary Dutchmen can muster little real concern. Although occasionally interested parties may resort to protests against particular Community decisions (with some of the more colorful and steady protests coming from farmers and transport interests), the attention of citizens and politicians alike has remained heavily focused on issues of national politics. There are various explanations for such an apparent paradox.

One explanation is that EC decision-making requires complex negotiations of so many state actors that a simple citizen correctly assumes that his own involvement can have no influence on its outcome. But then one might expect a growing disenchantment with the

[21] The reference is, of course, to the felicitous title of Ernst B. Haas, Beyond the Nation-State: Functionalism in International Organizations. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964.

phenomenon of a too distant 'Europe'; there are in fact remarkably few signs of this.

One could argue that Dutchmen have long been aware of the fact that their efforts will have little influence on international events and decisions. A lack of anger against, or involvement in, decisions beyond one's grasp might be a natural reaction for citizens of a country who have known for long that their influence in the world is limited.

A certain 'dissociation' between 'politics' and (international) 'economics' could be seen as a long-standing feature of an open economy like the Netherlands, just as there may be merit in the view that Dutchmen have for long been prepared to leave the settlement of vital issues to governmental and corporate economic actors over which they have little or no control.

Yet another factor may have added to this state of affairs: the tendency, which I indicated at the beginning, to conceive of international politics in abstract moral and legal terms. For such traditions allow one to opt out of substantive politics to go up in a stratosphere of principles in which one might feel no less happy for being both 'right' and 'above' a world of mundane interests.

As a result ordinary Dutchmen might to some degree contract out of the world of both 'low' and 'high' politics, living their life in an atmosphere - to quote Joris Voorhoeve once more - of 'peace, profits and principles'[22] whatever happens in the world of the European Community, or of Europe outside Dutch borders. That may strike one in these days as an exaggerated and illusionist picture. This does not detract from the possibility that it may well be true.

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[22] See p. 4.