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# Globalisation, Europeanization and Other Transnational Phenomena

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# DUTCH POLITICS IN THE 1950S AND THE MYTH OF INEVITABLE EUROPEANIZATION<sup>9</sup>

*Robin de Bruin*

## INEVITABILITY MYTH

In the 1950s, the integration of Europe seemed to be quite popular in the Netherlands. An indication of the great enthusiasm of the Dutch population was the consultative referendum held on December 17th 1952 in Delft and Bolsward; two cities with a population representative of the Netherlands as a whole. With a turnout of seventy percent, over ninety-five percent of the voters voted "yes" on the question whether or not a European government, controlled by a democratically elected European Parliament, was desirable.

The postwar European ideal in the Netherlands was in part a reaction to the experiences with (Nazi) totalitarianism in the Second World War. Many Dutch politicians believed that only the integration of Europe could prevent a future economic depression similar to that in the 1930s, and the increasing attraction to totalitarianism resulting from this crisis. They expected that European economic rationalization would increase production and wages and reduce prices. Thereby, it would diminish socio-economic inequality. This was considered necessary to prevent mass public attraction to Communist totalitarianism in Western Europe.

Among Dutch politicians there was a widespread belief in the inevitability of Europeanization in one way or another. This core belief was explicitly put into words by the Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs Wim Beyen in Parliament in 1954,

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<sup>9</sup> The author thanks Hugh McDonnell, Nell Pattij and Jamal Shahin for their comments on an earlier version of this article. The second and the concluding third paragraph contain a resumé of an article I published in 2010: Bruin, Robin de, "The "Elastic" European Ideal in the Netherlands, 1948-1958. Images of a Future Integrated Europe and the Transformation of Dutch Politics," in Marloes Beers & Jenny Raflik (dir./eds.), *Cultures nationales et identité communautaire: un défi pour l'Europe? / National Cultures and Common Identity. A Challenge for Europe?*, Bruxelles/Brussels, P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2010, pp. 207-216.

in a debate on (the necessity of) European integration.<sup>10</sup> It is true that Beyen was a convinced “European” – he would become one of the fathers of *relance européenne* after the blockage of the European Defense Community (EDC) in the French Parliament in 1954 – but even self-proclaimed European sceptics believed in the inevitability of Europeanization. For instance, in October 1953, the Labour member of Parliament Evert Vermeer sent a personal letter to the Orthodox Protestant member of Parliament Pieter Sjoerds Gerbrandy. Gerbrandy, who had been Prime Minister of the War Cabinet in exile during the German Occupation of the Netherlands, was one of the very few outspoken opponents of European integration. He rejected any transfer of national sovereignty.<sup>11</sup> In his letter to Gerbrandy, Vermeer made clear that he himself was not a European enthusiast who regarded Europeanization as the panacea for all the illnesses of modernity. Nevertheless, he claimed, the West European position in the world was in decline to such a degree that the national sovereignty of West European states had already become a fiction. According to Vermeer, the West European nation states had no choice other than to unite, if they didn’t want to “capitulate” to one of the new global Super Powers (the United States or the Soviet Union).<sup>12</sup>

Other politicians also drew the conclusion that the postwar new world order had made the integration of Europe inevitable. Gerbrandy’s political associate Sieuwert Bruins Slot came to this conclusion when the United Nations (UN) Security Council in 1948 in fact condemned the Dutch military intervention in The Dutch East Indies, where the “Republic of Indonesia” had started a war of independence. UN involvement eventually resulted in the termination of Dutch colonial mastery of the Indonesian archipelago (with the exception of West New Guinea). Bruins Slot and other Dutch politicians, who felt that the legal (Dutch) authorities in Indonesia were “overthrown” by the UN, interpreted this as a disruption of international justice by the new great powers, especially the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup> According to Bruins Slot, only through the integration of Europe could the European countries protect themselves against similar “violations of international justice” in the future. These

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<sup>10</sup> Weenink, W.H., *Bankier van de Wereld. Bouwer van Europa. Johan Willem Beyen 1897-1976*, Amsterdam and Rotterdam, Prometheus/NRC Handelsblad, 2005, p. 342.

<sup>11</sup> Bruin, R.J. de, “Cees Hazenbosch en de “Eeuwige beginselen van Gods Woord.” Antirevolutionaire Beginselpolitiek en de Integratie van Europa in de Jaren Vijftig,” in G.J. Schutte a.o. (eds.), *Grenzeloos Christelijk-Sociaal. Internationale Activiteiten van de Christelijk-Sociale Beweging. Cahier over de Geschiedenis van de Christelijk-Sociale Beweging 8*, Amsterdam, Aksant, 2009, pp. 52-62.

<sup>12</sup> National Archives, The Hague, Arch. P.S. Gerbrandy, No. 176, Letter Vermeer to Gerbrandy, October 8<sup>th</sup> 1953.

<sup>13</sup> Heerikhuizen, Annemarie van, *Pioniers van een Verenigd Europa. Bovennationaal Denken in het Nederlandse Parlement (1946-1951)*, Amsterdam, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1998, pp. 185-199: [http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/heer038pion01\\_01/](http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/heer038pion01_01/).

same politicians also strongly emphasized the growing global interconnectedness, caused by technological innovations.<sup>14</sup>

In his landmark study on the Netherlands in the 1950s and 1960s, the historian James Kennedy rightly points out the importance of these notions of “necessity” and “inevitability” in postwar Dutch foreign policy, especially in the field of European integration. Kennedy connects these notions with the shock of the Second World War and the postwar process of decolonization. In his view, the conflict between the Netherlands and its former colony Indonesia concerning West New Guinea (in 1962, under American pressure, the Dutch had to agree to hand over control of their territory to a UN interim administration) served as a turning point. From that moment on, Dutch politicians did the utmost to understand and meet the “demands of time”.<sup>15</sup>

Undoubtedly, the sense of a European decline in an ever closer and more connected world, seemed more valid after the Dutch colonial empire began to fall apart. However, the conclusion that European integration was inevitable did not exclusively arise from the postwar bipolar world order. There was also a strong continuity with Europeanist notions in the Interwar years and even with the authoritarian Europeanism in the first year of the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands.

One of the arguments in favor of Count Coudenhove-Kalergi's *Pan-Europa* in the 1920s had been a shrinking world caused by improvement in the means of communication and transport. In this view, political Europeanization was not so much a subcase of globalization, but rather a way to control growing interconnectedness. Notions about the rise of the Far East and Panamerica and the threatening decline of a divided Europe also had played a dominant role in the Europeanist propaganda in the Netherlands.<sup>16</sup> This type of argumentation was shared by a broader audience, for instance by the Dutch Prime Minister (from 1925-1926 and 1933-1939) Hendrik Colijn.<sup>17</sup> The common words for European fragmentation, “Kleinstaaterei”, “Balkanization” and “atomization”, were frequently, though certainly not exclusively used by Europeanists. Even many advocates of national political independence in Europe were convinced that economic sovereignty had become a fiction in modern Europe.

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<sup>14</sup> Bruins Slot, J.A.H.J.S., *Bezinning en Uitzicht. De Motieven der Huidige Wereldontwikkeling en onze Roeping daarin*, Wageningen, Zomer en Keuning's Uitgeversmaatschappij, n.d. [1950], p. 17 and pp. 78-80.

<sup>15</sup> Kennedy, James C., *Nieuw Babylon in Aanbouw. Nederland in de Jaren Zestig*, Amsterdam and Meppel, Boom, 1995, p. 53 and pp. 59-62.

<sup>16</sup> See: Both, J.G., “Over Paneuropa.” Voordracht gehouden door J.G. Both in de Rotary-Club te Rotterdam den 22sten septb. 1926, n.p., n.d. [1926].

<sup>17</sup> Vries, H. de, “Het concept van de aanpassingspolitiek,” in J. de Bruijn and H.J. Langeveld (eds.), *Colijn. Bouwstenen voor een biografie*, Kampen, Uitgeverij Kok, 1994, pp. 259-284.

In 1940, that same message was being preached by German *Reichsminister* for Economic Affairs Walther Funk.<sup>1</sup> Nazi Germany invaded the Netherlands in May 1940. During the first year of German occupation, it was expected that Germany would be a dominant power on the European continent for years to come. Not all the Dutch were fully aware of the criminal and rapacious character of the Nazi regime. Some of the Dutch (from diverse political backgrounds) saw a window of opportunity for the creation of a European economic *Grossraum*; an important condition for a general economic rationalization<sup>2</sup> that would be an alternative to the “class struggle.” They believed that a Germany extended over the whole of Europe would no longer be the Nazi Germany they knew, but a unified Europe under a different name. This especially applied to some “renewers,” advocates of a national renewal, who pursued the end of religious fragmentation and social division within the Dutch “pillarized” society. They were strongly inspired by French “Personalists” (some of whom cherished similar illusions about the New Order<sup>3</sup>). This window of opportunity slowly closed, and was permanently shut after the German invasion of Soviet Russia in June 1941, when the Nazi regime in the Netherlands hardened its policy. During the course of the Nazi occupation, many of the Dutch “renewers” joined the organized resistance against Nazi rule. Some of them became (Catholic or Labour) politicians after the liberation from German occupation.

After the Second World War, many Dutch politicians seemed to think of European integration as a historical inevitability that had to be steered onto the right course. Nazi Europe had been the wrong direction.<sup>4</sup> In accordance with the pan-European thinking of the interwar years, European integration was presented by

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<sup>1</sup> Mazower, Mark, *Hitler's Empire. Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe*, London and New York, Allen Lane, 2008, pp. 121-124; Ribeiro de Meneses, Filipe, *Salazar. A Political Biography*, New York, Enigma Books, 2009, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> See: Burger, Jaap, *Oorlogsdagboek. Bezorgd door Chris van Esterik*, Amsterdam, Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 1995, pp. 86-87; Henssen, Emile, *Gerretson en Indië*, Groningen, Wolters Noordhoff-Bouwma's Boekhuis, 1983, pp. 115-116; Osch, Henk van, *Jonkheer D.J. de Geer, De Teloorgang van een Minister-President*, Amsterdam, Boom, 2007, p. 391; Zwan, Arie van der, *Hij Overwon Iedereen op een Vrouw na. F.H. Fentener van Vlissingen 1882-1962*, Amsterdam, Uitgeverij Balans, 2006, p. 219.

<sup>3</sup> Bruneteau, Bernard, “L'Europe nouvelle de Hitler.” *Une Illusion des Intellectuels de la France de Vichy*, Monaco, Éditions du Rocher, 2003; see also: Smith, M.L., “Introduction: European Unity and the Second World War,” in M.L. Smith and P.M.R. Stirk (eds.), *Making the New Europe: European Unity and the Second World War*, London and New York, Pinter Publishers, 1990, pp. 1-17.

<sup>4</sup> Bruin, Robin de, “Het Nieuwe Europa. Hans Linthorst Homan, Lid van de Hoge Autoriteit (1962-1967),” in Gerrit Voerman, Bert van den Braak and Carla van Baalen (eds.), *De Nederlandse Eurocommissarissen*, Amsterdam, Boom, 2010, pp. 65-92.

Dutch politicians as part of a historical process that soon would cause the obsolescence of the nation state as such.<sup>5</sup>

## BROAD CHURCH OF EUROPEANISM

Between the Congress in The Hague in May 1948 and 1953/1954, when the European Political Community and the EDC were withdrawn from the political agenda in Western Europe, hardly any politician openly opposed the integration of Europe; Gerbrandy was a maverick. Judging from the enthusiasm shown, many Dutch politicians from the upcoming generation not only resigned themselves to this inevitable "Europe," but desired it as well. The staunchest supporters of European integration were Personalist "renewers" like Henk Brugmans and Wim Verkade. In 1945 and 1946, many of these renewers were involved in the establishment of the Labour Party. They strived after a European (or even a world) order based on the organizational principles of functionalism and federalist subsidiarity.<sup>6</sup> They preferred deliberation and compliance to power politics. Economically, many renewers were advocates of (neo)corporatism.

There was a strong belief that Europeanization in one way or another was inevitable, but within Dutch political parties the integration of Europe was pursued by means of a strange brew of socio-economic, moral and pragmatic arguments, and in all political parties different arguments were emphasized. Various political parties had a different *logic of appropriateness*, so to speak. And, of course the images of the future "Europe" were different within different political parties.

The Dutch Labour Party regarded "Europe" as the middle ground between "planning" and "freedom." According to the Labour Party, the European Coal and Steel Community of 1952 combined the benefits of economic liberalization and economic planning and thereby was the perfect "third way."<sup>7</sup>

A significant feature of Dutch politics is that no party ever gains an absolute majority in Parliamentary elections, so two or more parties have to form a coalition government. Some Dutch Labour politicians believed that the postwar domestic political compromises between Dutch Catholic and Labour politics (they

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<sup>5</sup> Ruygers, G., "In de maalstroom der wereldpolitiek," in G. Ruygers (ed.), *Socialisme in de branding. Een bundel opstellen onder redactie van...*, Amsterdam, De Arbeiderspers, 1952, pp. 217-259.

<sup>6</sup> International Institute for Social History (IISG), Arch. Jan Barents, No. 173, Commission Foreign Policy of the Nederlandse Volksbeweging (one of the forerunners and constituent parts of the Dutch Labour Party), Memorandum on Foreign Policy, 1946; Brugmans, H., "Een overpeinzing vooraf," in J. Linthorst Homan, "Wat zijt gij voor een vent." *Levensherinneringen van...*, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1974, pp. VII-XI.

<sup>7</sup> *De Weg naar Vrijheid. Een Socialistisch Perspectief. Rapport van de Plancommissie van de Partij van de Arbeid*, Derde druk, Amsterdam, De Arbeiderspers, 1951.



formed a coalition until 1958) served as an example for a future "truly democratic" Europe.<sup>8</sup>

Creating an affluent society was the most frequent reaction in democratic post-war Western Europe to the totalitarianism of the 1930s and 1940s and the totalitarian threat of the Communist world. The Catholic Party and the Labour Party were staunch supporters of a rather technocratic welfare policy. But, the experiences with and fear of totalitarianism also led to a strong condemnation of the welfare state (not of welfare as such), as was shown by the attitude towards European Integration of the Dutch Orthodox Protestant *Antirevolutionaire Partij* (ARP). The most characteristic feature of Calvinist political thought was the principle of "sphere sovereignty." Sphere sovereignty implied that the ultimate sovereignty belongs to God alone and that all earthly sovereignties are subordinate to and derived from God's sovereignty. Therefore, the spheres were autonomous of each other. This implied that the state should not interfere beyond its own sphere, for example in the sphere of religion or family.

During the German occupation, a relatively large part of the ARP party rank-and-file had participated in the organized resistance against the Nazi occupation. In their analysis of National Socialism, they emphasized the statist element of Nazi ideology. According to most of the ARP leaders, totalitarianism naturally followed from statism.

The attitude towards state authority and government interference was a decisive element in the realization of the ARP policy on Europe in the 1950s. A first general report on party policy with regard to the integration of Europe was published in 1953. This report stated that government interference in society had increased enormously since the early 1930s (when Dutch politics were still dominated by the centre-right) in an attempt to rescue vital parts of the economy from destruction caused by the economic crisis. But by enlarging the economic space to Western Europe, these economic sectors could do without government protection. Enlarging the economic space to Western Europe would diminish the danger of a future society patronized by "Socialists." For that reason, the ARP should welcome the integration of Europe.<sup>9</sup>

It was this view that converted the mainstream party rank-and-file to "Europeans." At the end of October 1957, during a Party Rally, member of Parliament Cees Hazenbosch gave a much acclaimed speech on the economic integration of Europe. After his speech, questions from the audience echoed this type of argumentation. Hazenbosch himself strongly emphasized the ideological consonance

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<sup>8</sup> IISG, Arch. PvdA (Dutch Labour Party), No. 558d, Report of a visit by a delegation from the PvdA to the West-German Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, from 24-26 January 1950.

<sup>9</sup> The Historical Documentation Centre for Dutch Protestantism, VU University Amsterdam, Arch. ARP, No. 355, Report of the ARP's "Advisory Committee".

with Catholic politics concerning the role of the state. Indeed, the ARP's view corresponded with that of Norbert Schmelzer, an up-and-coming politician within the Catholic Party, who had stated that by Europeanization "Socialist" aims could be achieved without "Socialist" means.<sup>10</sup>

## EUROPEANIZATION AND DOMESTIC CHANGE

After the Second World War, many Dutch politicians seemed to think of European integration as a historical inevitability. In accordance with the pan-European thinking of the interwar years, European integration was presented by Dutch politicians as part of a worldwide process of growing global interconnectedness. The experiences with the horrors of totalitarianism during the Second World War led to increased enthusiasm for the European cause in the early 1950s. However, the motivation for this enthusiasm varied strongly. The spokesmen of the Dutch Labour Party drew the conclusion that socio-economic justice provided by a European socio-economic policy could prevent future attraction to totalitarian ideologies like Communism. Moreover, European integration was seen as an international dimension of the process which in the late 1940s and early 1950s seemed to cause the end of the Dutch religiously segmented ("pillarized") and socially divided society which Labour desired. Within the Dutch Orthodox Protestant ARP freedom was conceived as freedom from state power. Many politicians of the "anti-statist" ARP regarded the economic integration of Europe as a means to increase welfare without having to create a "totalitarian welfare state."

Most Dutch political parties presented European integration more or less as a means for achieving their respective ideological aims. At the same time, the expectation of "Europe" caused ideological restraint in Dutch domestic politics. In the early 1950s, some Dutch Labour politicians and supporters believed that the domestic political compromises between the Catholic and the Labour party, that dominated Dutch politics until 1958, served as an example for "Europe". And in reverse they saw the vindication of Labour's postwar domestic policy in the expected Europeanization of political decision-making. Compromise became the incantation of the Dutch Labour Party. For the ARP, the acceptance of Europeanization in the second half of the 1950s turned out to be a major step in the direction of a national Protestant-Catholic cooperation<sup>11</sup>, that eventually, in 1980, would result in a merger between the ARP, the ARP's Protestant sister-party *Christelijk-Historische Unie* and the Catholic Party.

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<sup>10</sup> Bruin (2009) op.cit.

<sup>11</sup> Napel, H.-M.T.D. ten, "Een eigen weg." De Totstandkoming van het CDA (1952-1980), Kampen, Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok, 1992, pp. 354-356.

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