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Susanna Erlandsson

Window of opportunity
Dutch and Swedish security ideas and strategies 1942–1948
Abstract

The period treated in this thesis is one which is often characterized as a transition between World War II and the Cold War. By approaching it instead as a window of opportunity – a period in which the governments of small states perceived both an unusual space and an urgent need to reevaluate security – the security policies of two small northwestern European countries, the Netherlands and Sweden, are subjected to a critical reappraisal. Through a systematic comparison of the security ideas and strategies in two countries that ended up with different positions on alignment/non-alignment during the Cold War, this dissertation sheds new light on the reasons for the development of those security policies as well as on their significance. Not only does it uncover a number of concrete security strategies that were remarkably similar regardless of different circumstances, but it shows that the Swedish and Dutch governments formed similar ideas about the needs for future security in spite of different war experiences. Both concluded that small states could no longer survive in isolation and instead aimed for a better functioning system of collective security, built on the close cooperation of regional groups. This thesis argues that the different choices regarding security in 1948, when the Dutch signed the Treaty of Brussels and the Swedish reclaimed a policy of non-alignment, were in fact motivated by the same wish to maintain as wide a margin for manoeuvre as possible for the cooperation envisioned during the war, seeing this as the best guarantee of peace and independence.

Keywords: small states, security, margin for manoeuvre, window of opportunity, neutrality, non-alignment, alliance, collective security, regional cooperation, 20th century history, international relations, World War II, Cold War, Sweden, the Netherlands

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Till min älskade Sander
window of opportunity (ˈwɪndəʊ əv ,əpəˈtjuːnɪtɪ)
noun
an opportunity to do something that will only last for a short time and needs to be taken advantage of quickly ⇒ There is now a window of opportunity for peace.

(Collins English Dictionary)
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Susanna Erlandsson
Kumla kyrkby 17th March 2015
It may seem odd to speak of the 1940s as a window of opportunity when addressing small European states’ security issues. Considering that World War II threatened the very existence of the small states of Europe, destroyed what was left of the European balance of power and left the world in shambles, a period of powerlessness might seem more appropriate. The 1940s were marked by an acute awareness of deficient security and (potential) victimhood, by fear and caution, and by great dependence on – and misgivings about the intentions of – the greater powers. When the war dust finally settled, the Cold War and a bipolar world with its power centres outside Europe was the new international reality. The small states went from being threatened by one conflict to being subordinated to another.

In this light, it is easy to see the chaotic years between World War II and the Cold War as merely a transition period, a movement from one world order to the next. Such a view tends to promote a focus on the developments in that period that are recognizable from the new world order’s retrospective point of view. When speaking of the shaping of or the road to the policy that came next, the debates and policy initiatives of the 1940s are incorporated and interpreted in the context of Cold War policies not yet formulated – policies that were by and large unintentional and certainly unforeseeable. Original intentions, but also other lines both of continuity and of change, become overshadowed.

A prominent characteristic of a transition period, however, is its lack of paradigm. The very fact that one system is passing and the new still emerging results in a temporary lack of consensus regarding the nature of the world order. The so-called transition years are not years of movement in one direction, but instead years of great uncertainty. Focus on small states’ ideas and margins for manoeuvre makes such a period extremely interesting – not in spite of the foreign policy vacuum, but because of it. What did these smaller states, so dependent on the decisions of the world’s larger powers, do when those powers failed to show the way?
How to act was not only an unusually open question in these years, but an exceptionally urgent one. The ideological and total character of the most recent war had for many given rise to the conviction that the time had come for mankind to change its ways, a sense strengthened by the emergence of the atomic bomb, its threat of total annihilation looming on the horizon. While it was difficult for the smaller governments of Europe to make definite policy decisions because of uncertainty about the intentions of the great powers, the importance of acting was equally clear. It was in other words not only a period of waiting and hesitation, but also a time of an urgently felt need for swift action: something had to be done to prevent further disaster, and it had to be done now, before it was too late.

This investigation is an attempt at an open-ended study of the security policy ideas and strategies of small states in these years. To avoid a teleological perspective, the period between World War II and the Cold War will be treated not merely as a transition period but as a window of opportunity in which the policymakers of small states had both the space and felt a compelling urgency to discuss security. For that purpose, the security ideas and strategies of two small states in northwestern Europe will be compared, Sweden and the Netherlands: states with significant similarities but also marked differences. In analysing security ideas and behaviour, particular attention will be paid to considerations that cannot necessarily be tied to later Cold War policies. That means, among other things, identifying aspects of security policy that lie beyond definitions of policies of neutrality or alliance, or are compatible with both. Such an approach does not mean that the development of Swedish non-alignment and the Dutch decision to ally will be left aside. It means rather placing them under a new light by reevaluating the security policy goals and (perceived) options of the years before a Cold War discourse elevated non-alignment, in the case of Sweden, and NATO-membership, in the case of the Netherlands, to a position of indisputable security policy qualifier.

Small state security. Perspectives and definitions

Embarking on a study of the security options and ideas of the governments of small states necessitates clarifying a number of key concepts. What is a small state, what constitutes power, what security policies are there to choose from, and, not in the least, what constitutes security? To begin with the last question, the quest for security in this thesis alludes to the attempts to safeguard both territorial and political independence.\(^1\) That means not only defending the

\(^1\) The definition of national security as political independence and territorial integrity comes from Philip Everts and Guido Walraven who use it in passing in their introduction to a book on foreign policy implementation. Everts & Walraven 1989, p. 7.
country’s territorial integrity, but also the national government’s integrity and maneuverability. Before moving on to what that meant for the small states at hand – Sweden and the Netherlands – a discussion of some general problems of small state theories is in order.

The power of small states

For all the literature on small states, it is hard to find a satisfactory definition of what constitutes small, that is a definition that manages to both find a common denominator for all small states and to distinguish them from big – or, to be on the safe side: non-small – states. Some have tried to pinpoint small states by numbers, using size of territory, population or GNP as denominators. In his 1967 work *The inequality of states*, David Vital defines a small state as one with a population of up to 10–15 million in the case of economically advanced countries and 20–30 million in the case of underdeveloped countries. Although Vital thus weighs the number of citizens against economic wealth, he does not take other aspects into account. Moreover, the fact that Vital separates small states not only from great powers but also from the bigger so-called middle powers and the smaller so-called micro powers complicates matters further. As Vital himself admits, the definition is rough and does little more than “make clear the identity of the subject of this study”. The difference Vital sees between developed and underdeveloped countries points to one of many problems in using the term small state: speaking of states, small cannot be defined simply by size of territory or population because when we speak of small states in international relations, we generally do not actually speak of state size but of state influence, or power.

What then, is power? And do small states have a special kind of power? An early and still influential work in the discipline of international relations is Annette Baker Fox’s 1959 book *The power of small states*. What interests Baker Fox is “how the governments of small and militarily weak states can resist the strong pressure of great powers even in crisis periods.” According to Baker Fox, this ability to resist the demands of other states, rather than securing its own demands, is often the most important factor in defining the power status of a small state. She explains this small state power partly by differences in the scope

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2 Vital 1967, pp. 8–9. A number of other attempts at defining small states were made in the 1960s and 1970s but they all remain rather vague. See for example Vanderbosch 1964, p. 294; Rothstein 1968, p. 29; Mathisen 1971, pp. 17–39. After a period in which most small state researchers considered small states without trying to define them, a new attempt was made by Tom Crowards who in 2002 devoted himself meticulously to the task of defining small size using different parameters and with mathematical precision. However, as it remains unclear what analytical purpose the categories thus achieved might serve, his definitions in my view do little more than Vital’s attempts: make clear the subject of the study. Crowards 2002, pp. 143–173.

of attention between great and small states: smaller states can concentrate on their own fate, one task – to stay out of war –, while greater states have to “broaden their gaze to sweep the whole international arena.”

Arnold Wolfers in 1962 coined the phrase “the power of the weak” (in a book otherwise not treating small states specifically). In Wolfers’ view, this power first of all stems from the relationships between the great powers. Whenever great powers are focused on a struggle amongst one another, they cannot afford to waste coercive strength on “minor offenders” or to lose the support of more states, however small. Fear that a country will shift its loyalty (or shift from alignment to neutrality) could be enough to give that country the power of blackmail.

In a 1968 article, Danish political scientist Erling Bjøl picked up Wolfers’ concept of the power of the weak. Bjøl criticizes Wolfers’ focus on power as a scarce commodity and argues instead for security geography as one of the most important categories for analysing the role of small states in international politics. However, Bjøl goes on to develop a line of thought that is in fact quite similar to both Wolfers and Baker Fox: the more bilateral focus of small states compared to a multilateral focus of great powers leads to more capacity for the small state to focus on one thing at a time. He also speaks of willpower as a power factor, the motivation of a small state often being stronger, adding past behaviour and internal cohesion as criteria for strength of willpower. Bjøl in addition points to the development of an international legal community as an important aim of small powers. Norms of behaviour in international politics and elusive matters such as reputation, prestige, provocation and traditions are important, says Bjøl, and must be reckoned with even if they are vague and fluid. “For in these feelings of legitimacy probably resides some, perhaps the main power of the weak.”

Bjøl’s fellow countryman and political scientist Hans Branner follows much the same line of reasoning in his more recent call for a broader definition of power. While we often associate power with its offensive aspect, he says – the power to make others act the way one wants – it also has a defensive aspect: being able to avoid being subjected to the will of others. That is a crucial form of power, especially for the smaller state – even when the immaterial resources that are often the base of defensive power do not, in Branner’s words, “cause the same dramatic and visible effects in diplomatic history as do the more material and offensive powers of the state.”

While it is useful to bear these different sorts of power and resources in mind, this thesis will not explicitly employ the definition of small state power as

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5 Wolfers 1962, pp. 111–112.
essentially defensive, if nothing else because it puts focus on reactions rather than on actions. To avoid being caught in these connotations, it will speak of the margin for manoeuvre, instead of the power, of small states. Margin for manoeuvre opens up for a range of strategies to maintain territorial integrity and political independence, not just those associated with military strength or defence. The term small state itself already implies, as mentioned above, assumptions on relative power – or perhaps type of power, as Baker Fox and Branner among others seem to suggest. Suffice it here to define greater states as states whose decisions influence and can be a threat to a significant number of countries, while a small state’s policies have a limited influence on a few countries, and are of no direct or great threat to more than an occasional neighbour.8

It is true that by this definition, most states qualify in the latter category. In fact, only a few states can be considered leaders rather than followers, and even these leaders do not act independently. All states to a greater or lesser degree are dependent on others. Conversely, even very weak states in some cases successfully pursue a course contrary to the wishes or directives of a more powerful leader state. One could argue, like Peter Baehr in 1975, that “small states form too broad a category for purposes of analysis”, making the small state an insufficient concept as an analytical tool. However, as Niels Amstrup argued a year later, although “small state” is an elusive concept, it is an established one and no more vague than other concepts frequently used in international relations. Efraim Karsh in 1988 added that if we were to stay clear of researching things without an agreed definition, we could not study such things as power or national interest. The lack of an exact definition does not negate our acceptance that there are small states and that smallness matters.9

The overarching problem in this thesis is how small states – that is, states that are utterly dependent on the decisions of other states for their security and prosperity and would have no chance of withstanding an attack from a great power on their own – behave when the plans and actions of the states they most depend on are highly uncertain. In spite of its obvious limitations, the small state category will be used here, though in a rather general manner. It follows

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8 I am aware that this is a simplification: even a small state’s actions can have far reaching consequences in spite of the limits to its own powers because of its connections to other states. However, that influence is by virtue of those connections with/importance to greater powers. I realize also that an occasional state that would commonly be defined as small could pose a threat to many countries – a present-day example would be North Korea because of its access to nuclear weapons. Still, the potential use of such weapons by a small state would lead to its own destruction as well, placing it still in a fundamentally different category from that of a great power. Compare to the definition of a small state by Amry Vandenbosch, “a state which is unable to contend in war with the great powers on anything like equal terms”. Vandenbosch 1964, p. 294. Anyone interested in reading more on small state studies can find a good starting point in the anthology with annotated bibliography by Ingebritsen, Neumann, Gstöhl & Beyer eds. 2006, even if the editors at times tend to lapse into a praise of small states.

that an in-depth study like this cannot yield findings that are valid for all small states. Instead, I have chosen to look at two states in the small state category that also have a number of other similarities, thus here I am not only speaking of small states but of – among other things, to be discussed more at length shortly – democratic, wealthy, consolidated Western European small states. In this way, the study will contribute to the larger field of small state research by comparing in detail the margins for manoeuvre, ideas and strategies of two similar small countries choosing different tactics regarding alignment, thereby nuancing not only the histories of the states concerned but the meaning and usefulness of the concepts neutrality and alliance to define the security policies of small states.

Neutrality versus alliance?

Anyone who has read about (or lived during) the Cold War is probably familiar with the coloured maps of Europe showing NATO-members in one colour (often blue), Warsaw pact members in another (usually red), and neutrals as spots of white. The image of the security policy possibilities is clear: a state could either be allied with the West or East or be neutral (possibly allowing for an exception for Finland, which on some maps was given stripes or a lighter shade of the Warsaw pact colour to indicate its friendship treaty with the Soviet Union.) It is a point of departure encountered in small state theory as well that when it comes to security, a small state can choose either to ally with other states or to proclaim neutrality.10

Hans Morgenthau in 1949 wrote that if small nations did not stay independent simply because of their lack of attractiveness, they owed their independence to either a protecting power or to the balance of power. In the latter case, he described a state that was ready and willing to change sides as it deemed fit, a state in “splendid isolation”, as the powerful “holder of the balance” which would always throw its weight on the lighter scale as its “only objective […] is the maintenance of the balance.”11 Almost twenty years later, Robert Rothstein pointed out that this behaviour was only valid for greater states – small ones would (just as unscrupulously) behave in the exact opposite way, in an anti-balance of power manner.12 Quincy Wright had already in 1942 introduced the term “bandwagoning” to describe states that “appease the powerful aggressor in order to divert his attention or to profit by his conquest”.13 The term did not become popular until Kenneth Waltz in 1979 picked it up and used band-

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10 See for example Huldt 1977, pp. 38–56; Ottosson 1986, p. 15.
11 Morgenthau 1949a, p. 143.
12 Rothstein 1968, p. 15.
13 Wright 1942, p. 1258.
wagoning as an opposite to balancing (joining the weaker side to avert the threat of the stronger).  

Both balancing and bandwagoning assume that a smaller state will eventually throw its lot in with others, making neutrality by definition a temporary policy of wait and see. According to Rothstein, weak states have a tendency to choose whichever side seems to be winning. “If power corrupts, so does the lack of it”, he wrote. Bo Huldt in 1977 challenged the assumption that small states tend to ally with the winning side, thus acting in an anti-balance of power manner. He argued that this observation is in fact not all that general if you look at separate cases. Sometimes it’s the case, sometimes not. Quincy Wright, when he introduced the term bandwagon, actually presented it as one of four policies of states that were not the protagonists in a conflict – “prudent preparedness”, or bandwagoning, was only one of them. The other three were isolationist neutrality (eschewing conflict), balance of power (supporting the underdog), and collective security (building on juristic sentiments, collaboration “in a pre-arranged plan against aggression as in human societies enforcing law”). How well any of these strategies worked depended on, among other factors, the distance to the belligerents and the policies of other states.

In fact, small state theorists generally use other categories than neutrality and alliance as soon as it comes to describing the actual behaviour of small states. Still, the division of small states into the security categories of aligned versus non-aligned is paramount in historical accounts of small state security after World War II. It is compatible with the Cold War paradigm. From that perspective, World War II caused a partition, not only between East and West, but between the smaller Western states. Wartime neutrals that in spite of their declared neutrality had experienced occupation – like Norway, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands – joined NATO, while those that had avoided being drawn into the war – like Switzerland and Sweden – stayed neutral (or, to refer to the peacetime policy: non-aligned). However, this thesis will argue that while non-alignment and alliance are perhaps the most visible and seemingly overarching security policy principles, they may not be the only or even necessarily the most relevant or important security policy strategies for small states. Other strategies used to safeguard territorial and political independence and avoid being drawn into a war are not only equally important but may be similar for neutral and allied countries, warranting a questioning of the use of neutrality and alliance as a dichotomy. Such strategies may include the positioning in diplomatic exchanges, trade patterns, use of wealth, membership of interna-

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14 Waltz 1979, pp. 126–127. The expression “pilot fish behaviour” is also sometimes used to describe what Waltz calls bandwagoning. See Zetterberg 1997, p. 38.
15 Rothstein 1968, p. 11.
17 Wright 1942, p. 1258.
tional organizations, public relations, etcetera. These matters play a significant role in determining the margin for manoeuvre and opportunities of a country to achieve peace and stability. Neither common neutrality nor common alliance membership implies identical security policies.\textsuperscript{18}

This thesis will also argue that a neutrality policy and a policy of alliance membership need not be diametrically opposed: the concepts themselves are fluid, leaving the question of what is neutral, and what constitutes an alliance, open to interpretation. As the editors of *Neutrality in twentieth-century Europe* cleverly put it, neutrality is not a neutral word. It is rather a profoundly ambivalent term which carries a variety of charges, both positive and negative.\textsuperscript{19} Finding a universally applicable definition of neutrality is not easy even if one limits the scope to that of neutrality as a security policy. Neutrality, as Norwegian historian Nils Ørvik attempts to define in his book *The decline of neutrality*, “signifies primarily a nation’s status of non-participation in hostilities when other countries are at war.”\textsuperscript{20} Danish political scientist Hans Branner has used the obvious limits of such a definition to argue against neutrality as the central concept in the Danish foreign policy tradition: neutrality has taken on so many different forms under different circumstances that the only common denominator is “a tendency to stay out of war”. As Branner points out – and I tend to agree –, that says very little about the strategies employed and could be consistent with quite contradictory foreign policy views.\textsuperscript{21}

Even a glance at the historical meanings of neutrality and a superficial comparison between the policies of different neutral states at different times shows that neutrality is a fluid concept. Historians and political scientists of most neutral countries generally emphasize the unique character of that particular country’s variety of neutrality.\textsuperscript{22} Corresponding references to particular and unique forms of alliance policy are perhaps less frequent, but the definitions of

\textsuperscript{18} Torsten Örn has shown that even a superficial comparison of different countries’ neutralities exposes them as the consequences of different historical developments and with different aims and characters. Örn 1987; Örn 1990. Cees Wiebes and Bert Zeeman have pointed out that there were big differences in policy and plans among small states that joined NATO and that they should therefore not be lumped together, Wiebes & Zeeman 1994, pp. 169–174. Laurien Crump has shown how even within an alliance such as the Warsaw pact, small states played different roles and found margins for manoeuvre to use the pact to pursue their own, different aims. Crump 2012, pp. 49–63. See also her dissertation, Crump 2015. This suggests that there is much more to the security policy strategies of a small state than its alignment or non-alignment.

\textsuperscript{19} Lettevall, Somsen & Widmalm (eds.) 2012, pp. 1–13. For the historical ambivalence of the term neutrality in Sweden’s case, see also Andrén 1991. Andrén has also called Swedish neutrality an *överdoktrin*, an overarching or umbrella doctrine, which in reality encompassed a number of (sub-)doctrines, see Andrén 2002, pp. 104–116.

\textsuperscript{20} Ørvik 1971, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{21} Branner 2000, p. 189.

\textsuperscript{22} See for example Heinz Gärtner and Otmar Höll on Austria: “Austria’s concept of neutrality is historically and globally unique. This form of neutrality cannot be put on a level with other concepts of neutrality.” Gärtner & Höll 2001, p. 184.
an alliance are fluid as well. This is not for lack of attempts at a viable definition. Stefan Bergsmann, for one, has made great efforts to develop “a theoretically useful definition of the concept of military alliance” because, he argues, “all definitions developed so far are not clear, concise and narrow enough to be a useful basis for further theorizing.” His proposal for a useful definition of an alliance is “an explicit agreement among states in the realm of national security in which the partners promise mutual assistance in the form of a substantial contribution of resources in the case of a certain contingency the arising of which is uncertain”. But even such a carefully thought through definition remains vague. It cannot be clearly distinguished, for example, from the definition of an organization of collective security.

Rather than deciding on a definite definition of alliance, it seems pertinent to take into account how historical actors in different contexts have used and understood the term. As is the case with neutrality, an alliance can mean many things: the character of alliances, like that of neutrality, has varied in different historical periods. Robert Rothstein points out, for instance, that some alliances have been primarily defensive in character while others have been offensive, and that the form chosen has been influenced by the “nature of the period”. As an example he mentions the League era, in which alliances “tended to be at least formally open to all states.” In her recent dissertation on the Warsaw pact, which might be considered the opposite end of the alliance types – one that is very closed and inflexible and generally viewed as merely a power instrument of the dominating great power – Laurien Crump has convincingly shown how even such a pact provided its members with considerable room for manoeuvre to develop different strategies. In short, the choice for neutrality/non-alignment or alliance as such says very little about a state’s security considerations, strategies and room for manoeuvre. In addition, all forms of non-alignment do not exclude all types of alignment and vice versa. This thesis will therefore argue against framing small state security policies solely or even mainly within these concepts. It will examine their use in practice but not attempt to provide a definitive definition of either.

It should be noted, finally, that while only the term neutrality is used in this thesis when referring to Sweden’s wartime policy, the terms neutrality and non-alignment are used interchangeably to describe peacetime policy. Technically, this is not correct. Neutrality is by definition a wartime policy of a country declaring that it does not take sides and wishes to stay out of a war between other states. Non-alignment is the peacetime policy of not making any commitments that would prevent the possibility of declaring neutrality should war break out. However, the use of the expression neutrality policy when actually

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23 Bergsmann 2001, p. 36.
24 Rothstein 1968, p. 46.
referring to the peacetime policy of non-alignment is so widespread, both among contemporaries and among researchers, that I have seen fit to adopt it. A language which deviates too much from customary practices can become contrived. Let it be noted, nevertheless, that when “neutrality” is used to describe peacetime policy, it refers in fact to non-alignment with the goal of being able to declare neutrality in war.

Comparing Sweden and the Netherlands

Marc Bloch pointed out that by comparing we may discover the causes for different developments in spite of similar origins, and avoid the temptation to regard a specific development as logical or natural. Bloch showed how the death of the manse in one case and its persistence in the other would seem perfectly logical and unproblematic if one looked at only one country, examining the rural history of either France or Great Britain. “Only comparison”, he wrote, “reveals that the problem exists.”

In both Sweden and the Netherlands, there are tendencies to view the development of security policies after World War II as both logical and unique. In Sweden emphasis is placed on the tradition of neutrality and the fact that it survived the war. While most countries during the Cold War belonged to the East or West, Sweden was in-between and stayed aloof from anything that implied alliance, such as the European Community. For a long time, politicians as well as ordinary citizens have entertained the idea that Sweden, or at least Swedish foreign policy, was significantly different from the rest of Europe. Lena Hjelm-Wallén, the first Swedish foreign minister to participate in a foreign ministers’ meeting of the European Union in 1994, testified to this by recounting how surprised she was to discover the ease with which she got along with the other foreign ministers within the EU. “Like many other Swedes I thought we had an altogether special foreign policy that was very different from those others on the continent” she said, “but it wasn’t like that”.

In the Netherlands the German occupation is considered a formative moment for Dutch security policy which doomed the tradition of neutrality, or aloofness. Since World War II, the Dutch have prided themselves on being pioneers of European integration and something of a leader of the small NATO allies, emphasizing the uniqueness of the Dutch position as a bridge builder.

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26 Bloch 1953, p. 515.

between the Atlantic and Europe. However, when reading Dutch political scientist and former Minister of Defence Joris Voorhoeve’s study of Dutch foreign policy, *Peace, profits and principles*, it is evident that what might seem typically Dutch will often also be typically Swedish. The alliterative title, which functions as a summary in brief of the overall goals and motives of Dutch foreign policy, could just as well have been the title of a book on Swedish foreign policy traditions. For instance, one could also easily substitute “Dutch” for “Swedish” in claims like “neutrality in war and non-alignment in peace was developed by the Dutch into a doctrine with moral overtones”.  

If nothing else, it seems remarkable that two countries with fundamentally different international policies developed such similar positions as (at least self-proclaimed) role models. The inclination to support an image of doing good is strong in both countries. The heyday of Sweden as a “moral superpower” and of the Netherlands as a “guiding country” is usually dated to the 1970s in both countries, though the tendency can be found much earlier. Even the inclination to act as a bridge builder between East and West during the Cold War, a role many Swedes would link to Swedish non-alignment, can in fact also be found in the Netherlands. Although he is primarily known for contributing in 1974 to the cementing of an image of the Netherlands as NATO’s most loyal ally, Alfred van Staden a few years later pointed to the rise in the 1960s of the Dutch role as bridge builders, in competition with their role as loyal ally. In 1978 Van Staden and his students predicted that tensions might arise between the Dutch urge to strengthen NATO and the détente-inspired desire to promote cooperation between the power blocs.

Such eye catching correlations between Dutch and Swedish inclinations in international relations long after different alignment-choices suggest at least some line of continuity after World War II and call for a reevaluation of the

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28 Voorhoeve 1979, p. 48.

29 Sweden as moralisk stormakt and the Netherlands as gidsland, see Nilsson 1991, p. 46; Gaay Fortman 2001, p. 375. This image still persists. In a 2011 foreign policy report by the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy, the idea of the Netherlands as a model country is attributed to the Mansholt committee of 1972, but the report speaks of the existence in the Netherlands still after 1989 of a “deeply felt need to make a contribution that went beyond what could, in all reason, be expected from a country like the Netherlands”. The committee ties the idea of the Netherlands as a model country to its capacity to “punch above its weight”. Knapen, Arts, Kleistra, Klem & Rem 2011, pp. 35–37, quote from p. 37. Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström in a 2015 interview also spoke of the importance of Sweden’s engagement in the world: to spread an image of Sweden as a country that is democratic, open and egalitarian and works for solidarity opens doors all over the world. She called Sweden a humanitarian great power. Michael Winiarski and Karin Eriksson, interview with Margot Wallström in DN 16 January 2015, http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/tonenar-valdigt-hard-och-oforsonlig/ (accessed 16 January 2015).

30 The article was produced by Van Staden together with the participants in a graduate seminar of his. His co-authors are specified in a footnote: R.A.H. Schipper, K.J. Silverstone, P.G.L. Schumacher, C.A. Tazelaar, W.J. Wassen, J.W. Wesseldijk, and A.H. Wijffelman-Clemens. Van Staden et al. 1978, pp. 129–133.
significance of the policies of non-alignment and NATO-membership in practice. They raise the question of what other similarities have been overlooked by a propensity for focusing on distinguishing features from a national perspective. Probably all countries have the tendency to present their history as unique, and admittedly all countries’ histories are – only generally less unique than most people think, and no more unique than the history of others.

Operationalizing a comparative method

Voorhoeve gives three reasons for why the Dutch government did not return to a policy of neutrality after World War II: the policy had utterly failed; the change in the scale of warfare had made an independent defence even less attainable; and “the main pre-condition for successful neutrality, a stable European balance of power” had disappeared. At least the last two reasons are just as valid for Sweden, and though one might argue that the Swedish policy of neutrality had been successful – or at least had not “utterly failed”, considering that Sweden never became belligerent – the war shook the faith in the viability of neutrality in Swedish government circles as well, as will be discussed in chapter 2. While Voorhoeve’s explanation might not be wrong, the logics of the comparison reveal that it is not sufficient.

It is just as easy to point to examples of Swedish explanations that are refuted by comparisons with the Netherlands. In their book on Swedish security policy in the shadow of the superpowers 1945 to 1991, Magnus Petersson and Olof Kronvall present a situation after World War II in which Sweden hardly had any choice but not to offend the new superpower (the Soviet Union) as there was no other superpower to balance with: Germany was crushed, Great Britain severely weakened, and the commitment of the United States uncertain. Yet, the same was true for the Netherlands – a fact that did not keep that country from joining the Western camp as soon as the United States did make their commitment clear. Kronvall and Petersson’s explanation might be valid, but it is not comprehensive.

The comparative approach allows a scrutiny of the source material of one country through the prism of the other country’s explanatory model. The causes which writers invoke for one country’s security policy developments can be tested by asking whether they might explain the developments of the other country as well. As in the examples above, the comparison reveals where there is a need to move deeper and closer to understand what the crucial differences were between Sweden and the Netherlands, and to highlight what was in fact similar. Comparing explanations leads to more precise questions: did Swedish policymakers really consider neutrality successful, while the Dutch saw it as the

31 Voorhoeve 1979, pp. 102–103.
cause for failure? Did Swedish and Dutch policymakers make different estimates of the change in scale of warfare and balance of power? How did Dutch policymakers deal with the initial absence of the United States as a balancer to the Soviet Union in Europe, and how did the eventual American commitment to Europe affect Swedish policymakers compared to Dutch?

As a method to be able to compare perceptions, basic argumentation analysis will be employed, using three categories: definitions, assessments, and options. The first category, definitions, is used based on the assumption that much can be revealed by the manner in which something is described. How did the parties concerned define a situation or an organization, or the character of other peoples and governments? And in which terms did they describe themselves, their own goals and interests? Secondly, their assessment of an issue highlights existing standards, priorities and expectations. Which problems and possibilities did policymakers ascribe to a certain situation, organization or relationship and how did they put these in relation to the interests and goals of their own country? Turning to the implications of these definitions and assessments leads to the category of options: which possible actions did each country’s leaders perceive? Which attitude or action was advocated, which strategy chosen, and with what motivation? Which space was there between the definitions of the best and assessment of the possible?

Approaching the material in this way provides a tool to break down debates and decisions into comparable categories even where the quality, quantity or nature of the source materials differ, or where the concrete circumstances are fundamentally divergent. The categories work well with the source material and questions, and make it easier to analyse and compare the way in which policymakers in the two countries spoke about the international order and their own country’s place in that order. Unique events and problems have further been categorized as situations of pressure, threat or possibility to allow for comparing things that are at first glance quite different. For example, the strategies of the Swedish government in relation to pressure from Germany during the war can be compared to those of the Dutch government to counter pressure from the United States concerning Indonesia. By focusing on the strategies chosen and ideas expressed, the meaning and causes of decisions can be reevaluated.

As already mentioned, the analysis will compare the two governments’ margins for manoeuvre rather than use the concept of power to describe the ability

33 In my view, this approach lends itself very well for comparative research, although I have not encountered others who have used it for that particular purpose. Other than that, the method by and large corresponds to the way other historians and political scientists have traditionally used argumentation analysis to examine policy development, although I have boiled down to three what is often divided into four categories, see for example Levine 1963, pp. 12–30 (definitions, value judgements, analyses, and recommendations); Oredsson 1969, pp. 213–224 (definitions, values, description of reality, and recommendations). For a more recent overview of different possibilities of text and discourse analysis, see Bergström & Boréus 2012.
to pursue security. Margin for manoeuvre is not simply a synonym for freedom of action but reflects the inherent tension of seeking both territorial integrity and political independence. It is in other words coupled to the definition of security as this combination of striving for territorial integrity and political independence. The ideas and strategies for security in this double sense are the subject of this investigation.

Why Sweden and the Netherlands?

By comparing the reasoning around foreign policy and security possibilities and goals in two smaller European democracies in the immediate postwar period (including postwar planning during the war), this thesis will probe the causes for different developments as well as bring to light what was similar. Some comparisons of similar countries in the immediate postwar period have been conducted before: Swedish foreign policy has been compared to Norway’s, and the Netherlands to Belgium, for example. There is good reason to compare the policies of neighbour states. Their proximity and kinship can highlight differences that occur in spite of these. But there is also good reason to compare countries that do not directly influence each other or have close ties and sometimes sensitive historical baggage between them like neighbouring countries almost inevitably do. Sweden and the Netherlands are both situated in northwest Europe, but they are not neighbours and they belong to different local regions. They are both similar and different enough for a comparison to nuance each country’s national history writing and bring a new perspective on the margin for manoeuvre of small states.

This dissertation will compare Dutch and Swedish security ideas and strategies in the period during and immediately following the war, focusing on initiatives and debates in government circles which concern peace and security in post-World War II Europe. This will contribute to small state research by illuminating the possibilities and attempts of these states to position themselves during a time of uncertainty – window of opportunity – in the international order. By comparing two countries that ended up on different sides of the demarcation line between neutrality and alliance, the comparison will enable a discussion on the significance of that division. It will also test what common denominators might be found in spite of this and other differences. Notably, there was a significant difference in size and international position between the two countries due to Dutch colonial possessions in the Caribbean and South East Asia. Yet, both countries are traditionally defined as small – and were so at

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34 Wiebes & Zeeman 1993; Noreen 1994. The relations between these countries have also been subject to research; see Hellema, Coolsaet & Stol (eds.) 2011 (Belgian–Dutch relations) and Petersson 2003 (Swedish–Norwegian security relations).
the time, in spite of Dutch attempts to define itself as a middle power\textsuperscript{35} – which creates an opportunity to discuss in what ways their relative margin for manoeuvre related to the different positions. In short: Sweden and the Netherlands are sufficiently different in size and international position as well as in their war experience and in later Cold War policies (neutrality versus alliance) to make common denominators interesting.

At the same time, the differences are interesting because they constitute a contrast to a number of common characteristics of the two countries. Notwithstanding the differences mentioned above, there were many similar traits both in the countries’ international positions and in their past foreign policies. Their economies were dependent on international commerce and both propagated free trade. Both leaned on a seventeenth-century period of greatness which gave them a position – or at least an attitude – somewhat beyond their size. Sweden was one of the oldest kingdoms in Europe and had been a great power in the seventeenth century. The Netherlands inherited from its Golden Age of the same period not only its position as a hub for trade and culture, but also the wealth and status of a colonial power – even if the current maintenance of the Dutch East Indies had for some time been dependent on the support of the British.\textsuperscript{36}

The countries also had similar regional positions, both partly reminders of a greater past. In 1830 Belgium had broken out of the union with the Netherlands and become independent. In 1905 Norway had gained independence from Sweden. Before that, in 1809, Sweden had lost Finland to Russia. The Netherlands had close ties with Belgium and Luxembourg, as Sweden had with the Scandinavian countries, both often (being perceived as) acting as the “big brother” of the others. The two countries also had similar systems of government, both being constitutional monarchies with similar democracies and two chamber parliaments.

When it came to security, finally, both countries had a long tradition of proclaiming neutrality in conflicts though neither had a constitutional obligation to do so; both were fervent supporters of an international rule of law; both had successfully avoided being drawn into World War I but had given up strict neutrality after the war in favour of collective security. Within the League of Nations they had to some extent cooperated during the interwar period on the basis of shared interests. In 1936 they jointly withdrew from the plight of article 16, declaring their right to choose in each case whether to participate in sanctions, a movement culminating in the Declaration of Copenhagen in 1938, when the foreign ministers of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg declared that they considered the

\textsuperscript{35} See Wiebes & Zeeman 1993, pp. 63, 68, 74–75, 80.

\textsuperscript{36} According to H.L. Zwitser, since the Napoleonic wars the Netherlands had been dependent on others to maintain their colonies. Zwitser 1983, p. 58.
sanctions of the League optional not only for themselves but for all member states.\[37\]

There were thus a number of similar premises and ideas concerning foreign policy and security before World War II, which might lead to an expectation of continued similarities. The war, however, seemed to cause a rupture. The countries’ war experiences were fundamentally different. While Sweden again avoided being drawn into the war, the Netherlands was attacked and occupied in spite of a declaration of neutrality. The wartime lessons can easily be seen as decisive for the later Cold War policies: the German occupation efficiently discredited Dutch neutrality and made it unviable as a security policy, while Swedish neutrality survived the war. For a long time, the histories of both Swedish and Dutch postwar foreign policy were marked by consensus: Sweden was the country of a middle way between East and West and its non-alignment with time came to have an even sacrosanct shimmer. The Netherlands was a convinced and loyal NATO ally, a pioneer of integration, its neutrality definitively killed by the German invasion in 1940.

However, a closer look complicates the matter. In both countries the consensus stories have been nuanced considerably after the end of the Cold War. Several recent Swedish publications have emphasized that Cold War Sweden cooperated covertly with the West – even to the extent that some speak of a secret alliance.\[38\] Swedish compromises and stretching of the meaning of non-alignment and neutrality was hardly new, of course. During earlier conflicts and also during the latest war, deviations from legal neutrality were made when these were considered the best way to keep the country out of war. In fact, a determination of what was to be considered legal neutrality had only recently been laid down in the Hague conventions of 1907, and even that was incomplete and left considerable room for interpretation, as Swedish Foreign Minister Christian Günther pointed out in a speech on Swedish neutrality in 1943.\[39\] Moreover, after the war neutrality was in fact at first abandoned in favour of a collective security system, as long as that was thought the best chance for peace. Only when it was clear that the UN would not be efficient enough due to growing tensions between East and West did Sweden develop a peacetime policy of neutrality.\[40\]

As to the Netherlands, recent Dutch publications point out that the definitive demise of Dutch neutrality did not come until the Dutch entry into the Brussels pact in 1948. In the early postwar years many Dutch officials, including Foreign Minister Van Boetzelaer (1946–1948), were strong proponents of a pol-

\[38\] See for example Agrell 1991; Dalsjö 2006; Holmström 2011.
\[39\] Günther 1943, pp. 4–5.
\[40\] Though one could argue that the Cold War was in fact a war, albeit a cold one, and that this was what made neutrality a viable policy in the first place.
icy of collective security and the one-world conception with its focus on bridge building. Moreover, later Dutch reservations in NATO, but also wartime and early postwar serious disagreements with the British and even more the Americans on the Dutch East Indies, refute any simple story of a postwar Netherlands that was a convinced and loyal Western ally. Research in the 1990s showed that there had been serious doubts among Dutch advisors about the Atlantic arrangement on the grounds that it would be too provocative to the Soviet Union. The same thesis highlighted Dutch Foreign Minister Stikker’s last-minute threat to withdraw and not sign the North Atlantic Treaty because of pressure from the United States over Indonesia.

In light of all this, it seems appropriate not to simply pose Swedish neutrality against Dutch alignment. If nothing else, there are good reasons to assume that the Dutch abandonment of a long tradition of neutrality with all its implications (independence, non-participation, aloofness) was not entirely clear-cut and decisive, just as it seems safe to suggest that Swedish postwar neutrality was – as it had been before – subject to pragmatic adaptations to changing circumstances. It is time to ask: what was it exactly that was abandoned when Dutch neutrality was so vehemently declared stone dead? And what was it that Sweden retained by the claim of security policy continuity? A choice was made for non-alignment in Sweden and participation in an alliance in the Netherlands, and the outward professing consensus was strong. But a discrepancy may be sensed – both in Sweden and in the Netherlands – between the formal policy proclamations and implicit policy practices. One may even question, as Branner has done in the case of Denmark and neutrality, whether neutrality and alliance should be the central concepts with which to characterize and understand the Dutch and Swedish security policy traditions. The choice for a policy of neutrality or one of alliance was undoubtedly an important one, but overemphasizing it risks putting everything in its light and, by implication, leaving other things in its shadow. Surely not all parts of the Dutch traditions died instantly, while the Swedish ones were left unaffected by the changing world order?

Research design and delimitations

The prevailing image of both Dutch and Swedish foreign policy during the period treated in this dissertation is that it was more or less paralysed. Swedish historian Karl Molin writes that for most politicians, the immediate postwar years “was a period when foreign policy was marked by waiting and hesita-

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42 Wiebes & Zeeman 1993, pp. 299, 390–398.
tion”, and in his extensive survey of Dutch foreign policy, Dutch historian Duco Hellema entitles the entire chapter on 1940–1948, “Impasse”. Only when the superpowers had decided on their courses and the dust had settled on a world divided into East and West and ruled by armed peace guaranteed by the fear of total annihilation (later to be known as MAD, mutually assured destruction), the smaller states seemed to regain their ability to act – or, rather, react. The Netherlands abandoned a long tradition of neutrality (often referred to as a policy of aloofness or abstention) and became a member first of the Brussels pact in 1948, then of NATO in 1949. Sweden revived its policy of neutrality in 1948 and in the 1950s formulated what would become a Swedish trademark: non-alignment in peace aiming at neutrality in war.

Both Molin and Hellema recognize, however, that even if there was no clear guiding principle for the postwar policy before 1948, there were lively discussions concerning the international situation. As World War II drew to a close, the smaller states of Europe found themselves in a position of great need as well as immense uncertainty regarding the future. Survival as an independent state was at stake, making present and future security a critical matter. At the same time it was unclear how the great powers were going to act, leaving the smaller states guessing at possible future scenarios. Would the (former) allies continue to cooperate after the war, in spite of the noticeable tensions between them? What were the plans of the emerging eastern superpower, the Soviet Union? Would the United States withdraw into renewed isolation and leave Europe to fend for itself? How long before the Germans rebuilt and possibly sought revenge? What reforms would be required to avoid revolution and achieve internal stability among the population in Europe as well as in the colonies after years of sacrifice and lawlessness? And how could one start to restore sovereignty and rebuild a position in the international community after having been humiliatingly defeated or forced to compromises by the enemy of the victors? On top of all this, the devastation of the war and in particular the introduction of the atomic bomb in 1945 undermined previous assumptions about the nature of warfare and possibilities for defence and called for a redefinition of threats and how to handle them.


44 Hellema 2006, chapter 3. Henk Neuman’s book on Dutch security policy 1940–1945 is also called “Impasse”, Neuman 1990. Cees Wiebes and Bert Zeeman claim that the first postwar years were characterized by a low-profile wait and see-policy and that foreign policy was not high on the political agenda because of the primacy of the colonial question and economic reconstruction, Wiebes & Zeeman 1993, p. 133. Jussi Hanhimäki describes the early postwar years for the Scandinavian countries as a “transitional stage”, Hanhimäki 1997, p. 16. Maarten van Alstein uses the word “impasse” to describe the years 1945–1947, referring to the unclear and confusing character of the first postwar years. Alstein 2011, pp. 41, 45.

45 See for example Wels 1982, pp. 15–25.
In short, if there was waiting, it was certainly not calm and placid waiting; hesitation, yes, but not resignation and passivity. This was a period of feverish activity, a reorientation that began long before the war ended. The uncertainty and dependence on the actions of other states might often have impeded definitive decisions, but that did not mean that nothing was done or contemplated. Worldwide, this was a time of vivid discussions on international matters, novel ideas, the founding of new organizations. The future was too insecure and too important to just wait and see what the great powers would do without preparing for what they might do.

The reasoning behind the definition of this period as one of a foreign policy vacuum can in fact quite easily be turned around. The deadlock and uncertainty created a window of opportunity: a time of both greater freedom and greater urgency than usual for the policymakers of small states to discuss great strategic matters, precisely because there were no clear directions from the great powers; precisely because no one knew what would happen next; precisely because of the great and diffuse threats looming on the horizon. From this perspective, the formulating of new policies around 1950 was a reaction to the demands of the greater states once they had staked their postwar courses, and marked the end of a period of openness and possibilities.

On the time period chosen

Much of the research on international relations in the 1940s focuses either on World War II or on the (emerging) Cold War, making 1945 a divide. Publications either beginning or ending in 1945 are numerous, as a quick look in the literature list of any book on the period – this one included – will show. Any periodization is of course as necessary as it is artificial, and 1945 is not a bad choice as turning points go: the war undeniably overthrew old orders and its end ushered in new beginnings. However, cutting the 1940s in half makes it easy to overlook continuities as well as to miss the dynamics of the mid-forties themselves. This thesis deliberately breaks up the periodization before versus after 1945 to make room for continuities bridging the fracture of the war as well as to make it possible to treat this in-between period in its own right, with its chaotic character and diverse activities – whether these resulted in Cold War policy or not.

The choice of 1942 as the temporal starting point is one that requires some explanation. Arguably, the line of reasoning above could call for a starting point even earlier, immediately after the outbreak of World War II. The year 1942 has been chosen for a number of reasons. The most important is that the focus

46 That is indeed the periodization chosen in a Norwegian foreign policy overview series. Volume 4 with the title “Inn i storpolitikken” (Into big politics) covers the period 1940–1949: from the German attack on Norway to the decision to join NATO. Sverdrup 1996.
of this dissertation is on planning for future security, and before that year there was very little postwar planning. In 1942 the war was perceived to reach a turning point, thereby creating an opening for making plans for when the war would end.

Simultaneously, 1942 can be considered the nadir of the war in both Sweden and the Netherlands, the very darkest, most threatening time. Considering the latter, it may seem an odd starting point for something claimed to be a window of opportunity for small states like Sweden and the Netherlands to discuss greater strategic international postwar issues. After all, in 1942 both Sweden and the Netherlands had very little room to manoeuvre and one might compare the situation to a closed corner rather than an open window. If we speak of margin for manoeuvre, that margin may seem extremely narrow. Indeed, Sweden’s security policy of neutrality can be described as based on the principle of not acting, leaning on the lawful right to stay aloof – a very vulnerable strategy when other states are not abiding by the invoked law. Swedish diplomat Sven Grafström, at the time Acting Head of Division of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs’ press agency and Secretary of the Foreign Affairs Committee, in a 1942 diary note vented his opinion that it was dangerous for Sweden “to sit like a hypnotized neutral hare waiting to be devoured”.47 The picture of a passive, helpless Sweden corresponds with the description by Gunnar Hägglöf, Sweden’s chief negotiator during the war as the Head of the Foreign Ministry’s trade department. According to Hägglöf, Sweden’s foreign policy in the first war years was barely policy at all. In all important aspects it was no more than a positioning in the face of the requests and requirements of one belligerent party or the other.48

But this same feeling of being cornered, paradoxically enough, created the window of opportunity of which this thesis speaks. The aforementioned comments by Grafström and Hägglöf not only show the paralysed position of Sweden, they also criticize it. It is easy in retrospect to focus on the fact that Swedish neutrality survived, that it seemed successful, but from the perspective of the situation of 1942, it was a highly questionable policy.49

As far as the Netherlands was concerned, a policy of neutrality had already utterly failed by May 1940, as it did not keep Germany from attacking and

47 Grafström 1989a, p. 399. My translation. In Grafström’s words: “Att sitta som en hypnotiserad neutral hare och vänta på att bli slukad” Grafström in this context referred to how the Belgian and Dutch endeavour to maintain strict neutrality had meant they did not even dare discuss defence measures with each other, not to mention with others. Nonetheless, when these two neutral “hares” were devoured, it happened under the pretense that they had not maintained strict neutrality.

48 Hägglöf 1972, pp. 69, 116.

49 Bo Stråth claims that in the 1940s there was significant opposition against Sweden’s policy of neutrality within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, mentioning in particular Erik Boheman, Sven Grafström, and Karl Ivan Westman. He emphasizes that it is not until the 1950s that one can speak of a clear and unambiguous doctrine of neutrality. Stråth 1993, p. 56 et passim.
occupying the Netherlands. But alliance was hardly experienced as a simple solution to the security deficiency of neutrality. In fact, though at war with Germany, the Dutch government initially tried to maintain a neutral position vis-à-vis other countries. The role of the Netherlands as an ally after May 1940 was not one that the government chose freely or adapted to easily. Albert Kersten describes in his dissertation on the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in exile how it took a long time before Dutch diplomats abroad received any instructions on government policy at all after the occupation, and that when they did, the instructions were brief. According to Kersten, as they now had to fit into the context of the allies, the best the Dutch could do was often to follow the lead of their British colleagues. But for most Dutch diplomats, raised in a tradition of independent and unattached actions, this was a real challenge. One could no longer stay aloof from the great international issues, but the former soloists – as Kersten so nicely puts it – had to sing their own government’s melody in the choir of allied representatives. Moreover, participation in the allied concert increased the demands on the Dutch representatives abroad to actively manifest the existence and deeds of the Netherlands.\footnote{Kersten 1981, pp. 46, 149. See also Hellema 2009, pp. 84–87.}

It was also not as evident as was later made out\footnote{By for example Shaper 1981, pp. 102–124.} that it was neutrality as such that had failed and that therefore membership in an alliance was the obvious solution. As Floribert Baudet points out in his recent book \textit{Het vierde wapen} (The fourth weapon, my translation), a dominant view was that a main cause for the failure of the Dutch defence was a lack of cohesion and national unity. The popular resistance had been inadequate and support for the military too weak.\footnote{Baudet 2013, p. 17 et passim.} The occupation of the Netherlands threw the Dutch government into an alliance with the other Western belligerents and forced a Dutch security policy revision. However, there was no consensus as to exactly what the policy change should entail in the long run, after the war was over. With the turmoil involved in establishing and safeguarding legitimacy for a Dutch government in exile, and as long as Dutch armies kept fighting in the Pacific for the Dutch part of the kingdom in the East Indies, there was not much room to discuss future policy. On 9\textsuperscript{th} March 1942, however, Dutch troops surrendered and the Dutch East Indies were lost to the Japanese. By then both the United States and the Soviet Union had also joined the alliance, robbing the Dutch of their previously held position as a relatively strong ally to Great Britain.\footnote{Manning 1978.}

In short, in 1942 both the Netherlands and Sweden found themselves in a tight spot, occupied or under the threat of occupation and depending on the decisions and goodwill of other countries for their primary needs. Precisely because the bottom line was reached, and nothing less than survival as an inde-
ependent state was at stake, there was all the more reason to question the success of the current security policies. In addition, as in 1942 the military advantage was thought to have shifted, focus in the course of that year shifted from trying to survive the day – in the Dutch case also because the last great bastion of Dutch independence was occupied, in the Swedish because the most acute threat of an imminent attack seemed to have passed – to restoring independence and planning for a safer postwar world. Future security and safeguarding independence was a real and urgently felt need in 1942.

The choice to end the investigation in 1948 mirrors a resolve to compare the security ideas and strategies of the 1940s without placing them in the direct light of policies that were not yet formulated. Ending in 1948 conforms to a clear perception that this was the year in which the window definitively closed, which means I share the use of 1948 as a demarcation line with those who would formulate it as the end of the foreign policy vacuum or deadlock. 54 1948 was the year in which the Netherlands signed the Treaty of Brussels (thereby officially abandoning the traditional Dutch policy of neutrality) and the Swedish foreign minister reclaimed a policy of neutrality (although the formula ‘non-alignment in peace aiming at neutrality in war’ was not cemented until the 1950s). It ushered in a new set of conditions for the margin for manoeuvre to pursue security.

Aim and questions

The chief aim of this thesis is to shed new light on the nature, causes and consequences of two small states’ security policies and on their margin for manoeuvre in a period in which not only their own policies but international relations more generally were redefined. The comparative approach and the window of opportunity concept provide the methodological and theoretical framework of the dissertation. Together they frame an overarching two-part question: how did the security ideas and strategies of the Swedish and Dutch governments compare in a period when the future world order was uncertain, and what can that tell us about subsequent policy choices?

Treating the period as a window of opportunity avoids a teleological perspective. The questions of how to achieve and maintain security – territorial integrity and political independence – are approached from the viewpoint of the people involved in shaping security policy at the time. That does not mean that assumptions are made in advance regarding whether those policymakers

54 See also the research of Cecilia Notini Burch. In her dissertation on security and refugees she identifies 1948 as a watershed year, after which the Swedish government no longer refused any Soviet refugees but took a stronger stand against the Soviet regime. She points to 1948 as the year in which Sweden gave up eastward bridge-building ambitions and abandoned the most ambitious attempts at establishing a friendship with the Soviet Union, even if the need to maintain a certain level of trust remained throughout the Cold War. Notini Burch 2014, pp. 20, 210–217.
actually perceived a window of opportunity and tried to exploit it as such – that remains an open question. It does mean that the focus is on what security considerations were similar and different in the two countries before the new reality of the Cold War had been established. The treatment of the period as a window of opportunity lays bare motives and goals of the two countries’ security policies without regard to what later turned out to be possible.

The comparison in turn avoids a national perspective, and allows for questioning of traditionally nation-bound patterns of explanation. Comparing Sweden and the Netherlands in a period when policies were not fixed will show which security ideas were similar and different and reveal whether they can be tied to similar or different circumstances. It will allow for reevaluating both the impact of World War II and of the Cold War on security considerations. The comparison will reveal what was unique to each nation and what was common. This thesis will in other words look at Dutch and Swedish security policies in a new methodological and theoretical light. On a very general level, it will allow for a discussion of the margin for manoeuvre and possibilities of small states to position themselves in the international order during times when this order is itself being redefined – thus, windows of opportunity. More specifically, the goal is to nuance the existing images of Dutch and Swedish postwar security policy development.

In practice, there is of course no exact dividing line between the window of opportunity and the periods of more fixed security policies and established patterns of international relations that come before and after. Moreover, even in a period of uncertainty characterized by an unusually open discussion on future security arrangements, there were many constraints both practical and ideological. This thesis will therefore consistently treat not only ideas on security but also the concrete security strategies applied in many situations of pressure. By comparing the security ideas, strategies and circumstances, determining to what extent they were similar and on what points they differed and when, the development of the two countries’ security policies will be analysed.

A number of questions will help to concretize the analysis. First of all, which similarities and differences can be discerned between the general security attitudes and strategies in the two countries? This question will be answered by comparing both security ideas and security strategies from 1942 to 1948. What ideas regarding future security surfaced in the two countries during the war? Did these ideas change over the following years? If so, how and why did they change? A discussion of the conditions for realizing ideas in practice will be included in this context. Strategies will be compared in a similar way: what ways to handle the different concrete security problems can be identified in the two countries during the war, and how do these compare to postwar strategies? The interplay between ideas and strategies will be discussed as well. What were the motives behind the plans for future security and the day-to-day handling of
security issues respectively? And how did the handling of crises conform to the envisioned security ideals? Finally, the formation of the Cold War policies of non-alignment versus alliance will be set against one another in an attempt at a new understanding of this development. Why did the governments of these two countries come to make different choices for post-World War II national security when the window of opportunity closed, and what significance can be ascribed to that difference?

Source material

The concern of this dissertation is the making of security policy in Sweden and the Netherlands – how decisions were arrived at, formulated and defended and which factors were considered. The focus therefore is on debates on foreign policy and security as conducted on decision-making levels. Though many interesting ideas and opinions on the best new world order were put forward by non-governmental organizations and individuals as well in this period, these will only be treated insofar as those ideas became very general and/or visible in the decision making process on a state level. The concern here is not only what was considered desirable but also what was viewed as viable by those who were held accountable for the country’s welfare.55

To be able to follow each government’s lines of reasoning, focus has been placed on source materials that describe the ministers’ discussions and understanding of the situation as closely as possible. Memoranda from people with a central position in the governments’ foreign administrations have been included, as these formed the basis for decision making. The most obvious source materials for insight into the decision making of the governments would be the minutes from the cabinet meetings – the Dutch Notulen van de Ministerraad and the Swedish Statsrådsprotokoll. However, while the former indeed provide such insight, the latter do not. Discrepancies both in the traditions of keeping protocol and the manner in which the protocols have been ordered, have made slightly different approaches necessary. The Dutch cabinet meetings were held frequently (at least once a week, but sometimes twice) and the minutes of these meetings are comprehensive and include extensive summaries of discussions, providing also an account of dissenting views on different issues. The Swedish ministerial meetings of this period were slightly less frequent and – more important – the protocols only succinctly recorded decisions made and did not include motivations or an account of the preceding discussions.56

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55 Many individuals and groups devoted themselves to developing ideas for a better world and postwar peace. Some have been the subject of studies. See for example Klaus Misgeld’s thorough study of the international group of Social Democrats in Stockholm during the war, Misgeld 1976.

56 See SE/RA, UD Huvudarkiv, Statsrådsprotokoll för utrikes ärenden 1942–1945, A3A 111–118 and NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02. The difference is at least in part a concrete result of the
Another manner in which the cabinet minutes are disparate lies in how they have been preserved. The Swedish cabinet protocols were arranged by department, which means that the Swedish minutes used are the sections filed in the archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, thus only dealing with issues concerning foreign affairs, while the Dutch are filed in the cabinet archives and include all issues. That means that in the Swedish case, the selection of what should count as foreign affairs has already been made by civil servants, which with a different approach might have been a handicap. However, as this dissertation focuses on the greater strategic debates, the chances that important issues would be missed must be considered minimal.

The lack of such a departmental arrangement in the Netherlands has on the other hand meant going through a lot of Dutch cabinet issues to find the security and foreign policy concerns of interest, especially before 1947. In that year, the agendas began to take on a fixed form (treating foreign policy more or less consistently as item 4.) The obvious disadvantage has been practical: the time-consuming nature of the work. The advantage has been that it has resulted in a fair understanding of how much governmental attention was directed towards foreign policy and security as compared to other issues. On the Swedish side it has been necessary to rely on other sources (notes, diaries, parliamentary records) to form a similar impression.

When considering the Netherlands, the central source has been the lengthy protocols from the frequent meetings of the Council of Ministers (i.e. the cabinet), as these provide a picture of which issues and opinions dominated. This source has been complemented with the use of the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, as well as the separate archive of E.N. van Kleffens, who was foreign minister from 1939 to 1946 (on to 1947 without portfolio), followed by positions as postwar envoy to the United Nations and Dutch representative in the Security Council and Dutch ambassador in Washington. Eelco van Kleffens was no doubt the single most influential individual in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the period.

On the Swedish side, going through the foreign affairs section of the protocols from the Council of Ministers (Statsrådsprotokoll för utrikesärenden) has not provided similar insight into governmental views. Formal matters such as appointments of diplomatic missions, trade agreements, and decisions on dip-

different war experiences. Prior to World War II, no account of the Dutch cabinet deliberations was recorded either. It was only after the attack on the Netherlands and the flight of the government to London that on 18 May 1940 the decision was made to record what was said at the cabinet deliberations, presumably as a result of an awareness that the government would have to account for its actions in exile. De Jong 1979, p. 8.

The difference in the terms used for the foreign affairs departments of the two countries – Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Sweden but Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands – reflects how the governments themselves present the departments in English. See the Swedish government’s presentation: http://www.government.se/sb/d/2059 and the Dutch government’s presentation: http://www.government.nl/ministries/bz (both accessed 11 January 2015).
lomats’ benefits and travel expenses were registered, but the protocols reveal next to nothing on international politics and security considerations. They do reveal, however, when there was an issue considered important enough to discuss with the Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs (Utrikesnämnden, henceforth referred to as the Foreign Council). Decisions to assemble this council are recorded, including succinct agendas for the meetings which disclose little about their nature (often no more than two agenda points, such as “Protocol adjustment” and “The foreign policy situation”).

By consulting the protocols of the Foreign Council meetings themselves, a better picture of the government’s views and grounds for decisions can be obtained. The Foreign Council was a body for consultation between government and parliament which was informed and consulted about the government’s foreign policy regularly (though not necessarily very frequently – in the period treated here between five and ten times a year). The protocols provide a summary of the government’s presentations to the council as well as of the discussions in the council and its comments to the government. They provide an excellent picture of the issues and dilemmas considered most important in international relations.

As in the Dutch part of the study, the Swedish archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Utrikesdepartementet, have been used, as has the personal collection of Östen Undén, Swedish foreign minister from 1924 to 1926 and 1945 to 1962. Before he began his second term as foreign minister in 1945, Undén was a prominent member of the First Chamber and of the Foreign Council. He was the chairman of the Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs (Utrikesutskottet, henceforth the Foreign Affairs Committee), which was a separate organ but consisted of the same members as the Foreign Council. Moreover, during the war he was the international law expert of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and as such was often the author of memoranda on important security policy issues considered by the government. In many ways Undén was – in retrospect – the very incarnation of postwar Swedish foreign policy.

As the Foreign Council protocols often only reveal the government’s view after it had been formulated, other material has been used to gain some insight into the character of concerns and considerations leading up to the presentations, and to make sure nothing important is overlooked because the government might have chosen not to present it to the Foreign Council. A number of members of government have more or less elaborately described the cabinet deliberations in their private notes and diaries: Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson (Socialdemokraterna, Social Democratic Party), Minister of Justice Karl Gustaf Westman (Bondeförbundet, Farmers’ Union), Minister of Education

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59 For a discussion on the extent of the possibilities of the government to choose what to tell the Foreign Council and when, see Ekecrantz 2003.
Gösta Bagge (Högern, Liberal Conservatives), Prime Minister Tage Erlander (Socialdemokraterna) and Foreign Minister Östen Undén (Socialdemokraterna). In addition, I have used the notes of Sven Grafström, who was Head of Division at the press department of the Foreign Ministry as well as Secretary of the Foreign Affairs Committee and, from 1944, head of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs Political Department. Though there has been less need to rely on these kinds of materials on the Dutch side, the diaries and personal notes of Van Kleffens have provided extra insights as has the personal correspondence between Van Kleffens and his successor Van Boetzelaer van Oosterhout. Some use has also been made of the diaries of wartime Minister of War Otto Cornelis Adriaan van Lidith de Jeude and diplomat Han (Hendrik Nicolaas) Boon.

The parliamentary records of the two countries – the Dutch Handelingen van de Eerste en de Tweede Kamer and the Swedish Riksdagstryck – have also been used, though not for the entire period. The most obvious reason for this is the discrepancy in availability: for the first three years of the research period, 1942–1945, the Dutch government was in exile in London and did not have a parliament to answer to. For the symmetry of the study, and to enhance the comparability of the wartime and postwar periods, I have chosen not to build my account on these records for the postwar period either. However, an exception has been made for the centre chapter on the United Nations membership (chapter 4). Here, as a case study, the two countries’ parliamentary records have been used for a fuller understanding of the collective security debate. For the comparison of the treatment of one specific issue (UN membership) which was important in both countries, the parliamentary records provide excellent and easily comparable material.

Finally, some public expressions on foreign policy by central individuals or groups have been considered, as they reveal what views were consciously presented to an external audience and, presumably, meant to influence public (international) opinion. These include a number of articles and the text of a 1943 broadcast on Dutch foreign policy by Dutch Foreign Minister Eelco Nicolaas van Kleffens, and a 1944 pamphlet on national and international stability by the Dutch Prime Minister Pieter Sjoerds Gerbrandy. These were published in English which means they were in all likelihood deliberate top-level Dutch contributions to the international debate. On the Swedish side, in addition to domestic speeches and articles by foreign ministers Christian Günther and Östen Undén (in Swedish), a publication by the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (Utrikespolitiska Institutet) from January 1945 has been

60 Both the Netherlands and Sweden at this time had bicameral parliaments, and the procedure for adopting draft legislation followed basically the same pattern: a royal bill was presented, accompanied by an explanatory note by the government and attachments, followed by a Committee statement commenting the bill, after which it was discussed in the Second and the First Chambers where it was finally adopted or rejected by general consent or, if anyone called for it, by individual voting.
used: *Fred och säkerhet efter andra världskriget: ett diskussionsinlägg*. Even if it was not an official government publication, the authors came from the circle of Swedish policymakers. The book was simultaneously published in English as *Peace and security after the Second World War. A Swedish contribution to the subject*. This suggests that it was an attempt to spread Swedish views abroad and participate in the international debate on the postwar security system. A more complete and detailed list of sources used can be found under References.

**Disposition**

In addition to this introductory chapter, this dissertation consists of five empirical chapters and one chapter discussing the results of the investigation. Two short summaries follow, one in Swedish and one in Dutch. The disposition of the thesis is basically a chronological one, even if there is some overlap as the events are organized according to thematic considerations. The chronological set-up allows a view of the process and changes in attitudes during the period, although it is certainly not an account of every government exchange concerning security and foreign policy between 1942 and 1948. I have chosen to focus on general ideas and strategies rather than on the events themselves, which will only be used as examples to illustrate the security consideration, ideal or strategy at hand. The discussions of a few central issues will be treated in order to be able to make in-depth analyses of definitions, assessments and perceived options. Each chapter will deal in detail with a certain issue or group of issues. The questions in focus will be presented in each chapter’s introduction. The two countries will be treated parallel to each other and compared continuously as the chronological story moves along.

Chapter 2 will deal with security strategies during the war, coupled with critical issues of legitimacy and state survival. By default, this chapter will deal with quite different concrete situations and discussions in the two countries as the Netherlands was occupied while Sweden was a non-belligerent. Comparing how the governments defended their country’s existence and interests under such disparate war conditions will allow for unearthing the basic character of dilemmas and strategies independently of that country’s circumstances. Chapter 3 will focus more specifically on postwar planning during the war, and in particular on discussions and treatments of the ideas on regional and international cooperation and collective security. It will end with a discussion of the impact of the different war experiences on plans for the future. Chapter 2 and 3 together will make it possible to relate the exposed situation during the war, with its urgent focus on surviving, to the views on the best chances for future survival.

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As such, the publication was indeed reviewed by (among others) David Mitrany, the Romanian-British author of the 1943 pamphlet *A working peace system* (Mitrany 1943). Mitrany 1945.
In chapter 4, the central issue of collective security will be highlighted, using parliament debates on the collective security organization actually created after the war as a case study. The chapter will consider in detail the Dutch and Swedish governments’ propositions for each country’s United Nations membership and the ensuing parliamentary discussions. That will allow in-depth analyses of definitions, assessments and perceived options regarding security at the end of World War II and in the early postwar period. Chapter 5, then, will explore how the principles of collective security and the ideal of one world solidarity worked out in practice early in the postwar period. The balancing of sometimes contradictory security ideas and interests will be discussed, as will the attempts to reconcile national interests with support for the UN and hope for continued cooperation between the great powers. Chapter 6, finally, will consider the reactions to the growing tensions between the superpowers as the hope for such cooperation faded. It will feature the events leading up to the decisions to join a military alliance and reclaim a policy of neutrality respectively. In the concluding chapter 7 the results of the empirical investigations of chapters 2–6 will be analysed, the questions posed in the introduction answered, and suggestions made for continued research.
To ensure the survival of the state may be the most elementary task of any government, a prerequisite for all its other actions. Nonetheless state survival is seldom a central issue in the deliberations of the governments of well-established states like Sweden and the Netherlands, simply because it is not at stake. World War II brought the issue of national security in its most urgent shape—survival as an independent state—to the fore. In the years considered in this chapter, 1942–1945, threats to the state’s territorial integrity and political independence constituted pressing concerns for both the Swedish and the Dutch governments.

The difference between the two countries was, to be sure, considerable. The Dutch mainland was occupied by Germany in 1940 and the Dutch East Indies lost to the Japanese in 1942. Dutch citizens were subject to incarceration, deportation, forced labour, and genocide. Fighting for survival for the Dutch government meant coordinating military efforts with the allies as well as defending the legitimacy and political independence of the government in exile. In comparison, the Swedish situation was far less desperate. “[I]n this European paradise”, wrote the former Dutch envoy in Stockholm Egbert van Nagell in 1942, “[...] one notices only from radio and newspapers that there is a war raging, and [...] nobody cares about it as long as there are hors d’oeuvres and aquavit and the Russians don’t win.”

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62 Dutch former envoy in Sweden Baron Van Nagell to Foreign Minister Eelco van Kleffens on 16 June 1942. NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr 29. My translation of “in dit Europeesche paradys, waar men slechts uit radio en couranten bemerkt dat er een oorlog woedt, en waar niemand er zich iets van aantrekt zoolang er hors-d’oeuvres en aquavit zijn en de Russen maar niet winnen”. The quote should be seen in the light of earlier complaints by Van Kleffens that Nagell was not sending any useful reports to the Dutch government in exile and his dismissal in 1941 (although he stayed in Stockholm and continued to do some work at the Dutch legation.) Nagell defended himself by complaining that it was hopeless to get anyone to talk politics in neutral Sweden: people were either too scared or they didn’t care about the war. Minister of Justice J.R.M. van Angeren in a letter to Foreign Minister Van Kleffens on 29 April 1943.
While it serves to illustrate how far removed the Swedish war situation was from the Dutch, it is not true that the Swedish government was untouched by or indifferent towards the war, as Nagell suggested. Although Sweden had – so far – avoided invasion, its territorial integrity was most certainly threatened. The isolated neutral, surrounded by German troops, was on constant military alert and the government saw itself compelled to make concessions infringing on both territorial integrity and political independence in its attempts to avoid the fate of other neutral countries, among which were its closest neighbours.

The agenda of the Swedish government of course differed from that of the Dutch. While the highest priority of the Swedish administration was to avoid getting involved in the war, the Dutch government – after an initial period of continued partial aloofness\(^\text{63}\) – tried to get as involved as possible in allied war decisions that concerned the Netherlands or the Dutch East Indies. Swedish neutrality and Dutch war participation obviously also affected matters such as military organization and diplomatic contacts with other nations – both which ones were entertained and on what premises. Negotiations with the Germans, for example, were a necessity for the Swedish government but out of the question for the Dutch.\(^\text{64}\) And the intensity and frequency of contacts with the British and American administrations, as well as with the governments in exile of other occupied countries, was much higher for the Dutch government, physically present in London, than for the Swedish government which both figuratively and literally speaking kept its distance in Stockholm.\(^\text{65}\)

In light of these significant differences, it is all the more interesting to note that distinct similarities can be found in the security strategies of the two gov-

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\(^\text{63}\) The Dutch Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies declared the Dutch East Indies still neutral after the occupation of the Netherlands and the Dutch government in exile did not immediately declare war on all the enemies of the allies. Kersten 1981, pp. 45–46; Kersten 2009, p. 555. On the late Dutch declaration of war against Italy (16 December 1941) see also De Jong 1979, pp. 44–48 and Neuman 1990, p. 45 (Neuman however wrongly dates the declaration to 16 September 1941).

\(^\text{64}\) Although in the early period of the occupation, some prominent Dutch, including Prime Minister De Geer, argued for trying to negotiate an understanding with the Germans. De Geer was forced to resign. His successor Gerbrandy gives his version of De Geer’s negotiation attempts and dismissal in his postwar account of the London period, Gerbrandy 1946, pp. 7–9. See also for example De Jong 1979, pp. 71–96; Neuman 1990, pp. 58–62.

\(^\text{65}\) The cumbersome relationship between the Netherlands and the Soviet Union (more on that later) shows that fighting on the same side in the war did not automatically mean entertaining close relations. Also the much higher intensity of contacts of the Dutch with the Norwegian than with the Danish government points to the importance of the physical presence in London.
ernments. In this chapter, we shall take a closer look at how the Swedish and Dutch governments dealt with their relations to other countries during the war. The first part will focus on how the governments withstood pressure and in which ways acute measures were connected to considerations about the future. Secondly, strategies for strengthening the country’s position will be discussed. The final section will treat the hierarchy and character of different relations.

To allow for comparison in spite of the very different settings, the analysis centres on which concrete strategies and tactics the governments employed to safeguard independence and integrity rather than on the circumstances. The aim is not to provide an overview of the wartime policies of the two countries but to highlight a few situations which illustrate the governments’ concerns, their margin for manoeuvre and their actual use of that margin. That will make it possible to identify common denominators and find characteristics of these small states’ security policy practices without assuming a priori that the context of neutrality or alliance determined the strategies. This will benefit the analysis in the subsequent chapter, as the ideas on postwar security can be set off not only against the separate characteristics and conditions but also against the background of the concrete and practical security strategies during the war.

Dependent independence
The war put the governments of both Sweden and the Netherlands in a position where, to a large degree, they depended on others for their security. Whether neutral or allied, and whether about averting threats or obtaining assistance, relationships with other states were crucial. How did the Dutch and the Swedish governments work to maintain their independence in a situation of such obvious dependence on the decisions of others? Different interests had to be weighed against each other: avoiding immediate military risks against risking the country’s (long-term) standing; claiming the right to pursue an independent course against losing crucial cooperation and goodwill. What room was there to consider long-term national interests when dealing with critical threats to security? How did the governments balance the need to make concessions to the more powerful with the need to assert independence? This chapter will begin by highlighting certain government discussions that illustrate these wartime dilemmas. It will focus on how the two governments handled pressure in matters that were of both immediate and future concern.

Balancing critical threats and future interests
In early 1942, the most acute security challenge to the Dutch government in exile in London was defending Dutch authority over the Dutch East Indies, not
just in the face of the Japanese enemy but in relation to its own allies. In January 1942 the government discussed the position vis-à-vis the Americans and British concerning Dutch participation in warfare in the Far East. It was clearly not the first time the issue had come up. At stake was the level of Dutch involvement in decision making and dissatisfaction with the way the British and American governments handled matters without including the Dutch.

The chairman, Prime Minister Gerbrandy, wanted to demand full partnership for the Netherlands – a position that was quite drastic: it meant withdrawing support for a previous agreement on co-partnership. Foreign Minister without portfolio Edgar Michiels van Verduynen pointed this out, taking a more cautious stand, but Gerbrandy insisted, calling his position absolute and a matter of Dutch prestige. The Dutch should demand a full partnership for the Netherlands in the cooperation with Great Britain and the United States, especially with the future in mind. He warned that the Netherlands would pay a price for any concession made now, the consequences including their position in later peace negotiations. The Dutch must, according to Gerbrandy, keep asserting Dutch sovereign rights. Minister Michiels van Verduynen expressed his agreement, but argued for a careful approach. Terms like “unacceptable” would be dangerous in the negotiations with the British and Americans.

Not long after this discussion, the Dutch Lieutenant Governor General of the Dutch East Indies, Hubertus van Mook, publicly criticized the allied warfare against Japan, which led to another discussion in the council. Although the ministers understood Van Mook’s disappointment, polemics in the newspapers were considered undesirable. Michiels van Verduynen warned that the Dutch must, under these circumstances, not step on American toes.

These discussions illustrate how the government’s immediate problem was connected to concerns about the future. On the one hand, it was of principal importance to assert sovereignty and maintain authority and prestige with a

66 According to Loe de Jong, the Dutch had no influence on the allied strategy in the Pacific whatsoever. He also claims that the British hardly did either, but that the show was run by the Americans. De Jong 1979, p. 118. Albert Kersten has also described “the Dutch sense of marginalization” and how the Dutch won some symbolic recognition but no real influence on American policy in the Pacific. Kersten 2009, pp. 355–358. On how the Dutch were bypassed in decisions concerning the South East Asian theatre of war and had little influence in the (American-British-Dutch-Australian) ABDA-command and Combined Chiefs of Staff decisions, despite succeeding in acquiring the formal right to be heard in that forum, see also Neuman 1990, pp. 119–122. For a concise background on American ambivalent attitudes toward Dutch rule of the Dutch East Indies in the interwar years and a description of how geopolitical and economic interests dominated and led the United States to side with the Netherlands in the face of a Japanese threat, see Gouda 2009, pp. 520–530. For a description of how the Japanese occupation affected the Indonesian independence movement from an Indonesian perspective, see Soedjatmoko 1988.

67 Dutch cabinet protocol 16 & 20 January 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.

68 “zoals Jhr Michiels het uitdrukt: wij moeten in deze omstandigheden Amerika niet op de teenen trappen”. Dutch cabinet protocol 3 March 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.
view to the future position and power of the kingdom and thus to stand up to the pressure from other states. On the other hand, the present position of the Dutch government was that of a government without a country, a guest of the British government, reliant on that country’s support and hospitality. It was utterly dependent on the help and goodwill of others to regain the independence needed to build any position at all. That meant one had to tread carefully, a point particularly emphasized by the specialized members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Present survival was intertwined and sometimes at odds with future survival. And while it was important to assert one’s rights and independence in direct negotiations, it was simply not a good idea to challenge those with more power too bluntly or publicly.

Although the situation was considerably different, similar problems – of asserting independence in the cooperation with more powerful countries while not losing their crucial goodwill – presented themselves to the Swedish wartime government as well. A national coalition government, including all parliamentary parties except the communists, had been formed in 1939 for the sake of demonstrating national unity and stability during the war. It was faced with the difficult task of balancing different interests and demands with the overarching goal of keeping Sweden out of the war. Early on, it had made concessions to Germany allowing transit through Sweden of materiel and soldiers on leave between Norway and Germany, and throughout the war, negotiations with both Germany and the Western powers were necessary for trade purposes. The overseas trade was of vital importance for Sweden, and after the German occupation of Denmark and Norway, both the Germans and the British set up blockades of ships to and from Scandinavia, leaving more or less half the Swedish merchant fleet in waters controlled by the Germans, half in the British area of authority. Sweden faced an imminent risk of running out of essential supplies. Moreover, without overseas trade Sweden became dependent on trade with the German-dominated part of Europe. After intensive negotiations, the Gothenburg free passage traffic (lejdtrafiken), allowing Swedish westward trade, started around the turn of 1940/1941, but the Swedish government lived under the constant threat of either side stopping the trade if they were unsatisfied with Swedish actions.

69 In addition to the transits to Norway, the Swedish government also allowed a German division to pass through Sweden from Norway to Finland to fight the Soviet Union in 1941. See Carlgren 1973, pp. 150–190 (transit agreement), pp. 299–314 (transit of the Engelbrecht division to Finland) and pp. 358–443 (negotiations after the tide of the war changed in favour of the allies). See also Andrén 1996, pp. 55–58. For an account of Sweden’s war time trade policy, see Häglöf 1958. Gunnar Häglöf was the head of the trade department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs 1939–1944 and has described the events during his term of office in some detail. For an overview in English of how the transit agreement came about, see West 1978.

70 For this brief description which does not do justice to a complicated matter I have made grateful use of Nicolaus Rockberger’s dissertation on the Göteborg free passage traffic. He describes how different types of arguments were used to convince different belligerents to allow
It is against this background one must view the comment of Foreign Minister Christian Günther in the spring of 1943, when he informed the Foreign Council (Utrikesnämnden) that negotiations on a new trade agreement with Great Britain and the United States were imminent, that these negotiations were not about the free passage traffic. He emphasized instead the long term interest of the new trade agreement, which would replace that of 1939. A solid basis for the trade would be of importance under new circumstances (presumably meaning less possibilities for trade with Germany) and perhaps after the war. The trade agreement would also have general political significance. There were, however, certain British and American demands and conditions for closing a new trade agreement. Some demands, such as the use of Swedish ships abroad, were not considered problematic, but some caused a dilemma for the Swedish government. One was the demand that two Norwegian ships, held in the harbour of Gothenburg by the Swedish government after an earlier incident that had evoked strong German protests, be released and allowed to leave for England. The most important was that the Swedish put an end to the bulk of the transports covered by the transit agreement with Germany. It was especially on this matter that the government wanted to consult the Foreign Council.71

As in the Dutch case, the consideration of future needs and benefits is evident. The government was eager to accommodate the Western powers and build goodwill once the war was perceived to have turned in their favour. Moreover, ending the unpopular transit agreement had advantages within domestic public opinion and could improve the tarnished relations with Norway. The problem, of course, was that compliance might jeopardize the current safety of Sweden, if not by an outright attack then by Germany putting an end to the free passage traffic. As in the Dutch case, present and future survival were potentially at odds.

In the Foreign Council discussion of 8th April 1943 Foreign Minister Günther pointed out that the transits were very important to the Germans, but that a termination could, from a Swedish point of view, be defended as bringing Sweden closer to a strict policy of neutrality. The argument would be that the Swedish policy of neutrality was consistent and reliable, but that the fact that the occupation in Norway had taken on a more violent character meant that the transits now violated that neutrality. A termination of the transit agreement would hence be an expression of policy stability rather than change (and therefore not a sign of Sweden turning against Germany).

trade: the British were told that the trade would decrease Sweden’s dependence on Germany and increase possibilities for defence against that country, while the Germans were presented with economic arguments and the prospect of Sweden’s industry being able to function to facilitate exports to Germany. Rockberger 1973, a résumé of the arguments on pp. 96–97. For background on Swedish wartime negotiations with Germany and the Western powers, see also Karlsson 1974.

The opinions of the council on what to do varied. Some, like Conservative Johan Bernhard Johansson, argued that political issues should be avoided in trade negotiations and warned of Germany’s reaction. Although all seemed to agree that it would be desirable to get out of the transit agreement, some were of the opinion that while new demands could be rejected on the basis of new circumstances, it would be unwise to retract a concession already made. Besides, it had been going on with the silent acquiescence of the allies so far. Others, like Social Democrats Östen Undén and Rickard Sandler (the previous foreign minister), argued that the transits were un-neutral and had been a necessary evil which should be terminated as soon as possible. Sandler also argued that Sweden should take the initiative to end the traffic before the war was over. There were risks in relation to Germany, but these risks would not decrease if one waited until warfare broke out again in Norway and made it necessary to stop the transits – on the contrary: it would be incautious to wait until the German need was at its height. Moreover, the political value would not be the same if Sweden only ended the traffic when forced to.\footnote{Foreign Council on 8 April 1943. Official protocol, SE/RA Tvåkammarriksdagen, Utrikesnämnden, A2:5; Notes by Undén, SE/KB, Östen Undéns samling, L 108:11a; Karlsson 1974, pp. 274–280.}

This illustrates the importance of timing and that not only a weighing of short-term risks but also a consideration of the longer term political value of different choices was part of the security policy discussions. It also points out another dilemma attached to accommodating the Western powers (in addition to the problem of getting out of the transit agreement without German retaliation): the government did not want to create the impression that Sweden could be told what to do by the governments of other countries, but if it didn’t comply, it expected eventually to be coerced.

Defending the independent appearance

The manner in which a solution was found to the Swedish dilemma is characteristic for Sweden – which is not to say, as we shall see, that it was \textit{per se} typically Swedish. On 1\textsuperscript{st} October 1943, Foreign Minister Christian Günther informed the Foreign Council about the completion of the negotiations and gave them a review of what had happened since the summer. A Swedish memo had been delivered to the British and Americans on 13\textsuperscript{th} July in which it was emphasized that the Swedish government could not in an agreement with a warring party commit itself to terminating an agreement with the other warring party. At the same time the memo indicated that Sweden was planning to terminate the transit agreement shortly. It was added that the Swedish government would examine other parts of the proposal after the transits had ceased. In the meantime, it intended to follow the guidelines contained in the proposal. It planned...
to try to phase out the exports of oil to Germany – another Allied demand – by 1st October. In practice, the Swedish government also followed the rules of the proposed agreement when negotiating trade agreements with Germany, Finland, Hungary, etc.73 In other words, while formally refusing demands, the government did precisely what the counterpart desired – only presenting it as an independent policy decision of the Swedish government. That way, the counterpart could be accommodated without giving up formal political independence and while retaining the interpretative privilege.

The strategy of the Swedish government, manoeuvring to satisfy British and American demands without giving up formal initiative, is not unique as a strategy employed by a small state under pressure. The Dutch government similarly emphasized the importance of keeping the initiative in its own hands rather than waiting to be coerced, thus employing self-constraint, anticipating the demands of a more powerful party in a relationship rather than risking being openly constrained by it. A case in point is the Indonesian question, where international and especially American anti-colonialism posed a severe problem for the Dutch government. On the one hand the Dutch administration tried to influence both U.S. government officials and public opinion, trying to convince the Americans that the Dutch East Indies was not a colony in the traditional sense, but that the relationship should be seen as voluntary cooperation in which the Dutch took on the role of helping and developing their grateful colonial subjects.74 On the other, it tried to forestall American demands by announcing a postwar conference on the future of the kingdom in which all parts of the kingdom (emphasizing that they were parts of the kingdom rather than colonies) would take part. In a speech before a joint session of the United States congress in Washington on 6th August 1942, Queen Wilhelmina spoke of “voluntary cooperation in mutual respect and toleration between people of oriental and western stock towards full partnership in government on a basis of equality”,75 and in a radio speech on 6th December of the same year, she announced constitutional reforms concerning the Dutch East Indies.

In his memoirs, Social Democrat and future Prime Minister (1948–1958) Willem Drees blamed the Indonesian revolutionaries Hatta and Sukarno for


74 The protocols of the Dutch cabinet mention several times how members of the government as well as the ambassador in the United States took every chance available to “explain” the Indian situation to journalists, politicians and other groups in the United States with which they came in contact. Newspapers and magazines were also used to carry out the message, see for example Van Kleffens’ article on “The democratic future of the Netherlands Indies” in Foreign Affairs, October 1942. For background on the Dutch idea of managing a model colony and the Dutch “ethical” governance of the Dutch East Indies”, see Gouda 1995, quote from p. 241.

75 Address by her Majesty Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands to the Congress of the United States Thursday August 6, 1942. Congressional Record vol. 88, no. 143. Reproduced in NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr. 216.
unnecessary bloodshed, claiming that the December 1942 speech showed that an Indonesian rebellion was unnecessary. If they had only paid attention, Hatta and Sukarno would have known that independence could be achieved peacefully.76 Views similar to this one have been persistent in Dutch historiography. Joop de Jong in a 1988 article emphasizes that “the British and Dutch policy towards the Indonesian Revolution was not based on suppression or complete restoration, but on decolonization.” De Jong may be more nuanced than Drees, but he takes a very Dutch point of view, and the basic tone and essence of the argument is the same: this was not a matter of former masters trying to retain dominance. The Dutch have been misunderstood – they only wanted “a political understanding with the Indonesian nationalists about the precise road that would lead to complete independence.”77

However, the speech Drees felt they should have listened to was not primarily aimed at Indonesian ears. It should be seen in the light of the Dutch government’s hope to forestall American anti-colonial demands and enable the Netherlands to regain authority over the Dutch East Indies and maintain it as long as possible, at least in some form. Even the decision to include a Javanese minister without portfolio in the cabinet was taken with the Americans in mind. When it was proposed on 27th May 1942, it was argued not only that it would be an advantage to have a minister who saw the Indonesian affairs as an Indonesian, but also that his preparedness to be included would make a good impression. It would undermine American propaganda against the “suppression” of Indonesians by the Europeans (quotation marks as used in the protocol). In spite of initial resistance from the queen, on 10th June 1942 Pangeran

76 Drees 1983, pp. 93–95.
77 De Jong 1988, p. 23–24. The impression that De Jong’s view is lopsided is enhanced by his description in the same article of the Indonesian proclamation of independence in 1945 by Hatta and Sukarno as “the starting point of an expanding wave of nationalism”, while an article by Soedjatmoko in the same anthology shows how it was the result of an independence movement that had grown during the war. De Jong 1988, p. 24; Soedjatmoko 1988, pp. 9–16. In 2011 De Jong still emphasizes that the Netherlands and the Republic Indonesia from 1945 completely agreed on the main goal: Indonesian independence by way of gradual decolonization. He lays the blame for the failure of peaceful decolonization on domestic opposition in both countries. The fact that his Dutch “opposition” actually refers to (parts of) the government and parliament does not prevent him from simultaneously claiming that “the Netherlands” wanted Indonesian independence. As to the Indonesian domestic opposition, it is repeatedly referred to as “the recalcitrant following sabotaging every compromise” (“de recalcitrante, elk compromis saboterende achterban”), which suggests a view of the moderate Republican negotiators as the only true and sensible representatives of Indonesia – in spite of De Jong’s own description of the period as one of great chaos and internal power struggle. De Jong 2011, pp. 672, 681. L.G.M. Jaquet also has a Dutch-angled view of the decolonization, Jaquet 1982. For a more nuanced and in-depth account, read Frances Gouda: on the Dutch position and colonial practices in the Dutch East Indies, Gouda 1995; for the events surrounding the Indonesian declaration of independence, Gouda with Brocades Zaalberg 2002, pp. 119–141. For an account which places the Dutch loss of the Indies in an international context and compares it to the French and British decolonization processes, see Doel 2001.
Adipati Soejono was appointed minister without portfolio and welcomed into the cabinet.  

The discussions on the reception of the 6th December radio speech in the Council of Ministers clearly show that it was designed to appease the Americans, and to some extent the British, but not the Indonesians. Not one word was said about whether the speech had even been heard in the Indies, while great importance was attached to the positive reactions to the speech in American and British press. And in the preceding discussions on the contents of the speech in the Council of Ministers, concerns brought forward by Minister Soejono – ostensibly the insider expert – regarding what atmosphere the speech would create among Indonesians and warnings not to underestimate the forces for independence were brushed aside by the other ministers. Soejono’s understanding of the situation was dismissed as inadequate: he could not purport to know the mind of the Indonesians, who were moreover diverse and could not be treated as a unit. This did not, incidentally, prevent other ministers from claiming to be sure that the same – generalized – Indonesians desired continued cooperation with the Netherlands.

Other concerns were taken more seriously, such as world opinion; how the declaration would influence the Dutch authority in the Netherlands proper and in Europe; and what one should (and should not) tell the Americans, and when. The timing was, as in the Swedish case, an important issue and one that several ministers brought up, some arguing for making a statement as soon as possible, some for waiting for a better moment. In the discussions on the right timing, the overriding importance of international aspects and especially the United States again came to the fore. The Minister of Colonies on 15th October argued for the need to make a statement soon: before the British and Americans (in connection to discussions on reconquering the Indies) demanded an answer to how the Dutch saw their future administration of the Dutch East Indies and before a congress at the Institute of Pacific Relations in Montreal in December. Still, he wanted to wait until after 3rd November – that is, after the American elections: “otherwise one misses the necessary attention there”. Should the declaration pervade the Indies, he said, it might have a comforting effect on Indonesians too and serve to counter the propaganda of the Japanese. Still, the declaration on the future of the Dutch East Indies was clearly not primarily made to improve the relationship with the Indonesians.

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78 Dutch cabinet protocols 27 May, 2 and 10 June 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.


80 Dutch cabinet protocols of 13, 15 and 22 October and 8 December 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246. My translation of the Dutch words: “anders mist men daar de noodige belangstelling”. Soejono’s warnings were completely disregarded. Van Keffens was among those expressing his firm belief that a majority in the Indies was in favour of cooperation with the Netherlands and that it was thus not at all a matter of oppression (in the 13 October
Returning to the Swedish trade agreement with the United States and Great Britain, the way in which Sweden dealt with the other – more tricky – side of the problem, namely revoking Germany’s permission to transfer supplies and personnel to and from Norway, also shows some similarity to the way the Netherlands dealt with American pressure. The common denominator might be found in that the Netherlands and Sweden in both cases dealt with strong/aggressive pressure from a powerful country that it was important not to antagonize. At the same time, standing up to it was considered necessary as vital national interests were at stake (in the case of the Netherlands the maintenance of the Indies, for Sweden future trade and good relations with the expected victors of the war). Though the United States was not a military threat to the Netherlands as Germany was to Sweden, the Netherlands was in a sense similarly at the military mercy of the Americans: it could not reconquer the Dutch East Indies without the goodwill of the United States. That way, both cases concerned threats to the country’s territorial integrity.

While the Swedish government subtly let the British and Americans know that it would comply as long as it could do so on its own terms, it needed a different tactic for getting out of the arrangements previously made with Germany. Timing was important, as Sandler pointed out in the discussion mentioned above. In June 1943 it was still “desirable to wait before accepting the agreement because of expected German reactions to the discontinuation of the transit agreement” but by late July – under severe pressure from the British and Americans – the Swedish government defied Germany. Like in the Dutch deliberations, the Swedish sources show a continuous weighing of profits and risks, manoeuvring within a narrow margin and trying to act at the most opportune moment. The Swedish strategy in action entailed pointing to the benefits for their counterpart, as well as allowing them at least the appearance of influence on the formulation of the deal. On 1st October Foreign Minister Günther told the Foreign Council that on 29th July Germany had been notified of the decision to end the transits. Orally, the Swedish government had added the explanation that it wished to avoid any propagandistic use of the transits (against Germany, that is) and therefore would appreciate it if they would cease. It also offered to give the arrangement the character of a mutual agreement.

Initially the Germans had – in the Swedish minister’s words – refused to understand the Swedish point of view and had insisted that the transit arrange-
ment could not be unilaterally revoked, but eventually an agreement had been reached that ended the regular transits but allowed for transits of some non-military supplies and civilian travel. In August there had again been some commotion when the Swedish government had informed the Germans that no more oil exports would be admitted after 1st October. The Germans had threatened to cut off Sweden’s supply of oil and stopped some ships, but eventually they had been released. The German negotiators had, however, emphasized the importance of the Swedish press not commenting on the cessation of the transits in a manner which was derogatory to Germany.\(^\text{83}\)

The politics of persuasion\(^\text{84}\)

As we have seen, the attempts to maintain independence, integrity and margin for manoeuvre in a situation of considerable dependence on foreign governments did not stop at withstanding pressure or avoiding coercion. The Swedish government’s accounts in the Foreign Council as well as the Dutch cabinet discussions show how both governments tried in turn to influence the policies and actions of others. Most Swedish and Dutch ministers treated it as an indispensable foreign policy strategy to present matters in a favourable way, whether it was about arguing for certain courses of action or convincing others their own value and good intentions and the benefit of entertaining friendly relations with their state. Some ministers approached these attempts to influence others from a sense of being in the right (having justice on their side), some from more pragmatic considerations of national interest, and some – notably the members of the Foreign Affairs departments – emphasized the importance of taking into account the sensitivities of their foreign counterpart. A few examples will highlight some possibilities and dilemmas for the Swedish and Dutch strategies of persuasion during World War II.

Keeping the story straight

To begin with, let us return briefly to the Swedish termination of the transit agreement with Germany. Showing determination – letting the German administration know that the Swedish government would end the transits (and later the oil exports) as part of a return to a more strict policy of neutrality – was combined with offers to soften the deal by making it appear as a mutual

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\(^{84}\) The politics of persuasion is the title of a book on post-World War II Dutch foreign policy implementation. Apart from lending the suitable title, this paragraph does not in other ways refer to the contents of that book. Everts & Walraven 1989.
agreement and pointing to the advantages of avoiding bad press for Germany.\textsuperscript{85} While the Dutch government’s use of the press concentrated on propagating a certain representation of matters, Swedish control was more bent on avoiding an undesirable representation. The Swedish wartime promotion of the slogan “En svensk tiger” might illustrate this Swedish desire for caution, for not rocking the boat, with its emphasis on what should not be said, in combination with an ideal of strength and steadfastness. “Svensk” can mean both “Swede” and “Swedish”, and the word “tiger” can be read both as a noun (tiger) and as a verb (keeps silent), giving the slogan a double meaning. It can be translated as “A Swedish tiger”, referring to Sweden’s strength and determination to defend itself, as well as “A Swede keeps silent”, suggesting that the population should be careful not to say anything that might jeopardize the security of the kingdom.\textsuperscript{86}

A concrete example of this strategy can be found in the February 1942 Foreign Council discussion of the rumours of an imminent German attack on Sweden. There was general agreement on how to meet this threat: military preparedness was increased and great efforts made to emphasize to the Germans that Sweden was determined to maintain neutrality and defend itself in all directions (since the German plans to attack were presumably caused by the rumours of an allied intervention in Norway and fear that Sweden might in such a scenario join the allies). The Foreign Council urged the government to get the press to exercise restraint and the king even sent his personal assurances to Ribbentrop regarding Sweden’s intentions, putting the weight of royal reliability on the scales.\textsuperscript{87}

This role of royalty to reinforce policy and assure continuity as well as provide status is visible in both Sweden and the Netherlands. The speeches of Wilhelmina mentioned above are only one of many examples of the important role played by the Dutch queen. With her prominent character and emphatic presence in London, she had become a symbol for Dutch resistance and was an asset in international relations, giving the Dutch prestige beyond their size in the exile community. She was, however, headstrong and acted as the natural wartime representative of her people in a way not always entirely consistent with her constitutional position, often bringing her into conflict with the min-

\textsuperscript{85} For more details and nuances of the termination of the transit agreement see Karlsson 1974.

\textsuperscript{86} The slogan was spread by the Government Information Board (\textit{Statens Informationstyrelse}, SIS) in late 1941. The picture of a blue-yellow striped tiger drawn by Bertil Almqvist became a symbol for the board’s vigilance campaign. Wijk 1990, p. 33; Andrée Kriisa 2006, pp. 12–13. The call for people to keep quiet was as such not unique – it is a very common appeal for governments to make in wartime. The Swedish campaign was, however, rather extensive.

isters of the cabinet.\textsuperscript{88} Yet it is clear that the government also saw her as an important asset in foreign relations which it exploited. The Netherlands Press Agency in exile ANEP-ANETA issued a pamphlet in English giving a full record of the visit of Queen Wilhelmina to the United States and Canada in 1942, praising her successes and citing favourable comments on the queen by notable Americans.\textsuperscript{89} And in his report on the trip to the cabinet, Foreign Minister Van Kleffens presented it as a great Dutch success, claiming that the president of the United States had placed the Netherlands on a pedestal and that the visit of the Dutch queen had been equal \textit{in éclat} to that of the British royal couple in 1939.\textsuperscript{90}

Although the role of the Dutch queen was in many ways extraordinary, it bears certain resemblances to that of the Swedish king Gustaf V. Like Wilhelmina, he seems to have seen it as his special and personal responsibility to protect his people in this time of crisis. Even if his attitude towards the government ministers was not as uncooperative as Wilhelmina’s (though he was clearly fonder of some ministers than of others), he too occasionally acted on his own authority beyond the scope of his constitutional powers. King Gustaf more than once took it upon himself – both with and without the blessing of the cabinet – to write notes to other heads of state to make pleas or give assurances, with varying success. Whatever the difficulties, his role was also considered important by the Swedish government. On the occasion of the royal assurances to Ribbentrop mentioned above, in his diary diplomat Sven Grafström wrote that he personally thought Sweden’s increased military preparedness more important, but that it could not be ruled out that the personal assurances of “the Swedish ‘leader’” could be meaningful to Hitler, taking into account that “[i]n Germany, the king is of course considered to be our only foreign policy asset if not indeed the only man in Sweden with his common sense intact”.\textsuperscript{91} And on the occasion of the king being operated on to remove a large gall stone, Minister of Justice K.G. Westman wrote in his notes that he, the prime minister and the foreign minister were from a political perspective very worried that something would happen to the old king. It was decided that the crown prince, who would

\textsuperscript{88} For Wilhelmina’s relationship with Gerbrandy and the rest of the cabinet in London see Fasseur 2014, esp. pp. 225–237, 355–396.

\textsuperscript{89} Full record of the visit of H.M. Queen Wilhelmina to Canada and the United States June 18th --- August 26th, 1942, issued by Netherlands Press Agency. NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr. 216.

\textsuperscript{90} Dutch cabinet protocol 2 September 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.

\textsuperscript{91} Diary note by Sven Grafström 20 februari 1942, Grafström 1989a, p. 400, my translation. In original, the quote reads in full: “Kungen anses ju i Tyskland vara vår enda utrikespolitiska tillgång om inte rent av den ende karlen i Sverige med sundra förnuftet i behåll, så det kan ju hända, att dessa, den svenska ‘ledaren’ personliga försäkringar kunna få en betydelse, då de nå Hitlers öron – om det nu verkligen är så, att möjligheten av engelska och amerikanska svartkonster i norr beröva den store en del av hans nattsömn.”
temporarily act as regent, should assure the envoy of the German Reich in Sweden, the Prince zu Wied, of his commitment to his father’s foreign policy.\textsuperscript{92}

While the governments’ attitudes towards the usefulness of the monarchy in foreign relations were similar, one might expect differences in how they dealt with the at least equally important role of the press. The success of the Swedish wartime policy after all depended on convincing the belligerents of the public support not only for neutrality, but for any policy decision or concessions that the government made. Being a democracy, public criticism of the government’s foreign policy could cast doubt on its steadfastness and ability to keep its promises. The Swedish strategy in terminating the transit agreement with Germany also shows that the Swedish government was prepared to – or felt obliged – to use favourable press coverage as a bargaining chip. This required some control over what the papers wrote. A Government Board of Information (Statens Informationsstyrelse, SIS) had been instituted in 1940. Among its primary tasks was to discourage the publication of materials that might complicate the political and military situation and to report to the Department of Justice “such misuse of the freedom of the press as may harm national interests”.\textsuperscript{93} A paragraph of the Freedom of the Press Act that had not been used for almost a hundred years was revived. Paragraph 3:9 of this Act stated, among other things, that a newspaper could be confiscated without trial if it had given rise to a misunderstanding with a foreign power.\textsuperscript{94}

Sven Grafström, who was personally involved in the process of confiscation, describes in his diary how most of the time the decision to confiscate a paper was made before any misunderstanding with a foreign power arose, that is already on the presumption that it might cause such a misunderstanding.\textsuperscript{95} As historian Johnny Wijk has pointed out, it was remarkable that the decision rested on the arbitrary sensitivity of other countries to begin with. Because of that, there was no question of an impartial – neutral – implementation by the Swedish authorities: of the 315 confiscations that were carried out between 1940 and 1943, 251 concerned cases of criticism of Germany while papers that praised Germany and Nazism were only seized in a few cases.\textsuperscript{96}

The procedure was legally and democratically dubious, and it was heavily criticized at the time, causing recurring parliamentary discussions. However, many members of parliament thought that under the circumstances it was fair

\textsuperscript{92} Diary notes by K.G. Westman 6, 7 and 9 March 1942, Westman 1981, pp. 201–202.
\textsuperscript{93} Rynell 1942, p. 182, my translation of the quote which in Swedish reads: “sådana missbruk av tryckfriheten som skada landets intressen”.
\textsuperscript{95} Grafström’s diary 17 March 1942. Grafström 1989a, pp. 404–405.
\textsuperscript{96} Wijk 1990, pp. 25–26.
to expect the press to act responsibly and emphasized the need for all who spoke in public to be careful not to jeopardize the credibility of Sweden’s neutrality. On several occasions members of the Foreign Council even urged the government to try to directly influence coverage in the newspapers. It should also be pointed out that a constitutional change that made previewing and preventing publications possible – outright pre-publication censorship – had received the necessary approval of two consecutive parliaments in 1940 and 1941. Still, the government chose not to use that power. More important than the confiscation of papers was self-censorship by the press. The SIS sent notes to newspaper editors, urging them not to publish certain things or sometimes instructing them on what they should print. At frequent information meetings the press was kept up to date on war developments and allowed to ask questions. In return, they were asked to act in the nation’s interest, often leading to the press adhering to government instructions. By explaining why certain matters should be omitted and others emphasized and appealing to their solidarity with common national interests, the influencing of the press thus received the character of a voluntary arrangement, a mutual understanding between government and media.

The options available to the Dutch government were quite different, as were the stakes. The Netherlands was occupied, the government in exile, and the direct representation of the people temporarily disabled. Nevertheless, the

97 See for example the debate on Sweden’s foreign policy position in the First and Second Chambers on 7 November 1942, which reflect both attitudes. Riksdagstryck 1942, FK nr 29 pp. 62–84; AK nr 29 pp. 179–195.

98 When the threat of a German attack was discussed in February 1942, a member of the Foreign Council (Gränebo) suggested that a fundamental reason for German distrust of Swedish intentions was the attitude of the press and urged the government to attempt to influence it. The foreign minister promised that the government would seek to contact the press. A month later he reported that through contact with the press, the publication of a number of articles clarifying the attitude of the Swedish government and people had been achieved. On 8 April 1943, during the discussions on whether to stop the German transits, another member (Johansson) urged the government not to be led by the expressions of opinion but rather explain to the Swedish people that caution was required. Foreign Council protocols of 19 February and 19 March 1942, SE/RA, Tvåkammarriksduken, Utrikesnämnden, A25.

99 At a press conference on 18 April 1942, Foreign Minister Günther talked about the heightened tensions with Germany and pointed out that even if the government was consistent in its policy, the Germans might reason that one could not be sure it would stay that way or that this government would always remain in power. The German perception of a widespread anti-German attitude in the Swedish press had contributed to the insecurity and it was therefore of the utmost importance that the Swedish press of all political persuasions expressed their support for Swedish neutrality. SE/RA, UD Handarkiv, serie 3, Christian Günther, vol. 7.

100 For an exposition of the history and work of the Government Information Board, see the article “‘Censur- och propagandaministeriet’ – En översikt av Informationsstyrelsens verksamhet 1940–45 utifrån dess efterlämnade arkiv” which also has an English summary. Wijk 1990.

101 Paradoxically enough, this situation had a certain democratizing effect: being aware that their position would not be self-evidently accepted as legitimate, the Dutch government in exile
differences were not as great as they might seem at first glance: the success of the Dutch government in many ways depended on proving its loyalty and value to the allies, and public discord could threaten the exile government’s legitimacy. As in Sweden, a Dutch Government Information Service (Regerings-voorzichtingdienst, RVD) had been established in 1940, in its case to handle communication between the government in exile and occupied Netherlands and the surrounding world. The Netherlands Information Bureau (Nederlands Informatiebureau, NIB) became one of its most important assets, with a vast network for spreading information about the Netherlands, focusing especially on influencing public opinion in the United States. The RVD also established contacts with the Dutch underground press and instituted Radio Oranje (Radio Orange) which became an important information channel for the government in exile to occupied Netherlands. The ostensibly independent news agency ANEP-ANETA also in fact functioned as an extension of the RVD.102

The Dutch government did not have a system comparable to the Swedish for confiscating papers, though not necessarily because there was no perceived need. On Tuesday 6th October 1942, there was a discussion in the Dutch cabinet on whether the press should be censored. The occasion was the publication of a letter to the editor in Vrij Nederland (Free Netherlands, a resistance paper based in London) which had advocated taking German children away from their families after the war in order to re-educate and internationalize them. This had led to a reaction in the German press and was perceived as harmful to the allied cause. The Council of Ministers discussed interference but concluded that meddling with the freedom of the press would mean taking on responsibility for what the papers wrote, which would be very risky.103 This did not prevent a cabinet decision – on a different occasion – to publish a statement in which the government distanced itself from an article in Vrij Nederland and to contact the editors to point out the harmfulness of the article to them.104 The Dutch prime minister in fact met frequently with the chief editor of Vrij Nederland, Van

at its first meeting on 18 May 1940 made the decision to keep minutes of its meetings. De Jong 1979, p. 8. What the Dutch people would think of a decision was also a concern that was repeatedly voiced in these protocols. In comparison, the Swedish cabinet deliberations were kept secret and unrecorded, and the agreement between government and press must be considered an unholy alliance from a democratic perspective.

102 Baudet 2013, p. 62. For an exposition on the Netherlands Information Bureau during World War II and the early Cold War, see Snyder 2010. The ANEP-ANETA was a combination of the Dutch Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau, ANEP (re-established in exile as a substitute for the original ANP which continued its work in the occupied Netherlands, under German control), and the Dutch East Indian press bureau ANETA, Algemeen Nieuws- en Telegraafagentschap.

103 Dutch cabinet protocol 6 October 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.

104 The occasion was an article on Darlan (commander-in-chief of Vichy-France) that was considered too apologetic. Dutch cabinet protocol 8 December 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.
Blankenstein, for informal consultation on publications.\textsuperscript{105} This behaviour is similar to the Swedish practice of pointing out the interests of the state, although the Dutch situation did not allow for press meetings of the Swedish nature.

A more pressing problem for the Dutch government than the utterances of the free press was statements by individual ministers, for which the government had an undeniable responsibility. That the open criticism by Van Mook of allied warfare in the East was considered a problem has already been mentioned. Another incident with Van Mook took place in connection with the radio speech by Wilhelmina discussed above. The version of the speech finally approved by the cabinet was significantly less far reaching and, to maintain room for manoeuvre, a deliberately less detailed pledge concerning the future of the Indies than Van Mook’s original proposal. Yet, at a press conference in the United States on 5th December providing information on the speech to follow the next day, Van Mook distributed a confidential document among those present which included many of his original ideas. This caused serious indignation among his colleagues and Van Mook was reprimanded.\textsuperscript{106}

A serious incident with the minister of Trade, Industry and Shipping, Petrus Adrianus (Piet) Kerstens, provides another example of the difficulty in maintaining policy coherence, and – again – shows how wartime decisions were tied to concerns about the future. In March 1942, the Dutch cabinet discussed how to handle the current and anticipated postwar financial needs of the Netherlands. Johannes van den Broek, a liberal, party-unaffiliated businessman who would later be appointed Minister of Finances, advocated making use of the lend-lease act to buy necessities on credit, like other countries. He argued against the position that staying out of debt would make the Dutch postwar position stronger. The Netherlands would probably have to take loans at some point anyway, he said, and this would probably be more difficult at the end of the war. According to Van den Broek, it was very likely that the U.S. after the war would turn inward to lick its wounds and not be inclined to help foreign countries, especially if a Republican became president. The Americans would probably argue that they had made great sacrifices for democracy and that now the other countries must rebuild as best they could. At the very least possible loans would likely be tied to economic conditions, and other countries would need help even more than the Netherlands. Better borrow now and have some reserves at the end of the war, so as to get through the initial difficult postwar period independently, without having to rely on the mercy of others.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{105} Fasseur 2014, pp. 184–185.
\textsuperscript{106} Dutch cabinet protocol 8 December 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.
\textsuperscript{107} Copy of a letter by Ir J. van den Broek addressed to Foreign Minister E.N. van Kleffens 13 February 1942. The letter was apparently written at the latter’s request. Attachment to the Dutch cabinet protocol of 14 March 1942, p. 1. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.
Ministers Albarda (Minister of Water and of Finances ad interim) and Kerstens supported the view of Van den Broek in the Council of Ministers. They argued that besides liberation of the Motherland and the overseas territories it was crucial that the Netherlands in the postwar reorganization of the world be able to exercise an influence that was “in accordance with the position of the Kingdom.” To be able to exercise this influence the Netherlands must a) be able to keep participating in the fight against the enemy where possible; b) as much as possible be able to work on the reconstruction of the at present occupied parts of the kingdom at its own discretion and where possible help with the reconstruction of other occupied European countries; and c) maintain a governmental apparatus that was economically managed but calculated according to the requirements of the task. This would demand considerable means, and according to Foreign Minister Van Kleffens the prospect for a loan was at present favourable, a circumstance that might change as new events relegated what happened in the Dutch East Indies to the background.108

There was one catch, as Van den Broek pointed out: to get a loan one had to convince the Americans that the Dutch really needed it, that is, convince them that the Dutch did not have as many reserves as they in fact did.109 Though the cabinet protocol does not show any serious objections to this strategy at the time, it caused a problem: the image it required conflicted with the idea that the country would be better off if it could show that it pulled its own weight. In early 1944, Van den Broek (by then Minister of Finance) got into a heated argument with minister Kerstens on this issue. Although Kerstens himself in 1942 had advocated getting a loan, he had now, during a stay in the United States as a representative in the UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation) work, seen fit to spread the word that the Dutch had the money to pay their own way. Van den Broek, whose tactic towards the U.S. had consistently been to point out that the Dutch government in exile had no income and would be placed in an impossible position without a credit, was furious. Kerstens, who came back from the United States to defend his actions in the council, argued that in the United States there was great animosity against countries taking advantage of American welfare. Many feared that the UNRRA would aggravate

108 Memorandum by ministers Albarda and Kerstens, London, 13 March 1942. Attachment to the Dutch cabinet protocol of 14 March 1942, NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.
109 Copy of a letter by Ir J. van den Broek addressed to Foreign Minister E.N. van Kleffens 13 February 1942. Attachment to the Dutch cabinet protocol of 14 March 1942, NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246. Most of the gold reserves of the Dutch bank (De Nederlandsche Bank) had been moved to the United States and Great Britain before 14 May 1940 and one of the first measures of the government in exile was to make sure Dutch money abroad was inaccessible to the Germans. There were some other sources of income, such as a corporation tax introduced in 1943 for Dutch companies that had moved their offices abroad since April 1940, and credits and repayments of loans from the Dutch Antilles, Surinam and especially the Dutch East Indies (before 1942). Apart from other credits, the main resources came from using the gold reserves. De Jong 1979, pp. 16–20, 438–441.
this sentiment and that it might even lead Americans to turn against Roosevelt. He had felt obliged to distance the Dutch government in exile from the loathed beggars and claimed that his action had been successful: it had gained the Dutch respect as well as a more prominent position at the negotiations.\footnote{The discussions continued through three consecutive cabinet meetings. Protocols of 26 and 31 January, 8 February 1944. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.}

His arguments were to no avail – in May 1944 Kerstens was eventually forced to resign\footnote{For other reasons as well, see Fasseur 2014, pp. 384–393.} – but they go to show how important it was to secure the future position of the Netherlands vis-à-vis the United States and to keep that country sympathetic to continued involvement in world affairs. While the Dutch government in exile had for obvious reasons always had closer ties to the British government than to the American, emphasis during 1942 started to shift. On 10th March of that year, on his return from a stay in the United States, Foreign Minister Van Kleffens told the council of widespread American disdain for Great Britain. He claimed that the Dutch so far had a better reputation than the British, and warned that they should avoid being seen as simply riding on the shirttails of Britain. To avoid that fate, they had to have a constant presence in America. He also spoke of the trend among American intellectuals to oppose a return to foreign rule of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. One had to demonstrate to these people that those countries needed a “guiding hand”, and show that the Dutch had both the desire and – contrary to the Americans – the necessary know-how to guarantee their happiness. Van Kleffens complained of American ignorance of facts, pleading for more Dutch publicity, not only in New York but in the rest of the United States as well.\footnote{Dutch cabinet protocol 10 March 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.}

Later the same year, he suggested the Netherlands Information Bureau move from London to Washington, again referring to the need to correct American “wild ideas” regarding the East Indies.\footnote{Dutch cabinet protocol 2 September 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.} He certainly did his best to correct these ideas himself, taking every chance to talk on the subject on his travels as well as writing articles. In October 1942, the American magazine Foreign Affairs published an article by Van Kleffens called “The democratic future of the Netherlands Indies” in which he stressed the importance of products from the Indies for the world markets and the benefits of the Dutch benevolent development and maintenance of the unity of the country, as well as protection of civic rights, “so dear to Dutch and Americans alike”.\footnote{Van Kleffens 1942, p. 93.} When Prime Minister Gerbrandy in a cabinet meeting questioned the high costs for the governmental press service in New York, Van Kleffens and others argued that propaganda (the term as used in the protocol) was necessary. An interesting detail in this context is that another argument used was that one should not forget that the Belgians...
too paid a lot of attention to propaganda. This suggests a competition for attention between small states, or in any case a common need to make sure one did not disappear from the field of vision of a power whose goodwill and help was regarded as essential.\textsuperscript{115} It should be added that promotion was not only necessary for gaining political support but also for receiving help in general: on 3\textsuperscript{rd} October 1944 for example the cabinet discussed how the RVD had failed to sufficiently publicize the severe conditions in the Netherlands. To get relief, it was necessary to arouse a mood of sympathy in the foreign press for the emergency in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{116}

The Swedish government was less prone to compete for the attention of the belligerents in the foreign press and, not surprisingly considering its different position, it kept a lower profile. However, the unity and steadfastness of Swedish policy was emphasized so frequently and unanimously in parliament and national speeches that one can assume that such statements were made more for the benefit of foreign ears than for fellow members of parliament and citizens.\textsuperscript{117} In his dissertation Karl Molin has described the situation of the Swedish parliament during the war. In foreign policy issues coupled to a critical threat, such as the decision to allow German transits, the parliament was sometimes deprived of its right to be informed in advance and in practice the members had little choice but to show their support for the government’s policy. Rather than critically examine the government, during the war parliament was given the task of showing its trust in the government policy, strengthen its ability to act, and facilitate its work.\textsuperscript{118}

This call for loyal support of the government’s line of conduct and professing a strong outward unity was not, as we have already seen, a strategy reserved for neutrals. The Dutch emphasis on the same principle is not only visible in the above mentioned high profile cases where the principle failed, but can be found in several notes that did not receive the same attention since the potential con-

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\textsuperscript{115} Dutch cabinet protocol 31 March 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.
\textsuperscript{116} Dutch cabinet protocol 3 October 1944. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246. The importance of impressing others appears again at the next cabinet meeting, when the chairman reported on a meeting with Churchill regarding the matter of relief. Churchill had at first been unrelenting, saying that “the Germans would just eat it anyway” (“de Duitschers eten het toch maar op”), but it had then turned out that he had been impressed by the Dutch distress after all and had asked the High Command if the entire Netherlands could be free by 1 December. Protocol of 10 October 1944, NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.
\textsuperscript{117} See for example the speech by foreign minister Günther in parliament on 7 November 1942, in which he went to great lengths to explain that the expressions of support for the Norwegians and Danish were a sign of the natural sympathy between brother peoples and not at all of any wish to abandon neutrality. After the speech, parliament members from all parties, even if critical of certain things (such as the confiscation of papers), took turns expressing their conviction that the Swedish people were determined to maintain neutrality and defend the country in all directions, emphasizing the clarity and consistency of Sweden’s foreign policy. Riksdagstryck 1942 AK nr 29, pp. 178–194; FK nr 29, pp. 62–85.
\textsuperscript{118} Molin 1974, pp. 222–254.
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lict was avoided. In February 1944, for example, the Dutch head of the Government Information Services, Adriaan Pelt, recommended making a letter from the prime minister to Mr Van Walsem in New York confidential because of some references in the letter to divergences in outlook between Pelt and the Ministry for the Colonies. The divergence to which Pelt referred pertained to whether or not it would be possible to spare some personnel with expertise on the East Indies for an East Indies department of the Netherlands Information Bureau – hardly a high profile security issue, one might think. Even in such cases, it was evidently considered important not to advertise diversity of opinion but to present a façade of unity.\footnote{Memo to Jhr Mr E.M. van Haersma de With from mr A. Pelt 10th February 1944. NL– NIOD, Collectie Nederlandse Regering in Londen 233b, inv. nr 16.}

The discipline of unity was undeniably maintained more successfully in Sweden than in the Netherlands, whether or not this was due to the Swedish tactic being more defensive/passive than the Dutch (though it changed somewhat towards the end of the war, when working to improve goodwill with the allies became more important than defence). While the Dutch focused on drawing attention to their merits and creating a desirable image in public, the Swedish tactic was more cautious. In a 1943 speech, Minister of Defence Sköld emphasized that although the end of the war seemed to be drawing closer and Swedish military strength had increased, one must stay on guard. He warned against any recklessness in foreign policy. For the sake of self-preservation Sweden must, also in the future, maintain a good relationship to all peoples.\footnote{Speech by Minister of Defence Sköld on 28 March 1943, as published in Svensk utrikespolitik under andra världskriget: statsrådsstal, riksdagsdebatter och kommuniker 1946.}

When Germany surrendered on 7th May 1945, the Swedish king, prime minister and foreign minister all made speeches that emphasized unity as a Swedish virtue which had contributed to the ability of Sweden to stay out of the war. The king thanked the people for their help in his and the government’s work to keep the country out of the war. The “unity and understanding” of the Swedes had made a significant contribution to their success. Foreign Minister Christian Günther spoke of his gratitude for the “cohesion around our national values” that the Swedish people had shown, claiming that it had been the “essential prerequisite” for the implementation of Sweden’s peaceful course. Minister Per Albin Hansson thanked the Swedish people for their “good cohesion and un-wavering support”, and emphasized that the Swedish success in keeping out of the destruction of war had also served the interests of their “brother peoples”.\footnote{Radio speeches by King Gustaf and Prime Minister Hansson, statement by Foreign Minister Günther, all on 7 May 1945. As reprinted in Svensk utrikespolitik under andra världskriget 1946, pp. 641–643.}

The last addition was another point often emphasized in Swedish public relations: that Sweden’s ability to avoid the destruction of war was not only in the
country’s own interest but in the interests of the surrounding world. This was particularly important with future need of cooperation in mind. A neutral country may avoid enemies; it avoids making friends as well, or, as Machiavelli put it: it will be despised by the victorious and hated by the defeated.122 That such sentiments existed did not escape the Swedish government. It worked consciously to improve goodwill, among other things by showing preparedness to pull their weight in the reconstruction of the postwar world. However, as the above has shown, it would be wrong to assume that the need to prove value to the surrounding world or avoid being labelled a so-called free rider was only a problem for neutrals. We have seen that the Dutch government also fought to prove its value – only within the context of the war alliance, and with perhaps a little more difficulty in maintaining unity.

The legal argument

Closely related to the strategy of convincing others of goodwill and reliability, is the strategy of invoking justice. In literature on small state behaviour and power, one of the most commonly cited foreign policy strategies of small states is to promote international law.123 The assumption is that rules that regulate relations between states are especially favourable to those who do not otherwise have the power to enforce their will on others. However, although this research confirms that the legal argument was often invoked as protection, it also shows that rigid adherence to law could be dangerous as it limited the small state’s margin for manoeuvre. Predictability was important, but so was freedom of action. There was a recognizable discrepancy between the ideal world that one worked towards and the imperfect world one had to deal with in any given situation. A 1944 book by influential Swedish economist and Social Democrat Gunnar Myrdal, in which he warns against peace optimism (Varning för freds-optimism), is full of telling examples of this attitude: on the one hand Myrdal paints a lofty image of Sweden’s role as an advocate of world interests and commitment to legal order, on the other he describes a dangerous and degenerated world and advocates caution and “moral compromises” for the sake of peace.124 In the real world, bending the rules at times was crucial to the survival of a small state. It may be useful to consider for a moment what this may imply


123 List of the most commonly cited behaviours of small states in Hey 2003, p. 5.

for foreign policy practice; how trying to promote the overarching long term goal might be at odds with handling an emergency.

Presenting a cause as just could be an important tool for persuasion, especially if one could point to norms acknowledged by one’s counterpart. While other powers’ adherence to set rules was an advantage, however, there was a serious risk to committing oneself too rigidly to compliance with a legal route or to insisting that norms were consistently valid. The Swedish affair of the Norwegian embargo ships is a case in point. During the occupation of Norway, a number of Norwegian ships got stranded in the Swedish harbour of Gothenburg. In early 1941, after a few of them made a successful breakaway and departed for Great Britain, the Germans demanded that the Swedish government put the rest of the ships under embargo. The Norwegian government in exile and the British on the other hand asserted the ships’ right to depart. The matter was brought to court and resulted in a protracted judicial review going all the way to the Swedish Supreme Court (Högsta Domstolen). In the meantime, the ships were held in Gothenburg. The legal route, however, did not solve the problem for the Swedish government but rather put it in a difficult position. The German government had no intention of respecting a court decision. It let the Swedish government know in no uncertain terms that a release of the ships would be considered an unkind act one-sidedly favouring the allies. As the decision of the court – which was expected to order the release of the ships – drew nearer, German threats increased. There was considerable fear among Swedish ministers that Germany would attack Sweden if the ships were allowed to leave, and not without reason.

The Swedish government found itself in an awkward position. Recognizing the issue as a legal matter created an appearance of impartiality that served to avoid conflict. Now that conflict threatened anyway, the government’s freedom of action was restrained. In his diary, Prime Minister Hansson recounted a discussion between himself, the king and the foreign minister on the subject.

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125 See for the full story of the Norwegian ships Hägglöf 1958, pp. 178–188, 213–214, 227–230, 248ff; Rockberger 1973, pp. 137–184. See also Karlsson 1973, who addresses the issue of the ships in the context of the termination of the transit agreements with Germany. However, these accounts do not focus on the legal dilemma that is highlighted here.

126 That there was cause for this fear and it was not simply a manifestation of Swedish anxiety can be deduced from the fact that similar rumours circulated and were taken seriously in other countries. In the Netherlands, a top secret telegram sent by the Dutch ambassador in Washington (A. Loudon) on 1 April 1942 to the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs (Van Kleffens) reported that a German attack on Sweden was planned before 15 April, depending on weather circumstances. The information was reportedly obtained from the Intelligence Section of the American War Department and included the note that the German staff expected Swedish resistance to be broken within 24 hours. Discussions on who could take over the role of protecting power for Dutch interests if Sweden (that had that task in a number of countries) was occupied prove that the Dutch Foreign Ministry regarded the information as reliable. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Londens Archief, 2.05.80, inv. nr 2125.
The king had been inclined to prevent the departure of the ships even if it went against a court order, due to the risk of confrontation with Germany. Hansson had been of the opinion that once the government had committed to the legal route it could not act in a way that would make it look like a fraud to the British. And Günther, though desperately trying to find a loophole that would make it possible to declare the court process invalid – on legal grounds – pointed out that the Swedish position vis-à-vis Germany would also be weakened if the previously declared standpoint (that a judicial review would be decisive) was simply abandoned.  

The rest of the ministers were divided. Some looked to the short term benefits and dangers while others focused on principles and long term goals. Karl Gustaf Westman from Bondeförbundet (the Farmers’ Union), who was Minister of Justice nota bene, argued against taking the legal stand. He wrote in his notes on 21st January 1942 that in his opinion it was dangerous to take the position that once the matter had been referred to the courts, there was no choice but to follow their decision. He pointed to the threat of war with Germany, or at least a cessation of the westward Gothenburg-traffic and argued for flexibility – perhaps a peace-offering to Germany in the form of other, Swedish ships. His notes show that other government members were less prone to compromise. According to Westman, Minister of Defence Per Edvin Sköld said that war might as well come now instead of later (giving some indication of the perceived likelihood of being drawn into the war at some point anyway) and Herman Eriksson, Minister of Trade, said that he would rather have war than abandon a position and break a promise. Their fellow Social Democrat Ernst Wigforss, Minister of Finance, was in Westman’s words “on the same self-sufficient course”, while the king and Westman’s fellow party member Minister of Agriculture Axel Bramstorp did not want to risk war over the Norwegian ships.

On the Dutch side, the problem of principles, when they imposed limits not on others but on oneself, is most visible regarding – again – the Dutch East Indies. On 13th October 1942 a long and rather heated discussion on the future of the Indies took place in the Dutch Council of Ministers. The cause was a couple of memoranda and a draft government policy statement on the constitutional reform of the kingdom and the Dutch East Indies presented by Minister of Colonies Van Mook and the recently appointed Indonesian minister without portfolio Soejono. In the eyes of the other ministers, the statements not only suggested overly far reaching reforms and independence for the Indies, they were also too detailed, seriously limiting the Dutch freedom of action after the war.

129 Dutch cabinet protocol 13 October 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.
It is interesting to see how Van Mook and Soejono defended their work. Though Van Mook immediately backed down on the details of the plan, he emphasized the need for some statement, invoking the advantage of keeping the initiative in Dutch hands (as discussed earlier). He referred to the problem that the Indies would have to be reconquered by others and that the future status of colonies was currently a worldwide issue. He argued that the Netherlands should act as if resuming the rule of the Indies after the war was the most natural thing in the world, but in doing so the government must state how it intended to continue governing. It was important to forestall others asking and provide answers to potential questions now, because if one waited until others asked, the question might very well take the shape of a demand.

Soejono, on the other hand, managed to upset his fellow ministers by pointing out that the right of a people to choose its own government was the third principle of the Atlantic Charter, to which the Dutch government had declared its adherence. In all fairness, that should apply to the Indonesians, too. A storm of protests arose, providing an array of more or less creative arguments as to why the Charter principle was not applicable in this case. One minister (Kerstens) countered that there would be nothing fair about the Indonesian people being free to decide their own fate because the Netherlands was not free either but bound by its obligations to the Indies. Van Kleffens asked where it would end if all the different indigenous peoples that inhabited the Dutch East Indies decided to claim their own independence. Giving up the East Indies because of some moral or legal principle was clearly not an option. As Prime Minister Gerbrandy said, the Dutch East Indies were “our last trump card, if we lose that, the Dutch government is at the mercy of powers that can no longer be bridled.”

Though the Swedish and Dutch examples given here show quite different national circumstances, a similar pattern can be detected. Both incidents show a high level of perceived threat: adhering to the principles of law could lead to an attack, in the Swedish case, and the catastrophe of losing the Indies, in the Dutch. In addition to demonstrating that adhering all too adamantly to the legal route was risky as it limited the margin for manoeuvre, both examples show that focus on immediate survival and high stakes could lead to compromising the policy otherwise considered the best option for long term survival. Nobody would openly be against pledging allegiance to a system of international law, but it was not always expedient to be bound by inflexible rules in

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130 My translation. In the Dutch wording of the protocol: “Het gaat om onze laatste troef; zijn wij die kwijt, dan is de Nederlandsche Regeering overgeleverd aan machten, die niet meer te betoomen zijn.” Dutch cabinet protocol 13 October 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246. Some cabinet members seem to have been slightly shocked that Soejono would – even if in an ever so moderate way – speak up for Indonesian rights. Either way, they did not have to deal with the situation of having an Indonesian minister in the cabinet for long: Soejono died on 5 January 1943. He was not replaced.
specific cases. This means that in order to understand the terms of foreign policy development, we have to consider not only what was proclaimed officially and in principle, but the limiting influence of circumstances such as time and threat as well as the hierarchy of the relation at hand. With which term of time in mind did the governments make their decisions and what level of (immediate) threat did they perceive? As of yet, might had the advantage over right and as long as that was the case, invoking law all too rigorously could be risky for those who did not have the reserve option of using might, should right fail. And while the legal argument might serve the purpose of protection in relations to the more mighty, it was less advantageous when dealing with a subordinate.

Enemies, allies, neutrals? Wartime relations

It seems clear that the Swedish and Dutch governments treated different states in different ways. But what determined their behaviour? During war, states can be divided into two main categories: belligerents and non-belligerents. For a neutral state, these two categories officially determine some limits to the relations: a neutral can trade freely with other neutrals, for example, while the relations to the belligerents are circumscribed by rules. In reality, belligerents are also often perceived either as potential allies or potential enemies. For belligerents, the relationships to other states can be divided into three categories: enemies, allies or neutrals.

Sweden and the Netherlands belonged to different main categories (non-belligerent–belligerent), and hence had different preconditions for their relations to other states during the war. However, as this chapter has already shown, the categories of enemies, allies and neutrals did not alone determine against whom political independence had to be defended. It would rather seem that the greatest efforts both to assert independence and to obtain support were – not surprisingly perhaps – aimed at those with the (perceived) greatest power and intention to benefit and/or threaten the national interests. That observation warrants a closer look at wartime relations.

Relating to the mighty

It makes sense that the government of a vulnerable state during war would carefully monitor the shifts in power relations and adjust its inclinations accordingly. Much points to this indeed being the case. The focus of the Dutch government gradually shifted from Great Britain to the United States. For Sweden, focus shifted from Germany in the early years of the war to the Western allies at the end. However, Germany received more consideration than the allies even after the German power was clearly in decline. Power alone can hence not ex-
plain focus: predictability was important too, as was proximity and the perceived intent. The state that got the most consideration was not necessarily the state with the most power but the state perceived to be most prepared to use its power to interfere with the smaller state, either to help or (more often, probably) threaten it. Although the pressure from the Western allies on Sweden increased as the fortunes of war turned, it is evident from the 1942 and 1943 Foreign Council protocols that the Swedish government did not expect any surprise attack from the Western allies, so that antagonizing them was less dangerous than antagonizing the unreliable, unpredictable Germany.131

In his memoirs, diplomat Gunnar Hägglöf claims that the inner circle of Swedish negotiators was very aware of the political necessity to regulate Sweden’s relations to the United States and Great Britain and not risk being without a trade agreement with them at the end of the war. But, he says, in the government there was a strong sense of being exposed to the most serious risks from Germany while no such dangers threatened from the Western powers. He recounts a discussion with Per Albin Hansson in 1942 in which he had pointed out that one should be careful about sensitivities in the relationship to the Western powers too, now that the war had turned. The prime minister had answered: “Yes, but with the Western powers one can always reason.”132

The relationship of both the Dutch and the Swedish governments to the Western allies had elements of conflict but was essentially based on an underlying sense of reliability. The Eastern ally was a different matter: the Soviet Union was a special case. Swedish relations to the Soviet Union were in many ways more similar to the relations with Germany than to those with the other allies: it was a potential threat and possible enemy. The need to keep on good terms with the Soviet Union was not so much motivated by economic considerations and possible gain, like the relations with the great Western powers, as by military security concerns. In 1939 the Swedish government had supported the Finnish war-effort against the Soviet Union, and had been very keen to get the Finns to achieve a stable peace with its Eastern neighbour, a point to which we will return.

The fact that the Soviet Union had changed sides in the war did change the position of the Communist Party in Sweden and make public opinion more favourable to the Soviet Union.133 Still, the tone in communications with the

131 In the Foreign Council protocols of 1942 and 1943, the possibility of a German attack is discussed several times, while the possibility of an attack by the allies on Sweden is never even mentioned. Allied intervention in Norway was considered a risk, but only because it might cause a German attack on Sweden. SE/RA, Tvåkammarriksdagen, Utrikesnämnden, A2:5.


133 Yvonne Hirdmann describes how the enhanced position of the Soviet Union improved the position of the Swedish Communists and how the Swedish Communist Party made a volte-face concerning the ideological character of the war as the fight of the Soviet Union had to be syn-
Russians, and comments on them, remained reminiscent of those concerning Germany long after the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact was dissolved. Whatever the official standpoint, the tone was quite different from that used with and about the other allies. In June 1942, for example, a Swedish steamship was torpedoed by a presumably Russian submarine. The Swedish government protest against Russian submarine activity in the Baltic Sea was met not only with flat denial, but also with counteraccusations regarding Swedish deviations from neutrality. Both Gösta Bagge and Per Albin Hansson expressed their dismay at the Russian response in their diaries, without sounding surprised. Hansson wrote in his diary that the Russians had shown themselves quite resourceful in making up stories. Bagge called most of the Russian claims pure fantasy, and resignedly added that they were probably just an expression of a bad mood because of the Swedish protests and not a sign of a change in attitude towards Sweden. The slightly sarcastic, resigned tone bears a strong resemblance to, for example, the 10 April 1942 diary note by Hansson: “Here we go again. Once more, the Germans are angry at us.” In comparison, comments on demands by the United States or Great Britain could very well be met with irritation and remarks about them not understanding the situation properly, but not with the same resignation and sense of it being no use discussing the matter. Even when disagreeing, the underlying assumption with the Western powers was, as illustrated by Hägglöf’s anecdote on the comment of Per Albin Hansson, that negotiations were possible on the basis of reason.

The overall picture of the Soviets that emerges is that they were distrustful, unpredictable, and prone to sabre-rattling, much like the Germans. One must not believe all their threats but one must be wary and appease and reassure them. The words of the Dutch envoy quoted in the beginning of this chapter – that the Swedes did not care about the war as long as the Russians didn’t win – might also, however exaggerated, illustrate the widespread distrust of the Soviet Union in Sweden. That is not to say that there were not those who defended the Soviet Union and sincerely argued for the benefit of maintaining good relations with that country for other reasons than fear. While Nazism was generally considered to be inherently evil, there was a notion that the communism of the
Soviet Union might develop into a more acceptable form. Nazi Germany was by nature aggressive; the Soviet Union had been so by choice, which implied that it could also choose a different path. Some Swedish Social Democrats even nurtured a belief (or hope) that the Russian revolution could in spite of initial atrocities become the beginning of a fair, equal, and classless society.

For the Dutch government in exile, the relations with the Soviet Union were a particularly complicated matter as the Netherlands had at the outbreak of World War II still not recognized Soviet Russia (unlike most other European governments, which had proceeded to recognize the new regime after the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922). By 1942, however, the Russians had become allies and Foreign Minister Van Kleffens considered it necessary and urgent to establish diplomatic relations and send a legation to the Soviet Union. Like in Sweden, there were different opinions on the trustworthiness of the Soviet Union. Recurring discussions in the Council of Ministers in 1942 show how complex this matter was. Not just the relationship to the Soviet Union, but the government’s relationship to the Dutch people and to the queen, who also opposed recognition, were at stake and thereby Dutch unity and the government’s legitimacy – which, in turn, were considered crucial in the relations to the British and American governments. No doubt must exist that the Dutch government in exile was the legitimate government of a democratic Netherlands.

On 10th February, the council’s discussion focused on the dilemma of the need to settle the relationship with the Soviet (in the protocol called the Russian) government. All agreed that as the Dutch and the Russians were now fighting a common enemy, something must be undertaken to regulate relations between them. However, opinions diverged as to how far one could go considering that the Dutch people (that is parliament) had up until now declared itself against recognition. Did the exile government have the mandate to change the former policy? Some argued that it did not; that it must wait until the Dutch people could be consulted. Others argued that because the situation had changed so dramatically it was not only its right but also its duty to take initiative on the matter. Prime Minister Gerbrandy expressed particular concern regarding Dutch Catholics, who he expected would have the most difficulty digesting a change of policy towards the Soviet Union.

On Tuesday 17th March 1942 the council finally decided in favour of establishing a Dutch legation to the Soviet Union, but only after it had become clear that the Russians would not accept compromises such as a temporary arrangement to be endorsed by the Dutch people after the war, or a royal decree lim-

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140 See Knapen 1985 for the relationship of the Netherlands to the Soviet Union prior to 1942.
141 Dutch cabinet protocol 10 February 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.
iting the size of the legation beforehand.\textsuperscript{142} It was considered a serious problem but nonetheless necessary to act contrary to a previous principled and democratic decision against acknowledgement of the Soviet Union. The arguments were on the one hand that this was not about changed principles but a pragmatic decision and that as such the people would understand. On the other hand, arguments on the changed nature of the Soviet Union were used, which would justify a principled change. As in Sweden, the idea that the Soviet Union could change was used to defend a friendlier attitude. Van Kleffens claimed that Russian policy was clearly changing, even that it could no longer be called communist, and that the Soviet Union wasn’t internationalist anymore but had become a national state. Therefore he was prepared to consent, even if he warned not to expect too much as the Russian government was a closed and non-democratic unit. Another value-oriented pro-Soviet argument, made by the social democratic Minister for Social Affairs Van den Tempel, was that the Russian people were showing such valour in the present war. At the same time, however, he emphasized that the important question was whether the legation was important to the Dutch.\textsuperscript{143} This mixture of pragmatic and principled arguments is reminiscent of that in Swedish discussions on the country’s neutrality.

In spite of the urgency to establish relations with the Soviet Union, a discussion in the Dutch Council of Ministers on 24\textsuperscript{th} September 1942 shows that there was little expectation that diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union would be of any direct practical importance. It was still decided, after some discussion, to install an ambassador rather than just an envoy. The reason mentioned was that this step was necessary so as not to lag behind compared to other governments, like the Norwegian, which had decided to exchange ambassadors with the Russian government. Again, this points to possible competition among smaller states. The following, more difficult, question was who to send. On the one hand, the foreign minister remarked that the Dutch representation there would be important during peace negotiations after the war. On the other, a few names were rejected with the argument that they were needed for posts in Western Europe, which seems to suggest that these were considered more important. Diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union were considered necessary and of great symbolic importance, but – for now – not of direct practical value.\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{142} For a fuller account of the hesitations concerning the recognition and how the decision was eventually made, see Knapen 1985, pp. 231–244.

\textsuperscript{143} Dutch cabinet protocol 17 March 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.

\textsuperscript{144} Dutch cabinet protocol 24 September 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246. For a more thorough treatment of the Dutch–Soviet relations up until the recognition in 1942 as well as the details surrounding that decision, see Knapen 1985.
Strategic friendships and trusted companions

On the Dutch side, there was more hope of influencing the other emerging superpower, the United States, and as we have seen, considerable efforts were made to that end. But it was also important to entertain good relationships with others, who could increase Dutch influence. The competition between small states has already been mentioned: a fear of lagging behind. However, good relations with other smaller states could also enhance their combined influence. It was clear that small states could no longer manage by themselves, but that they were dependent on the goodwill of others. Van Kleffens openly propagated cooperation with “non-aggressive countries like England and the U.S.” – but he did this after conferring with his Norwegian and Belgian colleagues, trying to coordinate views on postwar matters to gain more leverage.\footnote{My translation. Original: “niet-agressieve landen als Engeland en de V.S.” Account of Van Kleffens of his talks with the Norwegian and Belgian colleagues in the cabinet meeting of 31 March 1942, NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246. See also correspondence from August 1944 on joint suggestions by the Netherlands, Belgium and Norway on the armistice conditions. NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr 250.}

The Dutch government also established a monetary agreement and began negotiations on a customs union with Belgium in 1943, the beginning of the Benelux customs union established in September 1944, which also included Luxemburg.\footnote{NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr 217; Kersten 1982, p. 5.} The Dutch diplomat H.F.L.K. van Vredenburch later called the Benelux “one of the few constructive thoughts that the war had produced.”\footnote{Vredenburch 1985, p. 230. My translation. In original: “een van de weinige constructieve gedachten die de oorlog had voortgebracht”.}

The Swedish government also sought cooperation with other states, primarily with the other Nordic countries Finland, Norway and Denmark. Although the Swedish foreign minister did not openly pursue future cooperation (beyond trade agreements) with the great powers – and how could he have, considering Swedish wartime neutrality? – it is interesting to note that future cooperation with other Nordic countries was discussed openly on several occasions, in spite of their war participation and Sweden’s neutrality.\footnote{See for example a speech by Minister of Defence Sköld on 28 March 1943, at a Social Democratic Party Congress, in which he emphasized that Sweden should in the future not isolate itself and become self-sufficient. Though he foresaw a continued policy of armed neutrality – at least for a while – this would, according to Sköld, be compatible with participating in a Nordic defence union. Svensk utrikespolitik under andra världskriget 1946.}

This is in line with what Mikael Byström has termed the Nordic idea. He describes Nordic solidarity as an extended form of patriotism which included an unchallenged understanding that the Nordic peoples and nations were central to Swedish interests. The Nordic brother peoples were not considered real foreigners, not even under these circumstances. Nordic refugees also received much more generous treatment than refugees from other countries. Byström argues that the region...
Norden (a term generally referring to Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland), was considered the responsibility of Sweden.\textsuperscript{149}

The material studied for this thesis confirms this image and gives the impression that the sense of Nordic solidarity transcended other considerations. The Swedish government was anxious to maintain good relations with Norway and Finland, countries that for a significant period were not only belligerent but on opposite sides in the war. From 1943, Danish and Norwegian so-called police forces were educated in Sweden, to be able to assist in the liberation. On 2\textsuperscript{nd} September 1944 support for Finland, Denmark and Norway was discussed in the Foreign Council. Former Foreign Minister Sandler argued that it would be good for Sweden’s future position in the Nordic region and in Europe if Sweden could give its Nordic neighbours political help before it was no longer needed. Others were more cautious, but on 19\textsuperscript{th} February 1945, when acts of violence in Norway and the question of what Sweden could do was raised, Foreign Minister Günther reported to the Foreign Council that the government had discussed the possibility of Swedish military intervention. Though it had decided against such intervention for the time being, it was not ruled out in the future, in case of catastrophic developments.\textsuperscript{150}

If nothing else, these discussions show that Sweden, like the Netherlands, could not manage alone, and that great value was attached to the security of their Nordic neighbours. Avoiding catastrophe in a neighbour country was important enough to consider abandoning neutrality. In fact, training and equipping Norwegian and Danish soldiers was a breach of neutrality, though calling them police forces made it possible to deny that.\textsuperscript{151} An interesting detail is that the measures were not just taken or considered to prevent chaos in Denmark and (especially) Norway, but also to prevent allied troops from occupying Nordic countries. Russian demands for participation in case of such an allied occupation were especially feared, but the Swedish government was eager to avoid having any foreign troops so close to home, not the least because an allied occupation of Norway was expected to have repercussions in Finland.\textsuperscript{152} Interestingly enough, there were similar concerns in the Dutch government about the occupation of the Netherlands following the liberation (though the Russians were not an issue). The matter of how to organize the temporary military authority of the Netherlands after liberation was repeatedly discussed in the cabinet from 1942 onwards. On 3\textsuperscript{rd} November 1942, Minister of Justice Van

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\item[\textsuperscript{149}] Byström 2006, see esp. pp. 24–25, 78–86. See also Åmark 2011, pp. 529–532.
\item[\textsuperscript{150}] Foreign Council protocols 2 September 1944 and 19 February 1945, SE/RA, Tvåkammarriksdagen, Utrikesnämnden, A2:5.
\item[\textsuperscript{151}] Kersti Blidberg points out that even if the education was never discussed from the perspective of neutrality, the demand that it would be police and not military training implied concern for neutrality and a desire to take Germany into consideration. Blidberg 1991, pp. 128–129.
\item[\textsuperscript{152}] See Foreign Council protocol 23 November 1943, SE/RA, Tvåkammarriksdagen, Utrikesnämnden, A2:5.
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Angeren warned that the Americans doubted that the Dutch would be able to establish a rule of law and that they were therefore training officers in the United States to be administrators in the Netherlands. That meant that the Dutch government had to ensure there were suitable Dutchmen available after liberation so as not to become dependent on foreign commanders.\(^{153}\)

In spite of fighting on the same side, the Dutch government did not want allied troops in the Netherlands after the war any more than the Swedish wanted them in Scandinavia. Whether allied or neutral, the aim was to defend national independence and territorial integrity. Moreover, the notion that cooperation with likeminded nations was crucial, a notion that was clearly present in both Sweden and the Netherlands, seems to have had little to do with being allied or neutral. The Swedish government considered the Nordic countries likeminded in spite of their different positions in the war, and while it was on occasion suggested that Sweden coordinate its policy with the rest of the neutral countries, such cooperation was dismissed on the grounds that other neutrals were not comparable to Sweden.\(^{154}\) The Dutch government on the other hand clearly did not feel affinity with all of its allies but only advocated continued cooperation with some of them. In the context of comparing the impact of neutrality or alliance on international relations, it deserves to be noted that the notion of other states being likeminded did not coincide with notions of fellow neutrality or fellow alliance membership.

Concluding remarks on strategies for survival

The national security strategies of both Sweden and the Netherlands during the war were focused on keeping decision making as well as territory in the national government’s hands and out of the control of foreign powers – both friends and foes. The examples brought up show how wartime behaviour was inextricably tied to looking ahead. It could be dangerous to both governments to take too rigid a position towards the great powers (think of the Dutch warning not to use terms as “unacceptable” when dealing with the United States, and the Swedish concessions towards the side posing the greatest threat), but also to comply too readily. To survive, it was of the utmost importance to maintain a margin for manoeuvre. This explains the efforts to hold on to the diplomatic initiative, even if it was the initiative to make concessions.

To strengthen their position in foreign relations the governments of both Sweden and the Netherlands aimed at strengthening each country’s status and impressing upon others its reliability and usefulness. The monarch and the press

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\(^{153}\) Dutch cabinet protocol 3 November 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.

\(^{154}\) Undén’s notes from the Foreign Council 17 April 1944. SE/KB, Östen Undén’ssamling, L 108:11a.
were used to emphasize the broad support for and determination and continuity of the countries’ foreign policies. Fostering an image of continuity and reliability appears to have been an important asset for any small state (or perhaps even any state), regardless of whether it was neutral or allied. The above has shown that being able to present a clear image of what other countries could and should expect was an important asset in foreign relations.

The need for predictability and the desirability of a guarantee for national security made it a logical choice to promote the rule of law in international relations. The above has shown, however, that declaring adherence to rules and principles could also limit the margin for manoeuvre in a dangerous way in short-term situations with a high level of threat. Both governments in fact used a mixture of principled and pragmatic arguments for their behaviour, not only when direct issues of principle were at stake – like in the case of the Norwegian ships in Sweden or the right of the Indies to self-rule – but when the reasons for establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union were discussed in the Dutch cabinet, or when the Swedish ministers debated decisions concerning the country’s neutrality. The differences in types of arguments can not only be found between different individuals but also in the arguments used by the same individual, showing how principles and pragmatism in practice cannot simply be treated as opposites.

As far as the weight of different relations go, the cabinet and Foreign Council protocols of the two countries show the growing importance of the emerging superpowers, a shift already visible in 1942. However, relationships to other smaller states also received considerable attention. To handle the threats and exploit the opportunities of the relationships to the great powers was only one aspect of achieving security. The other was to build good relations and establish close cooperation with likeminded smaller states to enhance the margin for manoeuvre vis-à-vis those greater states.

This chapter has focused primarily on how the two governments reacted to threats and defended their independence during the war, albeit with an eye to the future. We will now move on to the more active plans they made and the initiatives they took during the war to improve a future world and ensure their future safety and room for manoeuvre.
CHAPTER 3

Planning for peace. Thoughts on future security 1942–1945

As the previous chapter has shown, wartime day to day decisions and strategies were not only a fight to survive the day, they were also permeated with an awareness of the impact the present behaviour might have on a future position. But planning for the future was not limited to keeping future needs in mind when reacting to crises. The chaos of war and the uncertainty of the future sharpened the sense of need for an improved security system and created the space for security discussions and proposals.

Sweden and the Netherlands’ different situations had an impact on the exact shape of that space. The Swedish government’s primary goals were to stay out of the war and to avoid becoming cut off from supplies. Its neutrality called for caution in its contacts with other countries and in the expression of opinions. Nonetheless, one should keep in mind that neutrality was a means to an end but not a reliable means of protection and never holier than that end. As we have seen, the Swedish government conceded to or refused the demands of the warring countries based on a weighing of risks and advantages rather than on the basis of strictly neutral conduct, while continuing to adamantly profess neutrality as its undisputed foreign policy principle.

The occupation of the Netherlands, on the other hand, had brought Dutch neutrality to an abrupt end as it threw the Dutch government in exile into an alliance with the other Western belligerents and, later, the Soviet Union. While in Sweden openly challenging the policy of neutrality was close to national treason, the Dutch government professed the death of neutrality almost as adamantly as the Swedish government professed its survival. Still, one should not underestimate Dutch dismay at no longer being able to act independently, or forget that it was not only neutrality that had failed as the country was drawn into the vortex of World War II – just as it was not strict neutrality that kept Sweden out of the war. Neither were deliberate policy choices but rather the result of emergency measures taken in a situation where all bets were off.
With this in mind, we shall take a closer look at public statements, foreign department plans and governmental discussions on future security and compare how the two governments saw the possibilities for securing postwar peace. Practical adjustments made to deal with emergency situations have been discussed in the previous chapter, as has their connection to future policy. Against that background, this chapter will focus on the long-term strategies and security options considered by the governments and foreign ministries during the war. Both similarities and differences will be highlighted. To understand the plans for the future, and determine to what extent and in which way they were influenced by the experiences of the war, the Swedish and Dutch governments’ definitions and assessment of the contemporary situation will be compared. What problems were perceived; what possibilities? The implications of the definitions of the situation and the assessments of the margin for manoeuvre will be addressed. What was considered desirable and possible and what plans were conceived for a lasting peace – in spite of as well as because of the circumstances of chaos and uncertainty? Was there a window of opportunity for change and, if so, how was it used?

Defining the problem – a matter of neutrality?
Understanding the motivation behind the plans for peace drafted during the war requires an understanding of the perceived need for change. If it is true that the Swedish government considered neutrality a success while the Dutch blamed neutrality for the failure to stay out of the war, this should make for different ideas on the needs for change. In fact, the Swedish government might not perceive a need for change in its security policy at all. But how important was the issue of neutrality as a guide to future security policy? What role did neutrality or non-alignment play as a security policy factor in Dutch and Swedish plans for peace? What problems were actually mentioned in cabinet discussions, speeches, articles, and policy documents? And in what ways were these different and similar in Sweden and the Netherlands? In this section we shall take a closer look at how the governments of the two countries defined the problems that would have to be dealt with in postwar security planning.

On isolation and small and great states
That Swedish neutrality survived World War II in the sense that Sweden was never drawn into the war does not mean that isolated neutrality was considered a desirable policy for the future by the central policymakers of the Swedish government. Östen Undén, the postwar Swedish foreign minister who, ironically enough, came to be known as the very personification of Sweden’s policy of
neutrality during the Cold War, in late 1944 expressed his view that isolated neutrality was an unsustainable policy for the future. In a 20-page memo entitled “The Nordic cooperation” (Det nordiska samarbetet), Undén advocated Nordic defence and foreign policy cooperation as the most realistic option for the future. The position of the Nordic countries in postwar international interaction was not only a central postwar problem for the Swedish people, he wrote, but a matter of principal interest for the position of small states in Europe.\footnote{Typed memo “Det nordiska samarbetet”, undated but written in the autumn of 1944 according to a comment in the text itself, SE/KB, Östen Undén samling, L. 108 11b.}

Many small states lost their independence during the war and the concern about the position of small states of Europe was shared by many European governments. The basic assumption appears to have been that a small state would not be able to stay entirely independent anymore but would have to participate in some kind of greater unit. There was a widespread belief in the inevitable internationalization of the world, a view promoted by, among others, the American Republican leader Wendell Willkie in his political bestseller “One World”. “To win this peace”, he wrote in 1943, “[…] we must plan now for peace on a world basis […] I mean quite literally that it must embrace the earth.”\footnote{Willkie 1943, p. 202.}

In her 1944 book on postwar planning, prominent Swedish Social Democrat Alva Myrdal drew the conclusion that remaining aloof in a new world order had become impossible:

A rich, highly industrialized country like Sweden, set on international division of labour, will have fewer possibilities than ever to stay out of the global order which is in the making right now, in this final phase of the Second World War. Our neutrality has been a temporary necessity during the war crisis, nothing else. There is no potential whatsoever for Swedish postwar isolationism.\footnote{My translation. In Swedish: “Ett rikt, högindustriellt och på internationell arbetsfördelning inställt land som Sverige kommer att ha mindre möjligheter än någonsin att stå utanför den världsdörr, som just nu i det andra världskrigets slutfas förberedes. Vår neutralitet har varit ett tillfälligt nödvång under själva krigskrisen, ingenting annat. För en svensk efterkrigsisolationism finns det inga förutsättningar alls.” A. Myrdal 1944, p. 3.}

Exactly how the postwar world would become organized was as yet unclear but whether imagining the world as organized into a few large zones, a world federation or a freely cooperating democratic Commonwealth, Myrdal wrote, internationalization was the result. And Sweden would fit into this international context one way or the other – either with active Swedish involvement or in a way implemented by the victors alone.\footnote{A. Myrdal 1944, pp. 3–6.}

Undén argued for Swedish participation in a larger context by way of a Nordic pact, and he was not alone. In a 1943 speech Minister of Defence Per Edvin Sköld spoke of the benefits for Sweden of a political merger with the
other Nordic countries. Though it might seem contradictory, Sköld at the same time advocated neutrality: in all probability, he said in the same speech, Swedish foreign policy in the future peace must for a significant amount of time remain that of benevolent but armed neutrality. He also named the criteria for a free Sweden: full external political independence; the right to determine our internal affairs ourselves; and full freedom to dispose of our assets and the results of our labour. He went on to argue that Nordic cooperation would help protect this freedom: if an attack on one Nordic country was known to mean an attack on all, it would have a deterrent effect on a potential aggressor. Moreover, Sköld said, if a Nordic country was attacked without a pact, Sweden would lose its independence anyway, even if it could avoid direct attack. The independence of Finland was absolutely crucial to Swedish security and the independence of Denmark and Norway was a prerequisite for Swedish world trade. Even if Sweden against all odds could once again avoid sharing the fates of the Nordic brother peoples, such a situation was not a tempting prospect.159

According to Helge Pharo the legacy of the war – occupation of Norway and Denmark but successful Swedish neutrality – had a profound influence on the divergent Scandinavian foreign policies, and he claims that in Sweden there was “considerable scepticism against compromising the straight and narrow path of non-alignment, even as regards a non-aligned Scandinavian union”. Torbjörn Norman and Alf Johansson claim that for Social Democrats and in particular Minister of Defence Sköld neutrality played a role as “a means of keeping Sweden out of the war, but also as an instrument for safeguarding the Swedish welfare system in the future.” They argue that the war had created “emotional ties with neutrality” which became the most important foreign policy legacy of the social democratic movement from that period.160 Considering Sköld’s speech, it seems that these assessments neglect the important emotional impact of the attack on Norway and Denmark and the emphasis on the need for future cooperation with these neighbours to safeguard Sweden’s future. The emotional ties to the Nordic brothers were at least as strong as those to neutrality.

Perhaps previous research has tended not to treat Nordic solidarity and proposed cooperation as a competitor to Swedish neutrality because contemporary policymakers incorporated the Nordic aspect in their neutral rhetoric. Neither Undén nor Sköld put the prospect of a Nordic merger in opposition to neutrality, even though Undén clearly rejected isolated neutrality. Less than a year after his 1944 Nordic memo, when he had become foreign minister, Undén emphasized the need to abandon neutrality in favour of a policy of solidarity. His putting solidarity above neutrality has been seen as a breech with what has been labelled the political testament of wartime Foreign Minister Günther, in a

159 Speech by Minister of Defence Sköld at a Social Democratic Party conference on 28 March 1943, as reprinted in Svensk utrikespolitik under andra världskriget 1946, pp. 506–509.
speech held on 4th May 1945. In that speech, Günther indeed openly professed the view that Sweden should continue with a foreign policy based on armed neutrality. However, Günther in the same speech spoke of a Nordic defence union as potentially of great practical value. The condition was that they could agree on the goal of common defence, meaning that the other countries should join Sweden’s course of inoffensive neutrality. He recognized that Finland would first have to achieve more stable conditions and that Norway and Denmark were at present more inclined to continue their cooperation with the allies, but he expressed his belief that the perspective might change quickly after the war and that they would come around to Sweden’s point of view. As the pressure of an overwhelmingly powerful Germany would disappear, the position of the Scandinavian countries would again converge. Günther argued that it would be strange if this did not lead to similar views on foreign policy.

In other words, all three – Günther, Sköld and Undén – spoke of neutrality as compatible with a policy leading to a situation where Sweden could be drawn into a future war because of a commitment to another state, without having been attacked itself – that is, by all available definitions, participation in an alliance. This seemingly contradictory advocacy of both alliance and neutrality can be explained by the fact that a clear distinction was made between great power blocs and pacts comprising groups of smaller states, in combination with the idea that it was no longer possible for a small state to pursue its foreign policy in complete isolation. If the expectation was to be absorbed in a world in which small states would no longer be able to act independently, cooperation with likeminded states was a way to maintain as much Swedish independence as possible. And looking closely at Günther’s speech, it is not permeated so much by the belief in neutrality as by the distrust of the great powers and the opposition between great and small states: whether we would be spared a new world war would, as always, depend primarily on the interrelation between the leading powers. “As far as I can see,” Günther said, “small states should make themselves familiar with the thought that it isn’t sufficient for them to simply regis-

162 Speech by Foreign Minister Christian Günther 4 May 1945 in the concert hall of Stockholm, as reprinted in Svensk utrikespolitik under andra världskriget 1946, pp. 637–639.
163 I have not been able to come up with a single definition of military alliance that would not be applicable to the envisioned Nordic pact. Two examples of definitions are Stefan Bergsmann’s “an explicit agreement among states in the realm of national security in which the partners promise mutual assistance in the form of a substantial contribution of resources in the case of a certain contingency the arising of which is uncertain”, and Heinz Gärtner’s that alliances are “formal associations of states bound by the mutual commitment to use military force against non-member states to defend member states’ integrity”. Gärtner & Reiter (eds.) 2001, p. 36 (Bergsmann) and p. 2 (Gärtner). Both are compatible with Sweden’s envisioned Nordic pact. The fact that the pact was to be defensive makes it no less of an alliance. As Robert Rothstein in 1968 pointed out, alliances have had different characters in different periods, some alliances having been primarily defensive in character while others have been offensive. Rothstein 1968, p. 46.
ter for admission to a new League of Nations and assume the consequent obligations.” And speaking of the need for non-alignment, he maintained that Sweden should “keep out of all great power blocs and great power alliances”.164

In 1939 the Swedish government had also made a clear distinction between the Soviet-Finnish war and the great power war, declaring neutrality in the latter but only non-belligerency in the former conflict. It differentiated between great power blocs and alliances of small states. The antagonism between great and small states as the big problem can be sensed in Undén’s 1944 memo as well. His faith in the possibilities of a Nordic merger adduced common interests and similarities between the neighbours, “as well as the problems common to small states in a world ruled by great powers”.165

These “problems common to small states in a world ruled by great powers” were also recognized in the Netherlands. Dutch indignation at the Soviet attack on Finland and support of the Finnish struggle against the Soviet Union in the winter war was incidentally also strong, featuring a sense of small state solidarity.166 On 31st March 1942, Foreign Minister Van Kleffens argued in the Council of Ministers that the modern war had demonstrated that small states alone could not withstand the aggression of big states – not even with the combined strength of the Netherlands and Belgium. Therefore, small states should strive for cooperation with non-aggressive countries like Great Britain and the United States.167 Even if Van Kleffens did not consider teaming up with immediate neighbours a sufficient solution, the reasoning resembles that of the Swedish: to protect independence, the best one could do was to join states that were like-minded. The difference was that he did not exclude cooperation with a great power, provided it was likeminded.

In a Radio Orange speech on 28th December 1943, Van Kleffens elaborated on his ideas about the future foreign policy of the Netherlands. Although he acknowledged that any decisions on the matter must wait until the war was over, he presented as his “firm conviction that we are agreed, every one of us, that our pre-war policy of aloofness is stone dead.” Reading no further it would be easy to get the impression that neutrality was the defined problem, but in fact in the very next sentence Van Kleffens went on to defend the decision of the Dutch not to ally themselves before the war. Making military agreements with the British had not been a viable option: “Even if we had wanted to, the question could not arise, were it only because England had gone too far in her

167 Dutch cabinet protocol 31 March 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.
disarmament at that period. [...] To make military agreements with such a country would have been folly, although it was perfectly true that England could at the same time have addressed the same reproach towards us.”168

It had, in other words, not been a mistake to declare neutrality under the given circumstances. The Dutch policy had simply been a consequence of an unsustainable international system. Disarmament was the underlying problem, and the behaviour of the great states would have made joining an alliance useless. In a letter to the editor of the London Times that caused some international commotion, Van Kleffens on 24th March 1943 (published on 25th March) expressed even more direct criticism of the greater powers as responsible for the failure of the smaller powers to withstand aggression:

The smaller Powers suffer for the mistakes made by the big ones on the strength of their power, mistakes often made against the express advice of the lesser States whose existence, as a result of such errors, is sometimes endangered to an even greater degree than that of their more powerful friends.169

This allegation prompted reactions. Sir Roderick Jones on 26th March commented the letter by Van Kleffens’ in a column of the Times, suggesting that the reason for the Dutch and Belgian suffering of German aggression should rather be sought in the “strict neutrality which these two gallant nations felt themselves honourably bound to practise.”170 The sneer did not escape Van Kleffens, who answered the next day:

Sir Roderick Jones asks: ‘What would have happened, had the Netherlands and Belgium allowed themselves the advantages of frank military consultation with Britain if nothing more, far in advance of the German invasion, as a preliminary to active cooperation once invasion was inevitable?’ And he replies: The answer is that such a conduct would have been incompatible with the strict neutrality practised by these two countries. There is another and more pertinent reply, which may have its importance for explaining the past and perhaps for shaping the future. It is this: What advantages could accrue to the Netherlands, or Belgium, or both, from military consultation with Britain at a time when Britain was unprepared for war? There was nothing sacrosanct about Netherlands aloofness (I can only speak for my own country); it was a policy determined by all the relevant factors, of which the measure of British disarmament, next to German rearmament and French chaos, was one of the determining elements. In other words, if we are to abandon our aloofness (which in times of war between others becomes neutrality), certain prerequisites must be available.171

171 Letter to the editor, “Small nations” by E.N. van Kleffens, The London Times 27 March 1943. Correspondence concerning the exchange and press clippings of the letters to the editor were found in NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Londens Archief, 2.05.80, inv. nr 1192.
In other words: neutrality had not been a choice so much as a necessity for the smaller states, for lack of a better option.\footnote{Compare Wels 1983, p. 83. Wels claims that the policy of independence had been a mission, while after 1940 the emphasis was on the lack of an alternative to the policy pursued.} If the greater powers thought the smaller should abandon their aloofness, they should behave differently in the future. Neither had neutrality been a sanctimonious attempt to save their own skin: both Van Kleffens in his 25\textsuperscript{th} March letter and Minister of War Van Lidth de Jeude in a speech at a dinner of the Inter-Allied Friendship Circle in April of the same year emphasized that the resistance of the smaller states had bought the greater allies valuable time and had slowed the enemy’s advance, suggesting that their neutrality had in fact been in the interest of the allies.\footnote{As reported in the ANEP-ANETA bulletin of 14 April 1943, NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Londens Archief, 2.05.80, inv. nr 1192. See also diary Lidth de Jeude 13 April 1943, Lidth de Jeude 2001, p. 957.}

There are more examples that support the suggestion that neutrality as such was not defined as the problem. When Prime Minister Gerbrandy in October 1942 talked in the Council of Ministers of the importance of keeping the failure of previous Dutch policies as a mirror before oneself, he did not mention neutrality. Instead, he spoke of the military failure and said that the Netherlands had made the wrong decision when joining a system of collective security that had already proved unviable. These were the reasons that the Dutch had not been able to maintain their independence.\footnote{Dutch cabinet protocol 13 October 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.} Gerbrandy’s failure to mention neutrality as a cause for the Netherlands’ deep trouble does not mean, of course, that he was in favour of a return to neutrality – but it does show that neutrality as such was not seen as the only or even main reason for the Dutch failure to stay out of the war. Van Kleffens, Van Lidth de Jeude and Gerbrandy did not defend neutrality as a good choice, but neutrality simply does not seem to have been the most relevant category when the security problems were discussed. Neutrality was the effect, not the cause: it had been the only available option. The underlying problems were defined as military weakness (both of the Netherlands itself and of potential allies), the failure of the League, and a lack of preparedness and realism in evaluating the reliability of other states. It deserves mentioning in this context that in Sweden too, the conclusion had been drawn that a policy of neutrality was not enough but that building military strength was paramount, as the Swedish defence plan of 1942 shows.\footnote{See Bjereld, Johansson & Molin 2008, p. 65.}

The main problem identified was thus not neutrality, but the behaviour of the greater powers and lack of preparations and cooperation in an efficient League. A new international organization would have to have more power to actually intervene. The problem for the smaller states was how this could be achieved without handing over all power to the already most powerful. In a
speech in the House of Commons on 24th May 1944, Churchill presented a vision of a future World Controlling Council comprised of the greater states, which prompted the Dutch foreign minister to react. In a letter to the editor of the London Times, Van Kleffens criticized the dominant position of the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and (to some extent) China in “matters of more or less general concern”. Although the smaller states were not completely ignored, their views would “carry less weight, the decisive criterion appearing to be size and power.” He continued:

I venture to submit that, in a world dedicating itself anew to democracy, this is an antiquated notion. In national affairs we have advanced well beyond the stage when wealth gave political power. [...] It is difficult to see how, in things international, democratically minded people can feel justified in attaching more weight to the voice of the greater Powers than to that of the smaller ones – not necessarily small ones.176

Van Kleffens received attention for this statement around the world, being both praised for his courage in standing up for the rights of smaller states, and criticized for turning on his greater allies. The German press jumped at the chance to use his letter for anti-allied propaganda.177 The incident goes to show that the Dutch foreign minister did not simply act as a loyal follower of the United States and Great Britain even if he recommended Dutch cooperation with them. More than once, Van Kleffens challenged the legitimacy of great power behaviour and decisions to the irritation of some, but, to others, marking him as a heroic champion of the rights of smaller states.

In Sweden, the statements by Van Kleffens were followed with great interest – and Swedish reactions, in turn, were reported back to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Dutch envoy to Sweden.178 In June 1944, the Swedish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs received a report from the Swedish envoy to

176 Letter to the editor, “Great and small nations. Shares in shaping of policy” by E.N. van Kleffens, The London Times 25 March 1943. Though not mentioned in his letter, it was (according to comments found in the archive with the press clippings) a response to the speech by Churchill in which he had advocated the leadership of the great powers in the organisation of the postwar world. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Londens Archief, 2.05.80, inv. nr 1192.

177 Reports on reactions in different countries to the 1943 statement by Van Kleffens are collected in the archive of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including references to how it was exploited by the Germans. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Londens Archief, 2.05.80, inv. nr 1192.

178 See for example a letter to the Dutch Foreign Minister of 9 June 1944 in which the Dutch envoy reported that different people, among whom the head of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs’ press department (Sven Grafrström), had expressed their interest in Van Kleffens’ interview. Attached was a Dutch translation of an article in the Swedish paper “Allehanda” which argued the importance for Sweden to not only pay close attention to the allied debate on postwar planning but to especially listen to what the smaller allies had to say. Both recent and earlier statements by Van Kleffens were referred to at some length, adding that the developments had proven the Dutch minister right and that Sweden must also take the standpoint that the principle of equal sovereignty of great and small states must be recognized. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Londens Archief, 2.05.80, inv. nr 1198.
the Dutch and Belgian governments in exile in London, Gunnar Hägglöf, regarding an interview with Van Kleffens on 31st May 1944 on the topic of the position of smaller states in the future international peace organization. Hägglöf began by expressing his regrets that he could not be as elaborate as he would like because of the censorship of diplomatic mail, but still felt he must say something – and managed to write an eight-page memo – on the background to the Dutch minister’s statements.

Van Kleffens had argued that the discussion of the representation of smaller states was premature, as it was tied to the question of what obligations the new world organization would entail. If membership in the world pact would only amount to consultation – which seemed increasingly probable – the security problem would move to the regional level. He pointed to the precedent set by the UNRRA-organization which had been based on regional committees, one for Europe, one for the Far East, etc. According to Hägglöf, the dreams of a universal collective security system had evaporated. Instead, states like the Netherlands and Belgium were looking to solve their security problems by entering regional pacts with each other and with Great Britain and France. He also reported that Van Kleffens expected that the United States might give guarantees regarding the Pacific and South America but would be highly unlikely to give explicit guarantees to Europe. Regardless of what consequences Hägglöf’s report might have had on Swedish plans, it shows beyond doubt that the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs was familiar with these ideas.

Hägglöf’s representation of the Dutch stand incidentally contradicts the image generally conveyed in historiography that American participation was considered indispensable for Dutch participation in a regional pact. Herman Schaper claims that the Dutch postwar security policy faced impasse partly because other problems had prevalence over foreign policy issues, partly because the desired course of action, tying the United States to a regional pact, was not possible, while what was possible – a smaller European pact – was not desired. Cees Wiebes and Bert Zeeman also emphasize Van Kleffens’ insistence on including the United States and say that he rejected all purely European ventures and that the Dutch government “favoured regionalism over universalism but only in an Atlantic, not in a European (continental) framework.” However, the report by Hägglöf and an earlier report by Erik Sjöborg (on 1st December 1944) to State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Erik Boheman 7 June 1944. SE/RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 24, vol. 1166.

It is noted on the report that it was passed on to the envoys of Berlin, Bern, Copenhagen, Madrid, Moscow, Lisbon and Vichy on 22 June, and delivered by Grafström on 7 July 1944 to the envoy Beck-Friis in Helsinki and to University Chancellor Undén in Uppsala, for their information.


Wiebes & Zeeman 1993, pp. 65–68, 79–81, quote from p. 81. Ine Megens joins this view: “Every proposal for a security arrangement with exclusively European countries as members, was brushed aside.” Megens 1994, p. 30.
1943) suggest that already during the war, Van Kleffens no longer counted on American participation but envisaged a smaller European pact – or at least gave his Swedish colleagues that impression. Sjöborg claimed that Van Kleffens had told him that he had changed his mind regarding the need for an American guarantee: an informal connection would be sufficient, as the United States would by now have learnt its lesson. According to Sjöborg, Van Kleffens advocated a European security pact with loose ties to the United States.\footnote{Report by Erik Sjöborg 1 December 1943, SE/RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 01 Cn.} It is difficult to say anything of Van Kleffens’ true conviction based on this material, but it seems that the plans were perhaps not as clearly defined and the preferences not as unyielding as they have sometimes been presented. Even if Van Kleffens propagated ties with the United States, he was experienced enough to keep more than one option open. When defining the problems for both Sweden and the Netherlands in the postwar world, focus was primarily on the danger of isolation, the practical problems of the organization of cooperation, and especially the relationship between great and small powers. Isolated neutrality was considered a thing of the past and was not really an issue. Van Kleffens’ declaration of his belief that the Dutch former policy of aloofness was stone dead is not very different from Undén’s denouncement of isolation and call for solidarity. In a January 1945 article Undén referred to neutrality as something that belonged to the balance of power system that before 1914 had been the only method for maintaining peace. An international organization and solidarity was surely better, especially from a social democratic point of view, than the free play of forces expressing themselves for some in alliances, for others in isolation and neutrality, which had culminated in the world war.\footnote{Undén 1945, p. 11.}

The failure of the League and need for military security

Though the danger and infeasibility of isolation had become even more obvious in an increasingly global world, it was not a new problem. In fact, both the Dutch and Swedish governments had already drawn the conclusion that international cooperation was needed when they gave up strict neutrality to join the League of Nations. But now, the League too had failed. In the cabinet protocol mentioned above, where Dutch Foreign Minister Van Kleffens argued for cooperation with other non-aggressive states, he argued that experience had shown that the system of one general League must lead to failure.\footnote{Dutch cabinet protocol 31 March 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.} Prime Minister Gerbrandy called the system of collective security one that had proved impossible, and joining it a mistake.\footnote{Dutch cabinet protocol 13 October 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246. That is not to say that Gerbrandy did not want a collective security system – in a 1944 pamphlet...}
Van Kleffens was not, as we have seen, inclined to sit by and wait for others to make plans. Already in 1942, he actively promoted his idea of a future peace organization of the world based on regional arrangements. In April 1942 he asked the cabinet’s approval for continued consultations with the Norwegians and Belgians. As there was as yet no political plan for the future among the allies, it was desirable to incite them to some activity, he argued. “We ourselves cannot be left with nothing.”

This shows a sense of urgency that was also visible in the letter to the editor of the London Times mentioned above: before the war, when the League had failed and the great powers had not taken on their responsibilities for peace, the smaller states had been left with nothing. That must not happen again.

In Sweden, the failure of the League was also discussed. The fact that not all states had adhered to the organization was recurrently mentioned as a main problem. But Sweden’s behaviour within the League was also discussed. An early 1945 Swedish report on peace and security after the war pointed to the need for Swedish commitment to a functioning system of collective security – meaning preparedness to accept military solidarity. In the League, Sweden had loyally participated in promoting international law and disarmament but had been reluctant to participate in military sanctions. Herbert Tingsten, one of the members of the study group responsible for the report, in his introduction quoted the government in 1923 reasoning that for Sweden a military solidarity obligation would increase the risk of war in a manner not in proportion to the increased risk for other states, because of the relatively protected geographic situation of Sweden and the country’s stable relations to foreign states. By 1945, World War II had dramatically changed this situation, Tingsten wrote, so that now the security problem had moved to the fore in Sweden. The effort to build an international order based on law was still important, but the need for an efficient system for the preservation of peace had become increasingly manifest and the reasons holding Sweden back from a collective security commitment had lost their validity.

Coupled to the increased focus on the need for real military security in an international organization was criticism of the interwar policy of disarmament.

published in English, he argued for values of community over individualism and self-interest, and for a rule of law, highlighting thinkers of Dutch origin as pre-eminently international-minded and emphasizing the interaction between national and international stability. Gerbrandy 1944.

187 “Zelf kunnen wij niet blijven zitten met niets.” My translation. Dutch cabinet protocol 8 April 1942, NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.

188 For example by Undén in a January 1945 article on neutrality and solidarity, Tiden vol. 37, nr 1.

189 Fred och säkerhet efter andra världskriget 1945, pp. 12–14. The other participants of the study group of the Foreign Policy Institute responsible for the report were Nils Herlitz, Östen Undén, Torsten Gihl and Gunnar Myrdal. As the report was simultaneously published in an English version, this should not only be seen as a national discussion about the future role of Sweden in the world, but as a Swedish international declaration of intent assuring other countries of the Swedish commitment to future collective military security in spite of its present neutrality.
If there was one lesson to be learned, it was that striving for peace must be coupled with preparing for war. The public criticism by Van Kleffens of the disarmament of the British and French has already been mentioned. In a speech on 1st May 1945 the Swedish minister of Defence Sköld warned that although the weapons would finally soon be silent, they were still there as a threat for the future. “The great international postwar challenge is to create a guarantee for peace. If this succeeds, perhaps one day we can put down our arms. But we are not there yet.”

The change in warfare had also heightened the vulnerability of small state defence. Already in 1942, in connection to the rumours of an imminent German attack on Sweden, Gösta Bagge wrote in his diary that the Swedish military seemed more worried than before. The use of air forces that could intervene in different parts of the country simultaneously meant that shipping troops by sea to conquer a country was no longer necessary. It would take great resources to put up a defence against a German Blitzkrieg, and political measures to avert danger or reduce risks were much discussed. Undén too pointed to how the risk had increased for all the Nordic countries to be drawn into a great power war. The development of air strategy had further weakened the possibilities of a Nordic country to observe isolated neutrality in the future. A Nordic pact with a common defence would offer greater political-military security than separate neutrality policies. The danger, in Undén’s view, was isolation and the problem he identified was that the present war had divided the Nordic experiences and weakened the emotional basis for a Nordic merger.

The anticipation of an internationalization in which Sweden would have to participate one way or the other, as mentioned, caused at least some to argue for acting to keep the initiative in Swedish hands to avoid being left with nothing. In a 1943 paper on the future of Norden (the Nordic countries), Over-Governor of Stockholm Torsten Nothin pointed to the need to act swiftly in relation to a tighter Nordic union. It was a long-term project necessitating forward planning. Nothin argued that those who tried only to influence the present would soon find they were powerless because they were too late. “Therefore,” he said, “to us the most important matter of the day is the position we take towards the future and our aim, while there is still time, to seek to influence the development in the direction which is in our view appropriate.”


192 Memo “Det nordiska samarbetet”, undated. The content makes it possible to determine the time of writing to the autumn of 1944. SE/KB, Östen Undén’s samling, L 108 11b.

193 My translation. “Dagens för oss viktigaste fråga är därför vårt ståndpunktstagande till framtiden och vår strävan att medan tid är söka påverka utvecklingen i den riktning som enligt vår
Defining the solution: armed cooperation

The conclusions drawn by the Swedish and Dutch governments from their war experiences were in fact remarkably similar: the great dangers were isolation, disarmament and an all too naïve faith in a weak organization of collective security. One must work for peace but prepare for war. How to achieve an increased capacity for deterrence played an important role – whether armament was needed as a condition for military cooperation, as Van Kleffens suggested, or for joint armed neutrality, as Sköld preferred in their respective 1943 speeches. But most important to prevent war was international cooperation and an improved system of collective security.

A new organization for collective security

Because of its policy of neutrality, the Swedish government did not consider it possible to participate in international plans for postwar peace organization, since such planning inevitably took place in one of the belligerent camps. In a draft about future problems written in 1943 or 1944, Undén wrote that the lack of vivid discussions in Sweden about the postwar international organization was also a matter of tactfulness: a nation that did everything to stay out of the war could not very well give the belligerents advice on how to shape the peace. This restraint should not be mistaken for disinterest, he emphasized. Organized international cooperation on a democratic basis was in the interest of the Swedish people. But a neutral country could not make assumptions about who would shape the peace.194

Even in the late spring of 1944, the Foreign Affairs Committee rejected a First Chamber motion urging an initiative for a vigorous Swedish foreign policy to attempt to build a world organization to safeguard peace in cooperation with other countries. The Committee called such an appeal unnecessary as there could be no doubt that the Swedish authorities would wholeheartedly participate in the attempts at a more durable international association as soon as the war was over. In order to illustrate that there was no lack of ideas on a future organization already emerging among the belligerents (and thus presumably to show the petitioner that such an organization would surely come about with or without a Swedish initiative), the Committee attached to its statement a com-

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194 Undated draft by Östen Undén with the title “Några framtidsproblem” (“Some future problems”). SE/KB, Östen Undén’s samling, L 108:19. Bjereld, Johansson & Molin write that Sweden was disorientated at the end of the war, that there was a lack of something to rally around and an awareness of the inability, as a small, neutral country, to contribute much to the discussions on the new security system. Bjereld, Johansson & Molin 2008, p. 67.
pilation of excerpts from different countries’ official documents and statements by persons in an official position. In this attachment, it is striking that the first text cited is from the Tripartite Pact between Germany, Italy and Japan of 27th September 1940, announcing their intention for a durable world peace by each nation in the world receiving the space appropriate to it, Japan recognizing the leadership of Germany and Italy in the new order of Europe and Germany and Italy recognizing the Japanese leadership in creating a new order in the greater East Asian area.  

In light of the war experiences, which had left no doubt as to what this new order meant, citing the Axis pact on an equal footing with a number of allied ideas on the postwar organization for peace seems cynical – even more so considering the date of this Committee report: D-day, 6th June 1944. However, it must be seen as an expression of how far the Swedish authorities went in their attempts to profess impartiality. The documents and statements cited in addition to the Tripartite Pact included the Atlantic Charter of 1941, the alliance agreement between the Soviet Union and Great Britain of 1942, speeches by American, British and Soviet leaders, as well as by Norwegian Foreign Minister Trygve Lie and South African Prime Minister (as well as Minister of Defence, Foreign Minister and Field Marshal in the British army) General Smuts.

Taking other statements and documents into consideration, there is no doubt that the planned international association which the Swedish government saw itself adhering to in the future, was the one planned by the united nations alliance. In the already mentioned draft by Undén, he explicitly wrote that there was no use at all discussing the possible future international political order in case of German victory, as the small states would in that scenario be completely subordinate. And a November 1944 discussion protocol from the Foreign Policy Institute’s committee for the study of postwar problems, in which prominent Swedish policymakers like Undén and Gunnar Myrdal participated, shows that the future United Nations Organization was indeed discussed with some fervour. It is interesting to note that Undén took a clear stand against the Russian version of a new security organization in favour of the Anglo-version. The Soviet Union wanted to demand unity among all the members of the Security Council while the British-Americans advocated a system where the aggressor would not have a vote. Undén argued that it was, from a moral point of view, important to take a stand against a system which would give the great powers the right to conduct any war they wanted and only provide protection

195 Riksdagstryck 1944, Statement by the Foreign Affairs Committee (Utrikesutskottets utlätande) nr 1 with attachments. Motion submitted by Verner Andersson of Bondeförbundet (Farmers’ Union).
196 Riksdagstryck 1944, attachment to the statement by the Foreign Affairs Committee (Utrikesutskottets utlätande) nr 1.
197 Undated draft by Östen Undén with the title “Några framtidsproblem”. SE/KB, Östen Undéns samling, L 108:99.
against aggression from Germany. At the same time he acknowledged that no system would come about without cooperation from the Soviet Union and that Sweden should join whether the Russian version prevailed or not. However, that was no reason to adapt to the Russian point of view beforehand. The Swedish study group should promote what it considered most adequate and not anticipate an undesirable development.198

Participating openly in allied planning however would mean declaring the assumption or even support of the victory of that side, something that neither the Swedish government nor the Foreign Council or Foreign Affairs Committee considered itself at liberty to do. A note should also be made in this context of the fact that not only the neutral Swedes referred to the Axis attempts at a new world order. The following quote is from a Dutch underground paper:

The Nazis have shown the democracies the possibility of planning in Europe, but with contempt for justice and humanity. They built a ‘New Order’ on the bodies of the oppressed, on stolen wealth, on lies and tyranny.199

While condemning the way and basis on which the Nazis tried to build a new order, the effort as such – bringing about international order – was praised.

While not taking (public) initiatives for the postwar world organization, the Swedish government followed the initiatives of others with great interest, and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs collected reports and documents on the plans for postwar peace. As the Foreign Affairs Committee had said, there was widespread agreement that if and when a new universal organization for collective security was established, Sweden must join. And joining such an organization would mean, as it had when Sweden joined the League of Nations, giving up neutrality. As Östen Undén said in January 1945:

In spite of our present neutrality, which is induced by the League’s factual breakdown before the outbreak of the war, our country does not have any distinctly exceptional position in the world, which would assign us any other road than that which the united nations now intend to embark on. Besides, if the victorious nations decide on a general federal system, Sweden has no alternative but to adhere to it, whether we believe in the attempt’s success or not. A policy of isolation would certainly bring with it such great practical inconveniences and difficulties in respect to our international relations that it seems only a theoretical possibility.200

198 Discussion protocol from a meeting with the Foreign Policy Institute’s committee for the study of postwar problems (Utrikespolitiska institutets kommité för studiet av efterkrigsproblem) Friday 24 November 1944. SE/KB, Östen Undens samling L 108:19.


200 My translation. In original: ”Trots vår nuvarande neutralitet, som är betingad av att NF faktiskt hade brutit samman före krigsutbrottet, har vårt land inte någon uppräglad särställning i världen, som skulle anvisa oss någon annan väg än den som de förenade nationerna nu änmar slå
That is not to say, however, that the Swedish government had faith that the new universal organization for collective security planned by the allies would be adequate to ensure sufficient postwar security, or that it did not have any opinions on the matter. The speech on 4th May 1945 by Swedish Foreign Minister Günther has already been mentioned, in which he said that if and how long Sweden would be spared a new world war depended first and foremost on the interrelationships between the great powers. These powers would not give up leadership of their politics to an international organization, he said, but still act independently, and the world could only hope that they would continue to follow the principles that had made them assemble in San Francisco. But the small states should not rely on the League for protection.  

This combination of being convinced that it was necessary to join a new organization for collective security while not having much faith in its efficiency was analogous to the attitude of the involved policymakers of the Netherlands. Foreign Minister Van Kleffens’ diary from the conference in San Francisco conveys an image of continual disappointments. The minister complained in his notes of lengthy sleep inducing speeches; of obstinate Russians who had “not yet understood that it is good diplomacy to make yourself pleasant to people”; of loud and immodest (though cordial) Americans; of unprofessional delegates who did not speak English or French so that time-consuming translations were necessary; and of “endless twaddle on procedural issues”.  

Though, in Van Kleffens’ opinion, the conference finally did get around to hard work, he concluded that the committee chairmen seemed to have been chosen rather to satisfy all candidates than for their competence, and when he wrote that he kept himself informed of all activities and progress of the conference, he added cynically, “(if any)”. Like the Belgians, the Dutch feared that the conference would turn into a confirmation of the hegemony of the great powers at the expense of the smaller and yield a pompous treaty without real content, as Van Kleffens wrote on 21st May. The Dutch delegation did its best however: Van Kleffens described how they met every morning before the committee

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\footnote{Speech “Sweden and the world peace” (Sverige och världsfreden) by Foreign Minister Günther at “Sveriges flotta”, 4 May 1945. SE/RA, UD Handarkiv, serie 3, Christian Günther, vol. 8. (Also reprinted in Günther 1945 and in Svensk utrikespolitik under andra världskrigen.)}

\footnote{Diary of Van Kleffens from his trip to San Francisco 11 April – 7 June 1945. NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr 208. My translations. The quote on the Russians from 25 May: “Zij zijn er nog altijd niet achter dat het goede diplomatie is, zich bij de mensen aangenaam te maken.” “Endless twaddle on procedural issues” in original “Eindeloos geklets over procedure-quaesties” from 30 April.}
\end{footnotes}
meetings to talk things through which worked well for Dutch unity of action. Significant unofficial conferring with the delegates of other countries also took place during lunches and receptions, dinners and cocktail parties, and Van Kleffens also talked on the radio and met with journalists several times. And as the days passed, the tone became a little more positive. On 23rd May, he wrote that the Dumbarton Oaks plan was gradually becoming more plausible, and on 24th May, he noted that the difficult matter of a solution to the question of the relationship between the new organization and regional pacts seemed close to a solution, leaving a wide field of tasks to the regional pacts, which was just what the Dutch wanted.

In his report to the Council of Ministers on 14th June 1945, Van Kleffens emphasized the effect in some countries of the Dutch memorandum pointing to the flaws in the original Dumbarton Oaks design, which had enhanced the Dutch position. That memorandum had been printed and spread in January 1945 and emphasized two main criticisms. The first was that a basis for decision making was missing in the Dumbarton Oaks proposal: all that was suggested was that peace must not be endangered.

Experience shows how easily this may come to be done by seeking solutions calculated to induce powers threatening to use violence to refrain from carrying out their threat; such solutions may well be at the expense of the threatened power, however innocent, the Dutch government argued. The great powers’ sacrifice of Czechoslovakia to avoid war with Germany was fresh in the memory. The Dutch memo asked for a “recognition of some acceptable standard of conduct in international affairs”, some guarantee to “victims of international violence that their cause will be upheld” so that the proposal did not become “tantamount to putting a premium on pressure brought to bear by stronger on weaker states”.

The second point in the memo concerned the relationship between the great powers and smaller states, hinging to a great degree on how the voting system would work. The Dutch government argued that six places in the Security Council were not sufficient to guarantee smaller states’ rights. “If decisions, of whatever importance, were to be taken on the basis of a majority vote, the result would be that the vote of one single small power would be enough to give the great powers a majority. Is it not to be feared that, in the hard practice of international relations, one such vote will always be available?”

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203 San Francisco diary. NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr 208. The quote “(if any)” from 3 May 1945 has not been translated, Van Kleffens wrote those words in English.

204 Page 7 of the “Suggestions presented by the Netherlands Government concerning the Proposals for the Maintenance of Peace and Security agreed on at the Four Powers Conference of Dumbarton Oaks as published on October 9, 1944”, dated January 1945. NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr 249.

205 On Dumbarton Oaks January 1945, p. 9. NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr 249.
Van Kleffens wrote privately of the San Francisco conference that the Americans made something mystical of it, speaking of their “sacred task”, and that a lot of time was wasted on pretty talk, but that the hard work had been done in the committees and subcommittees that were finally formed. There were, according to Van Kleffens, three major issues: the interpretation of the veto-right, which overseas areas should be put under trusteeship, and whether the organization would base itself on law and equity. Van Kleffens was pleased to announce that it had been decided to base decisions on any dispute on law and equity. The matter of trusteeships had luckily been treated in the delegation of Van Mook and Van der Plas (both members of the Dutch government of the East Indies), who were able to play a big role “without appearing as stubborn reactionaries” in Van Kleffens’ words. They had been able to show that there was no need to consider placing the Dutch East Indies under trusteeship, because that area was already so far on the way to self-government that the indigenous population would not accept such a trusteeship. The bickering had been between the British and Americans, while the Russians and Chinese were “against everybody” (“tegen iedereen gekant”). The Russians, he said, had discovered in the goal of “independence for all peoples” a wonderful opportunity to interfere with all overseas territories. The trusteeships were eventually limited to: a) territories conquered by the enemy; b) territories that were already under mandate; c) countries that had requested to be put under mandate.\footnote{Van Kleffens wrote privately of the San Francisco conference that the Americans made something mystical of it, speaking of their “sacred task”, and that a lot of time was wasted on pretty talk, but that the hard work had been done in the committees and subcommittees that were finally formed. There were, according to Van Kleffens, three major issues: the interpretation of the veto-right, which overseas areas should be put under trusteeship, and whether the organization would base itself on law and equity. Van Kleffens was pleased to announce that it had been decided to base decisions on any dispute on law and equity. The matter of trusteeships had luckily been treated in the delegation of Van Mook and Van der Plas (both members of the Dutch government of the East Indies), who were able to play a big role “without appearing as stubborn reactionaries” in Van Kleffens’ words. They had been able to show that there was no need to consider placing the Dutch East Indies under trusteeship, because that area was already so far on the way to self-government that the indigenous population would not accept such a trusteeship. The bickering had been between the British and Americans, while the Russians and Chinese were “against everybody” (“tegen iedereen gekant”). The Russians, he said, had discovered in the goal of “independence for all peoples” a wonderful opportunity to interfere with all overseas territories. The trusteeships were eventually limited to: a) territories conquered by the enemy; b) territories that were already under mandate; c) countries that had requested to be put under mandate.}\footnote{Protocol of the Dutch cabinet 14 June 1945, NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246. My translation of the quote. In Dutch: “zonder daarbij den indruk van halstarrige reactionairen te wekken.”}

The veto-issue was more difficult. On this matter, the Dutch had especially worked together with Canada. When it became clear that the great powers were not prepared to give up the veto, the Dutch had tried at least to limit it. They had presented a questionnaire which, under pressure, had been discussed, which led to a fight. The Russians even wanted to exclude certain disputes from discussion, to which the Dutch had reacted by asking why, in that case, they should bother to become a member. Finally, Van Kleffens said, “Stalin caved in” and it was decided that the council would have the right to discuss any dispute and that any member could turn to the council to this end. The relationships to the other delegations were good, Van Kleffens emphasized, adding: “We never rallied behind any single power.” The Dutch had gotten along especially well with the Canadians and the Belgians. The South Americans were difficult and exaggerated. More or less against Dutch wishes they had forced upon the Netherlands a requirement to keep statistics on welfare and education in the Dutch East Indies.\footnote{The veto-issue was more difficult. On this matter, the Dutch had especially worked together with Canada. When it became clear that the great powers were not prepared to give up the veto, the Dutch had tried at least to limit it. They had presented a questionnaire which, under pressure, had been discussed, which led to a fight. The Russians even wanted to exclude certain disputes from discussion, to which the Dutch had reacted by asking why, in that case, they should bother to become a member. Finally, Van Kleffens said, “Stalin caved in” and it was decided that the council would have the right to discuss any dispute and that any member could turn to the council to this end. The relationships to the other delegations were good, Van Kleffens emphasized, adding: “We never rallied behind any single power.” The Dutch had gotten along especially well with the Canadians and the Belgians. The South Americans were difficult and exaggerated. More or less against Dutch wishes they had forced upon the Netherlands a requirement to keep statistics on welfare and education in the Dutch East Indies. My translations: “Tenslotte gaf Stalin toe” and “Nooit schaarden wij ons achter eenige mogendheid.”}

\footnote{Dutch cabinet protocol 14 June 1945, NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246. My translations: “Tenslotte gaf Stalin toe” and “Nooit schaarden wij ons achter eenige mogendheid.”}
Upon request Van Kleffens informed the Council of Ministers that the International Court of Justice would be maintained and for now remain in The Hague, and that the International Labour Organization would also remain and be tied to the new organization. Finally the foreign minister wanted to mention that one no longer only spoke of small and great powers, but that a third category of middle powers had been added, to which the Dutch belonged, as did the Canadians.\textsuperscript{208}

**Plans for regional cooperation**

As mentioned above, the new universal organization was not the only matter discussed when it came to future security. At least as important was cooperation with likeminded nations. The idea that regional pacts were a necessary step on the way towards a truly universal organization of collective security was neither new nor unique for the countries examined here. The idea, albeit controversial, that decentralization would strengthen the League of Nations and contribute to world peace had been promoted already in the 1920s by the members of a number of organizations surrounding the League of Nations.\textsuperscript{209} It is not surprising therefore to find the idea of regional arrangements as a possible way to increase security turning up in both Swedish and Dutch (as well as other countries') plans for postwar peace, after the experience of the failure of the League’s attempt at universal collective security. A memo by the United States envoy to the Holy See, Myron Taylor, found in the Dutch archive of the foreign minister seems to have been sent to several governments. In that memo, Taylor said on regional cooperation:

> The only plan which in my opinion offers the hope of salvation through reversal of the current drift toward suicidal doom of civilization, promising instead a new opportunity for ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,’ comprises the concept of a number of spheres of influence, based not on nationalistic but on economic considerations. The sum total of these spheres would be the entire world, and each sphere would be as large as it would be possible to conceive from an administrative point of view. The aim should be toward further consolidation at future times and against division. Each sphere would constitute an economic entity, in which the people of every nation would have equal rights, exercised by democratic procedures, to determine their economic course and administer their economic affairs.\textsuperscript{210}

\textsuperscript{208} Protocol of the Dutch cabinet 14 June 1945, NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246. Wiebes and Zeeman assert that in spite of what Van Kleffens claimed, the attempt to achieve a special middle power status for the Netherlands failed: the great powers were not prepared to differentiate between their smaller allies, and the Dutch did not have the power to actually back up their claim. Wiebes & Zeeman 1993, p. 80.

\textsuperscript{209} Richard 2012, pp. 233–256.

\textsuperscript{210} Memo on Germany from Myron Taylor 13 January, 1943, NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr 212.
The quote includes a number of ideas reappearing in similar forms in many statements and discussions: that if nothing changed, civilization would be doomed; that cooperation was crucial and had to 1) include the whole world and 2) be organized practically this time, meaning in a number of closely cooperating regions; and that economic measures were a key to change.

Foreign ideas were also collected in Sweden. A compilation, for example, under the title “Post-war programs of Europe’s underground” in the November 1943 issue of Foreign policy reports (a publication of the American Foreign Policy Association) was retrieved in the archives of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. There Winifred N. Hadsel presented “what appear to be the most significant post-war proposals known to have been made by European underground movements.” Apart from noting different calls for economic and social change, he summed up the common denominators of the political ideas in different countries. According to Hadsel, the underground movements were all on the one hand keenly nationalistic, but on the other hand showed willingness to curb national sovereignty for the sake of maintaining peace – which they thought obtainable only through international effort – provided all nations did the same. Among others, the future path for small states was treated in his compilation, quoting a Dutch resistance paper:

In this war we have seen the small nations trampled down one after the other. That is why Churchill and The Times want solid blocs of small nations existing freely beside the “Big Four”. In this community of nations there will be no more neutrality and no more individual national policy, but the small nations will not be mere tools in the hands of their bigger neighbours. This conception stands for an international order of justice.211

This idea of an international order of justice built on the close cooperation of groups of states under the umbrella of a worldwide organization lay at the heart of both Swedish and Dutch ideas concerning a future system for peace, even if the details were worked out differently.

On 31st March and 8th April 1942 the Dutch cabinet discussed a plan for regional cooperation presented by Foreign Minister Van Kleffens. The plan included the formation of a group of likeminded states to ensure the safety of the Atlantic Ocean – an initiative which has sometimes been presented as an early version of what would later become NATO.212 While the latter came about in the context of taking a stand against the Soviet Union and was an expression of a bipolar bloc formation, Van Kleffens had in fact thought carefully about how to avoid the division of the world into hostile great power blocs. In Van

211 SE/RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 24 vol. 1166.

Kleffens’ wartime version, the Atlantic pact was only one part in a larger collective security system to be built on regional cooperation between groups of non-aggressive states. Similar groups would be formed for the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, for example. The idea was not to create competing alliances but to invent a system of collective security that would be manageable and forceful – contrary to the League of Nations – by consisting of groups with similar values and interests in a particular area. Countries would participate in all groups where they had interests, which meant that the British and Americans would participate in all groups – a guarantee that the groups would not turn into competing alliances – and the Netherlands in three of the groups, corresponding to the country’s interests in Europe, the East Indies and the West Indies.

Questions and objections arose from other members of the cabinet. The Social Democratic ministers Albarda (Water) and Van den Tempel (Social Affairs) argued in favour of a universal league: the problem with the League of Nations was not its universality, Albarda pointed out, but that it was not universal enough. He argued that general universality was the only way to make a system of international law possible which could curtail a misbehaving great power, and warned of the risk of conflicts between regional groups. He was afraid it would lead to attempts at a balance of power, causing an arms race, ending in war. Albarda also pointed to the danger of the Netherlands being the weakest link in the chain in a group with England and the United States. He also asked how the Soviet Union (or Russia, as he said) would be involved.

Van Kleffens replied that if the Netherlands had a weak position, that would also be the case in a universal organization, and that regional organization did not exclude universal arrangements concerning, for example, the organization of work. Van den Tempel remarked that any problems there had been in the League would hardly be solved with regional pacts, which would instead be a new source of conflict. He did not think it wise to tie the Netherlands to an organization outside Europe. Besides, he said, political relations and security were not the only issue: how would economic and social cooperation fit into a scheme of regional groupings? Minister Kerstens of the Catholic Party warned that participation in a regional pact as outlined by the foreign minister would leave the Netherlands at the mercy of the United States and Britain. He would rather see economic and financial cooperation out of which the political might eventually arise. Van Kleffens was defended by the prime minister who expressed his lack of faith in a universal League of Nations and argued that the foreign minister should be authorized to continue noncommittal talks with other countries, led by the Dutch interest. Nobody objected.

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213 Dutch cabinet protocol 31 March 1942 and 8 April 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246.
214 Dutch cabinet protocol 8 April 1942. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 246. Van Kleffens was not the only strong Dutch promoter of regional pacts. The Dutch banker,
A year and a half later Van Kleffens put forward his views to the Dutch people. In a December 1943 radio broadcast on Radio Orange, the Dutch government’s channel to the occupied Netherlands, the foreign minister spoke about the future foreign policy of the Netherlands. While emphasizing that it was for the Dutch people to decide after liberation, he put forward his thoughts on the subject. The immediate impetus for the broadcast was a speech by Field Marshal Smuts, who had suggested that the democracies of Western Europe be incorporated into the British Commonwealth to form a counterweight to the United States and the Soviet Union. Van Kleffens made clear that the Netherlands had not been asked to merge with the British Empire and that the country never would, emphasizing its independence: “The State of the Netherlands knows no allegiance except to the Crown of the Netherlands”.

However, he argued emphatically for the need to collaborate – on the condition that Great Britain did not again disarm – and not to restrict this collaboration to the British Empire but, hopefully, convince the United States to participate. It was true that the Netherlands would place itself in a position of dependence on the greater powers, but, Van Kleffens emphasized, they would in turn depend on the Netherlands. In his speech, much of what was said in the cabinet in March and April 1942 came up. This time, the Soviet Union was also explicitly included.

If things move in this direction, we would see a strong formation in the West with America, Canada and the other British dominions as an arsenal and a vast reservoir of power, with England as a base, especially for air power, and the west European mainland – by which I mean the Netherlands, Belgium and France – as a bridgehead.

A development of this nature would indeed compel us to rely on the western powers, but conversely they would also need us. It is difficult to imagine a stronger position for our country. This formidable western bloc would find its eastern counterpart in Russia. Once Japan has been defeated, Russia’s heart will be protected to the North, East and South by natural frontiers. But, like ourselves, it will have to devote full and continued attention – and it will wish to do so – to the security of its open frontier on the German side. This picture brings, as it were automatically, to the fore the need for preservation of good relations between the Netherlands and the Soviet Union.215

Though the Dutch situation was in many ways far removed from that of Sweden, certain similarities are worth pointing out. The war had led to the

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Swedish government’s increased isolation from the governments of other countries while it had thrown the Dutch government into unprecedented cooperation with in particular the British government but also the American and with other governments in exile in London. It would be easy to see the Dutch initiative for a regional pact as an expression of its failed aloofness and of these circumstances. However, Van Kleffens’ proposed pact was not at the time perceived as a military alliance but as a peace organization, and the Swedish wartime isolation and neutrality did not prevent the simultaneous development of Swedish plans for regional security.

While reluctant to discuss a general future political international organization before the war was over, plans for Nordic cooperation were debated repeatedly in Sweden during the war. The future of the Nordic peoples was a direct Swedish interest, and according to Undén, a “rather widespread opinion in Sweden demands that after the end of the war we try to accomplish an intimate overall political and trade policy cooperation between the Nordic countries, the formation of a Nordic federation or a Nordic bloc”. A detail worth pointing out in this context is that in the ongoing redefining of the world that took place during the war, other countries also seem to have seen Sweden as part of a Scandinavian bloc, in spite of the country’s neutrality. In a 1943 letter to the War Ministry of the Dutch government in exile, the Dutch ambassador to the United States reported that in the regional division of the American Office of War Information, the Netherlands had been removed from the German regional section and placed in a group together with Belgium and France. The neutral countries, he added, had been bundled with the exception of Sweden, that had been left in the Scandinavian section. Though incidental, this points to a strong regional identification of Sweden with its neighbours, so strong that it superseded the Swedish identity as a neutral, even to the American War Information Office.

The evidence for the importance of Scandinavian identity to the Swedish government is much more than incidental. In spite of neutrality, Swedish war-

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216 In his report on the Dutch ideas, Swedish envoy Erik Sjöborg referred to the envisioned Atlantic pact as a peace organization (*fredsorganisation*). He spoke of the attempt to tie the United States to that future peace organization, giving the impression that it should be seen against the background of the failure of the League, in which the U.S. had not participated, rather than as plans for a military alliance with the United States. Report by Erik Sjöborg 1 December 1943, SE/RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 01 Cn.

217 Undated draft by Östen Undén from 1943 or 1944 with the title “Några framtidsproblem”. SE/KB, Östen Undén’s samling, L 108:19. My translation. In Swedish: “En ganska utbredd mening i Sverige kräver att vi efter krigets slut söka åstadkomma en intim allmänpolitisk och handelspolitisk samverkan mellan de nordiska länderna, bildandet av en nordisk federation eller ett nordiskt block”. See also Byström 2006 as referred to in chapter 2, Strategic friendships and trusted companions.

218 Letter from A. Loudon 30 September 1943. NL–NIOD, Collectie Nederlandse regering in Londen 233b, inv. nr 16.
time plans for a Nordic defence union surfaced as early as 1940. The Swedish government had not declared neutrality in the Finnish-Soviet war of 1939–1940 but only non-belligerency. It supported the Finnish war-effort by delivering supplies and allowing Swedish volunteers to participate on the Finnish side, drawing the line at direct military involvement – to the disappointment of the Finnish government. This illustrates that neutrality was no overarching dogma. It was a manifestation of a wish to stay out of conflicts between the great powers, reflecting the attitude that the government did not have any interests in the conflicts among the great powers. It did have interests in the conflicts of its neighbours though, and made a distinction between the war between the Finnish-Soviet war and the general European war – proclaiming neutrality only in the latter, non-belligerency in the former. The distinction between a conflict of a neighbour with a great power and of the great powers amongst themselves in practice became difficult to maintain. The Swedish government refused a Finnish request to allow allied troops to cross Swedish territory to come to Finland’s aid, on the grounds that it would draw Sweden into the great power war.219 To a second Finnish question however, asking whether the Swedish government would be prepared to examine the possibilities for a defence union after the end of the war, the government gave a positive answer, passing it on also to the Norwegians.220

The actions in connection to the Finnish winter war demonstrate clearly that some interests took precedence over neutrality. The fact that in 1940 the Swedish government contemplated a defence union with Finland and Norway shows that it was prepared to re-evaluate and change its security policy for the future based on Nordic solidarity and the perceived need for a stronger defence than could be achieved in isolation. It shows that non-alignment was not seen as definitive or as opposed to (certain) alliances. It was a means to maintain independence vis-à-vis the great powers, not an end in itself and not all-encompassing. Rickard Sandler, Sweden’s prewar foreign minister, already in 1938 argued for a so-called active Nordic neutrality policy, aimed at cooperation that would stabilize the Nordic region as a neutral bloc. He recognized that Nordic neutrality in a sense would no longer be neutrality: Sweden would not take on the position of a neutral with regard to its neighbours.221

219 After the renewed hostilities in 1941, however, following the German operation Barbarossa which had put the Soviet Union in the allied camp, the Swedish government allowed a German division to cross Sweden from Norway to Finland. See Åmark 2011, pp. 122–140; Carlgren 1973, pp. 299–314. Tage Erlander in his memoirs describes the decision as jeopardizing not only Swedish neutrality but the unity within the government. Erlander 1973, pp. 100–105.

220 Telegram from the cabinet to the Swedish mission in Oslo 11 March 1940, informing of the Finnish request and the Swedish government’s answer, asking for delivery to the foreign minister as soon as possible. SE/RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 20, vol. 1043.

Details on the Swedish attitude and motives regarding a Nordic defence union can be found in a memo by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs’ international law expert Östen Undén. The memo, dated 11th March 1940, is in itself a testimony to the earnestness of the intentions. Undén argued for a Swedish military commitment to Finland in the light of Finnish distrust of Soviet intentions. A Swedish guarantee to Finland, wrote Undén, would have several advantages: it would reduce Finnish bitterness towards Sweden for the lack of military assistance during the war and improve the future relationship between the two countries. It would also make the peace settlement with the Soviet Union (which included territorial losses) more acceptable to Finland. Though Undén said he did not expect renewed Russian expansion in Finland for the next few years, he suggested that a Swedish guarantee would reduce such a risk even more and thereby reassure the Finns that there would be no new Russian demands for more concessions. It would help ease Finnish suspicions of the Soviet Union, which in turn would contribute to an overall lessening of tensions in the area. Moreover, Undén judged that a Swedish guarantee to Finland would improve Swedish relations with other states, especially the Western powers. As it was, the policy of Sweden was subject to great distrust from the Western powers, so that a less friendly policy towards Sweden should be feared in the near future. That, in turn, would entail the risk of greater Swedish dependence on Germany.\footnote{PM on Sweden and Finland by Östen Undén dated 11 March 1940. Riksarkivet, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 20, vol. 1043.}

Besides making clear the crucial importance to Sweden of Finland’s security and peaceful relationship with the Soviet Union, the reasoning shows an awareness that a position of neutrality was difficult to maintain and could easily backfire. If Swedish behaviour antagonized the Western powers, it might be left at the mercy of Germany. However, events overtook the plans, so that nothing came of Undén’s drafted proposal. The Soviet government refused to accept such a pact on the grounds that it could only be aimed against the Soviet Union, in spite of Swedish assurances that it would be purely defensive.\footnote{See Carlgren 1973, pp. 132–136.} Shortly afterwards, the German attack on Norway and Denmark put all plans for Nordic cooperation on hold. By 1942, the Finns had joined forces with the Germans against the latter’s former ally so that Finland and Norway found themselves on opposite sides in the war and Sweden was surrounded by hostile troops, seeing no alternative to isolated neutrality.

That is not to say that the plans for a Nordic defence union were abandoned. The neutrality that kept the Swedish government from getting involved in any other postwar plans for international security did not prevent continued Swedish planning for a Nordic pact. Although the more concrete preparations had to wait until the end of the war because negotiations with the other Nordic
countries were not possible as long as the fighting continued, the plan for a Nordic pact was kept alive. All through the war years, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs collected information on views in Norway, Denmark and Finland on future Nordic cooperation and produced several memoranda on a future Nordic federation. In his March 1943 speech, Swedish Minister of Defence Sköld called participation in a regional Nordic pact not only compatible with a foreign policy of independence, but also desirable. He emphasized the increased deterrence if it were known that an attack on one of the Nordic countries would mean having to fight them all. While recognizing the risk of having to go to war without having been directly attacked, he argued that Sweden might just as well be drawn into the war next time in any case. If the other Nordic countries were prepared to join Sweden and accept a joint defence policy, Sweden should, in its own interest, be part of a Nordic pact.

Though the Swedish plans spoke of a pact based on common neutrality, it is difficult to see how the argument for a Nordic defence union would be in essence different from Van Kleffens’ argument for the regional cooperation of likeminded nations. Neither can Swedish ideas on regional cooperation be dismissed as less serious or – except perhaps in retrospect – less viable. Both were ideas concerning military cooperation with other countries to enhance security. That means that Sweden’s “successful” neutrality did not prevent Swedish ministers from arriving at the same conclusion as their Dutch colleagues: that isolated neutrality was no longer the safest option for future security. And the wish for a future Nordic defence union consisting of Finland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden was no passing fancy but a recurring and well established foreign policy consideration. It was preceded by the plans for a Norwegian-Finnish-Swedish pact following the March 1940 Finno-Soviet peace treaty, and followed by the 1948 Scandinavian Defence Union negotiations between Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Not until these negotiations failed in 1949 did the Swedish government give up this line of initiatives.

Like Dutch ideas on an Atlantic pact, Nordic cooperation was also seen as part of a larger scheme of achieving universal collective security. In the very first sentence of a March 1943 memorandum by Östen Undén, he pointed out that the Nordic problem could not be isolated from the greater problem of a general international organization. Even if the Nordic peoples were to be united in one state (which would be the most far reaching possible form of cooperation) general peace would be in that state’s interest. Any isolationist policy in relation to

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226 The tradition of Nordic foreign minister meetings was resumed after the war and continued after the failure of the SDU negotiations. Cooperation between the Nordic countries has in fact continued to be developed, even if not in the shape of an outright defence union, see for example Petersson 2003.
the rest of the world was out of the question. Undén explicitly emphasized that Nordic cooperation would be subordinated to a pan-global security system, suggesting in a way reminiscent of the reasoning of Van Kleffens that a regional pact between nations with similar interests would be well suited to take care of collective security in that particular region.227

Different war experiences, different peace plans?

Swedish and Dutch wartime definitions of future problems, assessments of possibilities, and plans conceived show some striking similarities. Both governments faced the problem of maintaining independence especially in the face of the greater powers. Both saw a future in which small states would not be able to manage alone. Both were imbued with awareness that isolation and aloofness must be replaced by cooperation and solidarity in order to survive. A functioning new world order had to be built and within that order, the small states would have to organize in order to maintain their margin for manoeuvre in relation to the great powers. To claim that the Netherlands in the last war years sought a postwar security solution in an alliance, while Sweden sought one in continued neutrality is not only a simplification but it suggests a fundamental difference in outlook which is not supported by the evidence. In spite of their different war experiences, both in fact sought a security solution in an improved system of collective security in which regional cooperation played a central role.

Defining collective security is tricky, and a topic to which we shall return in the next chapter. What really is the difference between an organization for collective security and an alliance, for example? In his influential book Politics among nations. The struggle for power and peace written in 1948, Hans Morgenthau claimed that since World War I, legalistic ideologies as justification for foreign policy behaviour had become common, leading to a replacement of the former alliances with “regional arrangements” or a “system of collective security”. He called this a “deliberate or unconscious ideological disguise” of foreign policy. Though one can question Morgenthau’s way of diminishing ideologies to nothing more than ways to justify power politics, there is some truth to his observation that the name you give something plays an important role in foreign policy and diplomacy and that it is important – and often difficult – not to confuse the presentation of foreign policy with its

227 “Memorandum med en diskussionsbasis för dryftande av formerna för en framtida nordisk federation” by Östen Undén. The memo itself is undated but has in handwriting the note “24/3” together with the names of missions to which it was sent (Berlin, Helsinki, Copenhagen, London, Washington, Oslo). The accompanying letter is dated 24 March 1943 and a comparison with Undén’s private notes confirms that the year was 1943. SE/RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 20, vol. 981; SE/KB, Östen Undéns samling, L 108 11b.
content (or in Morgenthau’s words: its “true character”).\textsuperscript{228} In the following chapters, we will see how the concept of collective security was developed and labelled and came to be combined with both the concept of neutrality and that of alliance.

It should be acknowledged, finally, that while the two countries’ approaches to the needs and possibilities of small states in the postwar world order were similar, their external circumstances were different and this influenced the course pursued. Which solution was chosen for a problem often depended on the time frame within which a decision had to be made and the level of perceived threat. As we have seen, opinions on what was the best course of action could at times differ significantly between the members of each government. Usually, the dividing line went between those arguing for a more pragmatic approach, which often meant one that was more immediately useful, and those who argued for adherence to notions which were considered to lead to more favourable conditions in the long run. “Dividing line” should not be taken too literally: principled and pragmatic arguments were often mixed even by one and the same individual. Overall, we can see a balancing between the two, with strategies for immediate survival sometimes at odds with long-term goals.

The way a compromise was reached was determining for the foreign policy outcome. The available time was of considerable importance. Because both governments perceived a need for unity in foreign policy, change was difficult and could only take place if a high degree of consensus could be reached among policymakers. Building a new consensus took time and was a delicate matter as it had to be done without disturbing the outward image of unity. In the Netherlands, the war shattered the consensus on the previous policy of aloofness as it threw the government in exile into the arms of the allies. However, it is evident that it was not easy to come to a new consensus, looking at the numerous conflicts between ministers, and between queen and cabinet. But, one might argue, the occupation opened a window of opportunity – a possibility as well as an urgently felt need – for the Dutch government to redefine its security policy.

Did a similar window open in Sweden? That is a more difficult question. The enormous threats and changes in the surrounding world did convince many leading Swedish personalities, both within and outside the government, of the necessity of change. The many (foreign) ideas and suggestions regarding a new world order did not pass by Sweden unnoticed, in spite of the country’s relative isolation. Yet, the position of Sweden as non-belligerent and the efforts to maintain that position meant that the consensus around the policy of neutrality was persistently defended even to the point of suppressing other opinions. That, of course, made it almost impossible to openly argue for a change of that policy. And still there were attempts, though they were made within a nar-

\textsuperscript{228} Morgenthau 1949a, pp. 61–69.
rower margin: the deeply anchored Swedish sense of solidarity with Finland and the other Scandinavian countries was used as a ground for change, while presenting cooperation with those countries as compatible with a policy of neutrality.

In spite of the limitations to the Swedish margin for manoeuvre, the basic assumptions on the need for change for a better future world order were remarkably similar to those in the Netherlands. As we have seen, the different war experiences of the Swedish and the Dutch governments did not lead to very different reasoning concerning security. The lessons learned from the war and the imagined solutions had fundamental resemblances. Even if the attitudes on the viability of neutrality or the desirability of an alliance were coloured by the war experience, the central ideas on future security did not differ along the lines of neutrality versus alliance. Though the specifics and geographical scope differed, both the Dutch and the Swedish envisioned becoming part of a regional grouping of likeminded nations that would help to uphold collective security within a context of worldwide cooperation. In a long-term context, when the best imaginable future was considered without it being related to an imminent threat or problem that demanded an ad hoc solution, the Dutch and Swedish ideas about that future were similar.

That is not to claim that there were not important differences with an impact on future policies. Though the Swedish and Dutch governments might have been in agreement in theory on the best future world order and even on their own possible position in it, the practical consequences of the war should not be underestimated. The Dutch government had an established line of communication with the British and American as well as other governments in exile. It would have been odd had the coordination and reckoning with the partners of the wartime alliance suddenly stopped because the war did. And it is hard to believe that the sense of threat and the constant calls for caution that dominated the political climate in Sweden for years did not have a serious impact on the continued Swedish foreign policy discussions. The greatest difference perhaps lay not in ideas but in the room for change: while the window in the Netherlands had been smashed violently open, the Swedish window of opportunity stood only slightly ajar.
CHAPTER 4

Much of the post-Cold War revision of twentieth century Swedish and Dutch security policy history has challenged traditional perceptions by going beyond declaratory policies to looking for underlying or hidden ideas and practices. In the Netherlands, the long-dominant image of the country as a convinced and loyal NATO ally – an image that corresponded to that promoted by Dutch authorities during the Cold War – has been questioned. In the 1990s researchers pointed to serious American-Dutch mutual irritation and disagreements in 1948–1949 and to the behind-the-scenes hesitance of Dutch Foreign Minister Stikker to sign the North Atlantic Treaty. Attention was also paid to the disinclination of the Dutch government to adjust to the NAT common defence planning or contribute to NATO in the 1950s, especially its reluctance not only to participate in the Korean War but to increase its own defence efforts to match the defence budgets of other NATO members. In Sweden, there has been an even stronger emphasis on policy secrets. The deeply rooted image of Sweden as the perpetual neutral – an image similarly fostered by the authorities during the Cold War – has been shaken by accounts of secret cooperation with the Western alliance and the United States.

229 Dutch historian Floribert Baudet has described how information officers were given the task of generating support for NATO (and for the defence policy and costs in general) in his book on information, propaganda and national resilience 1944–1953, Baudet 2013. In history writing, Alfred van Staden is generally credited with establishing the image of the Netherlands as the most loyal ally of NATO, Van Staden 1974. The book by Van Staden has been frequently cited since the 1970s. The image might be compared to that of Sweden as the convinced neutral, which was also seriously challenged in the 1990s but remains important for Sweden’s self-image.


231 In 1994 an official inquiry was conducted by the so-called neutrality policy commission (Neutralitetspolitikkommissionen) regarding the preparations for receipt of Western military assistance and for military cooperation in case of war during the years 1949–1969. The commission assessed that those preparations had in fact been in conformity with international law and had
These accounts have a common denominator: they have focused on what was not said in parliament, on what policymakers did or thought when they were not outwardly defending the official policy. Here, rather than looking for the hidden, it is precisely publicly articulated policy that will be in focus. While what was said in public might differ from opinions expressed in private, it shows how policymakers accounted for their views. In a democracy, the way a policy is defended and promoted is more than a smoke screen hiding real considerations and behaviour. It is an essential part of foreign policy development. Before the images of loyal ally versus principled neutral were canonized, what self-images and policy principles were promoted? After World War II, the preferred security policy of both Sweden and the Netherlands was, after all, formulated neither as neutrality nor as alliance but as a system of collective security based on the rule of international law. The very fact that membership in a collective security organization was later combined with other security measures implies that Swedish neutrality and Dutch alliance policies were in fact not diametrically opposed – certainly both were deemed compatible with membership of the United Nations.

Joining the UN was the first explicit political decision pertaining to security made in both countries in the early postwar period. The Netherlands had participated in the San Francisco conference and was one of the original signatories of the Charter in June 1945. The Dutch parliamentary debate to ratify the UN Charter took place in October–November 1945. In Sweden, the UN debate took place in March 1946. As a wartime neutral, Sweden had not participated in the San Francisco conference. The Swedish bill sought parliamentary approval to take the measures necessary for Sweden to join the United Nations and to let the government decide when to submit Sweden’s membership application.

While the membership was virtually uncontested in both countries, it was thoroughly assessed by both governments and extensively discussed in both parliaments. An analysis of the parliamentary treatment – the reasons invoked for joining, the problems and opportunities perceived, the character of both criticism and praise – is used here as a key to a more nuanced understanding of the postwar security policy positions of Sweden and the Netherlands. A close reading of parliamentary records helps to paint part of a larger picture of how Dutch and Swedish policymakers defined their interests, assessed their options and acted in the period between the height of World War II and the onset of

not restricted Sweden’s possibility of declaring neutrality in the case of war. It limited its criticism to calling a public statement by Prime Minister Erlander in 1959, in which he categorically denied any cooperation with the Western powers, deliberately misleading (“en medvetet felaktig bild”). SOU 1994:11, the mentioned assessment on pp. 34 and 307–308. Others have made harsher judgements, calling the preparations Sweden’s “double game” (Agrell 1991), “secret reserve option” (Dalsjö 2006), or even “secret alliance” (Holmström 2011). For a research overview of the debate on Swedish Western cooperation, see Hugemark Malmström 2014.
The core materials used in this chapter are the bills and explanatory notes of the Dutch and Swedish governments on the United Nations Charter, the Foreign Affairs Committees’ statements on these in both countries, and the protocols of the ensuing parliamentary discussions. The attachments accompanying the bills, such as copies of the UN Charter with translations and comments, have also been considered.

The parliaments and procedures were by and large similar. Both the Netherlands and Sweden at this time had bicameral parliaments, and the procedure for adopting draft legislation followed basically the same pattern. A few differences in the parliaments’ sizes and compilations, as well as in the steps of the procedure for adopting draft legislation, will be accounted for in a schematic overview on the next two pages. Notwithstanding the differences, the documents share the ability to reveal the governments’ lines of arguments in the presentation to parliament, as well as the prevailing opinions and emphases of the parliamentary committees and members on the matter. Differences and similarities in Dutch and Swedish views of the international order and their own position and ability to act in it, can be made visible through an analysis of the arguments put forward in these appeals for and discussions of the UN Charter and UN membership.

The analysis will focus on similarities and differences in definitions, assessment and perceived implications of UN membership. To begin with, the comparison will consider how the new organization was defined in the two countries, as a key to how it was viewed. How was it referred to, in which context was it described and how was it characterized? Secondly, attention will be given to the countries’ priorities by looking at the assessment of the organization. Which values, tasks and powers were ascribed to the UN and how were these related to the interests and values of each country? Which aspects of the UN Charter were emphasized? What problems and possibilities were identified? Finally, the analysis will focus on the available options and their perceived implications. What actions were recommended and why? And what place did neutrality or alliance considerations have in this context? In the concluding remarks, the similarities and differences identified will be discussed, highlighting what they reveal or imply regarding world view, security position and possible policy strategies.
Parliaments’ compilations at the time of the UN debates

**The Netherlands**

**First Chamber, total number of seats**
- Roomsch-Katholieke Staatspartij (Catholic Party) 34
- Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij (Social Democratic Party) 26
- Anti-Revolutionaire Partij (Anti-Revolutionary Party, protestant) 17
- Christelijk-Historische Unie (Christian-Historical Union, protestant) 16
- Liberale Staatspartij (Liberal Party) 14
- Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond (socio-lib., later merged with SDAP) 12

**Second Chamber, total number of seats**
- Roomsch-Katholieke Staatspartij (Catholic Party) 26
- Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij (Social Democratic Party) 17
- Anti-Revolutionaire Partij (Anti-Revolutionary Party, protestant) 16
- Christelijk-Historische Unie (Christian-Historical Union, protestant) 16
- Liberale Staatspartij (Liberal Party) 14
- Communistische Partij van Nederland (Communist Party) 1
- Christelijk-Democratische Unie (Protestant Socialist Party) 1
- Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (Conservative Protestant Party) 1

**Sweden**

**First Chamber, total number of seats**
- Socialdemokraterna (Social Democratic Party) 83
- Högern (Liberal-Conservative Party) 30
- Bondeförbundet (Farmers’ Union) 21
- Folkpartiet (Liberal Party) 14
- Kommunisterna (Communist Party) 2

**Second Chamber, total number of seats**
- Socialdemokraterna (Social Democratic Party) 115
- Högern (Liberal-Conservative Party) 39
- Bondeförbundet (Farmers’ Union) 35
- Folkpartiet (Liberal Party) 26
- Kommunisterna (Communist Party) 15

While the Swedish parliament was the regular elected parliament, that of the Netherlands was an emergency parliament with limited assignments that served only in the first postwar months. This Temporary States-General (Tijdelijke Staten-Generaal) had fewer members than the regular 100 Second Chamber and 50 First Chamber members. The emergency cabinet (appointed by Queen Wilhelmina after liberation pending the elections) had added some new members to those who remained from the prewar parliament, but it did not make up for all who had died during the war, or were excluded because of membership in the Dutch National-Socialist Party NSB (Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging), or on other grounds of (suspected) unpatriotic behaviour.

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Parliamentary procedures of adopting the UN bill in Sweden and the Netherlands

Sweden

- **Government bill with explanatory note and attachments**
  8 March 1946

- **Bicameral Foreign Affairs Committee statement**
  15 June 1946

- **2nd Chamber debate, adoption of bill**
  27 June 1946

- **1st Chamber debate, adoption of bill**
  27 June 1946

The Netherlands

- **Government bill with explanatory note and attachments**
  15 October 1945

- **2nd Chamber Foreign Affairs Committee preliminary report**
  23 October 1945

- **Foreign Minister’s explanatory answer**
  25 October 1945

- **2nd Chamber Foreign Affairs Committee report**
  27 October 1945

- **1st Chamber Foreign Affairs Committee final report**
  2 November 1945

- **2nd Chamber debate, adoption of bill**
  30 October 1945

- **1st Chamber debate, adoption of bill**
  7 November 1945

The Dutch statements contained questions and presented different opinions of the Committee members. The Swedish statement did not display different views or ask questions. The Swedish bill was accompanied by a 72-page comment to the Charter of the United Nations prepared by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs with the assistance of outside experts. Such expert commentary was not provided by the Dutch government, but its explanatory note was more extensive than the Swedish. Both bills were accompanied by the full text of the United Nations Charter and of the Statute of the International Court of Justice, in the Netherlands in English and in Dutch; in Sweden in English, French and Swedish. The Dutch bill was also accompanied by a copy of the Atlantic Charter and a list of states that had signed the UN Charter in San Francisco.
Definitions

To determine how the state bodies of Sweden and the Netherlands viewed the new organization, the first point of focus will be the definitions used in the bills and debates. Much can be revealed by the manner in which something is described. What was the United Nations to the Swedish government and members of parliament? And did it have the same meaning to the Dutch government and parliament?

What’s in a name?

Though a rose by any other name might smell as sweet, the name of an organization of states is a delicate matter with implications for what is considered its essence. Before taking on a somewhat broader perspective of how the organization was defined and qualified, let’s focus precisely on its name: the United Nations. In Dutch, as in English, the name of the new organization was the same as that used to describe the allies of World War II: the United Nations, or, in Dutch: “de Vereenigde Naties” (also sometimes used without capitalizing the first letters: the united nations or “vereenigde naties”). In Sweden, however, a distinction between the two was made in the translation. While the alliance of the united nations was in Swedish called “de förenade nationerna” (or “Förenade Nationerna”), the postwar organization the United Nations was given the Swedish name “Förenta Nationerna”. There is no difference in meaning. In fact, not only is the disparity not easily explained in English; it did not seem obvious or logical to Swedish diplomats at the time either: in early reports on different countries’ attitudes towards the United Nations – i.e. the postwar organization – both “förenade nationerna” and “förenta nationerna” (with as well as without a capital F and N) were used to describe the new organization.233

Gradually, “Förenta Nationerna” was established and became the only name used for the organization by the time the matter of Sweden’s membership reached parliament in 1946. This course of events gives the impression that in Sweden it was considered a problem that “the United Nations” was also the name commonly used for the wartime allies. The logic behind the contrived difference in translations would appear to be the wish to distinguish between an alliance and an organization of collective security – a distinction that, as the above might suggest and as the continuing discussion will show, was not necessarily self-evident. Did emphasizing that the United Nations was separate from and not a continuation of the military alliance of the united nations serve to


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make wartime neutral Sweden’s participation less controversial? Perhaps, but in
the explanatory note to the Swedish bill proposing membership of the United
Nations, Foreign Minister Östen Undén did not – as might have been expected
if that had been the case – downplay the link between the former alliance and
the new organization. In fact, he rather emphasized it by introducing the
United Nations (“Förenta Nationerna”) as a new security organization for
which the World War II allied states had laid the foundations at the conference
of San Francisco in 1945.234

In comparison, it may be noted that the Dutch government’s introduction
of the new organization made a point of naming the Atlantic Charter of 1941 as its
foundation, and that in doing so it mentioned explicitly that the United States
– President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was one of the signatories – was at the
time not a belligerent. This seems to indicate that in the Netherlands too there
was a wish to make a clear distinction between the present organization and the
wartime alliance. The fact that the Netherlands had itself been part of that alli-
ance and had participated in the San Francisco conference did not cause a dif-
ferent attitude in this regard. The origin of “the new organization of the States’
society, which has been given the name of the ‘United Nations’” was presented
as something not born out of a military alliance but out of a wish, independent
of any common war effort, of likeminded nations to declare their common
values and principles for a better future for the whole world.235

It is, in other words, not possible to conclude decisively that there was a
coherent Swedish attempt to distinguish the new organization from the wartime
alliance. And even if there was a conscious attempt to do so (only not consist-
ently carried out), this did not particularly distinguish wartime neutral Sweden
from wartime occupied Netherlands, where the same ambiguity appeared in at
least partial attempts to emphasize the new organization’s separateness from the
wartime united nations. Although it is not possible, based on the sources stud-
ied, to say anything conclusively about the motives for the Swedish translation
or the Dutch presentation of the origins of the UN, it seems safe to conclude
that any wish to make a distinction between an alliance and an organization for
collective security was not unambiguous and cannot be directly linked to war
experience or a wish to maintain neutrality.

A different aspect of the name United Nations, so obvious that it is easily for-
gotten, should also be mentioned briefly. Enclosed in the very name of the
organization was the emphatic message that it was not the League of Nations.

utarbetade de under det andra världskriget allierade staterna grundvalarna för en ny internationell
säkerhetsorganisation, benämnd ‘Förenta Nationerna’[…]”

of the quote. In Dutch: “de nieuwe organisatie der Statenmaatschappij, welke den naam heeft
gekregen van de ‘Vereenigde Naties’”.

II7
This was not a continuation or an expansion or development of the League, but a brand new organization for peace and security. This aspect is visible in both Swedish and Dutch descriptions, which both emphasized its separateness and stressed that the new organization had benefited from the lessons learned from the (failure of the) League. However, continuity with the League of Nations was sometimes also claimed, and it was used as a reference point for different aspects of the new organization on several occasions.

Characterizing the new organization

One of the most common qualifications of the new organization was indeed “new”. Though sometimes obviously used to distinguish it from the failed League and thereby implying “better”, most of the time not too much should be read into it. It was simply a way of distinguishing the new organization for peace and security from the old one. No significant differences in the use of this particular characterization can be found between Swedish and Dutch policymakers: both used it frequently. There are, however, other discrepancies. While in Sweden the United Nations were almost always referred to as a security organization – with some prefix variations, such as the “new”, “planned”, “intended”, “general” or “international” security organization, or combinations: “a general international organization for the maintenance of international peace and security” – the descriptions in the Netherlands were more varied. Though the Dutch policymakers certainly also spoke of the UN as an organization for peace and security, the reference to security was nowhere near as omnipresent as in Sweden. In the Dutch government’s explanatory note, the United Nations was introduced as “the new or ganization of the States’ society”. Other definitions, further on in the note as well as in parliamentary discussions, included “state community”, “confederation of states”, “international community” and “international law organization”, to name but a few.

Lawfulness was another important factor, as illustrated by the last definition of the organization mentioned above. The importance of the United Nations as an attempt to create and safeguard an international legal system came up in the Swedish debates as well, but in the Netherlands the legal aspect – i.e. the need not only for peace and order but for a just, legal peace and order – was more strongly emphasized. In the Swedish First Chamber debate, Liberal Elon Andersson mentioned that all agreed that this attempt at an international legal

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236 1946: Kommentar till Förenta Nationernas stadga, pp. 5–6. My translation of “en allmän internationell organisation för upprätthållandet av den internationella freden och säkerheten”.


238 Kamerstukken II 1945, passim. My translation of the Dutch terms statensamenleving, statenbond, internationale gemeenschap, internationale rechtsorganisatie.
order must be made, and in the Swedish Second Chamber Conservative Gösta Bagge spoke of the organisation as a symbol of old Swedish ideals of justice and peace (in that order) in the world. However, in the Netherlands a more explicit connection was made between the legal and security aspects. The Dutch Second Chamber Committee’s preliminary report announced the will to work together with the other united nations for peace and security based on the principles of justice and international law, and the Dutch First Chamber Committee criticized the fact that the Charter had originally not spoken of justice but one-sidedly brought forward the security factor.²³⁹

The stronger Dutch emphasis on law might at least partly be explained by the fact that the Dutch took some credit for developing this aspect. In Chapter 1, Article 1 of the UN Charter, which called for effective collective measures against threats to peace and stipulated that the means should be peaceful, the words “and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law” had been added at the instigation of, among others, the Dutch delegation in San Francisco.²⁴⁰ An active interest in the legal aspects and inquiries into these appeared in the Second Chamber Committee’s preliminary report. It repeatedly referred to the principles of law and the need for developing the principle of international law. The committee also asked questions about the legal position of the former enemy states and inquired about a Dutch suggestion to attach an advice committee of legal experts to the Security Council.²⁴¹ In contrast, it is worth noting that not even Swedish Foreign Minister and international law expert Östen Undén dwelled much on legal aspects. Of course by the time the United Nations were discussed in Sweden, the question of whether to base decisions on law was no longer on the agenda. While it had been a profile issue for the Dutch, the Swedes could not use it as such. Undén contented himself with mentioning the progress made in the area of international law during the League of Nations (in which he had, incidentally, distinguished himself) and how these achievements were retained in the institution of the new International Court. Other than that, he did not mention international law or legal aspects or principles in his presentation of the UN in the Swedish chambers.²⁴²

An important qualification of the new organization in both countries was that it was – or aimed to be – universal. One major criticism of the League of

²³⁹ Riksdagsfördrag 1946, FK nr 28, p. 29; Riksdagsfördrag 1946, AK nr 29, p. 12; Kamerstukken II 1945, 7, nr 7, pp. 45–47; Kamerstukken I 1945, 4, nr 4, pp. 1–2 (Eindverslag I), p. 2.

²⁴⁰ Kamerstukken II 1945, 3, nr 3, pp. 17–27 (Memorie van Toelichting) p. 18. The Dutch argument for not just maintaining peace at all costs but doing so on a legal basis can be found in the pamphlet with Dutch suggestions regarding the Dumbarton Oaks proposal: NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr 249.

²⁴¹ Kamerstukken II 1945, 7, nr 7, pp. 45–47 (Voorlopig Verslag II) p. 45, 46.

Nations had been that it was too closely connected to the peace treaties and that it was in reality an association of the victors of World War I (and not even of all the victors, considering that the United States never joined). Many people arguing in favour of membership of the United Nations in both Sweden and the Netherlands emphasized the advantage that the UN had been set up separately from the peace treaties. It would seem, again, that it was important to characterize the new organization as something different than a continuation of the wartime alliance. But was the difference between an alliance and an organization for collective security really that clear cut or self-evident at this time?

Though the Swedish foreign minister clearly spoke in favour of the principle of collective security, he actually presented the UN as an association of the victors. In his introduction to the debates in the Swedish Second and First Chambers on 27th June 1946, Östen Undén even called the United Nations “a direct continuation of the alliance against the Axis powers”. Although he went on to praise the allied leaders for their early planning for a security organization on the broadest possible basis and for making it separate from the peace treaties, he called the new organization “the most urgent task of the victors”, thus again defining it as the cause of the winning alliance. And after announcing that the organization had been made open to all peace-loving nations, Undén stressed that the “original character of the United Nations as an alliance between the states associated during the war however appears in several respects.” Sweden, as a peace-loving country, could be admitted, but its participation would mean accepting obligations reminiscent of those of an alliance.²⁴³

This ambiguous attitude towards the organization can also be found in the Netherlands. On the one hand, the universality of the UN was stressed. On the other, its exclusiveness as the organization of the victors, or even of the most important victors, was emphasized. The Dutch government’s explanatory note described the history of the United Nations largely as the story of negotiations between the great powers. True, Dutch suggestions in response to the Dumbarton Oaks propositions were highlighted, especially the fact that the Netherlands had called for basing the decisions of the new organization on international law and had extensively debated the relationship between the great powers and the other members of the organization. Still, the conference in San Francisco, which the Swedish foreign minister had presented as the arena where the allied countries had developed the foundation of the organization, the Dutch viewed more ambivalently, as the place where the lesser allies had been

²⁴³ Riksdagstryck 1946, Second and First Chamber debates 27 June 1946. 1946 AK nr 29, pp. 3–4; 1946 FK nr 28, pp. 11–12. My translations, the quoted sentences in original in the Second Chamber read: “Ehuru Förenta Nationerna är en direkt fortsättning av alliansen mot axelmakterna […]” (p. 3); “Den nya organisationen har nu i alla fall grundats oberoende av fredsuppgörelsen och fredstraktatena såsom den mest angelägna uppgiften för de segrande maktarna.” (p. 3); “Förenta Nationernas ursprungliga karaktär av en allians mellan de under kriget förbundna staterna framträder dock i flera hänseenden.” (p. 4).
invited to discuss and comment, but not fundamentally change, the draft of the “Sponsoring Powers”. The Dutch government’s explanatory note also not only pointed out that all countries that had taken part in the war on the side of the United Nations (here referring to the alliance) had been invited, but explicitly stated that this meant that states which had remained neutral, like Sweden and Switzerland, had as a consequence not been represented at the conference.244

It seems significant that the Dutch government saw fit to single out Sweden and Switzerland from amongst the countries who did not participate in San Francisco. It is, however, not immediately clear how to interpret this. Did it indicate that the Dutch felt that they should have been invited? It may have been mentioned to anticipate questions as to why these two countries, to which members of parliament in the Netherlands no doubt felt some affinity based on ties between some of the ex-neutrals of World War I, were excluded. They were, after all, not enemy countries but had simply – just like the Netherlands – proclaimed neutrality to stay out of a war no smaller state would have entered voluntarily. The exclusion of small states simply because they looked out for their own interests may have been perceived as a cause for concern for the Netherlands. On the other hand, it is not impossible that the motives for mentioning them were almost the opposite: it could have been a way to emphasize that the Netherlands had already gained access to decision making arenas which were denied to neutrals, thereby supporting the stand taken by Foreign Minister Eelco van Kleffens that the Dutch should abandon their policy of neutrality.

Some clues can be found in the ensuing discussions, where the issue of the neutrals, and even specifically the question of a possible Swedish and Swiss abandonment of neutrality and membership of the UN,245 came up again in a way which seems to support the assumption that the Dutch were eager to include them. In the Second Chamber debate, Social Democrat Leendert Antonie Donker spoke of the absence of the neutrals. The organization had been praised for being more universal than the League of Nations, Donker remarked, but it was still faulty. It was understandable that the enemy states were not yet admitted, but the absence of the neutrals worried him. Although the Charter was this time separate from the peace treaties – an advantage compared to the League – the question had to be asked whether the United Nations was not, in fact, and would remain, an organization of the victors.246

244 Kamerstukken II 1945, 3, nr 3, pp. 17–27 (Memorie van Toelichting), p. 17.
245 In an exchange between the First Chamber Committee and Van Kleffens, Kamerstukken I 1945, 4, nr 4, pp. 1–2 (Eindverslag I) p. 1 and Kamerverslagen I 1945, 7 November 1945, p. 19.
246 Kamerverslagen II 1945, 30 October 1945, p. 126.
Assessment

Some different emphases notwithstanding, the basic definition of the United Nations was much the same in Sweden and the Netherlands: it was a collective security organization, aiming to be universal, based on the principles of international law and equality between states, but still primarily an organization of the victors and of the great powers. By looking further at the assessment of the new organization – the presentation of values and tasks, the emphases and priorities made, the definitions of advantages and disadvantages, problems and possibilities – an image emerges of the national interests and world view of the two states and their perception of the best way to achieve peace and secure their own position in the world.

Values and foundation of the organization

In their assessment of the basic values and foundation upon which the organization was built, the debaters in both countries by and large aligned them with the values and basic mission of their own country: to promote worldwide peace and adherence to international law. These were values that seem to have been easy to espouse in both countries, with very few exceptions. Paying attention for a moment to the exceptions, though they were few, it may be interesting to note that they were of a fundamentally different nature in the Netherlands and in Sweden. In Sweden, the only critical comment on the basic values of the United Nations was the opinion of Swedish professor of civil law and Social Democrat Vilhelm Lundstedt, who held that there was no “natural” law. On that ground he objected to the wording that international peace and security should be maintained “in conformity with the principles of justice and international law”. He also held that the organization was based on an illusory notion of all states’ equal rights. But Lundstedt was alone in his critique, and even he applauded the organization as “a step towards lasting peace”.  

In the Netherlands, both international law and the principled equality between great and smaller nations were considered cornerstones of Dutch values. The only criticism that can be detected had a basis that was entirely absent in the Swedish discourse: a religious one. Discontent with the lack of a reference to God or Christian values was voiced repeatedly in the Netherlands, though only one person actually put them in opposition to the principles of world peace and international law. Pieter Zandt, member of the Second Chamber and of the ultraconservative orthodox reformed party SGP (Staatkundig-Gereformeerde Partij) held a long sermon on human pride and compared a league built on humanistic values to the tower of Babylon. Zandt was the

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248 Kamerverslagen II 1945, 30 October 1945, pp. 121–144, p. 139.
only parliament member to vote against ratification of the Charter (on grounds of it being ungodly), and no other Dutch member of parliament went as far in criticizing it on Christian grounds. Several members did, however, point out that the standards for the international order should be derived from God and that any attempt at international cooperation without recognition of God’s will in the world would be futile. Foreign Minister Van Kleffens had to spend some time reassuring members that awareness of the need for God’s blessing had indeed permeated the negotiations in San Francisco even if God’s name had not been placed into the wording of the Charter. In comparison there was complete lack of references to religious values in the Swedish discussion, and the only Swedish member of parliament to vote against membership of the UN (Conservative Second Chamber member Fahlman) claimed that he did so on the ground that he did not believe the United Nations would provide the desired security for Sweden.

In general, however, the basic aims of the UN were declared compatible with national values: indeed in both countries the new organization was presented as a step towards realizing values and/or interests that were in fact typically Dutch/Swedish. The Dutch government emphasized the contribution of the Dutch delegation to basing the decisions of the organization on principles of justice (as mentioned above) and described the choice to join the UN as “continuing the traditions which have always characterized the Dutch people”. Other speakers emphasized that international peace and security was in the Dutch national interest or, as Social-Liberal Van Embden put it: “International peace and security; that is the goal which at the same time represents all of our national interests.” Similarly, Swedish Commander-in-Chief Helge Jung stated that Sweden’s interests coincided entirely with the basic aim of the Charter of the United Nations. Several other speakers also referred in different ways to the UN values as typically Swedish. Conservative leader Gösta Bagge even claimed that it was the Swedish “old view and our old ideals on justice and peace in the world that it [the UN] in its feeble way wants to be a […] symbol of”.

249 Calls for recognition of Christian values can be found in Kamerverslagen I, 7 November 1945, p. 24; Kamerstukken I 1945, 4, nr 4, pp. 1–2 (Eindverslag) p. 2; Kamerstukken II 1945, 7, nr 7, pp. 45–47 (Voorlopig Verslag) p. 45. Van Kleffens’ reply in Kamerstukken II 1945, 8, nr 8, pp. 49–51 (Memorie van Antwoord) p. 49.

250 Riksdagstryck 1946, AK nr 29, p. 21.

251 Kamerstukken II 1945, 3, nr 3, pp. 17–27 (Memorie van Toelichting), p. 18; idem p. 27 My translation: “de tradities voortzettende, die steeds het Nederlandsche Volk hebben gekenmerkt”.

252 Kamerverslagen I 1945, 4, 7 November 1945 pp. 19–32, p. 27. My translation, in Dutch: “De internationale vrede en veiligheid, dat is de doelstelling, waarin tegelijkertijd ons aller nationale belangen behartigd worden.”

Advantages, flaws, opportunities

Regardless of the sporadic criticism, which mostly concerned weaknesses in the formulation, the acceptance of the basic values of the United Nations was relatively straightforward. The translation of these values into practical measures was a more complicated matter. In assessing the structure and organization of the UN, several disadvantages for the smaller member states were identified (to be treated shortly), but also some opportunities. The Dutch First Chamber Committee made a point of emphasizing that the work of San Francisco had not received the appreciation it deserved due to the pessimistic atmosphere in the world rather than because something was wrong with the work itself. Also some members of the committee (it seems not all were in agreement) wanted to stress the importance of the fact that this time, contrary to when the League was founded, everybody agreed that an international organization was needed. Representatives of states that had before had little or no contact with each other had managed to come to an agreement. In Sweden too several speakers stressed the importance of the different context compared to when the League was founded, praising the greater universality of the current organization and emphasizing the national consensus on membership now compared to 1920.

Both Swedish and Dutch policymakers named the same two improvements of the new organization, when compared to the League of Nations, as the most important: that it was more universal and that it was more realistic. In practice, “more universal” alluded first and foremost to the commitment of the United States, which had not been a member of the League at all, and the Soviet Union, which had only become a member at a stage when the League was already showing its weakness. “More realistic” referred to the fact that the great powers had permanent seats in the Security Council and that they, but only they, had the right to veto regarding sanctions to enforce peace. Though this was regarded by both the Dutch and Swedish governments as a severe weakness as well as an injustice that went contrary to the first principle of article two of the UN Charter which asserted “the sovereign equality of all its members,” it was also recognized as an accurate reflection of the (however unfortunate) factual power structure of the world. It was therefore a more realistic design than that of the League and should be accepted for the sake of

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254 Kamerstukken I 1945, 4, nr 4, pp. 1–2 (Eindverslag I), p. 1
255 See for example Östen Undén in both chambers, Riksdagstryck 1946, AK nr 29, p. 3; FK nr 28 pp. 11–12.
257 Charter of the United Nations, chapter 1, article 2, nr 1.
efficient peacekeeping. A certain understanding was also expressed that those with greater responsibilities had more power.\textsuperscript{258}

Connected to this issue was the recognition that the success of the organization was completely dependent on the goodwill and capacity to cooperate of the great powers. Reading the Dutch debate, it is relatively clear that there were no illusions on this; it was common knowledge that the great powers could hardly agree on anything. For some, hopes for cooperation between the great powers were reduced to the belief that general war fatigue and exhaustion, in combination with fear of the atomic bomb, would – at least for now – prevent another war.\textsuperscript{259} Others expressed a slightly more optimistic hope that humankind would now have realized that cooperation was necessary for survival.\textsuperscript{260} In Sweden, the disagreements between the great powers were glossed over more. Based on the same war fatigue argument, Commander-in-Chief Helge Jung drew the conclusion that it was likely that the war experiences had given the victorious powers a genuine wish to continue their cooperation to maintain peace, though he immediately added that the advent of the UN did not imply any guarantee that this would be the case.\textsuperscript{261} Whatever the view of the great powers’ willingness to cooperate, policymakers in both countries expressed hopes for a lowering of tensions between the great powers within the UN frame. Both also emphasized that the success of the new organization was dependent on the spirit in which the provisions were enacted and that one should strive to contribute to an atmosphere of goodwill.\textsuperscript{262}

It is interesting in this context that Dutch Foreign Minister Van Kleffens quite clearly reprimanded First Chamber member Van Embden (of the Left-Liberal Party VDB, Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond) for criticizing Russian postwar behaviour as imperialistic and dangerous to peace and security. Van Kleffens defended the Soviet Union, declaring that the Russian government did not have imperial intentions but only “in her way” was taking care of the country’s security. He emphatically called for caution in using such qualifications.\textsuperscript{263}

The incident shows that attempts to normalize and show understanding for Russian behaviour and to emphasize the need to treat the Soviet Union as any other country – keeping a neutral stand – was not an exclusively Swedish trait.


\textsuperscript{259} B. Ch. de Savornin Lohman in Kamerverslagen I 1945, 4, 7 November 1945, p. 24.

\textsuperscript{260} Kamersitken I 1945, 4, nr 4, pp. 1–2 (Eindverslag) p. 1.

\textsuperscript{261} Riksåtagryck 1946, Kungl. Maj:ts proposition nr 196, p. 10.


\textsuperscript{263} Kamerverslagen I 1945, 7 November 1945, p. 31.
A striking similarity in Dutch and Swedish rhetoric is that both referred to the acceptance of obligations, and of greater rights for greater powers, as small states making (noble) sacrifices. They gave up some of their right to exercise their sovereignty for the sake of efficient peacekeeping. The Dutch explanatory note called the sacrifices inevitable and added that only the future would tell if the capacity for peace enforcement of the Security Council would indeed be worth the sacrifice.\textsuperscript{264} In the Swedish note, Commander-in-Chief Jung referred to the limits to sovereignty and military obligations as sacrifices that were an absolutely necessary prerequisite for the efficiency of the organization.\textsuperscript{265} No smaller state could be happy with the situation, but emphasizing necessity and presenting the small states’ concessions as sacrifices made for the benefit of the whole world gave them an almost sacrosanct shimmer. Dutch Foreign Minister Van Kleffens was especially quick to turn necessity into virtue. The smaller countries had, he said, undoubtedly “declared themselves prepared to make much greater sacrifices than the greater countries.” Even though the next part of his speech actually implied that they had had little choice, he managed to tie even this to Dutch wisdom: the smaller countries had acted, he said, “according to the word of our great countryman Erasmus, that ‘it is hard to imagine an unfavourable peace that is not preferable to the most favourable war.’”\textsuperscript{266}

If any difference is to be perceived between the attitudes of the two states regarding the inequality between the greater and smaller states and the right to veto, it would be that the Dutch made more use of the matter to turn the Netherlands into a role model. While the Swedes presented it as a sacrifice that had to be made by the smaller states, the Dutch presented giving up sovereignty as the necessary course of action of all states if world peace were to be achieved. The current arrangement was already an improvement compared to the League, where \textit{de facto} all states had had the right to veto, but the next step had to be that the greater states too accepted majority rule. Presenting the situation as part of a process of improvement meant that the smaller states actually took the lead in a historical development. They set the example in giving up their vett-right: eventually all states, great or small, would have to accept the limitations to their own sovereignty which would be the irrefutable consequence of the closer unity needed to achieve peace. Lack of power was thus translated into exemplary behaviour and moral strength.\textsuperscript{267}

\textsuperscript{264} Kamerstukken II 1945, 3, nr 3, pp. 17–27 (Memorie van Toelichting), p. 26; Kamerverslagen I 1945, 7 November 1945 p. 19 (Van Kleffens), p. 25 (on limits to sovereignty as the unavoidable downside of strengthening the union, De Savornin Lohman).

\textsuperscript{265} Riksdagstryck 1946, Kungl. Maj:ts proposition nr 196, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{266} Kamerverslagen II 1945, 30 October 1945, p. 144. My translation of the Dutch: “Ze hebben gehandeld naar het woord van onzen grooten landgenoot Erasmus, dat ‘men zich nauwelijks een ongunstigen vrede kan voorstellen, die niet verkielselijk ware boven den gunstigsten oorlog.’”

\textsuperscript{267} Kamerstukken II 1945, 3, nr 3, pp. 17–27 (Memorie van Toelichting), pp. 26–27; Kamerverslagen II, 30 October 1945, p. 125.
Another way to mitigate the pain of the unequal position in the Security Council was to emphasize other aspects of the organization. Policymakers in both countries stressed the importance of the United Nations’ mandate to address economic, social, cultural, health and humanitarian issues on a global scale. Herein lay the foundation for world peace as well as the possibility for their own country to play an important role in fulfilling them, according to speakers in both Sweden and the Netherlands. In his First and Second Chamber debate introductions, Foreign Minister Östen Undén pointed to Sweden’s satisfaction with the Charter’s emphasis on economic and social problems. Without a rational and systematic treatment of these issues in close international cooperation there would be no long-term political stability. Undén especially pointed out that on these issues, decisions were made by simple majority and there were no privileges for the permanent council members. Social Democrat Rickard Sandler, former foreign minister and current member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, also made a point of emphasizing that even a small country could from the beginning make a difference in the social, economic and cultural area, where the General Assembly dominated. In the Netherlands the same sentiment was articulated by among others Leo Josephus Cornelis Beaufort (alias Le Père or Pater Didymus) of the Catholic Party RKSP (Rooms-Katholieke Staatspartij), who had participated in the Dutch delegation in San Francisco. The Dutch government also emphasized that in the Economic and Social Council the power of great and small states was entirely equivalent.

The role of the General Assembly, in which all states had equal votes, was also stressed. Even though matters of a critical and military nature were reserved for the Security Council, the long-term power of the Assembly should not be underestimated. It was an important international forum for deliberations and its judgement would be hard for the greater powers to entirely ignore. It is notable that in both countries references were made to the opportunity that lay in the power of the General Assembly to influence international public opinion. Perhaps the stress on the moral superiority of their own countries should be seen in the light of this emphasis on the importance of public image. It is in any case one of the most striking compensations of the lack of power in the Security Council: the stress on the moral superiority of the lesser states, so gallantly prepared to sacrifice their sovereignty for the good of the whole world.

\[268\] Riksdagstryck 1946, AK nr 29, p. 5; FK nr 28, p. 13.  
\[270\] Kamerverslagen II, 30 October 1945, p. 125. RKSP = Rooms-Katholieke Staatspartij.  
\[272\] Riksdagstryck 1946, AK nr 29 pp. 12, 20; Kamerstukken II 1945, 3, nr 3, pp. 17–27 (Memorie van Toelichting) p. 20; Kamerverslagen II 1945, 30 October 1945, p. 137; Riksdagstryck 1946, FK nr 28, p. 15.
Finally, a point was made in both countries of stressing that the United Nations was a work in progress. By participating, the Netherlands and Sweden would have the opportunity – as well as moral duty – to mould the imperfect organization into something more viable. The Dutch note referred to the flaws of the organization as something that would have to be accepted during “the present development phase of the society of states”, in which, as mentioned above, the Dutch had a task to lead the way. Foreign Minister Van Kleffens in the Second Chamber debate referred to the UN as “a new and serious attempt at international organization”, which he hoped would soon become as universal as possible through the admittance of the ex-neutrals. To secure the safety of the Netherlands and that of the other states, he said, it came down to “bringing the forces for good, dormant in the Charter, to full development”. Other speakers too referred to the unfinished state of the organization, among others Social Democrat Donker, who called the new Charter “an important piece of codification that however leaves open the possibility of further development” and Beaufort of the Catholic Party who spoke of being at the beginning of a long and rough road towards a better world.

In the Swedish debate, similar emphasis was placed on the possibility to develop the organization into something better. Though it was hard for the small states to make their voices heard, at least within the organization they had a voice. Sweden should, according to its capacity, contribute to create a better situation in the world. As a member, Sweden could take important initiatives for justice and should serve as a role model for peace, justice and democracy as well as work against an ideological division of the world.

Implications

Some of the implications of membership have already been mentioned. Joining the UN would imply, as set out above, participating in the building of a better world, trying to use and influence an imperfect instrument so as to better correspond to national interests. This part of the analysis will focus further on the options and implications perceived and on what actions were recommended. What did membership mean, according to those assessing it in 1945 and 1946? Why should the Netherlands and Sweden be part of this organization? The

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276 Riksdagstryck 1946, FK nr 28, pp. 18, 22, 26, 30.
notions of available choices will be treated as a factor determining the attitude towards the United Nations to begin with. Following that, the focus will be on the considered consequences of UN membership for the country’s margin for manoeuvre. And finally: how can neutrality or alliance considerations be understood in this context?

Margin for manoeuvre: on choice

An often used argument for membership in the United Nations in both countries was that there was no other choice. There is a slight difference in focus because of the different conditions and times in which the discussions took place. In the Netherlands, the discussion concerned whether to ratify the UN Charter or not. It is true that by the time the Dutch discussion took place it was already clear that enough countries had ratified the Charter for the organization to become operative even if the Dutch disapproved. Still, the issue was ratification, not membership application. In Sweden, the organization was a fait accompli when the discussion took place, and there was no question of Sweden approving the Charter. The Charter was ratified; the organization in place, and the question was whether Sweden should become a member.

The alternatives presented in Sweden were therefore more explicitly about joining versus remaining outside. In the Swedish Foreign Affairs Committee statement, the committee wrote that it had paid equal attention to the advantages and disadvantages of both alternatives: on the one hand the consequences of membership, on the other the consequences of standing aside. The conclusion was basically that the risks for Sweden linked to the organization would arise irrespective of a membership, so Sweden might as well join (as membership gave some advantages above non-membership).  

This consideration – that the disadvantages of participation were outweighed by the disadvantages of non-participation – was recurring in the Swedish discussions. In his statement accompanying the Swedish bill, Commander-in-Chief Helge Jung first made the remark that the disadvantages for the smaller nations from a military political point of view were smaller for the members of the United Nations than for those who placed themselves outside the organization. According to him, the risks for Sweden did not arise because of its membership, but were caused by the very realization of the security organization and the establishment of its principles for maintenance of peace and security. The inconveniences that he foresaw should therefore not cause Sweden to abstain from membership. On the contrary, the possibilities for Sweden to influence the form of its obligations as a member meant that the nuisances would probably be smaller than if it was not a member.

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277 Riksdagstryck 1946, Utrikesutskottets utläsande nr 5, pp. 2 and 7.
The basis for this reasoning, which was afterwards repeated not only by the Foreign Affairs Committee but also by several of the speakers\textsuperscript{279}, was the assumption that the United Nations would impose its rules on other countries whether they were members or not. This, in turn, was an interpretation of a segment of article 2 of the UN Charter:

The Organization shall ensure that states which are not Members of the United Nations act in accordance with these Principles so far as may be necessary for the maintenance of international peace and security.\textsuperscript{280}

This whole line of thought is absent in the Dutch documents. The above cited paragraph was not emphasized by the Dutch and neither was there such a pronounced comparison of membership versus non-membership. The for-or-against discussion in the Netherlands was formulated, as mentioned, as for or against the UN as such – not for or against Dutch membership (even though that was of course the implication). Though many aspects of the discussion were nonetheless similar to those brought forward in Sweden, it gave the Dutch discussion a slightly different tone and perhaps made it more comprehensive. The discussions treated a broad range of advantages and disadvantages of the organization as such, its foundations and values as well as its practical design. Comparable to the Swedish perception that membership had its disadvantages but was preferable to the disadvantages of non-membership, was the Dutch perception that this was a flawed organization but it was the best one could get. Or, as Dutch Foreign Minister Eelco van Kleffens put it, the choice was not between this and something better – it was either this compromise or no international organization for peace and security.\textsuperscript{281} And all (or well-nigh all) agreed that an international organization was necessary and that even an imperfect one was far preferable to no international organization at all.

The sense of urgency was increased by the advent of the atomic bomb, which added not only a sense of doom but a realization that the whole world was in this together. The Dutch government concluded its plea for a ratification of the UN Charter pointedly:

[A]t the appearance of an instrument of war of such unprecedented destructive effect as the atomic bomb, humanity has to seriously ask itself if the time has not come when the only available alternatives are to cooperate or to perish.\textsuperscript{282}

\textsuperscript{279} For example by Erik Fast (Social Democrat) and Martin Skoglund (Conservative) in the Second Chamber and Rickard Sandler (Social Democrat) and Georg Andrén (Conservative) in the First Chamber debate on 27 June 1946. Riksdagstryck 1946, AK nr 29, pp. 14, 20; FK nr 28, pp. 23, 28.

\textsuperscript{280} The Charter of the United Nations, Chapter I, Article 2, point 6.

\textsuperscript{281} Kamerstukken II 1945, 8, nr 8, pp. 49–51, Memorie van Antwoord II, p. 49.

\textsuperscript{282} Kamerstukken II 1945, 3, nr 3, pp. 17–27 (MvT), 27. My translation of the Dutch original, which reads in full: “[Maar desalniettemin mag,] bij de verschijning van een oorlogsmiddel van zoo ongekend vernietigende werking als de atoombom, het menschdom zich toch wel zeer ernstig
This line of thought appears in Swedish reasoning as well. Although the focus in Sweden was more on whether it was good for Sweden to join or not, the need for an international organization for peace and security as such was also stressed. Here the Swedish discussion resembled the Dutch one. After concluding that Swedish membership was desirable, the Swedish Foreign Affairs Committee went on to state that this stand corresponded well with the wish of Sweden to contribute to safeguarding an international legal system and peaceful conditions in the world.\textsuperscript{283} The reasoning was very similar to the Dutch, arguing the urgency to get an organization of collective security into place. The following quote from the Swedish government’s note could just as easily have been the words of the Dutch government:

> It comes down to the importance of trying to support the new organization without exaggerated hopes or distrust, and to contribute to turn it into an operational peace instrument. Especially against the background of the newest technological war inventions, the future of our civilization depends on it.\textsuperscript{284}

The references in both countries to global categories such as humanity and civilization show the acknowledgement that security had become a matter that transcended borders, something that could not be achieved independently by a single state – especially not a small one. The issue at stake here was not only Dutch or Swedish security, but the survival of humankind, of our civilization. Traditional small state neutrality or aloofness had, due to recent events, become outdated, not in the least by the development of the atomic bomb, and had to give way to collective security. An international system of peacekeeping had become indispensable.

Consequences and second choices

Following the above, it may be concluded that in both Sweden and the Netherlands, an organization for peace and security was a big priority – to the extent that any collective security organization was perceived to be better than none. As we have already seen, both countries were prepared to give up some of their sovereignty and accept the inequality between great and smaller states to ensure a functioning Security Council. That isolation must be prevented at all costs and that international defence was necessary may have been stated more

\textsuperscript{283} Riksdagstryck 1946, Utrikesutskottets utlåtande nr 5, p. 7.

explicitly in the Dutch debate than in the Swedish. However, it also appears in the Swedish parliamentary discussions and it especially surfaces in the documents of the Foreign Council and Ministry for Foreign Affairs. There, great concern can be discerned lest Sweden be left out and extensive efforts were made to prepare Swedish membership in a way that would alienate no one (read first and foremost: the Soviet Union).

At the same time, the sense was prevalent that there was great danger in putting all trust in this organization and that conducting a defence policy even remotely similar to the one after World War I was out of the question. In Sweden, this resulted in many references to military security and Sweden’s vulnerable strategic position, which could lead to a threatening situation should great power cooperation falter. Concurrent to the conviction of the indispensability of collective security was hence a lack of conviction about its viability. Its potential failure was seriously taken into account. That meant that the considerations of the consequences of membership of the UN dealt – implicitly or explicitly – with two scenarios: the implications of membership in a functioning UN and the implications of membership in case of UN failure.

In Sweden, these considerations were more explicit than in the Netherlands. Undén was quite clear that Swedish membership meant giving up neutrality. The characterization of the UN as an alliance has already been discussed above, but here one might again point to the introductory speech by Undén in both chambers, in which he emphasized that the origin of the organization in an alliance had left traces in the rules on sanctions. If a war case would lead the Security Council to decide on sanctions, Undén explained, the member states would not retain any right to conduct a policy of neutrality. “That is the consequence Sweden thus accepts by joining”, he said. He could hardly have been more explicit. At the same time he almost immediately downplayed the weight of the decision by referring to Swedish membership of the League of Nations. In fact, he argued, Sweden had already taken this step by approving the solidarity obligation of the League membership, even if world political development had led in practice to an inability to seriously uphold this solidarity. That so many countries had declared neutrality in spite of their League membership was not because they did not accept the principle of solidarity, but because the organization did not work.

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285 See for example Kamerverslagen I 1945, 7 November 1945 p. 27.
The reasoning strongly resembles that of Van Kleffens, who also emphasized that there was no room for neutrality “in the old sense” within the UN, but that the Netherlands had in fact already taken this step when the country joined the League of Nations. The added words in the old sense (in den ouden zin) seem just as in Sweden to reserve the option of a loophole for possible neutrality in some new sense – even if this option did not otherwise receive the attention it did in the Swedish debate. There, the hypothetical event of a great power conflict came up more than once, most often followed by an emphasis on Sweden’s freedom of action in such a case. In short, the UN was good and necessary, however flawed, an indispensable forum for the solving of international problems and a promoter of world peace to which every peace loving country could not but adhere. However, when it came to safeguarding one’s own country’s security, it fell short. Perhaps the words of Commander-in-Chief Helge Jung best sums up the Swedish attitude:

The advent of the UN does not constitute any guarantee for world peace and a Swedish accession to the organization does not secure peace for our country either. Sweden must be prepared for self-defence also within a normally functioning UN, but above all in the difficult situation that can arise in case of a great power conflict.

Many of the speakers in parliament emphasized that Sweden could – and some thought should – return to neutrality if a great power conflict would erupt. It is worth noting, however, that the implication of the government’s analysis was not necessarily only neutrality as the self-evident second choice (though that possibility was certainly kept open). The government emphasized instead that Sweden would retain the freedom to choose (neutrality or coordinating defence with others) and that either way, a strong national army must be maintained. Like in the Netherlands, it was mentioned in this context that it was compatible with the spirit of the Charter to prepare for collective self-defence. Jung referred to the possible advantages of a prepared political and military cooperation with other small or medium-sized states within a regional group, and some other speakers raised the issue, urging that the possibility for cooperation with the other Scandinavian countries be kept open. In the Dutch discussions, UN membership allowing for association in regional pacts was emphasized much more than the option to declare neutrality. That the Charter allowed for regional pacts was emphasized much more than the option to declare neutrality. That the Charter allowed for regional pacts was seen as a sign of a sound sense of reality.

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292 Kamerstukken II 1945, 7, nr 7, pp. 45–47 (Voorlopig Verslag) p. 46.
Though there were minor differences, the bottom line in both discussions was satisfaction that the country had maintained its freedom of action and right to choose an appropriate way to defend itself in case a great power conflict should erupt. One should not forget that the possible second choices, declaring neutrality or joining a regional defence pact, were discussed in both countries in terms of a complement to the collective security of the United Nations, not as an alternative. Beyond taking into account a downright failure of the United Nations (resulting in a great power war) was the assumption that the security provided by the United Nations, because of the built-in limitations to its powers, would be insufficient. In Sweden, this resulted in particular in discussions on military consequences. The ability of Sweden to defend itself was considered crucial. The possibility of foreign bases on Swedish territory was considered a problem, and concern was voiced that Sweden not cede too much of its army to far away UN interventions. Much attention was given to what Sweden should try to achieve in the bilateral agreements with the UN. Apart from recurring remarks on the matter, the greatest evidence of the overwhelming weight attributed to military issues in Sweden can be found in the very fact that the major part of the Swedish government’s explanatory note consisted of a statement by Commander-in-Chief Helge Jung.293

On the Dutch side, there was no comparable discussion of the military implications of UN membership. In its explanatory note, the government focused on the legal and organizational character of the organization and hardly paid attention to concrete military consequences at all – let alone gave the word to a military commander. Though a question on military consequences did come up in the Committee’s reaction to the note294, the reply by Van Kleffens was sketchy. He simply reported that the government did not yet know to what extent the Netherlands might be called upon to contribute armed forces in the event of a UN intervention. He merely concluded that it was clear that the Netherlands would not be able to do without an armed force. He then went on to discuss the implications for Dutch foreign policy in a broader sense, establishing – just as Undén did in Sweden – that fulfilment of the obligations of UN membership was incompatible with a policy of neutrality. Collective security was the Dutch goal. Notably, he here went on to talk of regional pacts to promote peace and security, which again shows that these were seen as part of a collective security system rather than as separate military alliances.295

In hindsight, the image of NATO is that of a Cold War alliance, part of the bipolar balance of power and separate from the more unifying collective security organization of the United Nations. In 1945, however, when the possibility of

294 Kamerstukken II 1945, 7, nr 7, pp. 45–47 (Voorlopig Verslag) p. 46.
295 Kamerstukken II 1945, 8, nr 8, pp. 49–51 (Memorie van Antwoord) pp. 49–50.
collective defence or regional pacts was mentioned, they were all seen as part of one collective security system under construction. In Sweden Helge Jung cited article 51 of the Charter leaving room for “individual and collective self-defence” as well as article 52 allowing regional organizations, stressing that there was no hindrance for regional arrangements, should Sweden wish to participate in such an organized cooperation. In the Netherlands, regional pacts were clearly considered as reinsurance in case the United Nations did not work properly or was not sufficiently effective in regional matters – but not in the sense of old style alliances. Regional arrangements were rather seen as an alternative (or complementary) form of collective security, groupings of similar-minded states that would, based on their proximity and common interests, be more efficient at dealing with concrete regional matters than the broad umbrella organization the UN. Van Kleffens himself, who had already in 1942 advocated a system of collective security based on regional arrangements, made it quite clear that although the Dutch government was not hostile to the idea of regional pacts, they could only be considered under the express condition that they were not aimed against a friendly state or group of states. Also, a sufficient amount of coordination between the different regional pacts was an absolute condition, something the United Nations was meant to provide.

The government has no fundamental objections to regional agreements to promote peace and security, but it also has an open eye for the great dangers of bloc formation. Precisely in the establishment of the United Nations lies the possibility to neutralize those dangers, and the Government would therefore be reluctant to conclude any regional agreements […] if no general States’ organization exists, which precisely because of its generality is capable to serve as an umbrella for regional agreements in different parts of the world and prevent conflicts between the separate groups of States tied to these agreements.

While regional arrangements were thus clearly on the Dutch agenda in 1945 as a viable alternative to unilateral national armament, it is important to note that these were explicitly seen as part of the system of collective security headed by

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297 Kamerverslagen I 1945, Nov. 7, 1945, p. 20; Kamerstukken II 1945, 7, nr 7 (Voorlopig Verslag II) p. 46.
298 Kamerstukken II 1945, 8, nr 8, pp. 49–50 (Memorie van Antwoord), p. 50. My translation. In Dutch: “Tegen regionale verdragen tot bevordering van vrede en veiligheid heft de Regeering geen fundamentele bedenkingen, doch zij heft daarnaast een open oog voor de groote gevaren van blokvorming. Juist in de toestandkoming van de Vereenigde Naties ligt de mogelijkheid opgesloten om die gevaren te neutraliseren, en de Regeering zou dan ook ongaarne tot de sluiting van regionale overeenkomsten als bovenbedoeld willen overgaan, indien niet een algemeene Statenorganisatie bestaat, die juist door haar algemeenheid in staat is, als overkapping van regionale overeenkomsten in verschillende deelen der wereld te dienen en conflicten tusschen de door die overeenkomsten gebonden afzonderlijke groepen van Staten te voorkomen.” Other speakers returned to the image of regional pacts under the UN umbrella, see for example De Savornin Lohman in Kamerverslagen I 1945, 7 November 1945, p. 26.
the UN. As the above quote shows, the importance of not participating in any formation of mutually hostile blocs was emphasized, just as it was in Sweden.\footnote{For example by Undén, Riksdagstryck 1946, AK nr 29 p. 4 and by Georg Branting FK nr 28 p. 21.}

A commitment to cooperation

As this chapter has shown, there was in the immediate postwar period no fundamental difference in the Swedish and Dutch basic views of what they needed to achieve security. They needed to be able to defend themselves militarily and they needed a system that kept a leash on other countries, a collective security system that would curtail potential threats from other states. Both Sweden and the Netherlands were adamant in their wish to tie the great powers to some international organization. The great powers must be convinced to cooperate and to acknowledge and protect the interests of the smaller states. Policymakers in both countries were convinced of the necessity of continued great power cooperation if world peace was to be feasible – and with the advent of unprecedented means of mass destruction, world peace might just be necessary to achieve even national security. In that light, the need to participate in an organization for collective security was a necessity that was hardly questioned. Regardless of their position on neutrality or alliance, isolation was not an option.

That is not to say that there were no differences in the way in which the governments and parliaments of the Netherlands and Sweden viewed and assessed the United Nations and its implications for their own country. Policymakers in Sweden were more focused on the concrete military security aspect and especially on what military demands might be placed on their own country. The military security aspect turns up in the definitions of the UN as well as in the assessments of the organization and discussions on its implications. The Dutch seemed more concerned with safeguarding their position in the international community and with the general rules of the organization.

Considering the circumstances of the two countries, this difference in focus seems quite understandable. Sweden at this time had a very strong defence, for which it could at least partly thank its non-belligerency during World War II. While military self-sufficiency was not even an option for the Dutch, it did not seem entirely impossible for Sweden. Sweden’s natural resources of uranium even allowed consideration of the possibility to develop independent Swedish nuclear weapons to deter an attack.\footnote{On Swedish nuclear weapons plans in the early postwar years, see Jonter 2010, pp. 62–65.} Moreover, its wartime non-belligerency placed Sweden in an outsider’s position: it had no background of participation
in united nations deliberations, neither during the war nor in San Francisco.\textsuperscript{301} The Dutch on the other hand were already members of the united nations and had already been faced with the difficulties of making their voice heard in the allied command decisions; it was logical that they would pay close attention to the rules that determined their position within the UN rather than looking at it from the outside, like the Swedish. Moreover, the top Dutch priority in 1945 was to regain control over the Dutch East Indies, for which they needed the goodwill and assistance of Great Britain and the United States. These circumstantial discrepancies by far outweighed any discrepancies that could be reduced to fundamentally different attitudes towards collective security, alliances or neutrality. There was no decisive difference between the treatment by neutral Sweden and the allied Netherlands of the origin and character of the UN. Both emphasized its ties to the wartime alliance while at the same time praising its aim to be universal; both concluded that membership meant forfeiting neutrality; and both emphasized the importance of great power cooperation and of an organization that could enforce rules of international law – even at the price of limits to sovereignty and formalized inequality between small and great states.

Though a maximum of freedom of action was preferred, the realization that concessions had to be made in order to achieve stability pervaded the conversations about the UN in both countries. The price for achieving security and safeguarding independence was to cede some sovereignty, though under controlled forms and protected by the organization’s adherence to international law. In this context, it is interesting that in both countries, the ideals and goals of the United Nations were identified as national ideals and goals. Rather than giving up something Swedish or Dutch, the commitment to collective security was presented as exporting typically Swedish or Dutch values to the rest of the world, assigning their countries the role of the carriers of progress. Policymakers in both countries also seem to have counted on the possibility of earning influence by contributing to the organization. In Sweden this need to participate in international political work was often formulated in a negative way, as a necessity, connected to regaining authority lost because of not having contributed to the war effort. Sweden must now “not evade responsibility”\textsuperscript{302}. In the Netherlands the need to participate was formulated more actively and had a more positive connotation: that the Netherlands had contributed to the war effort gave the country a better position as an active participant in world affairs. Serving as a role model, leading the way, would make even greater influence possible.

\textsuperscript{301} According to Elis Håstad, the fact that Sweden was not invited to participate as a founding member of the United Nations was a disappointment and put a damper on the public debate on the most suitable construction of the organization. Håstad 1955, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{302} Riksdagstryck 1946, FK nr 28, pp. 16, 21.
The more active Dutch internationalism can also be viewed as an adaptation to surrounding realities. The Dutch government was more dependent on others for the country’s immediate military needs than the Swedish. If it was to recover the Dutch East Indies, the Netherlands had to convince Great Britain and the United States that they deserved their support. Sweden had, at least militarily speaking, a better status quo to defend. It sufficed in many respects to exercise passive power – avoiding being subjected to the will of others – in order to achieve security. Achieving security for the policymakers of the Netherlands also required the power to make others act the way they wanted.

The discrepancy in active/passive position thus had more to do with the margin for manoeuvre than with any differences in basic assessment of the UN. Looking at the department preparations of the UN issue also illustrates this difference. While the papers of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs as well as the deliberations of the Foreign Council exhibit a thorough collecting and analysing of the views of other states, they show no attempts at spreading the Swedish view.303 The Dutch on the other hand spoke out and tried to make their view known as much as they could: as discussed in chapter 3, Van Kleffens already in 1943 published a critical article in the London Times concerning the relationship between the greater and smaller states, and in preparation of the San Francisco conference the Dutch government sent all other participating members a pamphlet with suggestions on the Dumbarton Oaks proposals.304 While the Swedish government as an outsider could maintain a margin for manoeuvre by waiting for the right time and by assessing opinion, the Dutch government from the inside tried to influence opinion in order to expand its margin.

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304 NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr 249; Buitenlandse Zaken, Londens Archief, 2.05.80, inv. nr 1192 (on Van Kleffens’ article in the Times re. relationship great vs. small states).
CHAPTER 5
Collective security in practice. Ideals and realities of postwar cooperation 1945–1947

On what we need first of all there is probably no difference of opinion. It is security, it is the certainty that a repetition of what has happened belongs to the absolute impossibilities.305

In his 1945 book Nieuw Nederland (the New Netherlands), Dutch historian Jan Romein wrote this declarative sentence under the heading International politics. It represented a widespread sentiment in 1945 Europe. We must have security; this must never happen again. Although Romein wrote on the desirable future of the Netherlands at the request of the Dutch underground newspaper Vrij Nederland, his view was by no means exclusively Dutch or especially underground. Governments all over Europe endorsed urgent pleas for society to get it right this time, phrasing these in well-nigh apocalyptic terms. In Romein’s words, it was a common vital necessity to find the “truly right” solution and to find it now, “if our victory is not to become defeat, yes more than defeat: doom.”306

There seems to have been little dispute on the general nature of that solution: international cooperation and an improved system of collective security. There was also broad agreement on the main condition for as well as threat to this envisioned future. The only safeguard for the security needed was the continued cooperation between the great powers that had emerged as the victors of the war. To Romein, that cooperation was a prerequisite for all the other postwar plans; should it fail, one might as well use the pages of his book to light the

305 Romein 1945, pp. 37–38. My translation of the Dutch original which reads: “Over wat wij allereerst nodig hebben zal wel geen verschil van mening bestaan. Het is veiligheid, het is zekerheid, dat een herhaling van het gebeurde tot de volstrekte onmogelijkheden behoort.”

His position rhymes well with what the previous chapters have shown about Swedish and Dutch ideas on security: cooperation was considered crucial and the perceived alternative was doom. Both the Swedish and the Dutch government emphasized in no uncertain terms the importance of developing an operational peace instrument: it was a matter of the future of civilization, of realizing that the time had come for mankind to cooperate or to perish. Soli-
darity was the key to future security and prevailed over considerations of neutrality or alliance. Membership in the United Nations was hardly contested.

At the same time the United Nations epitomized a dilemma of order versus justice. As the Dutch delegates to San Francisco had pointed out, reminding the other delegates how Czechoslovakia had been sacrificed on the altar of peace, collective security was meaningless to smaller states if the goal was world peace at any cost. Concerns of solidarity and right therefore played a real and important role in the security policy considerations and formulation in Sweden and the Netherlands. The UN vow not only to maintain peace and security but to do so in conformity with the principles of justice and international law was emphasized in both countries. Not that legality as such solved the problem. International law is full of contradictory principles: individual (human) rights are often at odds with state rights and the principle of sovereignty and non-intervention in internal affairs, for example. Neither was solidarity an unambiguous concept. Among others it involved the dilemma of whether universal solidarity should include states that did not conform to the declared principles.

As discussed in chapter 4, the membership of the United Nations was not considered a ready solution to the security problem in either Sweden or the Netherlands. The Dutch and Swedish hopes for the new organization were, as Norbert Götz has pointed out in the case of Denmark, of the conjuring kind rather than testifying to positive expectations. The UN Charter was viewed as a first draft of an as yet flawed organization which should be improved through hard work and serious commitment. The new organization was a starting point and arena for this work; for all its weaknesses it was at least a letter of intent by the great powers to develop a working system for peace based on the principles.

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309 For a more in-depth discussion of the order versus justice dilemma, see for example Foot, Gaddis & Hurrell (eds.) 2003: Order and justice in international relations, Oxford: Oxford University Press. As Rosemary Foot has put it in the introduction to that book, there is in the field of international relations “an unending search for an understanding of the relationship between order and justice.” Foot, Gaddis, Hurrell eds. 2003, p. 1.

310 Götz 2004, p. 74.
of solidarity and right rather than on power struggle and might. So far it is possible to speak of consensus. But the description that can be found in both countries of the first two postwar years as a period of UN-oriented security policy and adherence to the one world ideal is far from the whole story. Solidarity and right in practice took various forms and the character of the quest for collective security in 1945–1947 was ambiguous.

This chapter features the early postwar attempts to reconcile different principles and aims, set against the realities of pursuing territorial integrity and political independence in the postwar world. The ideas on the desirable security system and on the continued cooperation between the great powers will be compared and placed against the two countries’ different postwar circumstances. What similarities and differences can be perceived in the Dutch and Swedish quests for security in this period of paying at least lip service to a world organized by universal principles?

To begin with, Dutch and Swedish attitudes towards and relationships with the two new superpowers the United States and the Soviet Union will be compared, and linked to a discussion of the attempts to promote continued cooperation between the great powers. The legal system of the United Nations was built on this cooperation but was in reality from the beginning permeated by tensions between the great powers. How a world guided both by universal norms and by great power tensions created opportunities but also placed restrictions on the two governments’ margin for manoeuvre will be discussed in the second section. Finally, the third section will focus on the conflict between ideals of universal cooperation and the preference for working with the like-minded, and on the conditions for cooperation as they emerged in practice after the war. What happened to the ideal of regional cooperation? What room was there for realizing the envisioned postwar collective security?

Combining universalism and realism

As pointed out in the previous chapter, one of the two most emphasized advantages of the UN as compared to the League was that both the United States and the Soviet Union participated. The other was that the reality of the actual distribution of power was taken into account by giving the more powerful a stronger position in the organization – more rights as well as more respon-

311 J.J. Voorhoeve and M.D. Bogaarts are among those who have described this as a period of faith in the UN or of UN idealism. Hellema has questioned the description of the security policy of this period as solely based on the “illusion of the UN”, pointing to the Dutch active policy and aspirations regarding Indonesia and Germany. Voorhoeve 1979, pp. 103–104; Bogaarts 1999, pp. 167ff; Hellema 2009, p. 108. As to Sweden, Gerard Aalders has claimed that “[t]he UN was in the eufory of the postwar epoch generally regarded as the best instrument for maintaining peace.” Aalders 1989, p. 19.
sibility. But as much as both universalism and realism were needed, they were difficult to combine. Realism had been necessary to achieve the participation of the great powers and thus to make the organization universal, but the same realism threatened its universalism. The veto-right meant that the future of collective security rested on the capacity for continued cooperation between the victors of the war. Anyone declaring their support for the United Nations was therefore faced with the issue of promoting cooperation between the great powers. Both the Swedish and Dutch governments after the war stressed the need to support the continued great power cooperation and work for decreasing – or at least not increasing – tensions between East and West.

That is not to say that there was much faith in continued cooperation, even in 1945–1946. It was no secret that cooperation between the allies had already been difficult during the war, and most ministers and members of parliament recognized that the veto-right in the Security Council seriously undermined the very concept of collective security and equal rules for all. Growing tension between the Soviet Union and its former allies affected the way in which the governments of both the Netherlands and Sweden pursued their security goals after the war. On the one hand, they reckoned with the possibility that they would need to rely on something other than the United Nations for their security. On the other hand, the alternative that had been considered viable during postwar planning, security on a regional basis, was not available. Besides, as long as the great powers professed adherence to universal collective security, nobody wanted to be the one to spoil the chances of a peaceful world – all the more in view of the new weapons of mass destruction. The attempts to work for universal cooperation and the relationships of Sweden and the Netherlands to the emerging superpowers should be seen against this background. What did a policy of promoting cooperation mean? How did the governments view and handle their (bilateral) relations with the United States and the Soviet Union?

On Swedish and Dutch bridge building

From a Cold War perspective, the tensions between East and West easily become synonymous with the Soviet–American antagonism that came to dominate the world for decades to come. It therefore deserves to be pointed out that when policymakers in Sweden and the Netherlands in the early postwar period spoke of tensions between East and West, or of the emergence of a Western and an Eastern bloc, they probably referred to the tension between the British and the Russians, or between the Western allies as a group and the Soviet Union. The great powers did not only include the emerging superpowers but also Great Britain and France.312 At the end of World War II, the United

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312 Bjereld, Johansson & Molin 2008, p. 84. According to Charles Silva, the United States in the early postwar period “followed the British lead” regarding Scandinavia, which was tradition-
States government was a stronger proponent of the one world idea and a centralized universal organization for peace than many of its allies.\textsuperscript{313} President Harry Truman even spoke of the possibility of the United States serving as a mediator between Great Britain and the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{314}

In this period, new governments were formed in both Sweden and the Netherlands. In Sweden, the wartime coalition cabinet was replaced by a purely Social Democratic cabinet in the summer of 1945. Östen Undén became foreign minister, a post he was to retain until 1962. One of the reasons for Undén’s appointment was that he was not tainted by Swedish wartime concessions to Germany as was Christian Günther. Undén was known for his opposition to both the transit agreement and to the restrictions on the freedom of the press. He was also a renowned expert on international law. Early on in his term of office, even before Sweden had become a UN member, Undén declared his view that support of the United Nations and solidarity rather than neutrality must be the guideline of Swedish foreign policy. Most historians present him as a more convinced supporter of the UN than his predecessor Günther. His appointment was treated with enthusiasm in the Swedish press and he was presented as a man of principle with a vision for the future.\textsuperscript{315}

In the Netherlands an emergency cabinet was appointed by Queen Wilhelmina in June 1945. Ministers were in particular sought from among people who had stayed in the Netherlands during the war, and only three ministers from the last London cabinet were appointed to the new government. Van Kleffens was one of them – a testimony not only to his special standing with Wilhelmina and spotless reputation, but also to a wish for foreign policy continuity. Keeping Van Kleffens was a way not to disrupt ongoing partnerships.\textsuperscript{316} In November of the same year, the overworked Van Kleffens was compelled to take leave. In early March 1946, after medical advice not to return to his old position, he switched places with Foreign Minister without portfolio Dr J.H. (Herman) van Roijen.\textsuperscript{317} Van Roijen’s appointment was, like Undén’s, at least in part an expression of a wish to staff the cabinet with people who had “done the right thing” during the war. Van Roijen had spent most of the war in

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Baehr 2009, p. 639; Schaper 1991, p. 152; Lundestad 1975, pp. 45ff.}
\footnote{Kagan 2003, p. 17.}
\footnote{See Möller 1986, pp. 224–235. Undén tends from a Cold War perspective to be viewed as a stubborn neutralist, but Karl Molin points out that if Undén had a dogma it was not neutrality but collective security. Molin 1990, p. 75.}
\footnote{See Wiebes & Zeeman 1993, p. 128; Daalder 2003, p. 305.}
\footnote{In his memoirs Van Kleffens describes having what we would probably call a burnout. Van Kleffens 1983, pp. 124–125. Van Kleffens remained influential both as an advisor to his successors and as the Dutch Permanent Representative at the UN and ambassador to the United States.}
\end{footnotes}
the Netherlands and was something of a resistance hero. He only stayed in the post until the elections of the same year, however. With the July 1946 accession of the first so called Roman-Red cabinet, a coalition of the Catholic Party KVP and the Social Democratic PvdA, under the premiership of Catholic politician Dr L.J.M. (Louis) Beel, a new Dutch foreign minister was appointed after Van Roijen declined to stay on.318 Like Van Kleffens, Mr. C.G.W.H. (Pim) Baron Van Boetzelaer van Oosterhout was a party-unaffiliated doctor of law. According to most historians, Van Boetzelaer, unlike his predecessor, tended towards neutralism and was a strong proponent of the one world idea. Though aware of the tensions between the victors of the war, Van Boetzelaer was of the opinion that the differences were not insurmountable and that the Dutch must therefore reject all bloc formation and only accept international associations for particular purposes in a UN context.319

Yet, the differences between Van Boetzelaer and Van Kleffens should not be exaggerated. Van Kleffens himself (together with Van Roijen) recommended Van Boetzelaer as foreign minister to Beel. The two also maintained an amicable private correspondence in which they discussed foreign policy, Van Boetzelaer sometimes asking and Van Kleffens often giving his opinion or advice.320 That suggests that any differences of opinion between the two were not of a nature they themselves would have characterized as significant or fundamental. Many authors nonetheless describe Van Boetzelaer as a more convinced believer in the United Nations than Van Kleffens.321 Whether out of principled faith or not, Van Boetzelaer did conscientiously carry out the government’s instruction which stipulated as one of the main lines of Dutch

318 Molenaar 2002, pp. 54–59, p. 84.
320 Bogaarts 1989 IIA, p. 266; Correspondence between Van Kleffens and Van Boetzelaer 1946–1947, restricted access. NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens 2.05,86, inv. nr 298. It also is worth mentioning in this context that in 1945 Van Kleffens tried to avoid fueling the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. His defence of the Soviet Union during the UN debate has been discussed in chapter 4. Wiebes and Zeeman also recount the story of how Van Kleffens did not go to the San Francisco conference via Washington but travelled through Ottawa and Vancouver in order not to give the Soviet government reason to believe he was teaming up with the Americans. They say that ambassador Loudon even suggested Van Kleffens travel via Moscow as that would give him more leeway in the face of the Americans. Wiebes & Zeeman 1993, p. 75.
321 The proof they provide of Van Boetzelaer’s conviction is not always convincing however. For example, Witte claims that while the Soviet’s behaviour in the Security Council was seen by Van Kleffens as proof of Soviet use of the Security Council to campaign against the West, it did not shake Van Boetzelaer’s rock solid faith in the UN. However, the records Witte refers to in his note to substantiate his claim only pertain to Van Kleffens’ attitude and do not say anything about what Van Boetzelaer thought or didn’t think. Witte p. 62, note 26, text of the note on p. 204. Hellema also conveys the image of Van Boetzelaer as a one world promotor. His reference is to Schaper, who in fact talks about Van Boetzelaer’s wish to keep the Netherlands out of conflict, referring to parliamentary records. Hellema 2009, p. 107; Schaper 1981, p. 287. While what Van Boetzelaer said in parliament testifies to his official view it is not conclusive evidence of the personal conviction so often ascribed to Van Boetzelaer.
foreign policy that the Netherlands should contribute to the organization and development of the UN. The new Swedish and Dutch governments and foreign ministers thus had this main foreign policy line in common.

The phrase “bridge building” is often used to describe this policy of contributing to cooperation and working to lower tensions, not only in descriptions of the foreign policy of Sweden and the Netherlands but also of other small states in Europe in the first postwar years. Erik Noreen concludes that both Norway and Sweden had bridge-building ambitions after World War II. Jussi Hanhimäki treats it as a Scandinavian phenomenon, noting that bridge building was the official name for the foreign policy of the Norwegian, Swedish and Danish cabinets in the early postwar years. Cees Wiebes and Bert Zeeman describe how “Belgium considered itself perfectly suited to act as a bridge between East and West” and how the Dutch government “tried to occupy a middle position between the Big Four.” Frits Rovers writes that the security policy of the Dutch Social Democrats was aimed at bridge building long into 1947, and that this approach on the whole corresponded with that of the Beel cabinet and Foreign Minister Van Boetzelaer. Cecilia Notini Burch writes that Sweden acted like a bridge builder in an attempt to reduce tensions in Scandinavia.

Many commentators describe the underlying policies as more passive than the word “bridge building” might suggest. Bjereld, Johansson and Molin write that it was a central aspect of Swedish foreign policy after the war that anything that might hamper the cooperation between East and West should be avoided but that Swedish bridge building was not a particularly active policy. It was rather an attitude of cautious wait and see. Friso Wielenga similarly defines the Dutch government’s policy well into 1947 as adhering to a wait-and-see approach and trying to stay clear of any increasing tensions between East and West in the hope that the four great powers would be able to agree on a policy on Germany. Especially in the Netherlands this attitude of wait and see is often described in negative terms, as deadlock, impasse, a sign of uncertainty, passivity or disinterest, or a policy for lack of better alternatives. Descriptions suggesting a weak or even non-existent foreign policy tend to coincide with the argument that the first postwar years saw a falling back to a tradition of neutrality.

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324 Bjereld, Johansson & Molin 2008, p. 86; Wielenga 2009, p. 223. Noreen also describes Norwegian bridge building 1945–1948 as characterized by a mostly passive aim to avoid contributing to the tensions between the great powers, modest increasing contacts and cooperation with the Soviet Union and a reluctance to examine Soviet international policy too critically. The main strategy was to wait and see. Noreen 1994, pp. 56–67.
325 “During the duumvirate Van Kleffens-Van Roijen uncertainty and passivity reigned.” Thus Wiebes & Zeeman 1993, p. 149. Bogaarts claims there was understandable political disinterest in
Those descriptions fail to acknowledge that there were very concrete interests involved in bridge building as long as there was still any chance of its success. In the Netherlands, the interest in great power cooperation was closely tied to the need for negotiations between the four great powers to reach a solution to the German question. This was a vital Dutch interest: besides the Dutch East Indies, Germany was by far the most prominent topic in Dutch foreign and security policy discussions in the first postwar years. In Sweden, the relationship to the Soviet Union and the position of Finland especially were of crucial importance. A decrease in tensions between the great powers, reducing the Soviet need to take security measures along its north western border, was in this context a tangible national interest.

As this suggests, a policy of avoiding tensions had a strong element of cautious manoeuvring and wait and see. As far as the work to decrease tensions was concerned, bridge building in effect meant attempts to normalize relations with the Soviet Union. That in turn meant seeking to remove that country’s suspicions of the Western world and to simultaneously convince the Western world (including the Dutch and Swedish population) to give the Soviet regime the benefit of the doubt and treat it as a legitimate actor in the international arena. The Dutch and Swedish governments from 1945 and far into 1947 shared a persistent insistence on the advantage of adopting a friendly and reassuring approach to the Soviet Union. In part this policy of rapprochement was underpinned by a sincere admiration for the Soviet Union’s contribution to the allied victory which had led to a more positive view of the country than hitherto.

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327 It was coupled to a surge in support for communism in the late war foreign affairs due to the unclear character of postwar relations. Bogaarts 1999, p. 166. H.A. Schaper describes the conviction of Van Boetzelaer that the Netherlands should not choose sides but do all it could to diminish the tensions between the great powers as a return to the adherence to the principles of international law and a Dutch foreign policy aiming to keep the Netherlands out of conflict. Schaper 1991, pp. 158–159.


327 Martin Alm, in a study of descriptions of the Soviet Union in Sweden, concludes that they became more positive towards the Soviet Union during the war. Alm 2005, pp. 39, 44. The
and immediate postwar period. In the 1946 Dutch elections, the Communist Party CPN (Communistische Partij van Nederland) received an all-time high of 10.6 percent of the votes – a trebling compared to the prewar elections (3.4 percent in 1937). The Swedish Communist Party SKP (Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti), which had been the only Swedish party not to participate in the wartime coalition government, reached comparable results: in the Second Chamber elections of 1944 SKP got 10.3 percent of the votes and in the 1946 municipal elections 11.2 percent.\textsuperscript{328}

This surge in communist support gave the policy of bridge building extra legitimacy, not only because a tenth of the population was seen to sympathize with the Soviet Union – the Communist parties’ connection to that country was undeniable – but also because it was viewed with concern by both governments. The strong position of the communists in France and the civil war in Greece contributed to this anxiety. Fear of communism as threatening security by a Sovietization from within – a fifth column – was in early postwar Western Europe greater than any fear of an outright Soviet attack.\textsuperscript{329} Emphasis on bridge building and peaceful coexistence between the Soviet Union and the Western world could serve not only to stabilize international relations but also to take the edge off this internal threat. If the Soviet Union was living in peace with the capitalist liberal economies of the West, the Soviet-loyal communists within those countries might be less prone to revolution and more ready to accept peaceful coexistence too. The first postwar period of bridge building indeed corresponded to a period of revisionist politics of most of Western Europe’s communist parties: a declared belief in the possibility of a peaceful, parliamentary and gradual road to a socialist society.\textsuperscript{330}

Bridge building aimed at promoting peace and order. Conversely, the perception that peace was possible promoted bridge building. In some countries, the fear of a new war already in 1946 came close to panic. In a letter on 30\textsuperscript{th} August 1946 and again on 5\textsuperscript{th} September, the Dutch envoy to Norway reported that the Norwegian press was paying jittery attention to the question of whether

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Dutch attitude towards the Soviet Union changed as well. The late recognition of the Soviet Union in 1942 was a big change in official policy, and although it was primarily induced for pragmatic reasons – diplomatic relations became a necessity after the Soviet Union’s entry into the war on the allied side – public opinion also showed an increased admiration for the Russians. Knapen 1985, p. 242.

\textsuperscript{328} Percentages from the Dutch Databank Election Results (Databank Verkiezingsuitslagen), www.verkiezingsuitslagen.nl, and the Swedish Central Bureau of Statistics (Statistiska Centralbyrån) www.scb.se respectively, accessed 15 October 2014. See also Loeber 1992, p. 34.

\textsuperscript{329} Hoffenaar & Schoenmaker 1994, p. 40; Witte 1990, p. 59. That this risk was taken seriously is confirmed by the discussion in the Dutch cabinet of the wheat shortage in France. Fear of upheaval in this country made for consideration of a French request for wheat from the Netherlands in spite of Dutch domestic needs. Dutch cabinet protocol 4 March 1946. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 388.

\end{flushleft}
a new war was coming.\textsuperscript{331} In November 1946, the envoy in Ottawa in a similar report described how the head of the Canadian General Staff, Lieutenant General Foulkes, had confidentially told him that he was convinced that an eventual armed conflict with the Soviet Union was unavoidable, considering the dynamic and unscrupulous aims of the Russians for power and world communism.\textsuperscript{332} After a private talk with Norwegian Foreign Minister Halvard Lange on 28\textsuperscript{th} April 1946, Östen Undén noted that Lange had said he had heard rumours of an imminent war. Some circles in the United States presumably wanted to wage a preemptive war. Also, Lange was convinced that the Russian people would accept a new war if the leadership demanded it.\textsuperscript{333}

Interestingly enough, neither the Swedish nor the Dutch governments seem to have been swept up in this sentiment. Undén himself did not believe war was imminent. It was unreasonable, he wrote in the same notes on the talk with Lange. It seems that the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs by and large shared this view. The file called “World situation East–West” in the ministry archive contains a relatively large proportion of reports of Sweden’s estimate of the Soviet Union, as compared to reports from other countries. There are reports of the Swedish view that the Soviet leadership lacked trust in the Western powers (and vice versa) but that their main goal was consolidation rather than renewed aggression, and of Undén’s belief that to overcome the mutual distrust time, patience and open negotiations were necessary.\textsuperscript{334} The same file includes a 1946 memorandum reporting an American assessment of the unlikelihood of Russian aggression in the coming five years\textsuperscript{335} and a number of reports from the Dutch envoy to the Holy See, Marc van Weede. Van Weede passed on information from Monseigneur Tardini\textsuperscript{336} on all kinds of Soviet abuse in Eastern Europe but essentially conveying the belief that the Russians were above all bent on consolidating their gains, not on new aggression.

In referencing one of his long talks with Tardini, Van Weede reported having said himself how regrettable it was that the press was raging ever more against the Soviet Union. He suggested that the hardening position of the

\textsuperscript{331} Political reports from the embassy in Oslo 30 August and 5 September 1946, G.P. Luden to Foreign Minister Van Boetzelaer van Oosterhout. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 17039.

\textsuperscript{332} Political report from the embassy in Ottawa 19 November 1946, J. Snouck Hurgronje to Prime Minister and Foreign Minister a.i. Beel. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 17039.

\textsuperscript{333} Note by Undén 28 April 1946. SE/KB, Östen Undén’s samling L 108:35.

\textsuperscript{334} E. Teixeira de Mattos to the foreign minister 12 June 1946 on talk with Undén; 11 July 1946 on a Swedish report on the Soviet Union by Mr Lindh. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 17039.

\textsuperscript{335} Memorandum by J.G. de Beus 14 October 1946. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 17039.

\textsuperscript{336} Domenico Tardini, head of the foreign section of the Vatican Secretariat of State under pope Pius XII.
Soviets might be caused by fear in a reaction to the press attacks. It would be a good idea to launch a press campaign only writing pieces on how the Soviet Union had nothing to fear and that no one had aggressive or malicious intents towards the Russians. One should especially point to the wonderful opportunity that had been created through the United Nations to solve all difficulties. Tardini had agreed that this might be a good idea and had added that Churchill would have done better to keep silent. His Iron Curtain speech (5\textsuperscript{th} March 1946) had made the Soviet Union more suspicious than ever.\footnote{Marc van Weede to the foreign minister 13 March 1946. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 17039.}

This way of thinking is remarkably reminiscent of reasoning that is in Swedish research often presented as typically Swedish, or even more specific: as typical for Swedish Foreign Minister Undén.\footnote{Kronvall 2003b, p. 9.} There seem to have been plenty of Dutch and Swedish ministers and diplomats who did not share the anxiety of the Norwegians and Canadians about war being imminent, and who emphasized instead the need to tone down the rhetoric against the Soviet Union. Both governments were adamant about the need to treat Soviet policies as positively as possible and not to antagonize the Soviet Union, or contribute to any increase in tensions between the superpowers.

The United States and the Soviet Union: two of a kind?

Although the tensions between East and West involved a number of countries, the United States and the Soviet Union were of unparalleled importance in postwar international relations and will therefore be treated in more depth as we move to the question of how East and West were approached in practice in this time of declared belief in bridge building. They emerged from the war in exceptional positions of strength. A shift in attention from the European great powers to the United States had already started during the war (as mentioned in chapter 3) and continued after the war. A factor that set the United States apart from any other country in this period was its sole possession of the atomic bomb. The Soviet Union too influenced international relations in this period in an unparalleled way. The Russian demonstration of military capacity and stamina during the war had given rise to respect and admiration as well as fear.

Which position did the governments of the two smaller states take towards the two emerging superpowers? As discussed in chapter 2 and 3, an important aspect of small state security was to maintain political independence vis-à-vis greater powers. And chapter 4 has pointed out that one of the main perceived problems in Sweden and the Netherlands of organizing a new international collective security system and worldwide cooperation was the inequality between small and great states. In discussions of the inherent inequality of the
veto-right, the great powers were all criticized for not having accepted limitations to sovereignty for the sake of peaceful coexistence in the manner of the smaller states. An at least rhetorical division can be sensed between the peaceloving, bridge-building small states on the one hand and the great states reluctant to give up power politics on the other. Does this mean that the two emerging superpowers were essentially considered birds of a feather? No. While bridge building might have a neutral ring to it, it did not imply any equal treatment of both sides in the (potential) great power conflict. For all the attempts to act as if the Soviet Union was a country like any other, bridge building was in fact built on ambivalent bases and only superficially hid a deep distrust and even animosity towards that country.

Based on his research of public opinion polls, Dutch historian Hans Blom has pointed out that for all the emphasis on the growing fear of the eastern giant in 1948, there was in fact already in 1945 a widespread mistrust of the Soviet Union. He also concludes that as a group the CPN-voters were relatively isolated from the rest of the population. The surge in communist support need therefore not be viewed as a more general pro-Soviet attitude. Swedish public opinion polls similarly show that the Russians were hardly trusted at the end of the war. In a poll from April 1944, 45 percent of Swedish respondents said that they did not believe that the Russians would be content with the borders of 1941 if they won the war but that they would try to conquer a larger part of Europe, and in June 1945 the country with the largest postwar influence in Europe was expected to be the Soviet Union by 49 percent (compared to 13 percent believing that the United States would have the largest influence).

For all the practical differences between the Swedish and Dutch positions vis-à-vis the United States and the Soviet Union, the tone of assessments encountered in memos, reports and protocols is strikingly similar: while the United States and Americans could at times be characterized as overbearing, unpolished and even ignorant verging on simpleminded, they were considered essentially friendly. The Soviet Union and the Russians on the other hand were often not only typified as overly suspicious, unreasonable, untrustworthy and illmannered but also as potentially hostile and power hungry. The diary of Van Kleffens from the San Francisco conference is full of complaints about both Americans and Russians, but in different terms in line with the above. In a private letter from November 1946 Van Kleffens complained to Van Boetzelaer about the ambivalence of the Dutch delegation to the UN. The two members of parliament who had joined the delegation had no experience of international work and were described as naïve. Van Kleffens sarcastically wrote that it had

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341 San Francisco diary 11 April–7 June 1945. NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr 208. See also chapter 3, A new organization for collective security.
been a shock to Sassen (one of the members) that his eloquence was not enough to shake Stalin in his conviction. Fortunately, Van Kleffens had by his own account succeeded rather well in diverting them from their (naïve) idea that one must accommodate the Soviet Union. “Nothing”, he wrote, “is as beneficial as contact with reality, and that you have neither in Dordrecht nor Tilburg”.

The letter reveals that Van Kleffens’ defence of the Soviet Union during the UN debate, in which he presented Soviet behaviour as taking care of legitimate security concerns like any other country, did not mirror his view of the position to take towards the Soviet Union a year later. While in November 1945 he had reprimanded one member of parliament for openly criticizing the Soviet Union, in November 1946 he dismissed another for wanting to accommodate the same country. The difference might suggest that his attitude towards the Soviet Union had hardened in that year, but in all likelihood it reflects the discrepancy between what attitudes were considered suitable at negotiations and what should be expressed in public.

For their part Swedish government members had discussed the Russians in much the same terms as the Germans during the war (see chapter 2), and for all the bridge-building ideals and Russian war heroism, the image had not changed significantly. On 5th November 1946, in his diary, Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander expressed abhorrence, but no surprise, at the Russian methods of recruiting spies. A few weeks later he expressed understanding for British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin after a meeting with the Russian minister, who had been so headstrong and simplistic that Erlander had been flabbergasted. “I was quite curt and dismissive”, he wrote. “I am beginning to realize that Bevin’s anger could sometimes be caused by similar human affects as mine at this last minister-conversation.” He also wrote down several anecdotes illustrating how authoritarian and suspicious the Russians were.

The image of the Russians as overly suspicious and generally difficult to cooperate with appears in both countries regardless of the official policy of promoting friendly relations with and between the United States and the Soviet Union. In a report on the first UN general assembly, Swedish envoy Gunnar Hägglöf told Foreign Minister Undén that the Russian delegates’ unfamiliarity with parliamentary methods had put assembly president Spaak’s improvising skills to the test. Hägglöf also reported that the Russian delegate Mr Vyshinsky...
had curiously enough seemed very satisfied even though he had not gained the Security Council’s support for a single one of the Russian claims. Hägglöf had suggested to Spaak that perhaps it was more important to a Russian delegate to know that Moscow was satisfied with his attitude than to win a majority in the Security Council. Spaak had replied that it was exactly this which showed the demoralizing effect of the unlimited veto-right: a representative of a dictatorship might be easily tempted to use the Security Council as a forum for propaganda by exploiting the right to veto.344

In a report on his work in the UN, Van Kleffens similarly described the Russians as using the Security Council as an instrument for propaganda. In another he explained to the cabinet that to the Russians, cooperation meant doing what the Soviet Union wanted.345 Even Van Boetzelaer’s view of the Soviet Union did not differ significantly from that of his predecessors (even if he might have been a little more cautious in expressing it than Van Kleffens). Like them, and like his Swedish colleagues, he approached the Russians as people whose recalcitrance was guaranteed. Practically speaking, this Russian character meant that it was notoriously difficult to get a straight answer from the Soviet government. Van Boetzelaer’s comment in a 1947 memo which treated the reactions of other countries to the initiative by Spaak for closer cooperation of the Benelux countries with France and Great Britain testifies to a resigned fatigue regarding the Soviet Union. Van Boetzelaer reported that the Americans had called the initiative untimely but that no reaction was known from the Russian side. However, he wrote, it was “safe to assume” that Russia would approach the matter “with the usual distrust”.346

The Swedish government had had a similar difficulty the year before. It made considerable efforts to find out in advance who would support Sweden’s UN application and who might have objections. In the Foreign Council of 21 January 1946, Foreign Minister Undén reported on which countries had shown interest in the issue of an invitation to Sweden to join the new organization. He told the Council that the Swedish government did not mind whether a general invitation by the assembly was extended or a specific one to Sweden. However, considering the issue of the items on the agenda, it did not wish proposals to be made which would cause differences of opinion and conflicts. What he referred to was the fear that the admission of Sweden would be made contingent on the solution of other matters that might be on the UN agenda and that Sweden

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345 Dutch cabinet protocols 10 October 1946 and 10 February 1947. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad 2.02.05.02 inv. nr 388 and 389.
would thereby become drawn into an international dispute. In particular, rumour had it that the Soviet Union would make approval of Sweden’s application to the UN dependent on the recognition of the incorporation of the Baltic in the Soviet Union and tie the issue of Sweden’s membership to treatment of the Baltic States and Finland.\(^{347}\)

The Swedish government tried to forestall such a development by procuring assurances in advance from the permanent members of the Security Council that they would support the Swedish application and not make it conditional on the admission of other states. When it proved impossible to get a definite answer from the Russians in time for the deadline of 15th July, the Swedish application was postponed.\(^{348}\) By 22nd July, the Russians had finally answered in a generally favourable way. However, it had been impossible to obtain a guarantee that the Soviet Union would not make its support contingent on a positive decision concerning the admission of other states, leaving an element of risk, as the attitude of the United States and Great Britain regarding the admission of Albania and Outer Mongolia was highly insecure. The government therefore wanted to postpone its application for another few weeks, awaiting more secure information.\(^{349}\)

Before creating the impression that Swedish behaviour was solely motivated by concern about the actions of the Soviet Union, it should be added that some letters suggest that requests were also made by other countries concerning the Russian attitude towards Swedish membership of the UN. The Swedish envoy in Ottawa reported that he had assuured Undersecretary Robertson of the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs that the Swedish government had no knowledge of any Soviet opposition to Swedish membership. Robertson had said that the Canadians suspected the Russians would use the issue of new members as a bargaining chip.\(^{350}\) The incident suggests that the Swedish need for reassurance from the Soviet Union was at least in part motivated by a need to in turn reassure other countries that might otherwise be hesitant to support the Swedish application for fear of the issue being used in a power game by the Soviet Union. One should not forget that the wish to avoid conflict with the Soviet Union was not an exclusively Swedish preoccupation.

\(^{347}\) Foreign Council protocol 21 January 1946. SE/RA, Tvåkammarriksdagen, Utrikesnämnden, A2:5.

\(^{348}\) Foreign Council protocol 12 July 1946 and attached memo from 10 July 1946, referencing the replies by the American, British, French and Chinese governments and reporting that while the approached Russian vice foreign minister gave the impression of being in general favourably disposed to a Swedish application, an official Soviet answer was as yet unavailable. SE/RA, Tvåkammarriksdagen, Utrikesnämnden, A2:5.

\(^{349}\) Foreign Council protocol 22 July 1946. SE/RA, Tvåkammarriksdagen, Utrikesnämnden, A2:5.

That fact does not diminish the exceptional role of the Soviet Union in this waiting game. While it is true that the attitudes of all Security Council members were sounded out in advance, it was only the Russians who were described in the Swedish Foreign Council as wanting to use Sweden as a pawn by combining their interest for other nations with the issue of Sweden’s admission. One council member (Gösta Bagge of the Liberal Conservatives, Högern) even suggested it might be wise not to participate in the UN until the most important problems had been settled because Sweden was likely to agree with the Western powers on these matters, which would put Sweden in opposition to the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{351} Gerard Aalders has described Sweden’s abstention from voting on sensitive issues in the UN as a consistent refusal to choose sides in conflicts between the superpowers. He fails to point out that abstaining from participating in a decision may be less an expression of a neutral mindset than an attempt to hide a not-so-neutral opinion.\textsuperscript{352}

In both governments, there was evidently a greater affinity with the United States and Great Britain than with the Soviet Union. Conflict with the latter was avoided, but the interests of the former were constantly and matter of factly reckoned with. In early February 1946, for example, Dutch Foreign Minister Van Roijen objected to a request to house a scientific conference on nuclear physics in the Netherlands on the grounds that scientists are notoriously bad at keeping secrets, and the British and American governments might oppose the lifting of secrecy on these matters.\textsuperscript{353} And in connection with the Soviet demand for extradition of people who had fought in the German army and fled to Sweden – a matter that would later become known as the Baltic extradition (Baltutlämningen, in spite of the majority of Germans) – the question was raised in the Foreign Council whether the allies would be opposed to the extradition of military personnel directly to the Russians. Besides showing awareness of tension and reluctance to comply with the Soviet wish at the risk of antagonizing the United States and Great Britain, the wording shows that the Soviet Union was not put in the same category as the other wartime allies. Several times the protocol refers to the United States and Britain as simply “the allies” as opposed to the Soviet Union even though this country was also one of the

\textsuperscript{351} Foreign Council protocol 22 July 1946. SE/RA, Tvåkammarriksdagen, Utrikesnämnden, A25.

\textsuperscript{352} Aalders 1989, pp. 21–22. In my view Aalders overemphasizes the shift towards a more pro-Western attitude from Sweden from 1948 on. The attitude was as far as I can judge similar in the early postwar period. It was the circumstances that changed with the clear commitment of the US to the defence of Europe and the failure of the bridge-building policy. My findings are more in line with those of Notini Burch, who ascribes the shift in 1948 rather to a change in attitude towards the Soviet Union. Notini Burch argues that external security concerns caused concessions to the Soviet Union in the early postwar years but that these concerns gradually diminished and that their impact was clearly reduced from 1948 onwards. Notini Burch 2014, pp. 269–272.

\textsuperscript{353} Scientists are on principle against keeping secrets, he pointed out. Dutch cabinet protocol 4 February 1946, NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 388.
allies. Though the wordings “the Western allies” or “the other allies” occur as well, the omission of defining adjectives happens frequently enough to raise the impression that viewing the Soviet Union as not really belonging in the allied group happened without too much reflection, which suggests that the division was rather self-evident.354

The Swedish government decided to comply with the Soviet demand and extradite German military personnel or people of other nationalities who had served in the German army and had fled to Sweden after the war ended. The decision was made by the wartime coalition and did not cause much discussion in the Foreign Council at the time; however, arrangements for the extradition dragged on, rumours started spreading in the camps where the refugees were interned, and by November the press started writing about it. The fact that Baltic refugees who had served in the German army (civilians were not extradited) were to be handed over to the Soviet Union caught the public’s attention and indignation. The outrage grew as a result of hunger strikes and suicide attempts among the refugees. The extraditions began towards the end of 1945 but in many cases had to be postponed because of the poor health of the striking refugees. A renewed discussion erupted and the new government made some attempts to get out of the promise made by its predecessor, but the Soviet government insisted and the Swedish eventually complied. By the time the decision was carried out in 1946, it was done in the face of massive protests. The perseverance of the government was clearly motivated not only by reluctance to break a promise and a wish to show reliability, but by the desire not to antagonize the Soviet Union. It was however defended as being in the interest of the West as well. In his diary Tage Erlander recounted how on 4th December 1945 he declared to the government his view that a remission at this point would be a catastrophe as it would fundamentally destroy what little was left of Russian trust in “us and the West”. The Soviet relationship with Sweden was in other words tied to its relationship with the Western world in general. In his 1973 memoirs, Erlander also reprinted a 1945 letter in which he defended the Baltic extradition as a sacrifice on the altar of decreasing tensions – that is, to the benefit of the world.355

354 Foreign Council 12 June 1945, official protocol in SE/RA, Tävksammarriksdagen, Utrikesnämnden, A2:5; Notes by Undén in SE/KB Osten Undén’s samling, L108:11a. The notes sometimes refer to the Western countries as “the other allies” or “the Western allies” but quite often only as “the allies” although the Soviet Union is clearly not included in that term. It is not possible to determine whether the omissions were made by the speakers themselves or the protocol writers, but the division appears in both the official protocol and in Undén’s notes.

355 Erlander’s diary 5 December 1945, Erlander 2001, p. 44; Erlander 1973, pp. 224–227. For an extensive account of the whole affair of the extradition of Germans and people from the Baltics to the Soviet Union, see the two-volume work by Curt Ekholm. The account of the initial decision and subsequent emerging awareness about it in the camps can be found in Ekholm 1984, part I, pp. 99–180. Part II treats the reactions in the press and surge of public opinion against the extradition as well as the government’s reactions, the ensuing parliamentary debate, and the many
Another much debated issue was the 1946 Swedish bilateral trade agreement with the Soviet Union. It included substantial Swedish credit to the Soviet Union. The agreement had important economic and trade policy motives and was an attempt to make up for export markets lost during the war.\textsuperscript{356} Yet, it was clearly in part motivated by security policy concerns and a bridge-building ambition. Undén in early April, upon receiving the news that the Russians were interested in reopening trade negotiations, noted triumphantly in his diary that he had been right in his estimation that it was possible to build a good relationship with the Soviet Union. And when the trade agreement was criticized in the Foreign Council on the grounds that it would put too large a strain on Swedish industry and not provide enough in return, Prime Minister Hansson silenced the critics by stating that the point of departure for everyone must surely be that it would be desirable to achieve better eastward relations. It was obviously in the Swedish interest to come to a positive result in the negotiations, both for future trade and future relations.\textsuperscript{357}

Although not much came of them at the time, it should be mentioned that in 1944 Van Kleffens argued for Dutch trade negotiations with the Soviet Union along much the same lines as the Swedes: it would be necessary to maintain good relations with the USSR after the war and a Dutch–Soviet trade agreement was needed to make up for lost trade relations with Germany.\textsuperscript{358} It seems as if the lack of big controversial Dutch-Soviet issues compared to the two Swedish-Soviet issues of 1946 had more to do with different starting points and conditions than with different basic attitudes. Sweden’s status as wartime neutral and its geographic location resulted in a different position regarding refugees and brought Sweden into closer contact and more direct negotiations with the Soviet Union. The Dutch on the other hand had a long history of distancing themselves from the Soviet Union to overcome. Although the decision to establish a mission to Moscow was taken in 1942, it took until 1943 before an embassy was actually in place and until 1948 before the Netherlands managed to conclude a trade agreement with the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{359}

The threat from the Soviet Union was also less direct for the Dutch: the greatest perceived risk was perhaps that of Sovietization from within and the Soviet Union’s increased grip on Germany through the spread of communism.

\textsuperscript{356} For an in-depth discussion of the 1946 credit and trade agreement, see Karlsson 1992, esp. pp. 39–73.
\textsuperscript{357} Undén’s diary 2 April 1946, Undén 2002, p. 141; Foreign Council protocol 22 July 1946. SE/RA, Tvåkammarriksdagen, Utrikesnämnden, A25. See also for an extensive account of the credit and trade negotiations Karlsson 1992, pp. 39–51.
\textsuperscript{358} Van Kleffens’ instructions to the ambassador in Moscow as cited in Witte 1990, pp. 36–37.
\textsuperscript{359} Witte 1990, p. 138. For an account of the deep rooted Dutch aversions towards and misgivings about the Soviet Union, see Knapen 1985.
That spread was believed to be facilitated by poor economic conditions. In that sense, security and economy were inseparable, possibly more so in war-ravaged Netherlands than in relatively prosperous Sweden. The fear in Sweden of an increased Soviet presence in Finland had different preconditions. There was no involvement of the Western allies in the far north as in Germany. Moreover, the Soviet Union and Sweden already shared a border in the Baltic which became more substantial after the incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union.\footnote{Elis Håstad points out that after World War II the Soviet Union was the only and dominating Baltic military power and that the Finnish-Baltic buffer zone between the Soviet Union and Sweden was partly weakened, partly gone. Håstad 1955, p. 28. See also Bjereld, Johansson & Molin 2008, pp. 66–67.}

For all the shared emphasis on not contributing to any deterioration of the relations between the great powers, the Swedish government had more incentives to improve its (bilateral) relations with the Soviet Union than had the Dutch.

The assumption that the Swedish interest in appeasing the Soviet Union was a result of the higher level of perceived threat to national interests leads to the question of whether the Dutch had more of an eye on the United States for similar reasons. The United States was not only a potential benefactor but also a potential threat to Dutch interests and security, even if not in the same manner as the Soviet Union was to Sweden. In April 1946, for example, the governor of Surinam, Johannes Cornelis Brons, warned the Dutch cabinet of increased American interest in Surinam. Brons described the Surinam population as easily influenced, emotional and not so developed, and therefore possibly sensitive to American promises although in principle not a rebellious people. Foreign Minister Van Roijen asked Brons to warn him of any further signs of American interest in the region.\footnote{Dutch cabinet protocol 8 April 1946. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 388.}

Even if the Americans were not perceived as a direct security threat, they had a lot of power in situations that were of the utmost importance to the Dutch. There is a strong consensus among foreign policy historians that the two major issues for the Dutch in the immediate postwar period (beside national reconstruction) were the Indonesian and German questions.\footnote{The book by S.I.P. van Campen from 1958 has already been mentioned. The total dominance of the German question in this book (thanks to leaving out the Indonesian question as "outside the scope of this work", Campen 1958, p. 1), is best illustrated by the fact that the book is structured in two sections per year from 1946 to 1949: one part on general policy and one part on Germany. Others have stressed the Indonesian question as the overriding concern of these years. Schaper 1978 for example emphasizes that there was a lack of interest in security issues because Dutch policy was dominated by the problem of the decolonization of the Dutch East Indies (p. 92). Hellema 2009 emphasizes that both Germany and Indonesia "raised temperatures in The Hague more than any other issues", p. 108.} Good relations with the Americans were crucial to both, and regarding the colonies, the American attitude could even be considered a direct threat to Dutch interests. Improving
relations with the Soviet Union was also important to the overall solution of the German question, but in a more general way, just as it was important to the success of the UN: it was mainly a matter of working for improved relations between the great powers. The bilateral relations of the Dutch with the Soviet Union had, in comparison to those with the Americans, little to offer the Netherlands directly. This observation is congruent with that made in chapter 2, that the most attention was given to the power with the greatest potential impact on national security (whether threat or gain). In so far as there were differences in the Swedish and Dutch attitudes towards the superpowers, they flowed from this.

A final observation in the comparison of Swedish and Dutch attitudes towards the United States and the Soviet Union in the first postwar years is that it would seem that the Swedish middle way policy was no less dependent on continued American involvement in Europe than was the Dutch. An early 1946 report by the Dutch ambassador to Sweden, Pedro Désiré Edouard Teixeira de Mattos, testifies to how the Swedish policy of independence hinged on being able to count on the continued engagement of the Western powers and especially the United States in Europe. Teixeira de Mattos had spoken to the Deputy Secretary General of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Vilhelm Assarsson, who had been Sweden’s ambassador in Moscow until declared persona non grata in 1943. Assarsson had told him of continuous Russian “pin-pricks” directed at Sweden, always pushing to find a soft spot. According to Teixeira, Assarsson spoke of Swedish worries that the United States would pull back from Europe, in which case there would be no stopping the Soviet Union. The Russians were not at all pleased with the strong and unwavering Swedish government, he said, and didn’t care whether it was left-wing or right-wing, as long as it was malleable. That, Assarsson assured Teixeira, the Swedish government was not; at least if the great powers would also stand their ground. The Swedish ability to stand up to the Soviet Union was in other words, at least in Assarsson’s view, dependent on the Western powers balancing the Soviet threat.

Universal norms and great power tensions: policy opportunities and obstacles

Two international realities framed Dutch and Swedish security policy possibilities in the first postwar years. One was tensions between East and West and insecurity as to the course of action of the great powers. The other was that an international organization had been established whose members at least on

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363 E. Teixeira de Mattos to Herman van Roijen 5 February 1946. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 17039.
paper recognized the legitimacy of justice above might. Both affected Dutch and Swedish margins for manoeuvre. Any prospect of getting the two most powerful states in the world to adhere to international norms was a strong motive for UN support and bridge building. But promoting cooperation between the great powers was not enough. Concrete issues needed solving, and both governments within the given frames did what they could to promote their own interests.

In the Dutch and Swedish UN discussions considered in the previous chapter, the emphases on the greater good and serving as a role model stand out: here was an obvious opportunity for the smaller states. Eelco van Kleffens even chose *Désir de faire bien* – wish to do good – as his personal motto.\(^{364}\) Neither government had any illusions about the relationship between East and West, but both were seasoned when it came to manoeuvring under pressure. Some small state researchers have pointed to the room for manoeuvre created for small states both by universal ideals and by conflicts between great powers.\(^{365}\) What margin for manoeuvre did the Swedish and Dutch governments have in 1945–1947? How did they deal with the opportunities and obstacles of this postwar situation of (professed) universal norms and great power tensions?

**Principles and interests: strategies in the new (dis)order**

The precise role of principles in policy making is notoriously elusive, but that they did play a role in the postwar period is indisputable. The absence of an in-depth discussion here on the sincerity or depth of idealism of individual policymakers does not mean that personal convictions were not important. “Cognitive and normative factors which determine a decision maker’s perception of reality also influence the decision-making process” as John Rogers has put it, discussing the role of belief systems in foreign policy.\(^{366}\) However, it must suffice here to establish that both the Swedish and the Dutch governments often invoked universal values to defend national behaviour or interests. They referred to principles explicitly recognized by the United Nations such as sovereignty, justice and solidarity but also more general values such as objectivity, common good and expertise. Both governments consciously worked to spread a positive image abroad as a strategy to improve goodwill towards their country with respect to issues that could be expected to invite criticism. In


\(^{365}\) Arnold Wolfers has pointed to disagreement among the great powers as a contributor to the “power of the weak” and Erling Bjøl has named norms of behaviour in international politics one of the major components of that same power. Wolfers 1962, pp. 111–112; Bjøl 1968, pp. 158–167. See chapter 1, *The power of small states*.

\(^{366}\) Rogers 2007, p. 357.
Sweden this pertained mainly to the country’s position during the war; in the Netherlands it was primarily the issue of Indonesia.

A speech made by Swedish Foreign Minister Günther on 22nd July 1945 might serve as an example of how different norms were employed to defend national behaviour. Though seemingly aimed at a national audience – the speech was given in Ängelholm in southern Sweden – it was translated into English and supplied to the American magazine *Vital Speeches of the Day* by the Swedish delegation in Washington. In it, Günther defended Swedish wartime neutrality, pointing to the right of the Swedish government to evaluate the situation and do what it considered wisest under the circumstances – a reference to the principle of national sovereignty. He also pointed to the benefit to the surrounding countries of Sweden’s non-belligerency, invoking the idea of the general good. The Swedish policy had even saved the Western powers from a nearly fatal misjudgement: thanks to Sweden’s refusal to allow a transit of Western troops during the Finnish Winter War, the Western allies had avoided ending up at war with the Soviet Union. The implication was not only that Sweden’s neutrality had actually been of benefit to the allies, but that the allies and the critics of the refusal had misjudged the situation. Time had proven that the Swedish government had made the better, more level-headed assessment.367

The spreading of “objective information” about Sweden was a conscious strategy intended to enhance the country’s economic and political stature in the world. To that end, the semi-official Swedish Institute was established in 1945. In his dissertation on public diplomacy and the Swedish Institute, Nikolas Glover points out that the work of the institute was presented as being in the interest of both Sweden and the countries with which one interacted. It was described in terms of enlightenment and communication rather than propaganda.368 In the Netherlands too the strategy was presented as providing information rather than spreading propaganda, as Floribert Baudet has described in his book on the importance of information as a weapon in this period.369 The reasoning is clearly mirrored in Van Kleffens’ many attempts to improve the image of the Netherlands by properly explaining the Dutch presence in the Dutch East Indies to the outside world (notably to the Americans). The underlying assumption was that if they only had correct information, they would understand and support the Dutch position.370 In the case of Günther’s defence of Sweden, a diary note by Undén mentions that the Swedish parliament had decided that a brochure on Sweden’s wartime policy should be distributed, especially in English, but also Spanish-speaking countries. Undén had spoken

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370 Although the Dutch liked to portray the Americans as naïve concerning Indonesia, the Americans were in fact quite well informed. Gouda with Zaalberg 2002, pp. 38–42.
to Günther about an unsatisfactory concept brochure, and the two of them had finally decided that Günther should write it himself. The article in Vital Speeches of the Day was part of this drive to improve Sweden’s image abroad.371

The propaganda – or information – spread abroad was not necessarily different or separate from domestic campaigns. The presentation of decisions as the result of well-informed objectivity played a role in defending foreign policy at home as well. Regarding their work in the United Nations, both governments at one time or another emphasized that they made judgements based on facts from case to case, taking all factors into account. The implication was that they did not merely join the opinion of one side or the other but judged each issue on its own merits. It was a way to claim independence and expertise as well as a way to avoid criticism, both domestic and international. In October 1946, Eelco van Kleffens reported on his work in the Security Council to the rest of the cabinet. He explained that he decided his vote as objectively as possible by trying always to harmonize three set of interests, those of the United Peoples, of Western Europe, and, last but not least, those of the Netherlands.372

In a 1947 speech, Swedish Foreign Minister Östen Undén similarly described Swedish voting behaviour in the General Assembly as objective. The context was some criticism of Swedish attempts to stay on friendly terms with both the United States and the Soviet Union and sometimes abstaining from voting, presumably in order to avoid making enemies. In his speech, Undén denied that Swedish policy was an expression of seeking some kind of middle ground between the great power blocs, or of viewing the superpowers as essentially equal. The Swedish government rather chose its position after an independent examination and an objective assessment.373

A frequent strategy was to frame particular interests as general, especially by tying them to what was obviously or commonly considered good or just. An example of how the general good was consciously used to promote Dutch national interest can be found in discussions on the German question. The question of what should become of Germany was a complicated and multifaceted one. In spite of strong anti-German sentiments and calls for war damages in the shape of border corrections and economic claims, many government members recognized that in the long run, an economically strong and healthy Germany was vital to the Netherlands. The Dutch national economy was dependent on German imports and exports, and economic stability – both German and Dutch – was crucial to security.

Concerns about renewed aggression from Germany disappeared from official documents surprisingly quickly, even if, at an extraordinary cabinet meeting on

372 Dutch cabinet protocol 14 October 1946. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 389.
the German question on 8th January 1947, the prime minister suggested that a politically federalized but economically centralized Germany would be in the Dutch interest. The group emphasizing the long-term interest of an economically stable Germany, if necessary at the expense of extensive war compensation, included Van Boetzelaer who saw the risk of a repetition of the harsh peace treaty after World War I. This group gradually won the argument over those insisting on large war damages. At the January 8th meeting, though there were arguments about which position the Dutch should take on the matter, the emphasis was on the need to embed this position in a wider context. Dutch suggestions and demands would be better received if they were presented to the allies as part of a comprehensive solution to the German problem in Europe, including also plans for cultural recovery. Prime Minister Beel added that if the demands were put in the context of the general European interest, the Dutch moral basis would be much stronger.

The inability of the great powers to agree was also turned to the Dutch advantage. The Dutch cabinet explicitly discussed the possibility of using the existing discord to promote their own position on Germany. It is true that the lack of fruitful cooperation between the Soviet Union and the Western occupiers of Germany was at heart an obstacle to Dutch goals. But considering the dissension of the four great powers, the prime minister pointed out that the smaller countries’ ideas could very well have a chance to make an impact. In light of the division between the Great Four, the Netherlands should, in close cooperation with the Belgians, not neglect what the prime minister called “our vocation”. The Dutch prime minister seems to have perceived a window of opportunity for smaller states, created by the inability of the great powers to stake a course. As he put it, “we must not miss this historic moment”.

In Sweden the opportunities presented by the division between the great powers was also recognized, even if they were not necessarily discussed in terms of a historic moment. The veto-right of the permanent members of the Security Council is perhaps the most obvious example: it allowed Sweden to retain the possibility of declaring neutrality in conflicts between the great powers, which was sometimes referred to as an advantage – although as Undén pointed out,

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374 Duco Hellema describes how the territorial ambitions were cut back in order not to contribute to the collapse of the German economy. Hellema 2009, p. 111. On Van Boetzelaer’s opposition to a settlement that would cause the Germans to seek revenge, similar to the aftermath of WWI, see Bogaarts 1989, p. 271. David Reynolds mentions the dilemma for France and the Benelux of Germany being both a threat to security and the key to economic recovery. Reynolds 1994, p. 13.

375 Dutch cabinet protocol of an extraordinary meeting regarding Germany, 8 January 1947. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 389.

376 Dutch cabinet protocol of an extraordinary meeting on the German question. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 389. My translation. The citations in Dutch read, in their context: “Juist omdat er tegenstellingen onder de Grote Vier bestaan, mogen wij – in nauwe samenwerking met België – onze roeping niet verzuimen; dit historische moment mogen wij niet missen.”
without the veto there would have been no need to declare neutrality in the first place.\textsuperscript{377} Elis Håstad has written that the veto-right in practice gave Sweden full freedom of action in case of a great power war and that this appears to have been what made it possible to gain such a strong parliamentary majority in favour of membership. However, he adds, this could not be the whole story since all political camps agreed that Sweden must become a member of the new organization even before the veto-right was established.\textsuperscript{378}

An example of a more concrete benefit of the US–Soviet antagonism is one that presented itself during Swedish attempts to reach a trade agreement with the Soviet Union. The 1946 Swedish trade negotiations and credit deal with the Soviet Union caused unrest and some fear in the United States that Sweden was drawing nearer to the Eastern sphere of influence. An official protest note from the American government in turn led to rumours in Sweden that the Americans would block the export of raw materials to Sweden. Östen Undén, however, not only refused to show any concern, he recognized that the note gave Sweden an advantage in the negotiations with the Soviet Union, which were proceeding slowly. At a press conference, Undén reported on the progress of the trade negotiations with the Soviet Union and focused in particular on the American note. He mentioned rumours of American retaliation and emphasized how unreasonable it would be for the Americans to pursue such a policy. In his diary he noted that “of course”, the American démarche gave Sweden an advantage, as the Soviets would now be more interested in a quick result.\textsuperscript{379}

When there was no specific potential national gain involved, both governments tended to avoid taking a position that might put the country in opposition to others – especially to the great powers. In these cases, invoking the general interest meant seeking safety in numbers. The attitude towards Spain in 1946 is a case in point. To many, the survival of the fascist regime in Spain was a thorn in the eye after the allies had won a war “to make the world safe for democracy”. Many governments and notably France discussed sanctions or threatened to sever diplomatic relations with Franco’s Spain. In both Sweden and the Netherlands there were public calls for sanctions against the Spanish dictatorship.\textsuperscript{380} While this was potentially an opportunity to take a moral stand, both the Swedish and Dutch governments rejected the idea of taking measures

\textsuperscript{377} Undén 1945, pp. 10–13.
\textsuperscript{378} Håstad 1955, pp. 37–39.
\textsuperscript{380} Which is not to say that a majority of the population was in favour of sanctions. According to a Gallup poll in Sweden, 45% of the respondents answered that they were undecided when asked whether international action to overthrow Franco would be justified. And half of those in favour of such international action (39%) did not think that Sweden should participate. Håstad et al. 1950, p. 220.
independently. Instead they referred to their preparedness to participate in international sanctions, should they be decided upon. Even the possibility of joint measures with other small states was rejected in Sweden. In the Swedish Foreign Council of 21st January 1946, the foreign minister reported that the question of the relationship with Spain had come up during the recent joint Nordic meeting of ministers in Copenhagen. The Danish, Norwegian and Swedish foreign ministers had all declared that they would consider joining international action against Spain, should the situation arise. The Swedish minister was not inclined to take any separate Swedish action and had recommended the Nordic countries to only take action if it was agreed upon by all the great powers.381

The Dutch foreign minister was equally reluctant for the Netherlands to take unilateral action against Spain. In March of 1946 Herman van Roijen condemned a strike by harbour workers in Rotterdam, who refused to unload Spanish oranges. It would not be a problem if it was part of an international action, he said. However, action against Spain should not be undertaken unilaterally by the Netherlands.382 It seems that both governments, in spite of their shared moral distaste for Spain and even action on the part of a few other governments, chose to avoid a position which might put them in opposition to one or more of the great powers – and which would be economically damaging.

That is not to say that opposition to the great powers was always avoided. National interests and the country’s independence could be reinforced by championing what was morally right and resisting all suggestions of being influenced by other countries, especially the great powers. One way to do that, as shown earlier, was to invoke objectivity. Another was to set small power rights against great power pressures, evoking an image of standing up to the great powers. In his 1962 work on international relations, Arnold Wolfers observed that the solidarity which makes smaller states react to “the ‘bullying’ of any one of them” is a power asset to small states. Even great powers cannot afford the potential hostility of many states, however small.383

A general policy of caution and avoiding conflict was not inconsistent with a stubborn determination to stand up for independence and one’s ideals, alone if necessary, when faced with what was experienced as undue pressure. The image Undén sought to cultivate of unflinching, determined foreign minister who would not be intimidated is mirrored in Van Kleffens, for all their other differences. In 1952, wartime Minister of Justice Van Angeren in a testimony about the wartime ministry described Van Kleffens as a man who was difficult to approach and see through, always rational, never showing his feelings. Van

382 Dutch cabinet protocol 18 March 1946, NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 389.
383 Wolfers 1962, pp. 111–112. This is particularly effective if the stronger powers also accept the invoked ideals.
Kleffens’ formulation of matters was exceptionally clear and it was difficult to get him to say anything beyond what he had decided in advance to say. Foreign Minister Van Boetzelaer, it might be added, is also often described as reserved. His reaction to the Belgian “solo-initiatives” pushing for a Belgian-Dutch joining of an extended treaty of Dunkirk in 1947 was cool, to say the least. And Foreign Minister Undén’s stoic reaction whenever anyone tried to twist his arm was so well-known that when envoy Gunnar Hägglöf conveyed the view of the president of the UN general assembly (Belgian Paul-Henri Spaak) that Sweden, in connection with its application for UN membership, might do well to sound out the Russian government in advance, he hastened to add that Spaak had of course not meant to give the Swedish government any “advice” but that their talk had been of a social and informal character.

The private letters of Van Kleffens testify to his contempt for servile yielding to stronger nations. “I don’t think we should be disconcerted by the lack of support for us by the Belgians and Canadians”, Van Kleffens wrote on 9th August 1946 in an unofficial letter to his successor Van Boetzelaer. The matter at hand was the Dutch position on the rights of small states at the Paris peace conference. “If necessary, we can always resign ourselves to unsatisfactory solutions, but to give our formal consent, on so called sensible or realistic grounds (the Norwegians too excel in that cowardly stuff) will not only not increase the respect for us, but diminish it”, he concluded. This reasoning is reminiscent of that of Östen Undén discussed in chapter 3, when he acknowledged that Sweden would have to join a collective security organization whether the Russian version (which demanded Security Council unity) prevailed or not, but that there was no reason to adapt to the Russian demands in advance.

We see here a combination of claiming independence in some cases and avoiding controversy in others. Like in the case of long-term versus short-term goals, the choice seems to have been dependent on the level of perceived threat. In more general and principled matters – such as the rights of small states and the character of the international order in general – the tendency seems to have been to emphasize the principle. But in situations where a controversy might

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384 NL–NIOD, Collectie Nederlandse regering in Londen 233b, inv. nr 54.
387 Letter from Van Kleffens to Van Boetzelaer dated 9 August 1946 from the personal, restricted part of Van Kleffens’ archive. Consulted with the consent of law firm Van Butttingha Wichers notarissen, for which the author is grateful. NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr 298 (beperkt openbaar/restricted access). My translation of the quote which in Dutch reads: “Dat de Belgen en Canadezen ons zoo weinig steunen, moet ons geloof ik niet van de wijs brengen. Als het moet, kunnen wij ons altijd bij onbevredigende oplossingen neerleggen, maar formeel onze toestemming geven, op zgn. verstandige of realistische gronden (ook de Noren zijn sterk in dat laf gedoe) zal het respect voor ons niet alleen niet vergroten, maar verkleinen.”
388 See chapter 3, A new organization for collective security.
put the country in an isolated or otherwise unfavourable position, but where undue pressure had not (yet) been exercised or where the issue at hand did not concern the country’s own independence, focus was on avoiding conflict.

Perishing in a leaking ship full of principles?

For all the references to objectivity and support of universal principles, these principles were not always compatible with crucial interests. For the Netherlands, champion of law *par excellence*, adhering to the law as interpreted by the United Nations soon became a problem in connection to the Indonesian question. The slogan “Indies lost, disaster the cost” (*Indië verloren, rampspoed geboren* – literally: Indies lost, disaster born), which became popular after the war, says something about the Dutch perception of the importance of maintaining their control of the Indies.389 Already during the San Francisco conference, one of the main efforts of the Dutch delegation was to argue against placing the Dutch East Indies under a UN mandate. During 1946, the Council of Ministers repeatedly discussed the risk that the issue of the Indies would be addressed by the Security Council, always referring to it as a threat. The Dutch “could not feel safe” because the Security Council was assembling; there was a “danger” that the “international world” would interfere; it “must be feared” that failing to come to an agreement with the British might cause the United Nations Organization to intervene.390 And in 1947, the Netherlands came into open conflict with the UN over the Dutch so-called police actions in Indonesia, to which we will return in the next chapter. When it came to the Dutch East Indies, universal legal norms became an obstacle more than an opportunity. That is not to say that the legal argument was abandoned; policymakers rather claimed that the principles had been misinterpreted by others and that Dutch behaviour was in fact precisely the best defence of human rights, freedom, independence, and prosperity.391

Swedish policymakers might not have had a colonial problem like the Dutch, but in their case too when a crucial interest was at stake, universal principles came secondary or competing principles were brought into play. The Baltic extradition is a case in point. Curt Ekholm, who has researched the question thoroughly, concludes that the extradition was a violation of Swedish

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389 The slogan was already introduced by Cristoph Sandberg in 1914, but was launched on a large scale in patriotic circles after World War II. It was also used in the election campaign of 1948. See Glissenaar 2003, pp. 7–12.

390 Dutch cabinet protocols of 25 February, 10 April, and 8 July 1946. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 388.

391 For example, Ambassador to the United States A. Loudon on 29 July 1946 explained to the Council of Ministers that the Americans tended to confuse the concepts of “freedom” and “independence”. 29 July 1946. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 388.
humanitarian traditions and in some cases even of the Geneva Convention.\textsuperscript{392} As mentioned above, the decision caused little debate when originally made in 1945. International legal and humanitarian aspects seem not to have been considered at all.\textsuperscript{393} When such aspects were brought up by the media and the internees themselves, who became desperate in the face of extradition to the Soviet Union, the government tried to find a way out without reconsidering the issue on a principled basis. Undén suggested three possible solutions: to carry out the decision as planned; to seek some kind of guarantee of humane treatment of the Balts in the Soviet Union; or to convince the Russians to let the matter rest for the time being because it was stoking hostility to the Soviets.\textsuperscript{394} The last option, which Undén himself advocated, is strikingly similar to the argument used on the Germans with regard to the termination of the transit agreement (see above chapter 2, \textit{Defending the independent appearance}).

Yet, Erlander and other ministers argued that yielding to public opinion was unthinkable as it would destroy the relationship with the Soviet Union. As Bjereld, Johansson and Molin have pointed out it was paradoxically the opinion storm that made all compromises with the Soviet Union impossible. If the government had gone back on its word, it could have been perceived as a victory for anti-Soviet Swedish public opinion.\textsuperscript{395} A detail not mentioned by these authors is that the story was also picked up by foreign newspapers, among them the \textit{New York Times}, and that an American congressman even publicly urged the Swedish government to reconsider.\textsuperscript{396} Following the reasoning of Bjereld, Johansson and Molin, this in all likelihood made a Swedish change of heart even less feasible as it could be seen as yielding not only to domestic but to American pressure.

Though legal principles thus had little to do with the decision, it was still defended in terms of the greater good as an act to increase Russian trust in the West (not only Sweden) for the sake of maintaining (world) peace. In a letter from Erlander to Minister of Justice Zetterberg, who had favoured Undén’s third option, he wrote that sometimes one had to silence one’s conscience for the sake of the greater good. To support his argument that one could not in every situation follow one’s conscience Erlander referred to the heroic contribution to the war effort of British boys: they had to live with the fact that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{392} Ekholm 1984:II, p. 393.
  \item \textsuperscript{393} Ekholm 1984:1, p. 110.
  \item \textsuperscript{394} Undén’s diary 4 December 1945. Undén 2002, p. 122.
  \item \textsuperscript{395} Bjereld, Johansson & Molin 2008, p. 78.
  \item \textsuperscript{396} \textit{New York Times} 20 Nov. 1945 (“Sweden yields Baltic fugitives”, p. 6); 1 December 1945 (“100 Germans try suicide in Sweden”, p. 7); 11 December 1945 (“Germans attempt suicide to prevent Russian custody”, p. 3) and several more in December 1945 and January 1946. Congressman Daniel Flood (Democrat) in a House speech urged the Swedes not to hand over the Baltic refugees to the Soviet Union. House of Representatives 21 November 1945: 79\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 1\textsuperscript{st} session. “Surrender of prisoners of war by Sweden to Russia”. \textit{Congressional Records} vol. 91, part 8, p. 10874.
\end{itemize}
fighting Nazism by bombing meant killing innocent women and children in the process. Where would we have been today if every British boy had listened to his conscience? The comparison might seem crude, both because it suggests awareness that the extradition in fact meant sacrificing (innocent) people and because the Swedish sacrifice was made in order to appease an authoritarian regime while the British sacrifice had been made to fight one. However, the fact that Erlander himself almost thirty years later felt comfortable publishing this letter in his memoirs suggests his obliviousness to any crudity and a sincere conviction that the extradition was justified if not just.  

Actions that were morally or legally questionable were thus in both countries still defended as if they were in conformity with universal principles. In a dissertation on the use of international law in Swedish security policy, Per Ahlin describes a quite pragmatic use of legalistic and ideological rhetoric. In Sweden, international law has often been used as a justifying principle and protection, he writes. By invoking lawfulness it has been possible to avoid controversial political decisions as well as to show consistency and firmness. However, law has been interpreted more or less strictly depending on interests, an attitude according to Ahlin as typical for states as it is for individuals. While the Swedish government has not always adhered to international law in practice, Ahlin has not been able to find any cases of it claiming that international law was not suitable for the solution of the matter. Instead, the rule has been circumvented by a creative interpretation serving the interest at hand.

This image is consistent with the results of this study, also with the behaviour of the Dutch government. That even so eloquent a champion of right above might as Eelco van Kleffens considered it absolutely vital to act pragmatically – or, as he put it, demonstrate constructive statesmanship – is clear from his private correspondence with Van Boetzelaer. In a letter from December 1946 on the Dutch East Indies, Van Kleffens complained of the legalistic and unrealistic views of his countrymen, thinking they could simply pick any solution they liked. They were “utterly devoid of any understanding of what is for sale in the world” and risked “perishing in a leaking ship filled with principles”.

In Van Kleffens’ opinion, the people who would have the Dutch kingdom continue on the same footing as before, or were at least not prepared to change it sufficiently, were the ones who were going to cause the Netherlands to lose the Indies entirely. That some of them invoked the constitutionality of the

398 Ahlin 1993, pp. 349–357.
399 Eelco van Kleffens to Pim van Boetzelaer, New York, 12 December 1946. NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr 298 (restricted access). My translations from Dutch: “zij zijn volkomen gespeend van inzicht in hetgeen er in de wereld te koop is” and “ondergaan in een lekkend scheepje gevuld met beginselen”.

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Dutch kingdom Van Kleffens dismissed as ridiculous – you can’t tame revolutions with constitutions, he wrote. The former and the present foreign ministers were both of the opinion that if no compromise was reached, the Dutch kingdom (in the sense of the Netherlands and the Indies) would be lost. The advice that Van Kleffens gave on how to handle the situation shows a sense of realistic pragmatism mixed with the knowledge that it was important to show the appearance of righteousness: in case it proved impossible to gain Dutch support for an agreement, one must aim at rejection by the Indonesians. It shouldn’t be all too difficult, he wrote, to make use of Indonesian extremists and the “Mohammedan” group that was opposed to the treaty. If the Dutch proved to be the ones to reject the treaty, the international position of the Netherlands was beyond saving.

Van Kleffens showed – in private – a distinct preference for realism and even a slight contempt for idealism and legalism. This calls for a nuancing of earlier research which has described Van Kleffens’ approach to international relations as legalistic and called him at least partially blind to power politics. That Van Kleffens – like Undén in Sweden – openly rejected power politics and disputed the rule of might in favour of international law does not make him a naïve legalist. Based on the research conducted for this thesis, the impression is that Van Kleffens did not harbour many illusions as to the power relationships in the world. Neither did he have qualms about interpreting the rules of law he so adamantly supported according to what he perceived to be in the Dutch interest. Legality was an important tool, but the norm to which he adhered was that of exercising good statesmanship. While not ruling out that he at times had a warped image of his own and his country’s relative importance, he was quite

400 Eelco van Kleffens to Pim van Boetzelaer, New York, 12 December 1946. NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr 298 (restricted access). Comparing Sweden and the Netherlands, it is interesting to note how Van Kleffens compared the two: he warned that if no agreement was reached with the Indonesian Sjahrir-group, the Indies would be lost and the Dutch would become “a state like Sweden, a country that has its future in the past” (“een staat als Zweden, een land dat een toekomst achter zich heeft”). Van Boetzelaer similarly considered the Dutch behaviour in the Indies a threat to the international position of the Netherlands, evidenced by his plea in the cabinet for a signing of the Linggadjati treaty in 1947 on the grounds that from a foreign policy perspective, the Dutch situation would otherwise become increasingly difficult. Dutch cabinet protocol of 15 March 1947. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 389.

401 Albert Kersten describes him in this manner. Kersten 2009, p. 361. In his introduction to the section in the same anthology, Doeko Bosscher reproduces this image and puts Van Kleffens’ legalism in opposition to “the American vision, which was more concerned with the balance of power than with abstractions such as justice.” Bosscher 2009, p. 416. This description seems a simplification considering the American tendency to justify policy in legal and/or moral terms as well. Cees Wiebes and Bert Zeeman also claim that while Van Roijen soon realized that the Dutch government would have to adapt to what was internationally possible, Van Kleffens originally thought a Dutch military presence would suffice to restore Dutch sovereignty of the Indies. Wiebes & Zeeman 1999, p. 162. This is not concurrent with my findings, which suggest a much more realistic attitude on Van Kleffens’ part and a preference for protecting the international standing of the Netherlands rather than saving the Indies at any cost.
aware of the need to have – in his own words – an “understanding of what is for sale in the world”. Van Kleffens played the power game with the hand he had been dealt, which included the card of legalism.\textsuperscript{402}

One world solidarity versus solidarity of the likeminded

Solidarity was as important and ambivalent a protector of small state security as was legalism. It suggested protection but also potentially dangerous obligations. As discussed in chapter 3 and 4, there was consensus in both countries on the demise of isolation and the necessity of cooperation. Solidarity must replace neutrality as the key security policy guideline. Nevertheless, universal solidarity in practice had its limitations and was vulnerable to circumstances, national interests and (perceived) threats. Both Swedish and Dutch policy planners during the war had envisioned a decentralized system of collective security. Although the establishment of the United Nations made postwar solidarity focus on the one world ideal, it did not displace the idea of solidarity between likeminded nations in either Sweden or the Netherlands. This solidarity was originally not in opposition to the goal of universal solidarity but in line with it.\textsuperscript{403}

In both countries, there were political proponents of both regional and universal solidarity, and often they were combined. Like his Swedish counterpart, Dutch Foreign Minister Van Boetzelaer favoured the one world idea. There was, as mentioned, a strong consensus in the immediate postwar period that continued cooperation between the great powers was a \textit{sine qua non} for world peace. Nonetheless, the ideal of one world solidarity did not preclude a more spontaneous simultaneous solidarity of the likeminded. The bonds of solidarity were not necessarily always the same, but could involve different groups depending on the context. The solidarity of small states as the true carriers of collective security versus the unpredictable power politics of great states has been mentioned. At other times, the difference was emphasized between authoritarian regimes and democracies, the latter being in this context the defenders of international law and order as opposed to power hungry dictatorships. And in spite of the professed adherence to universal solidarity, a strong

\textsuperscript{402} Eelco van Kleffens to Pim van Boetzelaer, New York, 12 December 1946. NL–HaNA, E.N. van Kleffens, 2.05.86, inv. nr 298 (restricted access). My translations from Dutch: “inzicht in hetgeen er in de wereld te koop is”.

\textsuperscript{403} In an article on Norway and the UN, Norbert Götz points out that “the Atlanticism of Norwegian politicians did not necessarily presuppose a closed society of nations. Rather than being its opposite, allied ‘universalism’ was an obvious progression of an Atlantic orientation.” Götz 2009, p. 621. This is entirely in line with my findings concerning the Netherlands.
conviction remained in both countries of the need for regional cooperation. In this section the character of and conditions for a continued quest for regional cooperation after the end of the war will be addressed.

Regional solidarity revisited

As discussed in chapter 3, regional groupings were seen in both countries as a possible solution to the problem of organizing universal collective security, not only because they would make for more manageable administrative units, but because groups of countries with similar interests would cooperate more easily and contribute more readily within that unit. The creation of the United Nations, with its focus on universal collective security, put the plans for a decentralized organization of collective security in regions on hold. That does not mean that the idea was abandoned. Regional cooperation aligned with a widespread notion that the days of independent small states were numbered and that postwar international relations would require the cooperation of those small states in regional groups. Both governments, as we have seen, seized upon the fact that the Charter of the United Nations explicitly allowed regional pacts for self-defence.

As pointed out in chapter 4, there was some discrepancy as to how the new security organization was publicly defined in Sweden versus the Netherlands: military security aspects were more explicitly emphasized in Sweden. Östen Undén presented the United Nations as a continuation of the wartime alliance, in spite of signs of simultaneous attempts to establish its separateness. There is reason to speculate that the reference to continuity was made in part to satisfy the wish of Sweden’s neighbours to maintain some cooperation with their wartime allies. In a late 1944 memorandum on Nordic cooperation, Undén had written that the war had divided the Nordic peoples and created a Norwegian and Danish sense of solidarity with the allied powers. He identified this division among the Scandinavian countries as a threat. However, he judged that, as the leading Atlantic powers had shown no interest so far in an Atlantic combination that included Nordic states, this option was not an alternative that needed to be considered. Besides, the only real purpose of such a regional grouping would be to continue the cooperation between the Western allied nations, and this cooperation was now finding its form in the “new league of nations” (the UN). As a regional group within the new organization, the former alliance would be too disparate and shapeless, he wrote. A regional agreement between the Nordic countries within the frame of the new collective security organization, however, would be desirable and would at the same time satisfy the Norwegian and Danish need for continued cooperation with the allies.\[404\]

\[404\] Memo on Nordic cooperation (“Det nordiska samarbetet”), undated. The content allows determining the time of writing to the autumn of 1944. SE/KB, Östen Undén’s samling, L 108:11b.
Just as the potential parting of ways of the Scandinavian countries was considered a serious problem in Sweden, the possibility that Belgium would choose a path separate from the Netherlands was viewed with concern in that country. The notes and exchange of correspondence between Foreign Minister Van Boetzelaer and Ambassador Van Harinxma theo Slooten in Brussels in the aftermath of the British–French Treaty of Dunkirk signed on 4th March 1947 shows Dutch dismay at the independent initiatives taken by Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak. Van Boetzelaer worried about Spaak’s overtures towards France concerning a Belgian–French customs union while negotiations on a Benelux customs union were still ongoing. The haste with which Spaak rushed to declare his willingness to conclude treaties with the British and French after the Dunkirk model also vexed the Dutch foreign minister, who favoured a more cautious approach. He was not pleased that Spaak had neglected to confer with the Dutch before making a statement, and seemed to suspect Spaak of deliberately wanting to put pressure on the Dutch to state their point of view as well. The ambassador had a different view: they had been surprised by Spaak’s visit to French Foreign Minister Bidault, he wrote to Foreign Minister Van Boetzelaer, but he was convinced the failure to inform the Dutch in advance had been a mere oversight and not a deliberate omission.

Notwithstanding the improvised character of the initiative, he did think Spaak had his government and parliament behind him. The ambassador expressed his opinion that the Dutch should follow suit, so as to keep up with Belgium and not be left out. According to Harinxma theo Slooten, it was a psychologically favourable time for commitment, in spite of “outdated neutrality ideals” being more prominent in the Netherlands than in Belgium. Besides, one need not treat those ideals with too much concern, especially if the Dutch made clear that a treaty did not mean taking sides against the Soviet Union: the Belgians had informed the Russians of their intentions and offered them an agreement too, and the Dutch could do the same. Though the ambassador’s view that Dutch neutrality ideals were outdated might not have been shared by the foreign minister, the reasoning shows that there were ways to combine “neutrality ideals” with an alliance.

Swedish ideas on Nordic cooperation and coordinated defence (even if within a neutral bloc) did not disappear after the war, but some caution was shown about emphasizing those plans in public. The war experiences had

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405 The treaty was actually known before then and mentioned in these records as the French–British agreement of 28 February.

406 Letters from Dutch ambassador in Belgium Baron Van Harinxma theo Slooten to Dutch Foreign Minister Baron Van Boetzelaer van Oosterhout, 4 and 6 March 1947; letter from Van Boetzelaer van Oosterhout to the Brussels embassy 12 March 1947. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 20366 (preparations WEU 1947–1948). Other letters and notes in this collection also show concern about the Belgian intents and lack of consultation with the Dutch. My translation of “verouderde neutraliteitsidealen”, letter of 4 March.
divided the Scandinavian countries and the Swedish government was aware that too much enthusiasm for mutual assistance now, after having failed to come to its sister nations’ rescue before, might have a bitter taste for Finns, Danes, and Norwegians. The above mentioned memorandum shows that Östen Undén was convinced that the differences caused by the war would be temporary, but for now laying low was advisable, waiting for time to heal the wounds.\textsuperscript{407} There were also other reasons for exercising caution in suggesting mutual assistance. In June 1946 Staffan Söderblom, the Swedish envoy in Moscow, advised reticence after the prime minister had asked whether there was not something Sweden could do to remove Russian suspicion of a Nordic pact. Firstly, he wrote, discussing Nordic cooperation with the Russians would not be right – it was none of their business. Bringing it up might make the whole matter even more politically sensitive. Secondly, no discussion of such a plan with the Russians, however reasonable, would be likely to win their support. There were better chances that the Russians would quietly accept an expansion of traditional Nordic cooperation if its importance was not emphasized.\textsuperscript{408}

The Benelux cooperation was in some respects comparable to the Scandinavian. Both the Swedish and the Dutch governments tried to coordinate their international policies with their immediate neighbours to gain leverage against the greater powers. The Benelux like the Scandinavian countries took steps to ensure that as a group they would be represented as often as possible on international positions that were assigned to different nations on a rotational basis. There were, however, differences. The Benelux had been established during the war and whether the Russians approved of it or not does not seem to have been a consideration. Then again, the Benelux did not have a comparable security ambition, although there was some coordination of military supplies. In Sweden, regional Nordic cooperation was viewed both as a means towards achieving a stronger position in international relations and something that could eventually be developed into a viable security complement to the United Nations. In the Netherlands, the Benelux cooperation was an important factor in international negotiations but was not considered a sufficient security alternative. Dutch ideas on regional military cooperation presupposed a wider regional group, preferably including the United States, as will be discussed in the next chapter. For the purposes of coordinating foreign policy behaviour in the UN and vis-à-vis the greater allies, however, the Benelux filled essentially the same function as Scandinavian cooperation.

\textsuperscript{407} Memo on Nordic cooperation (“Det nordiska samarbetet"), undated. SE/KB, Östen Undén’s samling L 108:11b.

\textsuperscript{408} As recounted in a letter from Söderblom to Grafström 13 June 1946, SE/RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 20 vol. 982.
The remnants of war: conditions for cooperation

The distinct war experiences had not caused fundamentally divergent thinking about security in Sweden and the Netherlands. Though there were some differences in emphases and sense of urgency, the Dutch and Swedish governments had developed similar ideas of a security system based on solidarity and cooperation. In spite of the fact that during the war the Netherlands was part of an alliance while Sweden was neutral, similarities can also be found in concrete strategies for handling acute pressure and pursuing national interests. And even if Dutch neutrality had been pronounced dead, Dutch general foreign policy aims were in fact remarkably similar to ex-neutral Sweden’s in the first post-war period. Cornelis Wels describes the post-1945 activities of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as ambivalent: while there had in many ways been a clear break with the pre-war situation, there was also a yearning for a return to pre-1940 conditions, embodied in the fact that many senior officials resumed their former functions and that no fundamental reorganization of the ministry occurred. Duco Hellema too has pointed out that Dutch foreign policy in the first post-war years “fell back on old pre-war habits of thought and illusions”.

Nevertheless, the war had created different conditions and circumstances for the two governments. The effects on the formation of policy should not be overlooked. Old habits may have resurfaced, but there were also new habits. As a member of the wartime alliance, the government of the Netherlands in exile had developed ties with the Western allies which did not simply end at the end of the war. Even if in June 1945 the London cabinet was replaced almost in its entirety, the wartime foreign minister was kept on, which testifies to the desire for foreign policy continuity. Habits of consultation and cooperation with the Western allies had been established and remained in place. One must also not forget that after peace in Europe, the Netherlands was still at war in the Far East. A new policy of alliance would represent a change, but so would a policy of neutrality. The Netherlands did not officially declare a new security policy until 1948 but the 1940 occupation had effectively put an end to Dutch aloofness by bringing the Netherlands de facto into the allied camp and the Dutch government physically out of the Netherlands. Abandoning cooperation with the former allies after the war would have been difficult. If nothing else, the ongoing conflict in Indonesia – even after the defeat of Japan – required continued frequent consultations as the Dutch were highly dependent on the British and Americans to restore their authority over the colonies (or, as the Dutch would have expressed it, the overseas part of the kingdom). In addition

410 Compare also Petersen 1979 who points out the importance of the concrete cooperation of the Norwegian government in exile with the Western powers during the war as an explanation to that country being more West-minded than Denmark, which had not established similar relationships with Britain and the United States during the war. Petersen 1979, p. 205.
the German question was of the utmost importance to the future security and economic recovery of the Netherlands. That reinforced a position of dependence on and desire to be heard by the former allies.

As mentioned in the introduction to chapter 4, some historians have highlighted the difficulties in Dutch postwar relations with the British and especially the American government. Cees Wiebes and Bert Zeeman in the 1990s pointed out that the relations were not as cordial and unchallenged as was then customary to assume, in line with the image of loyal ally established by Alfred van Staden in 1974. Others, like Arnout Molenaar in 2002, have since reaffirmed the image of Dutch ambivalence regarding the United States and an arduous relationship with the British in connection to the Indonesian question.411 The protocols of the Dutch Council of Ministers indeed reveal many tensions in Dutch cooperation with the former allies. Nevertheless – and perhaps so self-evident that it is easily overlooked – those were tensions which existed by virtue of the existence of an established habit of cooperation. The Dutch government did not question the need to work closely with Great Britain and the United States. On 2nd January 1946 for example, the need to make sure that British policy was synchronized with Dutch was emphasized. As during the war, cabinet members expressed dissatisfaction with the British government’s lack of understanding of the Dutch position, and the protocol describes the attempts to make Britain take Dutch interests into account. It speaks of irritation with the British for being naïve concerning the Indonesians and for not consulting the Dutch on important decisions.412

The picture is one of often disgruntled collaboration, and a positive tone in the cabinet when talking about the British and Americans was unusual.413 Several protocols speak of the “unfavourable liaison” with the British, complaining of double messages and misunderstandings and British mistakes concerning Indonesia. One protocol registered that the British had requested that the Dutch censor letters to Germany, which the council refused on the grounds that after the lifting of martial law in the Netherlands no more censorship must take place.414 On 9th April the need to persuade the Americans to help in Indonesia in the face of British weakness was addressed; on 15th April Foreign Minister Van Roijen complained of the lack of allied consultation with the Dutch at the Allied Control Council in Berlin; and on 23rd April it was men-

412 Dutch cabinet protocol 2 January 1946. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 388.
413 In the Dutch cabinet protocol of 15 April 1946 talks with the British were described in quite positive and friendly terms, showing understanding for the difficulty of Britain’s position and evident satisfaction with the fact that Bevin had called the Dutch proposed agreement for Indonesia “a very fair and liberal arrangement”. However, that is the exception that confirms the rule. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 388.
414 Dutch cabinet protocols of 7 and 11 January, 11 and 25 February 1946; the censorship issue can be found in the protocol of 11 February. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 388.
tioned that a change in the composition of the Dutch mission to the Berlin
council would have to be discussed further with the allied military authorities.415

All these examples, whether testifying to tensions, demands or just referring
to consultations, show how entangled the Dutch government still was with the
Western allies. For all the complaints about the Americans and British, the
bottom line was that there was something to complain about – a practice of
mutual consultation and collaboration was already in place. Even if the Dutch
government sought more room for manoeuvre and kept trying to assert inde-
pendence vis-à-vis the others, it did so as a participant, not as an outsider. Rela-
tions may have needed improvement but ending them was not an option.

Similarly, the war had accustomed the Swedish government to a position of
cautious aloofness. The war had in practice cut Sweden off, estranged the sister
nations of Scandinavia and raised serious obstacles to a joint Nordic security
policy. The strengthened position of the Soviet Union impaired the freedom of
action of the Finnish government, even before the 1948 Finno-Soviet Treaty.
On 11th August 1945 Östen Undén noted in his diary that the Finnish prime
minister had let him know that although the Finnish interest in Nordic cooper-
ation was undiminished, the Finns would have to observe restraint regarding
participation in Nordic conferences and meetings.416 In a strictly confidential
February 1947 memo, Undén told all departments of the Ministry for Foreign
Affairs and the diplomatic missions in Copenhagen, Oslo and Helsinki that
Finland would not be invited to the Scandinavian foreign ministers’ meetings
because that would only do the Finns a disservice. He wrote that Finnish
Foreign Minister Carl Enckell had confirmed that Finland could not participate
as that would only arouse Soviet suspicions.417

As to Denmark and Norway, a November 1946 note to the cabinet by
Commander-in-Chief Helge Jung might serve to illustrate some of the practical
problems caused by the war. Jung outlined the prospects for the upcoming
mobilization of the Norwegian and Danish defence systems. Almost all Danish
and Norwegian weaponry had been removed or destroyed during the war and
the question of future rearmament was cause for concern. The Norwegian and
Danish troops that were to participate in the occupation of Germany would be
provided with British weapons, and such weapons were also being procured
(partly rented) to cover immediate training needs. For both political and eco-
nomic reasons, Jung wrote, the British were trying to establish British materiel
as the standard equipment for the Norwegian and Danish armies, something
the Swedes should be concerned about. It would mean its neighbours ceasing to

415 Dutch cabinet protocols of 9, 15, 23 April 1946. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02., inv.
nr 388. Continuing references to difficulties with the British regarding Indonesia on for example
20 and 27 May 1946.


417 PM by Undén 17 February 1947, SE/RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 20 vol. 982.
share common rifle calibres with Sweden, as well as abandoning the pre-war partial conformity between the countries’ artillery complements.418

Whereas Norway and Denmark had hardly any arms left, the war had left Sweden with extensive supplies of weapons and ammunition, making it unthinkable to undertake a complete Swedish rearmament in order to maintain conformity with the neighbours.419 But non-complementary armament systems would have big consequences, as Jung pointed out. Since neither Norway nor Denmark was able to organize a war industry of its own, they would be vulnerable if it came to conducting a common policy of armed neutrality with Sweden in a great power conflict, which would require substantial military means. And if the Nordic countries were drawn into a war, a common Nordic defence would be seriously impeded by different armament systems and by the Norwegian and Danish troops being dependent on foreign countries for maintenance of their weapons and ammunition. Considering also that the British calibre system differed from the Soviet system, reliance on British armament effectively meant siding with the West, as the military dependency would be such that armed resistance against the Western powers must be considered unthinkable. Even the possibilities for an active policy of neutrality against the wishes of the Western powers would be limited. In short: a shift to British arms would in practice even if not in name mean joining the Western bloc – at least the Soviet Union was likely to perceive it that way. And the risk of war for Sweden could be assumed to increase if its western and southern neighbours joined a great power bloc, Jung concluded. He pleaded for taking measures to establish Swedish materiel as the standard equipment for the Norwegian and Danish armies. That would make possible the efficient use of the countries’ combined military industrial resources and create the material conditions for a common Nordic policy.420

In a 22nd December 1946 memorandum to the minister of defence and foreign minister, Helge Jung repeated his concern that Norway and Denmark would automatically be joining the Western bloc if they opted for British materiel and that it would be in Sweden’s interest that they instead use Swedish materiel so that the weaponry systems were compatible across all the Scandinavian countries.421 Even if the memo spoke of Scandinavia, most con-

418 Depeche from Helge Jung to the cabinet, handwritten date 9 November 1946. Filed under the heading “Europaarmén” (the European army). SE/RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 10, vol. 780.
419 Mikael af Malmborg has pointed out that following the war Sweden had the strongest military defence in Europe after Spain and the Soviet Union and was the only country in the world with a sizable aviation industry except the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and France. Malmborg 1994, p. 31. On Sweden’s postwar military strength and position as a regional military great power, see also Bjereld, Johansson & Molin 2008, pp. 65–66. In English: Logue 1989, p. 52.
420 Jung to the cabinet 9 November 1946. SE/RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 10, vol. 780.
421 Memorandum by Jung to the Minister of Defence and Foreign Minister 22 December 1946, SE/RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem HP 10, vol. 780.
cerns in practice focused on strategically important Norway. The problem was convincing the Norwegians that using Swedish materiel was a good idea without giving them the feeling that Sweden was telling them what they should do. There is plenty of evidence of Swedish uneasiness in dealing with Norway after the war and fear of alienating that country. The greater consideration towards Norwegian rather than Danish sensibilities can be understood in light of the relatively recent Norwegian independence from Sweden (1905) and the Swedish wartime transit agreement with Germany, allowing transports through Sweden of German soldiers and supplies to and from occupied Norway. Moreover there was survivors’ guilt of the sort that can be sensed in the description by Tage Erlander of a trip to southern Sweden in May 1945 to participate in the Swedish reception of some Norwegian “political friends” (as Erlander put it) who had been fetched by the Swedish Red Cross from German camps. Erlander, shocked at seeing his once so dynamic acquaintances in a physical state almost beyond recognition, acknowledged in his memoirs his awareness of the rift between them, because he could never fully know what they had been through.

Our Norwegian friends had seen things that we had not seen. They had thought thoughts that were different from those we had thought. They looked as if past us. But they thanked us. That was perhaps the worst experience.422

Swedish attempts to be unobtrusive in proposals for closer cooperation were one consequence of the somewhat tense postwar relationship with Norway. In March 1946 the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Karl Ivan Westman informed Deputy Chief of Staff of Defence Swedlund – who had also championed selling Swedish weapons to Norway – that Foreign Minister Undén and Prime Minister Hansson thought it in everyone’s interest to let the Norwegians take the initiative.423

On 15th January 1947, Östen Undén told Lieutenant General Nordenskiöld that the plans for a Nordic pact that had been discussed during the war were dormant, but he gave no indication that this was because Sweden no longer desired greater Nordic cooperation. However, Sweden had to be careful and not take the initiative, he said. A Norwegian reaction against Swedish perceived intrusiveness must be avoided. It would be better for Swedish–Norwegian relations if the Norwegians would realize the value of cooperation and take the initiative. Military bloc or alliance plans were untimely as they had no resonance in Norway, according to Undén. That did not prevent him from predicting that not long into the future the three Scandinavian countries would somehow try to coordinate their military contributions to the United Nations.


Norwegian and Danish purchase of materiel from Sweden would be more than welcome, and Undén told Nordenskiöld that Norway and Denmark should be shown trust and openness when it came to insight into Swedish military conditions. In case of cooperation with political implications, however, the government should give the directives and the military not take any initiative.424

A few comments are in order here. One is that Helge Jung as early as 1946 spoke of a Western and an Eastern bloc. Evidently he already regarded the world as divided in two blocs. Another is that purely practical and economic considerations – such as the expense of rearming – could have far reaching political consequences, regardless of ideological convictions and overarching policy intent. Isolated neutrality was certainly not the aim in early postwar Sweden, but conditions temporarily hampered overt Swedish initiatives. Nonetheless, top policymakers continued to steer Swedish security policy slowly but surely in the direction of increased security cooperation with the other Scandinavian countries and a situation not unlike the one envisioned during the war of armed collective security based on regional pacts. The continuity of this trend has been almost entirely neglected in previous research, which tends to treat wartime plans for Nordic cooperation as something separate from the 1948–1949 SDU (Scandinavian Defence Union) negotiations. The evidence presented here suggests that they were part of the same continuous long term aim, but expressed in different ways at different times due to circumstances. Especially the 15th January memo by Undén shows that the absence of Swedish initiatives was not due to a lack of interest in Scandinavian military cooperation.425

The Dutch development shows a similar tension between continuity and reactions to new circumstances. As pointed out above, pre-war habits and old neutrality ideals still influenced Dutch thinking and behaviour and the idea of allying with greater powers was treated with hesitation. When it came to improving security, the Dutch, as the Swedes, in the early postwar period discussed the possibility of coordinating military resources with their closest friendly neighbour, Belgium. As late as January 1948 the possibility of a joint Dutch-Belgian machine factory to satisfy the defence needs of both countries was discussed in the Dutch cabinet in a way reminiscent of the Swedish ideas on coordinating defence materials with Norway to maintain self-sufficiency.426

425 That memo seems to have been overlooked by researchers otherwise well-informed of Scandinavian defence plans. Part of the explanation is probably that they have focused on later years, but possibly the oversight can also be explained by the irregular location of the sources: several of the documents analysed here were not found in the volume with the heading “Scandinavian cooperation” but in a box filed under the name “The European army” (“Europaparmén”). SE/RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 10, vol. 780.
426 Dutch cabinet protocols 2 September 1946 and 26 January 1948. NL–HaNA, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 388 and 390.
It would be wrong to say that the war had already determined the future policy of either country, but it had left Sweden and the Netherlands with considerably different conditions for cooperation. All the Netherlands’ neighbouring countries with the notable exception of Germany had been occupied and were allies during the war. Even if the Dutch relationship to the Western allies was by no means easy, it was in place, while a Swedish relationship to even its closest neighbours had to be slowly and cautiously rebuilt. It is interesting in this context to note how similar the Swedish estimate of the real consequences of postwar dependences was to the Dutch. The Swedish perception that Norway and Denmark because of their dependence on the British would be considered de facto members of a Western bloc by the Soviet Union is mirrored in some of the Dutch reasoning around the possibility of joining an extended treaty of Dunkirk. One of the objections raised to such a regional arrangement was that it might increase Russian suspicion and sensitivities and give the Soviet Union cause for a campaign against a so-called Western bloc. A counter-argument was that in Russian eyes, both the Netherlands and Belgium were already considered satellites of the Western powers anyway.427

Collective security in practice: concluding remarks

The immediate postwar period was characterized on the one hand by commitment to the solution of conflicts by peaceful and legal means, on the other by an unmistakable power struggle and great power antagonism. There was considerable uncertainty as to how this situation would develop. Under those circumstances, both the Dutch and the Swedish governments acted so as to maintain as broad a margin for manoeuvre as possible. While this behaviour is often described as a passive policy or a policy of illusions, it was in my view neither. Both governments acted in a way that kept the door open for realizing long-term ideals while reckoning with short-term realities.

Descriptions of this period as one of faith in the United Nations were promoted at the time and that image stubbornly persists today. In reality, the ideals of collective security were ambiguous. Promoting continued cooperation between the great powers and attempts to treat the Soviet Union as a “normal” state did not mean letting the guard down in the face of potential threats. The Swedish and Dutch governments treated the great powers much in the same way as before: in general avoiding conflict and paying more attention to the power with the biggest perceived capacity and/or will to influence national interests, whether by help or threat. A closer look reveals that promoting great

427 As argued in a 1947 note from the Department of Political Affairs (DPZ) for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. (Undated, but refers to the signing of the Treaty of Dunkirk “this past 4 March.”) NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv.nr 20366.
power cooperation was tied to concrete national interests. The bridge building policies of the smaller member states of the United Nations in the first postwar years were also a logical move for anyone professing support for the organization, considering that the functioning of the UN depended on continued great power cooperation.

An international organization which kept the great powers in line and recognized the primacy of right above might was also very much a national interest. Of course, adherence to universal principles was not unambiguous. An international legal order and universal principles did not only restrain great but also small powers. Moreover, the reality of the tensions between the great powers and their capacity to disregard UN decisions at will was obvious. In this setting, the governments of both the Netherlands and Sweden employed what would often be characterized as strategies of neutrality or aloofness. Legal reasoning or more general appeals to objectivity and expertise were used to depoliticize matters. A strategy commonly seen among neutral states in times of war was also used postwar: playing the belligerents – in this case the non-belligerent but antagonistic great powers – against each other.\footnote{For example, see Abbenhuis who points out that in World War I, the Netherlands managed to stay out of the conflict in spite of great vulnerability and strategic importance because neither belligerent would allow its enemy access to Dutch territory. Abbenhuis 2006, p. 25. Wolfers points to the power of blackmail of a small state if the antagonists suspect a shift in its loyalty. Wolfers 1962, pp. 111–112.} The strategies aimed to keep the country out of unnecessary conflict, international but also domestic, and (thereby) to maintain the broadest possible margin for manoeuvre. Non-alignment was not at the heart of this behaviour, but rather the wish to maintain independence, whether by invoking the image of ideal team player or of solitary and brave champion of what was right.

By framing particular interests as part of the common good, the Swedish and Dutch governments appealed to the solidarity of others who embraced the same ideals and had similar interests. Solidarity was a key concept in postwar collective security. It is important to clarify that originally, universal solidarity and solidarity of the likeminded were not in conflict. They were different organizational solutions to the same problem and meant to reinforce each other rather than compete. It was only as tensions between East and West grew that the solidarity of the likeminded began to be considered by some as a partial alternative to universal solidarity. To put it in somewhat simplified terms, two schools of thought on how to preserve peace emerged: one argued the necessity to keep cooperating with the Soviet Union and work to ease Russian distrust of the West; the other emphasized that it was imperative to make a clear and principled stand against the tyranny of the Soviet Union (no more appeasement). In her 1992 dissertation, Fredrika Björklund has labelled these two trends the lesson of 1914 (peace by collective security based on a common quest for peace)
and the lesson of 1939 (peace by working together with the like-minded to block an expansionistic dictatorship).\footnote{A third lesson is that of 1815; peace by balance of power. My description is a very brief version of Björklund’s more nuanced treatment of the three perspectives. See Björklund 1992, pp. 22–33.} It is worth emphasizing again that both were built on the idea of solidarity: the first school of thought argued that collective security must become universal by including all states in spite of differences in value systems, the second that collective security must be salvaged by joining in solidarity against those threatening that universal collective security (by not adhering to common principles). Both saw universal collective security as the ultimate goal even though the two movements disagreed on how to achieve it.

In the first two postwar years, the period considered in this chapter, few if any decisive differences between Sweden and the Netherlands can be found along the lines of this division. In both countries, there were proponents in national politics of both schools of thought. And while the importance of universal solidarity was often cited, in practice attempts at developing regional cooperation, as envisioned during the war, continued. So far, the similarities between the two countries prevail. However, the practical possibilities for these attempts were circumscribed by quite different conditions. While during the war the Dutch had established habits of consultation with the governments they considered likeminded, as well as become entirely dependent on them for military supplies, the Swedes had withdrawn, built up their own military arsenal, and become alienated even from those who traditionally belonged to the Nordic family of nations. This meant that the Swedish government developed its postwar plans under very different conditions from the Dutch.

Finally, a period which is so commonly and persistently described as a period of wait-and-see in both Sweden and the Netherlands warrants a second look at that term. Many accounts of both Swedish and Dutch security policies of the early postwar years mention hesitation as an important characteristic. The connotation is often that security policy was passive or even paralysed: the period of wait-and-see meant that policymakers could not (or did not) act and any plans for future security were put on hold.\footnote{This impression of an impasse, inability to act, is especially conveyed in the Dutch case by Hellema 2006, chapter 3 and Bogaarts 1999, p. 166. Others who have characterized the period as one of waiting and hesitation are Wiebes & Zeeman 1993, p. 133; and for Sweden Molin 1983, p. 346. A notable exception to the Dutch descriptions is that of Hans Loeber, who has called the concept of a one world security policy under the UN “a not-so-promising interim security concept” which nonetheless provided the Netherlands with much needed time and room for manoeuvre. Loeber 1992, p. 33.} But to wait and see might just as well be viewed as a strategy for maximizing the margin for manoeuvre. Swedish behaviour in relation to the application for membership of the United Nations in 1946 has been mentioned. So has the Dutch caution in connection with possible cooperation between the Benelux, Great Britain and France in 1947.
Though very different situations, they are comparable in the sense that both involved potential international commitments that might have advantages but could also cause conflicts. In such a situation, the governments acted very similarly. They collected information on the attitudes of others and carefully assessed pros and cons before determining their own course of action.

Such behaviour seems rational for any (small) government trying to manoeuvre in an insecure international setting. The wait-and-see strategy should be well represented in a period of exceptional institutional flux and change. But wait-and-see was not necessarily a sign of more inertia than usual. The choices of small states are always constrained and any change of direction not forced by external pressure must be expected to be undertaken cautiously and deliberately. In fact to wait and see was a way to keep options open. It was also an alert policy in the sense that it was coupled to an awareness of the need not to miss the boat. This aspect is clearly visible in both examples mentioned above. In the Dutch discussions of the Belgian overtures towards France following the Treaty of Dunkirk in March 1947, the Dutch ambassador to Belgium spoke of the psychological moment having arrived and of keeping up with Belgium.431 In the Swedish UN discussion, some council members pointed out that total security was unobtainable and that Sweden must not miss the opportunity to participate in the work of the Economic and Social Council and have Swedish officials appointed to the United Nations. There was no guarantee things would get better if one waited – the risk might even increase. Others emphasized the reasons for caution. They pointed not only to the risk of becoming a pawn in an admissions competition, but also to the initial difficulties to be expected in any new organization. It might not be such a bad idea to keep away until things had settled down. The discussion was settled by the prime minister concluding that it would be difficult for Sweden to avoid an application in time for the September 1946 meeting as the great powers were “waiting for us” and Denmark and Norway were eager for Sweden to become a member. Waiting longer could cause a conflict. The government would try to obtain a few additional guarantees, but in the end must take some risks.432

To wait and see was in other words a precarious game of maintaining as much freedom of manoeuvre as possible to act in the most opportune way at the most opportune time. In that sense, wait-and-see meant there was a window of opportunity; a moment in time in which options were kept open in the hope

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431 Harinxma thoe Slooten to Van Boetzelaer 4 March 1947. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 20366. To be clear, the Netherlands did not join an extended treaty of Dunkirk.

432 Foreign Council protocol 22 July 1946. SE/RA, Tvåkammarriksdagen, Utrikesnämnden, A2:5. The Swedish government built into its bill an extra clause reserving the right for the government to determine the time of the application in order to maintain as broad a margin for manoeuvre as possible. Riksdagstryck 1946, Kungl. Maj:ts proposition nr 196, p. 15. Compare to the wartime behaviour and the importance of timing as discussed in chapter 2, Dependent independence.
of improving conditions and in the awareness of the need to move fast once the window started closing. In such a window, it makes sense that ideals, which are usually associated with long-term small state security interests, had a prominent place. Both Dutch and Swedish policymakers kept working towards a functioning system of collective security. That work was always framed by realism, but realism is no reason, to paraphrase Undén, to relinquish the idea that even utopias occasionally become reality.433

433 Östen Undén in an undated wartime draft on the possibilities for a Nordic economic union after the war. Perhaps such a union is utopian, he wrote. “But that is no reason to relinquish the thought that even utopias sometimes move into reality.” My translation. In Swedish: “Men därför behöver vi inte avstå tanken att även utopier stundom flytta in i verkligheten.” SE/KB, Östen Undén’s samling L 108:11b. An interesting detail in this context is that H.F.L.K. van Vredenburch, Dutch head of Political Affairs and right hand of Van Boetzelaer, in his memoirs writes that his proposal to make a principal decision to undertake Benelux consultations in all political affairs of common interest was at the time (1946) considered utopian. Van Vredenburch in 1985 observes with some satisfaction that such consultations have by now in fact become the rule. Vredenburch 1985, p. 230.
In 1947 Eelco van Kleffens, who at that time represented the Netherlands in the Security Council, published an article on the UN in an American journal. In it, he likened the UN to a vessel on a stormy sea, a vessel made to run dead against a mighty current by the veto-right of the great powers.

That current, which is one of the main trends of our time, is the long and painful birth, through centuries of blood, waste, and toil, of an international order founded on right instead of on might, on law instead of on force.

The quote illustrates the tendency to emphasize the development of an international legal order as not only a desirable but natural evolutionary process in international relations. It exemplifies also how the insistence of the great powers on the right to veto was presented as unenlightened: it was not only unfair but reactionary and, in the long run, futile. As he had done during the UN discussions, Van Kleffens combined his criticism of the great powers with a portrayal of the smaller states as the noble carriers of progress. It was “the pride of the middle and smaller nations” that they had accepted the rule of law and given up the veto-right which, he pointed out, they too had possessed under the covenant of the League of Nations.434

The image of the smaller states as enlightened role models, by their own free will giving up a right which they too had once had, fits into a pattern of translating a lack of power into superior morals, the inability to do a particular thing embraced rhetorically as a choice not to do so. The small states took on the role as champions of the ideals of solidarity and right. As discussed in chapter 5, however, solidarity and right in practice could be interpreted in many different ways. Moreover, whatever the ideals, there were less than ideal realities to contend with. In 1946 and 1947, it became increasingly evident that the great powers would not be able to agree in the UN – and in the rare cases when they did, that was not necessarily to the advantage of the smaller powers. By 1948

434 Kleffens 1947, both quotes from p. 72.
hope for peaceful cooperation between the superpowers had faded, as had any belief in the capacity of the UN to guarantee peace. The superpowers had abandoned even the professed intent to cooperate. For all their eloquent words on the inevitability of the rise of an international order founded on right, for now the governments of both the Netherlands and Sweden had to deal with a reality in which the UN ran dead against this current. Moreover, the leaders of the two new centres of might were stepping up their demands for loyalty.

This chapter will consider how the heightening of tensions in 1947–1948 influenced the strategies and ideas that have been discussed in previous chapters. It aims to explain the development of security policies in Sweden and the Netherlands as the hope for one world solidarity was replaced by adjustment to bipolarity. The first part of the chapter will compare Dutch and Swedish reactions to the increasing war scare and American involvement in European recovery, which relentlessly exposed the growing schism between West and East. How did the two governments manoeuvre to maintain independence as tensions heightened? The second part focuses on the Swedish reformulation of its neutrality policy and the Dutch decision to sign the Brussels pact. How did the strong consensus on the necessity of international cooperation to secure national territorial integrity and political independence translate into different positions on how to best foster it? How can the parting of ways in 1948 – the Swedish government reemphasizing its freedom to declare neutrality and the Dutch signing the Treaty of Brussels – be explained?

Manoeuvring for a margin between East and West

From 1947 on, the heightening tensions between East and West increasingly took the shape of undisguised superpower antagonism. The United States took over the role from Great Britain as the Soviet Union’s chief adversary. With the declaration of the Truman doctrine (the strategy of containment) in March and the launch of the Marshall Plan in June 1947, the bloc-building against which Dutch and Swedish cabinets alike had warned greatly intensified.\(^\text{435}\) How did the development of the Cold War influence Swedish and Dutch perceptions of threats, relationships with the superpowers, and security strategies?

\(^{435}\) On the Truman doctrine as a shift from a *Pax Britannica* to a *Pax Americana* and as an intensification of the Cold War, see Rasmussen 2012, pp. 305ff. Her article includes references to other works on British-American relations in the early post World War II period. Many others have analysed the Truman doctrine, the Marshall Plan and the beginning of the Cold War. As Amanda Kay McVety puts it, “The origins of the Cold War has been the single most popular research topic among American diplomatic historians for decades”, McVety 2012, p. 88. Her article includes a historiographic overview and references. For a historiographic discussion of the role of the Marshall Plan as a central component of the early Cold War, see Landrum 2012, pp. 347ff. For a European perspective on the origins of the Cold War: Lundestad 1980; Reynolds 1994; and Aunesluoma 2003.
The risk of war

Interestingly enough, the increasing threat of another world war seems to have influenced both the Dutch and the Swedish governments primarily in terms of its effects on the behaviour of others; it did not cause any significant change in their own threat perceptions or focus. The concern that war would break out again was not new – already in 1945 about half of the surveyed population in both Sweden and the Netherlands stated that they expected a new war – but it peaked in 1948 when, according to opinion polls, 71 percent of Dutch respondents expected a new war and 52 percent expected it within ten years. A similar 1948 poll in Sweden shows that 75 percent of Swedish respondents expected a new great power war eventually and 32 percent thought that it would erupt within five years.

And yet, the character of the reports collected in the Dutch foreign ministry’s file “World situation East–West” did not become noticeably more panicky in 1947–1948, although they reported on the gloomy views of others. And in a 3rd August 1947 speech, Swedish Foreign Minister Undén accused the critics of Sweden’s conciliatory policies of thinking much too much about a future war and too little about the more probable eventuality that peace would be kept. Reports from this same period from the Swedish ambassador in the Netherlands, Joen Lagerberg, confirm the impression of the Netherlands and Sweden’s relative calm in the midst of the widespread war scare. In November 1947 Lagerberg reported to Undén that Dutch officials did not believe the Russians wanted war. This was contrary, he said, to the view of many Americans who were shockingly enough discussing not only if but when and where war would break out. And as late as 15th January 1948, Lagerberg wrote to Graström that excessive pessimism was not a Dutch trait as far as the danger of war was concerned and that Lovink (Tony Lovink, the Dutch ambassador to the Soviet Union March 1947–January 1948) was preaching that one must stop

436 These numbers can be compared to 1945, when 50% answered that they expected a new war, and 1946 when 32% said they expected war within ten years. Polls by NIPO, the Dutch institute for public opinion, as reproduced in Blom 1981, p. 155.

437 Polls by Gallup. There are no numbers for 5–10 years, but 16% expected war between 5 and 25 years, bringing the total of Swedish respondents expecting war within 25 years to 48%. The numbers for 1945 and 1946 mentioned by Blom also seem to correspond fairly well with the Swedish numbers in those years: in April 1945 a Gallup poll recorded that 49% of the Swedish respondents expected a new war and in April 1946 that 31% expected war within 19 years. In September of the same year that number was 36%. There are no numbers for how many Swedish respondents expected war within ten years in 1946. Hästad 1950, pp. 216, 220, 222, 225.

438 For example, see Envoy to the Holy See Marc van Weede to the foreign minister 17 October 1947; Political report from the embassy in Ottawa to Foreign Minister Van Boetzelaer, 2 January 1948. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 17039.

being afraid of the Russians. He argued that the West European susceptibility to Russian panic-sowing was counterproductive as it fuelled the Soviet propensity for bluffing. According to Lagerberg, the Dutch arguments for and against war were the same as the Swedish. He contrasted this level-headed attitude to the deep pessimism of members of the International Court of Justice like President Guerrero from El Salvador and the Norwegian judge Klaestad.  

The relationships with the superpowers

The Truman doctrine and Marshall Plan did not seem to fundamentally change Dutch and Swedish perceptions of threat or attitudes towards the superpowers. True, with the collapse of the negotiations between the great four regarding Germany, the Dutch attempts at bridge building lost their urgency. However, in practice little changed, considering that the Dutch government had previously not taken tangible measures to win Soviet trust. One could even argue that 1948 was a year of improvement of Netherlands–Soviet relations: in that year a trade agreement with the Soviet Union was at long last concluded. But when it came to security, Dutch focus was, as previously, on the relationship with the United States. In 1947–1948 this country became increasingly entangled not only with Europe but with the Indonesian question, which was of paramount importance to the Netherlands and to which we shall return shortly.

Swedish security concerns remained focused on the Soviet Union, even as economic ties with the United States were strengthened. Attempts to decrease tensions with the Soviet Union continued after the American announcement of the strategy of containment and the Marshall Plan. In 1947 Rolf Sohlman was appointed ambassador to the Soviet Union. He was married to a Russian and had played a key role in negotiating the 1946 trade agreement with the Soviet Union. Sohlman was a good friend of Undén’s and liked to claim that Undén personally was crucial for Soviet trust in the credibility of Swedish policy. His appointment meant that contacts with the Soviet Union were delegated to someone who had a history of sincere attempts to work with the Russians. The decision was met by internal criticism, as were Undén’s continued bridge-building attempts. Karl Molin has pointed out that there was a lot of hostility, even contempt towards Sohlman among other members of the diplomatic service as Undén’s henchman. There was not as solid a consensus regarding non-alignment in Sweden as one might at first glance be led to believe: many leading


444 The first official trade agreement between the Netherlands and the Soviet Union was concluded 10 June 1948. An overview of the contents of the trade treaty as well as a description of the negotiations leading up to it can be found in Witte 1990, pp. 148–153.
diplomats and high-ranking army officials favoured a Western alliance, or at least “nuanced non-alignment”. Neither was there a clear alignment policy in the Netherlands, in spite of the so-called death of neutrality. Van Boetzelaer’s policy throughout 1947 remained focused on improving the UN and cooperating within the Benelux. This stance was both applauded and criticized but generally accepted, in spite of concern with international developments.

Still, Sweden’s relatively good relations with the Soviet Union stand out. In spite of Tage Erlander’s expressions of outrage at Russian behaviour (mentioned in chapter 5), he also recounted a few instances of friendly meetings with the Russian minister in Stockholm. On 13th May 1947 he reported having had lunch with his wife at the Russian minister’s house in a cordial and warm atmosphere, and on 4th June 1947 he noted that the Russian minister had been so happy about Erlander showing up for a cocktail party that he had no regrets about going. Comparable evidence of friendly meetings between Russian and Dutch statesmen has not surfaced in the course of my research.

That is not to say that the Swedish perception of threat had changed. As before, any real threat to security came from the Soviet Union. The Americans posed no threat, judging by the way they were described by Erlander, other than being perhaps a bit uncouth and prone to paranoia. In a 6th May 1947 diary note, Erlander wrote that the trade negotiations in the USA seemed to be going well, if one could only calm the agitated and Russia-hating American opinion. In his diary, Undén described both Americans and Russians as bullies whom he met with a stoic refusal to budge. The Americans were described as impatient and quick to jump to conclusions, but only the Russians were mentioned in connection to any real threat to security. In early 1948, Undén pointed out to Norwegian Minister Gerhardsen that if it joined the Western bloc, Scandinavia risked becoming a borderland where the Russians would strive for influence as they were doing in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

The biggest difference in the treatment of the Soviet threat was perhaps that members of the Swedish government only talked about it in private while some Dutch policymakers were less cautious. Van Kleffens’ opinions on the impossibility of negotiating with the Russians expressed both in his San Francisco diary and his private letters have been mentioned earlier. In the already cited 1947 article on the United Nations, he expressed his opinions in public, openly

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442 Molin 1991, especially pp. 30–37. My translation of “nyanserad alliansfrihet”, p. 34. Sohlman’s claim that Russian trust in Swedish neutrality was to a great degree tied to the person of Undén was recounted by Undén in his diary, 10 June 1946. Undén 2002, p. 248.


446 On American haste and “American tempo” 5 June 1947 and 21 May 1948; on the Russian threat to Scandinavia 9 February 1948. Undén 2002, pp. 200, 224, 244. See also chapter 5, The United States and the Soviet Union – two of a kind?
blaming the Russians for obstructing decision making in the UN. He made a clear distinction between the Western powers, who tried to use the United Nations as intended, as “an agency for the pacific settlements of [...] genuine disputes” and the “states headed by the Soviet Union” who attempted to “use it as an instrument for furthering their national policy.” Van Kleffens nonetheless continued by expressing his hope for “co-existence of the Western and Soviet worlds as they exist today” which would be possible, he said, if only expansionist political and ideological pressure would cease. There is no doubt that what he meant was the pressure from the Soviet Union:

The Western world can neither forget nor afford to overlook the fact that, however vast the part of the globe controlled by Russia and however powerful its position in every respect, Russia has at all times, whatever its government, been a state showing expansive tendencies, which is all the more striking since population pressure or lack of natural resources plays no part whatever.447

Although it would hence seem that the Dutch sided more openly than their Swedish counterparts with the Western powers, it does not follow that they felt more threatened by the Soviet Union. On the contrary, placing the Netherlands firmly in the Western camp might have had a function similar to the Swedish public defences of the Soviet Union: it served to decrease tensions that were potentially harmful to the Netherlands. The emphasis on the correct use of the UN can also be understood in this context. For all the rhetoric, the Netherlands in 1947 and 1948 was in troublesome conflict with both the Security Council and the Western powers, notably the United States. When the Dutch attempted to quench the Indonesian rebellion with their so-called police action in July–August 1947 the United States and the Soviet Union both condemned the action. It was a bitter pill for the Dutch to swallow that, while the two superpowers hardly ever managed to agree on anything else, they joined ranks on this matter.448 Still, the Dutch “information campaign” regarding Indonesia had worked well: in spite of strong American anti-colonial rhetoric, most American policymakers bought the claim that Dutch rule in Indonesia was liberal and progressive, aimed at orderly decolonization, and preferable to chaos and a possible communist takeover. Moreover, focus at this point was on the Marshall

447 Van Kleffens 1947, pp. 75–76.

448 The expression “joined ranks” should not be taken to imply any fundamental agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union. Leon Gordenker has pointed to the American need for a UN success at a time when the relationship with the Soviet Union and strengthening of Europe were top priorities. That did not mean that the Security Council Members actually held the same views on the Indonesian matter. But, as Gordenker puts it, “[m]embers of the Security Council agreed on enough so that the Netherlands faced an extraordinarily hostile diplomatic alignment.” Gordenker 1988, p. 63. H.W. van den Doel points out that the United States in fact did their best to make the resolution as easy on the Dutch as possible and gave them a way out by offering their good offices. Doel 2001, pp. 247–248.
Plan and the rebuilding of Europe, and Indonesian resources were considered crucial to that end.449

Emphasizing the Soviet threat, as opposed to Dutch loyalty to Western and legal ideals, was clearly, in this context, in the Dutch interest. Eventually, however, Dutch attempts to convince the United States of the danger of Soviet influence in an independent Indonesia backfired. The Dutch were correct in estimating that their best chance of gaining American support for their continued rule in Indonesia lay in American fear of a communist takeover. This is confirmed by accounts of the role of decolonization in the emerging Cold War.450 Already in 1946 Minister van Mook had told the cabinet that the only way to get the Americans to intervene in favour of the Dutch in Indonesia would be to convince them of the danger of the Soviet Union gaining control of the East Indies. The only problem, as Van Mook also pointed out, was that there was actually no reliable evidence of direct Russian influence on the Republic of Indonesia.451

When the United States offered (and the Dutch accepted) their good offices in connection with the Dutch military intervention in 1947, the American official associated with the UN Committee of Good Offices (CGO), Frank Graham, came in contact with the Indonesian side of the story, and the picture that the Dutch had been painting began to crack.452 Although the American government initially continued to support the Dutch even in the face of ever more critical reports from their own committee representatives, Dutch frustration was considerable. The diary notes of diplomat Han Boon from his time as an advisor to Van Mook in Indonesia reveal that Dutch ministers thought the American CGO member Graham a naïve fool and that the interference of the UN Security Council worsened the conflict rather than helping to resolve it. Discrepancies within the Dutch administration are also evident: the Dutch government in the Netherlands often had a view of Dutch primacy that was unrealistic according to its representatives on site in Indonesia and was considered internationally damaging by the Dutch representative in the Security

449 These economic motives had also been deliberately propagated by the Dutch cabinet. On 26 June 1947, when Dutch proposals for an agreement with the Indonesian republic were on the table and less than a month before the first Dutch “police action”, the reply to a United States aide-mémoire was discussed. The cabinet decided to thank the Americans but point out that the “mutual tolerance” called for insufficiently took into account persistent Dutch patience (with the Indonesians) and to emphasize the economic-financial interests of an acceptance of the Dutch proposal in view of the American credit that had been announced. Dutch cabinet protocol 26 June 1947. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad 2.02.05.02 inv. nr 389. The account of Frances Gouda with Thijs Brocades Zaalberg testifies to the success of Dutch arguments: the Americans backed the Dutch until at least the summer of 1948, giving precedence to the recovery of the Dutch economy in a European context. Gouda with Zaalberg 2002, pp. 26–28, 141.


451 Dutch cabinet protocol 9 April 1946. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad 2.02.05.02 inv. nr 388.

452 See Drooglever 1988, pp. 40–41.
Council – who, from the point of view of many ministers at home, was too accommodating to the Security Council and the Americans.\textsuperscript{453} The calls for caution by Van Kleffens were to no avail and eventually fear-mongering about communism backfired against the Dutch. Instead of seeing an independent Indonesia that might move its loyalty to the Soviet Union as the greater risk, the American government began to view continued Dutch resistance to the freedom movement and American support of colonial rule as potentially fueling communist sentiments and driving the Indonesian nationalists into the arms of the Soviet Union. Especially after the Indonesian republican government suppressed a communist uprising in 1948, it was hard to make the Americans believe that the Dutch were the only guarantee against a communist takeover.\textsuperscript{454}

For all the advocacy of peace built on an international legal order and expressions of loyalty to Western ideals, Dutch military actions in Indonesia resulted in the Netherlands being treated as an aggressor by the Security Council and placed it in conflict with the United States. Considering the vital national interests perceived to be at stake, Dutch risk-taking and resentment of Security Council interference might seem in line with what one could expect. Perhaps more surprising is that there was a Swedish tendency to support the Dutch, in spite of the Swedes’ professed disposition not only to justice and equality but also to bridge building and East-West cooperation, and in spite of the lack of Swedish involvement in colonial affairs in the modern era. Although the Netherlands was a colonial power and was seen by many as an oppressor in this matter – on 29\textsuperscript{th} July 1947 the Dutch envoy in Stockholm, Edouard Teixeira de Mattos, reported that the criticism in the Swedish press regarding developments in Indonesia had been fierce, especially from left-wing papers\textsuperscript{455} – the Swedish foreign office and government did not automatically take the side of the Indonesian Republic. In his reports to Foreign Minister Undén, the Swedish envoy, Lagerberg, strongly defended the Dutch, describing them pretty much as they did themselves: as benevolent, peace-loving rulers who represented order, prosperity and civilization and wanted nothing but the best for their colonial subjects, who – with the exception of a few thugs – were predominantly pro-


\textsuperscript{454} Molenaar 2002, pp. 130–131; Westad 2005, pp. 113–114. See for a concise account of the American change of heart between mid 1947 and August 1948 Drooglever 1988 and for an overview of the development from American initial support for the Dutch colonial policy in the early postwar years to support for the Indonesian republic in late 1948 Loeber 1992, pp. 21–28. For a detailed account of how the Americans changed their policy from support for their “staunch ally” the Netherlands to support for the Indonesian Republic because of the belief that the latter could best withstand a communist threat, see Gouda with Zaalberg 2002, overview on pp. 25–43.

\textsuperscript{455} Teixeira de Mattos to Van Boetzelaer van Oosterhout, 29 July 1947. NL–HaNA, Gezantschap te Zweden 1944–1954, 2.05.220 inv. nr 753.
Dutch. In a letter written two weeks before the first police action, Lagerberg hinted that some restoration of order would be necessary and seemed almost to regret that the Dutch abided by the law laid down by the UN. Dutch order was placed against republican terrorism, in the guise of Indonesian “leaders” (Lagerberg’s quotation marks) educated in Japanese or Russian schools. Lagerberg uncritically conveyed the image of Sukarno and his ministers as power-hungry marionettes who lived in luxury while they ruthlessly exploited the people and sabotaged honest attempts at negotiations by the Dutch. As if it were not enough to suggest Japanese and Russian control of Indonesian “freedom aspirations” (quotation marks Lagerberg’s), he also accused Dutch communists of playing a role backstage and mentioned the use of German ex-Nazis as instructors of the republican army. British and American opposition to armed suppression of this Indonesian pack of thieves was depicted as naïve.456

The correspondence file does not include the reaction of the Swedish foreign minister to this report, but Lagerberg was not alone in supporting the Dutch. His distrust of the good judgement of the great powers was shared by parts of the press. On 20th August, 1947, the Dutch envoy attached to his report a translation of an article that had appeared in the Swedish newspaper Svenska Dagbladet on the same day in defence of the Dutch. The article cynically noted the sudden capacity of the Americans and Russians to agree in the Security Council on this matter, while a solution to the civil war in Greece was nowhere in sight and the Balkan veto by the Russians was the eleventh veto in the short history of the UN. The suggestion was that the great powers had staged a propaganda stunt to show their ability to cooperate – but at the expense of a weaker party (the Netherlands). It was hardly something to be happy about that the two superpowers were able to join forces to defeat a small state.457

The incident goes to show that the conflict of East versus West was not the only way to frame security thinking in these smaller states, but that small versus great still had real salience. And even ideals like right above might, bridge

456 Joen Lagerberg to Östen Undén, 7 July 1947. SE/RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 01 Cn. The tone of the memo is strikingly partisan, contrary to most diplomatic reports that tend to adopt at least a pretense of objectivity. Lagerberg claimed that the Indonesian answer note to the Dutch ultimatum of 27 May 1947, preceding the police action of 21 July, was written by the Dutch communist Douwes Dekker, who was of the same family as the famous writer Multatuli (Eduard Douwes Dekker, famous especially for exposing Dutch misconduct in the Indies in his book Max Havelaar). Lagerberg said he remembered Douwes Dekker (the younger), whom he had met in Rome in 1915 and 1916, as an “extravagant och obalanserad psykopat” (my translation of “extravagant och obalanserad psykopat”). Note also that Lagerberg characterized only the British and American opposition to the Dutch as naïve, suggesting that the opposition by the Soviet Union was on the contrary calculating. Incidentally, Lagerberg never seems to have changed his mind regarding the Netherlands’ right to Indonesia. In 1968, he still referred to the Dutch loss of the colony as “a great tragedy” (“en stor tragedi”). Lagerberg 1968, p. 121.

457 Article in Dutch translation attached to a letter by Teixeira de Mattos to Van Boetzelaer, 20 August 1947. NL–HaNA, Gezantschap te Zweden 1944–1954, 2.05.220 inv. nr 753.
building, and solidarity with oppressed peoples could be temporarily eclipsed by the identification with the Netherlands as a fellow civilized, north-western smaller state being bullied by the great powers. That does not mean that East–West considerations did not influence the Swedish position on colonial matters: judging from the worries expressed about communist and Soviet influences on the new states arising from the former colonies, there was also an element of siding with the likeminded countries of the western hemisphere against the perceived threat from the east – even if, in this case, even the United States formally sided with the Soviet Union. Bo Huldt, who in his dissertation has thoroughly examined Swedish voting behaviour in the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly of the UN, found that Swedish voting showed a marked pro-colonial bias. Sweden generally voted with the administering states (with the exception of Portugal and South Africa and to some extent Spain). If one looks at the East–West confrontation pattern of the controversies in the Fourth Committee, Sweden sided with the West, Huldt writes.458 His conclusion concurs with that of Danish historian Kristine Midtgaard: although all the Nordic countries officially welcomed the process of decolonization, they did not actively support it until the 1960s. In the early UN years, the Nordic countries instead supported the European colonial powers.459

As tensions heightened, differences did begin to show between the Dutch and Swedish governments’ approaches to the Soviet Union. However they should not be exaggerated. As the above has suggested, many different concerns influenced the positions taken, not in the least that of resistance to great power dominance. Dutch irritation with British and American interference and lack of respect for the Dutch position was mentioned earlier, as were the continual efforts to achieve a position at the negotiating table with the greater powers. Swedish policymakers may have been less concerned with participating in the great power negotiations (Sweden because of its isolation was not directly involved in many of the issues being negotiated), but they had the same basic attitude of indignation when their right to determine their own policy was impaired. Undén’s diary entries breathe an almost recalcitrant tone at times. On 25th November 1947 he wrote that a rather sharp exchange had erupted during dinner with the British ambassador. The topic had been the policy of the Scandinavian states in the UN. “I got new proof of how the greater powers view the smaller states”, Undén wrote. “They are just supposed to vote like the big ones want. Otherwise we act out of Russian terror.” Undén had “emphasized that since the days of the League we had entertained the habit of adopting our

458 Huldt 1974, passim, synthesis of results on p. 167. The Fourth Committee handled questions related to the International Trusteeship system and was, according to Huldt, the organ most directly involved in the decolonization process, pp. 13–14.
459 Midtgaard 2009, p. 50. Midtgaard uses “Nordic countries” as a reference to Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland and Finland.
own opinions and positions”. When the British ambassador had commented that he remembered Undén being a rather difficult gentleman for the British in the Mosul-question, Undén had reminded him that he had also been difficult regarding the matter of a permanent place for Spain in the League Council.460

It was not only vis-à-vis the Western diplomats that Undén saw fit to stand his ground. Less than a month later another diary entry refers to a dinner at the Russian minister’s. “I did not hide that I had found the atmosphere in the USA very anti-Russian and that Russian policy had a great part in this,” Undén wrote.461 And in the case of a complaint by the Russian ambassador of anti-Russian expressions in Swedish media, Undén wrote in his diary that the Russians to a great degree had themselves to blame for a sharpening of the tone. He had answered “in the usual way”, he wrote, noting dryly that this had made the ambassador “rather cross this time.”462 Undén obviously took pride in standing up to people or states that he perceived as bullies. The tactic of the American ambassador Matthews, who attempted to scare Sweden into openly siding with the West by threatening the Swedes with isolation, probably actually contributed to an even stronger determination on Undén’s part to claim Sweden’s right to pursue its own course. In November 1947 Undén indignantly recounted in his diary that the American embassy counsel Hugh Cumming had told Swedish diplomat Harald Edelstam that it was the position of the State Department that whoever was not on the side of the United States must be considered as belonging to the Eastern bloc. “Shameless methods of pressure!” Undén wrote.463 Whatever their other differences, it is clear that both Dutch and Swedish policymakers experienced pressure from the more powerful as undue interference with their countries’ right to shape their own policy, and that they often responded with indignation. The world might increasingly have become divided into East versus West; it was also still divided into small states versus great powers.


The role of the Marshall Aid

Retaining sovereignty in the face of pressure from the great powers also affected participation in the Marshall Aid negotiations which resulted in the European Recovery Program (ERP). Both governments plainly recognized the necessity and benefit of the programme and regional cooperation was again an important tool to solve the problem of the need for both cooperation with and independence vis-à-vis the great powers. The delegations of the Benelux countries had already decided to act as a unit at the opening of the Paris conference. They did so with some success, claiming a position equal to that of France and Great Britain at the conference, even if direct and frequent contact with the United States remained a British-French prerogative. Likewise, the foreign ministers of the Scandinavian countries met a few days before and agreed on cooperation during the Paris conference. The Scandinavian countries – Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland – were also treated as a unit and, like the Benelux, expected to distribute the seats in different committees between themselves.

The Swedish delegation – in concord with its Scandinavian counterparts – pleaded for placing Marshall Aid administration under the auspices of the Economic Council for Europe (ECE), a United Nations organ, from the beginning. When the representatives of the Soviet Union walked out of the first Paris meeting together with the rest of the Eastern European representatives, many abandoned this idea. However, Undén argued that the unfortunate Paris breakup made it all the more urgent to attempt to involve the ECE in the management of Marshall Aid, as that would be the only way to involve Eastern Europe as yet. Most members of the Foreign Council did not agree; according to them, Sweden must not insist on using the ECE, but rather keep the options open. Undén was even accused by some members of engaging in “big politics” by trying to involve the Soviet Union and prevent discord between the great powers. Referring matters to an organ in which the Russians were included in spite of the fact that the Soviet Union had declared its unwillingness to participate might jeopardize the whole project by risking the withdrawal of the American Congress, according to the leader of the Liberal Party, Bertil Ohlin. Others agreed, or at least called for caution, avoiding taking a stand before it was known what position the great powers would take.

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464 Kersten 1982, p. 6. Meindert Fennema and John Rhijnsburger point to the Dutch representative Hans Max Hirschfeld as behind the idea of coordinating policy with the Benelux in order to gain weight in the negotiations and also give him credit for succeeding in earning the Benelux-countries a place at the negotiating table tantamount to that of Great Britain and France. Fennema & Rhijnsburger 2007, pp. 161–168.

465 Landberg 2012, pp. 383–386. Finland was pressured by the Soviet Union into not participating. For a more extensive treatment of the Scandinavian and especially Swedish-Norwegian cooperation, see Noreen 1994, pp. 149–161.
Undén ended up on the defensive. He clarified that he had not proposed that Sweden make administration by the ECE a condition for participation. And he pointed out that Sweden’s position on the border of two spheres of interest meant that preventing a sharpening of the conflict was in Sweden’s national interest. It was not a case of meddling with “big politics”. If one has a case on such merits, one must not keep silent out of respect for the Western powers. He also emphasized that the economic reconstruction depended on there not being an increase in political tensions. Besides; wouldn’t it be “big politics” to bypass the ECE, just because the Soviet Union was a member there? It was in fact objectively justified to include the ECE.466

Besides providing a veritable display of small state strategies outlined in the previous chapter – references to objectivity, wait-and-see, not participating in “big politics”, judging issues on their merits – the above shows that the Marshall Plan was closely tied to political issues, of which Undén was well aware. Undén’s bridge-building focus was certainly not the result of any naïve understanding of Marshall’s proposal: already on 15th June Undén had written in his diary that according to Gunnar Myrdal, the American government basically wanted a Western European economic bloc but could not openly exclude the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as that would make British and French agreement impossible. The emphasis on using the ECE was a deliberate attempt on Undén’s part to take advantage of this limit to the American margin for manoeuvre, steer matters in a more favourable direction, and achieve Soviet participation.467

The schism at the Paris meeting on 2nd July did not change Swedish interests. The aim of the aid programme was, in Undén’s words to the Foreign Council on 8th July 1947, to avoid chaos in Western Europe, a goal Sweden must support. In the face of the split, Sweden should accept the inevitable but continue to try to promote bridge building. Rickard Sandler, Social Democrat, council member, and Christian Günther’s predecessor as foreign minister, added that although it was hard to know as yet what a yes to Marshall Aid would mean, a no would be a clear political statement. As with participation in the UN, the reasoning in favour was in part negative: it would be less damaging than not participating, as the latter would put Sweden in the Soviet camp. The tactic that Sweden employed to try to retain room for manoeuvre was to deny that the Marshall Plan was anything but an economic arrangement and do all it could to separate it from security measures. Thus, in an attempt to downplay the political implications, Undén did not participate in the negotiations himself. Instead, economic experts were sent to the conference, headed by non-partisan financial policy expert Dag Hammarskjöld. In the Foreign Council

deliberation Sandler emphasized that the economic profile of the Swedish representation was advantageous. Historical accounts also tend to emphasize the insistence on an (artificial) separation of economy and politics. The suggestion is that the Swedish government wished to mark that this was no foreign policy issue in the strict sense in order to make it possible to retain a security policy of neutrality.468

But the Swedish approach to the Marshall Aid negotiations was not as unique as this Swedish reasoning might suggest. Denmark and Norway too insisted on the economic character of the Marshall Plan and downplayed its political side.469 The Dutch also treated it as an economic matter, even if perhaps more as a matter of fact. In the Dutch cabinet discussion of the British-French invitation to deliberations on the Marshall Plan, Van Boetzelaer expressed his understanding that the foreign ministers would probably participate in the Executive Committee pro forma only, while the actual work would be done by economic representatives. A top official from the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Shipping, the non-partisan economic expert Hans Hirschfeld, was appointed the head of the Dutch delegation. Van Boetzelaer was preoccupied with the conflict in Indonesia which received the vast majority of attention in the cabinet deliberations of this period, overshadowing the Paris conference which coincided with the Dutch military intervention and treatment of Indonesia in the Security Council. Mentions of the Marshall Plan in the cabinet deliberations were scarce and limited to an occasional report by Hirschfeld and some remarks on the question of the economic integration of Germany and European trade balance. In the end Hirschfeld, like Hammarskjöld for Sweden, made many decisions independently. When his end report was presented in the Dutch cabinet, some members expressed dissatisfaction with the Dutch figures and surprise at not having been consulted in advance. Minister of Finance Lieftinck even asked whether perhaps Hirschfeld felt he was a European rather than a Dutch representative.470


469 Hanhimäki 1997, p. 25.

470 Dutch cabinet protocols of 30 June, 7 July, 28 July, 25 August, 1 September and 6 October 1947. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad 2.02.05.02 inv. nr 389. For an overview of the Netherlands and Marshall Aid, see Van der Eng 1987. For the relatively independent role of Dag Hammarskjöld as head of the Swedish delegation, see Landberg 2012, part IV (pp. 377–488). On the similarly independent role of Hirschfeld, see Fennema & Rhijnsburger 2007, pp. 158–180. They describe Hirschfeld as someone who gained the Netherlands considerable political leverage, especially vis-à-vis the United States, by becoming the capable architect of the European Recovery Program, but who was not duly appreciated by the Dutch cabinet.
In spite of the image of the Netherlands as a forerunner of European integration, it was obviously a reproach at this time (and in this context) to suggest that someone represented European rather than Dutch interests. In so far as the Dutch government was more pro-Europe than the Swedish, it had to do with concrete Dutch interests. When the speech by Marshall was first discussed in the Dutch cabinet on 9th June 1947, the eagerness about the prospect of systematic American help for the reconstruction of Europe was noticeably stronger than in Sweden, but that is hardly surprising in light of the severe economic problems of the Netherlands. Considering the critical Dutch needs as well as the existing cooperation with the Western powers, it is all the more striking that like in Sweden, the concern about a possible division between East and West was raised. One of the questions posed was whether Marshall’s aim was directed only towards Western Europe. The European question could not be seen as separate from the problem of Germany, Minister Vos (Minister of Traffic and Water Management) pointed out. Van Boetzelaer reassured him that as far as he understood, Marshall had referred to an economic plan for “Europe”.471 Again in September, during a discussion about the coordination of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund with the Marshall Plan, Minister of Finances Lieftinck emphasized the necessity of treating the European problem as one and indivisible. The matter was closely tied to the desire to solve the German problem, revive trade and achieve a healthy Germany that could pay for its imports.472

In Dutch historiography the Netherlands’ participation in the Marshall Plan is generally described as the point of no return for the country’s abandonment of aloofness, leading inevitably to its incorporation into the Western bloc. And yet, Swedish participation did not prevent that country from continuing to declare non-alignment. It is especially interesting in this context to note that this discrepancy cannot be explained by a fundamentally different approach to the Marshall Plan: as we have seen, both governments treated it as primarily an economic arrangement. Both, at least in public, continued to resist a division of Europe into East and West and denied that their participation in the European Recovery Program meant accepting bloc building. In a 1981 article Dutch historian Herman Schaper mentions the Dutch government’s emphasis on the importance of the United Nations Economic Council for Europe (ECE), in which the Eastern European countries were also represented, and its denial that it had chosen sides. That does not prevent him from asserting that Marshall Aid brought Dutch foreign policy out of its impasse, bringing an abrupt end to attempts at economic cooperation with Eastern Europe, which Schaper calls a blessing in disguise.473

471 Dutch cabinet protocol 9 June 1947. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad 2.02.05.02 inv. nr 389.
472 Dutch cabinet protocol 16 September 1947. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad 2.02.05.02 inv. nr 389.
In a 1987 book on the Netherlands and Marshall Aid, Pierre van der Eng adheres to a similar view. He describes the political and economic problems that led to the Dutch acceptance of the offer by Marshall as inextricably linked, and Marshall Aid as decisive for the course of development of Dutch foreign policy. However, Van der Eng too recognizes that in November 1947 the Dutch government still denied that it had made a choice between East and West by participating in the Marshall Aid programme. The Western European countries were not to blame for the non-participation of the Eastern European countries.\textsuperscript{474} In 1988 Albert Kersten presents Marshall Aid as the beginning of a reorientation towards the United States but adds that initially Dutch involvement was limited to economic aspects and that initiatives for Western European military bloc formation were rejected.\textsuperscript{475}

Toby Witte in 1990 presents the Marshall Plan as the definitive turning point which made a continued between-the-blocs-position impossible, without mentioning that at the time the Dutch government denied that it had chosen sides.\textsuperscript{476} In their 1993 dissertation on Belgium and the Netherlands Cees Wiebes and Bert Zeeman acknowledge that denial, but claim that it was a conscious choice for the West anyway:

> Although all involved realized that to take Marshall aid on American conditions signified a choice for the West, neither Spaak nor Van Boetzelaer yet accepted the division of Europe into two opposing camps.\textsuperscript{477}

Friso Wielenga in 2009 seems to adhere to Schaper’s blessing-in-disguise view and describes Eastern Europe’s rejection of the Marshall Plan as the starting point for a development which made it possible for the Netherlands to enter the international scene with more success than before.\textsuperscript{478} In 2011 Maarten van Alstein claims that the Marshall Plan and the establishment of the Cominform made it necessary for Dutch and Belgian foreign policy elites to take a clear stand in the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{479}

While there is considerable agreement in the Dutch historiography – differences in emphasis notwithstanding – that Marshall Aid implied a Dutch choice in favour of the West which started them on the road towards NATO-membership, it is clear that this rests on the assumption that an economic choice for the West had political implications. None of the authors mentioned provide any evidence that the Dutch choice for the West made in 1947 was different from the Swedish choice: that is to say that it was primarily treated as

\textsuperscript{474} Van der Eng 1987, p. 58.
\textsuperscript{475} Kersten 1988, p. 613.
\textsuperscript{476} Witte 1990, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{477} Wiebes & Zeeman 1994, p. 178.
\textsuperscript{478} Wielenga 2009, p. 223.
\textsuperscript{479} Alstein 2011, p. 41.
an economic decision in which political considerations – and implications for longer term political alignments – were either ignored or deliberately downplayed. The fact that the Dutch government emphasized that participation did not mean choosing a Western bloc and initially limited participation to economic aspects – as did the Swedish, without embarking on a road towards NATO-membership – suggests that the window of opportunity was not yet quite closed.

The window closes

In a speech in the Swedish parliament on 4th February 1948, Foreign Minister Östen Undén spoke of the unfortunate failure of cooperation in the United Nations between states that were not likeminded. He asserted that although bound by UN rules, Sweden must, in case of that organization’s failure, have the option to declare neutrality. On 13th February of the same year, the members of the Dutch cabinet received a draft joint memorandum of the Benelux-countries on participation in a regional pact with Great Britain and France. In the ensuing ministerial discussion on 16th February, Prime Minister Beel expressed his awareness of the fact that participation in the proposed pact would commit the Netherlands to a long-term foreign policy. The circumstances made this necessary.480

Both ministers were reacting to Ernest Bevin’s so-called Western Union speech of 22nd January, which seemed to affirm a general recognition of the division of the world into two opposing power blocs. The speech followed the failure of the great powers to agree on peace treaties for Germany and Austria (or on much else) at the 1947 Moscow and London conferences of the Council of Foreign Ministers.481 The consequences of this recognition differed in Sweden and the Netherlands. The conclusions drawn seem nearly opposite: while Undén re-emphasized aloofness and Sweden’s need to maintain freedom of action, Beel concluded that the Netherlands must sacrifice its freedom of action and commit to a regional pact. These intentions were reinforced by events that quickly followed suit, in particular that same month the communist coup in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet proposal for a Finnish-Soviet friendship treaty. If there was still any residual doubt (hope) concerning the nature of the postwar world order, it was soon obliterated.

480 Speech by Undén in parliament 4 February 1948. Undén 1948; Dutch cabinet protocol 16 February 1948. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 390.

481 The Council of Foreign Ministers was established at the Potsdam conference in 1945 and included the foreign ministers of the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and France. The foreign ministers met twice in 1947, in Moscow in March–April and again in London in November–December, without being able to reach an agreement.
In light of what has been said on the similar attitudes and goals of Dutch and Swedish security policies before 1948, a closer look at the renewed emphasis of the Swedish determination to remain non-aligned and the Dutch path to the signing of the Treaty of Brussels on 17th March 1948 is in order.

**Behind non-alignment**

A careful reading of Undén’s 4th February speech reveals interesting ambiguities: on the one hand the foreign minister emphasized the need to be prepared to cooperate with all states even if they were not likeminded, given that the UN had opted for universality. This meant including states with very different constitutional, political or economic values and not only those that had already reached political democracy and recognition of civil rights for all. (Note the similarity to Van Kleffens’ underlying assumption of an inevitable trend.) He emphasized Swedish attempts to examine each issue on its own merits and criticized the great powers for letting antagonisms paralyse the United Nations and for creating an unstable situation in the world affecting all, including Sweden. Sweden was thus presented as a good example, both as a forerunner in its capacity as a progressive, democratic country and as practicing an objectivity and goodwill that the great powers should try to emulate. Implicitly at least, this was also a criticism of the idea of creating a Western Union.

On the other hand, Undén subsequently went on to emphasize the close cooperation between Sweden and the other Nordic countries, and even presented this as a sort of role model for the proposed Western Union. The Nordic peoples had, he said, to a great extent realized among them the “spiritual union” that the British foreign minister in his acclaimed speech set as a target for a greater circle of states. The feeling of brotherhood that Mr. Bevin had stressed as essential and that rested on the awareness of equality, freedom, a common view of justice and common democratic outlook, had in this smaller circle of Nordic countries been more easily achieved thanks to the kinship and intimate relations its peoples enjoyed. Still, there was much to be gained in the future by an expanded and more systematic Nordic cooperation. The Swedish government considered this a significant goal of Swedish foreign policy.

At one moment, in other words, Undén praised universal cooperation and the ability to get along in spite of not being likeminded, criticizing those, like Bevin, who claimed that like-mindedness was a prerequisite for cooperation. In the next, he spoke proudly of Sweden as having accomplished *par excellence* 482

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482 Undén 1948. Like Van Kleffens in his 1947 article on the UN, Undén presented the ideals of his own country as the natural progress that all should – would, in time – reach.

483 Undén 1948. These clear references to Bevin’s ideal were made in spite of his announcement the day before to the members of the Foreign Council that he did not intend to comment on Bevin’s speech in his Foreign Policy address to parliament.
what Bevin called for, praising the far reaching state of like-mindedness – brotherhood – of Nordic cooperation as an ideal.\textsuperscript{484} The key to explaining the apparent discrepancy lies in understanding that the two were not, in Undén’s mind, contradictory. Undén obviously still considered likeminded cooperation an important component of universal cooperation, but criticized those who – at least in his view – would put it in opposition to universal collective security. The reasons for the neutrality declaration by Undén must be sought in his attempt to maintain rather than to change Sweden’s chosen path of solidarity and cooperation. This path was, like that of a Western Union, born out of the idea of a regionally organized universal collective security system, an idea that in spite of the growing tensions in the world was quite persistent. There was no question of wanting to retreat into isolated neutralism. However, under the circumstances, non-alignment seemed the best, if not only, choice if Sweden was to maintain room for manoeuvre to continue cooperation.

Which forms of cooperation were compatible with universality and which were not, was not clear cut.\textsuperscript{485} The association of Marshall Aid countries, for example, undeniably a Western association, was defended by Undén at some length in his speech. He praised the generous American initiative and spoke of the enormous significance of Marshall Aid for the whole world. In the Dutch discussions (which will be considered shortly) the Marshall Aid participants were more or less put in the same category of cooperation as the Western European Union. In a December 1947 note of the Dutch Department of Political Affairs, a Western European Union (WEU) was explicitly considered a logical extension of the Marshall Plan. Not only was political cooperation viewed as in line with the economic, but the economic aspects of the WEU were stressed much more than by Undén in his parliamentary speech, where he spoke of the dangers of political alliance systems aimed against other countries. The Swedish foreign minister made a distinction that the Dutch did not by stressing the difference between the WEU and the Marshall Plan. Marshall Plan participants were held together by a wish to accelerate Europe’s economic recovery and had not placed themselves in opposition to any other state or group of states, Undén argued. That some European countries had declined to cooperate was regrettable.\textsuperscript{486}

\textsuperscript{484} Swedish Foreign Council protocol 3 February 1948. SE/RA, Tväkammarriksdagen, Utrikesnämnden, A2.5. Compare also the treatment of the 4 February speech by Noreen 1994, p. 164. Noreen also notes the implicit criticism while emphasizing that Undén did not explicitly criticize Bevin, but pays no attention to the equally strong recognition of the value of likeminded cooperation.

\textsuperscript{485} Mikael af Malmborg has pointed to the intrinsic inconsistency of the Swedish tendency to interpret European endeavors for more unity as bloc formation, while Nordic unity was not considered to be at odds with the principle of universality. Malmborg 1995, p. 98.

\textsuperscript{486} Undén 1948; DPZ (Department of Political Affairs) to His Excellency the foreign minister, undated and unsigned, but unmistakably from 1947 and with “Q22/12” handwritten in green pen
The difference in view compared to the Dutch foreign ministry is in fact slim and lies precisely in the somewhat arbitrary line drawn between Marshall Aid and other forms of Western cooperation. The Dutch discussions in fact also point to a strong wish not to put a Western group in opposition to an Eastern bloc, and the outcome was formulated in much the same terms as Undén formulated the choice of Eastern countries not to cooperate with the Western in the context of the Marshall Plan: it was regrettable that the Eastern bloc had declined to cooperate so that the Western countries had no choice but to continue cooperation without them.\footnote{See the references to the Dutch discussion later in this chapter. Compare also to the previous section \textit{(The role of the Marshall Aid)}.}

Undén’s description of Bevin’s speech to the Foreign Council the day before his proclamation in parliament also shows that the dividing lines were not so clear, even to Undén himself. He told the council members that it was as yet highly unclear what should be understood by Bevin’s “union”: an extension of the Dunkirk Treaty, an economic cooperation with the Western European states in general, an extension of the Marshall Plan or a spiritual union between states with similar legal views and democracies? The foreign minister thought that the Dunkirk Treaty would become the model but that it was uncertain if a military agreement would be aimed against other countries than Germany. It was obvious, he said, that Bevin had spoken in very general terms about a closer cohesion between the Western European states. That his initiative had been blown up to such proportions was probably due to the tense international situation and the fact that the Marshall Plan was under discussion in the American congress. Undén declared that he was not going to comment on Bevin’s speech in his foreign policy address in parliament the next day. There had been no request from Britain for Sweden’s participation in a Western group. He concluded his Foreign Council exposition by declaring his assumption that the other parties shared the government’s view that Sweden should not participate in any bloc. No objections were registered.\footnote{Swedish Foreign Council protocol 3 February 1948. SE/RA, Tvåkammarriksdagen, Utrikesnämnden, A2:5. It is not easy to say what should be made of the fact that Undén actually did bring up Bevin’s speech in his 4 February address to parliament. It seems unlikely that he changed his mind overnight. The speech was big international news and Undén’s reference to it need not be defined as a comment on it – he did not explicitly express any judgement of the initiative. Sven Grafström wrote in his diary that Undén let Bevin’s plan pass almost unnoticed, which was, he added, correct considering that Bevin had been vague and had not approached Sweden or the Scandinavian countries. (In an earlier memorandum to the British cabinet Bevin had in fact explicitly included Scandinavia and even mentioned Sweden in particular as a suitable partner in a spiritual union against communism. That he eventually did not include Scandinavia in his speech was, according to Juhana Aunesluoma, due to caution not to upset the Soviet Union and the delicate balance in the north before any specific guarantees could be made. See on the last page, 22 December. The marginal notes and additions in the hand of Van Boetzelaer indicate that the note was written by J. Quarles. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 20366.}
An April 1948 memo in which Östen Undén summed up the pros and cons of a policy of alliance provides some further insight as to the Swedish foreign minister’s reasons for preferring a policy of non-alignment, now that alignment with the West or non-alignment seemed to be the only possible alternatives. The arguments for participation in a Western alliance, he wrote, would be that the Western front would be strengthened by Swedish participation and the deterrent effect on the Soviet Union (Undén wrote Russia) would increase. Also, the Soviet Union would be warned that an isolated attack on Sweden would mean a general war. However, Undén argued, Sweden was not so strong as to make any difference if the Soviet Union really contemplated a general war, and an isolated attack was unthinkable. Regardless of alliance obligations, an attack on Scandinavia could be expected to cause a general war. The disadvantages of participating in a Western alliance for Sweden, on the other hand, would include damaging the relations with the Soviet Union in times of peace. Military bases for enemies to the Soviet Union on Swedish territory would make Sweden a centre of unrest and the object of a political tug-of-war that would increase rather than decrease international tensions. Moreover, Sweden would be automatically drawn into a war with no chance whatsoever of staying out of it.

Undén argued that the great changes in war technology and in particular the atomic bomb was a reason not to participate in an alliance. Because the destruction would be so tremendous, the Swedish administration must do all in its power to try to prevent a war and if a war still erupted, do all it could to keep Sweden out of it. To cite Undén:

We do not want to be swept up by panic and shape our policy according to the war being imminent. For us the primary interest is to build friendly peacetime relations with other peoples. We refuse to accept war as a solution to the international problems that the last war has left behind. If against all reason war would erupt, our civilization is in danger of perishing. Sweden can in such a case do nothing but focus its powers on keeping out and maintaining its independence. Our defence is designed to that end.

It is interesting to note that Grafsström, who was a proponent for a more pro-Western attitude, commented Undén’s speech in positive terms and saw in it evidence of a move in his preferred direction rather than a return to stricter neutrality. According to Grafsström, Undén had manifested Swedish adherence to Western ideals in an unusually explicit way, even if the United States and Great Britain would unfortunately probably not pick up on Undén’s subtle shift towards a more pro-Western attitude. Grafsström 1989b, pp. 850–851.


Undén was aware that some argued that it would be impossible to stay out of a future war because of the changed scale of warfare, but he did not agree. The future was uncertain, he said, and it was not unthinkable that the great powers would in fact not be very interested in pulling Scandinavia into the war, especially if the main arena of the war was situated in some totally different part of Europe or the world. And, he added, even if neutrality would only give a short respite, that would be valuable. But the main point was that focus must be on promoting peace, or at least on not contributing to increased tensions.

There were undoubtedly those who did not agree with Undén, but that this was not only his personal opinion but a viewpoint that became central to Sweden’s policy is supported by the research of Robert Dalsjö. Dalsjö has pointed to the adherence to neutrality in the 1950s for the sake of this respite rather than any serious belief that Sweden would be able to stay out of a future war altogether, in addition to neutrality serving peacetime purposes. Counting on a new war starting with a violent initial nuclear exchange made it valuable to stay out even of only the initial phase. Dalsjö calls this possibility for a grace-period in case of war – not expecting to be able to stay out altogether but not joining the allied side “until the Soviet Union had had its nuclear fangs removed” – the “hidden rationale” of Sweden’s policy of neutrality of the 1950s. In his attempts to pinpoint how and when this became a motive, however, Dalsjö seems to have overlooked the April 1948 memo by Undén. While Dalsjö places the establishment of the idea of the value of staying out of the initial phase of a nuclear war to sometime between March 1949 and April 1953, the April 1948 memo shows that this consideration actually played a role from the very beginning of Undén’s emphasis on the need for Sweden to pursue a policy of neutrality.

The April memo also shows that the later attempt to create a Scandinavian Defence Union in 1948–1949 was not a deviation from this reasoning but rather a logical extension of it. Undén made clear that a Scandinavian bloc would be a different matter, as long as that bloc was neutral and not tied to the Western pact, because such a bloc would not need to be viewed as hostile to the Soviet Union. The advantage to Sweden of a Scandinavian bloc would lie in a united Scandinavian foreign policy, and Norway and Denmark would be assured of Swedish assistance in case of a Soviet attack. An attack of any one of the three might also be deterred by the knowledge that it would spark war with all. Undén did not, however, think the chances great for achieving such a Scandinavian union at the moment, both because Norway and Denmark were still so militarily weak that the short-term risks for Sweden would be increased without comparable advantages, and because Norway would probably not con-

491 Pro memoria 2 April 1948, SE/KB Östen Undén’s samling, L 108:19.
493 For an overview of the SDU negotiations, see Bjereld, Johansson & Molin, pp. 94–111.
sider Swedish help valuable enough to be prepared to give up its freedom of action.494

Gerard Aalders has used this same memo to argue that Undén did not really want a Scandinavian Defence Union and that he only proposed it a month later to save neutrality. He and among others Yngve Möller have presented Sweden’s neutrality as a continuous foreign policy course and the attempt at creating a Scandinavian Defence Union as a bold or desperate attempt to maintain Swedish neutrality by expanding it.495 My findings contradict this interpretation. Closer Nordic cooperation was a goal in itself, independent of the aim to stay neutral. The memo does show that Undén did not believe that the time was right, and in that sense the SDU proposal was indeed forced into existence by the heightening tensions and can be called a desperate attempt on Undén’s part – but it was a desperate attempt to save Nordic cooperation. Undén might have had little hope that the negotiations would succeed, and part of his motivation was no doubt to disarm domestic critics who would otherwise advocate a Western alliance and considering the general war scare might gain votes in the process.496 However, as shown in this thesis, Undén’s views regarding closer ties with the neighbouring countries were consistent, even if the exact shape of the envisioned commitment was not fixed. There is no reason to assume that his pursuit of Nordic cooperation was insincere. His reluctance to join a Western alliance was probably less motivated by a belief in neutrality than by a stubborn determination to promote solidarity, collective security and regional cooperation. According to this view, non-alignment became a way to save Nordic cooperation – not the other way around.497

It is worth pointing out that Undén’s reasoning gives no evidence of neutrality in the sense of equal hostility or friendship to all sides: except a neutral Scandinavian bond, the only alliance possibility considered at all was a Western one and the only perceived threat of hostilities came from the Soviet Union – there was not even an attempt to conceal that fact. Even when speaking of a Scandinavian bloc as only conceivable as a purely defensive, neutral union, Undén specified the advantage to Norway and Denmark of Swedish assistance in case of a Russian – not any – attack. There can be no doubt that he saw Sweden in general terms as a Western democracy and did not identify with the East. It is also worth pointing out that non-alignment as such was not the goal of Swedish policy, but rather not aligning with a great power bloc. Participation

494 Pro memoria 2 April 1948, SE/KB Östen Undén’s samling, L 108:19.
496 Karl Molin and Charles Silva are among those who have emphasized this motive. Molin 1991, pp. 56–62; Silva 1999, pp. 68–70.
497 Jan Andersson has criticized the common description of the failure of the SDU negotiations as dividing the security policies of the Nordic countries. He points out that they were in fact divided before then, as Finland was situated within the Soviet sphere and left out of the discussions on economic and security policy cooperation. Andersson 1995, p. 89.
in an alliance that did not take a stand between the superpowers was considered fairly unproblematic. Like in the case of the support for the Finnish war effort in 1939, a distinction was made between local conflicts and a great power conflict. It was only with respect to the latter that Undén wanted to proclaim neutrality. The goal of Swedish policy was not to stay out of all conflicts at any cost, but to avoid being drawn into a great power conflict and to achieve a situation of peaceful cooperation and stability, especially in the immediate region.

The fact that one of the Nordic countries, Finland, was dominated by Soviet Russia was a strong incitement to try to bridge the rift between East and West and ease Soviet suspicion. The essence of the so-called Finland argument was that if Swedish adherence to a Western bloc would antagonize the Soviet Union, as Undén believed, it would probably cause the Soviet Union to strengthen its position in Finland. Sweden would then have the potential enemy at its borders. Formulated more altruistically, the argument was that Swedish neutrality helped keep Finland independent. Erlander noted in his diary that the Russians were suspicious and that Sweden’s attitude could be decisive. If the Russians believed Sweden to be overly pro-Western, they might occupy Finland. Some authors have questioned the sincerity of considerations for Finland and have pointed instead to the conscious use of the Finland argument to justify Swedish neutrality to the West. Their perception has possibly been influenced by British and/or American views: Magnus Petersson has pointed out that British documents suggest a belief that the Swedes used the Finland argument to strengthen their case. However, several authors have shown convincingly that Sweden’s involvement with and interest in Finland was complex and profound. Research conducted after the end of the Cold War by Petersson and others has shown that the Finland argument was in fact real to

498 Diary note by Erlander 17 May 1947, Erlander 2001, pp. 176–177. There was also another side to the Finland argument, one which was used against the Soviet Union: that if the Soviet Union increased its presence in Finland, the Swedes might find themselves compelled to move closer to the West. Wahlbäck 2011, p. 239.

499 Gerald Aalders claims the Finland argument was used as an alibi for Swedish neutrality but was not an incentive for it. He argues that Sweden took Finland into consideration “not for the sake of Finland but for its own sake” but his argument that Finland was “no part of the Swedish self-interest” and therefore no motive for Sweden’s foreign policy is unconvincing. The evidence he invokes is that Undén did not mention Finland in his 2 April 1948 memorandum – a rather weak substantiation of his claim, especially considering Undén’s awareness of the need to keep a low profile regarding cooperation with Finland so as not to arouse Soviet suspicions, as discussed in chapter 5 (The remnants of war: conditions for cooperation). Aalders 1989, pp. 143–146, quotes from pp. 144 and 145. See also Aalders 1990, which repeats the same claim. Olof Kronvall points out that Aalders disregards the possibility that the Swedish government saw Finland as part of Swedish self-interest. I agree with Kronvall that this is an important flaw in Aalders’ reasoning. Kronvall 2003a, pp. 43–44. Ann-Sofie Dahl has an even weaker argument for discrediting the Finland argument: she claims that Swedish neutrality couldn’t possibly have served to protect Finland because the leadership of the Soviet Union was well aware of Sweden’s covert cooperation with the West. Dahl completely disregards the possibility that the Soviet leadership could have an interest in Sweden’s formal neutrality. Dahl 1999, pp. 53–54.
Swedish policymakers, whatever the British thought. There can be little doubt that concerns with Finland played an important role in Swedish security thinking.\footnote{See Wahlbäck 1990, pp. 115–119; Åström 1992, pp. 9–43; Zetterberg 1995; Andrén 2002, p. 96; Kronvall 2003a; Wahlbäck 2011, pp. 197–252; Petersson 2012, pp. 223–224.}

An aspect that has not been discussed so much in this context is that all hope of eventually being able to include Finland in a Nordic union was not necessarily abandoned. A confidential note from the Swedish embassy in Finland on 15th March 1946 reported that minister Hillelä (Finnish Minister of Social Affairs and Public Supply Minister) had hinted that the Finns would be interested in closer Nordic cooperation. Active participation was difficult at present, but given five or ten years, the Finns would slowly but surely approach the Nordic group.\footnote{Letter from the embassy in Helsinki to Sven Grafström, 15 March 1946. SE/RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 20, vol. 981.} Kent Zetterberg has also pointed out that Finnish lack of participation in the Nordic foreign ministers’ meetings after World War II did not mean that the Finns did not want to reconnect with their Nordic neighbours, only that this had to be done slowly and quietly so as not to arouse Soviet suspicion.\footnote{Zetterberg 1995, p. 73. In 1992 Swedish diplomat Sverker Åström claimed with great conviction that Sweden’s consistent armed neutrality had been a precondition for the relative freedom of Finland during the Cold War and its integration into the Nordic Council, OECD, EFTA and the Council of Europe. Åström 1992, pp. 41–42.} This concurs with what has been said in chapter 5 about the conditions for cooperation after the war. In this light, when it became clear that Norway would not accept a Scandinavian pact unless it was tied to the Western bloc, it seems possible that the Swedish government tried to save rather than give up Nordic cooperation when it abandoned the Scandinavian Defence Union. A defence union in open opposition to the Soviet Union would destroy the chances for such a Finnish rapprochement.

That is not to say that the Finnish problem was the only reason for Sweden’s policy. Swedish policymakers and in particular perhaps Undén continued to believe in universal solidarity and cooperation as the best long-term option for peace. It should be pointed out that the Swedish government resorted to a policy of non-alignment in peace aiming at neutrality in war because the window of opportunity for anything else closed. Time ran out. As Undén remarked in the memo treated earlier, it was not a good moment for a Scandinavian Defence Union. Norway and Denmark had not yet had time to build up their military defences, and there was some Norwegian sensitivity to joining a stronger Sweden because of Swedish rule of Norway pre-1905 as well as some residual resentment towards Sweden because of the wartime concessions to Germany.

\footnote{Zetterberg 1997.}
The fear of an impending war also seems to have been stronger in Norway and there was anxiety after the Finnish-Soviet Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance of 6th April 1948 that a similar demand would be made of Norway. Had there been time – a longer period of peace and lack of superpower interference – consensus for a Scandinavian pact might have been built.

That such a pact seemed not only possible but probable to contemporaries is supported by a question from Dutch Minister Lieftinck regarding the Brussels pact: on 1st March 1948 he asked in the Council of Ministers whether the representatives in Brussels had also discussed cooperation with the Nordic countries, the “future Scandinavian Union”. This fits into the overarching idea that collective security would be formed by cooperating regional pacts, placing a Western European and a Scandinavian Union in the same category. It shows also that such a union was not only a Swedish dream but that others too reckoned that a Scandinavian Union would be formed in time. As it was, the heightening of tensions removed that option. For Sweden, reverting to neutrality became the only possibility; the only policy that could be achieved short term with sufficient consensus and without closing the door entirely to the possibility of future Nordic cooperation. As Undén remarked in his April 1948 memo: it should be easy to gain the support of the Swedish public for a policy along the traditional lines.

The way in which Prime Minister Tage Erlander described the Swedish adherence to a policy of neutrality also testifies to the pragmatism and perceived necessity of the policy, and strengthens the impression that time ran out. On 8th March 1948, Erlander commented that Russian actions in Czechoslovakia and Finland had completely changed the political equation. He recounted a meeting with the editors of a number of social democratic newspapers. “Oddly enough”, Erlander wrote, “our so-called neutrality course was accepted by all”. Although one of them had made “the admittedly correct remark” that Swedish attempts to stay neutral would be worth nothing if the Russians perceived participation in the Marshall Plan as alignment with the Western bloc. And later the same month he remarked in his diary that a solid defence policy and a clear line of neutrality was “the only thing possible in the current situation”. These remarks show that Erlander was aware that Swedish neutrality was not uncontestable and that it was a policy forced by the circumstances.

503 Dutch cabinet protocol 1 March 1948. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 390. “Minister Lieftinck vraagt of er in Brussel nog gesproken is over samenwerking met de Noorse landen (toekomstige Scandinavische-Unie”).

504 Pro memora 2 April 1948, SE/KB Östen Undéns samling, l. 108:19.

Behind alignment

Although the situation for the Netherlands was quite different, some of the reasoning is very similar to that of the Swedes. Many of the reasons for joining a Western European Union had to do with promoting peacetime relations – not with preparing for war. And it is clear that the decision to sign the Brussels pact in 1948 was, like the Swedish non-alignment proclamation, forced by a heightening of tensions that closed the window of opportunity for the deliberate development of the best possible policy. A year earlier, the Dutch government had not been so eager to conclude a treaty with its European neighbours. In the early discussions on a potential treaty with the Benelux, France and Great Britain, Van Boetzelaer advocated a wait-and-see policy. He stressed the need to wait for the results of the ongoing Moscow conference and a possible treaty between the four great powers. Meanwhile, he asked the ambassador in Belgium to try to obtain more information – as pointed out in chapter 5 he sought to retain room for manoeuvre.506

In particular, the Dutch were not interested in getting tied up in any constellation that would not be compatible with a broader security arrangement. It was especially important that it be acceptable to the Americans, as US participation was considered an essential prerequisite for European security. As discussed in chapter 3, the emphasis on American participation can be understood against the memory of the failure of the League in which the United States had not participated. It need not be interpreted as a wish to join an alliance aimed against some other group, as in a balance of power military alliance system. The original goal can rather be characterized as a decentralized collective security system. This deserves to be emphasized again in the light of a tendency in Dutch literature to overlook the origin of Dutch ideas for regional pacts as a scheme for collective security.507

Initial Dutch reactions to a European pact are consistent with the notion that they were imagining some system of collective security rather than of alliances. They were not at all eager to join an ordinary military alliance that was perceived as too limited. In a 16th March 1947 note to the Council of Ministers, Van Boetzelaer reminded his colleagues that one must always reckon with a reawakening of American isolationism, something a solely European security arrangement might stimulate. He told the council that the very reserved Dutch attitude had been welcomed in Washington. The Dutch “aversion to pactomania” had, according to ambassador Loudon, been well-received as the


507 For example, Schaper writes that the Dutch could choose either collective security or regional pacts and clearly preferred the latter, which he calls a choice for a Western alliance. Schaper 1991, pp. 151–152. He overlooks the fact that regional pacts were originally seen as part of a system of collective security and that the dividing lines are not that open-and-shut.
Americans were of the opinion that no network of treaties was necessary under the Charter of the United Nations. On that note, Van Boetzelaer emphasized that in any case other forms of cooperation took precedence before any obligations of a treaty with the French and British, which could thus only gain meaning should the other fail. He listed the hierarchy of obligation:

1) the Charter of the UN
2) the agreements made under article 43 of the Charter
3) the Four Power Treaty (to which the Dutch hoped in time to be admitted)
4) the French-British agreement.

The document testifies to a cautious attitude and reluctance to get tied up in a limited group, especially one dominated by France. One should remember in this context the separate position of France during the war. While the Dutch government had developed close contacts with the governments of the United States, Great Britain and the other exile governments in London, it did not have a similar bond with France (even if France libre had fought on the allied side). That country rather remained what it had been: one of the greater neighbours surrounding the Netherlands and potentially threatening its independence. That Van Boetzelaer did not trust the French intentions is clear. He concluded in his note that the French would want to become the spokesmen for the Benelux in order to strengthen their position vis-à-vis Great Britain. He warned of Belgian susceptibility to French influence. The Dutch, on the other hand, did not wish to be used as a pawn in the power games of the greater powers. “Brussels is never entirely insensitive to the lure of the Paris siren”, he wrote. “The Hague, on the other hand, seeks equally close and cordial relations with both Paris and London.”

The protocol from the meeting of the Council of Ministers of 31st March 1947 confirms that the Dutch cabinet supported the conclusions of Van Boetzelaer, and the Department of Political Affairs was informed the next day that the cabinet had approved the note. No initiatives were to be taken before the results of the Moscow conference were known. Those results, when they came, were disappointing. The schism between East and West was clearer than ever and little had been achieved – certainly no Four Power Treaty. In a 3rd July

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509 Dutch cabinet protocol 31 March 1947. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inventory number 389; Communication to the DPZ (Department of Political Affairs) 1 April 1947. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 20366.
1947 short note – unsigned, but presumably by Van Boetzelaer – the Dutch policy was recapitulated in light of the failure of the conferences of Moscow and Paris: the intention had always been to refrain from anything which might be interpreted as a contribution to the division of Europe into two camps. However, if this division became inescapable, the Dutch would have to consider the consequences.

A few months later, after the London conference of the four great power foreign ministers had also failed, a new note from the Department of Political Affairs on the Dunkirk Treaty recapitulated earlier Dutch objections to such a treaty: the Dutch had wished to do nothing which might encourage the division of the world into an Eastern and a Western bloc; they had hoped for a Four Power Treaty to which they could be signatories; there had still been hope that the development of article 43 of the Charter (on military commitments of the members) might yield positive results; they had not worked for a European treaty for fear that it would advance isolationist tendencies in the United States and because of its limited security value. The note concluded that it had – until now – been highly uncertain whether the economic advantages of a treaty would outweigh being tied to Britain and France for 50 years.

Now, however, things had changed. The chances for a Four Power Treaty had evaporated: with the proclamation of the Truman doctrine and the acceptance and execution of the Marshall Plan the security of Western Europe had become an essential American interest; the functioning of the Security Council had in practice seriously diminished the security value of that organization; the American continent had set an example for the formation of a regional defence system by concluding an Inter-American treaty in Petropolis; the Marshall Plan had paved the way for Western European economic cooperation and political cooperation was in line with that development; and the instability of international relations had increased alarmingly. The note recommended wasting no time: if the Western European powers wished to continue to play a role in international political relations, they must draw closer, politically and militarily.

The situation had changed enough for the Dutch to “consider the consequences”. That did not mean that Dutch adherence to a pact with France and Great Britain was from this point on a done deal. It is characteristic that while Van Boetzelaer expressed his general agreement with the note in some handwritten comments, the conclusion that the increased international instability


511 J. Quarles of DPZ (Department of Political Affairs) to the foreign minister 1947 (undated and unsigned but marked “Q23/12” in green pen), NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 20366. The marginal notes and additions in the hand of Van Boetzelaer indicate that the note was written by J. Quarles and that it met with the general approval of Van Boetzelaer.
meant the Dutch must abandon their wait-and-see policy caused him to comment in the margin:

On the other hand our international position suggests not standing in the front row as long as it is not certain that England and the US will [not] let us down again if that would suit their own interests.\(^{512}\)

Van Boetzelaer seemed as cynical regarding the reliability of the greater powers as Undén: they would come to the aid of another country if, and only if, it was in their own interest. He also still did not like the idea of a treaty limited to the Western European powers: as the Four Power Treaty had failed, he wrote in another handwritten comment to the note, the next best thing would be a Three Power Treaty (the United States, Great Britain and France). Moreover, the Dutch needed first of all to discuss these matters with Belgium: if the Benelux could present a united front they would stand much stronger in the face of the great powers. Showing Dutch interest to the Belgians was also necessary as the latter might otherwise be inclined to join by themselves, which would be detrimental to Dutch policy.\(^{513}\)

Concerns about finding a form for the treaty which would not increase tensions in the world continued right up until the signing of the Treaty of Brussels in March 1948. Similar ideas to those of the Nordic neutral bloc, namely that a Western European union could – and should – become a third force between the United States and the Soviet Union, recurred several times. As late as 4\(^{th}\) February 1948, the Dutch ambassador in Paris brought it up – if only to pass on that French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault had called the development of a troisième force internationale illusory. Western Europe had to acknowledge that it was too dependent on the goodwill of the United States to be able to conduct an entirely independent foreign policy, Bidault had said. However, the union might exert some influence on the United States “to calm their hysteria and remedy their negligences”.\(^{514}\) If nothing else, these kinds of considerations show that it would be too simple to see Dutch involvement as taking sides in the Cold War – the goal was still to mitigate tensions as best one could.\(^{515}\)

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\(^{512}\) Comment in Van Boetzelaer’s handwriting in the margin of page four of the note by J. Quarles of DPZ (Department of Political Affairs) to the foreign minister on 22 December 1947, NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 20366. My translation. The word “not” seems to have been mistakenly left out. In original: “Aan de andere kant brengt onze international positie met zich mede, niet in het voorste gelid te gaan staan, zolang niet zeker is dat Engeland e/d VS ons [niet] weer laten vallen als hen dat in eigen kraam te pas komt.”

\(^{513}\) Handwritten comment by Van Boetzelaer to the Quarles note of 22 December 1947. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 20366.


\(^{515}\) Jan Schulten for one writes that during 1947 the Dutch government’s threat perception shifted with the realization that “the real danger had moved further east” and that this caused a
There were also persistent attempts to retain as much margin for manoeuvre and influence as possible vis-à-vis the great powers. There was some talk of making Dutch participation dependent on “the cessation of the barely concealed British opposition to our policy in the Dutch Indies” although that line of conduct was not pursued. Van Kleffens (after bringing it up in a letter to Van Boetzelaer) advised against a Dutch ultimatum, considering that the Netherlands was neither the only country asked by the British to participate nor the most powerful – and “standing alone in the cold is not an enviable position”. Besides, the treaty and spirit of cooperation might encourage greater British sympathy towards Dutch interests in the East Indies even without making it a condition, according to Van Kleffens.516

Another issue – mentioned by Van Kleffens in the same letter – was the Dutch wish for influence on matters in Germany. As late as 13th February 1948, only days before the Czech coup in Prague and on the same day that the draft treaty was distributed to the members of cabinet, Foreign Minister Van Boetzelaer wrote in a secret missive to the embassies in London, Paris, Washington and Brussels that unless the Benelux countries were given more say on the German question, he considered it of little use to even begin talks with Britain and France on a Western Union.517 This demand was successful and, as Maarten van Alstein has also pointed out, was one of the advantages that motivated Dutch participation in the Brussels pact. Van Alstein writes that in spite of anti-Soviet sentiments, other motives weighed more heavily, of which this was one. Gaining international influence, containing France and tying Great Britain to the continent were others. Solving the Dutch defence problem was only one motive among others, and that need was primarily caused by the conflict in Indonesia which tied up practically the whole Dutch army, leaving the Netherlands in Europe undefended.518

Some of the reasoning around joining a Western Union was very similar to the Swedish reasoning concerning participation in a Nordic bloc. A note from 7th February 1948 pointed out that chances would be slim for the Netherlands to stay out of a war anyway if one of the surrounding countries was attacked, so

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that the advantage of immediate help that a treaty would secure outweighed the disadvantage of potentially being drawn into a conflict without having been attacked directly. This line of thought is reminiscent of the arguments of Swedish Minister of Defence Sköld in 1943 (discussed in chapter 3) in favour of a Nordic pact: the possibility of staying out of a future war if one of the neighbours was attacked must be considered slim in any case, and the regional union would at least make it possible to plan a coordinated defence. Typical of Swedish reasoning around Nordic defence cooperation was also that it could be developed as a part of the UN and was compatible with universal solidarity, and that it would not contribute to but rather ease tensions between East and West. The Dutch February 1948 note similarly emphasized that a Western European union must be in harmony with and subordinate to the UN, and aimed only at self-defence. Finally, the author suggested that it might be advisable to present the Western European bloc from the beginning as an attempt to bridge the gap between the United States and the Soviet Union, so as to, as far as possible, avoid a sharpening of the opposition between the Soviet Union and Western Europe.

While this document did not invoke neutrality – in fact it clearly stated that a Western European pact meant the definite end to Dutch neutrality – it testifies to overarching goals and considerations that are nearly identical to those expressed by the Swedish advocates of neutrality. The different paths of the Swedish and Dutch governments – neutrality versus alliance – in fact seem to have been the separate consequences of similar aspirations. The Dutch note, again, mentioned that there might be some remaining defenders of neutrality in the Netherlands, especially now that the Scandinavian countries (evidently still considered as one bloc) were exhibiting a neutral standpoint. The note added that the Dutch situation was vastly different from that of Scandinavia.

The separate paths were forced by these different situations rather than by dissimilar aims and mind-sets. That the Dutch sense of aloofness was not as stone dead as the official change in policy suggests, and the Western European Union in the Dutch view not so different from a neutral Scandinavian Defence Union, might finally be illustrated by a symbolic mistake. In the 22nd March 1948 cabinet protocol on the ratification of the Treaty of Brussels, a discussion arose about the Indies becoming automatically involved in case of an attack on one of the five countries in Europe. In an adjustment of the protocol the words “an attack on” have been added by hand to replace the originally typed words

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519 Preliminary remarks on a Western European pact (“Voorlopige opmerkingen over een West-Europese pact”), undated but with “7/2” in pencil and evidently from 1948. Author unknown. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 20366.

520 Preliminary remarks on a Western European pact (“Voorlopige opmerkingen over een West-Europese pact”), undated but with “7/2” in pencil and evidently from 1948. Author unknown. NL–HaNA, Buitenlandse Zaken, Code-Archief 1945–1954, 2.05.117, inv. nr 20366.
“a violation of the neutrality of” which have been crossed out: “This means, that the Indies in case of a violation of the neutrality of one of the five countries is immediately involved in the conflict.” The Dutch still had to get used to being allies.

The bipolar effect on security

Looking at government level security discussions in the Netherlands and Sweden in 1947–1948, considerations of possible war between East and West are conspicuously absent. Not that the conflict between the superpowers did not receive attention or was not taken seriously; it did and it was. But it did not seriously change the security strategies and priorities of the two governments. Their actions do not suggest that they counted on a great power war breaking out any time soon. The Netherlands in Europe remained virtually undefended while the government kept sending military reinforcements to Indonesia. Considering the urgent need of able-bodied young men for national reconstruction work, their dispatch to Indonesia gives an indication of the crucial importance assigned to that conflict. That importance had to do with maintaining the Dutch international position as well as the conviction that a loss of the Indies would lead to economic disaster. The only thing competing with the Indonesian problem was other economic concerns and in that context the need for a solution to the German question. The Swedish government was likewise preoccupied with economic concerns as well as with restoring relations with its neighbouring countries. The threat of the Soviet Union certainly played a role in this Swedish aim, but not in the shape of the threat of an imminent superpower war. Both governments in their different contexts worked on securing the international cooperation and economic conditions perceived necessary to maintain territorial and political independence in the long run. Neither seemed overly worried about an immediate attack.

While the emerging Cold War did not in essence change national goals, it affected both governments’ margin for manoeuvre. Strategies had to be adapted, notably the way security policy was presented. Both governments tried to influence the superpowers in order to get what they wanted: the Dutch presented their fight in Indonesia as a fight against communism; the Swedish used the American reluctance to openly reject cooperation with the Soviet Union to try to make it happen (and took the opportunity to benefit from American aid while being able to deny that participation was an unfriendly act towards the Soviets). The Swedish and Dutch governments did not deal directly with the

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521 Dutch cabinet protocol 22 March 1948. NL–HaNA, Ministerraad, 2.02.05.02, inv. nr 390. My translation. Original: “Dit betekent, dat Indië bij een schending van de neutraliteit van een der vijf landen onmiddellijk in het conflict betrokken is.” In the margin: “een aanval op.”
threat of superpower war; they dealt with superpower pressure towards them, both from the United States and from the Soviet Union. In fact, the concrete problem for the Swedish and Dutch governments was to a high degree that of small states versus great powers rather than that of West versus East. Indirectly of course that too was a consequence of the emerging Cold War, as the rising tensions caused the superpowers to put the small powers under more pressure. But it was nonetheless that pressure that really defined their behaviour, and that explains why the Netherlands and Sweden ended up with different Cold War positions in spite of their similar ideological positions. As noted before, both tended to appease the superpower which posed the greatest threat to political independence or from which they had most to gain. At the same time, they tried to maintain political independence. It is interesting to note that whichever superpower the accommodation concerned, it caused internal criticism in both countries: Van Kleffens was criticized for being too accommodating to the United States, Östen Undén for being too soft on the Soviet Union. Independence and sovereign rights were in the balance.

Both Dutch and Swedish continued pleas for bridge building can be seen as a demonstration of independence and a desire not to let any great power determine national policy. In many cases it was also economically advantageous. Economic interests in general took precedence over security concerns in both countries – or, rather, economic concerns were inseparable from security concerns, as discussed briefly in chapter 5. The two often reinforced one another. Economic stability was considered crucial to peace, and trade agreements with the Soviet Union (as well as the United States) were clearly concluded for both economic and political reasons, for example. Even under these heightening tensions, the Dutch and Swedish governments had strikingly similar general security views: both placed importance on restoring trade and securing economic stability; neither believed in an impending war between the superpowers; but if such a war broke out, both counted on being drawn into it regardless of alliance obligations. In fact, the development of the two countries security policies both seem to have been inspired as much by concerns about peace time relations as by military concerns.

As we have seen, the character of the prospective Western European Union was not so clear to begin with. The economic character of the cooperation tended to be emphasized more by the Dutch government than by the Swedish, which rather criticized its political implications. Besides that, the obvious difference was that Sweden was not invited. In this context it is worth paying some attention to Marshall Aid, to which Sweden was invited. Limited need for economic aid and the goal of keeping on good terms with the Soviet Union did not prevent Swedish participation. Neither did close existing ties with the British and Americans and great economic needs prevent the Dutch government from arguing that accepting Marshall Aid did not mean participation in a
Western bloc, or from seeking to place the aid administration under the auspices of the ECE. This alone points to similarities that transcended any neutral versus allied mind-set at this time. The acceptance of Marshall Aid is invariably viewed in Dutch historiography as a definite choice to side with a Western bloc. But the Swedish government managed to participate without it being interpreted as a choice for the West. Why was this impossible in the case of the Netherlands?

Two possibilities present themselves. One is that regardless of official non-alignment, the Swedish government actually did make a choice for the West by participating in the Marshall Plan. The other is that the Dutch actually did not. Both are at least partly correct. It can be argued that accepting Marshall Aid was the beginning of an economic integration with the other Western powers that at least de facto placed Sweden firmly in the Western sphere of influence. It can also be argued that the choice for the West – both the Swedish and the Dutch – was not (only) conditioned by Marshall Aid but must be fitted into a wider perspective of dependencies and traditions. Rather than signifying a choice for the West, it confirmed a Western affiliation or identity already in place. There can be little doubt that if forced to choose between East and West, the governments of both Sweden and the Netherlands would have chosen the West. However, as shown above, East and West were not the only considerations and even in a bipolar world, maintaining political independence remained an important aspect of security policy. As defined in chapter 1, the quest for security meant safeguarding both territorial and political independence. While the real threat to territorial security came from the Soviet Union, threats to political independence came from both superpowers. The conflict of the small versus the great powers was an important aspect of security, and that conflict was not bipolar.

For both Sweden and the Netherlands joining the Marshall Plan was first and foremost an economic decision, albeit with political implications. Those political implications were not less important in Sweden than in the Netherlands. The diary entry by Erlander cited above (under Behind non-alignment) shows the awareness that participation in the Marshall Plan might well be perceived as aligning with the West. That economic alignment did indeed take place is confirmed by the Swedish administration’s informal agreements with the United States about not passing on certain products imported from the United States to the Eastern bloc countries. In her book on Swedish trade with the Eastern European states 1946–1952, Birgit Karlsson writes that no formal commitments were made or agreements signed, but that the Swedish government declared its (independently decided) intentions regarding security, embargo policy etc. in a way that satisfied American demands. That way one superpower was reassured while the other could not claim that Sweden had abandoned a neutral policy, as no treaties had been signed – Sweden simply
exercised the right to make its own decisions. Dutch behaviour in Indonesia also shows how the Dutch government limited its military interventions rather than risking being coerced as a consequence of an escalated conflict with the Security Council, in practice by the Americans. Though one committed to neutrality and the other to a Western alliance, both Sweden and the Netherlands in reality adapted to the realities of the Pax Americana, according to their different premises. In many ways their actions were reminiscent of their conduct during the war: the governments sought to hold on to their room for manoeuvre by making concessions while keeping the initiative in their own hands. The policies of 1948 represented a return to a wartime posture of seeking under pressure to maintain independence of action. The Dutch and Swedish security policies were shaped by the tensions between ideals and realities and the adjustments to the demands of a bipolar world.

CHAPTER 7
Closing the window on small state security
1942–1948

Who could have guessed at the beginning of the Second World War what the political world would be like at its end? Who could have known in 1945 what it would be like in 1948?²²³

It is well-nigh impossible not to interpret the past in light of what happened next. All historical questions, including those posed in this thesis, are after all raised by hindsight. However, seeking their answers, I have tried to keep in mind the words written by Hans Morgentau in 1948: Who could have guessed? Who could have known? Even if the historian’s perspective is always retrospective, the angling of that perspective can be chosen so as not to routinely repeat an existing construction of the past. To remember the human predilection for coherent stories and to realize that every story exists by virtue of simplifying and selecting facts from an infinitely complex reality belongs to a historian’s most basic tasks.

This thesis offers a new look at issues and a period that have very much been treated in light of what happened next. The Cold War has dominated not only the interpretations of small states’ security choices after World War II, but also the critical questions posed about them after the Cold War ended. The stories of the Netherlands as a loyal ally and Sweden as a committed neutral are Cold War stories, promoted by the governments at the time, and challenged by historians in the early 1990s. They questioned these countries’ “true” allegiance, thereby still taking as their point of departure the positioning between East and West, neutrality and alliance as the subjects of scrutiny.

By making a systematic comparison of the concrete security considerations and positions of the Swedish and Dutch governments before the Cold War placed them on different sides of a neutrality/alliance demarcation line, this thesis attempts to take the historical debate one step further. It questions the assumption that the security choices were primarily about non-alignment to

²²³ Morgenthau 1949a, p. 7.
begin with. The time period studied has consciously been chosen so as to
traverse the dividing lines of war and peace, neutrality and alliance, so as to be
able to compare actual security conduct and considerations under different
circumstances. The comparison itself is based on simple logics: if $a \rightarrow b$ is
claimed in one case, but $a \rightarrow c$ in the other, then either $a \neq a$, or $b = c$, or
$a \rightarrow$ something including both $b$ and $c$.

What results has this approach yielded? Most importantly, the comparison
has revealed that the security perceptions of the two governments in this period
were remarkably similar – that is, in terms of the above logic: $a = a$. Since $b$
(military alliance) is not the same thing as $c$ (non-alignment), both $b$ and $c$
must be the expression of, or at least compatible with, something else. The
comparison suggests that the Dutch signing of the Treaty of Brussels and the
Swedish reclamation of a policy of non-alignment did not in the first place reflect
different positions in the East-West conflict or even different convictions
regarding aloofness. They were rather both expressions of the attempt to
strengthen regional cooperation with the goal not only to maintain peace but to
safeguard a margin for manoeuvre and independence vis-à-vis the greater
powers.

This final chapter will discuss what can be inferred from the observations,
doing so on three levels. First of all, the results of the comparison will be dis-
cussed in light of their implications for the theoretical understanding of small
state security ideas and strategies. What similarities have been noted, in spite of
different circumstances, with regard to these two small state governments’ aspi-
rations and how they tried to achieve them? The historical reality behind the
concepts margin for manoeuvre and window of opportunity will be discussed in
relation to research on small states. The second section will focus on two
dichotomies that have played an important role in both Swedish and Dutch
collective identities but that are problematic: neutrality versus alliance and
realism versus idealism. How might the findings of this thesis change our view
of the history of Swedish non-alignment and Dutch NATO-membership and
of both as champions of right above might? And how does the understanding of
these particular cases in this particular time contribute to an understanding of
the role of non-alignment and alignment, principles and pragmatism as security
strategies? Finally, the contributions of the comparison to Swedish and Dutch
historiography specifically will be summarized. What new conclusions can be
drawn about the nature, causes and consequences of the development of Dutch
and Swedish security policies in the 1940s? The chapter ends with a short
reflection on Dutch and Swedish security after 1948 and a few words about
questions still waiting to be answered.
Small states in times of crisis: ideas and strategies

This analysis of the security discussions of the Swedish and Dutch governments 1942–1948 has shown that their definitions of security threats and ideals as well as their assessments of the realities of the postwar world were strikingly similar. Even the perceived options for small states were similar: both concluded that cooperation was key, on the one hand to decrease tensions between and secure support (or at least not malice) from the great powers and on the other hand to strengthen ties with likeminded countries for purposes of defence and in order to enhance national influence. The claim that the security considerations and choices in Sweden and the Netherlands had fundamental similarities might seem surprising considering their very different World War II experiences and different Cold War positions. Partly, the discrepancy is a question of focus and perspective: research which takes as a point of departure the Cold War policies of non-alignment and NATO-membership and/or the World War II policies of neutral versus allied easily tends to see neutrality and alliance as the most important security denominators, which places Sweden and the Netherlands from the outset in different camps. The results of this comparison will instead be discussed from the point of view of the concepts margin for manoeuvre and window of opportunity. This opens up ways of understanding security aims and strategies without assuming the primacy of alignment or non-alignment for small state security and highlights the story behind what might otherwise pass by as a foreign policy vacuum.

Margin for manoeuvre

In the introductory chapter, the concept of margin for manoeuvre was introduced as a substitute for that of power. The underlying idea was that this concept was better suited to cover the ability to successfully pursue security in the double meaning of territorial integrity and political independence. While power is easily associated with military strength and coercion, margin for manoeuvre focuses rather on the possibilities to maintain independence and pursue interests (of whatever kind). It also avoids the connotation of passivity or merely reactive behaviour contained in a term like defensive power, as suggested by Branner, which – as discussed in chapter 1 – is in line with the dominant manner of defining small state power since Annette Baker Fox. Speaking of a state’s margin for manoeuvre explicitly includes the immaterial resources associated with defensive power that these and other authors rightly point to, but does not limit the field of vision to how the small state can resist pressure.\textsuperscript{524}

\textsuperscript{524} Baker Fox 1967 (1959) and Branner 2000. Many others emphasize the essentially defensive character of small state power, see for example Väyrynen 1997; Karsh 1997. Bjørn Møller even argues that small states should apply a strategy of non-offensive defence, Møller 1997, pp. 127–145.
One observation has imposed itself again and again during the course of the research for this thesis and that is the propensity of both the Dutch and Swedish government for seeking the widest possible margins for manoeuvre. Whether in an alliance or between them, under pressure or not, dealing with friend or foe, that is the common denominator, the one overriding security goal. Even when ostensibly voluntarily giving up sovereignty, as when becoming a UN member or signing the Treaty of Brussels, it was for the sake of maintaining the widest possible margin for manoeuvre – that is, those choices were made because of the assumption that a different choice would mean a narrower margin for achieving territorial integrity as well as political independence. Whether that assumption was correct or not is a different matter, and there was certainly not always consensus on that assessment. Nevertheless, it is in my view essential for understanding any other policy choices to realize that the goal was to maintain a margin for manoeuvre.

In a 2009 radio interview, Swedish historian Bo Huldt spoke of Sweden’s policy of armed neutrality during the Cold War as successful because it had served both security and freedom of action: every state’s double ambition. While I agree in essence with Huldt regarding that ambition, the results of this thesis speak against separating the two: freedom of action is not something other than security but part of it. It is not possible to opt for security and relinquish freedom of action or vice versa. The two are interdependent. Chapter 2 showed that even at a point in time when territorial integrity was violated or threatened, security strategies were aimed as much at defending political independence as defending national territory. When concessions were considered necessary, they were as much as possible made autonomously and were preferably kept as noncommittal as possible – all to maintain margin for manoeuvre.

That does not mean that all strategies were purely defensive. Active work to strengthen the country’s image and standing in the international community was also a way to gain margin for manoeuvre. This included referring to common ideals and promoting an image of respectability, reliability and worth especially to the countries with the greatest potential to influence national security. It was not a matter of (only) pleasing a greater power but also of marking independence by at least formally maintaining the initiative in any adaptation to international realities and formulating it in terms of adherence to fixed

An exception to this rule of focusing on defence can be found in the work of Robert Keohane, who argues that the perception of the ability to influence the system is more relevant to how a state acts than its perception of the ability to defend itself, even if he concludes that small states are those that cannot make a significant impact – which returns us to the image of small states as essentially passive. However, following Keohane’s definitions, both Sweden and the Netherlands would be defined as middle powers (powers that perceive the possibility to impact the system in small groups or through an international institution). Keohane 1969, pp. 295–297.

norms. Upholding an international image of strength and reliability demanded domestic stability and consensus on foreign policy issues. The need to curtail domestic debate to gain international room for manoeuvre and the fact that a successfully achieved domestic consensus subsequently limited the foreign policy margin for manoeuvre of the government is an interesting paradox that deserves more attention than has been possible to give here.\textsuperscript{526} In the context of the comparison at hand, suffice it to note that the need to present a stable and united national front was emphasized in both countries, and hence was not only an expression of the need of neutrals, as research on Sweden sometimes suggests.\textsuperscript{527}

Attempts to exhibit internal stability mirrored the wish for a stable world order. The small states had a wider margin for manoeuvre if other states and especially the great powers adhered to a set of fixed rules. However, rules could also threaten the scope for manoeuvre. As chapters 2, 5 and 6 have shown, rules cut both ways. The limits laws and norms could pose to their own margin for manoeuvre made the Swedish and Dutch governments’ support of international law less natural and more ambiguous than an overview of small state studies would suggest.\textsuperscript{528} On the other hand, this thesis also shows that doing good in different manifestations (claims to lawfulness, morals, objectivity and expertise as well as mediating in conflict) was an important way to protect independence and claim rights. Measures sometimes ran contrary to legal or moral principles but that did not prevent either government from describing them in principled terms.

Not only the similarities, but the differences between Sweden and the Netherlands too can be explained in terms of seeking margins for manoeuvre. It has been pointed out that the Dutch were active in spreading their own views on the United Nations organization, while the Swedish preferred to keep their ideas to themselves while collecting information about the opinions of others and taking a wait-and-see approach. This difference stemmed from the fact that

\textsuperscript{526} Two international relations scholars who have paid attention to the relationship between international and domestic relations on a theoretical level are Helen Milner and Miriam Fendius Elman. Milner 1992; Elman 1995. See also Anders Wivel’s call for a break “with the unfortunate dichotomy between system-level theories and domestic-level theories”. Wivel 2000, p. 332.

\textsuperscript{527} Charles Silva discusses the so-called unity norm: the conviction among Swedish politicians that outward national unity was a condition for the credibility of Sweden’s non-alignment/neutrality. Silva 1999, p. 29. Swedish diplomat Sverker Åström also testifies to this sentiment, Åström 1989. Although he speaks of the value of national unity for the credibility of neutrality, some of his formulations are more general and suggest that unity makes any foreign policy more viable: “Foreign powers cannot play on differences of opinion inside Sweden concerning foreign policy. This is a source of strength.” Åström 1989, p. 17. Mikael af Malmborg describes how both world wars proved “the value of long-term consistency for the credibility of neutrality”. Malmborg 2001, p. 144. Compare also to Petersen who has pointed to the need for unity in the Danish and Norwegian cases, Petersen 1979, p. 207.

\textsuperscript{528} Emphasis on internationalist principles, international law, and other “morally minded” ideals is one of the most commonly cited behaviours of small states. Hey 2003, p. 5.
the Netherlands as a member of the wartime alliance participated in the San Francisco conference while Sweden was not invited. Within these different circumstances, both governments acted so as to create as wide a margin for manoeuvre as possible: being on the outside by carefully weighing what position one should take in relation to what others thought, being on the inside by actively protesting those parts of the common policy that threatened independence. The diary notes of Van Kleffens at the San Francisco conference discussed in chapter 3 do not convey much enthusiasm about the new organization but rather show how the leader of the Dutch delegation tried to defend Dutch interests. The three major issues stressed by the Dutch all served to defend territorial and political independence, the most obvious being the (successful) attempt to convince the conference not to place the Dutch East Indies under trusteeship. The (equally successful) attempt to include wording to the effect that the organization’s decisions would be based on law and equity was also a way to secure margin for manoeuvre as it decreased the risk that small states would be forced to comply with an arbitrary majority decision. The last attempt, which opposed the veto-right, failed.

Like in the Netherlands, the veto-right of the great powers was considered a serious drawback in Sweden. There is research which suggests that the veto-right was considered an advantage because it gave the Swedish government the possibility to declare neutrality in a great power conflict. However, this interpretation is based on the assumption that the Swedish goal was to be able to declare neutrality. That, in my view, is a misrepresentation of matters. The bloc formation of the Cold War put Sweden in a position where non-alignment could provide some room for manoeuvre. The goal of that non-alignment was to counteract bloc formation and promote cooperation and thereby security. Neutrality, or non-alignment, was not a goal but a means to an end. The Swedish goal was to maintain a margin for manoeuvre, which to begin with meant to maintain peace. A collective security system with the power to prevent war and limit the possibilities of the great powers to use their military might at will, would have provided the best margin for manoeuvre. The veto-right thwarted that scheme. In that situation, the possibility to declare neutrality in case of a great power conflict was indeed presented as an advantage. But without the veto-right, aloofness would not only have been impossible; it would have been unnecessary. The security choices of small states can take on different shapes, but the research conducted here indicates that whatever that shape, a small state’s quest for security is primarily a pursuit of a margin for manoeuvre.

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529 Aalders 1989, p. 21. Yngve Möller says that while Undén was originally very critical of the veto-right, it soon came to appear as a guarantee not to be drawn into a great power conflict. Möller 1990, p. 65.
Window of opportunity?

When the concept of a window of opportunity was introduced, it was done as a theoretical intervention: by treating this period as a window of opportunity rather than as an impasse, an opening was created for looking for aims and goals rather than only (re)actions. But the concept also corresponds to a historical reality, as suggested especially in chapter 5. The investigation of goals and strategies has shown that work towards long-term security goals was often impaired by short-term security threats. The long-term goals included building strong relations with likeminded states, promoting a situation of predictability and order, and establishing favourable trade relations and economic stability. Working towards these long-term goals often required patience and perseverance and hardly ever yielded spectacular actions or abrupt decisions, which perhaps explains the image of the period as one in which nothing happened. But considering that security strategies were aimed at maintaining a margin for manoeuvre, it should not be surprising that if given a choice, the governments would opt to keep options open rather than rushing into things that might shrink that margin.

Admittedly, the expression window of opportunity might lead one to expect something more spectacular than a policy dominated by wait-and-see. But labelling the period an impasse or a period of paralysis presumes an inability to act – which in turn presumes a desire to act (more or differently). In Dutch historiography, an impasse is often said to have arisen because “what was wanted was not possible and what was possible was not wanted”. However, that characterization only properly applies to the plan for a regional pact including the United States. On other matters, the Dutch government did act, certainly to pursue security – territorial integrity and political independence – in the Dutch East Indies. The Swedish government made controversial decisions to improve relations with the Soviet Union. There are examples of both governments taking the opportunity to put pressure on the great powers to move in what they considered the right direction: developing a more stable system of collective security. That is not done overnight, and these small state governments had no illusions that they could force the hand of the greater powers, but they did try to influence them. Decreasing tensions and improving cooperation were long term goals, and both governments simultaneously kept alert as to the realities of the power struggle. They collected as much information as possible and waited for the most opportune manner and moment to promote national interests, as discussed in chapters 5 and 6. As long as there were no critical threats, there was no reason to act rashly. Waiting could even be a strategy to achieve a certain goal.

So even if the early postwar years may at first glance seem like a period of few explicit foreign policy choices, it was a period of acting to promote security through a combination of working for long-term goals and prepared alertness. Rather than being paralysed, the policies had a fluid character. But change took time and was difficult, especially considering the need to maintain consensus. When great power demands were stepped up, the governments had to adapt and align their behaviour especially to the demands of the United States. The Netherlands was compelled to abandon the use of military might in the East Indies. Sweden had to adapt its trade patterns especially concerning Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. And both were pressed for time to develop their policies deliberately and often had to react under pressure, much like during the war. Long-term aims had to be rushed, or postponed, or pursued in a different manner. Because of the shattering of the Dutch foreign policy consensus with the German attack, followed by Dutch wartime cooperation with the allies, an abandonment of neutrality was easier for the Dutch government than for the Swedish, as suggested in chapters 3 and 5. Still, the Dutch decision to join the Brussels pact was made with hesitation and the Swedish government tried to avoid a return to isolated neutrality. The initiative for negotiations on a Scandinavian Defence Union in the spring of 1948 can be seen as a counterpart to the Dutch decision to sign the Treaty of Brussels: it was a hurried attempt not to miss an opportunity for change in the desired direction. For Sweden it was too early. The slow movement towards stronger regional cooperation had not had enough time to develop and the attempt to rescue it by a leap forward failed.

The observation that there is a difference between long-term and short-term goals and that these goals are sometimes at odds means that timing can be of great importance to policy outcome. The results of this thesis support the notion that in periods of confusion and chaos, such as after a war when the politics and demands of the greater powers are unclear, windows of opportunity – with different possible vantage points – appear for small states in international relations. These windows do not mean that anything is suddenly possible, but that the demand for consistent declaratory policies and alignment to the demands of the greater powers is temporarily relaxed so that change is possible and a wider range of long term goals, initiatives and plans become more visible than otherwise. Those goals do not disappear as a window closes but they can become hidden from plain view as governments are compelled to define their policies according to harsh realities and the demands of the greater powers, narrowing their margin for manoeuvre. The results of this study suggest that it is useful to study windows of opportunity in order to catch sight of long-term ambitions and continuities in the foreign policies of small states.
The dilemma of dichotomies

The concepts margin for manoeuvre and window of opportunity have served here as a means to rethink earlier patterns of interpretation. Those patterns often build on dichotomies that are themselves a simplification of reality. Two dichotomies in particular have influenced Swedish and Dutch national self images as well as the historiography: neutrality versus alliance and idealism versus realism. Both are problematic, not in the least because they seem to open up for moral judgements, and moral judgements do little to contribute to a fuller understanding of historical motives. In the Dutch historiography, policymakers who emphasized principles, like Van Kleffens and Van Boetzelaer, have been dismissed as naïve, as mentioned in chapter 5. Helge Pharo’s characterization of Norwegian prewar neutrality policy as “the pleasant position of being able to have their cake and eat it too”, getting protection from the British at low cost and being able to “indulge in [...] moralistic lecturing” is an example of a kind of morally tinted judgements of neutrality that is not uncommon.\textsuperscript{531} It is therefore appropriate to discuss briefly what the results of this study can say about these two dichotomies.

Neutrality versus alliance?

My analysis of the development of Swedish and Dutch security policies 1942–1948 has given me reason to question the common use of the neutrality/alliance binary as the main descriptor or point of departure for thinking about security policies. As others have shown, different security motives and strategies can be found among small states participating in the same alliance.\textsuperscript{532} This book goes further by showing that small states can make different choices regarding alignment in spite of similar security motives and strategies. It is thereby in line with the findings of Magnus Petersson, who has pointed to the high level of harmony in Swedish–Norwegian security relations in spite of different security policies, and has explained it with similarities on other levels, notably regarding strategic perceptions.\textsuperscript{533}

Whether a state participates in an alliance or not is not irrelevant, but the results of this thesis suggest that the description of a country as non-aligned or aligned reveals only a limited part of that country’s security considerations and conditions. Chapter 2 has shown that even during the war, when the Nether-

\textsuperscript{531} Pharo 1994, p. 199.

\textsuperscript{532} See Petersen 1979 (focusing on differences between the Danish and Norwegian road to NATO); Wiebes & Zeeman 1993 (focusing on differences between the Dutch and Belgian road to NATO); Wiggershaus & Foerster 1993 (focusing on early NATO, the different members and the variety and complexity of the aims, considerations and decision-making processes of the alliance); Crump 2015 (focusing on the different policies of non-Soviet Warsaw Pact members).

\textsuperscript{533} Petersson 2003.
lands fought as one of the allies while Sweden was a non-belligerent neutral, the Dutch and Swedish strategies for survival showed some strong similarities. Chapter 3 showed that the central ideas on future security which were developed during the war did not differ along the lines of neutrality versus alliance. The discussion on the UN and collective security analysed in chapter 4 testifies to similar attitudes regarding collective security and regional cooperation and to the fact that no clear distinction was made between an organization formed for collective security and an alliance. Chapter 5 painted an image of two governments reverting to what is often called neutral strategies – strategies to depoliticize matters of potential conflict – in their struggle to realize long-term goals of solidarity, promotion of legal principles and regional cooperation in the teeth of growing tensions between the superpowers. And yet, chapter 6 showed how, based on similar ideals of solidarity of the likeminded and the need for regional cooperation, the two governments ended up on different sides of the demarcation line neutrality–alliance. The fact that similar ideas and strategies resulted in different security policies, points to the fact that non-alignment and alignment were not diametrically opposed. They seem rather to have been different means to the same end: to strengthen international and especially regional cooperation, avoid being drawn into a war, and secure the broadest possible margin for manoeuvre so as to maintain both territorial and political independence.

Some authors in both Sweden and the Netherlands have pointed out that foreign policy after World War II changed in the direction of a more active internationalist policy (a change that had already partly begun after World War I). This is in line with the findings of this thesis. However, in the Netherlands that change from isolation to internationalism is generally described as part of the demise of neutrality (aloofness) while in Sweden internationalism is seen as linked to non-alignment, tied to the argument that a neutral position made possible (or even necessary) criticism of both superpowers and made Sweden particularly suited for mediating in international conflicts.534 I would argue, as Charles Silva has done concerning Swedish neutrality and William Mallinson concerning the Dutch, that the neutrality concept should not be seen

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534 For example, see Schaper 1991, pp. 150–155; Nilsson 1991, pp. 25–36; Appelqvist 2000, p. 51. Appelqvist builds his description of Sweden’s internationalist neutralism on the views of Gunnar Myrdal who argued that Sweden was particularly suited to being an advocate of world interests because Swedish interests were so obviously tied to peace, law, international democracy and free trade, and because the country’s morals had not been damaged by the cruelties of war and it had been better protected against the harmful nationalism that had spread amongst the belligerents. See G. Myrdal 1944, pp. 291–352. The idea that neutrality promotes internationalism is persistent: the Swedish foreign minister in January 2015 told an interviewer that Sweden is able to have a stronger voice in the world precisely because it is a small, non-aligned country. Michael Winiarski and Karin Eriksson, interview with Margot Wallström in DN 16 January 2015, http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/tonen-ar-valdigt-hard-och-oforsonlig/ (accessed 16 January 2015).
as a foreign policy umbrella. In fact, I would add that the same is true of the alliance concept. Both neutrality and alliance should be looked at as parts of much more nuanced and complicated foreign policies. The Swedish-Dutch comparison has shown that many small state strategies were similar and not tied to the choice for or against alignment. In addition to the findings of Petersson already mentioned, this result is corroborated by the findings of Norbert Götz who points out that NATO-member Norway had almost as high a profile in United Nations’ politics as neutral Sweden. Götz’ study also testifies to the close association between the Nordic countries – Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland – in spite of their different Cold War security positions. And yet, neutrality and alliance respectively are often presented as the dominant security characteristics of both Sweden and the Netherlands. So Ann-Sofie Nilsson posits that Sweden stubbornly clung to a neutral line while the rest of the Western world showed their mutual solidarity in NATO cooperation. “The foreign policy of the Netherlands since the Second World War has been characterized by a close alliance with the United States,” wrote Peter Baehr in 1978. “This alliance has strongly influenced all aspects of its foreign policy – even that had no direct relationship to the Cold War.”

But if Swedish neutrality was a sign of rejecting Western solidarity and the alliance with the United States really influenced “all aspects” of Dutch foreign policy, why did Cold War foreign policy developments in Sweden and the Netherlands resemble each other so closely? Both Sweden and the Netherlands were early to use development aid and humanitarian issues to legitimize their international position and as a way to conduct an active foreign policy, for example. That a neutral and an allied country could develop such interchangeable foreign policies, and share a similar mantle of moral superpower or guiding country, suggests that the neutral/aligned binary did not run particularly deep. More research needs to be done to understand this phenomenon, but it seems safe to conclude that the concepts of alliance and neutrality are inadequate as chief descriptors of the security policies of small states. The need for a stable and trustworthy foreign policy on the other hand, is probably even more important to less powerful than to more powerful states, which may

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535 See Silva 1995 and Silva 1999, pp. 347–348; Mallinson 2010, p. 9. Mallinson writes that “while it is indisputable that neutrality has been used by the Dutch at given moments in the past, especially to keep out of conflict, it does not appear to have been the over-riding factor in Dutch foreign policy.”

536 Götz 2011, p. 17. On the tradition of Nordic cooperation and its place in a more general small state context during the League era, see especially pp. 83–112. Chapters 3 and 4 deal in turn with each country’s UN delegations and civil society participation 1945–1975 under the common denominator of the so-called Scandinavian model.

537 Nilsson 1991, p. 56.


539 On the use of the role as “global good Samaritans” in foreign policy, see Brysk 2009.
account for the dominance of the language of alliance and neutrality in foreign policy discourse, even when it does not say everything, or even say very much about the day to day actions and security strategies of the foreign office. It follows that any in-depth analysis of a state’s security policy must move beyond this dichotomy.

**Idealism versus realism?**

Untangling the role principles play in the formation of policy is notoriously complicated, a point testified to by the long line of authors who have discussed the subject.\(^{540}\) The realist view of writers like Hans Morgenthau, who, in the late 1940s, argued for the irrelevance of moral principle to the conduct of foreign relations and claimed the primacy of national interest, has since then been frequently challenged. Nearly diametrically opposed to Morgenthau is the view expressed by David Halloran Lumsdaine, who argued in the 1990s that foreign aid is often motivated by humanitarian and egalitarian concerns rather than by political and economic interests, and who has defended the stance that morals *should* guide foreign policy.\(^{541}\) As on the topic of neutrality versus alliance, normative judgements are not uncommon in this field of study. Some writers, such as John Lewis Gaddis, have focused on “moral compromises” and the difficult balance between demands of order and justice.\(^{542}\) Even so, Gaddis himself has been criticized for placing too much emphasis on the idealistic aspect of American policy, notably by Norwegian Cold War historian Geir Lundestad. “All who have written about American foreign policy in general and under FDR in particular have struggled with the balance between idealism and realism”, Lundestad wrote in a review of Gaddis’s *The Cold War*. According to Lundestad, Gaddis failed to provide “a discussion of the complexities in US foreign policy or, if you will, the extent to which the American idealism tended to coincide with rather ordinary state interests.”\(^{543}\)

This interplay between idealism and so-called ordinary state interests is obviously not an exclusively American phenomenon. Such interplay was clearly

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540 The list of people who have discussed the complex relationship between principles and interests is long. For books on the role of morals or ethics in international relations see, for example, *International ethics* (Beitz, Cohen, Scanlon & Simmons eds., 1985) and *Ethics and international relations* (Anthony Ellis ed., 1986). As Rosemary Foot has put it, there is in the field of international relations “an unending search for an understanding of the relationship between order and justice”. Foot, Gaddis, Hurrell eds. 2003, p. 1.

541 Morgenthau 1949b. Lumsdaine in his book *Moral vision in international politics* discusses not only the motives for foreign aid 1949–1989 but asks on a more general level whether morals matter in international politics and whether the international system can be changed to make the world a better place. (His short answer is yes, at times.) Lumsdaine 1993, pp. 3, 28, 69, 283.

542 Foot, Gaddis, Hurrell, eds. 2003, pp. 155–175.

visible in the reasoning and behaviour of the Swedish and Dutch governments
during the period under discussion in this book. In fact, the separation of ideals
and “ordinary” interests is analytically problematic because idealism can very
well be in the national interest. If there is one conclusion that can be drawn
from the abundance of literature on the subject it is that posing (lofty) ideals as
something separate from (realistic) national interests is not only inadequate but
impossible. That conclusion is reinforced by the results of this study. Chapters
2, 3 and 5 have shown how principled and pragmatic arguments were often
mixed even by the same individuals on the same topic and how even clearly
pragmatic decisions were defended in moral terms. Even when considered
impracticable, principles were not officially abandoned. The need to defend
policy decisions in moral terms is logical considering both margin for
manoeuvre (as discussed above) and the need for consensus – which in turn
points to the difficulty of policy change. The concept of organized hypocrisy,
borrowed from Stephen Krasner who uses it to deal with the issue of state
sovereignty, describes this mechanism well. In 1999 Krasner introduced the
term organized hypocrisy to describe “the existence of durable principles and
norms, which were also frequently compromised” as “the logics of appropriate-
ness” mingled with or succumbed to “the logics of expected consequences” –
the latter according to Krasner dominating the environment of the international
system. In other words, acting in a certain way because of feared conse-
quences did not replace or preclude attempts to promote the appropriate.
Neither did convictions as to what was appropriate in the long run prevent
short-term emergency deviations from the declared course.

Swedish and Dutch security 1942–1948. Separate ways?

In spite of different positions in the world (both in Europe and taking into
account the Dutch overseas possessions), different war experiences and different
eventual policy outcomes, much of the security policy reasoning of the Swedish
and Dutch governments between 1942 and 1948 was strikingly similar. So were
some of their foreign policy actions. There were differences too, but most of
them did not pertain to ideas or strategies. Not even the notable exception that
the Swedish government never abandoned non-alignment while the Dutch
pronounced neutrality stone dead was based on fundamentally different notions
about security. The concrete security strategies used to avert threats or achieve
benefits were also remarkably similar. Especially interesting is the observation

544 Among those who have argued this point is Danish historian Kristine Midtgaard.
545 Krasner 1999, pp. 3–6. Definition of organized hypocrisy as it is described in the
Acknowledgements (before paging begins).
that the strategies could be similar whether dealing with friend or foe. Summing up differences and similarities, how separate were the separate ways of Sweden and the Netherlands? It is time to make up the balance of the observations on Dutch and Swedish security ideas, strategies and circumstances.

Cooperation or doom as a common denominator

During the war, Dutch and Swedish government members and officials developed similar ideas on what was needed for future security. There was an overwhelming consensus on its foundation: international cooperation. Even the ideas on how that cooperation would and should take shape were strikingly similar. A new collective security organization must be capable of more powerful sanctions than the League of Nations and include military solidarity; the smaller states would probably have to join in regional groups to be able to carry enough weight in the company of the great powers and should primarily contribute to the universal collective security in a regional context; this subdivision of a universal organization in regions would make it more manageable and efficient as well as make the solidarity obligations more acceptable and easier to carry for individual members.

That the expression of these ideas took somewhat different forms was largely due to circumstance. Swedish advocates of the idea of decentralized collective security kept their discussions and promoted their views close to home. Having declared neutrality, during the war the Swedish government did not feel at liberty to discuss any scheme that assumed the victory of one side over the other. The need to observe neutrality was nevertheless disregarded when it came to their immediate neighbours – they were clearly considered of a different category than the other belligerents. Plans for increased Nordic cooperation were seriously discussed in Sweden during the war, but the overarching world organization was left to the future victors. The Dutch were in a different position as members of the winning alliance, and Foreign Minister Van Kleffens took on an especially pro-active role. As so much was unclear, he considered it an opportune time for the Dutch to encourage the greater powers to take the right path. Van Kleffens spared no efforts in spreading his ideas at every opportunity: he published articles, spoke on the radio and presented his ideas in person to all who might have some influence, from journalists to the American president. Nevertheless, the “great four” persisted in creating a centralized universal collective security organization. For both Sweden and the Netherlands, collective security in the shape of the United Nations was what was available at the end of the war, even if the Netherlands had been allowed participation in the San Francisco conference while Sweden had not.

The parliamentary discussions on the United Nations in both countries reveal how ideas on the need for an effectively functioning organization trans-
lated into accepting the veto-right of the permanent members of the Security Council. The potential failure of international cooperation was painted in apocalyptic terms. That does not mean that either government was satisfied with their subordinate position in the new organization or had great faith in the UN. The article allowing regional groupings was welcomed in both countries. The idea that small state survival was at stake in a world perceived increasingly to be run by the great powers resurfaced in the strong and repeated pleas for an organization based on justice, and in the negative reasoning used to justify membership in the new organization: though faulty, it was better than nothing and at least it gave the small states a voice in the general assembly. The underlying assumption was that small states would be subject to the will of the great powers even if they did not join: independent aloofness had become unsustainable. The best one could hope for was a collective security system that would protect the rights of the small and still be efficient.

After the war, both the Swedish and Dutch governments were adamant about not undertaking anything that would contribute to the heightening of tensions between East and West. Both rejected bloc formation and tried to promote great power cooperation. In addition, both aspired to closer regional cooperation which was viewed as a complement to the universal collective security of the UN, not something in opposition to it. However, both concluded that the Soviet government probably already considered the smaller Western wartime allies part of a Western bloc. This automatically put the Netherlands in a different position than Sweden when tensions heightened in spite of bridge building attempts. Here the same assessment implied different options. That did not prevent both countries from participating in the Marshall Plan. Both weighed economic against political interests, recognizing the importance of economic stability for peace and trying to achieve economic benefits without giving up political independence. Finally, both were reluctant to tie themselves too closely to one greater power and emphasized the autonomy of their decisions and behaviour.

The conviction at the end of World War II that cooperation would be absolutely crucial for maintaining security is one of the strongest similarities between the Swedish and the Dutch governments. This conviction and the equally everpresent efforts to maintain a margin for manoeuvre led both governments to pursue two kinds of cooperation. One was cooperation in a context broad enough to counter the influence of more powerful neighbours. To the Netherlands, this meant including the United States to counter the influence not only of Great Britain and France, but also powers in Asia that threatened Indonesia. To Sweden, universal cooperation might have been the only context broad enough to counter the influence of the Soviet Union. The other was the pursuit of regional cooperation with one’s closest neighbours. The element of perceiving security in terms of small states versus great powers was prominent in
both countries. That did not mean a tendency to cooperate with other small states in general, even if they could be likeminded in some senses – think for example of the Swedish rejection of cooperation with other neutrals (as mentioned in chapter 2, *Strategic friendships and trusted companions*). The need to increase one’s national weight vis-à-vis the great powers limited the desired cooperation to the category of countries viewed as trusted companions or brother peoples. The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg developed a habit of coordinating their policies and counted on each other for support in international contexts. Sweden had perhaps an even stronger sense of unity with the other Nordic countries, Finland hardly being considered a foreign country at all (even if the different war experiences had complicated Nordic cooperation). Cooperation in that context was considered a sort of extension and strengthening of the nation state rather than international cooperation. These countries were not considered a threat to sovereignty.

How similarities turned into differences

The decisive differences between the Netherlands and Sweden pertaining to security can be found in the different circumstances of the two countries: geopolitical as well as historical. Considering the latter, one might conclude that World War II did in fact have a significant influence on future security choices, although not for the reasons often assumed. The different war experiences did not lead to different policy choices based on having or losing faith in neutrality. They did, however, create different practical conditions for the realization of similar security ideas. The Swedish government did not willfully choose isolated neutrality. The Dutch government did not seek to participate in a mutually hostile, bipolar bloc formation. Yet, the choices they made in order to cooperate in the manner perceived closest to their conceived ideals brought them into those positions.

Both the Dutch and the Swedish governments originally viewed cooperation with likeminded nations as not only compatible with but contributing to worldwide cooperation and stability, which was the overarching goal – together with (and serving) the goal of maintaining the widest possible margin for manoeuvre. It was only later, with increasing East–West tensions that solidarity of the likeminded came to stand in opposition to universal solidarity – and even then those advocating Western solidarity did not consider it a substitute but a temporary necessity in order to respond to what was perceived as standing in the way of the possibility of universal solidarity: an expanding Soviet Union. This thinking corresponds to what Fredrika Björklund in her 1992 dissertation on Swedish foreign policy debate during the Cold War has labelled the lesson of 1939: peace by counteracting an expansionist dictatorship. Björklund identifies two other answers to the question of how to create a peaceful world order that
were influential during Cold War debates in Sweden: the lesson of 1815, peace by balance of power, and the lesson of 1914, peace by collective security based on a common effort for peace. Only in the system of peace by balance of power, Björklund points out, does neutrality have a clear role.546

In Dutch and Swedish reasoning immediately after the war, it was, in Björklund’s terminology, the lesson of 1914 that dominated. As tensions grew, it was challenged by those pointing to the lesson of 1939. And with the new balance of power of the Cold War, the lesson of 1815 regained its *raison d’être*: peace by balance of power, in which neutrality could play a role. Undén himself later compared the situation to the period before World War I. That Sweden had not given up its policy of non-alignment in spite of the creation of the United Nations, he explained in 1955, was an expression of the perception that the international constellation was in its main features the same as before the League and the UN.547 And in a speech given in April 1948 he referred to the 1930s and the failure of the League. As in the 1930s, Sweden had been forced to revisit its non-interference policy because of the failure of an international organization.548 Swedish neutrality was caused by circumstances rather than by choice. It was a reaction to a new critical situation, much like the wartime policy had been, and official policy did not prevent a different ideal from being pursued by all available means. Undén kept trying to combine non-alignment with a policy of solidarity, striving for peace by collective security (the 1914 perspective) and using non-alignment to achieve that goal. There were simultaneous attempts to fit non-alignment into a 1939 perspective: the opposition on the right in particular emphasized Sweden’s moral alignment with the West, and the West as the champion of a free, peaceful world.549

The Dutch case shows a similar pattern. The preferred (1914) course of collective security was replaced by a return to the (1815) balance of power system – which of course not only permitted neutrality but also gave military alliances back their *raison d’être*. It remains to be explained why the Netherlands ended up in an alliance in this situation while Sweden did not. Some circumstances that have been invoked as determinative by other authors are refuted or put in a new light by the comparison. The changes in war technology and the scale of warfare, for example, caused urgent awareness in both countries of the necessity

547 “När Sverige inte uppgivit sin alliansfria ställning utan fullföljer sin traditionella utrikespolitik trots tillkomsten av FN, så är det ett uttryck för tankegången att i grunden den internationella konstellationen är till sina huvuddrag densamma som före NF och FN.” Undén 1955, p. 16.
549 For the reference to the combining of neutrality with the 1914 and 1939 perspectives respectively, see Björklund 1992, for example on pp. 121, 123–124, 203 and the summary on pp. 206–212. See also Molin 1991 for an overview of the friction between Undén and some conservative leading members of the diplomatic corps and of the military who pleaded for more West-friendly neutrality.
for cooperation and peacekeeping attempts, but it was not a decisive factor in the Dutch decision to abandon neutrality and join the Brussels pact.\textsuperscript{550} It is interesting to note that the Swedish foreign minister in fact reasoned in exactly the opposite way: the change in the nature of warfare made it all the more necessary not to contribute to tensions between the blocs. Because war would be such a total disaster, there was no point preparing for it. The only choice was to work for peace.\textsuperscript{551}

Nils Ørvik has claimed that the only thing that made Swedish neutrality viable during the Cold War was indeed the long period of peace: it was a policy for peace time relations rather than for war.\textsuperscript{552} He may well be right, but the conclusion of chapter 6 that neither the Swedish nor the Dutch government seemed to be counting on a great power war breaking out any time soon suggests that Dutch security policy was also chosen more for the sake of peacetime relations than in preparation for war; in other words this was not an exclusively Swedish or neutral trait. Nor did the focus on promoting peace, or the value that the Swedish foreign minister attached to the possibility of staying out of an initial phase of a future war, indicate a different estimate of the impact of new war technologies than those made by the Dutch. Already in a 1944 memo Undén had written that the development of air strategy meant that the Nordic countries were not remote from the potential war areas in the same way as before. Cooperation between the countries to safeguard their common security would therefore be natural.\textsuperscript{553} As to the Dutch rationale for joining an alliance, no evidence has surfaced during this investigation to suggest that the new technology of warfare was a decisive factor or that the decision was based on a different assessment of the great powers. Like Östen Undén, Pim van Boetzelaer reckoned that the great powers would intervene in case of a conflict if it was perceived as in their interest, whether a formal commitment existed or not.\textsuperscript{554}

What circumstances, then, turned these two countries in different directions? One factor that needs to be taken into account is the time needed for a public change in a country’s professed security policy. The Dutch government had more time and space than the Swedish to prepare for a policy other than non-alignment. Neutrality had been publicly discredited by the occupation and was already pronounced stone dead in 1940. The “lesson of 1939” had been experienced first-hand. While the window of opportunity began closing on both governments somewhere in 1947/1948, it opened earlier for the Netherlands than for Sweden. Although on a government level postwar plans for a new world

\textsuperscript{550} As suggested by Voorhoeve 1979, pp. 102–103; Schaper 1991, pp. 150–151.
\textsuperscript{551} See chapter 6, Behind non-alignment.
\textsuperscript{552} Ørvik 1971, p. 263, pp. 294–295.
\textsuperscript{553} Undated memo by Östen Undén under the heading “Det nordiska samarbetet”, reference in the text to it being the autumn of 1944. SE/KB, Östen Undéns samling, L 108:11b.
\textsuperscript{554} See Chapter, 6, Behind alignment.
order were being contemplated in Sweden as well during the later years of the war, security policy could not be discussed publicly until after the war, and even then it was difficult. Any change had to be advocated without giving an impression of discord. Proposals for a Nordic defence union were represented as fully consistent with the policy of neutrality. The possibility to revert to neutrality in case of collective security failure was brought up in the debate about joining the UN. This is part of the explanation for why the Swedes reverted to neutrality while the Dutch did not: changing security policy is a difficult and slow process, especially in countries where the tradition of consensus is strong. The Dutch ambassador in Belgium spoke of the continued prominence of neutrality ideals in Dutch public opinion as late as 1947 (see chapter 6), which testifies to the persistence of deep-rooted traditions (as does the clerical error referred to at the end of *Behind alignment*). The tendencies to assert independence and aloofness in a manner similar to that in Sweden, as well as inclinations towards bridge building and an aversion to the “bullying” of the United States have also been discussed. What made a Dutch policy change possible in spite of the stubbornness of tradition was, among other things, the fact that there had been time to establish new habits of cooperation with the Western powers.

Other reasons for the different choices lay in the differences in postwar economic and military strength and in the change in the two countries’ geopolitical positions. The Swedish government might not have perceived it possible to stay non-aligned if its position had been much weaker. The Dutch had economic incentives to join the Brussels pact that lacked equivalents in Sweden, not to mention the fact that almost all Dutch troops were deployed in Indonesia. As to geopolitical changes, they eliminated some of the traditional justifications for Dutch neutrality while strengthening them in Sweden. Dutch neutrality had traditionally been defended as being beneficial not only to the Netherlands but to Europe555, decreasing the tensions between the great powers Germany, France and Great Britain. The new bipolar balance of power system placed France, Great Britain, and gradually also the western parts of Germany in the same Western camp, ending this in-between position of the Netherlands and removing the threat on the Dutch eastern border. Meanwhile, the same development put Sweden on the front line of the new balance of power. Swedish Cold War rhetoric on Swedish neutrality as being good not only for Sweden but for the diminishing of tensions in the whole Nordic region and by extension the world, is quite reminiscent of Dutch pre-World War II rhetoric.

In line with this observation, finally, an important part of the answer to why the two governments chose different courses regarding alignment seems to lie in their shared goal of regional cooperation. It is curious that the international and transnational context of the plans in the two countries for regional cooperation

555 For example, see Smit 1991, p. 72; Beunders 1991, p. 88.
has not been emphasized more by Dutch or Swedish historians. As this dissertation has shown, ideas about small countries no longer being able to manage alone and the need to organize the world in regions were widespread in the international community. The plans of Van Kleffens (and Trygve Lie) for an Atlantic pact as well as the ideas for a Nordic defence union should in my view both be seen as expressions of this wider trend. The original conception of these defence pacts was as parts of a system of regional collective security rather than as traditional military alliances. This is congruent with the Dutch focus on regional pacts as compatible with the UN and even dependent on an overarching collective security organization, as well as with the Swedish presentations of a Nordic pact during the war as compatible with continued neutrality. There is also little reason to assume that contemporaries in Great Britain viewed a Scandinavian defence union as something essentially different from the Western European Union. Based on a new volume of British policy documents on the Nordic countries, former English diplomat Alyson Bailes asserts that for a long time London “clung to the notion of a set of separate but interlinked defence pacts between the Nordic states, the Brussels Treaty group and the United States”. This testifies, again, to the transnational character of the same basic idea of cooperating regional groups.

The war had a huge impact on postwar conditions for the envisioned cooperation. However, in the period before the great powers had decided their course and the Cold War was in place, the security policies of the Dutch and Swedish governments remained similar. Both advocated bridge building and kept striving for increased regional cooperation, even if it was not within immediate reach. The different outcomes were not due to a change of goals but to a change of circumstance: the heightening tensions between the superpowers put all smaller European countries under pressure. In the Netherlands, the sense of haste led to a quick decision to sign the Brussels pact so as not to miss the boat, pushing the country to take the final step in formalizing cooperation already at least in part in existence. In the Dutch case, the need for strong ties with their neighbours and the primacy of economic interests worked in favour of participation in the Brussels pact. The cooperation was in the interest of both

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556 There are exceptions to the rule that historians have underemphasized the international origin or transnational character of national ideas in this period, like Örjan Appelqvist who does transcend the national explanation pattern by placing the Swedish postwar bridge-building ideals in the context of the Atlantic declaration and describes them as born out of the American New-Deal debate. Appelqvist 1995, p. 83. Most history writing in both countries, however, has a national point of view, even when considering international relations. The contacts of Van Kleffens with his Norwegian and Belgian colleagues in London are certainly not ignored by Dutch historians, but I cannot think of anyone who discusses the significance of the fact that Van Kleffens’ plans for regional cooperation were part of a transnational idea. Similarly Nordic cooperation in this period tends to be discussed as an expression of Nordic traditions and interests and not, in addition, as part of a wider trend.

the Dutch defence and economy so that the issues were not separate. It was a logical extension to regional cooperation and the European Recovery Program.

For Sweden, the haste had the opposite effect: the country was pushed back into self-reliance and a situation that threatened isolation. There had not been enough time to sufficiently develop the relationship with Norway in particular for a regional pact to provide a realistic alternative. The window was already closed when Swedish policymakers proposed a Scandinavian Defence Union in the sense that any alternative to non-alignment was no longer an option for Sweden. The initiative can be seen as an almost desperate attempt to rescue plans for Nordic unity in the face of a closing window of opportunity. The failure of the negotiations has often been sought in different views on neutrality as a viable policy. But as argued in chapter 6, the Swedish goal was to save Nordic cooperation in the face of the threat of Norway (and Denmark) joining a Western bloc. With Finland under Soviet influence, hopes for future Nordic cooperation which included that country could only survive if that cooperation took place under the auspices of neutrality. Ties to a Western union would have defeated the purpose. When a neutral union proved impossible, Sweden was left with the role of Nordic balancer.

Both security policies then were a result of a new and critical war-like situation that left limited time or space to work for the long-term goal. One had to make a short-term decision for immediate survival, one which allowed the greatest possible room to work for long-term goals in other ways. In that sense, the Cold War policies of the two countries were reminiscent of their wartime policies. The difference was that while the Dutch alignment reinforced ties with its closest neighbours, a Western alliance for Sweden would have meant severing ties with Finland. In other words, as tensions between East and West grew, the solidarity of the likeminded came to have different implications for Sweden and the Netherlands. The conclusion must be that the definitive parting of ways of Sweden and the Netherlands in 1948 was not caused by different but by similar ideas on how best to achieve security and conduct foreign policy.

And then: neutral versus allied? Epilogue and outlook

In a sense the Dutch and Swedish governments made the same sort of decision in 1948: they committed to a long term foreign policy. There is a widespread notion that neutrality leaves more room for an independent position than does alliance. Yet, the Swedish commitment to neutrality limited the margin for

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558 For example, Vital presents the unaligned state as “the paradigm for all small powers” as it is “compelled to make its own decisions”, suggesting greater freedom/sovereignty for such a state than for one that is aligned. Vital 1967, p. 6. The idea that neutrality has allowed Sweden more freedom of manoeuvre than an alliance membership would have also colours the present-day Swedish debate on NATO-membership. In research on Swedish foreign policy it is also often
manoeuvre as much as the Dutch commitment to the Treaty of Brussels (and then NATO). While in an alliance there is a promise of assistance, the non-aligned Swedish government needed at all times to keep on good terms with those it hoped would come to the rescue in case of an attack. An isolated defence was as unrealistic for Sweden as it was for the Netherlands, notwithstanding the relatively strong Swedish military position.

The difference lies rather in the fact that the Dutch government had an explicit guarantee, which meant certain obligations and commitments but also a freedom to express criticism without the immediate risk of losing support, as the commitment was mutual. The Swedish government judged that such a guarantee had so many drawbacks in peacetime that it opted for a strong defence and implicit security assistance as a back-up in case of war. This left more nominal freedom but had the effect of limiting the possibility for internal criticism, both of domestic policies and NATO priorities, because any prospect of assistance was unofficial. It deserves to be pointed out in this context that such a plan B was not in violation of a policy of neutrality. In her book on Dutch neutrality during World War I, Maartje Abbenhuis emphasizes that even during the war it was not a violation of neutrality to negotiate with a warring state about possible action in the event that the country’s neutrality was breached. It was of course a risk because of the other party’s possible perception of such negotiations, but in itself it did not constitute a violation of neutrality.559

At the same time, it should be pointed out that even an explicit promise in the shape of an alliance commitment did not automatically guarantee effective military help. Any lack of attention to this fact in 1948 was not due to naivety. However, fear of an imminent attack on Dutch territory was neither strong nor the only reason for Dutch alignment. It did later become a problem. In a 2006 article Dutch military historian Jan Hoffenaar describes the insecurity in the early 1950s concerning whether the territory of the Netherlands would be defended by NATO in case of a Soviet attack on Western Europe. The Dutch feared that Allied operations would be determined by self-interest, which did not necessarily include the defence of the Netherlands if the Dutch themselves had not made sure there was a strong defence line along the river Ijssel. The French were more apt to see the Rhine as a natural line of defence, which would have left the Netherlands by and large undefended.560

When in 1952 the Dutch government had to answer to parliament regarding the defence of the Netherlands, the ministers resorted to vague formulations to disguise the fact that their Allies were not in fact committed to defending the Netherlands in the first stage of a potential war. It proved awkward for the

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national governments of the member states, he says, that the organization and operational plans of NATO in the early years were so affected by clashes of national interest. “Naturally, rather than admitting this to be the case”, Hoffenaar writes, “NATO dressed up its decisions with all the paraphernalia of being in the common interest.” This resulted in a “two-track policy” of national governments. “In NATO’s decision-making platforms they fought each other tooth and nail to broker the best possible deal for their country, while at the same time reassuring their own people, even though they did not always have reason to do so.”

It was not the first time potentially conflict-generating information was hidden from the public for the sake of protecting a certain security policy course. Dirk Stikker, the Dutch foreign minister who signed the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949, in his memoirs wrote that he did not think that the Netherlands would have joined NATO if he had revealed in public the American demands concerning Indonesia instead of discussing them only at a closed parliament hearing.

This is interesting first of all in light of the discussion in Swedish historiography about and criticism of the two-track Swedish defence policy: outward non-alignment and covert cooperation with the West. It seems time to ask how unique it was to have a public policy and a covert one. In her book on the Swedes and NATO Ann-Sofie Dahl has described the discrepancy in Swedish security policy between the official professing of non-alignment and the unofficial cooperation with the Western allies as unique and has condemned it as a reprehensible instance of freeriding. Yet, this comparison shows that a two-track security policy was by no means unique to Sweden. Moreover, Sweden’s position can hardly be described as freeriding when compared to that of the Netherlands, a NATO member. As discussed in the introduction to chapter 4, the Dutch government was reluctant to contribute to NATO in the 1950s.

Secondly, the fact that according to Hoffenaar “[i]n the early 1950s the Netherlands would have been left undefended in the event of a Soviet attack” draws attention to the Swedish focus on the possibility of being able to stay out of the initial phase of a third world war. It would seem that Undén’s estimate was in this particular instance quite realistic. Both countries, whether neutral or allied, had to rely on their own capacity to build up a national defence in order to be able to withstand a potential initial attack. Hoffenaar describes how the Dutch almost in panic were forced to step up their military build-up in the wake of the Korean War and had to strengthen their defence of the Ijssel line in order to gain NATO support for that line of defence. On the one hand one could argue that Sweden paid a comparatively high price for maintaining its

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564 Hoffenaar 2006, pp. 269, 279.
outward policy of neutrality as it had to build up its own defence and did not have any guarantee of military assistance in case of an attack. On the other, one could argue that in effect, neither did the Netherlands. Regardless of the different circumstances, both governments continued their quest for a margin for manoeuvre within which they could defend both territorial integrity and political independence. Continued development of Scandinavian cooperation in spite of the failure of the Scandinavian Defence Union also testifies to the continuity of the character of this quest.\(^{565}\)

More comparative research is needed to determine what impact the status of non-aligned versus that of allied actually had on the concrete security situation of Sweden and the Netherlands during the Cold War, and how this changed under the influence of changing circumstances such as the shift to a NATO strategy of massive retaliation. To what extent and in what ways did the professed policies in practice correspond to different degrees of adjustment to the Pax Americana, different levels of protection, and different positions in the international community? How did the United States treat and cooperate with neutral Sweden as compared to the allied Netherlands? Likewise, the impact of the two policies on the domestic situation and national democracy should be compared. How similar were the neutral and the allied states’ need for outward consensus? Was the Swedish government’s preparedness to mislead the public to protect the appearance of neutrality different in any fundamental way from the Dutch government’s resort to deception to protect the appearance of a tight-knit alliance? Questions like these need to be addressed in order to achieve a better understanding both of how the foreign policies of these two countries have developed and of the history of international relations in general. The comparison made here shows that it is time to reevaluate the significance of security policy labels such as non-alignment and alignment and include other levels of analysis and a more nuanced conceptual framework for a better understanding of the margin for manoeuvre of small states and the shaping of international relations.

\(^{565}\) Magnus Petersson has described how in 1949 the Swedish government approved military preparations for cooperation with Denmark and Norway in case of crisis and war and how subsequently the Swedish-Norwegian military cooperation was secretly expanded. Petersson 2012, pp. 132–136.
SAMMANFATTNING

Handlingsutrymme. Nederländska och svenska säkerhetspolitiska föreställningar och strategier 1942–1948


ligt stort utrymme att diskutera säkerhetspolitiska frågor eftersom stormakterna ännu inte hade bestämt sina kurser. Säkerheten framträde dessutom under dessa år som en ovanligt angestängr och brådskande fråga, vilket gör perioden extra intressant för studier av säkerhetspolitiska idéer och strategier. Hur föreställd sig de svenska och nederländska regeringarna sin framtidiga säkerhetspolitik när de internationella villkoren var oklara? Hur såg de på sitt handlingsutrymme och vilka strategier använde de sig av för att uppnå säkerhet? Och på vilket sätt påverkar svaren på dessa frågor förståelsen av de säkerhetspolitiska val som gjordes när kriget bröt ut?


En systematisk jämförelse av de två regeringarnas säkerhetspolitiska föreställningar och agerande visar slående likheter. Under kriget diskuteras i både svenska och nederländska regeringsskrets idéer för ett kollektivt säkerhetsystem baserat på samarbete i regionala pakter. Även om den nederländska utrikesministern föreställde sig en regional pakt centrerad runt Atlanten medan den svenska utrikesledningen tänkte sig en nordisk pakt, baserades båda på snarlika föreställningar: små stater skulle i framtid inte kunna klara sig själva utan måste samarbeta i grupper av likasinnade. Hela världen måste organiseras i sådana grupper som i sin tur skulle samarbeta med varandra i ett decentraliserat men världsomfattande kollektivt säkerhetsystem. Önskan om att skapa en regional pakt ska alltså inte förväxlas med en önskan att delta i en militärallians i traditionell bemärkelse. Den bör istället ses som ett försök att skapa ett system av kollektiv säkerhet som, i motsats till Nationernas Förbund, skulle vara praktiskt genomförbart och effektivt.


Den politiska praktiken rörde sig därför mellan idealism och realism, ett begrepp som enligt denna avhandling inte bör ses som en dikotomi. Än ena sidan försökte man främja en internationell rättsordning, å andra sidan erkände
man tillståndet av motsättningar mellan stormakterna och drog sig inte för att försöka utnyttja det för att främja egna intressen. Akuta hot kunde kräva av-vikelser från vad som uppfattades som det bästa på lång sikt och under idealiska omständigheter. Men även kortsiktiga och maktrrealistiska beslut försvarades i termer av rätt, moral eller allmännynska – vare sig det handlade om Nederländernas försvar av sitt styre i Indonesien eller Sveriges utlämning av baltiska flyktingar till Sovjetunionen.


säkerhetspolitik även om Nederländerna gjorde det genom att ingå i en allians och Sverige genom att slå fast sin alliansfrihet.


Undersökningen visar att det är dags att omvärdera vår bild av småstaters agerande och att studier som använder en mer nyanserad begreppssammanhang som bygger på säkerhetspolitiska etiketter som alliansfri och allierad kan berika historieskrivningen om internationella relationer.
De Koude Oorlog heeft een zwaar stempel gedrukt op het beeld van zowel de Nederlandse als de Zweedse veiligheidspolitiek na 1945. Het beleid van beide landen wordt geplaatst in het kader van de positie tussen Oost en West met respectievelijk het NAVO-lidmaatschap en de neutraliteit als belangrijkste resultaten. Vaak hebben historici de beleidslijnen gepresenteerd als het logische gevolg van de oorlogservaring: terwijl de Zweedse neutraliteit de oorlog overleefde, verloor die van Nederland zijn bestaansrecht toen het land ondanks de neutraliteitsverklaring werd bezet. De tegenstelling neutraal–geallieerd heeft een centrale positie ingenomen in analyses van het veiligheidsbeleid. Zelfs toen het gevestigde beeld van Nederland als een overtuigd en loyaal NAVO-lid, en van Zweden als neutraal balancerend tussen de supermachten, na het einde van de Koude Oorlog ter discussie werd gesteld, gebeurde dit op basis van dezelfde begrippen. Nederlandse onderzoekers stelden de vraag of Nederland nu echt zo’n loyaal NAVO-lid was geweest en wezen op verborgen conflicten met de Westerse mogendheden. Zweedse onderzoekers legden juist de nadruk op de geheime samenwerking met de Westerse mogendheden en stelden de vraag hoe neutraal Zweden nu eigenlijk was geweest.

Dit proefschrift beoogt het debat een stap verder te brengen. Het toetst de voorstellingen van het veiligheidsbeleid van de twee landen door ze tegenover elkaar te zetten nà de uitbraak van de Tweede Wereldoorlog maar vóór de definitieve keuze voor de alliantie- of neutraliteitspolitiek van de Koude Oorlog. Een systematische vergelijking van de ideeën en strategieën met betrekking tot veiligheid van de twee regeringen maakt aspecten van de veiligheidspolitiek zichtbaar die niet gebonden zijn aan neutraliteit of alliantie. Als uitgangspunt voor het onderzoek wordt het concept window of opportunity gebruikt. 1942–1948 was een tijd van grote internationale onzekerheid. De periode wordt vaak behandeld als een impasse of overgang in de internationale betrekkingen. Hier
wordt hij juist behandeld als een tijd van mogelijkheden: de regeringen van kleinere staten als Nederland en Zweden hadden ongewoon veel ruimte om veiligheidspolitieke kwesties te overwegen, juist omdat de grote mogendheden hun koers nog niet hadden bepaald. De veiligheidskwestie was bovendien door de oorlog op scherp gezet en werd dus ervaren als dringend. Dat maakt de periode buitengewoon interessant voor de studie van veiligheidspolitieke ideeën en strategieën. Hoe stelden de regeringen zich de toekomst van hun veiligheidsbeleid voor toen de internationale voorwaarden ervan onduidelijk waren? Welke speelruimte meenden zij te hebben en welke strategieën gebruikten zij om binnen die speelruimte hun veiligheidsdoelen te bereiken? En wat draagt het antwoord op deze vragen bij aan ons begrip van de keuzes die gemaakt werden toen de Koude Oorlog uitbrak?

Dit proefschrift spreekt bewust over de speelruimte (margin for manoeuvre) van kleine staten in plaats van hun macht. Discussions over macht blijven makkelijk steken in noties van relatieve macht en een splitting in offensieve en defensieve macht, waarbij offensieve macht meestal wordt beschouwd als typisch voor kleine mogendheden. De uitdrukking kleine mogendheid impliceert al een relatieve zwakte. Hier wordt liever gesproken over de speelruimte die kleine staten hadden om hun veiligheidsdoelen na te streven. Veiligheid wordt gebruikt in de dubbele betekenis van territoriale integriteit en politieke onafhankelijkheid. Het begrip margin for manoeuvre biedt ruimte aan de inherente spanning tussen deze twee onlosmakelijk met elkaar verbonden belangen. Als analytisch concept kan het aspecten omvatten die door het machtsbegrip meestal worden uitgesloten, zoals het vermogen om samen te werken.

Een vergelijking van de politieke denkbeelden en strategieën van de twee regeringen brengt opvallende gelijkenissen aan het licht. Tijdens de oorlog werden in beide regeringskringen ideeën besproken voor een systeem van collectieve veiligheid, gebaseerd op de samenwerking in regionale verbanden. Ook al stelde de Nederlandse Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken zich een Atlantisch pact voor, terwijl in Zweden een Noords pact werd beoogd, allebei gingen ze uit van hetzelfde scenario: kleine staten zouden zich in de toekomst niet individueel redden, maar moesten samenwerken in groepen van gelijkgezinden. De hele wereld moest georganiseerd worden in zulke groepen, die op hun beurt met elkaar zouden moeten samenwerken in een gedecentraliseerd maar wereldwijd systeem van collectieve veiligheid. De wens om deel te nemen aan een regionaal samenwerkingsverband moet dus niet gezien worden als een wens om deel te nemen aan een traditionele militaire alliantie. Het doel was om een systeem voor collectieve veiligheid te creëren dat, in tegenstelling tot de Volkenbond, uitvoerbaar en effectief zou zijn.

De plannen voor een systeem van collectieve veiligheid op basis van regionale samenwerking, waar vooral de Nederlandse Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Eelco van Kleffens voor pleitte, werden nooit gerealiseerd. De grote mogend-
heden gaven de voorkeur aan een gecentraliseerde veiligheidsorganisatie die dezelfde naam ging dragen als de geallieerden: de Verenigde Naties. De discusies over het lidmaatschap van de VN in Nederland en Zweden laten wederom veel gelijkenissen zien. De grens tussen een alliantie en een organisatie voor collectieve veiligheid is onduidelijk: in beide landen werd aan de ene kant benadrukt dat de VN een voortzetting van de winnende alliantie was, aan de andere kant dat de organisatie streefde naar wereldvrede en losstond van de alliantie uit de oorlog. Ook de interpretatie van de betekenis van de VN voor het eigen veiligheidsbeleid was ambivalent. In beide landen werd benadrukt dat lidmaatschap onverenigbaar was met neutraliteit, maar tegelijk het belang daarvan gebagatelliseerd door erop te wijzen dat men al na de Eerste Wereldoorlog had gekozen voor een solidariteitspolitiek, namelijk toen men lid werd van het Volkenbond. In Zweden werd gewezen op de mogelijkheid die het vetorecht gaf om terug te vallen op de neutraliteit, mocht de VN falen en een oorlog tussen de grote mogendheden uitbreken. In Nederland werd voldaan met de opmerking dat er geen ruimte was voor neutraliteit “in denouden zin”, en werd benadrukt dat het Handvest ruimte liet voor regionale samenwerkingsverbanden onder de overkoepelende organisatie van de VN. De ruimte voor regionale samenwerking werd ook in Zweden als een voordeel genoemd in discusies over de mogelijkheid om de defensie te coördineren met de Noordse buurlanden.

De discussie over de mogelijkheden om de veiligheid die de VN bood aan te vullen, weerspiegelt het gebrek aan vertrouwen in de organisatie in beide landen. Dat was geen gebrek aan overtuiging dat de organisatie nodig was. In tegendeel: zowel in Nederland als in Zweden werden de doelen van de VN gedefinieerd als in lijn met, of zelfs een uitdrukking van, typisch Nederlandse danwel Zweedse waarden en belangen. Samenwerking, vooral tussen de grote mogendheden, werd voorgesteld als een voorwaarde voor vrede. Voor de kleinere staten was het bovendien van levensbelang dat deze samenwerking gebonden werd aan internationale regels die het bestaansrecht van de zwakkeren erkenden. Het alternatief voor samenwerking werd in beide landen in dramatische termen beschreven, als ondergang, niet slechts voor afzonderlijke landen, maar voor de hele mensheid.

Na de oorlog werd in beide landen het belang van samenwerking benadrukt. De Ministeries van Buitenlandse Zaken streefden naar samenwerking tussen de grootmachten én naar een hechtere regionale samenwerking. Het streven naar een vreedzame samenleving werd vaak voorgesteld in termen van recht, solidariteit en moraal, of algemeen belang. De nadruk op principes was ook in het eigenbelang: de belangen en veiligheid van de kleinere staten waren gebaat bij een organisatie die de grotere staten in toom hield en recht erkende boven macht. Tegelijk kon een al te principiële houding in de praktijk gevaarlijk zijn. Het was duidelijk dat er veel onenigheid was tussen de supermachten en dat zij ondanks hun lidmaatschap heel goed in staat waren om de VN te negeren.
Bovendien waren universele principes niet altijd in het voordeel van de kleine staten: een internationale rechtsorde beperkte niet alleen de speelruimte van de grote maar ook van kleine staten.

De politieke praktijk bewoog daarom tussen idealisme en realisme – begrippen die in dit proefschrift niet worden gezien als een dichotomie. Aan de ene kant probeerde men een internationale rechtsorde te bevorderen, aan de andere kant erkende men de situatie van spanningen tussen de grootmachten en werden deze ook benut om eigen belangen te bevorderen. Acute dreigingen konden het noodzakelijk maken om af te wijken van een beleid dat nog steeds werd beschouwd als preferent op lange termijn en onder ideale omstandigheden. Maar ook kortzichtige en realistische beslissingen werden verdedigd in termen van recht, moraal of algemeen belang, of het nou ging om de verdediging van de voortzetting van het Nederlandse gezag over Nederlands Indië of van de Zweedse beslissing om Baltische vluchtelingen uit te leveren aan de Sovjet Unie.

Het volkenrecht zit vol tegenstrijdige principes en kan op vele manieren geïnterpreteerd worden. Dat geldt ook voor het solidariteitsprincipe. In de eerste naoorlogse jaren benadrukten zowel de Nederlandse als de Zweedse regering het belang van universele solidariteit en van samenwerking tussen de grote mogendheden. Tegelijk bleven ze streven naar nauwere samenwerking met gelijkgezinde landen. Achter dit streven lag de overtuiging dat kleine staten zouden moeten samenwerken om niet ten onder te gaan. Voor beide landen was het verdedigen van de eigen positie ten opzichte van de grote mogendheden – ongeacht of deze als in wezen vriendelijk of vijandelijk werden beschouwd – een belangrijk doel van het veiligheidsbeleid. Hiertoe gebruikten ze soortgelijke strategieën, zoals de demonstratie van politieke eensgezindheid, het anticiperen op verwachte eisen, en het benadrukken van de voordelen die de grotere staat bij een vriendschappelijke relatie zou hebben. De regionale samenwerking diende ook dit doel. Zowel de Benelux-landen als de Scandinavische landen probeerden invloed te winnen in internationale fora door gezaamenlijk op te treden, met enig succes.

De tegenstelling tussen Oost en West was dus slechts één van de tegenstellingen die het veiligheidsbeleid beïnvloedde. Ook die tussen kleine en grote mogendheden speelde een rol. Het is ook opvallend dat de regeringen van beide landen zich minder zorgen lieten lijken te hebben gemaakt over een mogelijke oorlog tussen de supermachten dan over de economische instabiliteit, die als een groot veiligheidsrisico werd beschouwd. Beide landen namen deel aan de Marshallhulp, gemotiveerd door het streven naar economische stabiliteit. De Nederlandse regering beweerde, net als de Zweedse, dat de deelname niet betekende dat er een politieke keuze was gemaakt tussen Oost en West. Het was slechts een economische maatregel. Dit is bijzonder interessant omdat de keuze voor de Marshallhulp in de Nederlandse geschiedschrijving nagenoeg altijd wordt gepresenteerd als een beslissend politiek moment, dat deelname aan het Westerse blok onontkoombaar maakte. In de Zweedse geschiedschrijving ligt de nadruk
juist op de pogingen om deelname aan de Marshallhulp als een niet-politieke keuze te presenteren, zodat de neutraliteit niet in gevaar kwam. In feite was de deelname in beide landen voornamelijk een economische beslissing, maar wel één met politieke implicaties. Beide regeringen pasten zich aan aan de Pax Americana en beide zagen zich uiteindelijk genoodzaakt om in 1948 hun veiligheidspolitiek vast te leggen, ook al deed Nederland dat door een alliantie aan te gaan terwijl Zweden zich neutraal verklaarde.

Wat zeggen de resultaten van dit onderzoek over deze verschillende keuzes? Allereerst is duidelijk dat het verschil niet simpelweg geweten kan worden aan het verschil in oorlogservaring. De conclusies die de regeringen trokken over de aard van toekomstige dreigingen en mogelijkheden van kleinere staten om zich afzijdig te houden, waren niet wezenlijk verschillend. Wel schiepen de gevolgen van de oorlog verschillende voorwaarden voor het verwezenlijken van de aanwezige, veelal vergelijkbare, ideeën. In economisch en militair opzicht kwam Zweden veel sterker uit de oorlog dan Nederland, dat in beide opzichten zeer afhankelijk was van anderen. De dwingende consensus in de veiligheidspolitiek beperkte aan de andere kant de speelruimte van Zweden meer dan van Nederland, waar de Duitse aanval al in 1940 ruimte had gemaakt voor open discussies over de veiligheidspolitiek. De oorlog beïnvloedde bovendien de internationale betrekkingen en geopolitieke positie van de twee landen op uiteenlopende wijze. Terwijl de Nederlandse regering tijdens de oorlog een hechtere samenwerking opbouwde met haar buurlanden, isoleerde de oorlog de Zweedse regering ten opzichte van de omliggende landen. De meest ingewikkelde regionale kwestie voor Nederland – de verhouding tot Duitsland – kon uiteindelijk worden opgelost in samenwerking met de Westerse mogendheden (nadat pogingen om de kwestie op te lossen in samenwerking met de Sovjet Unie waren mislukt). Zweden’s oosterbuur Finland, aan de andere kant, was onder het invloed van de Sovjet Unie gekomen. Dat bemoeilijkte een nauwere Zweedse samenwerking met de Westerse mogendheden aanzienlijk. Voor Zweden werden goede betrekkingen met de Sovjet Unie een voorwaarde voor een herstel van de regionale samenwerking.

De solidariteit en samenwerking met gelijkgezinden werd in beide landen beschouwd als een belangrijke sleutel voor de stabiliteit, territoriale integriteit en politieke zelfstandigheid. Deze bijzondere solidariteit met bepaalde landen stond aanvankelijk niet in tegenstelling tot het idee van een universele solidariteit, maar werd gezien als onderdeel ervan. Toen het conflict tussen Oost en West werd aangescherpt, kreeg de regionale solidariteit echter verschillende gevolgen in de twee landen. Terwijl het streven naar regionale samenwerking voor Nederland leidde tot deelname aan het Verdrag van Brussel, stond hetzelfde streven voor Zweden haaks op deelname aan een Westerse alliantie. Nederland en Zweden kwamen dus in verschillende veiligheidspolitieke kampen terecht, niet omdat ze verschillende ideeën en doelen hadden, maar juist omdat ze er
hetzelfde over dachten. Toen de spanningen groeiden en de supermachten de
kleinere landen onder druk zetten om kleur te bekennen, maakten beide een
keuze die ingegeven werd door de wens om maximale speelruimte te behouden
voor de beoogde regionale veiligheid. Dat de twee landen verschillende keuzes
maakten, had volgens dit proefschrift dus hetzelfde motief.

Het onderzoek laat zien dat het tijd is om het gedrag van kleine staten te
herwaarderen. Studies die een fijnmaziger begrippenkader gebruiken dan de
traditionele dichotomie ‘geallieerd’ versus ‘neutraal’ kunnen de geschied-
schrijving van de internationale betrekkingen aanzienlijk verrijken.
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