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Reframing the Diplomat: Ernst van der Beugel and the Cold War Atlantic Community

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Citation

Bloemendal, N. A. (2017, September 6). *Reframing the Diplomat: Ernst van der Beugel and the Cold War Atlantic Community*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/54855>

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Cover Page



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Issue Date: 2017-09-06

6. Defense, Détente and the “Average Man”

This chapter will continue the analysis of Ernst van der Beugel’s diplomatic role and his *modus operandi* from the perspective of New Diplomatic History in the context of the challenge to a strong Atlantic defense posed by the coalescence of détente and the democratization of foreign affairs during the late 1960’s and early 1970s. While the previous chapter predominantly focused on Van der Beugel’s relations with the Atlantic elite and foreign policy establishments on both sides of the Atlantic, this chapter will pay more attention to Ernst van der Beugel’s private activities in the context of Atlantic public diplomacy and psychological warfare. While public diplomacy has traditionally been interpreted as “a state-based instrument used by foreign ministries and other government agencies to engage and persuade foreign publics for the purpose of influencing their governments”, scholars in international relations as well as in diplomatic and communication studies are increasingly studying the role of non-state actors in public diplomacy. As a result, “public diplomacy has come to mean an instrument used by states, associations of states, and some sub-state and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes, and behavior; build and manage relationships; and influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values.”¹

Moreover, in today’s “complex world of transnational relations” a more holistic understanding of public diplomacy also breaks down the rigid separation between outreach to domestic and foreign publics in creating a conducive context for more concrete diplomatic goals.² Melissen argues that public diplomacy can thus be seen as “a metaphor for the democratization of diplomacy” as it has not only brought diplomats to the forefront, “making them more visible than they have ever been”, but its development has also “been instrumental in opening up the traditionally closed domain of accredited practitioners.”³ When we apply this more inclusive frame to our analysis of Ernst van der Beugel’s transatlantic activities, it becomes clear that Van der Beugel, as a transnational actor, already engaged in this kind of unofficial public diplomacy during the 1960s and 1970s – indeed, during a key period in the democratization of foreign policy. At the same time, this chapter will demonstrate how these public diplomacy activities were part of a bigger continuous effort to contribute to the management of the transatlantic relationship through both public channels and diplomatic elite circuits.

¹ Bruce Gregory, “American Public Diplomacy: Enduring Characteristics, Elusive Transformation”, *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 6:3/4 (2011): 353.

² Jan Melissen, “Beyond the New Public Diplomacy”, *Clingendael Paper No. 3*, (The Hague: Netherlands Institute for International Relations ‘Clingendael’, 2011): 3, 19-20.

³ *Ibid.*, 2.

Détente and the Soviet threat

Western cooperation, according to Ernst van der Beugel, was most of all a child of the Cold War conceived by the combined elements of the perceived Soviet threat and American hegemony, which he understood in terms of 'accepted' and 'acceptable' leadership. To a lesser extent he believed it was also born out of the post-war realization that certain problems – especially in the economic and security realms – could no longer be solved within the limited framework of the nation state.⁴ During the course of the 1960's Van der Beugel observed how all three of these elements became subject to erosion, thus creating new threats to Atlantic cohesion and consequently to the security of the West. As Van der Beugel put it in February 1968:

There is no field, whether political or economic or monetary in which things do not drift apart. Priorities in the U.S., by necessity of the circumstances have the tendency to change; Western Europe is in a complete mess; (...) and we talk about detente without knowing what detente is exactly about and what consequences we should draw from it. In other words, while the situation is screaming for a maximum cohesion of the West in practically every field, things have the tendency to fall apart.⁵

By 1966 Ernst van der Beugel had pretty much consolidated the set-up of his freestyle career in trans-Atlantic affairs. In January 1966 he defended his dissertation "From Marshall Aid to Atlantic Partnership: European integration as a Concern of American Foreign Policy" at the Netherlands School of Economics in Rotterdam. The book was published by Elsevier with a foreword by his close friend and rising star Henry Kissinger. Subsequently, in October 1966 Van der Beugel was appointed as Professor of Post-War Western Cooperation at Leiden University – a position made possible by an endowment from the Leiden University Fund. While many of his other activities were more elusive to the public eye – as they took place behind the scenes in boardrooms and through back channels – Ernst van der Beugel's role as professor gave him a clear position and a renewed kind of status as an expert. In this new capacity, Van der Beugel started to play a more prominent role in the public debate. As Jérôme Heldring had already pointed out in his 1963 column suggesting Van der Beugel should take the task of private transatlantic public diplomacy upon himself, public opinion mattered a great deal in international relations. This observation only grew in relevance during the course of the 1960's when foreign policy increasingly became a subject of Dutch public debate. As had been the case with the Gaullist challenge, international relations could not be separated from domestic developments in public opinion and policy making, thus rousing Ernst van der Beugel into action on the domestic as well as on the international front.

⁴ See: "De huidige problemen in de Westelijke Samenwerking - Voordracht gehouden op het Congres ter gelegenheid van het 100-jarig bestaan van de Hogere Krijgsschool op 19 november 1968", box "Lezingen EvdB", AHB; "Verslag van het Congres 'Afschrikking en Ontspanning'", *Internationale Spectator*, 23:1 (1969): 37.

⁵ E.H. van der Beugel to Dr. Fabio Luca Cavazza, 2 February 1968, file 7, EvdB.

Consequently, this chapter focuses on Ernst van der Beugel's analysis of the changing transatlantic landscape during the late 1960's and early 1970's and his subsequent efforts in pursuit of Atlantic cohesion with an emphasis on the legitimization of close Atlantic cooperation and a strong defense effort in the face of détente and the breakdown of the Cold War consensus.

While the first 10-15 years of the Atlantic alliance had been characterized by a sense of clarity undergirded by a basic consensus about the Soviet threat which led to a general recognition of the necessity to arm and defend the West, the alliance entered a twilight zone in the course of the 1960's as tensions in the relationship between East and West started to diminish and the consensus about the character of the Soviet threat broke down.⁶ The cautious rapprochement between East and West that began during the early 1960's started to gain a more concrete form towards the end of the decade as demonstrated by NATO's adoption of the Harmel Report in December 1967, which extended the organization's mission in response to the changing Cold War framework. Next to its original job "to maintain adequate military strength and political solidarity to deter aggression and other forms of pressure and to defend the territory of member countries if aggression should occur" NATO would now also "pursue the search for progress towards a more stable relationship in which underlying issues can be solved."⁷ Thus, as Geir Lundestad has pointed out, the report not only ratified the process of détente but also gave NATO an important role in the process.⁸ Half a year later, in July 1968, a Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed by the U.S. and the Soviet Union as well as some other nations. In 1969 détente entered a new phase. With Richard Nixon in the White House and Willy Brandt pursuing *Ostpolitik* in West-Germany, the process was further formalized and ushered into the 'era of negotiations'.⁹ Moreover, 1969 was also the year in which the Soviet Union realized its goal of reaching strategic parity with the United States, making it a "turning point in the history of the Cold War" according to Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis.¹⁰

At the 1967 Bilderberg conference in Cambridge, England Foreign minister Joseph Luns had asked Ernst van der Beugel to serve as a Dutch rapporteur for the NATO study on the future of the alliance that eventually led to the Harmel report – a request Van der Beugel seriously considered. He was briefed on the subject by the Dutch Permanent NATO Representative Han Boon and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and discussed the option with the American Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Eugene V. Rostow and the U.S.

⁶ "Defensie-Inspanning Zinvol", De Reserve-officier (1967), file 47, EvdB, NAH; "Prof. Van der Beugel: Westen in periode van schemering", NRC, 12 August 1968.

⁷ Qtd. In: Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945: From "Empire" by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 131.

⁸ Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945*, 131.

⁹ Duco Hellema, *Nederland en de jaren Zeventig* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2012), 120; Van der Beugel was not a fan of *Ostpolitik*. See: Van der Beugel/Kissinger TelCon 2-9-1971, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (TELCONS), Digital National Security Archive. "I disagree with him [(Healey)] on many things – he supports *Ostpolitik* now."

¹⁰ Qtd. In Hellema, *Nederland en de Jaren Zeventig*, 120.

Permanent Representative on the North Atlantic Council Harlan Cleveland. Both Americans supported Van der Beugel's appointment and were disappointed to find out shortly afterwards that the Dutchman had decided against accepting the position.¹¹ The reason was "purely a matter of time" Van der Beugel explained. He considered the study as very important, but his commitments for the next three months were such that he could not give it the absolute priority that it deserved.¹²

Ernst van der Beugel remained indeed very concerned about the future of NATO, which he avidly tried to support through his private efforts. During the second half of the 1960's, he carved out a place for himself as a public intellectual by sharing his increasingly disquieting observations of "disintegrating factors" within the Atlantic Community through a rich collection of speeches and articles. The evolving process of détente played a major role in these observations. To Van der Beugel's consternation, détente caused many in the West to think that the Soviet threat had diminished and that the Cold War was over. Many believed, according to Van der Beugel "that the interpretation of the external threat has either been wrong or that it has been outdated, that the existence of the two blocs stands in the way of a peaceful solution in the world and especially in Europe; that ideological differences are irrelevant for political relations; that, consequently, the dissolution of the two blocks would mean a positive contribution for the attainment of peace; that the dissolution of the blocks would mean that Western Europe should free itself from the hegemonic position of the United States and that maintaining and à fortiori strengthening NATO is a step back to an angry and irrelevant past." In fact, between this view and the other "extreme" point of view which stated "that nothing has changed and that what was relevant in 1947 is still as relevant today" Van der Beugel observed "tens of thousands of opinions and publications, which testify more or less to the dissatisfaction with the status quo."¹³

The consensus that once existed about the Soviet threat had clearly broken down and the great variety of interpretations of détente obfuscated the need for close transatlantic unity as well as the need for a robust Atlantic defense. Since Van der Beugel considered the "external threat as one of the most important impulses of the process of Western cooperation" it logically followed that "a change in the evaluation of that threat would imply a weakening" of this cooperation.¹⁴ This development greatly worried Ernst van der Beugel,

¹¹ E. H. van der Beugel to Eugene V. Rostow, 10 April 1967, file 7, EvdB; E.H. van der Beugel to J.M.A.H. Luns, 10 april 1967, file 7, EvdB; Harlan Cleveland to E. H. van der Beugel, 17 April 1967, file 7, EvdB.

¹² E. H. van der Beugel to Eugene V. Rostow, 10 April 1967, file 7, EvdB: "I consider this study as very important which implies that people who take a responsibility upon them should do so in the certainty that they can give absolute priority not only in time but also in their minds. My commitments for the next three months are such that this priority-requirement could not be met."

¹³ Van der Beugel, "De huidige problemen in de Westelijke samenwerking" (translation mine).

¹⁴ See also: E.H. van der Beugel, "Stadium Generale 13 oktober 1967", box "Lezingen EvdB", AHB: "Wat de S.U. vraagt (Karlsbad Conferentie) is ontbinding van de NATO, verdwijnen van de V.S. en permanente discriminatie tegen West-Duitsland. Het stelt daar niets tegenover. See also: Van der Beugel, "De huidige problemen in de Westelijke samenwerking" (translation mine): "Het is duidelijk dat wij, voor zover wij aanvaardden dat de Westelijke samenwerking voor een belangrijk deel een functie is van de Koude Oorlog, wij hier te maken hebben met een

who did not believe that détente reflected any actual changes in the aims and motives of the Soviet Union. Instead, he belonged to the skeptics who, as Max Kohnstamm phrased it, doubted “whether anything has really changed except the girl’s make-up and our way of looking at her.”¹⁵

The enduring malicious objectives of the Soviet Union had been openly reaffirmed in the final communiqué of the April 1967 Conference of the communist Parties in Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia, Van der Beugel argued. These included the dismantling of NATO, the removal of the American presence from the European continent and the permanent discrimination against the Federal Republic of Germany.¹⁶ In addition to this line of conduct, which had not changed since 1945, he added the Russian desire to completely dominate the Soviet imperium and – when given the opportunity – to expand it.¹⁷ Developments like the non-proliferation treaty or agreements about nuclear testing were not in conflict with these objectives, but fitted perfectly within the narrow interpretation of détente as “the simple desire to avoid a nuclear conflict”, which also happened to be the definition Van der Beugel preferred to use.¹⁸ “Essentially, détente is not more and not less than the will of the superpowers to avoid a military confrontation”¹⁹, he maintained. While Van der Beugel hoped that the dialogue between the United States and the Soviet Union on the above mentioned issues would continue, it should never obfuscate the underlying objectives of the Soviet Union, which remained unchanged: “What has not changed is that we still live in a world which is partly dominated by the rivalry of the two systems. East is East and West is West and in the foreseeable future the punishment for forgetting this will be severe.”²⁰

According to Ernst van der Beugel, the easing of East-West tensions was the result of the strength and cohesion that the West had shown after the Second World War. Now, the Atlantic alliance was in danger of becoming a victim of its own success.²¹ After all, a reduction in the strength and cohesion of the West in response to détente would destroy the very instruments that had brought about this change in the first place and would enable the Soviet Union to increase its influence and to bring the nations of Western Europe into a form of subordination through which it could strengthen its position vis-à-vis the only other relevant power in the world: the United States. This would not necessarily have to be a military

verschijnsel - het gebrek aan consensus over de Oost-West verhouding - dat het proces van Westelijke samenwerking verzwakt of althans de natuurlijke groei en evolutie daarvan vertraagt en bedreigt.”

¹⁵ “Max Kohnstamm’s Summary of Discussion Which Took Place at the Bilderberg Conference in Cambridge, England - April 2, 1967”, Box 76, file 4, Arthur H. Dean Papers, CUL.

¹⁶ Van der Beugel, “De huidige problemen in de Westelijke Samenwerking” (translation mine).

¹⁷ “Speech Prof. Dr. van der Beugel at the dinner celebrating the 20th anniversary of the American Association of the Netherlands Hilton Hotel”, Amsterdam, 21 November 1974, box “Lezingen EvdB”, AHB: “The S.U. has an unbroken imperialistic tradition and it has a perfectly good conscience about being imperial”.

¹⁸ Van der Beugel, “De huidige problemen in de Westelijke Samenwerking.”

¹⁹ “Changes in the Western World”, Speech by E.H. van der Beugel for the meeting of the *Conseil de Surveillance* of the *Société Financière Européenne* on October 22nd, 1974, Scrapbook XIV, AHB. p.19.

²⁰ Ibid; Van der Beugel, “De huidige problemen in de Westelijke Samenwerking.”

²¹ E.H. van der Beugel, “Introduction at the Atlantic Symposium in Greenwich”, October 3, 1967, box “Lezingen EvdB”, AHB.

subordination according to Van der Beugel; it could just as well be political in nature leading to the 'finlandization' of Europe.²² Either way, it would be supported by an enormous military power, which was only increasing in strength.²³ The only thing that had kept the Soviet Union from extending its domination over Western Europe was that it had been kept in check by a strong opposing power. If that counter-power would diminish the communists would immediately make use of this situation since, as Van der Beugel perceived the situation through his realist spectacles, "The Russians are simply practicing a politics of immediately filling up any power vacuum [that might occur]."²⁴

While Ernst van der Beugel consistently stressed the importance of power relations and often described the Atlantic Community as a security community in his speeches and publications, he believed it was a mistake to disregard the importance of value systems and ideology in this context. Power politics void of ideological considerations were senseless, he claimed. Jérôme Heldring, with whom Van der Beugel usually found himself in agreement, did not share this conviction. In January 1968, this difference of view led to a rhetorical dispute between the two men that ended up on the pages of the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*. "Why are you and I afraid of a power vacuum being filled up by the Soviet Union? Not just because of the strictly theoretical reason that every power should be kept in check by a countervailing power?" Van der Beugel asked Heldring while following up with his own answer to the question:

We are seriously concerned about such a development because the power vacuum in which we in Europe would live would be filled, not by a theoretical power but by the power of the Soviet Union, which advocates a form of society in which neither you nor I would wish to live, nor could live. To consider this as a secondary reason that ought to be subordinated by the pure theory that a power should be kept in check by a countervailing power is unrealistic and narrow-minded, and what will appeal more to you, factually incorrect.²⁵

Western Europe needed to cooperate closely with the United States because it belonged to the same community of values; a civilization that was being threatened by the power of the Soviet Union that desired to impose a system of values under which Van der Beugel did not desire to live.²⁶ "Individual freedom", Van der Beugel argued in multiple speeches, "is not a

²² Ernst van der Beugel often used this term coined by Richard Löwenthal, which was a popular term among the Dutch foreign policy elite at the time. See: A. van Staden, *Een trouwe bondgenoot: Nederland en het Atlantische bondgenootschap 1960-1971* (Baarn: In den Toren, 1974), 43.

²³ Van der Beugel, "Stadium Generale".

²⁴ "Defensie-Insparing Zinvol": "Die vrede was er slechts doordat de USSR een sterke macht tegenover zich wist. Zou die macht verminderen, dan - en dit is mijn stellige overtuiging, zo benadrukte prof. Van der Beugel - zou de tegenpartij er ogenblikkelijk gebruik van maken. De Russen voeren nu eenmaal een politiek van het dadelijk opvullen van een machtsvacuüm" (translation mine).

²⁵ E.H. van der Beugel to Jérôme Heldring, 16 January 1968, file 7, EvdB (translation mine).

²⁶ E.H. van der Beugel, "De huidige problemen in de Westelijke Samenwerking", "Verslag van het Congres 'Afschrikking en Ontspanning'", *Internationale Spectator*, 23:1 (1969): "Het gebruik van macht of het opbouwen van

marginal phenomenon. It is fundamental. A system that pursues individual freedom – and that is what happens in the countries of the Western system – often shows many weaknesses, flaws and shortcomings, but it demonstrates to be so clearly superior to a system that denies these freedoms that an obfuscation or even a denial of these differences must invoke the judgment of a lack of integrity.”²⁷ While Van der Beugel believed the threat of a full-out nuclear war had faded, he was convinced that the political threat of falling prey to the domination of a reprehensible political system had not faded a bit and was still to be feared – a conviction he tried to convey to whomever would listen. “I realize,” he acknowledged, “that this point of view is often classified as Cold War-orthodoxy carried by our trauma of the 1930’s and inspired by an outdated view of the power relations in the world or the intentions of those with respect to whom we have built up that strength. I do not want there to be any misunderstanding about the fact that I belong to that orthodoxy and that I would see a weakening of that strength or the creation of unclear situations as a calamity that would either bring the war closer or disturb the balance of power and at the very least it would expose us in Europe to the political pressure of the Soviet Union.”²⁸ Consequently, Van der Beugel argued that “European security is for the time being still bound to maintaining the structure, organization and power of the Western World.”²⁹ In this, Van der Beugel believed that American leadership and a continued American presence on the European continent played a central role. The American role and presence in Europe, however, had also become subject to erosion.

A Decline in Accepted and Acceptable American Leadership

American leadership in the Atlantic Community was a two way street according to Van der Beugel: not only should it be accepted by the receiving party (the Europeans), it also had to be embraced by the party exercising power (the Americans). During the course of the 1960’s, Van der Beugel observed how both European acceptance of American leadership and the American desire to assert leadership on the European continent were deteriorating. The Vietnam War played a key role in this process. “However one thinks about the American engagement in Vietnam – and in many of those thoughts I am often struck by the frightful lack of nuance in those judgments – one thing is certain, namely that Vietnam has sucked away both the material and mental sources of other objects of its foreign policy, and particularly from the process of Western cooperation,”³⁰ Van der Beugel observed. “Nobody can deny that the intense preoccupation with Europe by the United States has been substituted by its commitment to the war in Vietnam. I belong to those who support in

kracht in de Westelijke wereld van heden heeft onder meer tot doel het handhaven en verdedigen van een bepaalde maatschappijvorm. Spaak noemde het zelfs – en naar mijn mening terecht – een beschaving.”

²⁷ Van der Beugel, “Changes in the Western World”, 19.

²⁸ “Verslag van het Congres ‘Afschrikking en Ontspanning’”, 40 (translation mine).

²⁹ Van der Beugel, “Stadium Generale” (translation mine).

³⁰ Van der Beugel, “De huidige problemen in de Westelijke Samenwerking” (translation mine).

general America's role in that area because I feel that the outcome of this struggle is as much in our interest as in that of our American friends. We all are committed to America's prestige because it is the position and prestige of the only relevant power in the free world of which we are a part."³¹ Van der Beugel acknowledged however that American prestige was also greatly undermined by the Vietnam War, which served as a key catalyst for criticism of the United States in Western Europe.³²

To make matters worse, the Vietnam War coincided with the manifestation of immense problems in American society itself, especially with regards to issues of race and poverty; "the discovery that an unbearable tension can develop between the blessings of the system and the neglect of gaping wounds"³³ as Van der Beugel put it, which further amplified a shift in American priorities away from Europe. "If we add to this a general fatigue with regards to carrying global responsibilities, an endangered balance of payments and an increasing estrangement of those groups who helped to design and carry out America's post-war politics, it is no wonder that [America's] hegemonic position (...) has been seriously weakened, not in terms of power, but in terms of accepted and acceptable leadership"³⁴, Van der Beugel concluded. Europeans were less eager to accept American leadership and Americans were less inclined to provide it. While the U.S. was struggling with domestic unrest, a balance of payments problem and the War in Vietnam, Western Europe had grown stronger economically and increasingly Americans started to wonder why Europeans could not pick up more of the burden of their own defense.³⁵

The Atlantic Elite and the 'Average Man'

Meanwhile, the Atlantic elite tried to come to grips with this shifting trans-Atlantic landscape. At the 1967 Bilderberg meeting in Cambridge, England the question was explored whether the basic concepts of Atlantic cooperation remained valid for the evolving world situation. "What should the Atlantic Alliance be – if there should be an Atlantic Alliance; in an era of détente – if there is any détente?" In these words Max Kohnstamm rephrased the central question in an attempt to sum up the conclusions of the debate following papers by the German journalist Theo Sommer and the renowned Harvard professor of international relations Stanley Hoffman. As it turned out, the participants of the conference had trouble getting beyond defining the "evolving world situation" in the first place. No agreement could

³¹ "Relations Between Europe and the United States", *Knickerbocker International*, April 1967.

³² Rimko van der Maar, *Welterusten Meneer de President: Nederland en de Vietnamoorlog 1965-1973* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2007) 203.

³³ Van der Beugel, "De huidige problemen in de Westelijke Samenwerking" (translation mine).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ See for example: J. Hoffenaar and B. Schoemaker, *Met de blik naar het Oosten: de Koninklijke Landmacht 1945-1990* (The Hague: Historical Section of the Royal Netherlands Army, 1994), 257; A. van Staden, *Een Trouwe Bondgenoot: Nederland en het Atlantisch Bondgenootschap 1960-1971* (Baarn: In Den Toren, 1974), 164-166; Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945*, 194-195. This request even translated into congressional resolutions to reduce the number of American troops in Europe, the most dramatic of which were the so-called Mansfield amendments, named after Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield, who repeatedly put such resolutions forward from 1966 onwards.

be reached about the nature of the context in which the Atlantic alliance was operating: "We differ as to how this détente should be defined and where it is leading to", Max Kohnstamm observed. There was disagreement about the objectives of the alliance and he perceived "a considerable amount of disagreement concerning our means" as well as about "the emphasis that should be placed on national action on the one hand and alliance action on the other in the use of military and political forces." There was also divergence of opinion on the non-proliferation treaty and about the exact nature of the Soviet threat.³⁶ As Lord Shawcross wrote to Ernst van der Beugel afterwards, the conference brought home "the force of some of the disharmonies and the differences of objective which exist in the Atlantic alliance" making it "all the more obvious how much we ought to work to overcome some of the differences which exist and to find a sensible *modus vivendi* for the future."³⁷

Ernst van der Beugel could not agree more. He was very worried about the fragmentation of views that also manifested itself at the conference and during the following decade the Bilderberg Meetings served as a central forum where the Atlantic elite tried to come to grips with the evolving world situation. The Ford Foundation also saw an important role for Bilderberg in this context; in a way as a private substitute to make up for the lack of attention given to Europe by the American government. In 1968, the foundation decided to approve a \$50,000 grant to cover Bilderberg expenses during the following three years stating that "given the present state of tension in European-American relations, contacts of this kind should be cultivated" especially in the context of "European concerns that U.S. Government policy is not giving sufficient attention to Europe (on account of our involvement in Asia)."³⁸

On Van der Beugel's instigation the debate on "the relations between the West and the Communist countries" was continued at the 1968 Bilderberg conference in Mont Tremblant, Canada.³⁹ This time, "in appraising the shortcomings and imperfections of the Atlantic Alliance, considerable attention was paid to the unsatisfactory state of public opinion vis-a-vis NATO." During the discussion "various speakers stressed the importance of taking action to win the support of the public for the Western alliance."⁴⁰ While the debate in Mont Tremblant had again exposed a division of views on the evolving Cold War context, a certain consensus about the fundamental importance of the Atlantic alliance could still be detected among Bilderberg participants. What worried Van der Beugel most was that this consensus no longer reflected general trends among the public at large: the Atlantic elite had run out of sync with the general public in the countries represented at the Bilderberg conferences. Consequently, in finding a sensible *modus vivendi* for the future trying to foster mutual understanding among the elite did no longer suffice.

³⁶ "Max Kohnstamm's Summary of Discussion".

³⁷ Lord Shawcross to Ernst H. van der Beugel, 5 May 1967, file 7, EvdB.

³⁸ "Grant Request No. ID-118, General Program of the Bilderberg Conference Group Supplement No.3", April 17, 1968, Grant Files, Bilderberg, 56-340, Reel 5464, FFA, RAC.

³⁹ E.H. van der Beugel to Steering Committee, 9 November, 1967, box 76, Arthur H. Dean Papers, CUL.

⁴⁰ Bilderberg Meetings Mont Tremblant Conference Booklet, 26-28 April 1968, Series 7, box 53:30, Shepard Stone Papers, RSCL.

Already in August 1966, Ernst van der Beugel had rung the alarm bells within the Bilderberg Steering Committee concerning the “widening gap between the views (...) of the leading elites of our countries whose members still hold most of the vital posts in the Western world on the one hand, and, on the other, the great mass of people, and most especially the young”. In the past, Van der Beugel argued, “practically everybody in a position of influence in the Western World and practically every participant in the Bilderberg conferences agreed on a few basic assumptions” among which were the “need for a maximum of cohesion in the Atlantic world” and the “need for a strong defensive posture towards the Eastern Bloc”. Even more important, according to Van der Beugel, was the fact that “in agreeing to these basic assumptions the Bilderberg participants represented the main current of political thought in their respective countries”. Now that this was no longer the case, “the necessity for a strong and cohesive Atlantic world and for the strongest possible ties between the United States and Europe” was “in danger of becoming the credo of a very small group which is essentially the establishment of 1952 not that of 1966 and certainly not that of the seventies.”⁴¹

In this context, Van der Beugel was especially worried about “the complete ignorance of and indifference to our basic assumptions in the minds and hearts of such a substantial segment of the population in our part of the world,” which he considered to be very “dangerous”.⁴² After accepting an invitation as an “independent speaker” by NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General Goodpaster, in May 1970 to give a critical speech on “the Preservation of an Effective Alliance in the 1970s” to the NATO leadership at SHAPEX, Van der Beugel identified this as the key challenge to the future of the alliance.⁴³ “The time is over that foreign and military policy was formulated and executed by a small elite”, he declared. “The average person in our countries is more than ever important in relation to NATO.” He did not even try to hide his elitist disdain of these developments as he admitted to “have a certain nostalgia” for the period when the elite did not have to pay attention to the masses stating that he was “not overly enthusiastic about all the political, military and strategic theories of protestant clergyman, marrying priests, new leftist sociologists, leaders of student movements, television commentators and even some members of parliament.” Even so, they were no longer to be ignored: “we must admit that they want to be more involved in the process of decision making in foreign policy and its military consequence than formerly,” he acknowledged. “Therefore the perspective of the average person of NATO becomes more important.”⁴⁴

The ensuing situation created a major challenge for the Atlantic alliance: while the Americans were demanding an increase in the European defense contribution – and rightly so according to Van der Beugel – public opinion seemed to be moving in the opposite

⁴¹ E.H. van der Beugel to the Members of the Steering Committee of Bilderberg, August 1966, file 7, EvdB.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ A.J. Goodpaster to E.H. van der Beugel, January 15, 1970, Scrapbook XI, AHB. SHAPEX is the annual SACEUR conference.

⁴⁴ E.H. van der Beugel, “NATO and the Average Man”, speech, May 14, 1970, file 47, EvdB.

direction.⁴⁵ Increasingly, raising the defense budget was going to be a hard sell in most European countries. According to Van der Beugel, it was particularly difficult to mobilize a consensus behind NATO because the average person, notwithstanding all available information, was “confused” about the organization. This confusion was a result of developments like détente, nuclear parity and the diminishing role of American leadership in Europe, but also of the subsequent change in NATO’s military strategy from the black and white simplicity of “massive retaliation” to the more complex strategy of “flexible response”, which was harder to explain to the general public. For more than a decade it had been “hammered” into the minds of European citizens that conventional forces were practically irrelevant for NATO, and now they “suddenly had to accept that conventional forces were not only meaningful but vital for the flexible response strategy and that there was no longer a nuclear superiority of the United States.”⁴⁶ This message had not come across yet and to change this Ernst van der Beugel emphasized the importance of making sure “that the thesis that substantial conventional forces are a condition *sine qua non* for stability and peace in this part of the world” be translated into the “language of the average man.” This was crucial Van der Beugel emphasized “because in our modern times we need the understanding and the consent of broad groups of average people to implement policies of this nature.” For a large part, this was a matter of ‘education’. Van der Beugel was very critical of the way in which the public had been informed, especially by the news media, but he believed that this could still be corrected. “There are fortunately even now on both sides of the Ocean majorities which, if properly informed, would still be in support of the basic political assumptions from which NATO was born”, he claimed. “But important and vocal groups have dropped out of the consensus.”⁴⁷ Consequently, he considered “bringing back, at least the serious fragment of those groups, to the view that Western cooperation is not a relic of a bygone era” as essential for the perseverance of the Atlantic Community.⁴⁸

An important segment of these groups consisted of a new generation that had grown up after the Second World War. Their falling out could partly be explained by the development of a generation gap – a challenge in itself that the next chapter will focus on in more detail. But, Van der Beugel argued, “this is not only a matter of generations – the so – called generation gap. The change is more profound. Increasingly no clear distinction can be drawn between domestic and foreign policy and when there are rather fundamental changes in our domestic political and social structures they must have a serious impact on the Western system and the foreign policy of the countries in the West. (...) I think that for the survival of the Western system – of our kind of society – it is essential that we will do everything to restore a certain

⁴⁵ For an in depth study on individuals and groups questioning the legitimacy of the armed forces and security and defense policy in the Netherlands during the Cold War see: Coreline Boot, *Het leger onder vuur: De Koninklijke Landmacht en haar critici 1945-1989* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2015).

⁴⁶ Van der Beugel, “NATO and the Average Man”.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* (Emphasis mine).

⁴⁸ Van der Beugel, “De huidige problemen in de Westelijke Samenwerking” (translation mine).

consensus about our relations with the Communist world.”⁴⁹ In the context of Atlantic security, Van der Beugel believed it was the task of the “very small well informed group of military personnel and diplomats” to convince the masses about the necessity of a strong defense contribution.⁵⁰ He believed this was first and foremost a task for the national governments.⁵¹ In the Netherlands, however, he found that the national government was not pro-active enough in this field. Consequently, it was in this perceived void that Ernst van der Beugel stepped forward.

In doing so, Van der Beugel certainly was not the only or the first private actor taking up a role in transatlantic public diplomacy. As Valérie Aubourg has pointed out, the development of NATO’s Information Service (NATIS) was intertwined with the organic grass-root development of Atlantic NGO’s, which led to a complementary role in transatlantic diplomacy. While NATO’s member governments had a clear perception of the importance of public opinion, NATIS had been faced with strong limitations from the start. Government representatives had no intention of giving up their national prerogatives in the field of information policy and NATO did not want to come across as aggressive. A too belligerent public diplomacy campaign was regarded as particularly counterproductive as it might actually start to reek of communist-like propaganda, damaging its credibility in the West.⁵² In contrast, private support from transatlantic civil society emphasized a view of the alliance as a “defensive cooperation between free, democratic states.” Most important, however, was the fact that NATO relied on private actors “as opinion framers to spread out its message much more efficiently than through official propaganda.”⁵³ Thus, from early on NATO outsourced part of its public diplomacy to private proxies as NATIS deliberately cooperated with non-state actors to spread a better understanding of NATO, its aims and necessity, thus including them “among recognized actors in transatlantic public diplomacy.”⁵⁴ As Aubourg put it: “governments and official institutions were of course essential [in promoting the Atlantic alliance], but so were middle-level elites – including public intellectuals, the media, and non-

⁴⁹ Van der Beugel, “Changes in the Western World”.

⁵⁰ “Prof. Van der Beugel: ‘Overtuig de massa van noodzaak sterke defensie’”, *Trouw*, 1 October, 1970, 4.

⁵¹ See: E.H. van der Beugel and M. Kohnstamm “Western Europe and America in the Seventies” (Paper for the Bilderberg Meeting in Knokke, 21-23 April 1972), Series 7-53:61, Shepard Stone Papers, RSCL: “It nevertheless remains very important that NATO’s military role and its implications should be explained in a way understandable to the average citizen. This is not primarily a task for NATO, but for national governments – and here the record of performance is a bad one. This is a serious weakness because defence efforts are by definition not the most wildly acclaimed functions of government. In the long run no meaningful defence effort can be maintained without a broad basis of popular understanding.”

⁵² Valérie Aubourg, “Creating the Texture of the Atlantic community. The NATO Information Service, private Atlantic networks and the Atlantic Community in the 1950s,” in *European Community, Atlantic Community?* ed. Valérie Aubourg, Gerard Bossuat and Giles Scott-Smith (Paris: Soleb 2008), 392, 394, 407.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 408.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 410; A similar pattern can be seen in the context of NATO’s attitude towards psychological warfare in the 1960s. See for example: Giles Scott-Smith, “Not a NATO responsibility? Psychological warfare, the Berlin Crisis and the formation of Interdoc”, in *Transforming NATO in the Cold War: Challenges Beyond Deterrence in the 1960s*, eds. Anna Locher and Christian Nuenlist (London: Routledge, 2006), 31-49; Giles Scott-Smith, *Western anti-Communism and the Interdoc Network: Cold War Internationale* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

governmental organizations for example – who captured the fleeting ideas about the Atlantic Community and acted as a transmission belt to the larger public.”⁵⁵

The Dutch Scene: Nieuw Links, the PvdA and the Vietnam Letter

Also in the Netherlands Van der Beugel’s views were running out of vogue during the late 1960s as voices more critical of the status quo and especially of the *establishment* – to which Van der Beugel clearly belonged – were gaining strength and the broad post-war consensus underlying Dutch defense and security policy started to erode. The War in Vietnam (which was formally supported by the Dutch government), NATO, the arms race and the overall compliant attitude of the Dutch government towards the United States all became subject of social debate and criticism. “Current fashion”, Van der Beugel observed in 1967, “is characterized by long hair, short skirts and anti-Americanism.”⁵⁶

Cracks in the post-war foreign policy and security consensus also became visible within the Dutch Labor Party.⁵⁷ While the PvdA had traditionally been supportive of the Atlantic alliance, in 1966 a radical group of reformists that came to be known as *Nieuw Links* (New Left) came to the fore within the party. To Van der Beugel’s chagrin, the rise of *Nieuw Links* led to a more vocal opposition to ‘Cold War dogmas’ accompanied, among other things, with pleas for a ‘critical NATO-membership’ and a decrease of the defense budget.⁵⁸ In an attempt to do away with the Cold War mentality, members of *Nieuw Links* wanted to replace the preoccupation with the East-West divide by more attention for the North-South divide and a greater role for the Netherlands in the Third World. Van der Beugel, who still regarded Europe as a key theatre in a military and ideological stand-off between East and West, regarded this as a dangerous development, arguing that the punishment of such a shift of attention would be “severe”.⁵⁹

In the spring of 1966 criticism regarding America’s Vietnam policy appeared so popular that the PvdA party leadership was tempted to see it as a means to gain votes in its campaign for the provincial elections. Hence, on May 2, PvdA chair Sjeng Tans publicly delivered a critical letter on America’s Vietnam policy to the U.S. ambassador to the Netherlands, William

⁵⁵ Aubourg, “Creating the Texture of the Atlantic community”, 391.

⁵⁶ “Defensie-Inspanning Zinvol” (translation mine): “De Verenigde Staten vormen nog steeds de enige krachtbron die relevant is voor onze verhoudingen. Dat is mijn eerlijke mening en door die te uiten - dat realiseer ik me - onttek ik mij aan de mode. De huidige mode wordt namelijk gekarakteriseerd door lange haren, korte rokken en anti-Amerikanisme.”; “Prof. V.d. Beugel over Atlantische crisis”, *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, 1 December 1966; For the Netherlands and the Vietnam War see: Rimko van der Maar, *Welterusten mijnheer de president* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2007).

⁵⁷ For an in depth study of the security policy debate within the PvdA during this period see: Frank Zuijdam, *Tussen wens en werkelijkheid: Het debat over vrede en veiligheid binnen de PvdA in de periode 1958-1977* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2001).

⁵⁸ Frank Zuijdam, “Dutch Left-Wing Political Parties and NATO” in *Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations*, eds. Hans Krabbendam, Cornelis van Minnen, Giles Scott-Smith (Amsterdam: Boom, 2009), 65; Zuijdam, *Tussen wens en werkelijkheid*, 193; Hellema, *Nederland en de Jaren Zeventig*, 66.

⁵⁹ See: Zuijdam, *Tussen wens en werkelijkheid*, 138, 148, 156-157; Van der Beugel, “De huidige problemen in de Westelijke Samenwerking.”

Tyler. In the letter, which received a great deal of attention in the Dutch media, the PvdA leadership informed the American government that Dutch public opinion was growing increasingly disturbed by the enduring war in Vietnam and subsequently requested the Americans to stop their bombing campaign in Vietnam in order “to restore the shaken faith in the purposes of American politics.”⁶⁰

Ernst Van der Beugel strongly disagreed with this rather blunt and undiplomatic move by his own party. Together with three other prominent PvdA party members of the older generation – Frans Goedhart, Marinus van der Goes van Naters and Lou de Jong⁶¹ – he composed a critical response to the Vietnam letter which was published in two prominent Dutch Newspapers: *Het Parool* and *Het Vrije Volk*. In their response, the four critics accused the party leadership of defiling the international political-psychological climate and of playing into the hands of the communists by exercising “pacifist capitulation politics”. They furthermore warned the party leadership that it “should in no way cooperate with those who try to put pressure on America to ensure that the people in Vietnam will be left to their fate in their fight against the communists.” Instead, all the horrors of the Vietnam War should be seen as the responsibility of the instigators, “namely the communists in Hanoi, Peking and Moscow.”⁶² According to the writers, those who realized that resistance against communism “ought to be exercised with strength” were deeply disappointed and it was now up to the party leadership to do everything in its power to regain the trust of this group. During the course of 1967, however, it became increasingly clear that individuals like Ernst van der Beugel, represented a minority in the PvdA and the party leadership proved to be more interested in accommodating *Nieuw Links* than regaining the favor of the angry old guard.⁶³

In October 1966 Van der Beugel vented his remaining frustrations about the Vietnam letter in an opinion article in *Het Parool* and the PvdA journal *Socialisme en Democratie*. He now requested a clarification from the party leadership with regard to the letter on Vietnam and added the matter of the letter’s timing, namely weeks before the provincial elections, to his earlier voiced concerns while accusing the party leadership of jeopardizing Dutch relations with the Americans merely for the sake of domestic political purposes; in other words: to gain votes. Van der Beugel furthermore defended the United States as Holland’s greatest ally, reminding his readers of America’s benevolent role in and following the Second World War and as defender of the Free World in the Cold War. While this did not mean that the Dutch or the PvdA should accept America’s policy in Vietnam at face value, without any room for criticism, it did mean, Van der Beugel explained, that the way in which the United States

⁶⁰ Qtd. in: van der Maar, *Welterusten mijnheer de president*, 60 (translation mine).

⁶¹ Frans Goedhart served as a PvdA representative in the Second Chamber at the time. For an in depth study of Frans Goedhart see: Madelon de Keizer, *Frans Goedhart, een biografie. Journalist en Politicus, 1904-1990* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2012). Marinus van der Goes van Naters was a former SDAP and PvdA party leader (1945-1951) who served as a representative in both the Dutch (1937-1967) and the European (1958-1967) parliaments. Lou de Jong was a renowned Dutch historian specialized in the Second World War. For an in depth study on Lou de Jong see: Boudewijn Smits, *Lou de Jong, 1914-2005* (Boom: Amsterdam, 2014).

⁶² E.H. van der Beugel et al., “PvdA en Vietnam”, *Het Vrije Volk*, 16 June 1966, p. 9.

⁶³ Zuijdam, *Tussen Wens en werkelijkheid*, 178.

would solve this problem was an issue in which the Dutch people including PvdA members – as free people – were intimately involved. “However one thinks about the question whether Vietnam is the ideal place to commit so much American might and prestige, today we have to deal with the fact that this commitment is there and that an American defeat or humiliation is not tolerable – also not for us – because it would seriously impair the position of the only source of power in the Western World.” In the rest of the article, Van der Beugel went on to defend the American position and – again – suggested a communist plot. “Nowhere has the communist propaganda worked so effective and so subtle as in the case of the Vietnam-issue, not even in their attempts to systematically fuel fears of Germany”⁶⁴, he argued.

The PvdA’s international secretary Piet Dankert replied to Van der Beugel’s complaints on behalf of the party leadership in the same issue of *Socialisme en Democratie*. The party leadership’s letter to the American ambassador was not so much about the goals as it was about the methods of the Vietnam War, he explained. On the latter subject, however, Van der Beugel *et al* had been awfully silent. While arguing for an informed debate about a complex issue they had made themselves guilty of simplistic rhetoric that totally defied any such complexities, Dankert argued, while he, in turn, compared the style of the initial publication by the four critics of the Vietnam letter to the rhetoric used in communist propaganda. Dankert ended his piece by clarifying that the party leadership’s letter should first and foremost be understood as an expression of sympathy with those in the United States who strive towards a reasonable compromise that meets the need for order, rest and peace of great segments of the people of South-Vietnam.⁶⁵

In April 1967, Van der Beugel signed a petition of the *Reaktiecomité Vietnam*, a group of pro-America demonstrators set up by students from Rotterdam. In an effort to counter the anti-Vietnam War protesters, the group organized a demonstration during which they delivered a letter of support for America’s Vietnam policy to the American Ambassador and a petition of a similar nature to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Lou de Jong and Van der Goes van Naters were also among the signatories of the letter showing support for the Americans in Vietnam.⁶⁶ In November 1967, *Nieuw Links* won seven seats in the PvdA party council. After talks with the PvdA leadership in late 1967, in which they had shown no interest in countering the ‘anti-American’ forces unleashed within the party by *Nieuw Links*, Van der Beugel decided to terminate his PvdA membership in December 1967. He did so silently and never became a member of another political party again.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ E.H. van der Beugel, “De PvdA en Vietnam”, *Het Parool*, 15 October 1966, p.2.

⁶⁵ P. Dankert, “Vietnam, de brief van 2 mei en de links en rechts verontruste partijgenoten”, *Socialisme en Democratie* 23:10 (1966) 745-751.

⁶⁶ “Vluggesprek met prof. Dr. Ernst H. van der Beugel”, Scrapbook IX, AHB; “Demonstreren vóór VS in Vietnam,” *Nieuwe Leidsche Courant*, 12 april 1967, p.13.

⁶⁷ E.H. van der Beugel to W. Drees, 11 december 1967, file 7, EvdB; EvdB/Kersten Oral History, p 240.

The Dutch Defense Debate

During most of the 1960's, the Dutch defense contribution had decreased as a percentage of the Dutch GDP. While in 1962 the Netherlands dedicated 5,1 percent of its gross national income to its defense, this number had declined to 3,8 percent by 1970.⁶⁸ Van der Beugel not only believed that this budgetary trend had to be turned around in order to meet the NATO requirements, but was also convinced that the Dutch armed forces needed to be reformed so as to become more efficient. Both issues were highly controversial. In response to Van der Beugel's SHAPEX speech on 'NATO and the Average Man', professor Jaap Kymmell had written to him that "in essence, we can only arouse public interest in and appreciation for NATO and for the defense effort if we make the people afraid; afraid of the departure of the Americans and afraid of the dependence on the Russians. More information about the alliance, strategic conceptions, nuclear weapons, etc. essentially will not help."⁶⁹ While the Soviet threat and the dangers of an American retreat from the European continent were certainly central recurring themes in Van der Beugel's repertoire as a public intellectual, it was another Dutchman who, in the summer of 1970, succeeded to ignite a real national debate on the future of the Dutch defense by drawing upon some of the country's worst fears.

In June 1970, Lou de Jong, at the time the most renowned Dutch historian of the Second World War, delivered a speech titled "The Crisis of Our Defense" to an audience of former World War II political prisoners in the old Dutch city of Delft in which he drew direct parallels between the deplorable state of the Dutch military during the run-up to the Second World War and the current situation. History, de Jong argued, was repeating itself.⁷⁰ De Jong, who was one of the PvdA members who had joined Ernst van der Beugel in his protest against the party's Vietnam letter to the American ambassador, not only noticed a lack of public support for the Dutch armed forces, but also argued that the military itself was not trained nor equipped well enough to quickly repel a possible attack from the Warschaupact countries.⁷¹ With regards to the Dutch transatlantic commitments he also warned that:

⁶⁸ Theo de Jong, "Veertien Wijze mannen lichten defensie door", *Algemeen Dagblad*, 29 September 1971: "Vaststaat dat het percentage van het nationaal inkomen dat aan de defensie wordt besteed, de afgelopen jaren steeds verder gezakt is. In 1962 werd 5,1 procent aan de defensie uitgegeven: in 1963 4,8; 1965 4,3; 1966 4,1; 1967 4,2, 1968 4,0; 1969 3,9 en in 1970 3,8 procent. Dat niettemin het bedrag aan geld steeds stijgt, wordt verklaard door het feit dat het nationaal inkomen relatief snel groeit." For a more detailed description of the state of the Dutch defense during this period see: Jan Hoffenaar and Ben Schoenmaker, *Met de blik naar het Oosten*, 241-273.

⁶⁹ Prof. Dr. J. Kymmell to E.H. van der Beugel, 15 June 1970, file 9, EvdB: "in wezen kunnen wij de publieke belangstelling en waardering voor de NATO en voor de defensie alleen opwekken indien wij de mensen bang maken. Bang voor het vertrek van de Amerikanen en bang voor de afhankelijkheid van de Russen. Meer informatie over het bondgenootschap, strategische concepties, atoomwapens, etc. zullen in wezen niet helpen." Jaap Kymmell had served under Van der Beugel at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before he became Van der Beugel's dissertation advisor in the early 1960's

⁷⁰ L. de Jong, "De crisis van onze defensie", *Militaire Spectator* 139 (1970), 402-407.

⁷¹ H.P.M. Kreemers, "De oorlog tussen de Generaals: Het conflict in de top van de Koninklijke Landmacht, 1971-1973", *Militaire Spectator* 176 (2007): 378-389.

A situation threatens to arise in which our Army (I will just have to limit myself to that now) because of a lack of means – through obsolete armaments, through worn-out vehicles, through insufficient training, is simply incapable of performing the defensive task which it has to carry out in the framework of the alliance.⁷²

As Jan Willem Honig has pointed out, de Jong's speech "for the first time effectively drew the attention of a wide audience to the fact that all was not well with Holland's defense." Thus, Honig argued, "it can be said that de Jong sparked off a national debate that was to drag on for several years. For the first time it seemed possible that forces outside the defense establishment would have a voice in defense reform."⁷³ The speech indeed received a great deal of attention in Dutch media. Responses varied from astonishment to disbelief. While Foreign Affairs minister Joseph Luns and Defense minister Willem den Toon welcomed the speech, Joop den Uyl, the faction leader of the PvdA of which Lou de Jong was still a member, responded annoyed, saying de Jong had been fooled by the military establishment.⁷⁴ This, in turn, inspired Ernst van der Beugel to write an angry letter in response to den Uyl in which he accused the PvdA leader of trying to appease "a completely impossible stream within the party", which would only lead to an "increasingly irresponsible radicalization of the party."⁷⁵ Den Uyl, in turn, replied by saying that he believed that de Jong's warning in fact undermined the defensibility of the West. He was convinced that the comparison with the 1930's was flawed and that the argumentation that raising the defense budget would solve the problem "played into the hands of the most conventional and conservative approach to the defense-problem." According to Den Uyl, the worst enemies of the West were those, who – as a result of repeatedly renewed escalations of violence – have come to identify the West with violence.⁷⁶

Lou de Jong had also sent a copy of his speech to Ernst van der Beugel, who was – not surprisingly – quite jubilant about it, and even called de Jong's fear mongering speech 'well-balanced': "I do not have to tell you how much I applaud the fact that you have spoken these words. It is a good, important and well-balanced narrative. I agree with everything in it and I am thankful that you, an individual who naturally receives much publicity, have delivered this speech at this congress,"⁷⁷ he wrote. De Jong in turn, believed that van der Beugel's SHAPEX speech should be published for a broader audience.⁷⁸ In the debate that unfolded, Ernst van der Beugel stepped forward as one of the main public proponents of a strong defense effort. He was not only active on the public front, but also used his connections behind the scenes to

⁷² De Jong, qtd in: J.W. Honig, *Defense Policy in the North Atlantic Alliance: The Case of the Netherlands* (Westport: Praeger, 1993), 90.

⁷³ Honig, *Defense Policy in the North Atlantic Alliance*, 90.

⁷⁴ H.P.M. Kreemers, "Hete Hangijzers: De aanschaf van Nederlandse Gevechtsvliegtuigen" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2009), 105.

⁷⁵ E.H. van der Beugel to J.M. den Uyl, 16 June 1970, file 9, EvdB.

⁷⁶ J.M. den Uyl to E.H. van der Beugel, 17 June 1970, file 9, EvdB.

⁷⁷ E.H. van der Beugel to L. de Jong, 15 June, 1970, file 9, EvdB.

⁷⁸ L. de Jong to EvdB, 19 June 1970, file 9, EvdB.

pursue his goal of a strong Atlantic defense. Since Richard Nixon's inauguration as President in January 1969, Ernst van der Beugel also had a very intimate friend in the White House.

A Friend in the White House

It was not a given that Henry Kissinger, who was a close friend and associate of Nelson Rockefeller, would end up in the Nixon White House. In the summer of 1968, after Nelson Rockefeller – “the only man who could have restored America's position abroad and unified the country” according to Kissinger – had been defeated by Nixon in his attempt to win the Republican nomination, Kissinger was not sure what to do. “The Nixon people have offered me a job, but I cannot hop from candidate to candidate”, he told Van der Beugel. “In any event”, he added, “I detest Nixon.”⁷⁹

Richard Nixon's appointment of Henry Kissinger as his National Security Advisor provided Ernst van der Beugel with a direct line to the White House. In the course of the 1960's the relationship between Van der Beugel and Kissinger had developed into a very intimate friendship that remained strong when Kissinger moved into the highest echelons of power, a reality to which their correspondence as well as the White House telephone conversation record testify.⁸⁰

While Kissinger and Van der Beugel had first met when Kissinger was still a little known up-and-coming Harvard intellectual and Van der Beugel served as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands, now the tables were more than turned. “From time to time it is difficult to realize that you and I still belong to the same human species and the only thing I can say is that I still feel very safe with you in the spot of chief political astronaut”, Van der Beugel wrote to Kissinger in the Spring of 1969. “At the same time even imagining that we can remain in the usual contact is absolute nonsense. That will come after you return to a less demanding life. Demanding it will always be.”⁸¹ Over the course of Kissinger's career at the White House, Van der Beugel was very touched and impressed by the fact that in reality little changed in their personal contact and that Kissinger “did not show any signs of a too strong influence by the power that he exercised.” Van der Beugel expressed a great appreciation for the exceptional loyalty Kissinger displayed in his friendship and the extraordinary desire for contact with old friends who had no direct interest in the work that he now exercised.⁸² While Van der Beugel probably meant to include himself in the category of those who had no direct interest in Kissinger's work, in practice this was not entirely the case. While these interests certainly did not serve as the foundation of their friendship, their relationship also proved to be a diplomatic asset. As it turned out, the character of diplomacy and the centrality of personal relationships in this line of work have a tendency to blur the lines

⁷⁹ Henry A. Kissinger to E.H. van der Beugel, 14 August 1968, HAK.

⁸⁰ See: Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts, National Security Archive.

⁸¹ E.H. van der Beugel to H.A. Kissinger, 25 April 1969, file 8, EvdB.

⁸² E.H. van der Beugel to J.H. van Roijen, 26 July 1971, file 45, J.H. van Roijen archive, NAH (translation mine).

between the personal and the professional and the changing circumstances did not stop Kissinger and Van der Beugel from calling upon each other for assistance with international diplomatic or political situations.

Kissinger frequently solicited Van der Beugel's views on the evolving world situation and in particular on developments in Europe and valued his friend's judgement. "I have always gained confidence in crises of decision by asking myself how Ernst would respond to them", he wrote while looking back on their relationship in 1980.⁸³ In the fall of 1969, Kissinger asked Van der Beugel whether he knew if there was any particular reason why the Nixon White House did not have the same intimate contacts with the Monnet Committee as the previous administrations had had. Van der Beugel subsequently contacted Max Kohnstamm about this matter and instigated him to contact Kissinger, thus facilitating the re-establishment of contact between the White House and the Monnet Committee on Kissinger's request.⁸⁴

When in early 1969 Richard Nixon kicked off his presidency with a trip to Western Europe visiting Germany, France, England, Italy and Belgium, but not the Netherlands, he ran into some diplomatic trouble with the Dutch prompting Kissinger to call Van der Beugel for advice on how to respond. According to the telephone conversation transcript, Kissinger said Van der Beugel's "friend, the Foreign Minister is very agitated that we are going to Brussels and not to The Hague." Kissinger explained to Van der Beugel that they were going to Brussels because of the international organizations and that they would be happy to invite Foreign Minister Luns and Prime Minister de Jong to call on the President in Brussels but that they did not want to do this "if this creates bad feelings – beneath their dignity, etc." Van der Beugel told Kissinger he thought it was the right decision to visit the countries on the president's itinerary and that he believed that with regards to the idea to invite Luns to Brussels, the view of the American ambassador to The Hague Bill Tyler was important, adding that "if FM and PM go to Brussels it should be made clear that the meeting will take place in Brussels because of above reason but will not be distinct from other meeting."⁸⁵

It is unclear whether Van der Beugel contacted Luns about the matter, although it is likely they discussed it. Luns did not let himself be appeased and chose to interpret the matter "as a slight for a close and loyal ally" that came right after he had "risked considerable damage in the Netherlands by backing the U.S. effort in Vietnam."⁸⁶ In an attempt to make amends, President Nixon subsequently invited Luns and Prime Minister Piet de Jong to the

⁸³ See also: H.A. Kissinger in "Book on Ernst", 1980, box 27, Folder 1, Shepard Stone Papers, RSCL. "I have always gained confidence in crises of decision by asking myself how Ernst would respond to them."

⁸⁴ E.H. van der Beugel to Max Kohnstamm, 30 September 1969, file 8, EvdB; M. Kohnstamm to H.A. Kissinger, October 9, 1969, file 9, EvdB; Kohnstamm explained to Kissinger that "there is absolutely nothing which keeps us from our habitual visits to Washington but the feeling that we must clarify the position in Europe first" and that they had centered all their attention on "the British thing" in the meantime.

⁸⁵ Kissinger Van der Beugel/Kissinger TelCon, February 6, 1969, 9:40 A.M. "The Kissinger Telephone Conversations", Digital National Security Archive.

⁸⁶ Giles Scott-Smith and David J. Snyder, "'A Test of Sentiments': Civil Aviation, Alliance Politics and the KLM Challenge in Dutch-American Relations," *Diplomatic History* 37:5 (2013): 937.

White House, making them the first Western-European leaders to officially visit Nixon there.⁸⁷ Luns, however, was not yet satisfied. As Giles Scott-Smith has pointed out: “The message from The Hague was that the Dutchmen must return home after the meeting with some form of concrete policy concession.”⁸⁸ Topping the Dutch wish list were a nuclear submarine and landing rights for KLM at Chicago’s O’Hare airport. The possibility of negotiations about a Dutch nuclear submarine, however, proved soon unrealistic since this ran into strong opposition from the Department of Defense and the Atomic Energy Agency, thus bringing the focus back to KLM.

During the preceding decade Luns had raised the landing rights issue with the Americans at practically every single opportunity he got and it was probably at least partly due to his tenacity that in September 1968 a new round of informal talks on KLM landing rights had been initiated. Even so, these had not led to any concrete results. Luns was aware, however, that there was a strong “feeling of guilt” at the State Department concerning the strain on transatlantic relations as a result of Dutch dissatisfaction with the ongoing landing rights negotiations, which he had tried to use to the advantage of the Dutch.⁸⁹ After all, as Van der Beugel explained in a letter to Kissinger several years earlier there had been a “constant stream of assurances by top Administration people, that the thing would be settled. On numerous occasions Mr. Herter and Mr. Dillon and their staff have assured our Foreign Minister and other people from our government that it was much better not to bring the thing into the open because things were practically in the bag.” In the end, however, the State Department had never been able to actually deliver. Consequently, there was a “definite feeling in the Netherlands Government that we have been treated badly.”⁹⁰ It was this sense of guilt on the American side that Luns now used to tap into even further. As a result, a new window of opportunity was cracking open through which the friendship between Ernst van der Beugel and Henry Kissinger eventually “set the context in which a successful agreement could be reached.”⁹¹

The issue of KLM-landing rights never really stopped to occupy Ernst van der Beugel. Next to the fact that he believed American policy was unfair to small countries like the Netherlands it greatly bothered him that this issue – which was of no great significance to the Americans who otherwise spent billions of dollars to “make themselves popular” – was creating an atmosphere of anti-Americanism in the Netherlands that “could not be described

⁸⁷ “Exchange of remarks between the President and Prime Minister de Jong and Foreign Minister Luns of the Netherlands”, May 28, 1969, box 933, NSC Files, NPL.

⁸⁸ Giles Scott-Smith, “Ghosts in the Machine? Ernst van der Beugel, the Transatlantic elite, and the ‘New’ Diplomatic History,” accessed December 5, 2016, <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/19602>.

⁸⁹ Already in 1960 Luns wrote to Ernst van der Beugel “In Washington heb ik, zoals je inmiddels waarschijnlijk hebt gehoord, de KLM-zaak met klem bij Dillon e.a. voorgebracht en er is nog een kans dat ik de President te zien krijg. Of het veel zal helpen? Er is ontegenzeggelijk op het State Department een gevoel van schuld, doch, althans op dit moment, brengt ons dit niet verder.” J.M.A.H. Luns to E.H. van der Beugel, 21 September 1960, file 297, J.M.A.H. Luns archive, NAH.

⁹⁰ E.H. van der Beugel to H.A. Kissinger, December 23, 1960, HAK.

⁹¹ Scott-Smith, “Ghosts in the Machine”.

by any pen.”⁹² At different occasions he had tried to use his network to build sympathy for the Dutch case in the United States. In March 1960, for example, when the negotiations for landing rights in Los Angeles came to a deadlock for the second time, Van der Beugel wrote a long letter to George Ball, whom he had acquainted at his first Bilderberg Meeting in 1959, in which he described the history of Dutch-American landing rights negotiations and the Dutch role as a faithful ally to the United States from 1945 up to that moment as well as the way in which the matter was hurting transatlantic relations:

(...) the recent decision of the American Government makes it painfully clear to the people of Holland that all their efforts, also on behalf of the North Atlantic co-operation, are only measured against the geographical size of their country, which has little military or political influence. This lack of appreciation for the work and character of the Dutch nation, who rightly regard KLM as a major component of the national economy, has given rise to intense public resentment, disappointment and coolness towards the United States. Without exception the Dutch Press has criticized the attitude of the U.S. Government in biting editorials and derisive cartoons, wondering how it is possible that in the field of civil aviation the American point of view should be completely incompatible with the spirit of free enterprise and fair competition, so widely advocated by them!⁹³

George Ball, however, believed it would be “improper” to get involved in the controversy since his law firm served as the general counsel for Pan American World Airways and one of Ball’s partners at the law firm – Henry Friendly – was in fact the Vice President of Pan Am, one of KLMs biggest adversaries in its struggle for U.S. landing rights.⁹⁴ On the 5th of January 1961, roughly two weeks before he assumed office as Secretary of State, Van der Beugel also made sure to bring the matter to the attention of Dean Rusk.⁹⁵ In addition, as mentioned before, Van der Beugel also repeatedly vented his frustrations about the landing rights matter in his correspondence with Henry Kissinger.⁹⁶ In fact, he did not only make sure that Kissinger was well informed about the landing rights issue, but also acquainted him with the airline itself: “through Van der Beugel, Kissinger gradually became drawn into the world of KLM.”⁹⁷ To illustrate, when Van der Beugel was president of KLM, he organized a big annual KLM-dinner for “the great and the good” in the Netherlands to which he invited Henry Kissinger three years in a row as the guest speaker and made sure the table arrangements were as favorable for Kissinger as possible. In 1962, for example, Van der Beugel arranged that he got seated

⁹² E.H. van der Beugel to J.M.A.H. Luns, 15 September 1960, file 297, J.M.A.H. Luns archive, NAH.

⁹³ E.H. van der Beugel to G.W. Ball, 28 March 1960, box 61, folder 17, George W. Ball Papers, PUL.

⁹⁴ G.W. Ball to E.H. van der Beugel, 28 April 1960, box 96, folder 8, George W. Ball Papers, PUL. This was in fact the second time van der Beugel approached Ball about this issue. The first time was in 1959, after they had just met for the first time at the Bilderberg Meeting when Ball had already explained his law firm’s close ties with PanAm. See: G.W. Ball to E.H. van der Beugel, 28 July 1959, box 102, folder 5. George W. Ball Papers, PUL.

⁹⁵ E.H. van der Beugel to H.A. Kissinger, 23 December 1960, HAK.

⁹⁶ See for example: E.H. van der Beugel to H.A. Kissinger, 28 March 1960, HAK; E.H. van der Beugel to H.A. Kissinger, 23 December 1960, HAK; E.H. van der Beugel to H.A. Kissinger, 3 August 1961, HAK.

⁹⁷ Scott-Smith, “Ghosts in the Machine”.

next to Crown Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, Van der Beugel ensured that Kissinger could cross the Atlantic comfortably with KLM, “all expenses paid”.⁹⁹ Next to the KLM-events, Van der Beugel organized meetings with the “top people dealing with military and foreign policy” in the Netherlands.¹⁰⁰ Kissinger, who was still an up and coming academic at the time, was very thankful for these occasions which enabled him to get acquainted with the Dutch elite.¹⁰¹

Thus, when in 1969 KLM landing rights negotiations again appeared on the radar, Kissinger was no stranger to this matter. As Scott-Smith and Snyder have demonstrated in their 2013 Diplomatic History article “‘A Test of Sentiments’: Civil Aviation, Alliance Politics, and the KLM Challenge in Dutch-American Relations”, he even took a personal interest in their progress by staying on top of the matter from start to finish, informing his colleagues at the State Department that he “would especially appreciate being informed should the negotiations run into difficulty.”¹⁰² What is more, based on the documentary record Scott-Smith and Snyder argue that Kissinger “was able to shift the way in which the issue would be treated.”¹⁰³ While in April 1969 it still appeared that the Americans would have to deny the Dutch their desired landing rights, by May 20 Helmut Sonnenfeldt reported to Kissinger that the State Department, while still internally divided, now recommended laying “the groundwork for a satisfactory negotiated outcome.”¹⁰⁴

What happened in between? Scott-Smith suggests that Kissinger personally laid the groundwork for a favorable outcome by making it possible for the President to intervene directly in the decision-making process of the landing rights negotiations. In fact, in early March it was reported that President Nixon was “supporting stronger State Department direction of international air transport activities...to permit a tighter application of foreign policy considerations.”¹⁰⁵ After all, due to its small territory and the fact that the Americans already had access to the few airports that existed in the Netherlands, the Dutch only had foreign policy considerations to bargain with. On May 23, Nixon was advised that, “considering long-standing support for U.S. objectives on Vietnam, nuclear proliferation, and trade and monetary policy, ‘this visit should build renewed Dutch confidence in the United States.’”¹⁰⁶ When Luns and de Jong subsequently visited the White House on May 27, the Dutchmen were able to reach an agreement with the Americans in principle “to settle their longstanding request for additional landing rights for KLM in Chicago”, with the “technical

⁹⁸ E.H. van der Beugel to H.A. Kissinger, 14 June 1962, HAK.

⁹⁹ Scott-Smith, “Ghosts in the Machine”.

¹⁰⁰ E.H. van der Beugel to H.A. Kissinger, 14 May 1962, HAK.

¹⁰¹ H.A. Kissinger to E.H. van der Beugel, 26 May 1961, HAK; H.A. Kissinger to E.H. van der Beugel, 26 April 1961, HAK; Kissinger in interview with the author, 4 January 2012.

¹⁰² Qtd in: Scott-Smith, “Ghosts in the Machine”.

¹⁰³ Scott-Smith and Snyder, “‘A Test of Sentiments’”, 939.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 937.

¹⁰⁵ Qtd. In Scott-Smith, “Ghosts in the Machine”.

¹⁰⁶ Scott-Smith and Snyder, ‘A Test of Sentiments’, 937.

details” to be worked out in Washington in July.”¹⁰⁷ Afterwards, Van der Beugel wrote the following note to Kissinger, thanking him for his help in the process:

I can hardly tell you how excellently everything has worked. It has been a repair job of the highest order and the impact on American-Dutch relations could not be better. It will please you to know that both of them [Luns and de Jong] fully realized how very important the role has been which you have played in the arrangement and the substance of the visit. I repeat, it could not have been better.¹⁰⁸

To follow up on the White House meeting and to work out the further details of the deal, the American Assistant to the President for International Economic Affairs Peter Flanigan subsequently visited the Netherlands for preparatory talks on the Chicago deal. In this context, Ernst van der Beugel again served as an “informal link-man” by contacting Secretary of State for Transportation M.J. Keyzer to make sure there were no remaining obstacles, something Kissinger greatly appreciated.¹⁰⁹ Van der Beugel made sure to also keep Luns in the loop during this process.¹¹⁰

In July, Kissinger asked Van der Beugel to meet with Peter Flanigan in the Netherlands who wanted to consult Van der Beugel in the context of an assignment he was given by President Nixon, namely to organize a study into American aviation politics as a foundation for possible reforms. During his meeting with Van der Beugel, Flanigan told the Dutchman that “Long before [Kissinger] had accepted his position in the White House, [Van der Beugel] had continuously reminded him that U.S. aviation policy created difficulties with other countries, which were unjustifiable if one considered these interests in the context of relations with these countries as a whole.”¹¹¹ Ernst van der Beugel, subsequently wrote a memorandum for Flanigan with his ideas on possible reforms. Before he did so, however, he secretly approached Deputy Minister of Transportation M.J. Keyzer and proposed to turn his memorandum into a “joint effort” through cooperation with the Ministry of Transportation and KLM.¹¹² He also consulted H.A. Wassenbergh and G. van der Wal of KLM, whose remarks he subsequently included in his final report to Flanigan.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ “Memorandum for the President by Elliot L. Richardson”, 27 May 1969, box 933, NSC Files: VIP Visits, NPL; Scott-Smith, “Ghosts in the Machine”.

¹⁰⁸ E.H. van der Beugel to H.A. Kissinger, 5 June 1969, file 8, EvdB.

¹⁰⁹ H.A. Kissinger to E.H. van der Beugel, 21 July 1969, file 8, EvdB; Scott-Smith, “Ghosts in the Machine”.

¹¹⁰ E.H. van der Beugel to J.M.A.H. Luns, 22 September 1969, file 8, EvdB, NAH.

¹¹¹ E.H. van der Beugel to G. van der Wal, 1 September, 1969, file 8, EvdB; Scott-Smith, “Ghosts in the Machine”.

¹¹² E.H. van der Beugel to M.J. Keyzer, 8 August 1969, file 9, EvdB.

¹¹³ E.H. van der Beugel to P.M. Flanigan (Assistant tot the President), 19 September 1969, file 9, EvdB; E.H. van der Beugel to H.A. Wassenbergh, 22 September 1969, file 9, EvdB: “Hartelijk dank voor de opmerkingen, die U hebt gemaakt naar aanleiding van mijn eerste concept. Ik heb ze vrijwel allemaal overgenomen en de brief is nu aan de heer Flanigan verzonden”; G. van der Wal to E.H. van der Beugel, 10 September 1969, file 9, EvdB, NAH: “Het spreekt natuurlijk vanzelf dat naar buiten nooit iets zal mogen blijken van enige medewerking van de KLM of van Dr. Wassenbergh.”

In the end, Scott-Smith concludes that while “the State Department’s advice to Nixon to take the opportunity to quell a major irritant in Dutch-American relations probably had more weight (...) there is no doubt that the Kissinger – Van der Beugel relation was a constant factor in the background.”¹¹⁴ Scott-Smith’s case study supports Van der Beugel’s own account of the matter in his oral history. When asked whether he had ever used his close friendship with Henry Kissinger to gain any results on policy matters, Van der Beugel answered by saying: “no, I don’t remember anymore...I have one example (...) KLM got Chicago because I arranged that through Henry.”¹¹⁵ As this chapter will demonstrate, however, this was not the only time.

A Small Intervention that Could Make All the Difference

While Ernst van der Beugel tried to be selective in appealing to Kissinger with “official” requests, they certainly did occur. In the fall of 1970, a situation developed in the Netherlands that compelled Van der Beugel to approach his friend in the White House. “This is the first time in all our conversations during your official tenure that I ask your attention for an ‘official’ issue”, Van der Beugel wrote to Kissinger. “I do it because I think that in this country of mine it is of vital importance.” The ‘official issue’ concerned the Dutch defense budget and the Dutch contribution to NATO, which had become highly controversial; not only due to the speech by Lou de Jong about which Van der Beugel also informed Kissinger, but with elections coming up in the Spring of 1971, the Dutch debate had gained an extra sense of urgency: the next cabinet would have to make some very important decisions. In fact, according to Van der Beugel the defense question would be “one of the most difficult and delicate issues with which this and the next government is faced.”¹¹⁶

Van der Beugel explained to Kissinger that he believed the Dutch defense budget should be increased during the next cabinet period in terms of expenditure, percentage of the budget and in terms of percentage of the G.N.P. “in order to correct grave deficiencies, especially in the effectiveness of the army. Only in this way our contribution to NATO can be valid and meaningful,” he argued. While historians like Kim van der Wijngaart have pointed out that the De Jong cabinet in fact already manifested itself as a loyal ally in NATO, also with regards to the defense contribution, Van der Beugel expected a little more.¹¹⁷ “With a few excellent exceptions” he explained to Kissinger, the current Dutch government is “hesitant at best.” In this context, a small intervention by Kissinger, he believed, could make all the difference.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Scott-Smith, “Ghosts in the Machine”.

¹¹⁵ EvdB/Kersten Oral History, p. 891: “De KLM heeft Chicago gekregen omdat ik dat via Henry heb gedaan.”

¹¹⁶ E.H. van der Beugel to H.A. Kissinger, 14 September 1970, box 697, folder 1 of 3, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe, Netherlands, NPL.

¹¹⁷ Kim van der Wijngaart, *Bondgenootschap onder spanning: Nederlands-Amerikaanse betrekkingen, 1969-1976* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2011), 70.

¹¹⁸ E.H. van der Beugel to H.A. Kissinger, 14 September 1970, box 697, folder 1 of 3, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe, Netherlands, NPL.

On November 13, 1970 NATO Secretary General Manlio Brosio and SACEUR General Andy Goodpaster were scheduled to visit the Dutch cabinet to discuss the military and political situation. “Without any doubt the Dutch military contribution will also be discussed”, Van der Beugel wrote to Kissinger, but “the danger of these meetings is always that they take place in an atmosphere of smoothness and ‘senatorial courtesy’”. During the upcoming visit such routines were to be avoided according to Van der Beugel, who asked Kissinger to “give a signal to Andy Goodpaster” to make sure that “the tone of the NATO representatives should be tough and worried, not only about the general situation but also about the specific Dutch contribution.” Van der Beugel believed that this “could just change the balance between those who want to do something and those who want to let things drift.”¹¹⁹

Ernst van der Beugel’s letter did not go to Kissinger directly, but was processed by Kissinger’s close associate Helmut Sonnenfeldt. Ernst der Beugel was no stranger to Sonnenfeldt. Shortly after his appointment as National Security Advisor, Kissinger had invited Van der Beugel to the White House where he introduced him to his staff, including Sonnenfeldt who soon became a close acquaintance of Van der Beugel.¹²⁰ Sonnenfeldt informed Kissinger about the content of Van der Beugel’s letter saying that he believed the Dutchman’s suggestion to urge Brosio and Goodpaster to make their visit “more than a mere formality and really express their concern” was “very good.”¹²¹ Kissinger, in turn, did as Van der Beugel had requested. He had been briefed on the speech by Lou de Jong and watched the developments that Van der Beugel had described with concern. “It is, unfortunately, not unique to your country”, he wrote to Van der Beugel in reply, “but I agree that if it can somehow be arrested there it would also have a beneficial effect elsewhere.”¹²²

What this episode illustrates, is that Ernst van der Beugel had access to key members of the American foreign policy decision-making establishment – also under the Nixon Administration – and that he was taken seriously. While the above mentioned ‘intervention’ fitted perfectly within America’s foreign policy framework, it appears that Kissinger would not have taken this specific action if Van der Beugel had not requested it. It does remain questionable, however, whether the Dutch government really needed to be pressured into caring more for its defense – whether it was really as ‘weak’ and ‘hesitant’ as Van der Beugel made it appear. As the Dutch historian Kim van der Wijngaart has pointed out, the De Jong government was in fact already convinced of the importance of transatlantic burden sharing and a strong defense posture and did not really need any further stimulation.¹²³

What remained unclear, however, was how the *next* Dutch government would respond to the changing atmosphere in society, which was reflected in some political parties – like the

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ E.H. van der Beugel to U.S. Ambassador J.W. Middendorf II, 19 August 1968, file 8, EvdB.

¹²¹ Memorandum from Helmut Sonnenfeldt to Mr. Kissinger, 23 September 1970, box 697, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe / Netherlands Vol I 1969-1971 to Netherlands Vol. II 1972 [628-7730-347-5300], NPL.

¹²² Dr. H.A. Kissinger to Prof. E.H. van der Beugel, 11 November 1970, box 697, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe / Netherlands Vol I 1969-1971 to Netherlands Vol. II 1972 [628-7730-347-5300] NPL.

¹²³ Van der Wijngaart, *Bondgenootschap onder spanning*, 77.

PvdA – by a more critical stance towards defense spending. Hence, as Van der Beugel had already anticipated, the fate of the Dutch defense and the country's contribution to NATO would for a large part depend on the next government. It was in this context, with the election campaigns in full swing, that Ernst Van der Beugel urged Henry Kissinger in the spring of 1971 to receive the up-and-coming leader of the Dutch Catholic People's Party (KVP) Norbert Schmelzer – a likely candidate to succeed Joseph Luns as Minister of Foreign Affairs – in the White House. While Schmelzer – who was offered a trip to the United States by the American embassy in The Hague – was a supporter of NATO who recognized the need for a strong defense posture, the KVP was actually pressing for a reduction of Dutch brigades from six to four. Schmelzer personally did not agree with this decision, but a little pressure from the White House to fortify his position vis-à-vis his party probably would not do any harm.¹²⁴ “Norbert is a very nice man, very clever in domestic politics, but he is innocent and inexperienced in the field of foreign policy”, Van der Beugel told Kissinger. “His concept of the world is that of the youth congress of the Young Christian Democrats in Nancy.” The latter was not meant as a compliment.¹²⁵ While Van der Beugel was very fond of Schmelzer, he was also a bit “worried about the possibility that he gets Foreign Affairs” since Schmelzer was more European than Atlanticist in his orientation and he believed that a chat with Kissinger was “extremely important for Schmelzer's education.”¹²⁶ The American ambassador to The Hague, John William Middendorf II, also recommended Kissinger to receive the up-and-coming KVP politician.

This was not Ernst van der Beugel's first attempt to familiarize Schmelzer with the Western foreign policy establishment. He had also made sure that he got introduced to the Atlantic elite by inviting him to the 1969 Bilderberg Conference. In addition, Van der Beugel had already introduced Schmelzer to Kissinger during one of the renowned dinners at his own home in The Hague, where he brought many members of the Dutch establishment in contact with prominent Americans and Europeans.¹²⁷

Upon his return from the United States, Schmelzer was enthusiastic about his meeting with Kissinger and sent Ernst van der Beugel an elaborate report on his American trip.¹²⁸ During the trip he had been reminded of the importance of conventional forces in a time of nuclear parity and the problems the Nixon Administration faced in explaining to Congress why

¹²⁴ Memorandum from Helmut Sonnenfeldt to Henry Kissinger, 2 March 1971, box 697, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe / Netherlands Vol I 1969-1971 to Netherlands Vol. II 1972 [628-7730-347-5300], NPL.

¹²⁵ Jérôme Heldring, “Dezer Dagen”, no date (probably Summer 1971), in: Scrapbook XI, AHB: “Een aanhanger van die andere traditie in de Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek heeft eens van Schmelzer gezegd dat zijn horizon die is van ‘een deelnemer aan het christen-democratische jongerencongres te Aken’, en dat was niet aardig bedoeld.”

¹²⁶ E.H. van der Beugel to H.A. Kissinger, 19 March 1971, file 9, EvdB.

¹²⁷ J. William Middendorf II to E.H. van der Beugel, 23 September 1969, file 8, EvdB: “I want to thank you once again for the lovely dinner this past Saturday evening. It was most enjoyable, informative and very helpful to Dutch-United States relations.” (This referred to a dinner which EvdB organized for Helmut Sonnenfeldt).

¹²⁸ E.H. van der Beugel to W.K.N. Schmelzer, 29 maart 1971, file 9, EvdB. Kissinger was a recurrent guest at these dinners as were many influentials from the worlds of politics, journalism, academia, business and industry as well as royals like the Dutch Queen and Prince Bernhard. In this way van der Beugel in a sense facilitated a smaller, more intimate version of Bilderberg, or as Jérôme Heldring liked to describe it: “a salon”.

the U.S. had to spend more and more on conventional forces while the feeling prevailed in Congress that the European allies did not increase their efforts. Defense Secretary Laird had expressed his appreciation for the NATO policy of Joseph Luns as well as for the initiatives that the Dutch Defense Minister den Toom had taken as chair of the Eurogroup in December 1970. Schmelzer had also been warned by the Defense Secretary that the importance of the Dutch contribution to NATO should not be underestimated, especially since he was convinced that a decrease of the scope or quality of the Dutch defense-effort would have an irrevocable snowball-effect in Europe which would seriously weaken the position of the American government vis-à-vis the American Congress.¹²⁹ He understood the necessity of defense reforms in the Netherlands, but made it very clear to the up-and-coming politician that he believed that a reduction of Dutch brigades, as proposed by some of Schmelzer's fellow Catholic Party members, would be very difficult to digest for the American Congress.

The Biesheuvel Cabinet and the Committee of Civil and Military Experts

In July 1971, Norbert Schmelzer was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs in the newly established center-right Biesheuvel cabinet as Joseph Luns left this post – “after 17 years of tsardom”¹³⁰ – to become Secretary General of NATO, a position he would hold until 1984.

As expected, the matter of the Dutch defense turned out to be one of the more difficult issues during the lengthy cabinet formation that followed the elections of April 28, 1971. In the run-up to the elections, Van der Beugel – who was also well connected to the transatlantic security community – had been closely in touch with some top individuals of the Dutch department of Defense. In preparation of the debate on the military budget scheduled in October 1969, Deputy Minister of Defense Haex had handed Van der Beugel a memorandum justifying the desired defense budget prepared for the debate concerning the defense budget in the Second Chamber, which was scheduled later that month. In response to the memo and in preparation of the upcoming political debate, Van der Beugel told Haex he completely agreed with the document, but that the focus was too much on a military escalation. Instead, in order to justify the proposed defense budget he advised Haex to pay more attention to the dangers of a disruption of the power equilibrium in Europe *also* when that would happen without military means. “When you concentrate the possibility of a disturbance of the power balance too much on the purely military balance in a discussion with so many individuals who lack expertise”, Van der Beugel cautioned, “you always risk that they will dismiss the matter by saying that there will come no war anyway.” Consequently, Van der Beugel advised Haex to also remind his audience of the risk of finlandization.¹³¹

In April 1971 Van der Beugel informed some of his friends about a “memorandum dealing with the Dutch defense effort” for the cabinet *formateur* which he had drafted on

¹²⁹ W.K.N. Schmelzer, “Verslag van een bezoek aan Washington en New York van 1 t/m 5 maart 1971”, file 9, EvdB.

¹³⁰ E.H. van der Beugel to W.K.N. Schmelzer, 16 May 1973, file 9, EvdB.

¹³¹ E.H. van der Beugel to J.C.E. Haex, 10 October 1969, file 8, EvdB.

“request”. While Van der Beugel did not specify on whose request he drafted the memo he did mention that he had reached agreement on the memorandum with Deputy Minister Haex. He furthermore sent a copy of the document to his friend Frans Goedhart writing that he had better “destroy the document after reading.”¹³² It is not completely clear what happened with Van der Beugel’s memorandum. What is clear, however is that during that same month Defense Minister den Toom brought forward a white paper to aid the Cabinet formation concerning the defense effort, which was very much in line with Van der Beugel’s ideas.¹³³

During the lengthy cabinet formation following the elections of April 28, 1971, Minister den Toom’s white paper on the future of the Dutch defense, which pleaded for reforms and underlined the necessity of increasing the defense budget, eventually inspired the creation of a committee of civil and military experts to be established on 28 September, 1971 with the specific task to examine the Dutch defense obligations with regards to NATO and the financial means necessary to fulfill these obligations in the future.¹³⁴ Ernst van der Beugel was mentioned in Dutch newspapers as a likely candidate to chair the committee as an ‘authoritative civilian expert’, but he showed no interest in this position arguing he did not have the time required to lead the pack of experts.¹³⁵ In the end he gladly joined the committee as one of the civilian experts while KVP politician Karel van Rijckevorsel was appointed as chair. The committee counted fourteen ‘wise men’ including five experts from the Ministry of Defense, one from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and five members that were appointed by the main political parties, namely Karel van Rijckevorsel (KVP), Laurens Jan Brinkhorst (D66), Peter Kooijmans (ARP), Henk Neuman (KVP) en Wiebe Wierda (PvdA). The other four ‘civilian experts’ were J.P. van den Bent (CHU-member), Has Beyen (VVD-member), Frans Goedhart (DS’70) and Ernst van der Beugel, who was not formally affiliated with any political party anymore, making him ‘independent’.¹³⁶

132 E.H. van der Beugel to Prof. Dr. C.J.F. Böttscher, 29 March 1971, file 9, EvdB: “We telefoneerden gisteren even over de nota over de Defensie, waarvan ik je de voorgeschiedenis vertelde. Ik stuur je even mijn ontwerp, dat nu ongewijzigd is geaccepteerd en dat natuurlijk wel alleen voor jouw strikt persoonlijke informatie is. Ik ben alleen benieuwd wat je ervan vindt, omdat jij ook kan beoordelen hoe de manier moet zijn, waarop je een kabinetsformateur over dit soort problemen benadert; E.H. van der Beugel to F.J. Goedhart, 1 April 1971, file 9, EvdB, NAH: “Ik doe je hierbij strikt vertrouwelijk, werkelijk alleen voor jouw ogen, een stuk toekomen, dat ik op verzoek heb gemaakt en dat moet dienen aan de nieuwe kabinetsformateur ter hand te worden gesteld, met betrekking tot de Nederlandse defensie-inspanning. Ik bel je eens op om over beide dingen te praten, maar ik zou je wel willen vragen dit stuk na lezing maar weer te vernietigen.”; E.H. van der Beugel to B.J. Udink, no date (around same time), file 9, EvdB: “Je herinnert je ons telefoongesprek over de voorbereiding van de kabinetsformateur met betrekking tot de defensie-inspanning. Ik vertelde je, dat Joop Haex en ik over de tekst overeenstemming hadden bereikt. Die tekst stuur ik je nu hierbij toe en wij moeten er binnenkort over praten, of je het ermee eens bent en wat er verder mee kan gebeuren”.

¹³³ Kreemers, “De oorlog tussen de Generaals”, 378-389, 379.

¹³⁴ Van der Wijngaart, *Bondgenootschap onder spanning*, 110; J. Hoffenaar and B. Schoenmaker, *Met de blik naar het Oosten*, 268.

¹³⁵ “Defensie wordt doorgelicht”, *De Volkskrant*, 6 September 1971; “Kabinet Worstelt met instelling Defensie-groep”, *Volkskrant*, 18 September 1971.

¹³⁶ Theo de Jong, “Veertien Wijze mannen lichten defensie door”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 29 September 1971.

In her annual speech to Parliament reflecting the Cabinet's policy – *de Troonrede* – Queen Juliana remarked in September 1971 that the Dutch government hoped that the work of the Van Rijckevorsel Committee would help to foster public support for the Dutch defense effort so that it would be “carried by the conviction of our people.” As Theo de Jong noted in the Dutch daily *Algemeen Dagblad* “With this sentence the queen touches upon the key problem, because a substantial part of the Dutch people, and consequently of the political parties, is not yet convinced of the fact that more money for the armed forces should be put on the table.”¹³⁷ In fact, several opposition parties – including the PvdA – pleaded for a significant reduction of the defense budget.¹³⁸ After the goal of fostering public support for the Dutch defense effort through the Van Rijckevorsel Committee was also highlighted by prime-minister Biesheuvel, a journalist at the Dutch (left-wing) weekly magazine *Vrij Nederland* observed that “clearly, the armed forces need to be ‘sold’ [to the public] with nice slogans.”¹³⁹

The deliberations of the Van Rijckevorsel Committee were followed closely by the American embassy in The Hague, where Ambassador J. William Middendorf II maintained close contact with Ernst van der Beugel. After all, decisions on Dutch defense in the NATO context were directly tied to domestic pressures in the United States to reduce the American military presence on the European continent. In November 1971 Ernst van der Beugel tried to put the ambassador's “mind at rest” by informing him that “the group was becoming more and more convinced that it had to take a hard line as regards defense and he predicted that a significant majority would favor this when the Committee submitted its report on March 1.” Van der Beugel admitted, however, that it was still necessary to convince certain members of the Committee leading him to believe “that a favorable consensus report was probable, but that a unanimous report was probably not possible.”¹⁴⁰ Middendorf sent a memorandum of this conversation to Henry Kissinger, who had already been informed by Van der Beugel himself, who – among others – also kept Secretary General Joseph Luns and General Goodpaster at NATO in the loop.¹⁴¹

In January 1972, while the Van Rijckevorsel Committee was in the middle of its proceedings, Prime Minister Biesheuvel paid a low-key visit to the White House. In advance, Van der Beugel had offered his services to Biesheuvel, telling him that he was available for a chat prior to the trip, if Biesheuvel desired. In addition, Van der Beugel offered Biesheuvel to arrange a meeting with Henry Kissinger for him. “Naturally, this shall be prepared through official channels, but should it be certain that you go, then I would consider it of great importance that you have a quiet hour to talk with Kissinger alone”, Van der Beugel wrote, adding that “that is difficult to arrange via the official channels and I would gladly help you

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ “Commissie buigt zich over begroting”, *NRC*, 12 Augustus, 1971.

¹³⁹ Hans Smits, “Doorlichtingscommissie moet defensie verkopen”, *Vrij Nederland*, 6 November 1971.

¹⁴⁰ “Memorandum of Conversation between Ernst H. van der Beugel and Ambassador J. William Middendorf II”, November 29, 1971.” White House Central File – Countries, box 54, Folder CO108 Netherlands, NPL.

¹⁴¹ E.H. van der Beugel to A.J. Goodpaster, March 23, 1972, file 9, EvdB.

with this.”¹⁴² In January, Van der Beugel subsequently encouraged Kissinger to meet with Biesheuvel, arguing that a chat “would be extremely helpful.”¹⁴³ Why was Van der Beugel so keen to arrange this? Well, as Van der Beugel informed Kissinger, Biesheuvel was “reasonable, but not too strong on defense matters” and Van der Beugel once again hoped to use his connection with Kissinger to put pressure on the Dutch government to increase its defense effort. He specifically provided Kissinger with the following suggestions:

I think that the line you should take, should be rather tough, making it clear that U.S. military posture in NATO is not only linked to reasonable defense effort of European allies, but also dependent on economic climate, which enables the President to maintain his present NATO policy.¹⁴⁴

This time, however, Kissinger did not follow up on Van der Beugel’s suggestion. In fact, as Kim van der Wijngaart has pointed out, the Americans did quite the opposite: they gave the Dutch prime minister a compliment. President Nixon himself explicitly expressed his appreciation for the continuing Dutch support for the unity and strength of Western cooperation as well as for the Dutch defense contribution. Compared to some other allies, the Dutch role in this field was actually perceived as exemplary by the Americans.¹⁴⁵

After fifty-five full days of meetings spread out over six months during which the Van Rijckevorsel Committee studied the Dutch defense situation and heard many experts, both foreign and domestic, the Committee presented its report to Prime Minister Biesheuvel on March 27, 1972. As Van der Beugel had predicted, the civil and military experts had not been able to come to a unanimous consensus on Dutch defense policy. Instead, their conclusions underlined the schism that had developed both in society and in the political arena as the Committee was split into a majority and a minority view – reflected in two separate reports.¹⁴⁶ The majority presented a report that was in line with the white paper that former Defense Minister den Toom prepared for the 1971 cabinet formation arguing for an increase of the level of defense spending from 3,945 percent of the national income in 1972 to an average of 4,25 percent between 1973 and 1977.¹⁴⁷ The minority recommended maintaining the defense budget on the existing level of 3,945 percent of the Dutch national income in 1972.¹⁴⁸ Considering the circumstances, Van der Beugel was quite satisfied with this outcome. As he wrote to General Goodpaster:

¹⁴² E.H. van der Beugel to B. Biesheuvel, 31 December 1971, file 9, EvdB.

¹⁴³ E.H. van der Beugel to H.A. Kissinger, January 16, 1972, file 9, EvdB.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Van der Wijngaart, *Bondgenootschap onder spanning*, 119.

¹⁴⁶ Commissie van Civiele en Militaire Deskundigen, “De Toekomst van de Nederlandse Defensie, March 1972”, file 31, Commissie van Rijckevorsel archive, NAH.

¹⁴⁷ “Meerderheid commissie: ‘Defensiebudget moet verhoogd’”, *NRC*, 11 March 1972. “Zij volgen daarmee de conclusies van de nota die oud-minister den Toom van defensie vorig jaar voor de kabinetsformateur achterliet.”

¹⁴⁸ Kreemers, “Hete Hangijzers”, 115-116; Van der Wijngaart, *Bondgenootschap onder spanning*, 111.

The majority of the Committee recommends a rather steep increase in defense expenditure for the first four years. Needless to say that I belong to the majority. The paradoxical situation exists that I don't consider the majority view as the main achievement of the Committee but rather that the majority pushed the minority to a point of view in which they propose the maintenance (fortunately not a reduction, which I expected them to do in the beginning of our deliberations) of our present effort.¹⁴⁹

The committee's chair Karel van Rijckevorsel had at the last moment sided with the minority, a decision that "was not received without irritation."¹⁵⁰ Consequently, in the flurry of media attention following the publication of the reports, Ernst van der Beugel emerged as a key spokesperson of the majority viewpoint. He gave interviews and wrote opinion articles, delivered speeches and appeared on national TV. In March 1972, for example, Ernst van der Beugel appeared in the popular current affairs program "Extra-Brandpunt" to comment on the Van Rijckevorsel report and to defend the majority viewpoint. Afterwards, Philip van Tijn of the Dutch social-democratic newspaper 'Het Vrije Volk' described the event as a lovely comeback of Ernst van der Beugel into the Dutch public debate through which "the smell of the Russian danger entered the living room."¹⁵¹

In Pursuit of a Domestic Climate Conducive to Close Transatlantic Relations

Overall, in his contribution to the public debate – through speeches and articles, lectures, interviews and commentary – Ernst van der Beugel consistently tried to counter the anti-American trends he perceived by trying to explain the American position to the Dutch as well as the necessity of a strong defense effort. These two issues were closely interrelated, not just in the Netherlands, but also in the United States where European anti-Americanism and the relatively meager European defense contributions were feeding Congressional pressures to decrease the amount of American conventional forces on the European continent.¹⁵² At the same time, Van der Beugel tried to foster understanding among the American foreign policy and defense establishment concerning the complications in bringing about an increase

¹⁴⁹ E.H. van der Beugel to A.J. Goodpaster, 23 March 1972, file 9, EvdB, NAH.

¹⁵⁰ "Defensie doorgelicht", *Haagse Post*, 29 March 1972.

¹⁵¹ Philip van Tijn, *Vrije Volk*, 28 maart 1972 (translation mine).

¹⁵² Scott Aiken, "European Security tied to U.S. Troops", *Cincinnati Enquirer*, No date but probably December 1972. Scrapbook XIII, AHB: In this context Ernst van der Beugel believed that "the West-Europeans should be accommodating to American needs and public opinion." This also included being more accommodating towards the Americans with regards to the economic negotiations which were creating transatlantic tension during the early 1970s. Within the framework of the Cold War van der Beugel believed economic negotiations should be approached in the light of the broader security context. The United States had been 'generous' to Europe in the early post-war era when it had accepted some economic discrimination for the purpose of building up a strong Europe. According to van der Beugel Europe should now be generous to the United States in economic matters "to help the [Nixon] Administration create the climate in which it can maintain a sizeable conventional armed force in Europe." In order to create this climate, the Western European countries' contribution to offset the cost of maintaining U.S. troops should be increased in order to create a situation in which the maintenance of American troops in Europe was "not a drain on the American balance of payments" (italics mine).

in the European defense budgets, thus trying to mediate international pressure and expectations on the one hand and domestic tensions on the other.¹⁵³ Van der Beugel believed that it was of fundamental importance to “create the climate” in which maintenance of a sizeable American force would be possible.¹⁵⁴ It was to such a climate – a public atmosphere conducive to close transatlantic relations and a strong defense – that he tried to contribute through his private efforts in the public domain, not just through his own publications, but also through his connections with journalists.

Ernst van der Beugel maintained contact with an extensive network of journalists throughout the Atlantic community.¹⁵⁵ Back home in the Netherlands, Van der Beugel was extremely annoyed by the negative views articulated by Dutch journalists about the United States and on defense matters.¹⁵⁶ The lack of an informed public opinion about matters of international relations and defense was, from Van der Beugel’s perspective, for a large part the result of ignorance and bad reporting on behalf of the Dutch press. This in turn, undermined the possibility of an informed public debate about these issues. Van der Beugel did not let these things go by without voicing his disapproval, for example through critical letters to journalists or their editors-in-chief when he believed they had gone out of line. He was not particularly mild in his criticism either.¹⁵⁷ To illustrate, in 1967 Van der Beugel ended his subscription of the Dutch daily newspaper *Algemeen Handelsblad* with a long letter to the editor-in-chief to whom he explained that his decision was “an act of protest” from his side directed towards “the daily menu of protest by some of your younger employees” and in particular aimed at the either “open, hidden or creeping anti-Americanism” in the newspaper that he considered not just “incorrect”, but “life threatening and cheap.”¹⁵⁸ A similar letter followed in 1970 to the editor-in-chief of the *Volkscrant*, arguing that the paper increasingly reflected “the forged, distorted, tendentious and deceitful reporting that is the beginning or the accompanying phenomenon of every form of terror.”¹⁵⁹

At the same time he was very supportive of journalists whose work he admired. He regularly sent personal notes to journalists to express his admiration in response to articles

¹⁵³ Van der Beugel, “NATO and the Average Man”.

¹⁵⁴ Aiken, “European Security tied to U.S. Troops”.

¹⁵⁵ Van der Beugel was for example well acquainted with the American political commentator Walter Lippmann and with New York Times journalists James “Scotty” Reston and Cyrus L. Sulzberger, Raymond Aron of *Le Figaro* and Theo Sommer from *Die Zeit*.

¹⁵⁶ See for example: “Prof. E.H. van der Beugel lucht zijn hart: ‘Nederlandse politiek verliest niveau’, *De Telegraaf*, 19 April 1972: “Velen bij de pers, radio en televisie (...) geven een oordeel dat verre van representatief is van wat er werkelijk leeft; een scheefgetrokken beeld van de publieke opinie. Bovendien is het niveau van meningsuiters eenvoudig onvoldoende; tot een werkelijke dialoog is men vaak niet in stand.”

¹⁵⁷ In 1966, Van der Beugel wrote a letter to W.G.N. de Keizer, the editor-in-chief of *Elsevier’s Weekblad* (an influential weekly magazine) in which he complained, among things, about some articles by the journalist Lunshof which he considered “not only bad, but completely unacceptable” accusing him of publishing ‘fundamental falsehoods.’ Keizer replied to van der Beugel that the ‘Lunshof problem’ would ‘undoubtedly’ be ‘solved’ in 1966.

¹⁵⁸ E.H. van der Beugel to C.A. Steketee, 12 April 1967, file 7, EvdB.

¹⁵⁹ E.H. van der Beugel to J.M.M. van der Pluym, 10 April 1970, file 9, EvdB: “...de vervalste, verdraaide, tendentieuze en leugenachtige berichtgeving, die het begin of het begeleidingsverschijnsel is van iedere vorm van terreur. Of die voorlichtingsterreur van rechts of van links komt, is voor mij onverschillig. Ik vind dat in alle omstandigheden onverdraaglijk.”

they had written or to provide encouragement. More important, though, was the fact that – as Jérôme Heldring also pointed out – Ernst van der Beugel could “open doors” by providing the necessary introductions for journalists who desired to meet with one of the *prima donna*’s in his extensive network.¹⁶⁰ Van der Beugel was eager to arrange access to prominent Americans for Dutch journalists whose judgement he trusted and of whom he expected satisfactory coverage of the United States. To illustrate, in 1968, he arranged a whole series of meetings with influential Americans for the renowned Dutch journalist G.B.J. Hilterman, who had written to Van der Beugel that he did not intend to “rediscover America” nor to throw himself completely on “negroes and poverty” but that he instead intended to focus on some “preferably positive aspects of American society, which may be less well known, but still very much worth the effort.”¹⁶¹ Ernst van der Beugel was happy to help, providing introductions to a whole list of influentials including Henry Kissinger, Bill Moyers, Zbigniew Brzeziński, David Rockefeller, Richard Neustadt, Ted Sorensen, George Ball and Joe Johnson.¹⁶² In 1970 Van der Beugel arranged a meeting with Henry Kissinger for Jérôme Heldring, whom Kissinger (and his assistant Helmut Sonnenfeldt) had already met at dinners at Van der Beugel’s home, as well as at a Bilderberg Conference.¹⁶³ In the summer of 1973, Van der Beugel recommended Kissinger to give an interview to the foreign editor of Elsevier’s Magazine Gerry Philip Mok, whom he described as the one serious and responsible exception in the Dutch weekly press, which for the rest was “in the hands of the irresponsible left wing liberal establishment.”¹⁶⁴

Ernst van der Beugel also invited Dutch journalists whose work he appreciated to dinners at his home and to the Bilderberg Meetings, which enabled them to establish valuable contacts while enabling them to tap into the insider knowledge and ideas that proliferated among the Atlantic elite.¹⁶⁵ To illustrate, in 1971, Van der Beugel invited André Spoor, the editor-in-chief of *NRC Handelsblad*, to a Bilderberg meeting. When Spoor in May 1973 requested an interview with Henry Kissinger, the American embassy noted that Spoor had met Kissinger two years before at a Bilderberg conference. This comment was followed

¹⁶⁰ Jérôme Heldring, interview by the author.

¹⁶¹ G.B.J. Hilterman to E.H. van der Beugel, 21 May 1968, file 8, EvdB.

¹⁶² E.H. van der Beugel to G.B.J. Hilterman, 13 June 1968, file 8, EvdB.

¹⁶³ E.H. van der Beugel to David Young (Assistant to Dr. Henry Kissinger), 8 May 1970, file 9, EvdB: “He knows Henry because he has met him several times at my house and in Boston and I know that Henry has always been very much impressed by his intelligence and knowledge”; E.H. van der Beugel to H. Sonnenfeldt, 8 May 1970, file 9, EvdB: “I learned that my friend Jérôme Heldring, whom you have met at the dinner in my house, will spend three days in Washington notably May 25th, 26th and 27th. Jérôme Heldring is in my opinion beyond any shadow of a doubt the most intelligent and influential journalist in Holland. He is chief-editor of the “Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant” and has an absolutely first-class mind; Interview Jérôme Heldring.

¹⁶⁴ E.H. van der Beugel to H.A. Kissinger, 13 August, 1973, file 10, EvdB.

¹⁶⁵ For a study of the relationship between Bilderberg and the Press see: Ingeborg Philipsen, “Diplomacy with Ambiguity: the history of the Bilderberg Organization” (PhD diss., Copenhagen University, 2009) 220- 237: “part of the reason behind inviting journalists to attend the conferences was obviously also that they were in a good position to influence public opinion.” In this way, “journalists were not expected to act like passive observers; they were expected to take part in the foreign policy process.” (Philipsen, 227-228).

by the recommendation that “a background conversation with Spoor would be helpful, providing as it would for a sympathetic presentation of U.S. views in the Dutch press.”¹⁶⁶

Van der Beugel’s own publications mostly appeared in Dutch newspapers as well as international foreign affairs magazines such as *Le Monde Diplomatique*, the Atlantic Quarterly and the Knickerbocker. In the Netherlands he had especially good contacts at *Het Parool* and *NRC Handelsblad* where he published the majority of his analyses and opinion articles for a general audience. His speeches usually received ample attention in the media. Journalists approached him for interviews and solicited his views as an expert on transatlantic relations and defense matters. His stint at the Van Rijckevorsel Committee followed by his appointment as chairman of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, which through its studies and publications tried to contribute to an informed public debate on defense matters, added to his renown as an authoritative expert on matters of international relations and defense. His undertakings did not go unnoticed by the American embassy in The Hague where successive ambassadors thanked Van der Beugel for his efforts. “I should like you to know how much I appreciate the time and effort that you give to creating a better understanding of American institutions and our role in the Western Alliance”, Ambassador Middendorf II wrote to Ernst van der Beugel on January 14, 1970. “We all feel greatly indebted to you.”¹⁶⁷

Thus, Ernst van der Beugel established a prominent position in the public debate. When in 1972 a journalist inquired during an interview whether he considered going back into politics, Van der Beugel answered he had no desire to do so whatsoever. “I consider my current combination of activities ideal”, he explained. “There is no other way in which I could make myself more useful for the public cause than by doing the work I do now: public speaking, teaching and/or publishing.”¹⁶⁸ In a similar vein he had already told his sister in 1970 that “When I would be offered the Embassy in Washington, I would not need ten seconds to decline clearly and friendly. Never again am I going to do something other than this.”¹⁶⁹

In the end, no major changes took place with regards to the Dutch defense policy during the Biesheuvel administrations, which were characterized by a high degree of continuity in this field.¹⁷⁰ However, as Van der Beugel had pointed out to Goodpaster – considering the negative trend in public opinion concerning defense spending – stability could be seen as a victory in itself as the feared spending cuts were held at bay. During the subsequent years,

¹⁶⁶ “Memorandum for Mr. Kissinger”, 7 May 1973, box 54, folder CO108 Netherlands 1/1/73, White House Central Files, Subject Files, Countries, NPL.

¹⁶⁷ J. William Middendorf, II (U.S. ambassador to the Netherlands) to E.H. van der Beugel, January 14, 1970, file 8, EvdB.

¹⁶⁸ “Prof. E.H. van der Beugel lucht zijn hart: “Nederlandse politiek verliest niveau” (translation mine): “De combinatie van werkzaamheden van nu vind ik ideaal ik (...) Ik kan me voor de publieke zaak niet nuttiger maken dan wanneer ik werk zoals ik nu doe: spreken, doceren en/of publiceren”

¹⁶⁹ EvdB to I. Brokmeijer-van der Beugel, 13 January 1970, file 8, EvdB: “Wanneer mij de Ambassade in Washington zou worden aangeboden, zou ik geen tien seconden nodig hebben om even vriendelijk als duidelijk neen te zeggen. Ik ga nooit meer iets anders doen dan dit.”

¹⁷⁰ Van der Wijngaart, *Bondgenootschap onder spanning*, 111-112.

however, when the Netherlands was governed by a relatively left-wing cabinet under the leadership of Joop den Uyl (PvdA), the defense contribution increasingly came under pressure. By 1976 Ernst van der Beugel wrote to Goedhart that “with regards to our advice in the Van Rijckevorsel committee, considering the current circumstances, I would wholeheartedly endorse the minority recommendations. At least we would have had something. One cannot be somber enough about the total paralysis of the West. To this paralysis, the Netherlands is contributing a more than proportional share.”¹⁷¹

In the meantime, Ernst van der Beugel remained active as an informal liaison between Kissinger’s White House and the American State Department on the one hand and the Dutch foreign policy establishment on the other hand. In September 1972, for example, he informed Biesheuvel, Schmelzer and Defense Minister De Koster about developments in Washington concerning potential reductions of American forces on the European continent. “In general”, Van der Beugel wrote, “one hears in the United States that it will only be a matter of time until a substantial amount of American forces will be pulled out of Europe and that this could either happen unilaterally or as a result of the Mutual Balanced Force Reductions” (M.B.F.R.). Even so, Van der Beugel informed his countrymen, this was not Henry Kissinger’s opinion. Instead, he reassured them that “supposing that this Administration will stay in power, any possible reduction would take place within the framework of the M.B.F.R.” He furthermore informed them that any potential American troop reduction would not exceed the 10-15%, adding that in the meantime Kissinger “hoped and expected” that the European defense effort would not be reduced warning that any substantial decrease of the European effort could jeopardize the plans of the Nixon administration in the most serious way.¹⁷² Schmelzer greatly appreciated this confidential report and told Van der Beugel that he would welcome any new information that Van der Beugel would be able to provide in the future.¹⁷³

Ernst van der Beugel continued these activities after 1973, when Max van der Stoel replaced Schmelzer as minister of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands and Henry Kissinger adopted a dual function as National Security Advisor and U.S. Secretary of State. Van der Beugel also served as a back channel between Kissinger and the NATO leadership, in particular Joseph Luns – who had been appointed as Secretary General of NATO in 1971 – and informed Kissinger about worries within NATO, for example concerning the American representation. In 1974, the Ernst van der Beugel – Kissinger backchannel was again instrumental in Dutch-American negotiations concerning the long desired landing rights for

¹⁷¹ E.H. van der Beugel to F.J. Goedhart, 16 January 1976, file 38, EvdB: "Voor wat betreft ons advies in de commissie van Rijckevorsel zou ik, gezien de gang van zaken nu, wholeheartedly de aanbevelingen van de minderheid onderschrijven. Dan hadden we tenminste iets. Men kan niet somber genoeg zijn over de totale paralyse van het Westen. Nederland levert aan die paralyse een meer dan evenredige bijdrage."

¹⁷² E.H. van der Beugel to B.W. Biesheuvel, W.K.N. Schmelzer and H.J. de Koster, 27 September 1972, file 9, EvdB.

¹⁷³ W.K.N. Schmelzer to E.H. van der Beugel, 30 October 1972, file 9, EvdB, NAH. "Mijn welgemeende dank voor je brief van 27 september 1972 over je gesprek met Kissinger ten aanzien van de MBFR en een eventuele terugtrekking van Amerikaanse troepen. Intussen kreeg ik ook de beschikking voer een samenvatting van het "Randall-rapport", welke samenvatting ik je voor jouw informatie in fotokopie doe toekomen. Graag blijf ik mij aanbevolen houden voor informatie zoals je mij nu vertrouwelijk hebt willen verschaffen."

Los Angeles. After Van der Beugel raised the issue with Kissinger, the latter assured Van der Beugel that he would “overrule our bureaucracy” in order to satisfy a key ally in Europe due to an “overwhelming desire to support the Dutch position.”¹⁷⁴

During the rest of the 1970’s as well as the 1980’s Ernst van der Beugel continued to play an active role in the public debate, partly as an Atlanticist Jeremiah – lamenting the state of the alliance while defying the “false prophets” of détente, the moralist politics of marrying priests and protestant clergymen, the new leftist sociologists and a new generation with its long hair, short skirts and anti-Americanism in the public square. Even so, during the course of the 1970s his clout started to fade. While still consulted as an *eminence grise*, the fossilization of Van der Beugel’s ideas increasingly turned him into a remnant of a different time and generation with different experiences, views and priorities while across the Atlantic the old East Coast Establishment, with which Van der Beugel had been intimately associated, was starting to unravel. “For two decades, the Establishment had held sway by sitting squarely astride the middle ground of ‘informed’ public opinion. But by the seventies, the center no longer held; Vietnam had shattered the post-World War II consensus.”¹⁷⁵

The times they were a changin’ and in the process the Atlantic Community was confronted with an additional challenge as the old Marshall Plan-era establishment had to make way for a new generation to whom the fundamental importance of close transatlantic ties was not as obvious as it had been to Ernst van der Beugel and many of his friends. In contrast to Van der Beugel’s generation, this generation had not lived through the horrors of the Second World War nor experienced the joy of liberation, the miracle of post-war reconstruction or the dawn of the Cold War. Instead, members of the successor generation spent their formative years during a period of détente combined with experiences like the Vietnam War followed by the Watergate Scandal. As they came of age – preparing themselves to move into positions of power throughout the West – one question became increasingly pertinent among the Atlantic elite: How could the values and aspirations of the post-war Atlanticist establishment be transferred to this new generation?

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the views of the Atlantic elite ran out of sync with the ideas and concerns of the ‘public at large’ – especially on the necessity of NATO and a strong Atlantic defense in the context of easing tensions between East and West. This happened during a period of democratization in foreign affairs during which the general public not only started to demonstrate a greater interest in foreign policy but also started to voice its concerns stronger and louder. In the process it demonstrated an awareness on Van der Beugel’s side that the Atlantic security community formalized through NATO in fact also

¹⁷⁴ Qtd. In: Scott-Smith and Snyder, “A Test of Sentiments”, 943

¹⁷⁵ Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), 725.

depended on the Atlantic Community as an imagined community. While the sense of belonging to such a community was still alive on an elite level, he feared that it was unravelling among the public at large due to a combination of growing anti-Americanism and a diminishing awareness of the Soviet threat. Through a combination of private efforts focused on public diplomacy and psychological warfare Van der Beugel attempted to foster and strengthen this sense of community in the mind of the 'average man'. He did so by countering anti-Americanism with a more positive image of the United States as liberator, ally and protector while keeping the enemy image of the Soviet Union alive. Thus, while he did not expect the Soviet Union to start a hot war any time soon, he presented the communist enemy above all as a threat to the Atlantic Community as a community of values based on a shared civilization and shared interests.

While the democratization of foreign policy created new challenges for the Atlantic Community, it also increased the significance of public diplomacy, which in turn opened up new avenues for unofficial diplomats like Ernst van der Beugel to influence the transatlantic diplomatic process. While traditional state-centered approaches to diplomatic history tend to ignore the contribution of these unofficial actors to the diplomatic process, the perspective of New Diplomatic History makes it possible to demonstrate how Ernst van der Beugel as a private actor dissatisfied with official efforts at explaining NATO to the public at large, took it upon himself to contribute to this public diplomacy effort – and he was not the only one. The contributions of private actors, including many Atlantic NGOs, in public diplomacy and psychological warfare were recognized and encouraged by NATO officials who wanted to avoid suspicion of spreading communist-like propaganda. What is more, they believed that private actors could spread their messages more efficiently while granting more legitimacy to transatlantic public diplomacy efforts. In a similar vein, as a private individual, Van der Beugel could also be more aggressive in his psychological warfare through his efforts of keeping the enemy image alive.

From the second half of the 1960's onwards Van der Beugel put an increasing portion of his time and energy into private public diplomacy efforts – trying to create a conducive public climate for close transatlantic relations and a strong Atlantic defense. His positions as professor of transatlantic cooperation at Leiden University and chairman of the renowned International Institute for Strategic Studies in London provided him with extra status as an 'independent' expert in his field. Through speeches, publications and TV appearances – mostly in the Netherlands, but also abroad – he became a key voice in the public debate on transatlantic relations and defense. In the process, he tried to create a positive image of the United States by keeping the memory of America's role in the liberation and post-war recovery of the Netherlands alive in the face of the Vietnam War and growing anti-Americanism while emphasizing the importance of the Dutch and Atlantic defense while contributing to psychological warfare efforts by reminding his publics that the Soviet threat had not truly diminished.

Next to his own direct contribution to the public debate he also tried to influence the way in which Dutch journalists covered the United States, by offering access to American influentials to journalists whom he expected to write positively about the United States and by socializing them into the Atlantic elite by inviting them to Bilderberg Meetings or to dinners at his own home. While the greatest part of his public diplomacy efforts was focused on the Dutch public, these efforts were partly driven by the fear that the growing anti-American sentiments among European publics might alienate the Americans and threaten their willingness to stay committed to the safety of the European continent. He also tried to explain the Dutch position to the American elites directly.

While his public diplomacy efforts increased during this period, his role behind the scenes of transatlantic diplomacy did not diminish, as he remained well-connected to the formal diplomatic circuits, serving as an unofficial liaison between Washington, The Hague and NATO. In fact, as his close friend Henry Kissinger entered the Nixon White House first as National Security Adviser and later also as Secretary of State, his access to the official Foreign Policy Establishment in Washington was better than ever before. Both men also used this connection for diplomatic purposes. Kissinger contacted Van der Beugel for example when he wanted to reconnect White House bonds with Monnet's Action Committee for a United Europe through Kohnstamm or when the omission of the Netherlands on the itinerary of Nixon's 1969 European tour rubbed foreign minister Luns the wrong way. The two main 'official' issues about which Van der Beugel approached Kissinger repeatedly – the KLM-landing rights negotiations in the U.S. and the Dutch defense budget – don't just demonstrate that Ernst van der Beugel was taken seriously as an unofficial actor, but also show that he was not just an extension of the Dutch or the American government. He was very critical about American landing rights policy and helped the Dutch government to get U.S. landing rights, believing that resolving this issue was also in the interest of transatlantic cohesion. At the same time he did not mind to use his American connections to put pressure on the Dutch government via NATO and the White House to raise its defense budget. In the end all of these private efforts – in public and behind the scenes – worked in tandem towards the same diplomatic goal: fostering and maintaining close transatlantic ties within a strong Atlantic Community.