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Summaries

The price of our security. A comparative analysis of defense expenditures in 18 capitalist democracies

by J. E. Keman

Until now little attention has been paid to the cross-national analysis of the determinants of Defence-expenditures. Most of the research in this field has merely concentrated on the effects of military expenditure.

In this article we attempt to analyse the possible (explanatory) determinants of military expenditure. We concentrate on military expenditure in its quality as a 'Public Policy' and confine the analysis to 18 capitalist democracies. We use four areas of possible influences: domestic policies and politics, international (geo)politics and the role of the economy. From our results, it appears that between 1955 and 1975 (the period under investigation) a rather constant structure of military expenditure can be discerned which is largely determined by geopolitical factors on the one hand, and by the relative economic strength of a country on the other. Furthermore it appears that there is a convergent tendency developing between 1955 and 1975 (which is the specific result of the post-war history of the western world). Contrary to the constant structure, the convergent trajectory of military expenditure seems to be of a conjunctural nature.

Our conclusion is that domestic politics and policies have had only an indirect bearing on defence-policies in capitalist democratic nation-states. However, both the economic and the international situation have changed, which in our opinion could indicate that – given the constant structure of military expenditure – the convergent trend will be upheld and may lead to national and transnational (i.e. within alliances) tensions in and between capitalist democratic countries.

These tensions are not only the result of the change in the international theatre but also a consequence of the growing problems of the respective national economies.

Administrative reorganisation in the Netherlands

by J. N. Breunese

Since 1979, when the author published an article in this journal (ACTA POLITICA, nr. 4, 1979) in which a description was given of administrative reorganisation in the Netherlands until then, there have been sufficient significant developments to warrant a new article on the subject of administrative reorganisation. Four main topics dominated the discussion on administrative reorganisation in the 1970's:

- decentralisation of national governmental tasks;
- provincial regroupings;
- local government regroupings;
- cooperation between local authorities.

Since 1979 three more topics may be added:

- the working group 'Complementary administration' produced a final report;
- the so-called 'Vonhoff' commission (Commission 'Hoofdstructuur Rijksdienst') was installed to resolve the problems of national administration as well as of the political and administrative branches;
- reorganisation of government due to the economic recession involving cutting down on expenses.

Decentralisation of national governmental tasks

The new decentralisation paper, which appeared in 1980, pointed out that there is consensus among the politicians over the desirability of decentralisation. Yet a dualistic attitude is found in the Dutch parliament concerning decentralisation. On the one hand, there are generalists who plead for decentralisation, and on the other hand there are the sector specialists, who are in favour of centralisation. The position of the government is found in a explanatory memorandum which is attached to the Law on Reorganization of Administration (November 1981): decentralisation of national government tasks to the provincial level is an indissoluble part of the reorganisation of administration.

Provincial regroupings

In 1979 we concluded (ACTA POLITICA, nr. 4, 1979) that in order to telescope the provincial and regional level successfully, twenty four provinces would be needed. This went beyond the target of seventeen provinces, which was the official policy at that time. The minister of Home Affairs, who entered office in 1981, did indeed decide to strive for the establishment of twenty four provinces.

With the recent fall of the kabinet 'Van Agt II' this minister left office and the waiting is for the election to be held in september 1982 so that a new kabinet will have to determine again how many new provinces are needed.

Local government regrouping

The 1979 ACTA POLITICA article warned against regrouping local government without previously having developed a consistent view or policy on the matter. The regroupings of local governments since that time have taken place without consistent policy being used.

Cooperation between local authorities

One of the biggest bottlenecks in the reorganisation process is the role of the regional level. The question not yet conclusively answered is whether the regional level is a kind of local government or whether it is to be placed hierarchically above local government. In the period from 1969 until 1975 it looked as if the regional government would materialize as a layer above local government and there was much talk of the 'era of regional government formation'. But since this time, primarily under the influence of the growing consciousness of local governments and the ensuing idea of provincial regrouping, the significance of the regional level has almost disappeared. Because the government has decided to terminate its

financial support for the existing regional organs, within a few years, the likelihood that the regional level will disappear altogether is great.

Complementary administration

Complementary administration has as its aim the mutual influence of competences and tasks of governmental organs even on different levels. This viewpoint conflicts with the hierarchical structure of Dutch government, so that the term 'administration' is out of place. It is suggested that the term 'consultation' would be more appropriate.

Reorganisation of the National Administration

The discussion on the reorganisation of the national administration is almost as old as the discussion on the administration reorganisation. The most important development has been the so called 'Vonhoff' report, which appeared in May of 1981. The commission authoring this report recommended an enormous decentralisation effort involving national tasks being transposed to the provincial and local level. One of the main obstacles to this effort is considered by the commission to be the stagnating political decision making in the Netherlands.