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## Pillarization as a Process of Modernization

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10. See Dobbelaere, 1981-A; Dobbelaere, Billiet and Creyf, 1978-A.
11. Thurlings, 1971, pp. 133-181; Billiet, 1974, p. 349.
12. Thurlings, 1979.
13. Billiet, 1981-B; 1982-C; 1983.
14. Billiet and Dobbelaere, 1976-B, pp. 79-88; Billiet, 1981-A; 1982-A.
15. See Billiet, 1982-A, pp. 45-58; see also Dobbelaere, 1979-B; 1982.
16. See Dobbelaere, 1973-A; Billiet, 1977-B, pp. 172-182.
17. See Dobbelaere and Billiet, 1978-B, pp. 243-246; Billiet, 1981-C, pp. 1-20.
18. Dobbelaere, 1983-A; Dobbelaere and Billiet, 1983-B.
19. Winter, 1981.
20. See Thurlings, 1979, pp. 484-485.
21. See Heisler, 1974-B, pp. 181 ff.; Heisler and Kvavik, 1974-C, pp. 38-42.
22. See Scholten, 1982.
23. Doorn, 1956, p. 42.
24. Huyse, 1981, pp. 323-324.
25. Billiet, 1982-B, pp. 86-92; Huyse, 1975-A, pp. 414-425.
26. Lipset and Rokkan, 1967, pp. 13-14; McRae, 1974, pp. 2-4; Steiner, 1981-A, pp. 340-342; Lijphart, 1968-A; 1974, p. 71.
27. Lehmbruch, 1979, p. 53.
28. See Dierickx, 1978-B; 1979-B.
29. See D. B. Truman, *The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion*, New York, 1951, pp. 508-511; A. F. Bentley, *The Process of Government: A Study of Social Pressures*, Evanston, 1955, p. 208; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967, p. 17.
30. Huyse, 1970, pp. 173, 192-195; Brande, 1963, pp. 3, 28-29.
31. Compare with Scholten, 1980, pp. 340-343.
32. Righart, 1981.
33. Lorwin, 1974-A, pp. 179-181; 1974-B, p. 34; Rokkan, 1975, pp. 568-569; Zolberg, 1978, pp. 99-138; Tilly, 1975, pp. 608-609.
34. Urwin, 1970, p. 321; S. P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven, 1968, p. 12; Tilly, 1975, pp. 616-617.
35. Witte, 1981-B, pp. 1-157, esp. 110-117, 130-132; Billiet, 1977-A; Dobbelaere, Billiet and Creyf, 1978-A, esp. 100-108.
36. Rokkan, 1977; see also Brande, 1973.
37. Urwin, 1970, pp. 321, 336.
38. Witte, 1981-B, pp. 92-96, 123-125; Art, 1982, pp. 11, 12, 16 esp. footnote 18; Isacker, 1969, pp. 43-141; Billiet, 1977-B, pp. 7-18; Schöffner, 1956, 1975.
39. Schmitter, 1979-A, p. 9.
40. Heisler, 1974-C, p. 43; 1974-D, p. 13.

## Pillarization as a process of modernization\*

J. E. Ellemers

*Verzuiling* or Pillarization is usually considered as the particular way in which Dutch society has been organized along denominational lines. The 'Pillars' (*Zuilen*), which form the basis of this system, are made up of different denominational groups. At first only the Catholics and orthodox Protestants, but later on also other ideological groups such as the Socialists and the (conservative) Liberals and even Jews and 'Humanists' were considered to form 'Pillars'. In due course the main Pillars established their own network of organizations, ranging from political parties, trade unions and educational systems (including a Catholic and a Calvinist university) to broadcasting corporations, welfare agencies, sport associations and even social research institutes.

When social scientists started to study this peculiar way in which Dutch society has been organized for almost a century now, they first looked at it as a more or less structural phenomenon. The leading Dutch sociologist J. P. Kruijt, who in the 1950s was one of the first to study *Verzuiling*, set out to describe it as a way in which a religion or denomination organized itself also in those institutional spheres which were not primarily connected with religion. Kruijt developed several 'measurements' to determine the degree of *Verzuiling* and established, among other things, that *Verzuiling* had increased from the beginning of this century through the late 1950s.<sup>1</sup>

Other scholars, in particular Calvinist and Protestant historians and sociologists, pointed out that one of the functions of *Verzuiling* has been that it provided a means of 'emancipation' for those groups of Dutch society (mainly Catholics and orthodox Protestants) which had for long been deprived or otherwise lagged behind.<sup>2</sup> Still other sociologists viewed

\* I am indebted to Henk van Goor, Frits van Holthoorn, Rob Kroes and Greetje Tromp for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Since this paper is an outline of a more detailed study, in which all the relevant literature on Dutch history and *Verzuiling* will be dealt with, references in the present text are relatively sparse.

*Verzuiling* as the way in which denominational groups succeeded through organizational networks to exercise social control over their followers.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, political scientists, since the publication of A. Lijphart's *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*<sup>4</sup>, have been looking at *Verzuiling* as a way in which political conflicts were regulated in a society characterized by an extraordinary degree of social cleavages or 'segmented pluralism'. This stimulated other political scientists to apply the model of 'consociational democracy', as it was also called, to other societies as well, ranging from Northern Ireland, Belgium, Switzerland and Austria, to Cyprus, Lebanon, Malaysia, Canada and even South-Africa.<sup>5</sup>

In this presentation I propose to combine elements of these different viewpoints and explanations. But primarily I intend to look at *Verzuiling* as a particular manner in which a relatively small society, characterized by 'segmented pluralism' and a relative high degree of particularism tries to cope with processes of modernization. In this view *Verzuiling* is largely seen as a specific process during a specific period of time in a specific kind of society.

In order to elaborate this point of view a few remarks are in order with regard to some characteristics of smaller nations in general and the history of Dutch society in particular.

### Special problems of size and scale

In the social science literature *Verzuiling*, 'Consociationalism', or 'Proportionaldemokratie' are largely dealt with in terms of conflict regulation and social control in societies which are characterized by a relatively high degree of 'segmented pluralism'. This, however, in a way can also be considered as a result of certain conditions. The concepts we are talking about (*Verzuiling*, 'consociational democracy') are mostly applied to smaller and medium sized nations: Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria.

What most of these countries have in common is a certain degree of defiance, or even recalcitrance, in the sense that they preferred and succeeded to keep an identity of their own. These nations did not become a part of a larger national or political entity (the Netherlands, Switzerland), or split off again from larger entities (Belgium). It seems that these nations were difficult to control and absorb within a larger framework, because of their cultural, religious, linguistic or ethnic diversity, which in some way

formed part of their national identity. Particularism seems to be one of the characteristics of their defiance.

Within these nations there existed a certain degree of social heterogeneity, or even cleavages. But at the same time there was no clear majority which could absorb the minority, or minorities. In spite of the presence of a pronounced national center, these nations tended to a higher degree of particularism and a lower degree of universalism than most larger nation states.

For a long period of time the fact that these smaller nations were 'left on their own', because they could not or would not be absorbed within a larger framework, did not pose very special problems. This, however, changed with the advent of large scale processes of modernization, in particular the industrial revolution and all that followed in its wake. Then the smaller scale did create some special problems. In many of the smaller nations, which today are considered to be 'consociational democracies', modernization took only partly place along lines of increased universalism and homogeneity. The smaller nations had to cope with modernization under conditions of a relatively high degree of particularism and diversity. This demanded special institutional arrangements, of which *Verzuiling* is but one of the examples.

In this view it is not so much *Verzuiling* or 'consociationalism' as such, which makes for similarities between these nations. Rather some underlying factors, especially their size, small(er) scale and particularism, based on cultural, religious or linguistic diversity, without a larger universalistic framework, demanded different institutional arrangements; i.e. different from those of larger nations.

Some of the differences between smaller and larger nations in the process of modernization are obvious. In most cases modernization meant a greater dependence of international influences, first and foremost of international markets.<sup>6</sup> Since their internal markets were often not large enough, nor sufficiently diversified, they had to specialize. Taking part successfully in modernization meant for smaller nations that they needed a higher degree of flexibility in applying resources, in adjustment and in decision-making. In larger nations different tasks and functions can in turn be fulfilled by different sectors or different regions. Larger nations have a larger infrastructure, usually more than one center, more and larger peripheral areas and more diversified arrangements to deal with different and changing demands. In smaller nations the more limited scale requires a higher degree of integration and flexibility within a much smaller framework.

In these smaller nations special institutional arrangements are called for to deal with these problems of integration and flexibility. Often by trial-and-

error such arrangements have taken shape and were subsequently applied to other spheres and activities. As we will see, such institutional arrangements in the long run may tend to become a kind of 'dynamic conservatism'. Dynamic because it is continuously applied to deal with *new* problems. Conservative because different problems are dealt with in a *similar* fashion.

Of course much more could be said about problems of size, scale and modernization. Here, however, we have to limit ourselves to a sketch of the bare outlines of these problems. Hopefully it has become sufficiently clear that *Verzuiling* and more or less similar arrangements in other smaller or medium size nations, are not just institutionalized arrangements to deal with conflicts and social cleavages, but more basically can be considered as a way to cope with change and modernization.

### Development of the Dutch nation

From its inception in the late 16th century, the Dutch nation was characterized by rather peculiar traits. First of all, the founding cities with an almost 'city-state' character and also the provinces and the cities within the provinces, kept a very autonomous position for a long period of time within the Republic of the Seven United Provinces.<sup>7</sup> The relative preponderance of the province of Holland never led to a complete political dominance and not even to cultural unification. Decision-making and national policy was rather a matter of consent and mutual accommodation than of coercion.

Secondly, from the very beginning the Netherlands had a religiously mixed population. With the exception of the Southern provinces (which at first had a semi-dependent status and did not belong to the Republic proper), there was not any area which was completely homogeneous from a religious point of view. Moreover, each of the main religious groups (Catholics, Calvinists and liberal Protestants and other 'libertines') – none of which was to disappear – had held at one time or another a position of complete power and dominance. Although Calvinism eventually became the dominant religion, until the 18th century the Catholics formed approximately half of the population.<sup>8</sup> However, half of these Catholics lived in the Southern provinces, the other half in the Republic proper.

On the other hand, the Protestants never formed a unity, but were internally divided. Especially with regard to politics and economic life the Calvinists, who otherwise from the 17th century onward became a dominant element within the Dutch nation, had to share power positions with liberal protestants and even 'Humanistic' liberals. The Calvinists, many of

whom originated from the Southern Netherlands, formed at the beginning of the 17th century no more than half of all Protestants. The other half, mostly belonging to the indigenous population, consisted of Lutherans, Baptists and several other Protestant sects. But there were also those who did not believe or who considered themselves 'libertines'. However, not all foreigners and their descendants, who immigrated in the first fifty years of the republic from the Southern Netherlands, Spain and Portugal, were or became Calvinists. Many of these foreigners, who probably made up some ten percent of the total population, were to play an important role in the economic development of the Republic, which later in the 17th century led to an economic 'boom': the Golden Age.<sup>9</sup>

Eventually the Liberals were to become in the 18th century and especially in the first half of the 19th century a dominant force in their own right; not only in the field of politics and the economy, but also in cultural life. By that time the Calvinist church had been robbed of its privileges as a state church and Catholics and other non-Protestants had received full civil rights, including the restoration of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy.

In short, from its inception in the late 16th century onwards, the Dutch nation has been characterized by a rather uneasy balance of power between at least three denominational groups: Catholics, Calvinists and other Protestants and liberals. None of these groups held a complete majority or even dominated society in all respects. Besides, none of these groups was characterized by territorial concentration. This was not even the case with the Catholics, of whom about half lived in the fairly homogeneous Catholic Southern provinces, but of whom the other half was dispersed over the remainder of the country. Since none of these groups could command a clear majority and each formed in one way or another a minority, an understanding evolved that the nation could only be preserved when the rights of minorities would be protected or at least respected.

Reinforced by other institutional arrangements and by a strong emphasis on group particularism – not only of religious groups, but of other groups as well, e.g. provinces, regions, cities – this way of doing things led to a political culture of decision-making by consent and accommodation.

So it should be clear that at the advent of the Industrial Revolution group particularism was a very dominant trait in Dutch society. Among many other things it meant that group ties – also of small groups, such as family and church parish – played a very important role. It meant too that the bulk of the Calvinists and Catholics, who were relatively deprived in comparison to the urban bourgeoisie in the center of the country, were kept together in small territorial groups, reinforced by religious ties. Furthermore it meant that when the emancipation of the small bourgeoisie and the

lower classes started, it took place within the framework of existing and newly established organizations of the churches in which clergymen and priests often took a leading part. Finally it should be mentioned that the Industrial Revolution in the Netherlands did not only take place at a relatively late point in time, but also at a relatively slow pace. This is another reason why dechristianization among the working class was very limited until deep in the 20th century.

### The rise of a network of denominational organizations

When in the second half of the 19th century the Industrial Revolution reached the Netherlands, it posed—as anywhere else in the Western world—completely new problems. The process of ‘take-off into sustained growth’ – to use Rostow’s well-known term – involved a large-scale process of social change, which was not limited to economic life alone. It encompassed a process of social mobilization which touched almost all sectors of society. The introduction of industrial production was accompanied by changes in the composition of the labour force, urbanization, increased communication, extension of the educational system and in general an enlargement of scale to which Dutch society was quite unaccustomed. It involved also changes in family life, social relations in general, political life, religion and culture and triggered off processes of emancipation of segments of the population which had lagged behind: labourers, farmers, women (somewhat later) and many Catholics and Protestants as well, who to a large extent represented the middle and lower ranges of society.

At the most general level the process of modernization which had started, meant a process of differentiation in which various institutional spheres developed and became relatively autonomous. This was especially the case with the economy, political life and education, later to be followed by new developments in the sphere of communications, leisure time, cultural orientations and morals. Changes in each of these spheres necessitated not only new institutional arrangements, but also posed new problems of (re-)integration.

How did these changes come about in a society which was not only internally divided, but where various social groups also lived rather isolated from one another? How could these different groups and regions be integrated within a new socio-economic system and—in a way for the first time in history – be amalgamated into something resembling a national entity?

Although we do not know yet very well how exactly these changes took place at the local and regional level, it is interesting to note that whenever certain relatively isolated groups were confronted with drastic changes, they tended to define these problems first and foremost in terms of denominational affiliation. This is not surprising in a society where the own group and especially denominational affiliation had been a major source of identification for centuries.

So it should not be a complete surprise that when in the last decades of the 19th century Dutch society was confronted with changes in the spheres of labour relations, political participation and education, religious groups tried to take part in these expanding institutional spheres through organizations of their own.

What made the Dutch case a rather special one, however, was a combination of several factors. First of all it was not just one denominational group which tried to control new institutional activities through religion affiliated organizations. In fact there were at least *two* denominational groups, the Roman Catholics and the orthodox Protestants, which made such attempts and which between them constituted—at least in sheer numbers—a majority of the Dutch population.

In the second place, both the Dutch Catholics and the Protestants had earlier in the 19th century undergone a process of reorganization of their churches, which in the case of the Protestants involved a rather complex sequence of rearrangements, splits and new mergers. So when the process of modernization started in the last decades of the 19th century, both Catholics and Protestants commanded already rather elaborate and renewed church organizations.

In the third place, it proved to be important that both Catholics and Protestants started to organize activities in certain institutional spheres which previously had been considered secular – i.e. politics, labour relations and education – more or less *simultaneously*. Although relations between Protestants and Catholics in the past and also for a long time to come were strained and even distrustful (it was not till a century later, in 1977, that the Catholic party and the two major Protestant parties would merge into one Christian Democratic party), the counterpressures of Liberals and the emerging Socialists brought them into a political coalition. This started off a whole new sequence of events. Although the Catholic-Protestant coalition has been a very uneasy one for a long time, it proved to be successful. First the common interests of both Catholics and Protestants with regard to public subsidies for their religious schools prompted them to act together. At the same time or somewhat later the

extension of suffrage, the so-called 'social question' (i.e. the socio-economic order) and other issues, among them matters of family policy, not only brought them again in coalition, but also encouraged them to build organizations of their own, including political parties. In fact, once this process had started, Catholics and Protestants – later to be followed by the Socialists – were challenged and challenged each other to continue to organize certain activities along denominational lines. So each time a certain institutional sphere became relatively more important, claims were laid to develop it through organizations affiliated with religious or ideological groups. This was especially the case when subsidies or facilities became available to develop these activities.

Finally and probably most important, the new way of organizing more and more activities, which previously were considered to be secular, along denominational lines, proved also to alleviate the problems of national integration and flexibility in decision-making. In both respects Dutch society had been weak in the past. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution and all other processes of modernization that started to take place, these various developments had to be integrated and coordinated at the national level.

Although the increased organization of social and public life along denominational lines tended to reinforce already existing cleavages, it also contributed in a special way to a form of national integration and a higher level of flexibility in decision-making. First, since certain activities started to be organized nationally, albeit by church affiliated organizations, it meant that regional boundaries *within* the various denominational groups were slowly eroded. Second, organizing public life along denominational lines, meant that at the top of these organizations some consultation and coordination should take place with the tops of the other organizations. This is essentially what political scientists have called the 'politics of accommodation'. However divided Dutch society might be, at the top the elites have to settle divisive issues and work out certain arrangements, under penalty of a complete disintegration of society.

Eventually this way of reaching agreements led to sets of informal 'rules of the game', which enabled politicians and other leaders of the various denominational and ideological groups to arrive at decisions and to react to social changes.<sup>10</sup>

It is generally agreed that this way of organizing Dutch society and public life became more or less institutionalized and reached some sort of 'maturity' at the end of the second decade of the 20th century. At that time some of the most divisive issues of the previous decades were finally settled with the 'Pacification' of the 'school issue' (i.e. full public subsidy for

religious schools, 1917), universal suffrage for men (1917) and women (1919) and proportional representation in the elections for parliament (1917). Settlement of these issues was brought about by constitutional amendments which were nearly unanimously agreed upon.

In this way, after much internal struggle and controversies which had threatened the nation, a new way of dealing with problems of modernization and social change had evolved. Once this way of problem solving proved to be successful, it was also applied to other institutional spheres and by other ideological groups.

### Nuances, mechanisms and personnel

The sketchy outline just given, is somewhat of an 'ideal type'. Reality was and is somewhat more complex and less straightforward. For instance, the extension of suffrage went step by step. In fact there were not two solid blocs of Catholics and Protestants, who joined action. Both groups were rather loose leagues, certainly at first. Within the Catholic segment considerable internal strife and even conflicts existed. The Protestants did not constitute one but several churches, which kept feuding with each other. Political party organizations both among Catholics and Protestants emerged only slowly and after much internal bickering. Even when political parties were constituted, the Protestants formed two bigger and several smaller parties. As was mentioned before, distrust and conflicts between Catholics and Protestants were for a long time latent and flared up repeatedly'.<sup>11</sup>

Later on, when other institutional spheres were also organized along denominational lines, there did not emerge a neat division in two (Catholic and Protestant) or still later in four (Catholic, Protestant, Socialist and Liberal) blocs, as is sometimes suggested.<sup>12</sup> In the long run only one pillar (*zuil*) was fully developed, the Catholic pillar, which became something of a monolith. But among Protestants often several separate and sometimes competing networks were founded according to more orthodox or more moderate religious shades. Still later, in the 20th century, the Socialists were challenged to build their own network of organizations. But the (conservative) Liberals had a much less elaborate network, unless one could say that 'neutral', non-denominational organizations were considered to 'represent' the Liberals.

In short, the emergence of a system of an increasing number of activities organized along religious or ideological lines, was not a uniform process, but one full of dissimilarities and inconsistencies. Whether things were

organized one way or another depended often on coincidences. The same was true at the local and regional level. At these levels even more differences and dissimilarities in manner and degree of organizing certain activities existed. Sometimes it led to cooperation of Catholics and Protestants, in other cases between Catholics and Socialists, or between Protestants and Liberals, depending on local conditions, the local elites, the composition of the population and the issues at stake.<sup>13</sup>

However, in the long run these developments also presented some system, with as a systemic element that once this way of organizing activities had started and had proved to 'work' in one way or another, it was imitated by others or applied to different, new problems that emerged. It stimulated both competition and cooperation between particularistic groups at the same time. This was the case at the local level, as well as at the national level. In the course of the years it became a generally accepted way of dealing with new problems; for instance about distributing benefits, subsidies and facilities. Political scientists have often stressed that it has evolved into a way of handling conflicts in a deeply divided society. But it seems to be a much more general phenomenon. It slowly evolved into a way of handling problems *in general*, and more in particular of dealing with *new* problems and coping with social change; although certain changes are accompanied by conflicts as well. Considered from this point of view *Verzuiling* became a dynamic element in its own right.

At the individual level this way of organizing different activities along denominational lines created a new 'opportunity structure'. It meant that in almost every village or town a certain activity was organized three or four times over, rather than just once, within each institutional sphere. Not only the different churches and political parties, but also the trade unions, farmers associations, schoolboards, health organizations, and all the other voluntary associations that sprang up in Dutch modernizing society, came to offer opportunities for leadership, management and other (semi-)elite positions and potential subsequent upward mobility.

At the intermediate level this new way of organizing social and public life meant of course first and foremost an increased opportunity for social control by the churches and their leaders. The coordination of certain activities became more centralized within the church organizations, at the regional level and eventually at the national level. In addition to this it proved to be a way of insulating the adherents of the own denomination from other people and outside influences. A consequence of this was an increase of the dependency and apathy of the rank-and-file, who in due course were caught in a network of organizations and individuals of their own denomination.

At the national level it implied the things mentioned before: a way of coping with new problems, conflict resolution, social control, insulating adherents of the various denominational groups, and so on. But considered from a macro-sociological perspective, the increased opportunity-structure implied also increased social emancipation and chances for upward social mobility among those, who for a long period of time had been in a relatively disadvantageous position, in particular Catholics and orthodox Protestants.

This brings us finally to the question of personnel. Who were the people who brought about this elaborate network of organizations? In the study of the history of *Verzuiling* so far, much attention has been given to the national elites who formed the core of the system. However, as should be clear by now, it was also – and in terms of numbers even mainly – a process which took place at the regional and local level. Until quite recently very little research has been done on this aspect. Obviously, Protestant clergymen and Catholic priests have played a decisive role in elaborating the system at the local and regional level.

Interestingly enough, it has been established that within the churches it was at times the competition among the clergy itself that contributed to the emergence of denomination oriented organizations. For instance, in the province of Noord-Brabant competition between 'regular' and 'secular' Catholic priests generated the foundation of Catholic farmers' organizations.<sup>14</sup> In other places Protestant clergymen competed in the founding of as many church affiliated organizations as possible.

But others too, (semi-)professionals and laymen and 'amateurs' have played a significant role in organizing activities along denominational lines. So far very little empirical information is available about this aspect. But it might be worthwhile to pursue this further, e.g. in terms of 'resource mobilization'.<sup>15</sup>

### Maturity and decline of *Verzuiling*

The phenomenon which today is called *Verzuiling* – a term, incidentally, which was coined in the 1930s and became widely used only in the late 1940s – can be considered to have started somewhere at the end of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century. It reached full maturity in the 1920s and 1930s and its culmination can be situated in the late 1950s. In the course of the 1960s it started to decline, a phenomenon which is called *Ontzuiling*, or De-Pillarization. Recently it has been suggested that some

re-emergence of *Verzuiling* (*Herzuiling*, or Re-Pillarization) is taking place, but it is doubtful whether this is really the case.

As has been explained before, once it had started, *Verzuiling* became a self-perpetuating mechanism. After it had reached a certain degree of institutionalization, it tended to develop an impetus of its own. It became the accepted way of dealing with problems of modernization. But in doing so it somehow maintained, or even reinforced, the existing cleavages. In other words it legitimized the very sources of tension which formed the basis of its existence. It was regarded as a rather satisfactory way of dealing with social change and modernization in a pluralistic society. A society, moreover, which in comparison to many other Western societies still had many traditional elements, backward pockets and a relatively slow pace of social change.

In this connection it is not without significance that we can see an upswing of *Verzuiling* in the 1920s and again in the decade after the Second World War. In the 1920s *Verzuiling* became the means *par excellence* to deal with new or developing institutions, which evolved as a result of continuous modernization. In the 1920s and 1930s the emergence of mass media (big circulation newspapers, the radio), the extension of leisure time and the subsequent increase in importance of sports, popular education, reading and other leisure time activities were almost from the beginning absorbed within the framework of *Verzuiling*. The interbellum years were the heyday of Catholic, Protestant and Socialist youth organizations, sports clubs, publishing houses and even cattle breeders organizations.

It is interesting to note in this context that the Socialists were at first rather reluctant to follow suit and take part in the various activities with organizations of their own. However, once *Verzuiling* got on its way, it seemed as though the Socialists started to lead the way. Especially in the 1920s they created socialist organizations in almost every field of activity: youth and women organizations, a publishing house with a network of newspapers with tens of regional editions, a broadcasting corporation, libraries, organizations for popular education, even an insurance company.

Of course, once one ideological group (whether church or political party) started to organize a certain activity within its own organizational realm, others had to follow suit. Even certain 'neutral' voluntary associations were in this way forced to take part in the system of *Verzuiling*, as was the case with for instance the neutral broadcasting corporation, health and other organizations, which were considered to represent the Liberal or 'neutral' pillar.

All this was reinforced by a widening of the principle of proportional

representation, not only in the field of politics, but in many other institutional spheres as well. Members of governing boards and of roof organizations were supposed to 'mirror' the various denominational, ideological and even regional segments of their hinterlands or populations. In the same way subsidies and facilities (for instance broadcasting time) were, and still are, distributed according to such principles. This in turn induced certain groups or movements to claim such facilities too and by doing so take part in the system of *Verzuiling*, which they might not have done otherwise. So today, in addition to the 'established' Pillars, we witness 'midget-Pillars' of Liberal Protestants, Humanists, Jews and even ethnic and other minorities (like homosexuals), claiming certain facilities or subsidies to support their activities.

In the late 1930s *Verzuiling*, which at the time was sometimes called rather scornfully 'the spirit of compartments' (*hokjesgeest*), was often fiercely disputed and criticized, and was almost completely done away with during the Second World War and the German occupation. However, it returned in an unprecedented form during the late 1940s and 1950s. It should be mentioned in passing, that in general the Second World War, in spite of its tremendous effects and very profound emotional and traumatic marks it left in the lives of many individuals, did not leave very profound changes in the way Dutch society was organized. We witness this also with respect to *Verzuiling*.

In the postwar decade many newly emerging institutions and activities were almost at once and without much discussion absorbed within the system of *Verzuiling*. Thus, television, social welfare, mental health care, marriage counseling and many other new institutions, including even social research, became part and parcel of the system of *Verzuiling*.

However, this spread of *Verzuiling* to almost every sector of social life, meant also the beginning of its decline. Although still in 1954 the Dutch bishops forbade the Catholics to be member of a socialist trade union, to read a socialist newspaper or to listen to a socialist broadcasting corporation, soon afterwards drastic changes started to take place. *Verzuiling* started to lose not only much of its luster, but the churches also lost many of their members.

It is probably too early to explain these changes in full. Still some general factors could be mentioned by way of explaining the decline of *Verzuiling* since the 1960s. First of all it should be remembered that *Verzuiling* has been a mechanism of 'dynamic conservatism'. Dynamic because it could be applied to new problems and newly emerging institutions, conservative because it was based on a fixed principle that could be applied again and

again.

At a certain moment this mechanism started to wear out. Almost all institutional spheres were brought under the system of *Verzuiling* and the conservative features started to get the upper hand. It could also be said that once a certain stage of modernization was reached, *Verzuiling* became obsolete because the old principles failed to solve newly emerging problems. Rather than self-perpetuating, as in earlier decades, it became self-defeating.

This, of course, has also to do with certain internal contradictions of *Verzuiling*, which in the 1960s started to show up. For many decades *Verzuiling* had been a way of solving problems in a pluralistic society. It had helped to reduce tensions between different particularistic groups. At the same time it enabled these groups to become 'emancipated' and modernized. But it did so by keeping denominational groups isolated from one another. *Verzuiling* meant only integration at the top, between the elites, while keeping the rank-and-file submissive and passive.

Once a certain level of modernization was reached and the more backward segments among the Catholic and Protestant population were 'emancipated', the existing patterns of submissiveness and passivity tended to crumble down. The spread of modern mass media played of course an important role in this process. In particular television made people aware of the ideas and values of other groups, and subsequently eroded existing cleavages. On the other hand, it made people more aware of what were considered the new problems of the 1960s: active political and public participation and socio-economic equality. These developments were in many respects at variance with much that was once characteristic of *Verzuiling*.

In these changes the emergence and increase of new secondary elites, especially graduates of universities and professional schools, was of great significance. Although these secondary elites operated at first within the existing frameworks of *Verzuiling*, their different professional orientation and critical attitude stimulated discussion and reflection about real and perceived differences between the various denominational groups and contributed to a decrease of traditional denominational boundaries. Of course, much more could be said about these developments, which also took place within the pillars themselves, in particular among the clergy and intellectual leaders.<sup>16</sup>

A final word should be said about *Verzuiling* and the advent of the welfare state. The relation between the two, which developed in the 1950s and 1960s, is a rather complex one. At first *Verzuiling* seemed an almost ideal

avenue for the spread of the institutional provisions of the welfare state. In a way *Verzuiling* provided an ideological and organizational framework for the way the welfare state should operate and the manner in which benefits should be distributed. For instance the principle of proportional representation became also an important working principle for the distribution of benefits and facilities, e.g. in the fields of education, social welfare and public health. In many ways these agencies of *Verzuiling* became an extension of the welfare state.

In other respects too the corporatism of *Verzuiling* and the 'neo-corporatism' of the welfare state show certain similarities. However, there are differences as well. *Verzuiling* was primarily based on the principle of self-organization of the various denominational groups, which at first had had to provide the financial means and an organizational basis to start certain activities themselves. Later on the money would come increasingly, in full or in part, from governmental agencies, which often provided the means to organize certain activities. In particular the fact that the welfare state, through government subsidies, provided the possibility to organize activities in a *professional* way, might have proved detrimental to *Verzuiling*. For it meant that no longer volunteers and 'amateurs' would run the institutions of *Verzuiling*, but that increasingly full-time officials and professionals would be in charge. Moreover, it also meant that religious and ideological convictions would no longer be dominant, but rather considerations of means and ends and professional orientations. These and many other developments contributed to a state of affairs in which it has become increasingly questionable whether many organizations can be still called *Verzuild*, or whether they have become secularized extensions of the welfare state which only in name still operate through the system of *Verzuiling*.

## Notes

1. Kruijt, 1957-A, 1959; Kruijt en Goddijn, 1961
2. Cf. for a survey Boogman en Tamse, 1978.
3. E.g. van Doorn, 1956.
4. Lijphart, 1968-A.
5. Cf. e.g. McRae, 1974, Lijphart, 1977.
6. S. Kuznets, Economic Growth of Small Nations, in: *The Challenge of Development*, Jerusalem: The Eliezer Kaplan School of Economics and Social Sciences, The Hebrew University, 1958, pp. 9-22. S. N. Eisenstadt, Sociological Characteristics and Problems of Small States, *The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, vol. 2, 1977, pp. 35-50.

7. See for this and the following in more detail e.g. Daalder, 1981; Ellemers, 1967; Schöffler, 1956; I. Schöffler, Protestantism in Flux During the Revolt of the Netherlands, in: J. S. Bromley and E. H. Kossman (eds.), *Britain and the Netherlands*, vol. II, Wolters, Groningen, 1964, pp. 67-83; Schöffler, 1973.
8. Kok, 1964.
9. J. Briels, *De Zuidnederlandse immigratie 1572-1630*, Fibula-Van Dishoeck, Haarlem, 1978.
10. Cf. Lijphart, 1968-A.
11. Cf. e.g. Bakvis, 1981; Coleman, 1978; Daalder, 1981; Schöffler, 1973.
12. E.g. by Lijphart, 1968-A.
13. Cf. e.g. Brunt, 1974; P. F. Maas, *Sociaal-Democratische gemeentepolitiek in Katholiek Nijmegen 1894-1927*, Janssen, Nijmegen, 1974; Verrips, 1978.
14. Cf. Bax, 1982.
15. Cf. e.g. J. D. McCarthy and M. N. Zald, Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 82, 1977, pp. 1212-1241.
16. Cf. Ellemers, 1981.

## Pillarization reconsidered\*

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Ten to fifteen years ago questions and doubts arose with many people, both participants and social scientists, with regard to the chances of survival of the pillars in Belgium.<sup>1</sup> The doubts were based on two assumptions. The first one concerns the numerous signs of secularization. Among the catholic population, it was being predicted, advancing secularization would impair the 'we-feeling', and thus the texture that gave the catholic pillar its cohesion would decompose. Therefore the crumbling down of the catholic pillar seemed inevitable. Next to this it was assumed that, as a reaction, a similar development would take place on the non-catholic, formerly anticlerical, side<sup>2</sup> which could incite the demolition of the socialist and liberal pillars. The second consideration led to a similar prognosis: the school-pact<sup>3</sup>, or broader, the political truce of 1958 between catholics and non-religious groups, which had created quite a few guarantees for both groups, would, so it was expected, start a process of bilateral disarmament.

This prediction turned out to be false: the pillars remained upright, although their original philosophical-ethical value basis seemed to be largely gone. New, more accurate measurements of deconfessionalization on the one hand, of organizational pillarization on the other, did not eliminate this contradiction.<sup>4</sup> The mystery remained.

Recently, the following hypothesis was presented: on the catholic side, the original religious-philosophical substratum on which the pillar rested had been replaced *in time* by another set of mainly secular values and legitimacies, better tuned to the new circumstances.<sup>5</sup> That explains how the catholic pillar survived secularization. This development has been called the *secular adaptation* of the catholic symbolic universe. But through this statement doubt crept into social science circles as to the current

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