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THE NETHERLANDS AND THE 1940 NAZI INVASION

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SMALL STATES AND FOREIGN POLICY CRISIS:
THE NETHERLANDS AND THE 1940 NAZI INVASION

Introduction

Studies of small power crisis decision-making have been relatively rare (See Fox, 1959; Barston, 1973; and Vital, 1967 and 1971.) and hence the ways such states use their foreign policy options are not well understood. Because of their complex dependence on nearby and/or large states, there is reason to focus on small states' decisions and expect them to be based on considerations rather different from those of major powers.

In September, 1939 the "phoney war" began in Europe with the British and French eying German troops and promising "not to shoot if you don't." With the official declaration of war the pressure was on the small neutral states between and around the Allies and Germans--and especially on the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland. Their leaders had to wrestle with a high probability of military violence nearby, and with the tempting vulnerability of their countries. Such threats represent the ultimate survival crises for small states, and hence are likely to reveal much about the ways small power leaders struggle to forestall loss of power and destruction. This study will concern the Dutch, who maintained official neutrality throughout the "phoney war" and were ultimately invaded, bombed, and occupied by advancing Nazi forces in May, 1940.

Crisis researchers have emphasized the importance and interplay of threat perception, time pressure, communications and information processing, consideration of alternatives, bureaucratic conflicts, and types of decision-making groups. These factors supposedly affect the probability of misperception and the adequacy and appropriateness of response to the crisis. (See Hermann,

1972; Allison, 1971; Holsti, 1972; Jervis, 1976; Kelman, ed., 1965; and McClelland, 1964 and 1968.) Michael Brecher (1977) has incorporated expectations about such interplay into twenty-two research questions concerning crisis dynamics. It is useful to address these questions for the Netherlands invasion crisis, to determine whether the patterns in Northern Europe, 1940, are similar to those of other cases and account for the variation in foreign policy responses and success in other cases. Perhaps these are not the right research questions, but it is difficult to know without a comparative analysis of case studies. Each research question is considered in turn below.

For purposes of analysis, the eight-month Dutch crisis will be divided into five segments or periods, corresponding to the time before, during, and after three major warnings of German attack. These warnings or alarms were sounded by an informer within the German high command, as well as by the Allied powers. In fact, the Dutch were specifically warned of impending invasion twenty-nine times and, as seen below, it was partly the cumulative disbelief and insensitivity to warnings, as Hitler repeatedly changed the invasion plans, that limited consideration of options in the Hague. The crisis stages include the pre-World War tension (1938-39), declaration of European war (September-October, 1939), the first alarm and resultant sensitization (November-December, 1939), the second alarm and resultant sensitization (January, 1940-April, 1940), and the third alarm beginning with the fall of Denmark and Norway, including direct warning of Nazi invasion of Holland (April-May, 1940).

The Connection Between Threat and The Perceived Need for Information

Some scholars hypothesize that deepening threat will spur leaders to find as much information as possible about possible solutions and consequences, while other scholars claim that the pressures of threatening situations leave

too little time and inclination for extensive information search. (See Hermann, 1969b, pp. 129, 158, and 161; and Burton, 1968, pp. 76-77.) Obviously, in one case study it is impossible fully to evaluate these rival hypotheses, but in 1939-40 the Dutch did not act as if they felt an increasing need for more information. This was especially true after the Venlo incident of November 9, in which British and Dutch intelligence agents were trapped and captured by German agents inside the Netherlands while seeking to contact German dissidents. This incident so embarrassed the supposedly neutral Netherlands-government that the anti-Nazi head of Dutch military intelligence, Major General J. Van Oorschot, was dismissed and replaced by an older man who had no conception of the techniques necessary to obtain information in a post-World War I crisis situation. (As late as April, 1940, the new intelligence chief, Lt. General H. A. C. Fabius, asked the German military attaché to declare on his word of honor that there would be no attack; Fabius believed that Hitler would not risk "international prestige" with such an attack. See De Jong, 1969a, Vol. II, P. 109.) Unfortunately the Venlo incident occurred just three days before the expected November 12 German attack on Holland, of which the Dutch had been warned on November 7 by Major General G. J. Sas, their Berlin military attaché. When Hitler changed his plan and no attack occurred on the 12th, it seemed that the whole thing had been a trick and Sas had been hoodwinked. The credibility of his subsequent warnings was, therefore, suspect.

Desire for information and contacts abroad became secondary to the government's desire not to further provoke the Germans or fall into more German traps by believing false alarms and thus revealing secret defense and mobilization plans. The Dutch had reversed themselves, since previously intensive cooperation had been maintained with the British and French secret services and

military planners, although few officials spoke about it since government disapproval was assumed. In 1937 the French had promised Dutch intelligence to "rush" to Holland's assistance. (De Jong, 1969a, Vol. II, p. 88.) The Dutch passport control office had become an unofficial subsidiary of the British Secret Intelligence Service. This led to the Venlo entanglement and the subsequent Dutch reaction against further connivance. Small states struggling to preserve neutrality and, as shown below, whose leaders have no confidence in the defense or assistance of nearby friendly large powers, may recede into an insulated shell, shunning information exchanges, in order not to provoke nearby hostile large powers.

In addition, even in small states, bureaucratic jealousies and pressure for conformity (discussed further below) may cause distortion of information. The Dutch armed forces supreme commander until February, 1940, General I. H. Reynders, attempted to have all military intelligence data channelled to him before distribution to ministers (including the defense minister) or the Queen. This was due both to his rivalry with the defense minister, and his desire to condense the "raw" warnings coming from Sas in Germany so as not to overly alarm the civilians and affect their estimates of attack probability. (Enquete, Ia, pp. 24-28 and 95-101.)

Objectively speaking, the Dutch had the necessary information to predict precisely the data of German attack (although the date kept changing) at least a week ahead of each projected attack. They knew that attack plans existed, and in January, 1940 were even informed by the Belgians (who had captured a German flier) and by German dissident, Colonel Hans Oster, of the attack strategy for the Dutch campaign--the so-called "Schwerpunkt" swing south of the Rhine and Maas rivers accompanied by a quick drive against Rotterdam.

(Mason, 1963, p. 555, citing Enquette, 1c, pp. 209 and 254.) One of the officials present at the final crisis meeting at the foreign minister's home in the Hague on May 10, 1940 claims that even hearing reports of German air attacks, those in the room estimated the chance of the attack being real at only 70-80%. (Personal confidential interview with the author, The Hague, April, 1977.) Mason explains the treatment of information passed by the Dutch military attaché in Berlin:

"... the Dutch, informed by Oster of each proposed date of attack, were in effect "over-warned" and thoroughly confused... The more detailed the information relayed by Sas was, the more the reliability of his source ... was disputed. Sas was almost recalled from his post when he persisted in vouching for his informant, particularly after reporting that this informant was also planning the assassination of Hitler ... No one could imagine that such a Prussian officer in fact existed." (Mason, 1963, p. 557.)

Thus, information flow looked quite similar to patterns reported for other crises--particularly Pearl Harbor (see Wohlstetter, 1962) in which sufficient and perhaps even overly abundant warnings and information existed, but in which the threatened government could not--for reasons of cognitive dissonance (see Festinger, 1957), psychological "groupthink" (see Janis, 1972), or bureaucratic bickering and over-load--make effective use of the information to prevent or relieve the attack. Indeed, in order to lessen the dissonance of incoming information and its conflict with expectations, the Dutch government nearly in effect cut off its ears by dismissing their intelligence chief and considering the recall of Sas.

The Dutch shut off information for one additional reason; a feeling of profound powerlessness and belief that few alternatives existed. Thus, there was little perceived reason for further information search. The problem in small as well as large power crises may be less the availability of

than the premature closure of search for alternative remedies (see below), and the inability or unwillingness to distinguish accurate from inaccurate information.

Influence of Historical Legacy on Decision-Makers in Threat Situations

The relative success of Dutch neutrality in the first world war had a profound effect on statesmen in the thirties, especially as British-French determination to uphold the terms of the Versailles Treaty and League of Nations Covenant dissolved. While the Dutch had been prime supporters of collective security notions embodied in the League, including the provisions allowing transit and support for League-authorized forces attempting to discipline aggressors, after the Munich example the Dutch joined the Belgians and Nordic states in withdrawing from these commitments and reverting to strict diplomatic neutrality. As seen below, this neutrality was not always scrupulous, and did not accurately reflect anti-Nazi emotional reaction in much of the Netherlands, nor the expectation in the Hague that an attack would come from Berlin rather than London or Paris. Nevertheless, neutrality became a convenient fall-back for leaders perceiving few other viable alternatives. It was hoped that the Netherlands--and specifically "fortress Holland" (the original Western provinces)--might be spared attack and occupation as in 1914, even if the Germans swept through Southeastern Dutch provinces. If the Germans did attack, Foreign Minister Van Kleffens and military commanders assumed that the Dutch army could hold out for five or six days until British-French help arrived. Because of the need to remain outwardly neutral, however--so as not to provoke an attack--this assumption was based on remarkably little effective consultation and strategic coordination with the Allies who were expected to help. A fundamental French-Dutch disagreement as to where defense lines should be drawn was allowed to remain unresolved throughout 1940.

As the crisis deepened in 1940, and as no remedies seemed available, one Dutch parliamentarian after another rose in the Second Chamber to denounce Winston Churchill's call for cooperation in the war effort by blaming the Allies for the harsh Versailles peace which allowed someone like Hitler to emerge. As "Rome burned" around them, Dutch politicians began to sound like history professors, probably for want of anything better to do. Historical legacy provided ready excuses for Dutch policy, even if it did not fully determine such policy.

Threat and the Relationship Between Decision-Makers and Subordinates

Most of the major decisions during the eight crisis months were concentrated in a relatively small group of top decision-makers, with the cabinet as a whole in the dark on certain key matters--such as the specific lines of defense from invasion decided on by the new supreme commander, General Winkelman, in March, 1940. By the same token, consultation with subordinates seemed incomplete and sporadic at best. Note, though as Mason (1963, p. 557) points out, that, "Internal (governmental) clashes did take place, but they did not concern basic ideological or foreign policy aims of the nation."

In the end, it was subordinates, the military attachés in Paris and Brussels, who took it upon themselves to disobey orders and open the secret letters (detailing Dutch defense plans) sent in late 1939 to the Dutch embassies in Allied countries by Supreme Commander Reynders. On the orders of Foreign Minister Van Kleffens these letters were to have been opened only in case of Nazi attack, to facilitate Allied aid. Van Kleffens decided to send such letters shortly after the first alarm on November 4. The "security group," consisting of the foreign and defense ministers, the supreme commander, and the Queen, had decided on an initial military defense strategy, including mobilization, preparation for limited inundation, withdrawal of leaves on November 10 (so as not to

prematurely alarm the population), and a diplomatic offensive (planned by Van Kleffens) with the Queen joining King Leopold of Belgium and the Duchess of Luxembourg in a twelfth-hour appeal to both sides to end the war. (De Jong, 1969a, Vol. II, p. 120-123). General Reynders had wanted to send connection officers to the Allies at the time of attack, but Van Kleffens felt there would not be time. When the attachés prematurely opened the letters, they found that the plans did not correspond to existing or likely French-Belgian strategy, and hence were largely impractical since Allied and Belgian troops would not be sent as far east as the Dutch defenses required. This word was sent back to Dijxhoorn, Van Kleffens, and Reynders, but Reynders ignored the criticism, another case of misused information.

In January, Reynders was dismissed largely because of continued conflicts with his superior, Minister of Defense Dijxhoorn, a man who had been Reynders' subordinate in the military and from whom the ambitious supreme commander did not like to take orders. The two men conflicted over the nature of the defense plans (Dijxhoorn felt Reynders would needlessly sacrifice men by initially defending the Eastern "Peel Line") as well as the amount of civil power the supreme commander could garner; Reynders had consistently pushed, after the November alarm, for declaration of a state of seige, with the accompanying power to censor the press and suspend certain constitutional provisions inside the Netherlands. Indeed, conflicts between Reynders and the fiscally conservative defense and finance ministries over Dutch war preparedness (or lack thereof) and cuts in the defense budget had predated the September war. Dijxhoorn was particularly incensed when he learned from a subordinate in the intelligence service that Reynders had ordered all information sent to him before dispatch to the ministers or Queen. Sas in Berlin had even been ordered to stop reporting directly to Dijxhoorn, an order he disobeyed. From Reynders' point of

view, Dijxhoorn had meddled by issuing direct orders to Reynders' subordinates. (Enquette, 1a, b, pp. 87 ff.) Reynders seemed convinced that strict neutrality and adequate armed forces build-up were necessary and that a German attack was unlikely.

Reynders incredibly failed to report the existence of the letters in Allied capitals or the controversy surrounding them to his successor, General Winkelman, who found out about them in March after the second alert, and had their provisions changed. The cabinet knew that the plans were changed, but made no effort to scrutinize or discuss details or the letters' contents, evidently trusting Winkelman--despite Reynders' obvious mistakes--and believing that even deliberations would somehow violate neutrality. (De Jong, 1969a, Vol. II, pp. 252). At this point Van Kleffens, who had supposedly done everything to convince Reynders to end the contacts between the military attachés and Allied military commanders, (personal confidential interview with a former diplomatic official, The Hague, April, 1977) reportedly authorized Winkelman to contact Belgian commanders quietly. Attachés went further and contacted French and British commanders as well, but Van Kleffens and Dijxhoorn professed not to have known of the contacts. Even Winkelman evidently did not know of the meetings with British representatives. These contacts were arranged by the chief naval commander, who in turn professed not to know of Winkelman's letters or strategic plans. Vice Admiral Furstner went on to obtain British codes and maps and arrange for the evacuation of Dutch gold and silver to England--at the request of the Netherlands central bank and unbeknown to ministries. (De Jong, 1969b, pp. 208 ff.)

The state of siege was finally declared by the frightened Dutch leaders on April 9, with the German invasion of Denmark and Norway; however, both Belgium and Holland refused to permit passage of UK-French troops to aid the Norwegians.

Nevertheless, there is indication that even under new and less assertive leadership the Dutch secret intelligence service still maintained some contacts with the British; warning of the Denmark-Norway invasion, having originated with Sas, was passed to the British in the Hague. Again, supposedly Van Kleffens did not know of this leak. Dutch policy remained committed to formal neutrality even while hesitant and rather ineffectual efforts were made, sometimes at the instigation of subordinate officials, to hedge bets and make it possible for the Allies to rescue Holland.

Of course, it was convenient for Van Kleffens "not to know" that consultations with Allies were taking place. Post-war testimony by the Dutch attaché in Paris and by General Reynders indicated frequent contact with the French general staff, and according to the attaché, the defense and foreign ministers indicated that such contacts were legitimate as early as November, 1939. Ex-French Premier Reynaud even wrote of an understanding for French occupation of Zeeland's islands following a German attack. However, after the attack, recriminations flew on both sides over apparent misunderstandings about the supposedly half-hearted Dutch defense of Southeastern provinces. (Mason, 1963, p. 560)

Van Kleffens' policy reflects a belief that outward neutrality, in conjunction with peace offensives, might prevent the invasion, or at least was worth the try. However, there are also indications that Van Kleffens may have winked at consultations with Allies within the neutrality framework. Judging by Annette Baker Fox's (1959) account of other neutrality struggles in Europe, those that failed--as did Holland's--were carried on despite genuine political and social preferences for the Allies; thus the neutrality policy was out of step with public and elite preferences, and valuable time for coordination with Britain and France was lost. In view of Dutch expectations of attack only by Nazi Germany, the half-hearted Dutch-Allied consultation seems contradictory and self-defeating.

Given the state of Allied forces by May, 1940, perhaps no coordination could have helped. Major Dutch officials certainly thought not. But it is ironic that as the Germans attacked, their government accused the Dutch of collusion with the Allies anyway; the Dutch achieved the worst of both worlds.

The Volume of Communications in Threat Situation

Since most of the Netherlands' documents for the early war period were destroyed either by the Dutch or Nazis, it is impossible accurately to measure the volume of information flowing to the Hague as the crisis deepened. Testimony of certain officials indicates that message traffic was heavy; in defending his efforts to screen information going to the Queen and defense minister, Reynders claimed that he reported to them regularly, but that there was a tangle of messages, some of which were contradictory. (Enquete, 1a, b, pp. 87 ff.) Clearly, the major alarms and reports of impending German attacks were corroborated by more than one source; information was arriving from many sources. Dutch intelligence per se does not appear to have been very active, however, after the removal of Van Oorschot, and the military attachés provided most of the pertinent information on Allied and Nazi battle plans. Indeed, General Winkelman defended the technically non-neutral defense consultations with the Allies by maintaining that a military attaché is "nothing but a spy" and "all countries have accepted this." (Mason, 1965, p. 561) Through January, 1940, Reynders' self-appointed role as intelligence censor had the effect of reducing the volume and range of information reaching key civilian decision-makers. This practice perturbed Prince Bernhard when he learned of it, and may have contributed to Reynders' dismissal. (Mason, 1963, p. 558 note)

Communications between the defense ministry and military were also disrupted by the Dijkhoorn--Reynders disputes. Incredibly, after discussion between the Dutch intelligence chief and Reynders about the specific January dispatch from

Berlin detailing the German attack strategy, the information was dismissed; it was considered "too risky" for the Germans to adopt such a strategy. The warning was filed away in Reynders' safe, not to be discussed or seen again until after the war, even by the new supreme commander, let alone by the civilians. The intelligence chief failed to inform the new commander because, as he later put it, the army's "operations division and intelligence division have always been at odds with one another." Subsequent (to January) references to the German attack strategy by Sas supposedly never reached Winkelman but got lost "in channels." (Mason, 1963, pp. 563-65)

Hence despite more than adequate warning, German military strategy took the Dutch by surprise in May, 1940. Incoming information did not seem to overload Dutch bureaucratic capabilities, but rather was distorted or used for the interests of certain political or military leaders, interests which included gaining acceptance for the belief that the German attack was not necessarily imminent. Certain leads were never pursued for political reasons:

"The Germans themselves tried to induce the Dutch to violate their neutrality. From November or December, 1939 until the very eve of the invasion they made several rather clumsy attempts to urge a "Danish" policy on the Dutch, involving transit rights for German troops and 'peaceful' occupation of Dutch territory. The Dutch rejected these feelers, without actually being aware to what extent they came from the highest German authorities." (Mason, 1963, p. 562 note)

The Dutch, and especially Reynders, were never sure when the Germans were trying to trap them diplomatically and militarily, and such feelers constituted too much of a risk for the neutrality policy, about the terms of which the Dutch maintained there could be no negotiations.

Because of the intelligence service's and army's disbelief of warnings, communications posts were seriously understaffed even on the eve of the attack. Despite specific warning from Sas, only one deputy chief of staff and some lower

ranking officers were on duty at headquarters as the attack began in the early morning of May 11; through a series of sometimes petty difficulties (not enough cots in the building to house more officers), news of the attack and a general military alert were delayed until after 4 A.M. As in the Pearl Harbor case (see Janis, 1972), while the supreme commander tentatively alerted front line forces on the eve of attack, regional commanders in other sectors were allowed discretion in the type of alert status in their sectors. Thus there was no prior alert in the "Fortress Holland" heartland where troops were totally surprised and needlessly overwhelmed by the German paratroop invasion. (Mason, 1963, p. 566.)

The Link Between Escalation of Threat and Influence of Armed Forces

Elements of the Dutch military definitely sought and achieved increased influence in government decision-making as the crisis deepened. Basic policy and legislative control, of course, remained in civilian hands. General Reynders' attempts to gain state of siege decision-making authority failed, perhaps as much because the cabinet did not wish to project a war-footing image to the home population or the Germans as for constitutional reasons. Nevertheless, Reynders had managed considerable control of intelligence data flow and defense planning. Even under Winkelman the full cabinet was not well informed of defense plans (although this is normally the defense minister's preserve in Holland), and had never been told of Van Oorschot's close coordination with British and French military authorities after 1937. Military attachés carried on most of the strategic consultations with other countries as well as relaying most of the intelligence information from those countries. Finally, after the invasion of Denmark and Norway, the full state of siege was declared, with accompanying domestic restrictions under the supreme commander's authority.

A supreme commander is only appointed in the Netherlands if a state of national emergency prevails, as it did after the Hitler-Stalin pact in August, 1939. General Reynders' authority as commander was limited by a "gentlemen's agreement" in which he promised not to utilize all the potential of the war powers act of 1899--an act which could have given him superior authority over the civilian government. Yet in December, Reynders unilaterally repudiated the agreement and stated that he was no longer to be supervised by the cabinet and was entitled to full authority for military rule under the state of war. The cabinet did not agree that the situation was serious enough to warrant suspension of constitutional rights and military rule, so an impasse was reached and Reynders was finally dismissed. Ultimately, after the state of siege was declared and when the government and royal house fled to England during the invasion, the supreme commander was left to administer the country and negotiate the best possible surrender and occupation terms with the Germans. General Winkelman proved to be a patriotic and diligent negotiator on these points.

Despite increased military authority and influence, and largely because of General Reynders' rather rigid inclination to disbelieve invasion warnings, Dutch war preparations were woefully inadequate. Partly this can be blamed on reduced pre-war defense spending by civilian authorities, on Britain's unwillingness or inability to sell Holland up-to-date arms during the war (from which the Dutch deduced that they could not rely on Britain--personal confidential interview with a former diplomatic official, The Hague, April, 1977), and even on the cabinet's unwillingness to let Reynders disrupt civilian life with full war preparations. But the conflicts between civilian and military officials, the removal of key military and intelligence officers, and the inflexible and politically ambitious nature of military decision-making all impeded effective preparation for defense. It is not clear whether such factors are peculiar to

the Dutch case. Ultimately, no effective defense may have been possible with- in or outside the framework of neutrality; however effective consultations with potential allies and full use of intelligence data would seem to afford more alternatives to decision-makers of any small country in crisis. These advantages were denied the Netherlands partly because of military-civilian friction. (Such friction also led to delays in the construction of necessary fortifications, according to the Enquete Commission. Enquete, 1a, b, pp.74 ff.)

The Link Between Growing Threat Perceptions and Economic Factors

Dutch neutrality was partly conditioned by simultaneous and important trade dependence on both Britain and Germany (see Table 1). In 1939 the Netherlands was just emerging from the depression, and leaders did not want to risk trade re- lations needlessly. Despite the government's emergency trade negotiation authority after 1933, and because of increasingly restrictive trade practices throughout the world, the volume and value of Dutch trade diminished during the depression, reaching a minimum in 1935. But while exports to Germany had fallen markedly in 1935 and 36, exports to Britain increased by almost 100% between 1933 and 37. Despite devaluation, Dutch economic recovery had lagged behind world rates until devaluation of the guilder after September, 1936, and revenue from shipping fell sharply as well. Dutch economic malaise after 1936 included unemployment of more than 400,000, reduced production, and speculative capital flights from the country. (De Jong, 1969a, Vol. I, pp. 205 ff.) For a country with a very great interest in international trade and shipping, this all constituted a lingering economic emergency.

When war was declared, the Dutch tried to maintain economic relations with both sides, working out special agreements with the British about shipping, since there was a complete blockade of Germany. All goods, except medicines preparation for defense. It is not clear whether such factors were decisive in

Table 1

Netherlands Trade With Selected Countries Before the Second World War
(In Millions of Guilders)

	WITH	GER		UK		US		BEL		DUTCH EAST INDIES	
		EX	IM	EX	IM	EX	IM	EX	IM	EX	IM
1933		157	379	126	109	33	78	100	124	31	51
1934		177	298	135	97	22	69	82	108	30	58
1935		129	239	142	87	33	65	72	103	32	57
1936		117	237	165	94	45	72	86	119	44	79
1937*		185	334	248	129	58	136	126	180	94	126
1938*		159	308	234	115	37	153	106	162	100	102
1939*		136	358	226	118	42	146	90	220	101	91

* German figures include Austria

and tobacco etc., were declared contraband; Dutch ships were stopped and searched. Thus, with Germany pressuring Holland for continued delivery of goods, Dutch-German trade fell by 20-25% between 1939 and 40. (De Jong, 1969a, Vol. II, p. 166.) The Dutch protested German attacks on Dutch ships going to Britain and France, but with little effect. Protests over the blockade were also registered in London, and the directors of Netherlands' offices for trade and industry were instructed by superiors to ignore the Allies' blacklist. The Dutch government threatened that Germany would be given preferences if choices of export markets had to be made. While the government acted as if no blockade existed, most private companies followed London's rules. German companies inside Holland (utilizing Dutch middlemen) had little trouble with the blockade. Gradually, terms of the blockade were liberalized to do away with detention and searches of Dutch ships at sea (replaced by a system of naval certificates at port of departure), and finally after intensive negotiation, to distinguish between "A" and "B" goods. The former could go to Germany within the limits of 1938 trade.

At the beginning of the crisis (September, 1939) there was some fear of scarcity in Holland, but the government moved to prevent hoarding and to assure reasonable supplies of durable goods. In contrast to World War I, panic did not occur, and the government had plans and a control apparatus, much of it stemming from the crisis system of the depression years, especially in the agricultural and food supply sectors. Foreign trade of food was restricted, but rationed domestic supplies were adequate until the invasion. Government regulation of supply and prices was already accepted, even in the midst of generally conservative economic thinking. Offices were established to organize and plan production of wood, textiles, leather, medicines, paper, rubber, coal, etc. Companies were to be protected, and competition avoided, and there was to be no move

toward permanent socialism. The Dutch, of course, had far flung economic interests which they struggled desperately to maintain in the Orient, but they were prepared for retrenchment at home as well. Because of tight government control of the shipping industry, the Dutch were even able to supply Belgium with goods from the East Indies in the Spring of 1940.

The Dutch economy thus survived relatively well during the eight crisis months. It is difficult to cut off an industrially developed and entrepreneurial small country from its foreign contacts; there are many informal or surreptitious ways of carrying on "business as usual." This is especially true when serious efforts by a major power to prevent trade with another major power might result in an invasion of the small country. Britain was ultimately better off with an independent Holland trading at a reduced level with Germany than with trade shut off, and as a result, a German occupation of Holland.

Perceptions Regarding Superpower Penetration as the Decisive Constraint on Behavior in Situations of Threat

Dutch leaders were obviously quite constrained by worries over German motives and intentions. They were constantly worried about tipping their strategic hand, falling for a German threat-plot and revealing defense plans in response. By the same token, cabinet officials repeatedly cut themselves off from information (or were cut off by military authorities) for fear of appearing "unneutral" in considering hostile alternatives or consulting with potential allies. Germany was viewed, somewhat contradictingly, as malevolent and threatening, tricky and appeasable. Responding to all these views at once, the Dutch government employed contradictory and self-defeating policies; here preparing half-heartedly for defense, there maintaining a staunch public neutrality.

The other major powers of potential concern, the British and French, were viewed as ultimately friendly (no Dutch leader feared a British-French preemptive

invasion either because they viewed London and Paris as still weak or because they could not conceive of such an invasion threatening Dutch independence), but woefully weak. There could be no reliance on the Allies; thus perhaps the rationalizations and wishful thinking that Germany could be assuaged and kept from attacking. Few effective alternatives were seen. Therefore, Dutch perceptions of major power potential and behavior were all-important in determining ultimate responses from the Hague. Obviously not all Dutch officials perceived the powers in the same way; some were more or less concerned about neutrality or the German threat. But this made for even more confusion, as policy administration was decentralized so that certain officials would not "have to know" what others were doing; various officials developed their own initiatives either to move toward or away from the Allies.

The Link Between Growing Threat and Consideration of Alternatives

It seems quite clear that once British-French strength and determination were judged as poor, there was little reconsideration of alternatives in the Hague. Dutch leaders joined their Belgian and Swiss counterparts in an outwardly neutral policy. They kept options open in contacts with Allies, but after Venlo these contacts became more and more haphazard due to disagreements within the government and efforts to camouflage violations of neutrality. Historian L. De Jong, who had specialized in this period, has concluded (1969b) that despite denials, it is nearly certain the Van Kleffens and Dijkhoorn discussed contacts with the Allies, since a German occupation would mean the end of Dutch democracy. These discussions could not include the whole cabinet, however, because of Prime Minister De Geer's unremitting commitment to neutrality and inability to deal with the "bad dream" of a German attack. Working under these great domestic political restrictions, Van Kleffens could only mold a patch-work compromise, arranging neutral diplomacy, royal initiatives, sealed

letters, and surreptitious consultations.

In detail, when the November alarm sounded, the Belgians were prepared to participate in an improvised plan with the French to aid Belgium and Holland; French troops were to move into Dutch Flanders and Zeeland province. Sealed Dutch defense plans were to be made available to the French, Belgians, and British. But Reynders' doubts led to the failure to reconcile Dutch and French plans despite the relations already established with and information already received from the Belgians and French by the military attaché, Major Van Voorst Evekink. Talks with Belgians continued with the 1940 alarms, and in March the inappropriate and nearly forgotten original Dutch defense plans were revised by General Winkelman. The Belgian military attaché in the Hague consulted Netherlands officials in February, March and April, with similar consultations by his Dutch counterpart in Brussels. Approval for the Belgian contacts came in late February from Dijxhoorn and Van Kleffens, assisted by the Secretary General for Foreign Affairs. Winkelman, handicapped by internal pressures and the consequences of Reynders' planning, could not come to an agreement with Belgian tacticians. Direct word of French strategy was also received in Paris from General Gamelin by Van Voorst Evekink; yet the Dutch failed to make the necessary defense adjustments to meet French terms. These French contacts evidently were not known to Dijxhoorn and Van Kleffens; contacts (with the British) by the naval commander were unknown even to Winkelman. In March Winkelman decided to retreat from forward positions if attacked and meet French forces, but the French did not agree to this, nor evidently understand it.

The fragmented nature of Dutch decision-making reflects executive paralysis and some tactical disagreement. Alternatives were considered, but not by the government or responsible decision groups as a whole, and except for the most pressing moments, evidently not by the Prime Minister.

The Link Between Increasing Threat and the Size and Structure of Decision-Making Groups

As in some of the previous analyses, it is difficult to establish a "linear" relationship between increased threat and changes in size of decision-making groups. Generally, major decisions were made by a small elite group of officials from the beginning of the crisis through the entire eight months. The whole cabinet seldom deliberated in detail. The specific reactions to each of the alarms basically had been hammered out by the prime minister, foreign and defense ministers, and the supreme commander, sometimes meeting with the Queen.

The Dutch constitution provides that foreign policy is the domain of the foreign minister, who is technically responsible to the cabinet while conducting his or her own policy. Normally the minister would coordinate policy closely with the prime minister, though this is not required. In 1939-40, however, the prime minister seemed to remove himself from unseemly deliberations, holding inflexibly to the neutrality posture. Prime Minister De Geer reluctantly inherited the chief minister's position when Colijn, probably the most influential Dutch politician at the time, was unable to form a new government in June, 1939. Thus, a weak politician was saddled with a job for which he was not well prepared. Note, though, that Colijn, did not believe in the likelihood of a German attack in 1939 any more than De Geer, and even criticized the government in the November first alarm for calling a general mobilization. (De Jong, 1969a, Vol. II, p. 132)

De Geer had less foreign policy interest than Colijn and, as a Christian pacifist, abhorred war while strongly supporting the League of Nations. Maintaining that, "I do not understand a bit of strategy and I cannot imagine what reasons the Germans could have to attack our country," DeGeer left military

preparations to his supreme commander and political maneuvering to the foreign and defense ministers. (Testimony by H. Fabius, Enquete, 1c, p. 254; De Jong, 1969a, Vol. II, p. 64.) Since he and the cabinet were responsible for the decisions, De Geer met with these officials on the main policy guidelines--such as the basic "weak in the East, strong in the West" defense plan. Obviously, major episodes, such as the Venlo fiasco, had to be considered by the entire cabinet, and reports made to Parliament. The Parliament was told of each invasion alarm, but was not informed of the government's decision to leave the country in May, 1940. The implementation of neutrality was left to Van Kleffens, Reynders, Dijkhooorn, and military intelligence. The Prime Minister sometimes undercut the views and authority of responsible cabinet officials, as when on November 13, he assured the people on radio that all the rumors about invasion were intrigues of the British and French press (De Jong, 1969a, Vol. II, p. 131; Enquete, 1b, p. 94).

Within the "inner circle" of decision-makers, the Queen, Van Kleffens, and Dijkhooorn frequently squared off against the more strict neutralists--De Geer and Reynders. Hence reluctant compromises were reached, but each subgroup went on to push incrementally on its own for more or less war preparation or, in Reynders' case, to control the information available to the others.

After Reynders was replaced in January the conflicts subsided somewhat, and increased contacts with the Belgians and Allies about defense lines took place. Yet with the Prime Minister still intransigent and supported by most of the cabinet, and with little faith in Allied strength, the basic neutrality policy did not change. In this sense, and with neutrality generally, if bitterly accepted in parliament, press and public opinion, the size and structure of the decision-making group did not matter a great deal. It mattered only in decreasing

the probability of effective and thoroughly planned defense measures once the attack came.

The Link Between Threat Perception and Performance

While most Dutch officials performed effectively during the crisis, growing threat and pressure probably affected the prime minister and Chief of Intelligence Fabius more than others, since they were admittedly at a loss to understand the nature of the threat--or "bad dream." In this sense, their performance deteriorated because they, and probably General Reynders as well, were insufficiently sensitive and reactive to threat. As the cabinet met in August and September to authorize mobilization and declare a state of war because of increased tension following the Hitler-Stalin pact, Prime Minister De Geer, an avowed neutralist, chose to stay on vacation in Germany and Holland. His absence from his post at key moments is usually explained by his advanced age (nearly 70) (Enquette, IIa, pp. 11-12.)

Reynders had become increasingly preoccupied with his bureaucratic battles against the defense minister, and avoided coordination with Allies since he did not expect an attack. Hence details of the German invasion plan were lost, and in addition to its own glaring weaknesses (the Dutch had no tanks, and few motorized vehicles and radios, despite the Philips electronic works in Holland) the Dutch army was saddled with ludicrously inappropriate planning when the attack came. The key bridges of Western Holland were immediately lost, having been defended by inferior officers and troops because no one expected such a quick attack. One important bridge was defended by an officer whose brother was the Dutch Nazi party leader, and who shot at Dutch troops, claiming to have mistaken them for Germans, while allowing German troops to walk in, claiming to have mistaken them for friendly French. (See Mason, 1963, p. 568) Obviously the performance of some lower echelon officials in government and the military

left something to be desired as well, but it is hard to say that this was caused by growing tension, except that as the warnings continued and alternatives seemed few, more and more Dutch people adopted the reassuring if irrational belief that somehow war would not come to Holland.

Links Between Time Pressure and Tendency for Consensus Among Decision-Makers

While there was general consensus on a neutral policy, we have seen differences among Dutch officials on the execution of that policy. However, it does not appear that time pressure, as opposed to differences in threat perception, had much to do with the disagreements or the consensus. Due to accumulating effects of time, Dutch officials became partially desensitized to invasion warnings, and hence, threat perception was somewhat reduced. Time considerations entered into Van Kleffens' decision to have notes detailing defense strategy waiting in foreign capitals, and into the confusion that came with the actual invasion in May--confusion leading to the unauthorized grant of civil jurisdiction by two ministers to General Winkelman and to the failure to inform Parliament of impending governmental evacuation. Winkelman delayed capitulation when given a hastily worded German ultimatum, and the Germans seized the opportunity to brutally bomb defenseless Rotterdam. Hence, reactions to time pressure had severe consequences for Dutch society, but there is little evidence that decision-makers conformed to each other's views because there was little time to carry on disputes.

The Links Between Time Pressure and Search for and Evaluation of Alternatives and the Pattern of Communication

As with consensus, search and evaluation of alternatives were affected more by decision-makers' interpretation of threats (and warnings) than by time considerations. Fruitless negotiations with the Belgians and Allies were carried on over several months, and thus seemed relatively unhurried. There was no

hurried push for alternative strategies partly because threats and warnings were not believed and partly because the main alternative, collusion with the Allies, seemed doomed, while the "lessons of history" pointed to neutrality.

Communication breakdowns were partially due to bureaucratic and intra-governmental rivalries, although the press of events on May 9-10 resulted in poor communication about defense measures--such as blowing up bridges, expectation of German tactics, and reorganization of government. By then, however, so little effective preparation, including arms procurement, for military defense had been made that the outcome could not have been greatly improved with better communication. Even with the "surprising" German blitz, French troops reached the main Dutch bridges in time to clear out the paratroopers, but French commanders considered the situation too risky. Hence failure to reach prior defense coordination, with Dutch neutrality and French defensive intransigence getting in the way, was the main factor in the easy German success in "Fortress Holland."

The Links Between Time Pressure and Instinctive, Affective Reactions

Dutch citizens and leaders evidently were basically anti-Nazi, although there was an active, if small, Nazi party and although ultimately 90% of Dutch Jews died in the occupation period, with collaboration evident. Yet Dutch leaders varied in their instinctive revulsion at what Germany had become--with the Prime Minister evidently more willing than others to overlook and discount the German threat and continue regular intercourse. As for the average citizen, sentiments may have been similar to those implied by a resident of Brabant Province who had been a young man during the war: "We could have forgiven what was done to us (bombing Rotterdam, etc.) if it had been done by any country--by France or England, for example--but we can never forgive the Germans because we are of the same family, the same race; families just don't do that

to each other." (Interview, Tilburg, March, 1977) The Dutch undoubtedly felt great ambivalence about their eastern neighbors, the type of love-hate relationship that stems from traditional closeness and dependence, and exists to this day.

Time pressure as the crisis deepened did not greatly change these attitudes. Again, increased threat had the greater effect, as "instinctive" tendencies to denounce German atrocities were somewhat stifled by fear and government pressure to avoid further provocation of Berlin. Dutch opinion was outraged by the German attack on Poland, and severely shocked by the subsequent moves against Denmark and Norway. The Dutch tend strongly to identify with the fate of other small states, particularly those in Northern Europe. The fall of Denmark and Norway increased the sense of urgency and time pressure in the Hague, and caused the Queen and government to renew diplomatic offensives and step up defense coordination and internal security (mainly against Dutch Nazis, since it was thought that fifth columnists accounted for easy German successes in Scandinavia). But even these shocks were weighed in the minds of most cabinet officials against shocks and outrages over prior Soviet violations against Finland and Poland, and general lack of regard for British-French resolve and preparedness. By 1940, cynicism had become relatively common in Holland. (De Jong, 1969a, Vol. II, pp. 143 ff.) Thus, the government clung to neutrality and refused passage to Allied troops who might have aided the Norwegians and Danes.

We must remember that the Dutch government was run by conservative parties, whose members' anti-Nazism was somewhat balanced by anti-Communism. Dutch Socialists such as Menno Ter Braak, along with some leftists, academics, and writers, continued to speak out against Germany; but increasingly they became a political embarrassment to the government. On May 1, 1940, Menno Ter Braak,

along with the publisher H. Leopold, were charged by Minister of Justice Gerbrandy (one of the more pro-Allied and socially progressive cabinet members) with "offending a befriended statesman"--Adolf Hitler. (De Jong, 1969a, Vol. II, p. 149)

The Link Between Perceived Probability of War and Centralization of Authority and Character of Decisional Unit

As noted previously, in some ways authority was concentrated in fewer hands as war came to seem more probable. On the other hand, premature concentration was resisted, a supreme military commander lost his job in the ensuing bureaucratic struggle, and implementation of the "neutrality" policy was quite decentralized with military attachés retaining considerable initiative. The country was put on a modified war footing just prior to the declaration of European war, and new emergency decrees were issued with the November, 1939 alarm; the national government invoked greatly increased authority with the state of siege declared in April, 1940. During the eight months of crisis, executive agencies greatly increased their planning and regulatory authority to keep the economy functioning and assure basic human needs. The ground work for this had been laid with crisis legislation from World War I and the depression, and the emergency measures were seen as temporary and not a prelude to a socialized state.

The conduct of diplomacy and foreign policy was ostensibly left to an inner circle of officials, including the Queen and supreme commander, but in reality initiatives were taken by some of these officials without knowledge of the others, and lower level officials took initiatives of their own abroad. The attachés faithfully reported back to superiors, however, sometimes disobeying orders to make sure the foreign and defense ministers and the Queen were informed as well. The whole cabinet generally did not concern itself with

foreign policy intricacies.

The expected pattern of concentrated authority with the approach of war was evident, but modified by centrifugal tendencies pulling away from the center. Slight decentralization seemed due to frustration with the limitations of official policy and the difficulty of the Dutch position as war approached. Officials did not agree on the possibilities for war preparation and Allied consultation within neutrality, and attachés felt that too much was being taken for granted in the Hague as far as an Allied rescue was concerned. They prodded their superiors to plan and consult more fully and carefully, and they warned of crucial pitfalls--and indeed of the imminence of attack.

Frequently there is a tendency for central decision-makers to discount the warnings of those in the field clamoring for their attention; it is assumed that field and lower echelon officials become too concerned with the priorities of their host states and perhaps too taken with the importance of the information they receive. They do not see the "big picture." It is difficult to tell to what extent this was true of the Hague's inner circle, but on several occasions there were definite attempts to soft-pedal warnings either because of this form of distrust or because of established political and bureaucratic priorities and perspectives. Sas was believed by his colleagues at the Berlin embassy partly because his warnings were corroborated by another German informer. He had much more trouble in The Hague, being called "overly theatrical" when he swore an oath of truth before the cabinet, and being stopped by General Reynders himself at the palace gate when he tried to warn the Queen directly. (Mason, 1963, p. 564 and note .)

The Link Between Perceived Probability of War and Patterns of Communication

Obviously, communication channels were disrupted as war approached, and the quality of communication within the Netherlands government and with the

field was not good. It was improved only with the attachés persistence. Some new and informal channels were created, and plenty of information was available. But central decision-makers seemed all too prone to close off or downplay direct communications with major foreign powers, relying excessively instead on sealed memoranda to be opened in time of war. In March, April, and May, contacts with Allied military officials continued, but without the push of top civilian officials in the Netherlands, Belgium, Britain and France, no agreements were made, even though some military men later testified that understandings should have been clear. Civilians tried to keep clear so as not to be tainted by consultation in time of neutrality. Effective communication seems impossible without the direct participation of civilian authorities.

The Link Between Perceived Probability of War and Domestic Constraints on Choice

Dutch policies seemed to result from an assessment of Dutch power limitations and options in the international scene, rather than from strong domestic pressure. As war approached, government statements seemed increasingly congruent with public and elite opinion, as expressed in the press and parliament. The public did not strongly oppose Dutch neutrality (and knew little of informal contacts with Allies), and political leaders, apart perhaps from the Prime Minister, did not spend much time trying to shape public opinion. National mobilization had been called quite early, and despite inconveniences and grumbling, there was not much public debate on the viability of various defense strategies. Dutch history, as well as commercial and geo-political interests seemed to mitigate in favor of both neutrality and strenuous efforts for a diplomatic settlement of the war. Because of the general agreement on the need for a neutral image, even anti-Nazi editors who felt Germany should and would lose the war, such as the man heading De Telegraaf, would not print their private sentiments (some may have been convinced of the necessity of reticence

by government pressure). Political opinion leaders such as Leiden's international law professor, B.M. Telders--chairman of the Liberal Party, went on elaborately and enthusiastically to justify, or rationalize Dutch neutrality calling the Dutch "trustees" of three great rivers' delta. Obviously, though, the geographic importance of a small power can be taken by large neighbors either as a reason to keep hands off or as an excuse to attack.

At any rate, domestic constraints on Dutch government action were not great, except of course for the bureaucratic battles already described. Despite differences in geographical location and immediacy of threat, citizens and leaders of a well developed small country like Holland are unlikely to opt for an assertive response to crisis, or to take sides openly, when stronger neutral states, such as the U.S., seem unwilling to enter the fray.

The Link Between Perceived Probability of War and Search and Consideration of Alternatives

Dutch concern about the imminence of war varied among officials, and according to the degree of credence given to Sas' warnings from Berlin and the level of aggressive German behavior. The "cry-wolf" syndrome reduced some officials' concern, but each alarm was taken seriously by at least some civilian leaders--especially when accompanied by tangible indicators such as the German attacks on Scandinavia. Yet the governmental response was invariably compartmentalized, and thus an organized attempt to expand alternatives was minimal. Consultation with governments which could offer military aid was confined to lower military staff echelons; consultation with other neutrals took place through the foreign ministry; defense preparation and planning involved both civilian and military agencies and, on occasion, the royal family, which also undertook to make diplomatic contacts. While a small group sought to orchestrate overall policy, there was not enough agreement on priorities to create a coordinated

approach. Thus in the November alarm, most effort went into a diplomatic offensive and military buildup; in January most effort went into establishing a workable defense plan; in April-May, while mobilization was expanded, most effort went into internal security efforts. Overall, the tendency was to dig in and wait for the worst, hoping for Allied aid if necessary rather than to explore fully either German or Allied offers and terms. The Dutch tended to view such offers and terms as tricks designed to seduce the Netherlands from neutrality and thus force entry into the war or justify attack. Hence they explored relatively fewer alternatives as war approached. Increased threat thus led to a lessening of search, and because few alternatives seemed viable, estimates of the probability of war were somewhat reduced by wishful thinkers.

Conclusion

We are left with the question of whether Dutch neutrality as practiced in 1939-40 was idiosyncratic of Dutch politics or whether other small states in similar straits could be expected to act similarly. There was much historical precedent for the neutral stance, and a legalistic tradition in the Netherlands that would make it easy to believe that logic and law could forestall attack. This made it easier for the population to support a relatively passive strategy. Hence, different political cultures could produce far different responses. But we must also remember the crucial perception of Dutch leaders that unpreparedness and passivity in Britain and France left no choice but to abandon League commitments and revert to relatively passive neutrality. Active commercial and industrialized small states are likely to be intricately dependent upon their major world markets and on major friendly powers for leadership. When none came from London, Paris, and Washington until 1940, the Dutch had to make up their minds. Rather than prod and cajole the Western powers, they decided not to provoke Germany while cooperating if possible with Allied attempts to weaken

Germany. When the Venlo fiasco exposed this strategy, they opted even more for non-provocation. Rather than become more inventive in seeking ways to uproot the Nazis, the Dutch reduced their contacts with the West to those necessary to keep trade going and to provide relief if and when the German attack came. Small states in these circumstances cannot be expected to carry the battle or organize political offensives; they may opt not even to participate in others' offensives if they see little prospect of success. The mental picture of the world and estimates of war probability carried by most people in Holland were deeply affected by the 1930's diplomacy they had witnessed around them in Europe and by the breakdown of the League. In this sense, the short term effects of threat, shortage of time, etc. were less important in explaining crisis behavior than the pre-crisis environment. Within the basic neutrality framework, however, threat perception and bureaucratic rivalry more strongly conditioned behavior than time pressure and war probability estimates.

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