Jacco Pekelder

Dealing with Violent Protest in West Germany and the Netherlands

Societal Dynamics of Left-Wing Political Violence in the 1960s and 1970s

Abstract

Political violence is a specific category of participation that is frowned upon in most societies. This article compares how two western-style post war democracies, West Germany and the Netherlands, dealt with violent politics from the left in the 1960s and 1970s. On the macro level, a lack of integrative mechanisms in the West German political system fostered a radicalization that the Netherlands was able to avoid. On the meso level of intra-movement dynamics, this also produced different outcomes. While West German radicals such as the founders of the left-wing terrorist Red Army Faction were able to enhance their reputations and find sympathy and support within the broad new left movement family through an embrace of the idea and practice of armed struggle, similar Dutch groups found no footing. Still, it would be a foregone conclusion to deem the Netherlands immune to the kinds of counter-productive policies towards unwelcome forms of political participation that befell West Germany. When the Netherlands was put to the ultimate stress test in 1977–1978 during a direct confrontation with the RAF, its police, justice system and political apparatus proved nearly as vulnerable to the negative societal dynamics of political violence as their counterparts to the East.

Keywords: *1968; 1960s; 1970s; Political Violence; Terrorism; New Left; RAF; Baader Meinhof; West Germany; The Netherlands*

Looking for violent forms of political participation, western eyes automatically turn their gaze towards the 1960s and 1970s, the two decades that in combination count as the exemplary protest era of the last century. With the rise of heterogeneous and transnationalist new social movements and the new left in many countries in Western Europe and the Americas, these were times of great societal upheaval; some even speak of a global protest era.[1] In many of the societies involved, protest bred violence on the part of the

1 See Martin Klimke/Jacco Pekelder/Joachim Scharloth (eds.): Between Prague Spring and French May: Opposition and Revolt in Europe, 1960–1980, New York/Oxford 2011.

DOI: 10.46586/mts.66.2021.21-41 Moving the Social · 66 (2021) · p. 21–41

state and the establishment, and on the part of protesters as well—some of these even specialized in violent politics and organized terrorist campaigns. Of course, this violence should not overshadow one of the most significant enduring effects of the protest era: that relations between citizens and state institutions and figures of authority underwent fundamental changes with lasting implications until today.[2] Nonetheless, it is interesting to see how societies during this period dealt with violent politics, both as an idea and as an actual way of waging politics or, as it was called at the time, the "armed struggle." In most democracies, political violence is considered taboo, but the ways in which their political and legal systems deal with it can be very different all the same; these dealings can reveal a lot about the inner workings of these democracies.

This article compares two such democracies in terms of how they dealt with left-wing political violence, both as an idea and a form of political practice, in the 1960s and 1970s: West Germany and the Netherlands, neighbours in the Northwestern corner of Europe, with the crucial similarity of both being postwar Western-style open societies. As a first step, it looks to the structure of both societies and their political system, including their capacity to peaceably integrate new voices and groups. In what ways did their capacity (or the lack of it) to integrate the new left movement in established political structures influence the emergence of political violence from the left, and what can be considered the crucial differences between West Germany and the Netherlands in this respect? Sociologists and historians have grown accustomed to building a comparison on national characteristics like these and even in the under-researched field of German-Dutch studies it is the common denominator. This article can for this reason build the macro level analysis mostly on existing literature.

In a second step, the article looks at the role of meso level processes within the new left movement in the rise of violent protest. Did intra-movement dynamics between various factions, including the violent few, around the ideas and practices of violent protest foster or delay their spread and popularity? How did government agencies and other institutions of established society react and influence these dynamics? And, finally, what can be considered the main differences between the two countries? On these questions, this article offers a new approach, drawing in part from original research into what, in cooperation with my Leiden colleague Joost Augusteijn, we call "terrorist constituencies": the broad segment of society that terrorists or violent activists consider to be their first audience. It encompasses everyone they believe to be susceptible to the political messages inherent to their statements and acts of violence.[3]

2 Jacco Pekelder: Towards Another Concept of the State: Historiography of the 1970s in the USA and Western Europe, in: Cordia Baumann/Sebastian Gehrig/Nicolas Büchse (eds.), Linksalternative Milieus und Neue Soziale Bewegungen in den 1970er Jahren, Heidelberg 2011, pp. 61–83.

3 Joost Augusteijn/Jacco Pekelder: Terrorist Constituencies in Terrorist–State Conflicts: The Debate on the Use of Violence Among Irish Nationalists and West Germany"s Radical Left

Recent historiography and modern social science research on political violence, terrorism and the protest movement and the left alternative milieu of the 1960s and 1970s inspired Augusteijn and me to delve deeper into these meso level dynamics. The sociologist and historian Donatella della Porta, for one, while leaning towards a macro level analysis, has for some time now argued that, in the 1960s and 1970s, meso level formations—ranging from the *groupuscules* typical of both the terrorist cells and the era's omnipresent action committees to the broad so-called "new social movements" in which all of these groups cohabitated—played a pivotal role. From this perspective, della Porta points out that it is important to account for the heterogeneity of a social movement and to understand that they are generally "movement families," encompassing a plurality of pluriform organizations that, while sharing strong ideological connections—at a minimum, the notion that the state is their common enemy—and subcultural lifestyles, they simultaneously consider one another rivals in the struggle over members, new recruits, finances, ideological building blocks, and other limited resources.[4]

In this struggle, one group can acquire an edge over another within a movement family by self-associating with violent politics. Often even a *flirt* with violence will already help in the process of creating an attractive "brand": a group's ideas, leaders, and actions thereby gain the attention of more people within the movement family and possibly pull a certain number of them towards supporting or even joining them. In the 1960s, this mechanism pushed some groups within, for instance, West Germany's *Außerparlamentarische Opposition* (Extra-Parliamentary Opposition) towards ever more extreme forms of militancy. As will be shown, the emergence of the *Rote Armee Fraktion* (RAF, or Red Army Faction) as the most prominent left-wing terrorist organization can indeed be traced to this intra-movement struggle for resources and attention. Taking a cue from della Porta, sociologists Peter Waldmann and Stefan Malthaner maintain that terrorists not only use violence to frighten large swaths of the population, they also aim to seduce the part of the population they consider their reference group to side with them through their threats and atrocities.[5] As terrorism expert Louise Richardson has pointed out, this is the *Umfeld* or milieu, the "societal surround" without which no terrorist group can survive and thrive.[6]

in the Mid-1970s, in: Joost Augusteijn/ Constant Hijzen/Mark Leon de Vries (eds.): Historical Perspectives on Democracies and their Adversaries, Houndsmills 2019, pp. 101–136, 103–106.

4 Donatella della Porta: Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany, Cambridge 1995, pp. 11–12.

5 Stefan Malthaner/Peter Waldmann: The Radical Milieu: Conceptualizing the Supportive Social Environment of Terrorist Groups," in: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 37 (2014), no. 12, pp. 979–998, 981–982.

6 Louise Richardson: What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Enemy: Containing the threat, New York 2006, p. 69.

In our work on "terrorist constituencies," Augusteijn and I have expanded on these ideas to understand how individuals on the receiving end actually process the efforts by their violent comrades to attract them. Moreover, we also aim to take into account that, beyond the violent comrades, state authorities and representatives of the established social system (such as political parties and the media) also play a crucial role in influencing the debates and actions of these constituencies in the face of violence propagated and committed on their behalf. In fact, the reactions of state authorities, established political elites, and the media to debates about violence within the constituencies had a deep impact on their attitudes towards their violent comrades. As will be explained below, West German reactions to discussions with left-wing alternative circles suggest that state functionaries and the media already regarded these as unwelcome forms of political participation. They were frowned upon (or in German: *verpönt*) and considered detrimental to democracy.

As a result, not only voices in support of militant or terrorist groups, but also voices of criticism and rejection were suppressed in West Germany.[7] This offers a striking contrast to the Netherlands, where the government developed a far more subtle approach to the spectre of left-wing violence and where intra-movements dynamics were far less beneficial to violent politics. Still, it is a foregone conclusion to consider the Netherlands immune from the negative societal spiral around violent protest that marked West German politics in the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, in a third and final step, this article investigates the moment when the Netherlands faced a challenge that was directly related to the situation in West Germany, when, in the Autumn of 1977, three shoot-outs with Dutch police resulted in the capture and imprisonment of three German RAF members. Until they were handed over to West German authorities in October 1978, a series of prison and courtroom confrontations and related mobilizations of left-wing sympathy and support that was very similar to the RAF solidarity campaign in West Germany since the early 1970s unfolded. The final part of this article thus asks: How did the macro level integrative mechanisms of Dutch society and the meso level intra-movement dynamics there hold up to the ultimate stress test of a direct confrontation with the RAF on Dutch soil?[8] Do indicators still point to a cer-

7 In her comparison of the counterterrorist policies of West Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and the United States in the 1970s, Dutch historian Beatrice de Graaf says as much, without however extensively dealing with terrorist constituencies: idem, Evaluating Counterterrorism performance: A Comparative Study, London/New York 2011, pp. 241–243. Another ambitious comparative study of West German, Austrian and Dutch counterterrorist policies pays even less attention to this constituency: Matthias Dahlke: Demokratischer Staat und transnationaler Terrorismus: Drei Wege zur Unnachgiebigkeit in Westeuropa 1972–1975, Munich 2011.

8 Surprising as it may seem, the 1977–1978 confrontation with the RAF can indeed be considered the Netherlands' ultimate terrorism stress test. It put the rule of law under greater pressure than at any other time, including the 1970s' attacks linked to the Palestinian liber-

tain advantage as compared to the Federal Republic or do we see the country drifting towards similar patterns of downward spiralling? As this question mostly relates to the Netherlands, this part focuses on a source-based analysis of the developments there.[9]

Integration of Protest Movements

It presents a challenge to compare the Federal Republic of Germany—even before the 1989 reunification one of Europe's largest countries in terms of territory, population, and economy—with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, one of its smaller states. This difference in size can relativized however by their comparable wealth, and by their close bilateral relations, with age-old cultural and linguistic bonds and intensely entangled economies in terms of interstate trade and cross-border capital investments.[10] Of course, towards the protest era under scrutiny here, both countries had taken dramatically different trajectories. While the Netherlands in the 1960s was a well-established and territorially well-defined body politic that still fit the description enshrined in its 1848 constitution, West Germany, with a Basic Law that was more than a century younger,[11] was still somewhat of an experiment in state-building—with the added challenge of the unfulfilled aspirations to reunite the German nation. Still, after 1945, both countries had returned from the abyss of the Nazi era as parliamentary democracies and social market economies. In addition, both were key members of the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European communities, and cooperated closely to uphold their external security and economic prosperity and fend off the threat of the Soviet bloc.

ation movement or the train hijackings and other acts of violence emanating from second generation South Moluccans between 1970 and 1978. Although this Moluccan terrorism was unique to the Netherlands, it did not come with a strong mobilization of public opinion akin to the RAF's (See A. P. Schmid/J. F. A. de Graaf/F. Bovenkerk/L. M. Bovenkerk-Teerink/L.Brunt: Zuidmoluks terrorisme, de media en de publieke opinie, Amsterdam 1982). This can be explained in part by the fact that, unlike the RAF, the other terrorists did not espouse a left-wing revolutionary agenda that triggered the authorities' anxieties. Also, they lacked the RAF's image of ostensibly fighting against a return of German fascism and the related appeal to left-wing fears of Dutch authorities copying presumed German police state methods (See Jacco Pekelder: Ich liebe Ulrike. Die RAF und die Niederlande 1970–1980, Münster 2012).

9 There is an abundance of literature on German dealings with the RAF. See for example, Wolfgang Kraushaar (ed.): Die RAF und der linke Terrorismus, Hamburg 2006.

10 See Jacco Pekelder: Neue Nachbarschaft. Deutschland und die Niederlande: Bildformung und Beziehungen seit 1990, Münster 2013.

11 Intriguingly, the Dutch call their constitution *grondwet*, which basically equates to the German *Grundgesetz* (or Basic Law), but in contrast to West Germany's founders, they have never considered it a provisional solution.

On the topic of political violence, especially in early years of the protest movement, there were similarities between West Germany and the Netherlands as well: Although they both had their share of right-wing demonstrations and at times saw right-wing extremist mobs take to the streets, in the long "Red Decade" between 1960 and 1980,[12] most protest was clearly situated ideologically on the left of the political spectrum. On either side of the border, this protest was initially shouldered by a cultural and often bohemian avantgarde and by groups of radical students. They put the Western, capitalist model of consumer society and the perceived hypocrisy of political and moral institutions on the pillory and criticized a Western alliance that closed its eyes to the Vietnam War and the exploitation of oppressed peoples in the Global South. In both countries, the protest movement posed as anti-authoritarian and demanded true democracy, participation, and, later on, autonomy.[13] Moreover, in both countries, discussions about the Third Reich and the Second World War fertilized protest on the left. Psychologically and rhetorically, this coming to terms with the past and "mastering" it (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) was a defining aspect of protest. And just like in Germany, Dutch protesters gradually began to believe that their rhetoric was indeed a fitting description of actual societal circumstances. The result was sometimes counter-productive, as it lowered the threshold for the use of political violence—understood as counterviolence to a violent state.

In the literature on the 1960s, instances of young German protesters equating certain features of West German society, and their clashes with the police, with the Third Reich abound.[14] Less well known, but just as commonplace were the many instances in the Netherlands when authoritarianism, in political life and within the police, was also interpreted as a prefiguration of a return to fascism. Just like in Germany, Nazi comparisons were often used as a moral club. Dutch protesters, for instance, were eager to portray the police as Nazi paramilitary, sometimes calling them the "Orange SS." It was significant that they did not hesitate to accuse a conservative newspaper of working towards the "*Endlösung* of the Provo question"—a grim play of words on the Nazi "final solution" of the so-called Jewish question.[15] The background and permutations of protest were thus rather similar, although a remarkable difference lay

12 The use of the term "Red Decade" of course slightly differs from its original use in: Gerd Koenen: Das rote Jahrzehnt: Unsere kleine deutsche Kulturrevolution 1967–1977, Cologne 2001.

13 A good general portrayal of the 1960s in the Netherlands is: Hans Righart: De eindeloze jaren zestig. Geschiedenis van een generatieconflict, Amsterdam/Antwerp 1995. For Germany, see: Nick Thomas: Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Dissent and Democracy, Oxford 2003.

14 See Jacco Pekelder, Links slachtofferschap: De RAF als afrekening met de Duitse schuld, in: Patrick Dassen/Ton Nijhuis/Krijn Thijs (eds.): Duitsers als slachtoffers: Het einde van een taboe?, Amsterdam 2007, pp. 305–335.

15 Chris van der Heijden: Dat nooit meer: de nasleep van de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Neder-

in the quantity and quality of violent incidents. Violent protest reared its terrifying head far more often in the Federal Republic, and far more often its consequences were deadly. The number of deaths that can be associated with German left-wing political violence might be as high as ninety individuals.[16] Thirty-three or thirty-four of these were killed by the RAF, a number that includes a Dutch policeman and two Dutch customs officers.[17] The small number of Dutch activists emanating from the protest movement and involved in armed struggle mostly refrained from planned attacks on human life, and in the end never caused deadly harm during this period.

Few have attempted to compare German and Dutch occasions of violent protest in the 1960s and 1970s. At best, general overviews of Dutch history by German historians contain one or two hints, as do a few of the broader comparisons of the protest movements in both countries—mostly in an effort to find an explanation for the difference between Germany and the Netherlands in societal structures, especially in state-citizen relations. The authors in question often concentrate on the interactions between the way the police handled protest and the use of violence by (members of) protest movements.[18] Ernest Zahn, a Czech-Dutch sociologist and economist at the University of Amsterdam, for instance, published a book in 1984 for the German market about what he called *Das unbekannte Holland* (The Unknown Netherlands) in which he wrote: "Where there [in contrast to Germany] was no reification of the state, there cannot be a turn to despisal of the state. Riots therefore have [in the Netherlands] been met by more relaxed reactions, because they have not been regarded instantly as threats to the state and the rule of law."[19] Willem Melching, a Dutch expert on German history, also argues that reactions to protest by state institutions are crucial to explaining the differences in the dynamics of political violence in both neighbouring countries:

> Initially, in the Netherlands as well, police behaviour […] was characterized by repressive severity. From the mid 1960s, each country then [however] followed its own course. In the Netherlands, this new course led to de-escalation, in Germany, in contrast, a long period of escalation into massive violence began.[20]

land, Amsterdam/Antwerp 2011, pp. 398–399 (in the original *Endlösung* is misspelled as *Entlösung*).

16 Hans-Peter Feldmann: 1967–1993. Die Toten: Studentenbewegung, APO, Baader-Meinhof, Bewegung 2. Juni, Revolutionäre Zellen, RAF, …, Düsseldorf 1998.

17 Butz Peters: Tödlicher Irrtum: Die Geschichte der RAF, Berlin 2004, p. 28.

18 See della Porta: Social Movements, p. 14.

19 Ernest Zahn: Das unbekannte Holland: Regenten, Rebellen und Reformatoren, Munich 1993, p. 27. (Translation by the author.)

20 Willem Melching: Deutscher Herbst—holländischer Frühling? Protestbewegung und politische Kultur 1960–1980, in: Friso Wielenga (ed.): Politische Kulturen im Vergleich: Beiträ-

In both countries, the decisive turn in the development of left-wing political violence took place from 1965 to 1968. In West Berlin and elsewhere in West Germany, this period was marked by a series of ever more violent confrontations during which a first batch of left-wing groups escalated towards a strategy of armed struggle. Clearly, the killing (and initial denial of this by the authorities) of Benno Ohnesorg, a student demonstrator, by a West Berlin policeman on 2 June 1967 and the attempted murder of West Berlin student leader Rudi Dutschke on 11 April 1968 were important escalating events. These acts of violence against the left took place amid an aggressive anti-student campaign by the Springer tabloid press group, which fed into the anxieties of many who believed they were facing an existential threat from the establishment. Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin were among the first of the often rather haphazardly formed groups to embrace armed struggle. In April 1968, just before the attempt on Dutschke's life, they planned and committed the simultaneous firebombing of two Frankfurt department stores with two other men—the seminal act of what two years later would become the Red Army Faction. In sum, in West Germany, confrontation and polarization dominated the situation.

From 1965 onwards, the Netherlands also experienced a similar escalation of violent confrontations between the police and protest groups like the Provos, especially in Amsterdam, the "epicentre" of Dutch protest. Events threatened to spiral out of control when, on 13–14 June 1966, the death of a protesting worker during violent clashes with Amsterdam police sparked a confrontation between protesters linked to Provo, militant youngsters, and workers on one side and the vehemently anti-new left *Telegraaf* tabloid newspaper on the other.[21] In contrast to the events in Germany after the slaying of Ohnesorg a year later, a remarkably effective de-escalation occurred in the Netherlands as early as mid-1966, which began with a critical self-reflection among political elites.[22] It helped that, lacking a strong tradition of radical activism, students tended to keep their lines of communication to the elites open, in spite of occasional bouts of extremist actions.[23] Spectacular electoral successes by new initiatives, on the local and national level—with the Provos wining seats in Amsterdam's city council; *Nieuw Links*, a new left group gaining ground within the Dutch Labour Party; and D66, a Liberal Democrat upstart party, entering parliament—likely helped as well. Confrontation was thus followed by a relatively swift integration of protest voices into established politics.

ge über die Niederlande und Deutschland seit 1945, Bonn 2002, pp. 80–98, 86. (Translation by the author.)

21 Hans Righart: De eindeloze jaren zestig: Geschiedenis van een generatieconflict, Amsterdam/Antwerp 1995, pp. 225, 247.

22 Guus Meershoek: De geschiedenis van de Nederlandse politie: De Gemeentepolitie in een veranderende samenleving, Amsterdam 2007, pp. 383–388.

23 Righart: De eindeloze jaren zestig, pp. 261–262.

In his brilliant book *Nieuw Babylon in aanbouw* (New Babylon under Construction, 1996), historian James Kennedy states that it was especially the self-reflection of Dutch elites that led to this rather successful integration of the protest movement into the existing political system and thus prevented more extreme forms of political violence on the left. In this, these elites were motivated by an especially open mind towards innovation and modernization, an attitude that sprang from the existential crisis provoked by the German occupation during the Second World War and the loss of Indonesia as a Dutch colony between 1945 and 1949.[24] In his central argument, Kennedy posits that, as early as the 1950s, Dutch elites in their search for a new national identity—after their traditional self-image as a liberal-conservative, ethically Christian-inspired nation, with a foreign policy guided by straightforward commercial interests and a neutralist tendency on security—had come to embrace a somewhat blind belief in progress. In the 1960s, after the first confrontations, this belief had then led them to the conviction that the young innovators of the protest movement were the true carriers of the zeitgeist. Elites saw it as their duty to make room for the iconoclasts, and, in a sense, transformed the country into something like a laboratory of "repressive tolerance" (Herbert Marcuse). In plastering over the inter-generational conflict and reinterpreting the Netherlands as a model of modernity and progress to the world, they found pride in their country again.

In contrast, the attitudes of West German elites from the late 1960s onwards had a more tragic quality, particularly among politicians within the ruling social-liberal coalition. In a wonderfully careful analysis, historian Karrin Hanshew has convincingly demonstrated how a political culture and legal system of "militant democracy," informed by the lessons of the Weimar and Nazi eras, led to severe counter-productive effects as elites' dealt with the fundamental opposition on the left.[25] In their efforts to save West Germany's young, rules-based democracy, they largely overreacted not only to the left-wing terrorism to come, but also to the rather playful provocations of earlier new left protest. Only after 1977's "German Autumn" did social-liberal politicians succeed in moving their country towards measured de-escalation—more than a decade, mind you, after the Netherlands had taken a similar turn.

24 James Kennedy: Nieuw Babylon in aanbouw: Nederland in de jaren zestig, Amsterdam 1995. A German summary is on offer in: James Kennedy: Management der Modernität: Die niederländischen Eliten und der Protest in den 1960er Jahren, in: Hanco Jürgens et al. (eds.): Eine Welt zu gewinnen! Formen und Folgen der 68er Bewegung in Ost- und Westeuropa, Leipzig 2009, pp.19–28.

25 Karrin Hanshew, Terror and Democracy in West Germany, Cambridge 2012.

Violent Protest and Intra-Movement Dynamics

As discussed above, propagating and practicing political violence is often a successful way for a group within a broad social movement family to distinguish itself. We have to remember that the RAF was, to a large extent, the result of a widespread fragmentation of the radical left in a multitude of action committees and initiatives after the APO had failed to fulfil its over-ambitious goals during the summer of 1968. Many of the student-activists began to focus on their studies and careers again, at best aiming to realize the revolution by way of the "long march through the institutions," as their leader Dutschke had proclaimed. Others began working towards the long-term goal of uniting with the working classes and joined one of several *K-Gruppen*, the orthodox, often Maoist, "communist groups" that focused on a combination of factory work and schooling themselves and others in Marxist theory.[26] Likely the smallest number of activists chose to circumvent this rigid life and hung on to 1960s hedonist lifestyles and revolutionary spontaneity. Gradually, these *Spontis* came to put their stamp on local activism in several of Germany's cities, especially Frankfurt, West Berlin, and various university towns, where they initiated and supported the up-and-coming squatters' movement. It was this *Sponti* subculture that became the core of what both the RAF and the establishment considered to be its constituency. They were the first audience of the RAF's brochures and communications, and they bore the brunt of the broad surveillance and repression measures on the part of West German's police, lawmakers, and justice system.[27] Sandwiched between the two, *Sponti* groups produced a wide range of responses, with a miniscule minority joining the violent few, while many others sympathized with the RAF to various degrees. Still, from the start, leading voices also existed, who objected to the armed struggle and condemned it on moral or strategic grounds; especially from 1976–1977 onwards, they gradually seem to have gained the upper hand.[28] Conversely, starting from the premise that it was high time to substitute the APO's strategy of peaceful mass protest with violence, the RAF set out to outcompete others with similar plans. In fact, the RAF came about through a

26 Wolfgang Kraushaar: Achtundsechzig: Eine Bilanz, Berlin 2008, p. 185.

27 Jacco Pekelder: The RAF and the Left in West Germany: Communication Processes between Terrorists and Their Constituency in the Early 1970s, in: Klaus Weinhauer/Jörg Requate (eds.): Gewalt ohne Ausweg? Terrorismus als Kommunikationsprozess in Europa seit dem 19. Jahrhundert, Frankfurt am Main 2012, pp. 203–222. See Sebastian Gehrig: Sympathizing Subcultures? The Milieus of West German Terrorism, in: Martin Klimke/Jacco Pekelder/Joachim Scharloth (eds.), Between Prague Spring and French May: Opposition and Revolt in Europe, 1960–1980, New York/Oxford 2011, pp. 233–250.

28 Jacco Pekelder, From Militancy to Democracy? The Radical Left in West Germany in the 1970s, in: Joris Gijsenbergh/Saskia Hollander/Tim Houwen/Wim de Jong (eds.), Creative Crises of Democracy, Bruxelles etc. 2012, 309–330.

conscious effort by the APO's frustrated lawyer Horst Mahler to unite his efforts to build an armed group with the incoherent ambitions of famed Frankfurt arsonists Baader and Ensslin. Visiting them in Italy, where they were hiding from the German police, he persuaded them to return to West Berlin, where they then made the smart move to recruit star journalist of the left Ulrike Meinhof. The RAF's spectacular start, Baader's liberation from prison on 14 May 1970, and the spectacular bank raids later that year thus immediately made a lasting impression.

Although they managed to occasionally step into the limelight, both in the early years as well as later on in the 1970s, other armed groups on the left could not keep up with the RAF and its hold on the imagination of both the left-wing alternative milieu and the establishment. The final ingredient in this successful branding exercise were the declarations and semi-intellectual brochures, including the lengthy essays *The Urban Guerrilla Concept* and *About the Armed Struggle in Western Europe* published in 1971. Through these, the Baader-Meinhof group consciously proclaimed itself to be the vanguard in West Germany for all radical left-wing groups, action committees, and projects, and emphatically demanded their solidarity and support. Especially after shoot-outs with the police had led to the first fatalities, many on the left felt bound to declare solidarity with the group. Not even the first series of political bombings in May 1972, in which the RAF killed four and wounded seventy-four, could cut that emotional tie; a left-wing activist, Oskar Negt, was booed out of the room at a Frankfurt rally when he dared criticize them.[29] A reason for this was that, from a very early stage, the RAF caused great upheaval throughout West Germany. On the one hand, there were waves of "moral panic" in mainstream society, driven by anxious press commentaries and politicians demanding tougher anti-terrorist policies. On the other hand, several public opinion surveys in 1971 found that the RAF enjoyed some sympathy among a number of left-wing intellectuals and youngsters.[30]

After the leadership and many members of the RAF were arrested in June 1972, events took an unexpected turn. Instead of passively enduring their detainment, most members of the RAF (excluding Mahler who left the organization) began a prison struggle that would eventually also involve collective hunger strikes that put pressure on both the authorities and their supporters and sympathizers.[31] In addition, they began to instrumentalize the legal proceedings and trials against them as dramatic events. In line with what activists of the 1960s protest movement had done before,

29 Oskar Negt: Sozialistische Politik und Terrorismus. Erweiterte und veränderte Fassung der Kundgebungsrede am 3. Juni 1972 zum Kongreß 'Am Beispiel Angela Davis,' in: Links, July/August 1972, and Interview with Oskar Negt, Hanover, 19 March 2012.

30 See Hanno Balz: Von Terroristen, Sympathisanten und dem starken Staat: Die öffentliche Debatte über die RAF in den 70er Jahren, Frankfurt am Main/New York 2008.

31 Leith Passmore, The Art of Hunger: Self-Starvation in the Red Army Faction, in: German History 27 (2009), no. 1, pp. 32–59.

they tried to use the courtroom as a stage from which they could broadcast their ideology. Between 1975 and 1977, both the RAF and the state saw the Stammheim trial against the RAF leadership as their most important battleground.[32]

In combination with massive scrutiny by the police and justice system of the whole constituency, these RAF campaigns produced strong solidarity reflexes, which—time and again—re-actualized the "negative alliance" (Karrin Hanshew) that was the foundation of the left-wing alternative movement family; sympathy for the RAF thus functioned as the integrationist glue of the anti-state left.[33] New terrorist cells within the left-wing radical milieu ultimately sprang from the RAF solidarity movement to commit attacks and abductions in order to force the German government to release the prisoners. During the "German Autumn" of 1977, these actions drove West German society to the brink of a socio-political crisis, after which the RAF seemed to have reached its end—although it proved a long goodbye. Until 1991, a third "generation" mounted attacks against NATO-related targets, German business leaders, and political functionaries. Nonetheless, the still active cells did not declare their disbandment until 1998.[34] Still, he perception of the RAF as a fundamental threat to German society had already faded away long before, as civic attitudes towards the state changed over time. Whereas, in 1977, extreme measures by the police and the state against the terrorists and their prospective "sympathizers" had been met with the consent of most quarters of German society, a period of critical reflection had already begun by 1978, as criticism of the police grew markedly, especially of measures to electronically collect and process large quantities of personal data.[35] Trust in state institutions began to erode and state officials were subject to rising democratic scrutiny. In view of the traditional focus on the state in German political culture, these were remarkable developments.[36]

32 Jacco Pekelder/Klaus Weinhauer: Germany Confronts the Baader-Meinhof Group: The Stammheim Trial (1975–1977) and Its Legacies, in: Beatrice de Graaf/Alex Schmid (eds.): Terrorists on Trial: A Performative Perspective, Leiden 2016, pp. 231–309.

33 Jacco Pekelder: The RAF and the Left in West Germany.

34 Jacco Pekelder: The end of the Baader Meinhof Group: The Long Goodbye of the RAF Between 1977 and 1998, 2010, https://www.fundacionmgimenezabad.es/es/documentacion/end-baader-meinhof-group-long-goodbye-raf-between-1977-and-1998 (last visited on 30 October 2020).

35 Klaus Weinhauer was one of the first to describe this shift in: ibid.: Zwischen 'Partisanenkampf' und 'Kommissar Computer': Polizei und Linksterrorismus in der Bundesrepublik bis Anfang der 1980er Jahre, in: Klaus Weinhauer/Jörg Requate/Heinz-Gerhard Haupt (eds.): Terrorismus in der Bundesrepublik: Medien, Staat und Subkulturen in den 1970er Jahren, Frankfurt am Main/New York 2006, pp. 244–270.

36 Nicolas Büchse: Von Staatsbürgern und Protestbürgern: Der Deutsche Herbst und die Veränderung der politischen Kultur in Deutschland, in: Habbo Knoch (ed.): Bürgersinn und Weltgefühl: Politische Moral und solidarischer Protest in den sechziger und siebziger

While West Germany thus experienced a highly challenging period after the fragmentation of the broad protest movement in the late 1960s, the Dutch left processed the frustration of their revolution postponed in less extreme ways. Inspired by the RAF, some small groups, such as the *Rode Jeugd* (Red Youth), active around 1970, and the *Rood Verzetsfront* (Red Resistance Front), with a tendency towards violent politics emerged in late 1976, but their efforts to outcompete their rivals on the left, whom they decried as cowardly wordsmiths, by posing as "polder guerrillas" largely failed to attract more than a few followers. One of the reasons for this was that left-wing violence in the Netherlands was remarkably often directed against foreign, in fact often German, targets. In the end, this orientation away from their own society did not make a strategy of violence more attractive, but endowed aspiring Dutch urban guerrillas with the devasting image of being unserious "Zaterdagmiddagrevolutionairen" (literally: Saturday afternoon revolutionaries, i. e. hobbyists).[37] Because of the integrative mechanism within the Dutch political system, the adaptive attitudes of the elites when confronted with the demand for societal innovation, and the de-escalation strategy of the police, hardly anyone on the left really believed in the necessity of armed struggle.[38] Still, at certain moments, the similarities between West Germany and the Netherlands were greater than the above suggests. This was especially clear in 1977, when the Netherlands was suddenly confronted with a domestic crisis involving the Red Army Faction. Similar to the situation east of the border, the Dutch police experienced violent confrontations with German members of the RAF, who after their arrests, practiced the same solidarity campaigns from Dutch courthouses and prisons as they had done from Stammheim and other "theatres of justice" to mobilize sympathy and support in the Netherlands.[39] Confronted with these, the integrative mechanisms of Dutch society were less successful, and elites struggled to hold on to the flexible and somewhat phlegmatic attitude they had previously developed.

Jahren, Göttingen 2007, pp. 311–32; see Jacco Pekelder: Towards Another Concept of the State.

37 Maarten van Riel: Zaterdagmiddagrevolutie: Portret van de Rode Jeugd, Amsterdam 2010.

38 See Jacco Pekelder: Ich liebe Ulrike: Die RAF und die Niederlande 1970–1980, Münster 2012, pp. 112–115.

39 A first attempt of the author to build a Dutch-German comparison on this case was published as: Jacco Pekelder: Dynamiken des Terrorismus in Deutschland und den Niederlanden, in: Geschichte und Gesellschaft, vol. 35 (2009), pp. 402–428.

The Dutch Integrative Mechanism Under Stress

Against the backdrop of the German Autumn, three shoot-outs occurred between Dutch police and German members of the RAF within a six week-period from 19 September to 10 November 1977, in The Hague, Utrecht, and Amsterdam. In all three cases, attempts at arrest resulted in the RAF firing handguns and, in one case, using a hand grenade against policemen. RAF members Christof Wackernagel and Gert Schneider and five officers were wounded, and, on 22 September 1977, Knut Folkerts fatally shot Utrecht brigadier Arie Kranenburg. The shock waves triggered in the Netherlands were in many ways similar to earlier outrage against the RAF in West Germany. Moreover, the events that unfolded in the Netherlands in the months to come showed striking similarities to the script of West Germany's confrontation with the RAF. Just like on the German side of the equation, from their arrests in late 1977 until their extradition to West Germany in late 1978, a tense, mediated struggle developed on the Dutch side between the three "terrorists," their legal defenders and sympathizers on the one hand and various representatives of state institutions and leading politicians on the other.

As had been the case in the Federal Republic, this confrontation focused on the legal proceedings against RAF members and their situation in prison. In the Netherlands, there was nothing similar to the anti-terrorist legislation that West Germany introduced to counter the RAF in the aftermath of the violence: nothing like the new paragraph in West Germany's Criminal Code against "terrorist associations" (§129a), nor anything resembling the new restrictions written into its Code of Criminal Procedure against lawyers cooperating in cases related to terrorism or colluding with their clients.[40] Instead, Dutch politicians explicitly subscribed to existing laws and the rule of law in general, as social democrat Minister President Joop den Uyl explained on television in the immediate aftermath of the deadly Utrecht shooting:

> It can and must not be, that we will use police state methods. This is to say that we try to solve this problem by breaking existing legal prescriptions. Because if we would do that, we'd do exactly what the terrorists aim at, we'd become a state where power rules, a police state. That mustn't be.[41]

40 Pekelder/Weinhauer: Germany Confronts the Baader-Meinhof Group, pp. 239–41 and 244–48.

41 Cees Labeur a. o.: Interview with Den Uyl, in the NCRV broadcasting association news show "Hier en Nu," 24 September 1977, Nationaal Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid, Hilversum (NIBG), Inv. Nr. M58499. (Translation by the author.)

Nonetheless, in other respects, Dutch politicians, police and prosecutors approached the proceedings against the three RAF members in broadly similar ways, In essence this was because Dutch authorities viewed their cases—a murder trial against Folkerts at the Utrecht Court of Justice on 6 and 7 December 1977 and trials about political asylum or extradition to West Germany for all three RAF members—in much the same terms as their German colleagues.[42] For one, outside of the courthouses, security issues reigned supreme: rows of armed policemen blocked a wide perimeter around the courthouses; all visitors were frisked upon entering; the defendants were sometimes transported in armoured cars; and police photo- and videographers registered all those who participated in demonstrations.[43] It was all very much like the trial days at Stammheim, including the fact that, at times, court hearings in the Netherlands also took place in a prison setting, which, as critics remarked, ran counter to the presumption of innocence. Inside the courts, Dutch prosecutors seemed to have taken their cue from Germany as well. In the case against Folkerts, using a similarly broad interpretation of penal law, they accused him of murder instead of manslaughter in spite of the chaotic circumstances of his violent arrest. Only the judges in the Netherlands generally handled the situation differently than their German counterparts. Instead of reacting fiercely when confronted by the efforts of the accused and their lawyers to politicize the trials, they behaved with the patience and sovereignty befitting a magistrate. The verdicts were nevertheless equally harsh: twenty years for Folkerts, who was found guilty of murder after an efficiently run trial in December 1977, and extraditions for all three. Mid-October 1978 they were sent by helicopter to West Germany to face more trials and long prison sentences.

It was the RAF's legal team, consisting of five lawyers of whom only two already had some experience with left-wing militants, that provoked the most controversy. They found themselves dealing with a trio of suspects who, inspired by the recently deceased RAF leadership, were determined to continue their political struggle from behind bars. At his trial, for example, Folkerts refused to discuss the circumstances of the Utrecht shooting and instead only spoke at length about his political beliefs. This attitude forced his lawyers, especially Pieter Herman Bakker Schut, Arnoud Willems and Gerard Spong, to embrace a style of "political legal defence" that some of their West German colleagues had already practiced since the late 1960s. Such lawyers often worked as a collective, identified strongly with their defendants and their ideology, and viewed it as their primary task to help them continue their struggle from captivity. Instead of engaging in a straightforward legal defence, they tried to undermine

42 Dutch authorities agreed to include the Amsterdam shooting in a broader criminal case against Wackernagel and Schneider before a West German court.

43 Zaak-Folkerts: sfeer in gerechtsgebouw ontspannen, and Incidentje aan slot van het proces tegen Folkerts, in: Utrechts Nieuwsblad, 6 and 8 December 1977 respectively.

the legitimacy of the court and the powers that be and were often willing to set aside legal norms on the demand of their clients or the organization they belonged to.[44] The informal leader of this group of lawyers was Bakker Schut, who had become involved with the RAF in 1974, when he was part of the legal defence team of a Dutch member of the organization, Ronald Augustin, facing trial in West Germany. In late 1974, Bakker Schut had taken care of founding the International Committee in Defence of Political Prisoners, an international solidarity committee of lawyers, medical doctors and concerned intellectuals, in Utrecht. In April 1975, he founded its Dutch chapter, the Medical-Juridical Committee, that tried to mobilize public support for the RAF in the Netherlands during and after the Stammheim trial. From the autumn of 1977 onwards, this Dutch committee and its publication immediately became welcome tools of the defence team to distribute the declarations of Folkerts and his lawyers.[45]

The other four lawyers were more sceptical of RAF ideology. Their main motivation was their colletive concern about both a possible return to fascism in West Germany and the undermining of the rule of law in the Netherlands. Willems, for instance, condemned the RAF's violence, but—very much aware of Germany's Nazi past—simultaneously saw why Germans on the left felt the need for armed resistance.[46] Van Bennekom saw the treatment of his clients as a testcase for the Dutch legal system, but, in contrast to Bakker Schut, tried to keep his clients and their ideology at a distance. For that reason, he objected to the use of certain phrases to describe the prison situation that were directly imported from German solidarity campaigns, such as "isolation torture," "death tract" and "sensory deprivation."[47] More of a left-liberal, Josephine Dubois-Brinkmann, the only female member of the team, was simply shocked by the scale of security measures at a hearing where Folkerts' terms of imprisonment were up for debate.[48]

As far as the Dutch media was concerned, the message of the RAF's legal defence team was met with reservations. Until the shootings in the Netherlands, even many

44 See the PhD dissertation on the theme defended by Bakker Schut at Utrecht University in 1986: Pieter Herman Bakker Schut: Politische Verteidigung in Strafsachen: Eine Fallstudie des von 1972–1977 in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland geführten Strafverfahrens gegen Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Ulrike Meinhof, Holger Meins, Jan Carl Raspe, Kiel 1986, and Hellmut Brunn/Thomas Kirn: Rechtsanwälte, Linksanwälte: 1971–1981—das Rote Jahrzehnt vor Gericht, Frankfurt am Main 2004.

45 Jacco Pekelder: The RAF Solidarity Movement from a European Perspective, in: Klimke/Pekelder/Scharloth (eds.): Between Prague Spring and French May, pp. 251–266: 257–260.

46 Interview with Arnoud Willems, Amsterdam, 22 June and 3 July 2006.

47 Interview with Willem van Bennekom, Amsterdam, 9 January 2007. See Willem van Bennekom: Was bleibt von der RAF? Reflexionen eines niederländischen Rechtsanwalts, in: Nicole Colin et al. (eds.): Der 'Deutsche Herbst' und die RAF in Politik, Medien und Kunst: Nationale und internationale Perspektiven, Bielefeld 2008, pp. 216–228.

48 Interview with Josephine Dubois-Brinkmann, Maastricht, 3 May 2006.

politically centrist newspapers and television programmes had been quite welcoming to narratives that portrayed the RAF as martyrs in a struggle to prevent a return to fascism in West Germany and its imprisoned members as the first victims of a counter-revolutionary campaign by a West German police state against the entirety of the political left.[49] Now, criticism of the RAF received more attention, in part because journalists for the first time really made the effort to understand what the RAF's ideology actually meant. Some, for instance, listened to Folkerts' lengthy speech at his Utrecht trial in full, but were puzzled by his disjointed ramblings on the Federal Republic as a vasal state of the United States and his attacks on West German social democracy. Moreover, they were clearly angered by his failure to properly explain why this struggle against Bonn and Washington had taken the life of a policeman in Utrecht.[50] Others also charged at the lawyers, calling them "terrorists in robes" and demanding their expulsion from the bar.[51]

Just like in Germany, prisons in the Netherlands became a second venue for the confrontation between the RAF and the authorities. In part, the West German prisoners' understanding of their detention as an attempt to "annihilate" them—they talked about *Vernichtungshaft* (extermination detention)—was to blame. In part, it was certainly also a result of the actually very severe conditions in which many, if not all, members of the RAF were detained. Although it remains somewhat controversial in the historiography, it is clear that West German authorities, citing security risks, chose to keep them in "strict solitary confinement," allowing them, at best, to only meet other imprisoned RAF members, their lawyers and their closest family members. Moreover, some of the detainees were held in isolated cells (on isolated wards) for lengthier periods of up to six months and more, which added to their visual and acoustic isolation.[52] The situation in the Dutch penitentiaries of Maastricht and Scheveningen was very similar and fostered similar reactions by the prisoners. Prison personnel—having read about the disorder in the cells at Stammheim and how this had enabled the RAF leadership to hide weapons there—chose to organize regular searches and controls,

49 See Janneke Martens, 'Polizei und Justiz drehen völlig durch': Die Rote Armee Fraktion in den niederländischen Medien," in: Colin et al. (eds.): Der 'Deutsche Herbst,' pp. 91–105.

50 Advocaat Willems: 'Folkerts voor mishandeling veroordelen,' in: Utrechts Nieuwsblad, 7 December 1977.

51 The weekly Accent was probably the first to use the term in a portrait of Bakker Schut by Hans Knoop, a journalist who had won fame as a Nazi hunter: Weekbladen, in: de Volkskrant, 6 October 1977.

52 Martin Jander: Isolation: Zu den Haftbedingungen der RAF-Gefangenen, in: Wolfgang Kraushaar (ed.): Die RAF und der linke Terrorismus, vol. 2, Hamburg 2006, pp. 973–993, 973 and 980–985; Christoph Riederer: Die RAF und die Folterdebatte der 1970er Jahre, Wiesbaden 2014; and Sabine Bergstermann: Stammheim: Eine moderne Haftanstalt als Ort der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Staat und RAF, Berlin/Boston 2016.

which really got under the prisoners' skin.[53] They and their lawyers protested these severe conditions, and, just like in Germany, the authorities initially did not concede, which then, within months, led to a severe escalation of the situation.

A particularly revelatory stress test for traditional Dutch attitudes towards forms of unwelcome participation was the collective hunger strike that Folkerts, Wackernagel and Schneider started on 1 February 1978. It was carefully modelled on the previous hunger strikes of the RAF in German prisons and, just like these, functioned as the starting point of a solidarity campaign carried by their lawyers, a group of medical doctors who spoke out in their support, and activists of the Dutch radical left. Confronted with this morally charged challenge to the norms and customs of Dutch politics and society, both the authorities and the media proved less welcoming and integrative than had been common practice before, as prison authorities stuck to their very strict rules, with the backing of the Ministry of Justice, despite the real threat of one or more prisoners starving to death. This was reminiscent of how German wardens had reacted—the only difference being that force-feeding was out of the question, since it was generally understood that all individuals have a right to decide about their own lives in the Netherlands, even if they are in the custody of the state. This at least was the consensus within the medical profession, which was respected by the state. In West Germany, the consensus went just the other way and held the state accountable for a prisoner's life, even if they do not seem to care for it.

Immediately after the start of the hunger strike, the lawyers bombarded the authorities with protests and demands to improve prison conditions. This was more or less to be expected, but the lawyers also took the remarkable step of approaching five medical doctors to join them in a working group to coordinate the support for the prisoners. Most of these doctors were (or were studying to become) psychiatrists; one of them was in fact Frank van Ree, a well-known proponent of critical psychiatry and an opponent of isolation as a means of controlling patients. This working group now began to demand that the state allow its "trusted medical doctors" to visit and examine the hunger strikers. At first, the authorities refused, but after almost a month, they were allowed to pay regular visits to the imprisoned RAF members to check on their health. These visits then provided a platform for a carefully staged publicity stunt: On 9 March 1978, the working group had already published a report on the medical condition of the prisoners, which concluded that "from a medical perspective" their isolation "was an unacceptable form of incarceration […] that already within a short amount of time would likely have a negative impact on mental and bodily functions." To counter this, the doctors demanded that the prisoners be integrated into the general prison population, or, if that was impossible, to allow them to have "normal human contact" with each other. The lawyers, for their part, warned the Ministry of

53 Interview and tour with former prison warden Hans Brinkhof, Maastricht, 19 January 2007.

Justice that the burden of responsibility for the lives of their clients was on them.[54] Four days later, a press conference in Amsterdam by the working group led to a surge of media attention. Simultaneously, the Dutch High Court held a hearing about the government's intention to extradite the three RAF members to West Germany. Under pressure, the ministry granted the prisoners greater leeway, and, in response, they started to eat again. In the run-up to this seemingly smooth ending, however, Dutch authorities demonstrated that they had, to some extent, lost their patience with those challenging the political hierarchy in unusual ways. Especially state secretary Elbarta (Bert) Haars, the highest political figure involved, who had positioned herself as "hard on crime," had not refrained, in response to questions from parliamentarians and journalists, from ridiculing the working group and its politically "naïve" doctors, seemingly indifferent to the risks of the hunger strike. In a meeting with them, she had spoken from on high with an attitude that seemed out of touch with the mentality of the political elite since the late 1960s.[55]

In doing so, Haars seemed to forget the rationale behind the toleration of unwelcome participation that had become a custom of Dutch politics a decade earlier: managing societal conflicts by defusing them. Instead, she risked further escalation, both in the short and the long run. In the immediate confrontation in early 1978, her stubbornness only strengthened the doctors' resolve, at a time when there were serious differences of opinion within the quintet. Parallel to the lawyers, they too felt torn between their professional ethics, centred on the health of their patients, and the demand to fully identify with the RAF's political programme. On one side of the argument, van Ree cried out in a working group meeting that, "sorry, that I will not throw hand grenades to help them!," [56] and later explained that he reproached himself for not having the same kind of courage as the RAF and its armed struggle against oppression.[57] On the other side, there were doctors with serious reservations about the politics of their imprisoned patients. In the immediate confrontation with state authorities, and certainly with Haars, they chose however to present a solid front.

A long-term effect of the hunger strike was that it also raised awareness of the plight of the prisoners amongst circles within the Dutch radical left. For one, it had the counter-productive effect of triggering activists on the left to form action committees in various Dutch cities in solidarity with the RAF trio and "political prison-

54 Pekelder: Ich liebe Ulrike, p. 169.

55 Ibid., p. 170.

56 The internal discussions in the working group are well documented in a 'Voortgangsrapportage' (VGR, progress report) made at van Ree's behest, see: International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, RAF in the Netherlands collection, inv. nr. 22 and 23, pages. 168–171. See Frank van Ree: Vrijheidsstrijd, verzet, terrorisme: Verslag van een RAF-vertrouwensarts, Lisse 2000.

57 Interview with Frank van Ree, Bennebroek, 8 January 2017.

ers" more widely. Moreover, it contributed to the radicalization of a small group of activists, who were already preparing to wage armed struggle against the Dutch state. Prodded by Bakker Schut, the Red Resistance Front had already begun to assist with the printing and distributing of propaganda materials. Now, they took to the streets to demonstrate and fight the police, at one time also occupying the offices of the minister president in The Hague. In addition, it seems that members from their ranks also waged a campaign of fire-bombing German targets in the Netherlands such as diplomatic missions and dealerships of car manufacturers.[58]

These acts of violence by the Red Resistance Front were probably triggered by the seeming intransigence of Dutch authorities. They signalled that state secretary Haars and others in power had played a dangerous game with their harsh political stance and their polemics against the prisoners, who seemed so obviously to be the underdogs in the confrontation. The intransigence of these state representatives was a far cry from the flexibility Dutch elites had developed in the 1960s in reaction to new forms of participation that, as initial harsh confrontations with the police indicated, had initially been as unwelcome in the Netherlands as in West Germany. This article has tried to establish why the tactics deployed in either country subsequently bifurcated and ultimately, after a decade, might have rejoined more parallel pathways again.

On a macro level it has become clear, that the Netherlands were primed towards a greater toleration of protest in the 1960s and 1970s than West Germany. The reification of the state was less of a trait of Dutch political culture, with its more gradual and stable itinerary towards a social market democracy. That the police and justice systems were also quicker to adapt to a modern society with more conscious citizens, had much to do with how Dutch elites after the Second World War reimagined the Netherlands. Their vision of the country as an essentially modern nation allowed them to engage in a mindset of self-assured openness towards new societal and political movements. In West Germany, in contrast, elites' aversion to putting the country's post war rules-based democracy at risk hindered a similar welcoming attitude towards new forms of participation.

On the meso level of intra-movement dynamics, West Germany's cautious and at times inimical elites involuntarily contributed to the notion among some on the radical left—with the RAF its most prominent example—that violence, or armed struggle, was a viable solution. As a consequence, left-wing political violence played out a dystopian script in which the authorities unwillingly added to the attraction of violent politics within the RAF's constituency, and thus lengthened its lifespan. In the Netherlands, in contrast, the violent few were never so lucky as to experience a similar helping hand by the state and the media in their efforts to attract the support of large

58 Paul Moussault/Jan Lust: Rood Verzetsfront: Aanzetten tot stadsguerrilla in Nederland, Breda 2009.

segments of their constituency. For the most part, they simply did not receive any attention at all.

That is, until the confrontation with the RAF from late 1977. In the security-dominated atmosphere after the shootings, the authorities and the media in the Netherlands lost some of their good sense. In many—not all—respects, their behaviour was in fact very similar to the way their West German counterparts had met the challenge of left-wing political violence and the sympathy and support it seemed to generate from parts of the population. Especially the harsh and unwelcoming attitude towards the lawyers, medical doctors and activists who sided with the imprisoned members of the RAF contained the risk of a return to the mid-1960s and the initial blunt rejection of the radical left by the Dutch establishment. In the end, things did not escalate in the extreme way they had in West Germany. Still, the basic fact that the Netherlands, under acute pressure, was as unable to avoid the kind of counter-productive policies towards unwelcome forms of political participation is telling, insofar as it shows that the Netherlands and West Germany were not so fundamentally different after all. Neither had found an effective way to defuse the societal dynamics of political violence, especially the triangular relationship between the state (and established society), terrorists and terrorist constituencies. It is a structural feature of Western-style democracies such as these two neighbours in Europe's Northwest, both in the more formative decades of the post war era and in our own day and age.

Jacco Pekelder (b. 1967) is professor of modern and contemporary history of the Netherlands at the University of Münster. In his research, he deals with the societal dynamics of political violence and terrorism, especially in West Germany since the 1970s and Germany's position in Europe since 1815, especially in terms of German relations with the Netherlands and other neighbouring countries.