1 Nationality, Religious and Gender Politics in the Netherlands

Dutch political and social life has been highly stratified throughout the 20th century. In the debate in the Netherlands, both after the First Gulf War and following 11 September, three central themes can be distinguished, namely nationality politics and the question of belonging; religious politics; and gender politics.

The debate on nationality politics reveals a distinction between so-called ‘native’ Dutch nationals and non-native Dutch nationals. A native Dutch person is somebody who is born of two Dutch parents who are Dutch nationals at birth. This group is referred to as ‘autochtonen’. A non-native Dutch national is a person born from a relationship of which at least one of the parents did not have Dutch nationality at birth and/or a person of colour. These Dutch nationals are called ‘allochtonen’. Thus, for example, a person born in the Netherlands from Dutch parents of Moroccan origin will be classed as an ‘allochtoon’ and called ‘Moroccan’, despite the fact that all three of them have acquired Dutch nationality. Although both groups have exactly the same political rights, as they are all Dutch nationals, this distinction has resulted in a social division of society where autochtonen are first-class citizens and allochtonen are classed as second class-citizens.

The debate that has dominated the second theme, religious politics, has its origins in the ‘politics of pacification’.1 This terminology was introduced in 1917 when an agreement was reached between the confessional parties, on the one hand, and the liberal and socialist parties on the other hand. This agreement put an end to a number of differences of opinion. The first concerned the financing of education. The participants to this debate were the confessionals,

who demanded subsidies to found schools where education would be geared to their own religious beliefs, and the liberals who demanded support for public schools, not based on any particular religious denomination. At the same time the battle fought by the socialists for an enlargement of voting rights resulted in a separation of political parties. The third battle focused on the amelioration of the rights of the working class. The agreement reached entailed the granting of subsidies for religious and public education, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the granting of voting rights to all men (not just the upper class) in 1918 along with proportional representation of political parties in Parliament in accordance with the number of votes acquired by each party.

The Dutch debate on gender politics involves the restructuring of natural constituencies or political fault lines along lines of support for or against same sex relationships and calls for the emancipation of women. This way of dividing society was capitalised upon by politicians who broke with the traditional rules of Dutch consensual politics by demanding specific changes in society unrelated to the party to which they belonged or the kind of group they were thought to represent in Dutch society.

2 Dutch Engagement in the First Gulf War
The Gulf War of 1990-1 marked a change in Dutch defence policy. It was the first time since the Korean War in 1950 that the Netherlands had participated in a war. According to several commentators, the outspoken pro-American point of view that was adopted in the Netherlands was different from the view adopted by the other Western European countries. The war against Iraq met with little resistance from the Dutch peace movements. The Dutch policy in the period preceding the First Gulf War is characterized by ad hoc decisions. However, with the ultimatum to Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait by 15 January 1991 drawing closer, it became necessary for the Dutch government to take a position on the approaching war. In this period there could be no doubt that the Netherlands embraced the United States policy. On January 8, 1991, the Dutch government announced that the Dutch fleet would be put under American command and defend the American fleet when the war started. A request on behalf of Turkey to send Patriot air defence was met by the Dutch government.

3 Perceived Threats According to Dutch Intelligence Service
Before the beginning of First Gulf War, the Minister of Interior Affairs, Dales, had already stated that the communist threat, which had disappeared after the


3 Ibid., pp. 90-100.