

‘The Atlantic Priority’ deals with the heated debate in the Netherlands on the European Defence Community (EDC), set against the background of the country’s defence policy in the period 1948-1954. These were the years that government, military and business faced the difficult challenge of rebuilding the national army and armaments industry after the morally and physically catastrophic period of World War II. Moreover, up to 1949 the country was undergoing the traumatic process of de-colonisation in the Dutch East-Indies. In this unstable national and international environment, the government was in search of reliable allies and institutions. When the United States joined NATO in 1949, The Hague developed into a staunch promoter of the Atlantic bond and rejected European initiatives which might conflict with the cherished relationship with Washington. The EDC, launched by France, was seen as such a potentially harmful initiative, because it was thought to delay both German rearmament and the realisation of the Dutch-favoured ‘forward defence’ (as far to the East as possible) on the European continent. The ‘ins’ and ‘outs’ of The Hague’s Atlantic and European policy-making are described and analysed in this book, which is based on thorough research undertaken in the country’s government archives.

Jan van der Harst (born 19-12-1957 in The Hague) graduated in contemporary history at the University of Leiden (1983) and obtained his Ph.D. degree at the European University Institute, Florence (1988) on the topic European Union and Atlantic Partnership: Political, Military and Economic Aspects of Dutch Defence, 1948-1954; and the Impact of the European Defence Community. He has published extensively on themes relating to European integration and cooperation and Dutch foreign policy. He was assistant lecturer in European Studies at the University of Cork (1987) and is now senior lecturer in international relations and international organisations at the University of Groningen. Since 1996 he occupies the Jean Monnet Chair in the History and Theory of European Integration at the University of Groningen.



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Dutch Defence Policy at the Time of the European Defence Community



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