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THE PEACE MOVEMENT AND PUBLIC OPINION: PROSPECTS FOR THE NINETIES

by

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1 Introduction

On the eve of the wave of mass protest in Europe against nuclear weapons, which concentrated first on the so-called neutron warheads and later on on the introduction of new generations of nuclear missiles, and which gave rise to what became known as "the new peace movement", I published an article, which concluded that nuclear weapons no longer were a public issue, that protest against them had disappeared and that it was unlikely to emerge again in the foreseeable future ¹. I pointed to several reasons for this state of affairs: the abstract character of the nuclear threat, the fact that people had got used to the risks, the (false) feeling of security provided by such agreements as the Limited Test Ban of 1963, the limited successes of the protest movements at earlier stages, and the presence of other issues (such as the Vietnam war in the middle sixties and Third World issues in general) which appeared either more urgent or more promising and hence were more successful in drawing attention in the competition for scarce resources like time and energy. My analysis, I noted, was shared by a number of colleagues, and for those of us concerned about these issues, it appeared that little could be done about this state of affairs.

Happily for my activist side, but unhappily for my scientist side this prediction turned out to be absolutely wrong as from 1977 onwards a massive movement of protest against nuclear weapons unfolded, which though originating in Northwestern Europe gradually spread to the US as well as to other parts of Europe, and which acquired dimensions which far surpassed those of the previous wave of massive protest, the 'ban-the-bomb movement' of the late fifties and early sixties.

This development was, as far as I know, not foreseen or predicted by anyone. Since then, many efforts have been made to explain it, some popular and rather superficial, others more serious, but none of these were very satisfactory, as I shall argue below. Most of them have some prima facie plausibility but are not convincing on closer inspection.

To all outward appearances the new peace movement has now declined about as quickly as it appeared, and the question is now: will it reemerge, and if so how and why?

The history of the peace movement so far in this century shows a cyclical pattern with periods of rise and fall following upon one other. Earlier

¹ Ph.P.Everts, Het protest tegen de bom is verdampt, Vredesopbouw 13 (1976), 9, 7-10

waves occurred before World War I, in the Interbellum, and in the late Fifties.

The peace movement can be compared with whales, which now and then suddenly emerge from the ocean, which seem to move through the air, and splash back into the water after a while. In this connection there are two interpretations of what is happening. One, dear to those on the right, is that the peace movement no longer exists, once it has disappeared out of sight, the other, popular among supporters of the movement, is that whales can fly. Both are mistaken ².

If we want to answer the question mentioned above, we can on the basis of the past safely predict that at some time a new cycle is bound to occur, but we would like to be more precise about the when and how. For that we need to know more about the factors which cause the pattern referred to. Without such an understanding a good prediction remains a mere chance result.

In this paper I shall therefore take another look at the most recent phase in the history of the peace movement. In this connection two kinds of questions need to be addressed. If we want to explain the periodic rise of mass protest against war and war preparation we have to look first of all to, so to say, the inputside of the process, the factors and developments which could explain the sudden emergence of this mass movement. But it is also relevant and necessary to look at the outputside, the impact of the movement. The impact of the peace movement on the political process can be both direct, in terms of influence on decisionmaking, and indirect, in terms of influence on public opinion at large. Both need to be examined. It is relevant as well as necessary to look at the outputside because one may assume that there is a causal connection between success or failure on the one hand and the cyclical pattern on the other. The connection is probably not a very straightforward one. Failure, on the one hand, is in many cases a main factor in explaining the periodic decline of the movement.

But successes may have opposite effects, in the sense that they may wetten the appetite to score again but may also be conducive to the view that the problem has been solved or become less urgent which would mean that further action is not necessary.

The apparent failure of the peace movement before 1940 (coupled with the accusation of 'appeasement') for instance, was probably one of the major reasons why it took so long for the movement to reemerge as a relevant

² I owe this metaphor and observation to Gwyn Prins

political factor after 1945. The success of the pressure which contributed to the adoption of the Testban Treaty of 1963 (in addition to the Vietnam war which drew away the attention of many potential activists) probably contributed to a (false) sense of security which helps to explain the demise of the ban-the-bomb-movement in the early sixties. The perceived success of the campaign against the neutron bomb at the end of the seventies, on the other hand clearly helped to create the expectation that protest might be effective when the debate over the modernisation of the intermediate range nuclear weapons started. For both contending parties this was a new round, which by the way explains the desire on the part of the NATO governments to show visibly that NATO was able to take a unanimous decision and the stubbornness with which this decision was upheld against the pressure of mass protest in later years.

Before we return to the most recent history of the peace movement a few things should be said about the peace movement as a movement.

2 The peace movement

It is rather trivial, but we need to be reminded now and then that it is difficult to speak of the peace movement. It is an amalgam of a wide variety of groups and organisations with different ideological orientations and value motivations, with different types of activities, and it is composed of different kinds of people. Also, the goals of the various components overlap only partly. Some groups aim to eliminate all war, others only a particular war (like the war in Vietnam). Some reject all weapons, others only specific forms of armament, like nuclear weapons³. The movement is as varied, one might say, as the ideas about reaching peace. It is, moreover, not sufficient and useful to define the peace movement as those groups which want 'to promote peace', since this does hardly discriminate between the peace movement and others. One may ask whether it is at all possible to define the peace movement without taking an (implicit) ideological stand, since only this would allow us, for instance, to decide whether the conservative groups which have come into being in recent years to combat the influence of the anti-nuclear groups ("peace through strength") are part of the peace movement or not (although they consider themselves to be a part). The groups not only differ in terms of goals, but also in terms of motivating ideology. In the history of the movement in Western countries at least

³ See B. Overy, How effective are peace movements?, Montreal: Harvest House, 1982

four major streams or traditions can be distinguished in this connection: the liberal, the socialist/communist, the anarchist and the humanitarian/christian. Their relative strength and importance has strongly varied over time. The liberal tradition, to give one example, was rather strong at the turn of the century but lost most of its appeal especially since 1945. On the other hand the churchrelated organisations have become much more prominent than in the past, and even largely dominated the most recent wave of protest against war preparation, due to changes opinions in the churches themselves.

In terms of organisation we also find major differences. Some peace organisations strive to be mass organisations, mobilizing e.g. women, youth or Christians, others are small groups aiming at specific goals or professional groups (e.g. lawyers against nuclear weapons), and still others promote their concerns as part of a much larger, non-political organisation, such as the churches or the trade unions and consider this 'mother organisation' their prime target for mobilization.

In this paper we shall reserve the term peace movement for the larger whole (which is real, despite our definitional difficulties) and speak about peace organisations to refer to individual or specific groups.

I already referred to the cyclical character of the history of the peace movement, which is noted by many observers⁴. I have argued above the necessity of looking at both the input- and the output side in the search for explanations of this cyclical pattern. Alternatively, one may distinguish between the factors which can account for the rise and for the decline of the movement. In both cases, most attention is usually given to the first. A variety of factors and approaches have been suggested in this connection, with which we shall not deal here extensively.⁵

The various theories which may be relevant here suggest that we should at least look at four levels at which the emergence and development of social movements (including the peace movement) can be explained⁶:

⁴ It is not always clear, however, how the intensity (amplitude) and frequency are measured. Historical data on membership and support are often difficult to get hold of or impressionistic. In an earlier study we measured fluctuations in the Netherlands by taking the number of national organisations active in each ten year period. (Ph.P.Everts and G.Walraven, Vredesbeweging, Utrecht, 1984, p.73)

⁵ See e.g. N.Young, Why peace movements fail, Social Alternatives, 4 (1984), 1, 9-16. For a more journalistic but informative account see e.g. Ruth Brandon, The burning question. The anti-nuclear movement since 1945, London: Heinemann, 1987.

⁶ Johan J. de Deken, A Socio-political profile of the Current Peace Movement in Flanders, Vredesonderzoek, nr.1, 1988, published by Interfacultair Overlegorgaan voor (Vervolg voetnoot)

1. The structural conditions in society which explain the emergence of social movements;
2. The level of the structural tensions and conflicts which accompany this emergence;
3. The size and growth of 'generalized beliefs' concerning necessary changes in reaction to perceived problems;
4. The level of mobilization of participants in the movement.

I will not deal with these here. At this point I merely want to call attention to an aspect which has received little attention: the fact that the wave pattern referred to consists of two rather different components, which we can refer to as prophetic minorities and coalition movements.⁷ The undercurrent of the movement is formed by the first category, which consists of groups with generally radical goals. Their character is sectlike and 'totalitarian'. To work for peace requires a total commitment, a complete reconstruction of society is necessary. To become a member is a deed of conversion, to break with it is seen as betrayal. Purity in doctrine and loyalty to one's conscience is more important than temporary successes. Because of the demands they put on their members, the prophetic minorities tend to remain rather small. Sectarianism and fanaticism are the main threats to this type of movement. They generally do not profit from the periods in which the peace movement as a whole thrives. On the other hand, they represent the historic continuity in the movement between the peaks which occur at irregular intervals. The troughs and peaks are caused, however, by the presence or absence of what I refer to as coalition movements. The peaks usually occur when organisations and forms of organisation develop whose general concerns crystallize around specific issues and which focus on specific societal or political goals. The coalition type organisations do not aim at the total transformation of society, but at more concrete goals: to stop one particular war, or the abolition or introduction of a particular weapon or weapon system. Participation in the movement is not a fulltime job. People move in and out of the movement quite easily and on a large scale. Coalition movements generally aim at changing specific government policies. This requires the formation of large and broad coalitions, and under these circumstances one can not pick and choose one's allies at will. Although most of the groups in such coalitions will usually have other and more encompassing goals, these are pushed into

(Vervolg voetnoot)

vredesonderzoek van de Vrije Universiteit Brussel, contains a summary of the various theories and a preliminary empirical test.

⁷ See Everts and Walraven, Vredesbeweging, pp. 15-17 for more details

the background for the time being. While prophetic minorities are threatened by factionalism and selfmarginalization, the coalition movements run the danger of becoming coopted into the existing power structure or of falling apart again after the issue which gave rise to the coalition is decided or otherwise loses its political relevance.

During these peak periods we see a general heightening of the saliency of particular issues, which makes people willing to act upon their convictions (which otherwise remain only latently present). As a consequence not only new peace groups in large variety come into being, but also otherwise 'non-political' organisations, such as the trade unions, womens organizations and churches, feel pressed (by their members of otherwise) to do something which they would not normally do, i.e. to speak out on the issue concerned. By speaking out in this way and providing legitimacy (and other forms of support) to the peace groups in their midst, they enable the peace movement in general to mobilize people beyond its traditional recruiting ground: the more or less radical left, and make it into a true mass movement.

The most recent wave in the history of the peace movement offers a good example of the (potential) effectiveness of such a coalition type movement. In the Netherlands the major churchrelated peace organisations (IKV and Pax Christi) which had concentrated on an educational strategy (consensus mobilization) up to the late seventies met with considerable success when they embarked on the 'long march through the institutions' since 1977 in connection with their campaign for removal of all nuclear weapons from the Netherlands (action mobilization). This provided the basis for the coalition, which emerged around the issue of the cruise missiles and included not only the parties on the left and the churches, but also the social democratic party and elements of the established forces in the political centre of society. While ultimately unsuccessful (a decision of the government to deploy the cruise missiles was finally accepted by parliament), it forced a delay of six years in the decision to deploy the missiles in the Netherlands. (I shall return below to the question of whether the peace movement can claim the INF treaty as its victory).

For the question of what determines the peaks and troughs in the history of the peace movement, it is not very relevant to look at the prophetic minorities. They are not only essential to embody the historic continuity but also provide the necessary stimuli to the less radical groups. Their 'size', however, does not vary very much over time, nor does their

political impact, which is fairly limited anyway⁸. It is therefore more important to explore the question of what conditions influence the rise and fall of the coalitiontype movements on the one hand and their political effectiveness on the other. A first approximative answer to the question of the political effectiveness of the peace movement can be gathered from its success in raising and maintaining support among both levels of public opinion. To the extent that it is aimed to bring about changes in government policy, this is, however only an intermediate goal.

3 The peace movement and public opinion

Peace organisations and coalitions aiming at influence on government policies usually also try to mobilize the support of public opinion. For even if they, as is sometimes the case, enjoy some direct access to the decisionmaking process in a more narrow sense support by public opinion is essential, since intellectual arguments by themselves are seldom sufficient to sway government policy. When we speak about public opinion, it is useful to distinguish between nonorganised/nonstructured and structured/organised opinion. The first refers to public opinion as measured in the usual way by public opinion polls at the mass level. The other refers to opinions and views expressed in the form of statements or other activities of institutions and organisations in society and promoted on their behalf. The two forms or manifestations of public opinion need not necessarily point into the same direction or be equally strong.

a **nonorganized public opinion**

Has the peace movement been successful in changing public opinion at the mass level in recent years? Of course, one may always question whether such manifestations of public opinion as mass demonstrations and petition drives are an isolated phenomenon, to be discounted against the views of the 'silent majority', or represent the famous 'tip of the iceberg', but surely the massive character of public protest against (new) nuclear weapons in recent years suggests that major changes in public opinion had

⁸ To the extent that this implies a criticism of the prophetic minorities this should not unduly worry them, since their interest is far less focused on political effectiveness than is the case for the coalition movements, for which it is essential. For the prophetic minorities the problem of war is much more one of taking a personal stand and to answer to one's conscience.

taken place. The available evidence, however, suggests otherwise⁹. While the evidence presented here is mainly drawn from the Netherlands, there is reason to believe that these findings can be generalized to other European countries to some degree.¹⁰

Overlooking all the variations and deviations which should really force us to be much more careful, we can conclude that the available data suggest a strong degree of continuity. A striking stability on many issues rather than change is the main impression one gets by looking at those opinion questions for which time series data are available. This is true for such more general questions as the necessity to possess armed forces, to maintain a military equilibrium and the membership of NATO, as a more specific question like the deployment of cruise missiles. The distribution of basic attitudes on questions of defence does not appear to be much affected by contemporary events and developments, and to the extent that they are, the impact of these events and developments is usually only a temporary affair. To give one example of continuity: Already in 1975, before the peace movement in the Netherlands started its campaign against nuclear weapons and long before the 'new peace movement' appeared on the international scene, a large majority of public opinion favored denuclearisation of the Netherlands, and this did not change in later years. Likewise, the distribution of public attitudes on the cruise missiles, an issue which deeply divided the country between 1979 and 1986, merely fluctuated a little in those years (with some 40 % unconditional opponents, another 40 % wavering and 15 % supporting deployment unconditionally) but showed no noticeable trendlike shift¹¹. This is not strange considering the strong connection between these basic attitudes and personality traits, which also change very slowly if at all¹².

⁹ The material is analyzed in much more detail in various publications including Ph.P.Everts, Public opinion, the churches and foreign policy. Studies of domestic factors in Dutch foreign policy, Leiden: Institute for International Studies, 1983, and idem, Continuity and change in public attitudes on questions of security: The role of the peace movement, paper presented at the conference on Public attitudes to arms control and security in Western Europe and North America, Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, May 23-24, 1988

¹⁰ See G.Flynn and H.Rattinger (eds.), The Public and Atlantic Defense, London: Croom Helm/Totowa, N.J.:Rowman and Allanheldt, 1985 for evidence concerning six Western European countries and the United States, and for some general conclusions.

¹¹ Nevertheless, the number of people expecting that deployment would eventually take place rose steadily in the same period, from some 40 tot over 80 %.

¹² H.-J.Rebel and L.Wecke (eds.), Friends, Foes, Values, and Fears, Nijmegen: Studiecentrum Vredesvraagstukken/ Amsterdam: Jan Mets, 1987.

This does not mean that public attitudes are also homogeneous and without apparent internal inconsistencies. In fact, for many, especially those with centrist political views, this is not the case. Massive support for membership of NATO and such well-established notions that a country without an army is inconceivable, and that military expenditure are a necessary evil to maintain a military equilibrium with potential aggressors is found together in the Netherlands with abhorrence and rejection of nuclear weapons and a preference for arms control over confrontational politics. Many people, to put it very simply, are traditionally torn apart between fear of nuclear weapons and fear of communism. This results in conflicting poll data which can only be reconciled if one takes into account how especially the 'doubters' can be influenced by the different stimuli in question wordings. To what extent the policies and proposals of Mr Gorbachov and the recent changes in the Soviet Union and the smaller Eastern European countries have had or will have a lasting impact on the landscape of political attitudes has to be awaited. For the time being the evidence in this respect is not unambiguous. I will return to this question below.

By and large, there is a rather constant distribution of attitudes, which in the Netherlands amounts to the situation that some 35-40 % are convinced opponents of present military policies (nuclear pacifists), some 25 % on the other hand are staunch supporters of the conventional wisdom of established NATO policies of nuclear deterrence, and there is a group in between which either does not care or is wavering between the two positions. It is this group in the middle which is or should be the prime target in strategies aimed at winning 'the hearts and minds' of the people. To concentrate on the other two is either a waste of energy or relatively superfluous. The distribution of public attitudes as summarized above has, apparently, not been affected by the activities of the peace movement in recent years.

Support for the claims of the movement has been maintained but not increased. Given the tendency for public opinion to side with the government post facto, once a controversial decision has been made, the fact that this has not happened to a large degree in the cruise missile case may testify to the strength of the peace movement.

b organised public opinion

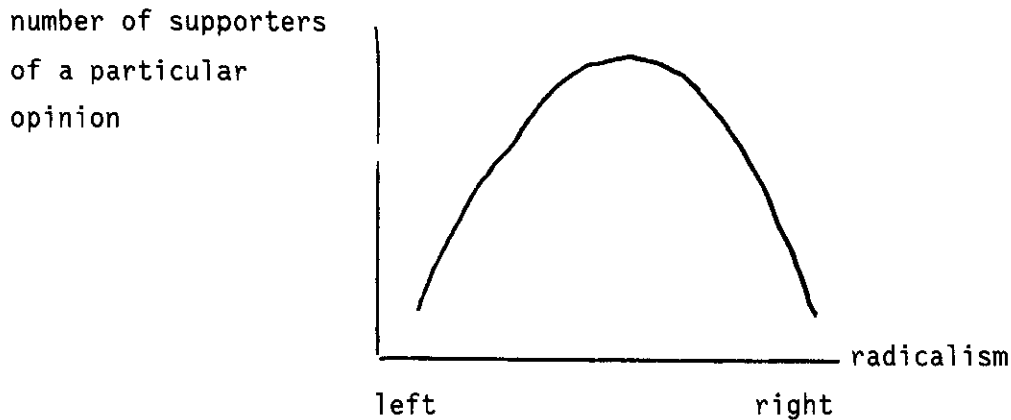
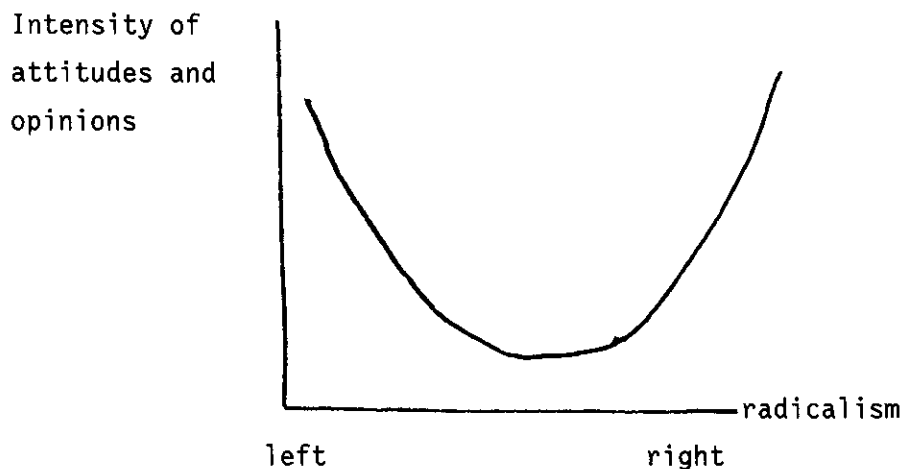
This, however, is not all there is to say. When the peace movement succeeds in raising support beyond its traditional recruiting ground it is usually not through the growth of existing groups, but through the coming into being of new organizations and ad hoc coalitions, usually around a specific theme which appeals to large numbers of people, approached in different and specific ways. For a strategy aimed at coalition building it is necessary

to aim at the centre of society, at the established institutions. This may be very unattractive for the more radical segments of the movement which shudder at the prospect of having to weaken their demands, but in terms of raising public support this is essential. In fact, the impact of the peace movement on what above I have called organised opinion, has been at least as far as the Netherlands is concerned considerable and remarkable to the extent that it includes segments of the political centre and what are usually referred to as established groups (such as the churches or the trade unions). This comes to light especially if one compares the more recent period with that of the ban-the-bomb period of the late fifties and early sixties. In the latter case, protest, despite the high visibility of demonstrations and the first acts of what came to be called 'direct action' remained a rather marginal affair, since none of the larger social institutions: the churches, the trade unions and the political parties was prepared to take the side of the peace movement and become involved in the protest. In the early 1980's the situation was very different, although admittedly some of the support provided to the peace movement's claims turned out to be rather lukewarm and shortlived. Yet, important gains were made to get a foothold in the centre of society, where power resides. The peace movement gained support among organisations which were able to act as a mouthpiece and megaphone for opinions which also found considerable support among sizable segments (though not necessarily a majority of the public). What happened at this level of public opinion produced the (exaggerated) image that major changes were taking place, which none of the governments concerned could neglect (although the actual situation varied from country to country).

c Saliency

A second remark is also in order here. Important for the impact of public opinion is not so much the content and distribution of public attitudes, as the intensity with which they are held, or the saliency of the issue. Opinions only matter politically if people are prepared to act upon their convictions. Despite the methodological problems involved in getting at a reliable indicator of saliency, the evidence suggests, again drawing upon data for the Netherlands, that involvement with the problems of defense and nuclear weapons fluctuates strongly over time. Periods of high saliency tend to coincide with peace movement activities¹³. Saliency was probably

¹³ See note 9 for the sources on which this conclusion is based.

Figure 1) Size of (potential) support and radicalism of opinionFigure 2) Radicalism and intensity of attitudes

Consequently the degree of support expressed by organised public opinion (in the form of statements and activities of established institutions) while vital in presenting the image of a mass base of the protest, was in reality rather shallow. Nevertheless it represents a resource which can easily be reopened again in future cases.

A strategy aimed at the centre which stresses the moderation of its demands or forces people to take sides might be attractive. The peace movement could thus increase its share of the 'market'. But since people in the centre of the political spectrum are also sensitive of other stimuli, which reduces their willingness to take action, this strategy has serious limitations. What can be gained in terms of number of supporters is easily lost again or is not very effective. In addition, the more radical part of the movement will probably only support such a strategy halfheartedly. An illustration of the phenomenon mentioned here can be gained from the parliamentary elections in the Netherlands of 1986. A good number of supporters of the centrist and right-of-centre parties CDA (christian democrats) and

VVD (liberal-conservative) opposed deployment of the missiles, but the intensity of their opinions was far less than that of the more radical voters at the political periphery. One poll at the eve of the 1986 parliamentary elections in the Netherlands showed that the cruise missiles issue was mentioned by 40% as 'the decisive issue' determining their voting behaviour (after 'unemployment' (62%) and 'social security payments' (47%)). For the prospective CDA- and VVD-voters this was only 24 and 23 % respectively, whereas it was 59% for PvdA-voters (labour) and 85% for those voting for the small parties on the far left.¹⁵ This explains why the elections were not a quasi-referendum on the nuclear weapons issue. Convinced opponents would vote for the left anyway and to voters in the centre the issue was not sufficiently salient to make them change their vote.

Simple polls exploring the sympathy for the claims of the peace movement are therefore misleading if they not include a serious effort to also tap the saliency of the issue.

4 Limitations of the centre-oriented strategy; The political opportunity structure;

At the same time a strategy which aims at raising the saliency of attitudes (because changing attitudes is far less likely), at mobilising a broad coalition and at forcing people to take sides, and which consequently has to simplify issues, also has other obvious limitations. These include an unavoidable degree of polarization. To be 'for' or 'against' the missiles became a litmus test of peacelovingness. This did not appeal to those doubters, especially among the Christian-democrats, which felt that they were put in the dock by their fellow-christians and resented this loyalty test. One part of the strategy (persuading the doubters) clashed with the other (pressing people to take sides). Schennink has referred in this connection to the difference between the 'culture of struggle' which is characteristic for the left and the 'culture of persuasion' which characterizes the climate in the churches. The change of strategy of the peace movement antagonized a part of the potential supporters, mainly within the churches¹⁶.

Also, the limits of a strategy which concentrates on one particular weapon system have become quite visible. It is true that in the context of the discussions on the cruise missiles other, more general, questions also

¹⁵ Source: NIPO for Atlantische Commissie, May 1986.

¹⁶ B.Schennink, From peace week to peace work, unpublished paper, Nijmegen: Studiecentrum Vredesvraagstukken, 1987

automatically entered into the debate. More important, however, is that once such concrete issues lose their political relevance (either because they are settled or for other reasons) the coalitions which crystallized around them are bound to fall apart again, with the concomitant confusion and weakening of the movement.

Decisive in determining the outcome of the struggle led by the peace movement to prevent deployment of the cruise missiles seems finally to have been the political opportunity structure. In the period concerned, the government, composed of the christian-democrats (CDA) and conservative-liberals (VVD), only enjoyed a small parliamentary majority. The parties of the left were in opposition. This gave a disproportionate share of influence to the left wing of the CDA, which selected a number of strongly symbolic, mainly foreign policy issues (South Africa, nuclear weapons) to show their leftist credentials. They provided a foothold for the church-related peace organisations (IKV and Pax Christi) which at the same time acted as the linchpin in the coalition opposing the missiles. The fact that their actions were supported and legitimized by the churches made it possible for these organisations to appeal to the CDA. Within the coalition they were sufficiently trusted by both the more radical groups and the organisations with a more established perspective to keep the coalition together. The fact that the social-democrats were out of power allowed them to espouse the opposition to the cruise missiles apparently wholeheartedly. As it became clear to many, especially among the leadership that this position blocked their access to any future coalition government with either CDA or VVD, they began to shift back to a more 'moderate' position, in order to overcome the political polarisation and their relative isolation. This reduced the opportunities of the peace movement to be a politically relevant factor considerably.

To conclude this section, there is some evidence that the peace movement has little influence on individual attitudes, but it can affect public opinion in its organized form and influence the (perceived) saliency of opinions. This in turn can have some influence on the policymaking process, once specific conditions (mainly in the political opportunity structure) are fulfilled. Compared to other countries, especially those where the cruise missiles would also be stationed it is evident that the opposition to this stationing, in which the peace movement played the central role, was relatively more successful in the Netherlands. Since public opinion data for the Netherlands are not very different from those for other countries in this respect there is more reason to look for an explanation in

the relative 'openness' of Dutch society which makes it relatively easy to put issues on the political agenda and keep them there, and to provide inputs in the foreign policy process. Although the traditional elitism of most foreign policymaking has remained, the elite now includes representatives of the 'countercultural opposition', which means that a broader range of 'acceptable' views is taken into account in policymaking, and which provides for some access to the decisionmaking centres. The need to broaden the basis of consensus is generally recognized. Hence, the influence of the peace movement (supported by large segments of mass opinion) on the foreign policy making process may perhaps be more important and lasting than its impact on particular decisions.

4 The future of the peace movement

I will now return to the question mentioned at the beginning of this paper, i.e. the prospects of the peace movement. Its history suggests a continuation of a cyclical pattern of periods of rise and fall. Since the development of the peace movement can, at least partly be related to specific international developments, both positive and negative, such as the outbreak of the two world wars, the foundation of the League of Nations, and the emergence of a personality such as Mr. Gorbachov, the history of the pattern of rise and fall is largely independent of the rise and fall of other social movements, and hence any theory which aims at a more general explanation (such as the emergence of post-materialist values) should be treated with suspicion. A separate theory is called for. What distinguishes the peace movement from other movements, such as the women's and environment movement, is that the opportunities to be active in the movement in a politically effective way seem to be much more limited. Apart from a few opportunities to be an independent actor on the transnational level, the peace movement can only get 'access' to the stage where war and peace are enacted and to international politics in general through the foreign policies of particular state-actors. This implies that its activities should be directed, at least in the end, at influencing government policies to be politically relevant. All the rest is symbolic action and at best only indirectly relevant. In view of the still elitist nature of most foreign policymaking, it is much more difficult to exercise influence in this area compared to other issue areas and local politics. ¹⁷

¹⁷ Ph.P. Everts (ed.), Controversies at Home. Domestic factors in the foreign policy of the Netherlands, Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985.

Many activities of the peace movement are therefore of an expressive rather than an instrumental nature. For many of its adherents this is apparently not problematic. Many people took part in the demonstrations of 1981 and 1983 and signed the 'peoples's petition' in 1985 not because they expected a direct result (the contrary was often the case), but because they wanted to have done everything that was in their power to do to express their feelings.

For others such a form of expressive behaviour is not sufficient. The peace movement to them is not offering enough in terms of potential political profit. Hence the peace movement easily loses the competition with other movements ~~but~~ which are focused on more immediate and concrete matters in the struggle for attention. These movements in principle in many ways appeal to the same group of potential supporters. The ups and downs of the peace movement will therefore tend to correlate inversely with those of other movements rather than coincide in time. This phenomenon leads to efforts to connect the aims of the peace movement analytically and strategically with those of other movements, not for ideological, but for more practical reasons: to extend potential and real support.

Nuclear weapons for most people constitute an abstract (if real) danger and international conflicts for most of us are far away from our beds. The influence which one can exercise on these question is usually far less than that what may be expected from investments in other areas closer to home. Under 'normal' circumstances the peace movement therefore attracts only the support of those for which peace issues are highly salient, and seen as vitally important. To remain motivated to be active requires both a great deal of endurance and the willingness to be content with largely expressive and symbolic behaviour. A mobilisation of people at the level of the 1977-1983 period is therefore to be considered an exceptional event, both in size and duration. Such a mobilisation should therefore neither be the permanent goal of the peace movement nor the norm by which its effectiveness should be judged.

Most of the work of the peace movement consists of developing and offering new ideas, educating the public of new facts and opportunities, of lobbying with politicians, in short : of creating a 'peace climate'.¹⁸ This type of work, also called 'consensus mobilization' takes a long breath and proceeds slowly. On the one hand it is a precondition of 'action mobilization', but it may also suffer from the simplification and polarization

¹⁸ See in the respect on the history of one organisation, the Interchurch Peace Council: Ph.P.Everts and G.Walraven (eds), In actie voor een vredesklimaat. Twintig jaar IKV, Amersfoort: De Horstink, 1987.

which are an unavoidable part of action mobilization. Thus, the two strategies and forms of action are not only complementary but also to some extent mutually exclusive. It is, however, too shortsighted to assume that the peace movement does not exist in periods when consensus mobilization prevails. To argue that the peace movement does not exist when mass demonstrations are not on the order of the day is just as simplistic as taking the number of strikes as an indication of the strength of the trade union movement.

Nevertheless, to all outward appearances the visible strength of the peace movement has declined considerably since the early eighties. But even in these terms it is not a foregone conclusion that the present 'trough' should be as deep as was previously the case. On the one hand, we have seen that the large coalitions which account for the peaks in the movement's history are almost necessarily a temporary affair, being tied to specific issues. On the other hand, because of the breakthrough to other institutions (at least in the Netherlands, but the changes within e.g. the churches are a phenomenon with a wider international impact), it is in a much better shape to mobilize people again on a large scale, if the occasion arises again in the coming years. The public debates of the seventies and eighties have been conducive to nothing less than a 'crisis of faith' concerning nuclear weapons, not only at the mass but also the elite level. The critical public attitudes (such as concern about the arms race, opposition to nuclear weapons, insistence on arms control) are still there, be it in latent form and with a reduced saliency. For these attitudes to become manifest it is important to take the evolution of events at the elite level into account. For the issue area in question even more than for other areas it is probably true that masses only begin to act if the elites are not capable of solving the issues among themselves. Given what we know about the dynamics of the arms race, if things do not change fundamentally these occasions are bound to recur (although we cannot be certain of the exact time and place).

Continued divisions at the elite level and further erosion of consensus are bound to occur if the prospect of disarmament would, for the first time become a realistic possibility and governments really have to put their cards on the table and can no longer find a pretext for avoiding a show-down.

Together with the, be it often lukewarm and conditional, support which has been gained among sectors of organised opinion in the recent past, this provides for a good starting condition for a renewal of mass support for the claims of the peace movement.

An additional condition for large scale mobilization is the existence of a possibility to direct available, be it latent and not concrete, concerns at

an issue which is both concrete and abstract symbol of the larger issue. The cruise missiles were a perfect example of such a goal. Whether it would be wise for the peace movement to focus again on such an issue is debatable, however, in view of the negative impact which a polarizing one-issue campaign may have on its other, educational, consciousnessraising activities and its efforts to remain on speaking terms with policymaking groups. Whether the price for a high visibility campaign is too high in this respect is, however, not a scientific but a political question.

It is thus not unlikely at all¹, that in the coming years we may see a repetition of what happened in the early eighties.

There are, however, two factors which make the situation more complicated. One is that governments of the NATO countries, especially those in which the nuclear missiles now to be destroyed under the INF treaty were to be deployed, have had to spend a great deal of political capital in the struggle over this deployment, and there are indications that they would rather avoid a recurrence of such a struggle in the future. They would like to prevent a reemergence of the struggle by anticipating such a course of events. This is particularly evident in the Federal Republic of Germany, where nuclear allergy for a variety of reasons is strongest and is certainly not restricted to the left, now in opposition. Moreover, the issue of nuclear weapons, more particularly the question of eventual 'modernization' of nuclear weapons below the range of 500 km, is seen by many observers as an electoral liability for the ruling parties¹⁹. It is therefore highly likely that the government will try to preempt the reemergence of mass protest by some form of anticipation. There is strong evidence that there is strong concern about the evolution of public opinion among the leadership of NATO.²⁰ If successful such anticipation should indeed reduce the chance of a reemergence of mass protest.

¹⁹ In this respect the situation is rather different from that in Great Britain, where poll results strongly suggest that Labour's anti-nuclear stand was a liability in the 1983 and the 1987 general elections (In a June 1987 poll (Gallup) 54% of Britons stated that the Conservatives had the best defence policy. 21% mentioned Labour and 15% Lib/SPD. In May 1987, Gallup asked respondents who did not intend to vote Labour what was their main reason for this 21% mentioned Labour's defense policy as being too dangerous). The situation also differs from that in the Netherlands, where despite the virulent role of the nuclear issue in recent election campaigns actual voting behaviour does hardly seem to have been effected (see the sources cited in note 9)

²⁰ See e.g. the series of reports prepared by the Civilian Affairs Committee of the North Atlantic (parliamentary) Assembly, on NATO and the state of public opinion, most recently General Report on NATO and public opinion (J.J.Genton (France), Rapporteur), Brussels, NATO Assembly International Secretariat, November 1988. This report shows a strong concern (Vervolg voetnoot)

The other reason why this may be the case is the 'Gorbachov factor'. Indeed, the sympathy for Mr.Gorbachov and the positive image he has created not only of the possibilities of changes in the Soviet Union, but also and more particularly of chances in the field of arms control and disarmament are remarkable, and may represent more than a temporary phenomenon. A recent poll held in a number of European countries testifies to the strength of this phenomenon. ²¹

Table 1 Have real and positive changes taken place in the Soviet Union ?

	Netherl.	France	FRG	Gr.Britain	Italy	Belgium
- yes	72	34	77	83	87	57
- no	7	29	21	7	5	13
- dont know/no answer	22	37	2	10	8	30

Very large majorities are not only impressed by the personality of Mr.Gorbachov but are also convinced that real and positive changes have already taken place in the Soviet Union. This contributes undoubtedly to a reduced perception of threat from the Soviet Union and a reduced legitimacy of defense preparations, which would strengthen the appeal of the peace movement.

The Soviet Union is also seen by considerable numbers of people as the country which makes the largest contribution to ending the arms race (Table 2).

Table 2. Which country makes the most effort to end the arms race?

	Netherl.	France	FRG	Gr.Britain	Italy	Belgium
US does most	9	17	13	13	8	13
SU does most	47	17	28	38	31	28
both equally much	35	53	58	34	53	30
dont know/no answer	9	13	1	15	8	29

It would be misleading to conclude from these data that the peace movement will be the first to profit from this change in climate. The climate has changed and probably continue to do so, but a feeling of reduced threat and

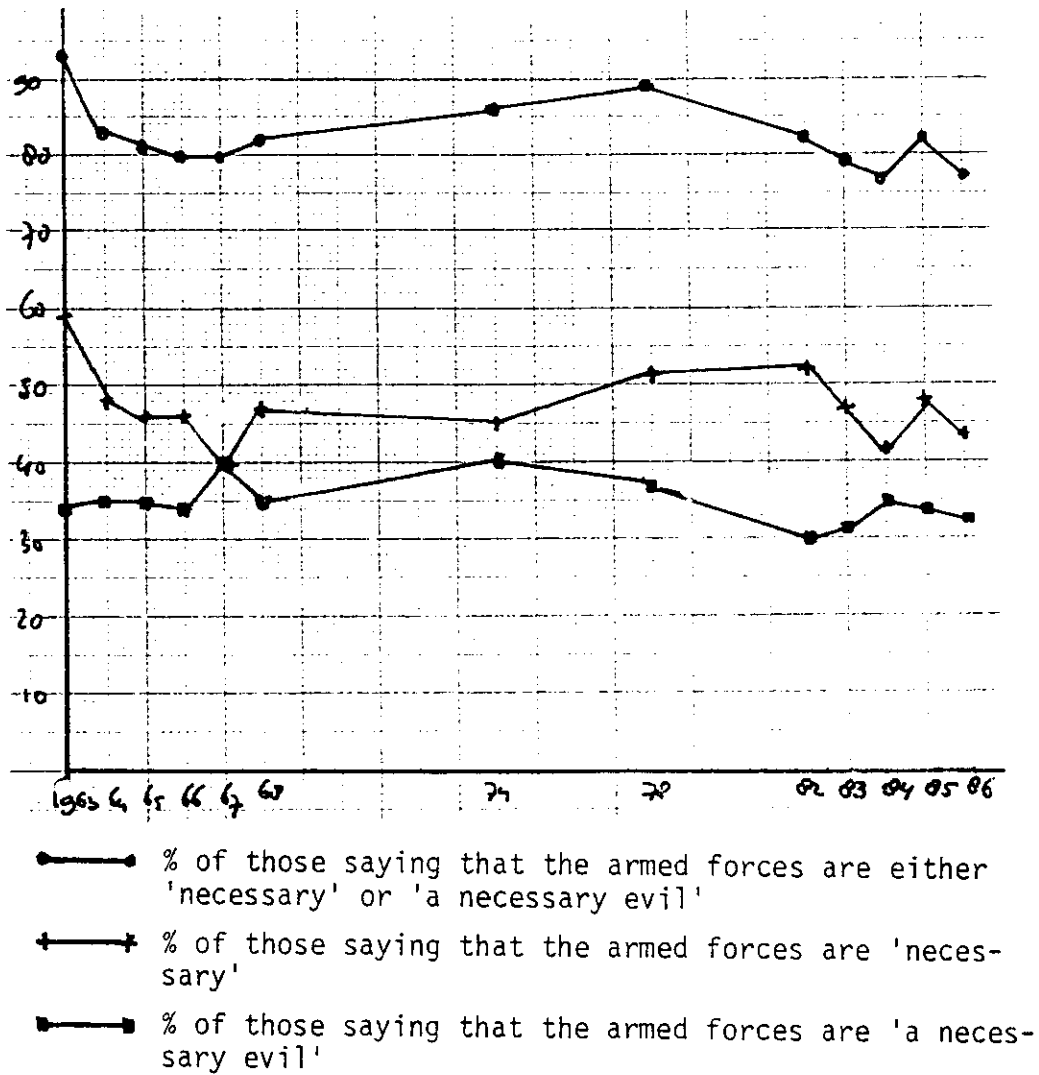
(Vervolg voetnoot)

about the perceived negative impact of 'the Gorbachov factor' on the possibility to maintain the forces necessary for a strategy of nuclear deterrence by NATO.

²¹ Poll results from Data Group, presented at a meeting of the Western European Union, London, March 1989 (cited here from Drentse en Asser Courant, 17 Maart 1989)

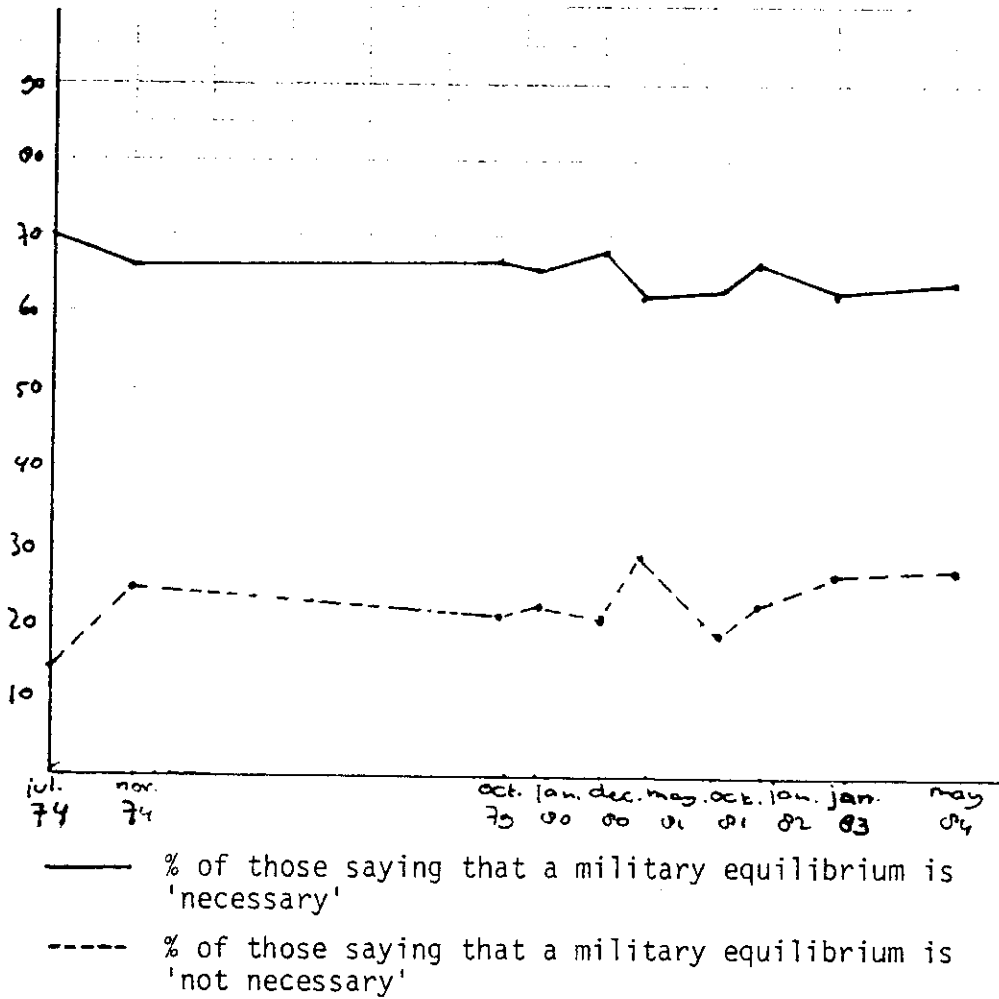
general relaxation of tension may also well contribute to a feeling that things will improve without further effort, thus leading to a reduced sense of urgency, which will (further) reduce the saliency of the issues, all of which reduces the potential for renewed mobilization. Taken together, these factors may account for the unexpected situation that a remarkable improvement in the international situation and real steps towards arms control and disarmament may go together with an apparently much reduced relevance of the peace movement.

Figure 1 Necessity of the armed forces, 1963-1986



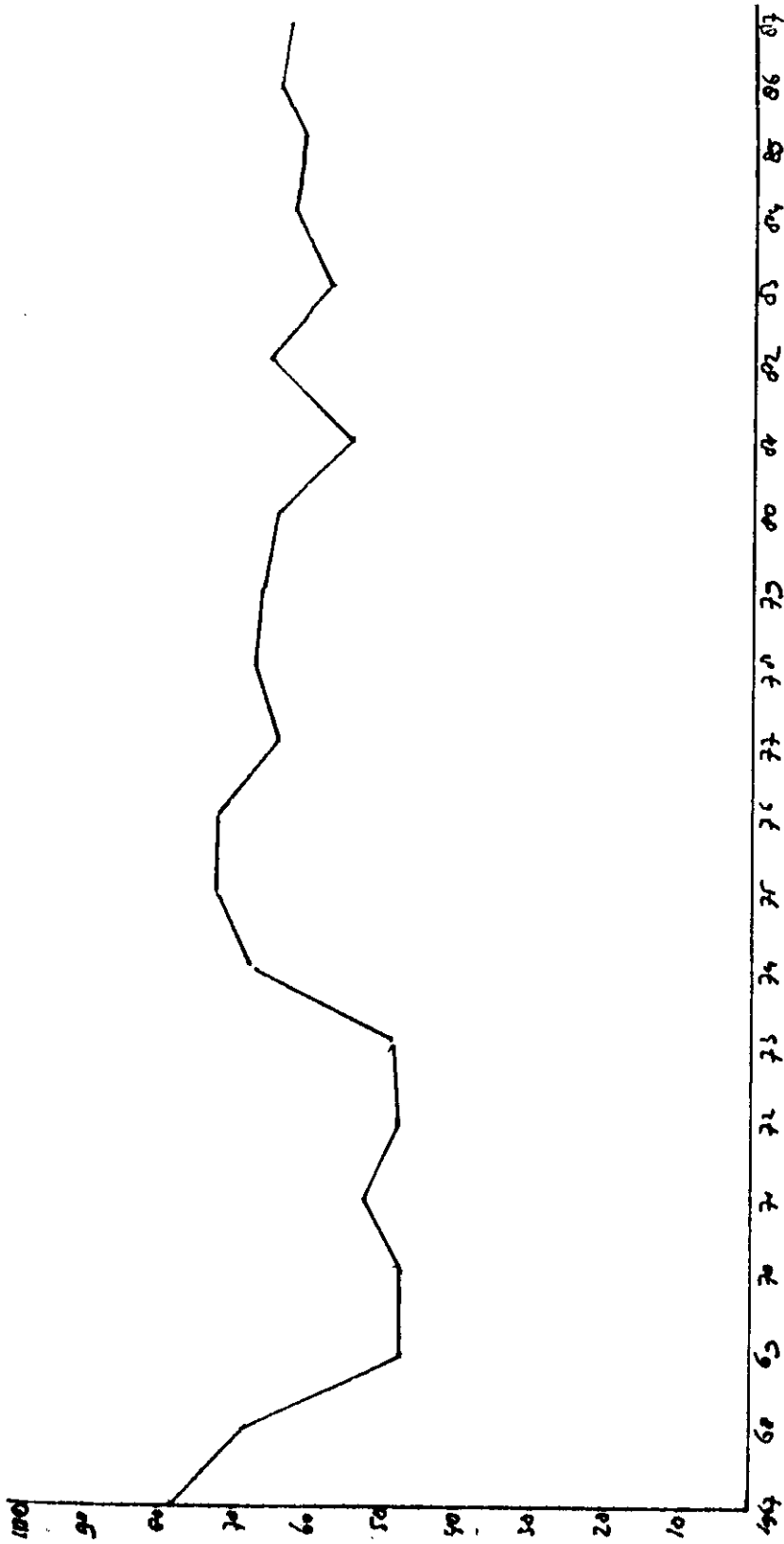
Source: NIPO / Stichting Krijgsmacht en Maatschappij.

Figure 2 Necessity of a military equilibrium between East and West, 1974-1984



Source: NIPO.

Figure 3 Support of Dutch membership of NATO (1967-87)



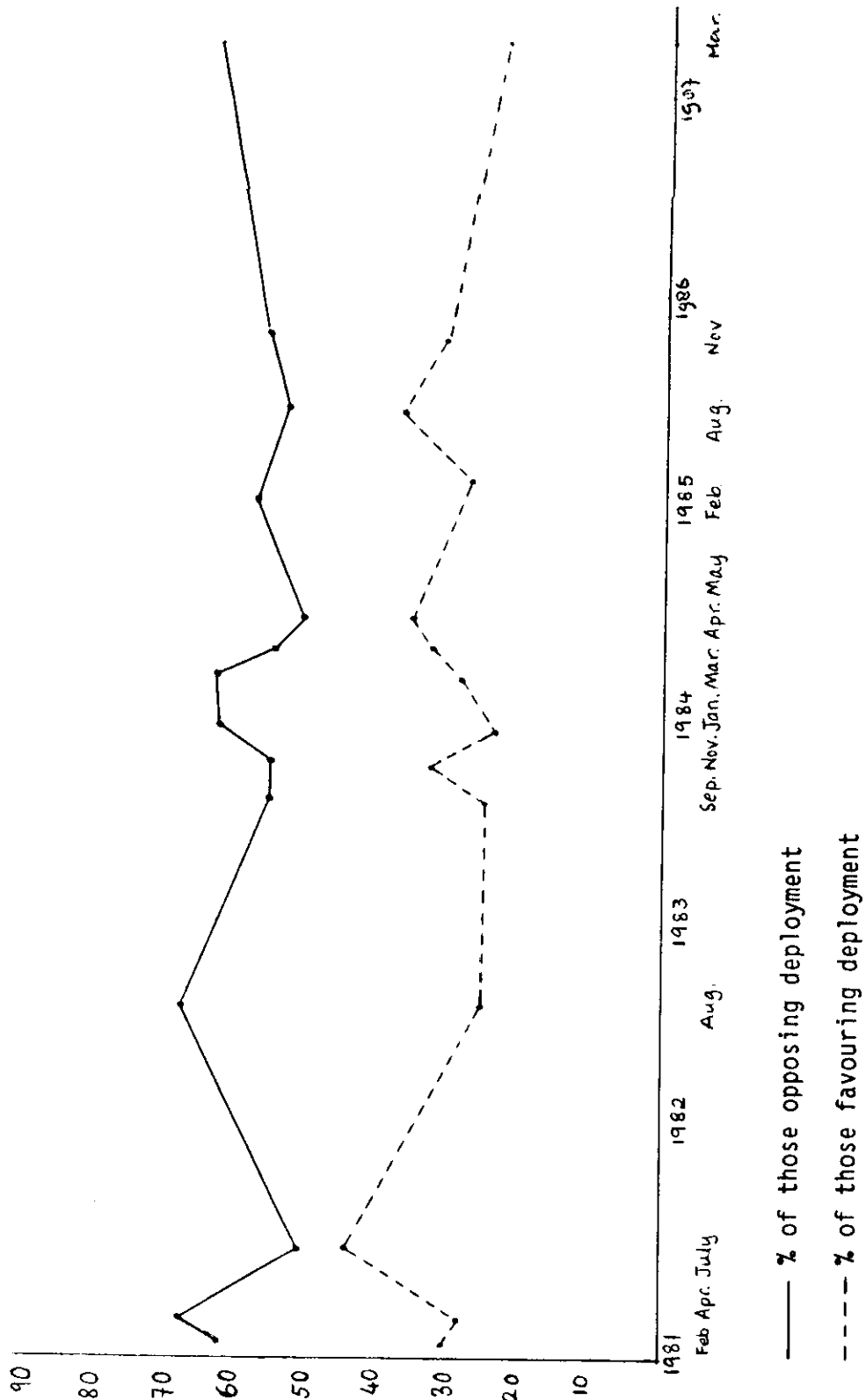
Sources: Everts, 1985; Vaneker and Everts (ed.), 1985; Rebel, 1985 ; NIPO, 1986,1987.

Note: The figures represented in this graph are the difference between proponents and opponents of Dutch membership of NATO. For those years for which data from two or more surveys are available, averages have been taken.

Figure 4

Attitudes on deployment of Cruise missiles in the Netherlands

1981-1987 (I)

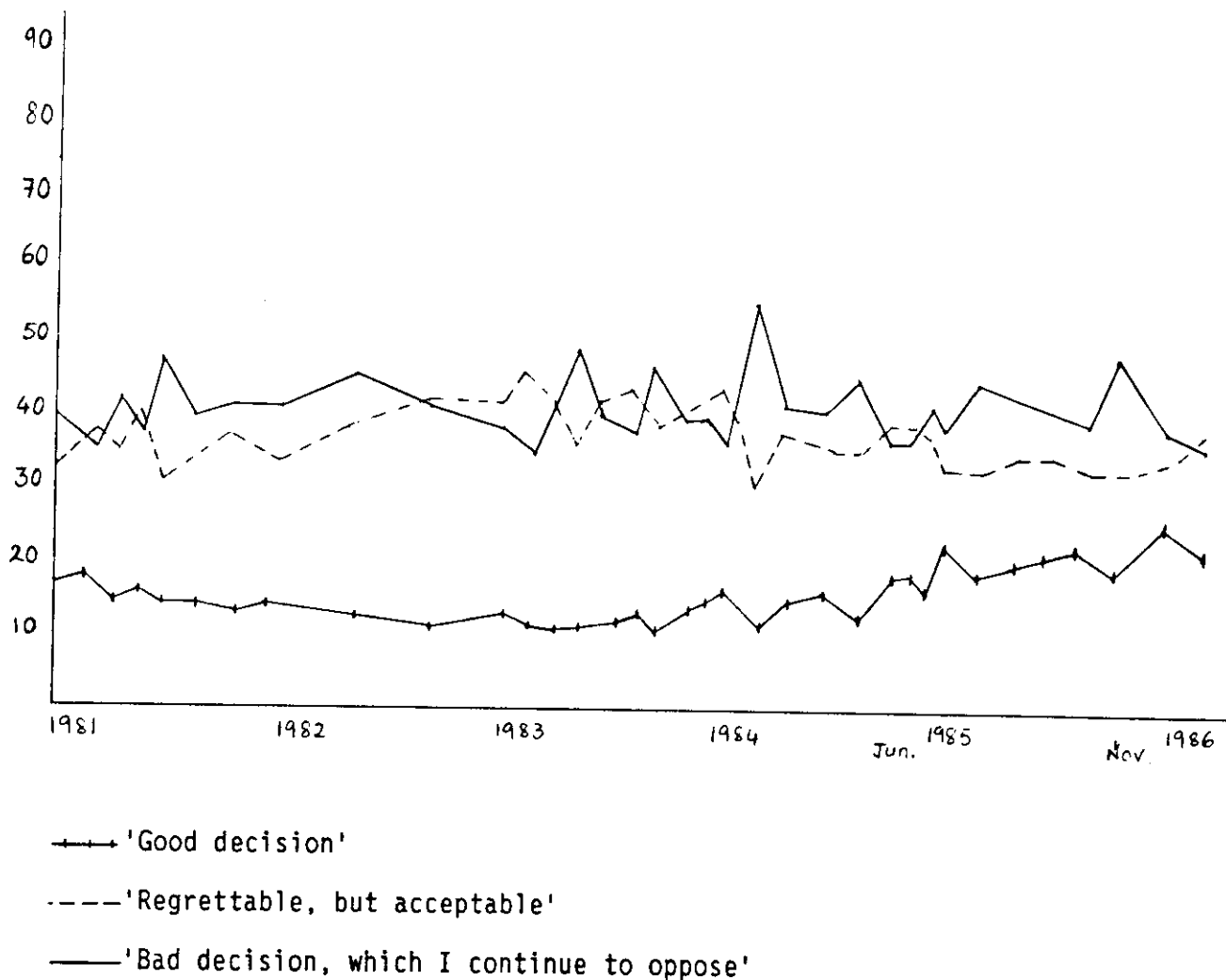


Compiled from: Various polls

Note: Although the phrasing of the various questions sometimes differed, the general formula was: "Are you in favour or against deployment of Cruise missiles in the Netherlands?"

Figure 5
Attitudes on deployment of Cruise missiles in the Netherlands

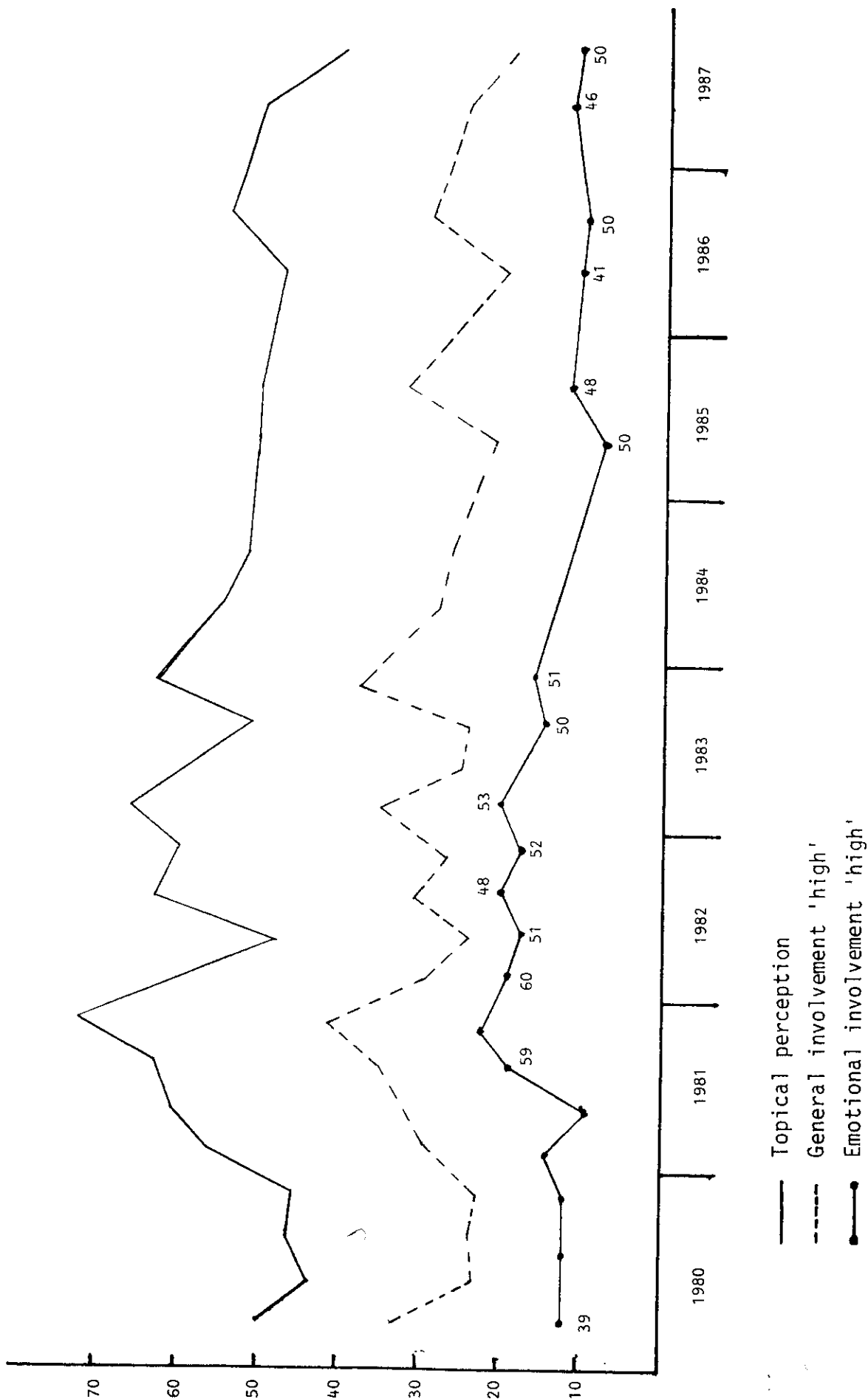
1981-1985 (II)



Source: NIPO

Note: The exact phrasing of this question has varied over time, due to changes in the political situation. In general, however, respondents were asked to state whether they would consider a government decision to deploy 'a good decision', 'bad decision, which they would continue to oppose' or 'a regrettable, but acceptable decision'.

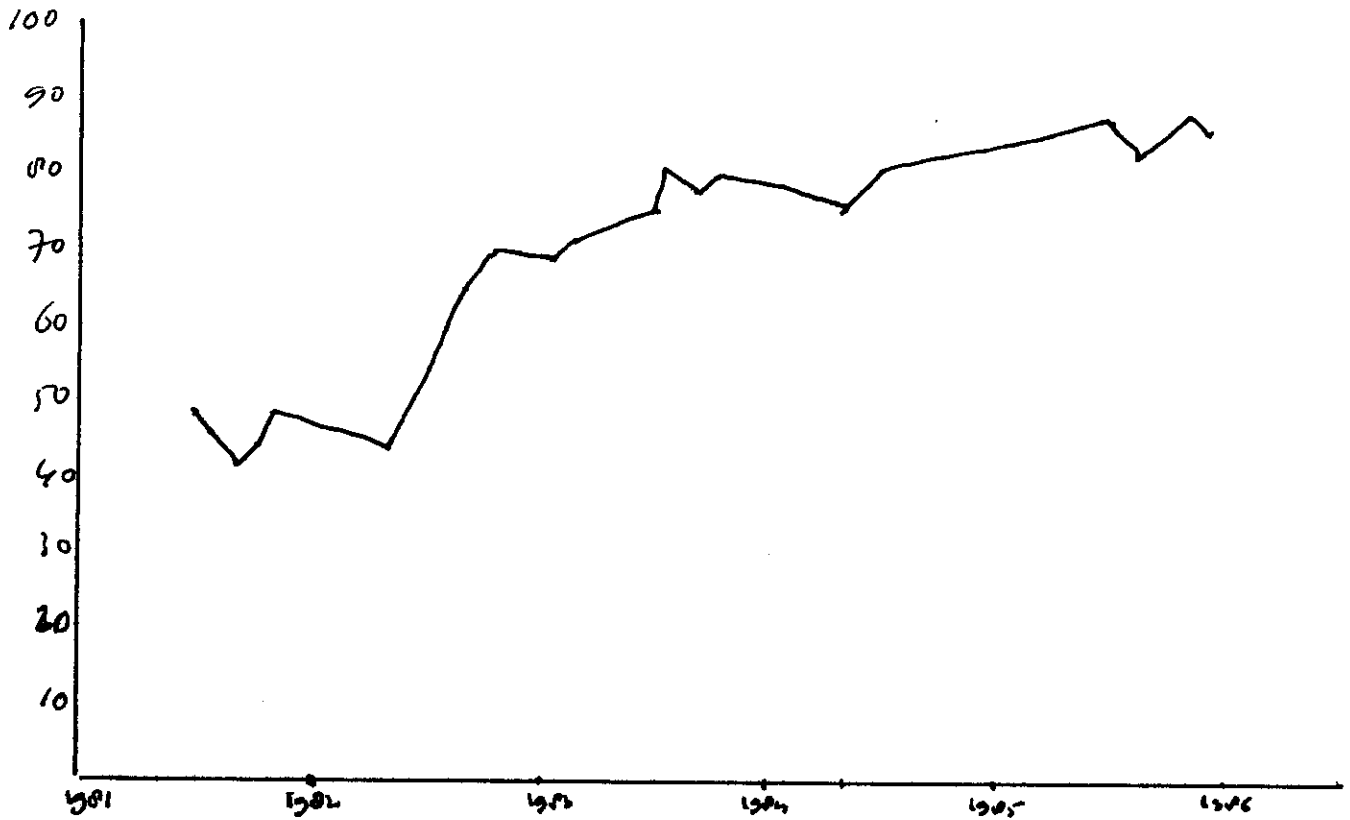
Figure 6 Saliency and involvement in problems of armament and disarmament



Source: NSS.

Note: The figures indicate the degree of action disposition among the group with high emotional involvement.

Figure 7 Expectations concerning deployment of cruise missiles (1981-85)



Source: NIPO

Note: Percentage of those expecting that "cruise missiles will (yet) be deployed".