Being Secretary General of NATO between 1961 and 1964

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This text, with a short biography of Dirk Stikker, Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) between 1961 and 1964, is part of the IO BIO Project: The Biographical Dictionary of Secretaries-General of International Organizations. Before addressing Stikker as NATO Secretary General the paper discusses the IO BIO Project, including the entries available on the project’s website, the related Database, the writing of an IO BIO entry and the need for the IO BIO effort. The paper then highlights a few aspects related to an assessment of Stikker’s career as Secretary General drawn from his IO BIO entry, which is provided following this analysis and also serves to illustrate the format of an IO BIO entry.

The IO BIO Project
Secretaries-General, or other executive heads with different titles, of international organizations are the chief executives and representatives of international bureaucracies that vary in size and structure. The biographical literature on Secretaries-General is limited, giving an incomplete picture of the variety of people who have held these positions and the interactions between them. Thus, there is a gap in our understanding of the people in these posts, both individually and collectively, in terms of who they are and how they affect the performance of international organizations, both as organizations and in international relations. The Biographical Dictionary of Secretaries-General of International Organizations is designed to provide short, but informative biographies of individual Secretaries-General as well as descriptions and analyses of the social and professional connections of these individuals (group analyses, referred to as prosopographies) in order to address this shortcoming.

The IO BIO entries are published on the project’s website (see below). While IO BIO is moving ahead as an online project, it also includes plans for a series of published hard copy volumes, with both individual entries and group analyses. At the moment the IO BIO Editorial Team has three members: Bob Reinalda, Kent Kille and Jaci Eisenberg.

Entries Available on the IO BIO Website www.ru.nl/fm/iobio
At the moment IO BIO has published over 30 entries, covering over 20 international organizations. These are the international organizations and their Secretaries-General:

European Commission (Sicco Mansholt)
FAO (Edouard Saouma)
GATT (Eric Wyndham White)
IAEA (William Cole)
ILO (Harold Butler, Michel Hansenne, David Morse)
League of Nations (Joseph Avenol, Rachel Crowdy, Fridtjof Nansen)
NATO (Lionel Ismay, Paul-Henri Spaak, Dirk Stikker)
Nordic Council of Ministers (Per Unckel)
OAS (João Baena Soares)
OEEC (Thorkil Kristensen, Robert Marjolin)
OECD (Donald Johnston, Thorkil Kristensen)
UNASUR (Néstor Kirchner)
UNCTAD (Rubens Ricupero)
UNECA (Robert Gardiner)
UNECE (Gunnar Myrdal)
UNESCO (Luther Evans, Julian Huxley, René Maheu)
UNHCHR (Mary Robinson)
UNHCR (Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart)
World Bank (Eugene Black, Robert McNamara, George Woods)
WFP (James Ingram)
WHO (Gro Brundtland, George Chisholm, Halfdan Mahler)
WMO (Arthur Davies)

Each of these entries adds to our understanding of what is taking place within a specific organization during the time in office, but connections between people are also illustrated. For instance, Dirk Stikker chaired the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) between 1950 and 1952 and cooperated with Secretary-General Robert Marjolin, which sheds some light on the way top executives work together within the same institution.

**IO BIO Database and Entries**

Last year IO BIO Co-Editor Kent Kille and I (2013) wrote a paper for the ACUNS annual meeting in Lund, Sweden on Secretary-General leadership in global governance, based on an analysis of our database, which encompasses around 900 executives heads of some 130 international organizations, and the 20 entries published at the time. The IO BIO Database is accessible through the project’s website.

Analysis across the IO BIO database as a whole provides further perspective on patterns of Secretary-General leadership across a large number of organizations, and reveals distinctions about the organizations themselves as well (more details in Kille and Reinalda 2013: 14-17). Drawing together the data in this manner allows us to better grasp the types of titles used (e.g. Secretary, Director, Administrator) and to begin to consider more closely the significance of title variation and frequency of use, including the manner in which the titles have changed over time within certain organizations. A much broader sense of which countries are represented in global leadership through holding Secretary-General positions is also established. Distinctions between the approach to serving as Secretary-General can also be drawn across acting Secretaries-General versus permanent office-holders and those who have held the office more than once, either within the same organization or across different organizations. This cross-database analysis reveals that such situations are relatively rare, but also that they have occurred frequently enough to warrant closer examination. Finally, the particular characteristics of Secretaries-General across time – including gender, age, and time in office – provide a clearer picture of the averages overall, as well as signalling where there are distinctive exceptions from the norm, in addition to what this means for the relative standing of a particular Secretary-General.
The IO BIO Project also allows for analyses of certain groups. In 2011 I had a closer look at nine humanitarian intergovernmental organizations in order to find out what we actually know and learn about the careers of their Secretaries-General. The paper revealed that two interesting aspects were missing in the information provided by the organizations themselves, namely any political dimension of what Secretaries-General do and the ways in which an executive head tries to lead an organization (Reinalda 2011).

For our initial analysis of 20 published entries Kent Kille and I discussed three potential ways of categorizing the Secretaries-General (more details in Kille and Reinalda 2013: 11-14). First, we looked across all 20 Secretaries-General to explore the degree to which they showed strong internal and/or external leadership (respectively of the secretariat or bureaucracy and in international relations). Based on the assumption that in order to play a significant role Secretaries-General must combine internal and external leadership, we examined the group of ten Secretaries-General who actually combined these two forms of leadership (labeled the Combiners). Second, we drew out the seven Frontierspersons, those Secretaries-General who set up the administrative machineries for their respective international organizations, to consider the relative leadership that they provided coming from serving as Secretary-General at a similar stage in their international organization’s history. Finally, we examined a group of five Reformers, those who had to reform the organization, due to the circumstances of the international organization and/or demands by important member-states.

The general conclusion with regard to internal leadership of the Combiners was that personal characteristics and the ability of Secretaries-General to motivate staff and to use assets do matter. The general conclusion with regard to their external leadership was that this form of leadership deserves attention, because leadership in international relations is not only a matter of heads of state and government, but also of Secretaries-General of international organizations, both with regard to international problems and inter-organizational relations. Our examples seemed to signal that Frontierspersons need to be both good internal and external leaders, but need to be extremely good external leaders if environmental conditions are hostile to the visions developed by the Secretary-General of an international organization. The general conclusion with regard to Reformers was that the reform of an international organization is also a matter of both internal and external leadership capacities.

Writing an IO BIO Entry: Tools to Help

IO BIO is designed to provide short, but informative biographies of individual Secretaries-General. The short biographies (between roughly 800 and 3,600 words; the length is determined by level of importance, with three category levels) present an accurate and coherent description of the entire life and career of each Secretary-General. The genre of the biographical dictionary, with short biographies of individuals whose performance contributed to the public sphere, dates back primarily to the nineteenth century, although older examples exist. While the appeal of ‘great persons’ has remained a crucial component of biography as an art, scholarly explanation has become more important, with ‘modern biography’ producing more or less coherent lives. These represent complex personalities as part of, and contributing to, their time. The descriptions are based on a combination of both primary and secondary sources, including private information. Rather than providing a catalogue of mere biographical and career details (as so-called Who’s Who publications do), all entries about the individuals are descriptions written according to scientific standards, with entries providing biographical data (the first section), a balanced account of life and work (the main section), as well as references (archives, publications and literature). These entries highlight the Secretaries-General’s contributions to their profession, their organization and international relations as a whole.
To help authors write their entries a model biography is available, as well as instructions with style requirements and directives with regard to personal data, the account of life and work and relevant sources. We also provide an overview of tools that help find missing information through international biographical dictionaries, Who’s Whos, oral history projects and other databases. All these guiding texts can be found on the website.

**Do We Need an IO BIO?**

Now that we have the Internet, do we really need an IO BIO? I would argue that one should test the hypothesis underlying this question by trying to find out about the career of a specific Secretary-General. Some executive heads have smaller or larger life descriptions in Wikipedia (a source generally to be distrusted anyway, even if a few excellent life descriptions exist), but most Secretaries-General have incomplete descriptions or none at all, as we found out when composing the database and making an inventory of the information that is available through the Internet. Furthermore, the organizations themselves are not producing much information about their executive heads, as was shown in the case of the humanitarian international organizations, but this is also true in a wider sense. Generally speaking, international organizations tend to inform only about the dates (or just years) of the time in office and sometimes add few general remarks, a picture and, more obvious, important prizes that were awarded. What is lacking most is information about the policies of a Secretary-General, hence: ideas, efforts to realize, compromises or failures; even achievements are rarely mentioned. It may be understandable that international organizations are restrictive in publishing about internal or external conflicts, but these are often essential to understand what an organization, or its executive head, is trying to do. This refers to both internal developments and external activities. In order to find such elements, IO BIO needs experts who are well informed about the organization and its staff and there is an ongoing effort to encourage additional authors to apply to write an entry.¹

Other sources may also have restrictions with regard to a Secretary-Generalship. For instance, a well-established yearbook in the Netherlands that discusses the Dutch Ministers of Foreign Affairs provides a fine description of Dirk Stikker, who was the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1948 and 1952. Although the authoritative author of Stikker’s short biography discusses his entire life in 18 pages, only two short sentences inform us about his time as Secretary General of NATO: explaining only that he became the third Secretary General in 1961 and left three years later due to health problems which had handicapped his work as Secretary General (Bank 1999: 195). I will come back to this issue, based on the Stikker entry for IO BIO.

**A Few Remarkable Aspects in Stikker’s Career**

*NB for this section it is helpful to first read the Stikker entry provided at the end of the paper*

IO BIO is interested in the entire life of an individual, hence not just the days of a Secretary-General’s time in office, because we are also curious to know where Secretaries-General come from: What are their backgrounds (for example, education and career)? How did they get engaged in international relations? What kind of experience did they have when accepting

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¹ Scholars and practitioners are carrying out the IO BIO Project on a voluntary basis. To express an interest, or for more information, please contact us by e-mail: iobio@fm.ru.nl. When applying to write an entry, please provide name, institutional affiliation, and contact information, and provide the arguments for why you are a good author for this entry. Entries already ‘under construction’ are listed on the ‘IO BIO Documents page’ and do not require an author at this time.
the post of Secretary-General? We are also interested in what happens to the person after leaving the organization.

What Stikker’s initial postwar years reveal is that he was actively engaged in the new United Nations (UN) system, which takes us to the relationship between the UN system and a national political system. As Chair of the Dutch Foundation of Labour, Stikker was a delegate to the International Labour Conference in 1946. When he became Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1948 and had to deal with the issue of Indonesia’s independence he travelled to Washington DC to discuss the issue and the dissenting Dutch position with the American Secretary of State, but he also stopped in Paris to be informed about the attitudes in the UN General Assembly as well as among the members of the Committee of Good Offices that was set up by the UN Security Council. Stikker, as a businessman used to observing the local situation directly, thus received a useful impression of foreign and international opinions and power relations. Although he tried to convince his Dutch Cabinet colleagues of the international reality, he did not manage to change the attitude of the strongest party that dominated the Dutch Indonesian strategy and maintained its traditional domestic view. When Merle Cochran, the American member of the Committee of Good Offices, visited the Dutch capital to discuss the international developments and positions with regard to Indonesia, he concluded that Stikker was the only Dutch politician who understood the international situation.

What is the relevance of this part of Stikker’s biography? We may conclude that Stikker clearly understood how the UN system and its driving hegemon were functioning. With regard to the relationship between the UN and the Dutch political system, the conclusion is different. In general, a new international system, such as the one based on the institutional strategy of the United States since 1945 (cf. Ikenberry 2001), has to be accepted by domestic politics. In the case of the Netherlands this was not an easy acceptance – much in contrast to the official impression given by Dutch politicians and the Dutch political system that it welcomed the UN system from the very beginning. This is not correct, since both in Bretton Woods in 1944 and San Francisco in 1945 the Dutch delegates preferred regional over global cooperation. When the head of the Dutch delegation at Bretton Woods, Jan Willem Beyen, advocated a regional framework for postwar economic and monetary reconstruction, the Dutch delegation had not yet understood that this proposal was not viable in the face of the American preference for a global programme. Dutch UN membership was by no means a foregone conclusion for the exiled Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Eelco van Kleffens, during the preparations of the UN Organization in early 1945, where he missed the fact that his country was not a middle-sized power and the United States preferred global over regional cooperation (cf. Krabbendam et al. 2009: 744-745). The issue of Indonesia’s independence is further proof of misunderstanding international reality. Stikker’s biography shows that many Dutch politicians, both as members of government and otherwise, had not yet grasped the essence of the new system. Stikker’s reorganization of the Ministry and its bureaucracy can be assessed in this context as well and this also shows that it took some time before the UN system impacted the Dutch national political system.

What do we know about the division of labour between the chair of a council and the Secretary-General? Stikker’s entry, in combination with other IO BIO entries, shows some aspects. While Robert Marjolin as Secretary-General of the OEEC was engaged mainly in secretariat matters running the organization (see the Marjolin entry by Alix Heiniger), the major policy of pushing trade liberalization among the member states by the United States was the job of the OEEC chair. Since unanimity was required and the policy was disliked, it was the chair’s duty to reach results, which often lasted very long time. In Stikker’s case the room where this happened was referred to as the ‘torture room’. Something similar happened at the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in Geneva. Before stating a common
position the European Commission representative in Geneva had to seek a ‘coordination’ of individual member-state positions with regard to the ongoing GATT negotiations, which were taking place in a building known as ‘the bunker’ (Dinan 2000: 79). Another illustration of someone able to run marathon sessions is Sicco Mansholt (see his IO BIO entry). Whoever has to do the job, the examples show that managing extended sessions is one of the capacities that leading multilateral politicians must have. As the Marjolin entry also shows, Stikker was helped in this respect by the autonomous staff and secretariat policies of the OEEC Secretary-General. My last point is also related to the necessary capacities of Secretaries-General.

The final issue to be discussed in this paper is the assessment of Stikker’s leadership, which was seen by some authors as weak, amongst other factors as a result of his bad health, as mentioned before. Both Robert Jordan in his book Political Leadership in NATO (1979) and Ryan Hendrickson is his book Diplomacy and War at NATO (2006) regards Stikker’s leadership role as wanting, because of the overwhelming political difficulties that he met. During the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 he was in hospital due to a nasty illness and it took him a long time to recover, while the Secretary General of the alliance in non-crisis situations already has a working week of ninety to one hundred hours. Furthermore, military men such as American General Lauris Norstad dominated the scene, being far better equipped for crisis situations than the Secretary General. Stikker also had to withstand the obstinate French General Charles de Gaulle. NATO as an organization looked like a broken polity, in which issues could not be solved and individuals could not be controlled. Jaap Hoogenboezem, who took a closer look at how Stikker functioned as a leader, disagrees with this supposed weak or unsuccessful leadership and speaks of ‘hidden success’. He refers to the Dutch political system, which was characterized by pillarization, that is a diversity of groups, whose elites may be willing to cooperate and find compromises that allow the groups to continue their lives, while at the same time decisions are being made based on respect and compromise. Given Stikker’s experience in postwar, pillarized Dutch politics, Hoogenboezem argues that Stikker used his Dutch experience in the deadlocked NATO alliance. He did not try to find final solutions for difficult issues (such as the new United States-dominated strategy of flexible response, the complicated United States-United Kingdom relationship, and the autonomous position of France) and personal problems such as those personified by the dominance of individuals like Norstad and de Gaulle. Stikker rather managed by respecting differences and solving day-to-day problems in such a way that the organization continued to function. Instead of resolving the deadlock of United States hegemony in the organization, Stikker controlled it by silent diplomacy, ensuring that he still kept control. With regard to obstinate individuals he took care by bringing large problems back to manageable proportions. Hoogenboezem (2006: 417) hence concludes that Stikker’s credit is that ‘he recognized the deadlock for what it was, and made the alliance live with it’.

Answering the question of whether Stikker’s tenure was a success or a failure seems to depend on the assessment of his way of working. If one stresses overwhelming circumstances and events, including his weak health, the outcome of the assessment is negative. If one takes into account Stikker’s experience in economic and political life, including his capacity of understanding a situation, his realism and pragmatism, as well as his compromise-oriented approach, then the outcome can be positive, as is argued by Hoogenboezem and quoted in my assessment of Stikker’s time in office at the end of the entry. Or is it the case that these two Dutch authors are transferring a characteristic of the postwar Dutch political system (pillarization) onto the situation of an international alliance where it does not fit?
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Krabbendam, Hans et al. (Eds) (2009), Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations 1609-2009, Amsterdam: Boom
STIKKER, Dirk Uipko, Dutch politician and third Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 1961-64, was born 5 February 1897 in Winschoten, Netherlands and died 24 December 1979 in Wassenaar. He was the son of Uipko Obbo Stikker, stockbroker, and Ida Meursing. On 2 May 1922 he married Catharina Paulina van der Scheer. After the early death of one daughter and one son, they had two sons.

Stikker grew up in the northern part of the Netherlands, where the family moved from the countryside to the dynamic city of Groningen when he was ten years old. He was ill quite often while attending grammar school and also spent time at a Swiss health resort. Given his poor health the army refused him for military obligations. While his father was pro-German during the First World War, Stikker supported the British. He studied law, just like his father had done, completing his studies at the University of Groningen in 1922. He participated intensively in the activities of related student organizations, becoming president of both the local student association and the law students’ union. Unlike most fellow students he had an early interest in politics. Before Stikker graduated, he was involved in assisting and advising his father, including undertaking a business trip to Vienna, where he also engaged with a private organization that was sending Austrian children to the Netherlands to convalesce. As a result of disagreements about business practices in 1922 his father had to leave the bank that had taken over his brokerage firm, which caused financial problems for the family. Shortly after Stikker married Paulina van der Scheer, to whom he had been engaged since meeting her during a holiday in 1918, and accepted a position at the Twentsche Bank, the one that had made his father step down. In 1923 he moved to the bank’s headquarters in Amsterdam, where he had to start again from scratch, and managed to successfully focus on legal and economic aspects of banking. In 1927 he became director of a local bank in Lisse, which later was taken over by the Twentsche Bank, which appointed him director in Leyden in 1930 and then in Haarlem in 1933. While travelling in the United States (US) in 1932, Stikker was impressed by Franklin D. Roosevelt’s presidential campaign and concluded that only the New Deal could end the Depression. Following the League of Nations’ Economic World Conference in London in 1933, he rejected the Dutch continuation of the Gold Standard policy. Informed by a friend about a vacancy at Heineken’s Breweries in Amsterdam, he was not initially interested but changed his mind when he saw the firm’s balance sheet and, after being asked, became managing director of Heineken in 1935, a position he held until 1948. Due to his responsibility for international expansion he travelled extensively across the globe.
in order to increase the number of foreign branches and, given the political developments at the time, was introduced to the world of international economic and political relations.

During the German occupation of the Netherlands (1940-1945) Stikker occupied several functions related to brewery operations. The German effort of pushing employer and worker organizations to adopt a National-Socialist identity created unity among the employers, albeit an anti-German one, while the trade unions were dismantled. Stikker began using the breweries’ financial resources to support those who had lost their jobs as a result of their political convictions. He arranged for money to be transferred to a former trade union leader, who used a fake name and received advances for a non-existing public house. Stikker enjoyed misleading the Germans, while simultaneously negotiating with them in his role as president of the national brewery association, and managed to avoid arrest. His underground work resulted in a network of employers’ and workers’ leaders who developed ideas about modernizing postwar labour relations. In early 1945 they secretly prepared the establishment of the Foundation of Labour, which, shortly after the country’s liberation in early May, began to play an important role in improving Dutch labour relations and ensuring economic reconstruction while trying to avoid labour conflicts. Stikker became the chair of the Foundation, which comprised employers’ organizations (he himself chaired the Central Social Association of Employers) and trade unions, and attended the 1946 International Labour Conference in Montreal as delegate. He was politically active as well and in November 1945 he became an independent member of the Upper Chamber. He succeeded in turning the prewar Liberal party into the new Party of Freedom (he left out the word Liberal in the name) and became its political leader. In 1948 it was reorganized into the People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy, which soon came to be dominated by Pieter Oud, an influential competitor in politics. In order to avoid discord, Stikker decided to become a full-time politician when his party was able to become part of a new governmental coalition. Since he had to give up all his existing economic and other positions for this, he demanded a powerful post and in August 1948 became Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was the first businessman and party man to serve in this post. As Minister of Foreign Affairs, Stikker turned out to be a pragmatic politician, essentially a proponent of Atlantic cooperation, who was also prepared to confront the US. The main foreign policy issues he faced were Indonesian independence, Atlantic relations and European integration.

At first Stikker regarded Sukarno, who had declared Indonesian independence in 1945, as a Japanese collaborator and agreed with the general business wish to restore Dutch authority over Indonesia. However, after another visit to Indonesia in mid-1948, and in line with a changing business attitude, he began to distance himself from the Dutch government policy (and his own party’s stand) to continue colonial administration. As a businessman used to observing the local situation directly, he travelled to Washington DC in September 1948 to meet Secretary of State George C. Marshall. In August 1947 the United Nations (UN) Security Council had called for a cease-fire in the armed conflict between the Dutch and the Indonesians and created a three-man Committee of Good Offices. Stikker was annoyed that its American member, Merle Cochran, had written a note which reflected the US policy that negotiations should be continued and that the US would support Indonesia. In Washington Marshall confirmed this position to Stikker. Soon after, on his way to Indonesia, Stikker found out in Paris that UN General Assembly President Herbert Evatt and the Security Council members Australia, Norway and the United Kingdom (UK) did not support the Dutch either and, in Indonesia, he discovered that both the Indonesian leaders and the other two members of the Committee of Good Offices concurred with the Cochran Note. Stikker tried to convince his cabinet colleagues of this reality, but did not succeed in changing the attitude of the Catholic People’s Party that dominated the Dutch Indonesian strategy. Negotiations for a political settlement in Indonesia, in which Stikker was involved directly, failed and in
December 1948 the Dutch resumed using force. They took Djokjakarta and imprisoned the Indonesian leaders, but the Dutch were met with such strong international discontent that they had to end the action in early January 1949. This was followed by the Security Council’s transformation of the Committee of Good Offices into the more powerful UN Commission for Indonesia, which outlined a detailed recommendation for the settlement of the dispute on 28 January. When Cochran visited The Hague in February he concluded that Stikker was the only Dutch politician who understood the international situation (Bank 1999: 186). Under pressure from the US, negotiations with Indonesia were resumed in March and Stikker visited several capitals to discuss the issue. He met in Washington with the new Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, with whom he developed a better relationship than with Marshall and which later even became a friendship, and in Indonesia negotiated with Prime Minister Mohammed Hatta. This resulted in an armistice, followed by a Round Table Conference in August. In order to change the Constitution, given the number of votes required, Stikker had calculated that the government could obtain enough votes in Parliament if he succeeded in controlling his party. For this he called for support from the business lobby and eventually the government had one more vote than needed in the Lower Chamber and exactly enough in the Upper Chamber (Wilson 1970: 7; Bank 1999: 186). In December 1949 the Dutch transferred sovereignty to the Republic of Indonesia.

Having been involved in the negotiations for a North Atlantic Treaty since 1948, Stikker left his negotiator Eelco van Kleffens the necessary room for manoeuvre. However, his engagement with Indonesian independence made him intervene a few times. When Averell Harriman, the US Special Representative for the Marshall Aid in Europe, told Stikker in March 1949 that the US might suspend military aid if the Netherlands did not implement the UN resolution on Indonesia (a matter raised by Senator Owen Brewster given the Dutch stubbornness), Stikker proposed to the Dutch government to make a reservation to its North Atlantic Treaty commitment and, in order to gain a stronger position, he began to organize support for the principle of equality of treatment among the members of the Western Union, established in Brussels in 1948 by France, the UK and the Benelux countries. In his contacts with the Americans Stikker threatened to neither sign nor ratify the North Atlantic Treaty. Historians agree that this US pressure on the Dutch government impacted the outcome of the Indonesia issue, but debate whether Stikker was sincere in his intentions of withholding his signature (Megens 1994: 34-35). Some regard this as theatre, while others indicate that Stikker looked for French support in the Indonesian issue by supporting France on the question of whether or not cover the colonies in the North Atlantic Treaty. Stikker also supported Canada in its successful effort to widen the Treaty’s Article 2, which deals with economic and social cooperation, while a Canadian-led Security Council compromise on Indonesia helped the Dutch to overcome a deadlock. Wiebes and Zeeman (1985: 236, 249) argue that Stikker was indeed prepared to employ North Atlantic Treaty negotiations in order to influence the US position on Indonesia. However, he also understood that he should avoid losing goodwill and, thus, had to accept US leadership in decolonization matters. Like his colleagues, he signed the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 1949. Yet, where it served Dutch interests Stikker distanced himself from the US, such as his recognition of the People’s Republic of China in March 1950 and his rejection of US proposals to confront China directly during the Korean War. In 1949 he headed the Dutch delegation to the UN and also reorganized the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to improve the fit with modern international relations by separating political affairs from assistance work and allowing more access to non-diplomatic actors. In December 1950 Stikker clashed with his competitor in the Liberal party, Oud, who initiated a vote of non-confidence over the status of West New Guinea, which, according to the 1949 UN agreement, should have been resolved in 1950. When all Liberals voted in favour Stikker submitted his resignation, provoking a ministerial
crisis. Stikker returned in the new government, but would no longer engage actively with the New Guinea issue.

For economic reasons, such as the development of the Rotterdam harbour and the trade in agricultural products, Stikker favoured normal relations with Germany after the war and succeeded in taming existing wishes for border corrections. With regards to European integration as espoused by the Council of Europe, which had been founded in 1949, he believed that the federalist ideas discussed in that context had little relation to the real problems. Given his focus on trade liberalization, which was difficult during reconstruction, he regarded trade promotion and payment regulation as practical forms of integration. Given the more rigorous US policy of using Marshall Aid to further economic integration and the, according to the US, inadequate functioning of the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), the US decided to promote the appointment of a political conciliator at the OEEC, without clearly defining the conciliator’s duties. When the UK rejected Paul-Henri Spaak of Belgium, Stikker was chosen for this post in February 1950. After he was elected Council chairman in April, the position of conciliator lost its prominence. Stikker’s aim as chair was to further liberalization within the OEEC and, in June, he proposed liberalizing various branches of trade in succession, in what he referred to as the ‘sector’ approach. He advocated full liberalization coupled with compensating measures for certain economic activities, for which a European fund would have to be established. Although the Plan of Action named after him received a limited response from the OEEC, the organization began to promote mutual trade under US pressure through a Code of Liberalization of Trade. Since unanimous agreement on implementation was required, Stikker tried to eliminate as many problems as possible and for the remaining few asked the representatives to come to what they called the ‘torture room’, because of the extremely long sessions required to reach agreement (Wilson 1970: 12-13). The main limitation on the possibilities offered by Stikker’s Plan of Action was not related to the OEEC, in which he cooperated with Secretary-General Robert Marjolin, but rather to the launching of the plan by French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman in May 1950 which would lead to the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and its High Authority in April 1951. Although the ECSC had traces of his sectoral approach, Stikker, who signed the ECSC Treaty for the Netherlands, had reservations about both its supranational character and its restricted membership in comparison to the wider OEEC. Stikker opposed the decision that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), created as a permanent organization in February 1952, should study the economic situation of its member states because of overlap with the better-equipped OEEC. In the late 1950s he suggested that the US and Canada should associate themselves with the OEEC in order to better understand European decision making in this organization and to be aware of the divergence with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade that was taking place.

In September 1952 Stikker did not return as Dutch minister after the elections and ended his OEEC chairmanship. He became Dutch ambassador to the UK (until 1958) and from 1954 also represented his country in Iceland and in the Permanent Council of the Western European Union in London. Since his expenses proved larger than his income, he speculated to enlarge his capital. Following instructions was not easy for an individual used to leading. He chaired the Dutch delegation to the UN Economic and Social Council in 1955 and 1956 and in 1958 became the Dutch Permanent Representative to NATO’s North Atlantic Council and to the OEEC, a combined position in Paris that he held until 21 April 1961, when he became the third Secretary General of NATO, succeeding Spaak. In March 1952 the Americans had asked him to accept this position, but he refused at the time because he did not want to build up the organization and also preferred to play roles behind the scenes and on a personal basis (Wilson 1970: 21). When Spaak decided to return to Belgian politics in early
1961, Stikker proposed a British Secretary General, but both the US and the UK asked Stikker to be a candidate. He agreed under the condition that the North Atlantic Council be unanimous in asking him. This happened, although the French originally opposed his nomination because of the strained relations within NATO after President Charles de Gaulle’s proposal for a US-British-French directorate within the alliance, which the US had refused. These tensions dominated Stikker’s time in office, which was also affected by the Cold War events of the early 1960s such as the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. During a blockade of the roads to Berlin Stikker was annoyed that the major countries did not inform NATO headquarters. Instead, he had to use his good informal relations with General Lauris Norstad, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, to work together to handle the situation and give instructions to the officers in command on the roads about how to act. As Secretary General, Stikker had close contacts with British politicians, US President John F. Kennedy, who favoured a moderate defence strategy, and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (the latter two had holiday homes close to each other on the Italian Lake Como). Although Stikker understood de Gaulle’s feelings about France being sidelined in US strategies, he had little direct contact with him and noticed France’s minimal efforts to contribute to and cooperate within the alliance, while still depending on NATO. Relations became more strained when US Secretary of Defence, Robert McNamara, gave a secret speech to the North Atlantic Council in May 1962 in which he advocated a strengthening of European conventional forces and a stronger US control of nuclear strategy, including a limited use of nuclear weapons, and he criticized France’s nuclear plans. Adenauer was hurt because he had not been consulted and feared a lack of defence and de Gaulle felt insulted. Relations became more complex after the so-called Nassau Conference in December, where the US and the UK agreed to make their nuclear forces available to NATO, and de Gaulle’s press conference of January 1963, where he refused the American offer of a Polaris missile arrangement and NATO’s flexible response strategy and also vetoed the British application to join the European Economic Community. Stikker and his staff analysed the various statements in order to provide answers that might help reduce the concerns and uneasiness that undermined the alliance’s coherence. Stikker travelled to the capitals in order to emphasize NATO solidarity and tolerance, aware that not all politicians shared his confidence in Atlantic unity. He also talked to Kennedy, McNamara and Secretary of State Dean Rusk in order to prepare Council meetings. Stikker saw his activities severely restricted when a malignant tumour was discovered. He was operated in Walter Reed Hospital in Washington in October 1962. He needed a long time to recover and was unable to actively participate when the Cuban Missile Crisis began a few days after his operation. He had a special telephone next to his bed, but Deputy Secretary General Guido Colonna di Paliano replaced him, also trying to be moderate. Stikker returned to activity in 1963, but needed another operation in May. During the summer and autumn he noticed that his physical condition was not improving and therefore he announced in December that he would step down in the following year. During the Cyprus crisis of 1964 he was concerned about the tensions between NATO members Greece and Turkey, but also noticed that the NATO Secretary General had no political or diplomatic representatives capable of informing him of the status of the situation. To solve this hurdle he engaged the NATO military authorities and used their information and connections to convey his interest and actively offer his good offices. On 1 August 1964 he resigned and was succeeded by Manlio Brosio.

Stikker then took leave to be a private citizen in Menaggio, Italy, where he wrote his memoirs, *Men of Responsibility*, published in 1966. The book showed little modesty for his role and thus created debate. In 1964 Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island awarded Stikker an honorary doctorate. In 1966 Stikker participated in the founding of the Asian Development Bank, for which he also studied the economic situation in various Southeast
Asian countries. In that year he also became an advisor to the UN Conference on Trade and Development, for which he published a report on the role of private enterprise in investment and the promotion of exports in developing countries in 1968. In 1972 he returned to the Netherlands, where he slowly lost his sight and eventually passed away in 1979. Although there is an understanding that Stikker played a conciliatory role in NATO, Robert Jordan (1979) and Ryan Hendrickson (2006) regard Stikker’s leadership role as wanting, due to the difficult political circumstances, his health, the strong influence of military like Norstad and French animosity. Jaap Hoogenboezem (2009), however, refers to Stikker’s experience in Dutch pillarized politics as one where leadership was the ability to solve day-to-day problems through careful negotiation between various segments, all the while respecting existing differences and fostering core values such as cooperation and compromise. Stikker did not resolve the deadlock of US hegemony in the organization, but rather controlled it by silent diplomacy, and he handled de Gaulle by bringing large problems back to manageable proportions. Stikker thus recognized NATO’s deadlock at the time for what it was and made the alliance live with it (Hoogenboezem 2009: 417). NATO did not break up and continued to perform its functions.


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