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‘Hip Hip Hooray and Thank You Marshall’: Gratitude, Emotion and the Mediation of Post-War Dutch–US Relations

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This article conceptualises a transatlantic diplomacy of gratitude that developed in the context of the Marshall Plan as a case of emotional diplomacy by focusing on a Dutch commemorative tradition that celebrates the US aid programme. It shows that US Marshall Planners carefully refrained from explicit demands of gratitude and that it was the Dutch government, rather, that initiated a discourse of gratitude for US aid. Through the ways in which they invoked and embodied expressions of gratitude, the Dutch mediated and reframed their country’s post-war demotion from a global empire to an aid-dependent country. This case, then, allows us to understand how the Netherlands strategically reconceptualised its position in a post-Second World War power structure dominated by the United States, while demonstrating how the careful navigation of the international emotional landscape played an important but as yet underexplored role in the diplomatic interactions of the post-war years.

In June 1952, it was time to officially mark the end of the Marshall Plan, the \$13 billion US aid programme for the recovery of Europe that had started in 1948. Max Hirschfeld, the Dutch government commissioner responsible for coordinating the so-called European Recovery Program (ERP) in the Netherlands, was carefully weighing his words for a public radio address to commemorate the occasion. His speech went through several drafts, the first of which suggested that ‘a word of great gratitude without any reservations [for the Marshall Plan] is indispensable’ and that the Dutch ‘have understood that this aid creates obligations’. When Hirschfeld ultimately gave his speech, however, his phrasing was considerably more careful: a word of gratitude was ‘in order’, he said, and the Dutch had shown themselves deserving of US aid, since the money was ‘well-spent’ on the Netherlands.¹ The way in which the commissioner carefully crafted his words illustrates a central point regarding the Dutch reception of the Marshall Plan. Gratitude was certainly thought to be appropriate, but how it would be expressed and what that meant was carefully considered. A focus on Dutch gratitude for the Marshall Plan, then, allows for a deeper understanding of Dutch responses to the US aid programme, one that moves beyond the celebratory propaganda posters, photographs and films and reveals careful diplomatic manoeuvring amidst a complex emotional landscape.

As a catalyst of Cold War rivalry and a milestone in the development of modern transatlantic relations, the Marshall Plan has been studied from many angles, including its economic, political and

¹ H.M. Hirschfeld, untitled drafts and transcript of radio address at the occasion of the end of the Marshall Plan, enclosed in P.H.J. Francot, press service of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, to Hirschfeld, 27 June 1952, National Archive, The Hague, the Netherlands, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Code-archief 1945–1954 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, henceforth: NL-HaNA, BuZa), entry 2.05.117, inventory number 23056. All quotations from documents in the Dutch National Archive in The Hague, as well as quotations from Dutch books and articles, were translated by the authors, unless stated otherwise.

geopolitical dimensions.² Moreover, the ‘cultural turn’ in diplomatic history produced a body of literature that investigates the aid programme in the context of the transfer of US ideas and standards regarding productivity, consumerism and democracy. Initially focusing mostly on the US information campaign that attended the aid programme, characterised by David Ellwood as ‘the largest international propaganda operation ever seen in peacetime’, this literature has more recently centred on European receptions of the US message.³ Rather than a one-way street of transmission and reception, the picture that consequently emerges is one of Europeans actively shaping the meaning and impact of the Marshall Plan.⁴ This more complex analysis, one that carefully accounts for European agency, intersects with recent developments in Dutch historiography, which challenge the traditional image of the Netherlands as a ‘loyal ally’ to the United States.⁵ Several studies indicate that the Dutch turn toward the Atlantic partnership during the post-war years was accompanied by considerable concerns about US policies and attempts to create room for independent manoeuvre within an obviously asymmetrical relationship.⁶

In that context, this article shows that an analysis of the emotional dimension of this relationship, with a focus on Dutch expressions of gratitude, contributes to our understanding of European responses to the Marshall Plan against the background of fundamental shifts of power.⁷ As Frank Costigliola argues, historians ‘can track expressions of ... feelings – and responses to such expressions – as calibrators of power relationships’.⁸ But where Costigliola refers to the freedom of powerful states to express ‘transgressive’ emotions such as anger, we demonstrate how the Dutch sought to mediate and negotiate their declining status within the limits of what might seem, at first glance, the expression of an affirmative or even deferential emotion. Leslie R. Brody points out that gratitude is associated with ‘feminine gender-role stereotypic traits’, stressing that ‘those with low status are expected to feel

² Respectively: Imanuel Wexler, *The Marshall Plan Revisited: The European Recovery Program in Economic Perspective* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983); Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947–1952* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Benn Steil, *The Marshall Plan: Dawn of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

³ Quote in David Ellwood, ‘“You Too Can Be Like Us”: Selling the Marshall Plan’, *History Today* 48 (Oct. 1998): 33. For overviews of US Marshall Plan propaganda and European responses thereto, see for example: Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), chapter 7; Günter Bischof and Dieter Stiefel, eds., *Images of the Marshall Plan in Europe: Films, Photographs, Exhibits, Posters* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2009); David Ellwood, *The Shock of America: Europe and the Challenge of the Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), chapter 8; and Maria Fritsche, *The American Marshall Plan Film Campaign and the Europeans: A Captivated Audience?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

⁴ Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka and Dieter Stiefel, eds., *The Marshall Plan in Austria* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000); Bernadette Whelan, ‘Marshall Plan Publicity and Propaganda in Italy and Ireland, 1947–1951’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 23, no. 4 (2003): 311–28; Brian Angus McKenzie, *Remaking France: Americanization, Public Diplomacy, and the Marshall Plan* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008).

⁵ For a brief discussion, see: Duco Hellema, *Nederland in de Wereld: Buitenlandse Politiek van Nederland* (Houten: Spectrum, 2010), 218–21.

⁶ Duco Hellema, ‘The Politics of Asymmetry: The Netherlands and the United States since 1945’, in Hans Krabbendam, Cornelius A. van Minnen and Giles Scott-Smith, eds., *Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations, 1609–2009* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2009); David J. Snyder, ‘The Dutch Encounter with the American Century: Modernization, Clientelism, and the Uses of Sovereignty during the Early Cold War’, *Dutch Crossing* 40, no. 1 (2016): 10–23; Stefanie Massink, ‘A Critical Ally (1949–1977): The Dutch Social Democrats, Spain and NATO 1’, in Laurien Crump and Susanna Erlandsson, eds., *Margins for Manoeuvre in Cold War Europe. The Influence of Smaller Powers* (New York: Routledge, 2019); Jorrit van den Berk, ‘The Intermediary is the Message: US Public Diplomacy and the Marshall Plan Productivity Drive in the Netherlands, 1948–52’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 56, no. 2 (2021): 411–33; Rimko van der Maar, ‘“Easily Emotional” and “Always Inclined to Extremes”: Ambassador Herman van Roijen and Dutch Anxiety about American Anti-Communism, 1947–53’, *Diplomatica* 4, no. 1 (2022): 100–23.

⁷ Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945: From ‘Empire’ by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 27–34; Mary Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890–2010* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 154.

⁸ Frank Costigliola, ‘Reading for Emotion’, in Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 367.

grateful toward those with high status'.⁹ This article shows how the Dutch overturned that gendered script through a masculine response to the US aid programme, which we read as one of the ways in which the Dutch tried to define their declining international position in a way that allowed them to maintain a sense of dignity consistent with their national self-image.

While historical accounts of the post-war years refer to the existence of a rich emotional landscape, including through references to shame, pride, anger, anxiety, frustration, hope, fear, and resentment as a background to developing international positions, systematic studies of its relationship to the diplomatic process do not yet exist.¹⁰ Presenting one way to fill that gap, this article focuses on the Dutch government's frequent and deliberate evocation of gratitude for the Marshall Plan through public speech acts and performances. We read these in relation to Dutch domestic and public diplomacy policies as well as to US expectations and responses, to show how such expressions of gratitude were employed strategically. As such, we explore the diplomacy of gratitude as a form of 'emotional diplomacy', itself a subcategory of what Todd Hall and Karl Gustafsson call 'emotional politics'.¹¹ One of three key approaches to emotions in international relations, 'emotional politics' refers to 'political discourse and behavior that work by appealing to, cultivating, manipulating, or emulating emotions and emotional expressions for political ends'.¹² Todd Hall's concept of 'emotional diplomacy' offers the starting point for our analysis and refers to the 'coordinated state-level behavior that explicitly and officially projects the image of a particular emotional response towards other states'.¹³

How did Dutch and US diplomats navigate the complex post-war transatlantic emotional-diplomatic landscape amidst profoundly shifting power relations through the diplomacy of gratitude in the context of the Marshall Plan? What actors were involved in this diplomacy of gratitude and why? And, more specifically: how did Dutch actors actively shape expressions of gratitude for the Marshall aid in ways that were consistent with their own interests and sense of national identity? These are the central questions that this article seeks to answer. To this end, we first position the Marshall Plan public diplomacy campaign within the transatlantic emotional landscape in which it developed, with a focus on Dutch sensitivities and the ways in which US diplomats tried to consciously navigate these. Subsequently, we analyse how the Dutch chose to express their gratitude during three distinct stages: the first year of Marshall aid (1948–9), the high point of the Marshall Plan (1949–51)

⁹ Robert A. Emmons, 'The Psychology of Gratitude: An Introduction', in Robert A. Emmons and Michael E. McCullough, eds., *The Psychology of Gratitude* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 8–9; Leslie R. Brody, 'On Understanding Gender Differences in the Expression of Emotion: Gender Roles, Socialization, and Language', in Steven L. Ablon, Daniel P. Brown, Edward J. Khantzian and John E. Mack, eds., *Human Feelings: Explorations in Affect Development and Meaning* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 237.

¹⁰ See, for example, footnote 7. Frank Biess offers an excellent conceptual roadmap to situate post-war emotions in a longer history of emotions, in: Frank Biess, 'Feelings in the Aftermath: Toward a History of Postwar Emotions', in Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller, eds., *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010). His focus, however, is mostly on the expression of emotions within the context of post-war societies. This article extends that analysis by demonstrating how emotional expressions also shaped post-war international relations. Also see: Richard Bessel, 'Hatred after War: Emotions and the Postwar History of East Germany', *History and Memory* 17, nos. 1–2 (2005): 195–216; Frank Biess, *German Angst: Fear and Democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), especially chapters 1 and 3.

¹¹ Karl Gustafsson and Todd H. Hall, 'The Politics of Emotions in International Relations: Who Gets to Feel What, Whose Emotions Matter, and the "History Problem" in Sino-Japanese Relations', *International Studies Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (2021): 973–74.

¹² Gustafsson and Hall also identify 'political emotion', or the ways in which emotions shape political processes and their outcomes, and 'politics of emotion', referring to 'contests involving claims over who can or should feel what and/or whose feelings matter'. Gustafsson and Hall, 'Politics of Emotions', 974. Key contributions in this context include Simon Koschut's work on how discourse may seek to elicit or represent emotions for political purposes, Kinnvall's explorations of the ways in which populist politics taps into feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, or fear. Simon Koschut, ed., *The Power of Emotions in World Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2020); Catarina Kinnvall, 'Ontological Insecurities and Postcolonial Imaginaries: The Emotional Appeal of Populism', *Humanity & Society* 42, no. 4 (2018): 523–43.

¹³ Todd H. Hall, *Emotional Diplomacy: Official Emotion on the International Stage* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 2.

and, based on a selection of especially important occasions during times of transatlantic frictions, the historical endurance of this discourse of gratitude within commemorative practices following the end of Marshall aid to the Netherlands.

The Emotional Landscape of the Marshall Plan in the Netherlands

The ERP was accompanied by a massive information campaign that was coordinated from Washington, DC, through the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) but administered and executed locally by ECA country missions in collaboration with the governments of participating countries. ECA missions were expected to adjust central guidelines to local tastes and realities, while participating governments in Europe were required by bilateral ERP treaties to develop their own information campaigns.¹⁴ In light of this decentralised organisation of ERP publicity, it is crucial that it be understood as a complex composite of transnational cooperation (that is, a product of the shared interests and worldviews of a transatlantic elite) and national concerns (a reflection of the national and international politics and policies of both the United States and the Netherlands). Moreover, that publicity was created in the face of great challenges. For US and European officials who coordinated it, there was no certainty that publics on either side of the Atlantic would support the programme in a way that was consistent with the goals of the Marshall Plan and the policies of local governments.¹⁵ Both sides considered it crucial, therefore, that they could set the terms on which the aid programme would be understood. The narrative of the Marshall Plan, then, springs from many sources and has been employed by a variety of actors to serve different and changing ends.

A considerable body of academic literature has mapped both US and European Marshall Plan publicity in relation to (sometimes clashing) political-economic interests, which can be characterised as a US New Deal synthesis that promised growing living standards in return for higher productivity and consumption versus a European focus on the redistributive policies of the emerging welfare state.¹⁶ The emotional landscape in which the Marshall Plan took shape, and which connects the aid programme to broader US and European concerns over national identities and shifting constellations of power, has yet to receive attention from scholars. That context can be conceptualised based on Hall and Gustafsson's notion of a 'distributive politics of emotion', referring to contesting claims over 'who can or should feel what and/or whose feelings matter'.¹⁷

Already during the Second World War, the US government demonstrated a clear awareness of the importance of carefully navigating national (emotional) sensitivities, keeping an eye not just on winning the war itself, but also on consolidating the peace that followed on US terms. As Marja Roholl has pointed out, the Office of War Information (OWI) realised early on that 'notwithstanding the enormous gratitude for the crucial role the US had played in the liberation' of Europe, the growing power of the US would provoke fear among Allies for both its retreat into isolationism and, paradoxically, for US imperialism.¹⁸ Anticipating these challenges, the OWI had been aided to fine tune its messages

¹⁴ A good overview of this decentralised approach, focused on ECA operations in France, is McKenzie, *Remaking France*, 23–6 and 93–4.

¹⁵ Michael Wala, 'Selling the Marshall Plan at Home: The Committee for the Marshall Plan to Aid European Recovery', *Diplomatic History* 10, no. 3 (1986): 248–50; Mathilde Roza, 'Educating the Nation: Jo Spier, Dutch National Identity, and the Marshall Plan in the Netherlands', in Hans Bak, Frank Mehring and Mathilde Roza, eds., *Politics and Cultures of Liberation: Media, Memory, and Projections of Democracy* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 39–40; Pien van der Hoeven, *Hoed af voor Marshall. De Marshall-hulp aan Nederland* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1997), 101, 107, 115.

¹⁶ Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*, 5; De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 338–50; Ellwood, *The Shock*, 369–79 and 381.

¹⁷ Gustafsson and Hall, 'Politics of Emotions', 974.

¹⁸ Marja Roholl, 'An Invasion of a Different Kind: The US Office of War Information and "The Projection of America" Propaganda in the Netherlands, 1944–1945', in Bak, Mehring and Roza, eds., *Politics and Cultures of Liberation*, 20. On OWI and the impact of its media strategy on the post-war State Department, see: Justin Hart, *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of US Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 104–5.

based on research by the famous US anthropologist Ruth Benedict. In her research on the Netherlands, she had already described the Dutch as a:

proud people, who were trying to cope with their diminished role in the world and their dependency on the help of the Allies, in Europe and Asia alike – something that could easily turn into resentment. This attitude went hand in hand with reservations over America's postwar role as world leader and fears over American territorial ambitions and desire for economic concessions in the Dutch East Indies and elsewhere.¹⁹

As ECA representatives in the Netherlands quickly registered, similar sentiments still lingered among the Dutch during the Marshall Plan era and would be reinforced by the US role in the decolonisation of Indonesia. On 15 December 1948, ECA information officer in the Netherlands Eugene Rachlis submitted his first substantial report on the information policy of his post. While briefly confirming that Dutch attitudes were generally pro-American and supportive of the Marshall Plan, it focused on 'sensitive spots'. Present economic difficulties weighed heavily on the Dutch because the 'position of being in the need of large-scale aid ... is extremely distasteful' to them. The relationship with the United States was also 'difficult' due to the Dutch sense that 'the U.S. gives with one hand and takes with the other'. This, in Rachlis's estimation, was due to the impression that while US aid promoted economic recovery, its policies regarding Indonesia, preferential treatment of US shipping and occupation policies in Germany actually caused that recovery to slow down.

Dealing with Dutch 'pride' was experienced as a precarious issue in matters of information policy and protocol. 'Because the Dutch have taken one of the quickest comedowns in Europe', Rachlis's report stated, 'their pride must be a prime consideration in information. Obvious demonstrations of gratitude must not be pushed, and all publicity of aid requires discretion and taste'.²⁰ This standpoint was widely shared within the broader ECA bureaucracy. The 1951 guidelines for ECA information policy, for example, asserted that experience up to that point had 'amply demonstrated the superficiality and futility of any effort to win friends in Europe by appealing to a sense of gratitude for American generosity'. Any aid clearly labelled as American tended to 'offend national pride' and to 'put people on the defensive against "propaganda"'. Rather, US 'sponsored' information should be presented as national, European, or international.²¹

Despite its prudence in this regard, the ECA did not, entirely by itself, determine the emotional demands placed on Marshall aid recipients. The US Congress played a significant role and required that the ECA emphasise US generosity. Particularly during the first year of the Marshall Plan, the source of the US aid was very clearly propagated, for example by demanding that the Marshall Plan emblem with the US stars and stripes be visibly printed on Marshall aid sponsored goods, including the text: 'For European Recovery, supplied by the United States of America'.²² This emphasis on US generosity and the idealistic, humanitarian motivations behind the aid programme that Congress sought to highlight obfuscated that the United States also had clear interests in the Marshall Plan and underlined the unequal relationship of giver–receiver, which – as we will see – was in itself enough to expose Dutch sensitivities.

¹⁹ Roholl, 'Invasion of a Different Kind', 26.

²⁰ Eugene Rachlis, information officer, ECA Mission to the Netherlands, to Roscoe Drummond, director, OSR information division in Paris, 15 Dec. 1949, National Archives of the United States at College Park, MD (henceforth: NARA), Record Group 469: Records of US Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948–1961, Mission to the Netherlands (henceforth: RG469), entry 1335, box 1.

²¹ Report enclosed in Roscoe Drummond, director of information OSR, to ECA information officers, 9 Feb. 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 2. According to a French government report quoted by McKenzie, most Marshall Plan films offended French pride. Whelan finds that Italians regarded the Marshall Plan emblem as a symbol of intervention, while Irish welcomed it. McKenzie, *Remaking France*; Whelan, 'Marshall Plan Publicity'.

²² Pien van der Hoeven, *Hoed af voor Marshall: De Marshall-hulp aan Nederland 1947–1952* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 1997), 115–16.

Contemporary ECA assessments of Dutch sensitivities were not far off the mark. Starting with the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East-Indies (present-day Indonesia) in 1942, the Dutch government-in-exile struggled to come to terms with the idea that it no longer represented a large colonial empire. Rather, the Netherlands joined the ranks of smaller European powers, a fact that required considerable and sometimes agonising adjustments to the national self-image. Post-war geopolitical shifts as well as the Dutch reorientation of its foreign policy – away from neutrality and toward the Atlantic area and the United States in particular – also entailed reconsiderations of its traditional interests. The US and Allied occupation of Germany profoundly affected Dutch transit trade; United Nations and US attitudes on decolonisation threatened Dutch colonial rule in the Caribbean and South-East Asia; and after the outbreak of the Korean War, US insistence on sharing the burden of rearmament necessitated significant economic adjustments. As Duco Hellema concludes: ‘The period up to 1948 was characterised by confusion, insecurity, and frustration about the Dutch role and status in the world’.²³

The part that the United States played in these issues might have caused frictions with the Netherlands under any circumstances. And while the point is rarely, if ever, made in the literature, Dutch anxieties about their declining role and vulnerability to US pressure were heightened by their dependence on Marshall Plan aid. The meeting of the Dutch Government’s Advisory Council for the European Recovery Program, held on 9 June 1948 to discuss the first US proposal for a draft of the bilateral agreement that would set out the conditions of the recovery programme, is a case in point. The foremost concern of the council was the ‘sharp tone’ of the agreement, which ‘needlessly accentuated’ the ‘one-sidedness’ of the US–Dutch relationship and the ‘inequality of both partners’. Such emphasis was, in the assessment of the council, ‘untactful’ on ‘psychological grounds’ but also an impediment to the common goals that the United States and European nations had formulated for the ERP.

The council clearly preferred that the ‘idealistic spirit’ (*ideele strekking*) of the agreement, which emphasised US generosity, be replaced with a more business-like and transactional focus on the ‘creditor-debtor-relationship’, combined with an acknowledgement of the *joint* interest in and objectives of European recovery. That general attitude was translated into several specific objections to articles that gave the United States a lot of leeway while leaving the Netherlands unprotected against ‘arbitrary’ decisions, which, perhaps already anticipating US pressure, was deemed especially important in the context of ‘our relationship to the East Indies’.²⁴

The US congressional tendency to emphasise US generosity and idealism while obfuscating self-interest implied an asymmetrical relationship of an active benefactor and passive beneficiary. The Dutch government found this difficult to reconcile with its own self-image and sense of dignity, while such imagery also fed into anxieties concerning Dutch dependency on the United States. While the Dutch acknowledged that they (temporarily) needed aid, they preferred a business-like framing of the relationship emphasising mutual interest, an interpretation that represented the Marshall Plan as part of a more equal partnership and Marshall aid as a US investment that the Dutch could repay by living up to their part of the deal. These tensions at different levels – Congress, the ECA, and the Dutch government – became even more apparent as Dutch publics became involved through early public diplomacy efforts. The need to address and mediate the interests of different actors and audiences, and through it the asymmetry of the US–Dutch relationship, helped set the parameters within which the ensuing expressions of gratitude that developed in this context took shape.

²³ Hellema, *Nederland in de Wereld*, 139. For sources on anti-American sentiments among the Dutch during this period see also: Floribert Baudet, ‘De strijd om de *Hearts and Minds*: Amerikaanse voorlichting en propaganda in de jaren vijftig’, in Duco Hellema and Giles Scott-Smith, eds., *De Amerikaanse Ambassade in Den Haag* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2016), 41–3. On the Dutch coming to terms with their new international role in the post-Second World War world see: Diederik Oostdijk, *Bells for America: The Cold War, Modernism, and the Netherlands Carillon in Arlington* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019), 39.

²⁴ Report of a meeting of the Advisory Council for the European Recovery Program addressed to Hirschfeld, June 1948, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23057.

Dutch Performances of Gratitude, 1948–9

The first year of the Marshall Plan, April 1948 to April 1949, can be regarded as a distinct phase in both the history of the recovery programme itself and in the emergence and consolidation of a Dutch discourse of gratitude for US support. Marshall Plan aid during this period was mostly focused on immediate relief, including the early deliveries of US coal, grain and machinery, whereas the emphasis of the programme later shifted towards a focus on the long-term reconstruction of European economies.²⁵ The publicity of both the local ECA mission and the Dutch government jointly and separately, meanwhile, primarily sought to familiarise Dutch and US audiences with the existence, origins and necessity of the Marshall Plan.²⁶

Crucially, even before an ECA country mission was established in The Hague in July 1948, the Dutch government took the first steps in publicising the start of the Marshall Plan and the arrival of the first US relief goods. While government officials had expressed misgivings about the ‘tone’ of the ERP treaty behind closed doors, they went to great lengths to determine how Dutch gratitude would be expressed and communicated to Dutch and US publics. Such expressions seem to have been regarded as self-evidently appropriate to the occasion – consistent with diplomatic decorum and implicit ‘feeling rules’ governing acceptable emotional expressions – because there appears to have been no discussion on *whether* the Dutch government should express its appreciation for US aid.²⁷ *How* that gratitude was expressed, however – the words, acts and symbols used, the timing and frequency, the people involved as actors and audiences – was a case of careful and conscious design. Coming to terms with a new role in the world, the Dutch government sought to express its gratitude in ways that allowed them to maintain a sense of national dignity, while also securing a strong transatlantic bond with the United States.

Despite the ECA’s policy of not ‘pushing’ displays of gratitude, Dutch government officials nevertheless *experienced* considerable US pressure to perform it frequently and in visually compelling ways. The main source of pressure was Dutch anxiety about the role of the US Congress, which had assumed the power to annually review and determine the ERP’s budget as well as to evaluate its execution by both the ECA and the receiving countries.²⁸ In that context, the local ECA mission played an intermediary role: since it had its own stake in the success of the Dutch case, it pro-actively assisted the Dutch government in presenting it to Congress. Thus, much of the Dutch public diplomatic approach to the Marshall Plan, especially during the first year, focused on Congress. This included copious statistical reports on the progress of economic recovery, but also photographs and films portraying Dutch gratitude for US aid – materials that Dutch officials somewhat sardonically referred to as ‘hip hip hooray and thank you Marshall’ publicity. Privately, then, Dutch bureaucrats continued to express misgivings about what they sometimes regarded as undignified public ‘stunts’, but they were nonetheless adamant to make sure that they would continue to set the tone for ERP publicity in a way that secured congressional goodwill while maintaining a sense of Dutch dignity in the process.²⁹

That publicity consisted of periodic public events, such as the reception of ships delivering US goods or parades and pageants showing how the Marshall aid was put to use. It was meant to

²⁵ For a discussion of Marshall Plan periodisation, see Ellwood, *The Shock*, chapter 8.

²⁶ For initial activities and goals of the information division of the ECA mission, see Julian Street, information officer ECA mission The Hague, to Alan Valentine, chief ECA mission The Hague, 11 Nov. 1948, NARA RG469, entry 1335, box 1. For an early review of Dutch information policy, see Ernst van der Beugel, director bureau of the government commissioner for the European Recovery Program, to the Interdepartmental Committee for the European Recovery Program (ICERP), 13 Oct. 1948, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23060.

²⁷ See: Simon Koschut, ‘Emotion, Discourse, and Power in World Politics’, in Koschut, ed., *The Power of Emotions*, 6.

²⁸ For example: Van der Beugel to ICERP, 13 Oct. 1948; Max Weisglas, press service of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, to O.W.P. Mohr, director a.i. department of foreign publicity at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 Jan. 1949, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23054; Weisglas to Van der Beugel, 13 Aug. 1949, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23054.

²⁹ Van der Beugel to ICERP, 13 Oct. 1948; Weisglas to Van der Beugel, 11 Jan. 1949, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23054; Francot to Weisglas, 19 Feb. 1949, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23054.

demonstrate to Congress that its money was diligently put to good use by a grateful nation. These events were strategically timed to coincide with congressional debates, late February to April, and carefully organised in ways that were suitable for visual portrayal and distribution in the form of photographs, films, or posters. By urging private actors, including businesses, professional organisations, schools and unions, to get involved, the Dutch government was able to communicate the impression that official expressions of gratitude in fact reflected a broader sense of gratitude, *sincerely felt* among diverse segments of the Dutch population. At the same time, government officials carefully curated the resulting publicity for the US market.³⁰

The very first of these events was the ceremonial reception, on 26 April 1948, of the Dutch ship *Noordam*, which delivered the first shipment of US grain to the Netherlands. This event deserves particular attention, as it established some of the main themes in what became the Dutch discourse of gratitude for US aid and a key point of reference in the tradition of Marshall Plan commemoration.³¹ An analysis of the ceremonies, which were carefully scripted by the press service of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs (henceforth press service) and documented on film, photograph and in news reports, reveals a complex composite of rhetoric and symbolic performance. It was a visual demonstration of Dutch recovery that expressed the nation's gratitude to the United States while expelling Dutch anxieties about their international status and dependency on US aid through a masculine display of energy and hard work.

Early in the morning of 26 April, as the *Noordam* entered the harbour of Rotterdam, moviemakers, photographers and radio commentators stood by on the docks to record how dockworkers unloaded the grain.³² 'Naturally', the script for the occasion stated, 'the purpose of this reception is to achieve the largest possible publicity on the gratitude of the Netherlands for America'. Indeed, the press service left nothing to chance: Dutch and foreign journalists were invited to the event and sound recordings were broadcast by three Dutch and three US radio stations. Photographs and an 'elaborate newsreel' were flown over to Britain, France and the United States immediately after the ceremonies.³³

The stage for this Marshall Plan performance was the city of Rotterdam itself. Having sustained heavy damage during the war, its harbour had been reconstructed by 1948 and became a symbol of Dutch endurance and resilience.³⁴ That stage was occupied not only by the usual actors, government

³⁰ Van der Beugel to ICERP, 13 Oct. 1948. For sources on specific cases, see the discussions of early Marshall Plan ceremonies below. On the value of perceived sincerity and 'grassroots gratitude' in emotional diplomacy see: Albertine Bloemendal, 'Ambassadeurs voor een Dankbaar Nederland: De Burgerinitiatieven van Margraten en de trans-Atlantische Diplomatie van Dankbaarheid', *Atlantisch Perspectief* 44, no. 2 (2020): 7–12.

³¹ Meindert van der Kaaij, 'Er zat vast eigenbelang bij, maar de Marshallhulp gaf ons land hoop', *Trouw*, 26 Apr. 2018, <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/er-zat-vast-eigenbelang-bij-maar-de-marshallhulp-gaf-ons-land-hoop~b8d08a07/> (accessed 10 July 2024); Yvonne Keunen, 'Je geweten verplicht het de Marshallhulp te herdenken', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 27 Apr. 2018, <https://www.ad.nl/rotterdam/je-geweten-verplicht-het-de-marshallhulp-te-herdenken~abcce8c2/> (accessed 10 July 2024).

³² Memorandum entitled 'De ontvangst van het m.s. "Noordam" op 26 Apr. a.s. te 11 uur', no date [c. Apr. 1948], National Archive, The Hague, the Netherlands, Ministerie van Economische Zaken: Persdienst en Directie Externe Betrekkingen (Ministry of Economic Affairs: Press Service and Division of External Relations), entry 2.06.085, inventory number 230; Weekjournaal van Polygoon Hollands Nieuws van week 18 uit 1948, 'De Noordam brengt de eerste Marshall-goederen', 30 Apr. 1948, Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid (Netherlands Institute *Sound and Vision*), Persistent Identifier (PID): URN:NBN:NL:IN:20-PGM4011982.

³³ 'Ontvangst van het m.s. "Noordam"' [Apr. 1948]. On the development of Dutch government publicity in response to the Marshall Plan, see: Pierre van der Eng, *De Marshall-Hulp: Een Perspectief voor Nederland, 1947–1953* (Houten: De Haan, 1987), 111, 116–19; Tity de Vries, "'Een Brede Verspreiding van de Berichtgeving is Wenselijk": Publiciteit rond de Marshall-Hulp als Overheidsvoorlichting Nieuwe Stijl', in Richard Griffiths, ed., *Van Strohhalm tot Strategie: Het Marshall-Plan in Perspectief* (Assen: Van Gorkum, 1997), 38–48.

³⁴ A fact that was portrayed in the Marshall Plan funded movie *Houen Zo!* (1952); see: Albert Hemsing, 'The Marshall Plan's European Film Unit, 1948–1955: A Memoir and Filmography', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 14, no. 3 (1994): 269–97. That interpretation is also confirmed by the speeches at the occasion as well as by reports in the national dailies. See for example: 'Eerste "Marshall-schip"'; 'Eerste Marshall-hulp in Nederland. Gepavoiseerde "Noordam" opende feestelijk de rij', *De Volkskrant*, 27 Apr. 1948, 1; 'Eerste Marshall-schip in Rotterdam met vuurwerk begroet', *Trouw*, 26

representatives who narrated the event through their speeches, but also by the Dutch people – both actually and rhetorically. The work of docking and unloading the *Noordam* was an integral part of the ceremonies and their photographic and cinematic representations. Attending dignitaries and reporters witnessed Dutch dockworkers and crane operators unloading the grain, a point that was accentuated in the film reel and highlighted by the US ambassador in attendance, Herman Baruch, who confirmed that ‘nowhere in the world can a ship be loaded or unloaded faster or more efficiently than’ in Rotterdam.³⁵ The activity at the docks served as a backdrop to the rhetorical evocation of ‘the Dutch people’ at the ceremonies. Both the ministers of Foreign and Economic Affairs expressed the gratitude of ‘the Dutch people’ to the United States, while stressing the *energy* with which it pursued recovery.³⁶

It is remarkable how easily Baruch and the ECA officers that followed him found their roles in the context of these early Dutch Marshall Plan ceremonies. Or rather, perhaps, how well his speech lent itself to domestic representations of the event, where the Dutch were the main actors and US officials were cast in the role of ‘bearing witness’ to the national recovery effort, thus undermining the image of a passive reception of aid. Few dailies printed the parts of Baruch’s speech where he reflected on the dynamism of democracy in the face of a totalitarian threat, for example. But his assurance that the display of Dutch ‘diligence and energy’ had elicited US respect found ready reception among journalists.³⁷ The roles that the Dutch government and US representatives found for themselves during the reception of the *Noordam* would evolve into a delicate balance. Once established, the ECA mission in The Hague played an intermediary role: on the one hand, it regularly pushed for more and more spectacular Marshall Plan publicity, especially while Congress was in session, to the point where Dutch officials feared that overemphasising US generosity would endanger the public’s good will toward the United States.³⁸ On the other, the ECA carefully deferred to what it knew to be the hurt pride of the Dutch, and its officers appear to have found a balance between congressional demands and Dutch sensitivities by accepting Dutch performances of hard work and vigour *as* displays of gratitude for US aid.

The reception of the *Noordam* was the first of a series of public events revolving around the delivery of Marshall Plan goods such as coal, tractors, grain and even candies throughout the first year of the ERP’s operation. As with the *Noordam*, these events took the form of pageantries of Dutch recovery as gratitude for US aid. The Dutch government actively promoted initiatives that emerged from local communities, schools, or professional organisations which were subsequently filmed, photographed, narrated and distributed to the most appropriate target audiences by the ECA and the Dutch press service. Those events followed remarkably similar scripts: workers would perform the dynamism of Dutch reconstruction efforts by hoisting, unpacking and moving the received aid goods, driving trucks and tractors, or turning wheat into bread. ECA officials would be present in static roles, shown as bearing witness to Dutch reconstruction efforts. Thus, the Dutch ‘flipped’ the traditional gender script that associates gratitude with ‘feminine’ characteristics, which tends to emphasise the unequal power-relationship between an active giver and passive receiver.³⁹

For example, during ‘truck day’ (*truck dag*) in The Hague, the Dutch transportation branch presented a procession of some 80 to 100 new trucks to US dignitaries. Polished to a shine and sporting

Apr. 1948, 1; ‘Eerste Marshall-schip arriveert in Rotterdam’, *De Maasbode*, 26 Apr. 1948, 1; ‘Eerste tarwe uit Marshall-hulp te Rotterdam aangekomen’, *De Tijd*, 26 Apr. 1948, 1.

³⁵ Baruch paraphrased in ‘Eerste “Marshall-schip”’.

³⁶ ‘Eerste Marshall-hulp’.

³⁷ Baruch’s speech is summarised and paraphrased in the national newspapers in footnote 34 above. Cf. Baruch’s full speech: Untitled memorandum, 23 Apr. 1948, NARA, Record Group 84: Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Netherlands (henceforth: RG84), entry 3011, box 45.

³⁸ For example: J.H.W. Hoogwater, press service of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, to Hirschfeld, 5 July 1951, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23056.

³⁹ Similar themes – masculinity, hard work and national pride – also featured as key themes in early Marshall Plan films in Italy. See: Fritsche, *Marshall Plan Film Campaign*, 27–8.

flags and flowers, the trucks in the procession sought to express ‘Dutch gratitude to the U[nited] States’.⁴⁰ Chief of the ECA mission Allen Valentine was just then in the United States to present a ‘sympathetic portrayal’ of the Dutch case to Congress, which was debating the renewal and extent of aid for the next year.⁴¹ In support of this effort, the Dutch embassy in Washington, DC, made sure to quickly forward to ECA headquarters several posters and pictures of the truck day – ‘organised in the Netherlands to express the gratitude of the population for the deliveries of trucks under ERP’.⁴²

Another occasion was national ‘bread day’ (*broodgraan dag*), celebrating the end of bread rations and organised by Dutch bakers who ‘wanted to express their gratitude [for] ... the Marshall Plan’.⁴³ Representatives of Dutch grain import and bakery organisations treated ECA officer John Humpstone to a tour of flour and biscuit factories and bakeries in the city, meant to parallel the progression of Marshall grain through the production process. When the motorcade finally arrived at the *Van der Meer en Schoep* bakery, which had been elaborately decorated with ‘bread and cakes with thanks to Marshall baked over all of them’, the proprietress was quite overcome by this spectacle of transatlantic diplomacy: ‘when Humpstone appeared in the bakery she broke down in tears and was only able to mumble her gratitude when she presented him with a bouquet [of flowers]’. In return, Humpstone assured the crowds that ‘the Marshall Plan is not just selfishness ... the Dutch also return the gift: the example of their great energy’.⁴⁴

Thus, during the initial stage of the Marshall Plan, and through the interplay between Dutch and American actors, important foundations were laid for a bilateral discourse of gratitude. The Dutch government never questioned the need to express its gratitude for US aid, nor was that a point of contention in mainstream press responses to the first Marshall Plan ceremonies.⁴⁵ The crucial issue revolved around the terms on which that gratitude would be expressed. Being anxious about US power in general and congressional demands for recognition in particular, the Dutch employed performances of gratitude to ensure the goodwill of Congress whilst challenging the asymmetric power relations of benefactor and beneficiary, rather preferring a masculine performance of brusque activity, demonstrating their own contributions to the recovery process. The ECA, meanwhile, deferred to Dutch pride when addressing local audiences and both pushed and aided the Dutch government to display national gratitude before Congress.

The Start of a Commemorative Tradition, 1949–51

At the beginning of 1949, both Dutch and ECA officials concluded that the US Congress and public had been satisfied with their ‘efficient “Thank you Marshall” publicity’. Information activities started to move away from events that celebrated the arrival of Marshall Plan goods. During the next two years, Dutch and US information campaigns overlapped to an important extent as both (separately and jointly) broadcast the need for the Netherlands’ economic recovery and independence from aid

⁴⁰ ‘Marshall-stoet trok door Den Haag’, *Trouw*, 28 Jan. 1949, 2; ‘Tachtig vrachtwagens defileren voor Dr. Baruch’, *De Volkskrant*, 29 Jan. 1949, 7.

⁴¹ Notulen van de elfde vergadering van de Raad van Advies voor het Europees Herstel Programma, 31 Mar. 1949, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23057.

⁴² A.H. Philipse, minister plenipotentary Dutch embassy in Washington, DC, to ECA Washington, DC, 4 Feb. 1949, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23054.

⁴³ ‘Brood voor meer dan de helft gebakken met Marshall-graan’, *De Volkskrant*, 5 Nov. 1948, 3.

⁴⁴ Street to Mrs. Lodge, 1 Dec. 1948, RG469, entry 1335, box 2; Humpstone quoted in Dutch in ‘Mr. John D. Humpstone volgde de weg van het Marshall-graan’, *Het Vrije Volk*, 4 Nov. 1948, 3; ‘Holland – Nation thanks US for food aid’, script sheet for *The Telenews Daily*, 24 Dec. 1948, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 1.

⁴⁵ A key exception in the Dutch press not belonging to the Dutch mainstream media was the communist newspaper *De Waarheid*, which was critical both of the Marshall Aid and Dutch expressions of gratitude for it. This newspaper and the Communist Party in the Netherlands, however, held a marginal position in the Netherlands during the Marshall Plan period. See also: Albertine Bloemendal, *Reframing the Diplomat: Ernst van der Beugel and the Cold War Atlantic Community* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 79.

by the end of the Marshall Plan programme in 1952.⁴⁶ The Dutch government did need to ensure both the US public's support for the continued flow of Marshall Plan dollars to the Netherlands and the willingness of the Dutch public to shoulder the burden of increased production against lower wages and lower consumption.

The performances of gratitude as they had been developed during the earliest days of the Marshall Plan continued to function as a framework that could keep these complex and, at times, contradictory impulses together. The early ceremonies celebrating the reception of relief goods evolved into a commemorative tradition, focusing on the arrival of the *Noordam* or George Marshall's 1947 Harvard speech, and continued to parallel congressional debates. Taken together, these commemorative events presented a coherent interpretation of Dutch dependence on US aid that revolved around a complex narrative of gratitude. This narrative acknowledged but also sought to explain and at times disguise this unequal relationship in ways that allowed the Dutch to accept their position while maintaining a sense of pride and dignity as they came to terms with this new reality. The common threads that run through many speeches representing this narrative can be summarised in three interrelated themes.

Firstly, the post-war reality of Dutch weakness was explained by conjuring up images of war and destruction, followed by the 'accident' of the dollar gap. Many public speeches started, almost ritualistically, with a litany of destruction and misfortunes. In one concise example, Dutch labour leader Adriaan de Bruijn noted how the 'Dutch people came out of the war: robbed, poor and starving, their economic life was broken, their transport paralysed, their financial position extremely bad'. This same theme returned in exhibits such as *Milestone 1950*, which connected five years of Dutch recovery with the two year anniversary of Marshall's speech, where visitors entered the fairgrounds through a dark tunnel with several highlighted pictures of 'destroyed buildings, bridges, physical condition, poor rations, etc. etc.', meant to 'offer a compound image of the situation in our country as of May 5, 1945'.⁴⁷ Such images implied that there was no shame in accepting aid to rectify a situation over which the Dutch had little control. The fact that the United States now had to help Europe, argued former minister of Social Affairs Marinus Damme at the close of a conference to mark the first anniversary of the Marshall Plan, had not reduced the continent to the 'dishonourable position of destitute nations'.⁴⁸

A second common theme focused on the United States and its perceived motivations for the Marshall Plan. In particular, Congress's and the ECA's emphasis on the Marshall Plan as originating from humanitarian motives rooted in US idealism, as well as from the sacrifices and generosity of US taxpayers, appeared to backfire in the Netherlands, where more than in most other European countries there was a widespread understanding of the Marshall Plan as also serving US interests. A 1948 international Gallup poll, for example, showed that many Dutch citizens ascribed US motives to economic self-interest (44 per cent in the Netherlands, compared to 26 per cent in France, 22 per cent in England and 17 per cent in Italy). Comparatively few thought of it as humanitarianism (10 per cent in the Netherlands, 23 per cent in France, 24 per cent in England and 35 per cent in Italy).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Francot to Weisglas, 19 Feb. 1949, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23054; Weisglas to Van der Beugel, 11 Jan. 1949, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23054.

⁴⁷ Adriaan de Bruijn, chairman of the Catholic Trade Union, text of radio address for 'The Voice of America', enclosed in Hoogwater to Van der Beugel, 18 Mar. 1950, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23055; Exhibit script for 'Mijlpaal 1950' enclosed in G.E.P. Manuel to Van der Beugel, 19 Nov. 1949, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23055.

⁴⁸ 'Slotwoord van Ir. M.H. Damme', in *Het Economisch Herstel Programma. Derde Congres van de Arbeid, 1949*, enclosed in letter to Van der Beugel, 12 Mar. 1949, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23054. The original Dutch 'bedeelde' (destitute) carries the connotation of 'needy', which Damme clarified later in his remarks by asserting that the Marshall Plan was not a case of the 'wealthy and the needy' ('*de rijke en de behoeftige*').

⁴⁹ Gallup Institute (Netherlands Institute for Public Opinion, NIPO), Publication 187, 20 Mar. 1948. Enclosed in J. de Jonge, NIPO, to Valentine, 8 Oct. 1948, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 3. In another ECA sponsored poll, some 37% of Dutch people believed that one of the United States' important goals with the Marshall Plan was 'to get rid of its overproduction'. This was closely followed by 'to dominate and influence' other countries (36%) and 'to acquire allies in case of war' (32%).

In this context, the US emphasis on its own generosity and goodwill created resentment and at times even suspicion. It is worth pointing out, though, that within the Dutch context, understandings of US motives as rooted in self-interest did not imply disapproval. In fact, Dutch government officers tried to explain that to the ECA and argued that a framework of ‘enlightened self-interest’ – emphasising how the aid programme served both Dutch and US interests – was more attractive to the ‘Calvinistic’ and ‘business-like’ Dutch. Rather than self-interest as such, it was the attempt to hide it under the cloak of US idealism that would likely evoke suspicion and resentment among the Dutch public.⁵⁰ Ernst van der Beugel, director of the Dutch government’s Marshall Plan bureau, may have phrased it most succinctly when, in an attempt to appease Dutch suspicions, he said: ‘It is equally simplistic to claim that the Marshall plan is born from the promotion of American export interests, as it is naïve to assume that only a Santa Claus sentiment among the Government and people of the United States played a role’. In fact, many speeches argued that the United States was also fulfilling its moral duty (belatedly, it was sometimes implied with oblique references to the country’s isolationist past) as a Great Power. If European economic recovery could be achieved, argued Damme, the United States would also safeguard ‘its own independence and its precious liberty. This conception is an entirely different one than that of the wealthy and the destitute, as it bears witness to the unity of all freedom loving people’.⁵¹

The idea of mutual interests also enabled Dutch elites to mark the boundaries of their country’s dependence on US aid: if ‘our American friends’ should use Marshall aid to put political pressure on the receiving countries, warned labour leader Evert Kupers, that would ‘play into the hands of those who claim that America was [moved] by purely imperialistic considerations in offering its help to Europe or, to put it differently, to make Europe economically and politically dependent [on the United States]’. Ironically, considering his reference to imperialism, Kupers’ main concern was with US opposition to Dutch rule in Indonesia.⁵²

Dutch elites and US officials in the Netherlands were aware, then, of the subtle tensions in the portrayal of the Marshall Plan as motivated by either enlightened self-interest or generosity. The Dutch preferred to see the ERP in a transactional context: as a US investment that would eventually repay itself, a joint venture working towards mutually beneficial goals. But in the meantime, as one Dutch official somewhat bitterly put it, ‘the American citizen who yearns for gratitude’ had to be accommodated.⁵³ The way these tensions were resolved echoed the earliest receptions of Marshall Plan aid, where Dutch workers were portrayed in the role of rebuilding their country: a clearly masculine performance of brisk activity. Yes, the message seemed to be, the Dutch have incurred a debt of gratitude to the Americans. And it will be repaid in *deeds*.

As a third theme, then, speeches, brochures, exhibits and images portrayed the Marshall Plan not as a hand-out, passively received, but as a call to action: an opportunity to be realised by the Dutch themselves through hard work. The report of the 1949 conference of the Dutch Foundation of Labour (*Stichting van de Arbeid*), a corporatist body that included representatives of government, business and labour, that marked the first anniversary of the Marshall Plan, stated that Dutch gratitude must be expressed in ‘dogged labour ... [the] will to brave and persistent effort’.⁵⁴ At the occasion

Of the available choices in the poll, only 23% selected ‘to help Europeans’. Rachlis, ‘Findings of a Survey on the Marshall Plan in the Netherlands’, n.d. [c. June 1949], NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 3. Also see: Van der Eng, *Marshall-hulp*, 128.

⁵⁰ Rachlis, ‘Findings of a Survey’, n.d. [c. June 1949]; Van der Eng, *Marshall-Hulp*, 125–8.

⁵¹ Speeches by Van der Beugel and Damme in *Het Economisch Herstel Programma*, enclosed in letter to Van der Beugel, 12 Mar. 1949.

⁵² Speech by Kupers in *idem*.

⁵³ ‘...de naar dankbaarheid smachtende Amerikaanse staatsburger...’. P.A. Zoetmulder, bureau of the government commissioner for the European Recovery Program, to Hirschfeld, 11 Aug. 1951, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23056.

⁵⁴ *Het Economisch Herstel Programma*, enclosed in letter to Van der Beugel, 12 Mar. 1949. Also consult the speeches by Van der Beugel (‘Europe was not waiting with arms folded’); entrepreneur Arnold Hugo Ingen Housz (‘Let us be grateful but not complacent. On the contrary, tighten the belt, roll up the sleeves, and forward to the second wind!’); and Valentine (the sacrifices and soberness of the Dutch compel international respect).

of the second anniversary of the Marshall Plan, labour leader Adriaan de Bruyn assured listeners of the *Voice of America* that the Netherlands would repay its moral obligations: 'A "recovered Holland" will be presented to the American people as thanks and in exchange for their help'.⁵⁵ And to mark the ceremonial end of the aid programme in 1952, Hirschfeld announced that:

After this period of four years a word a great gratitude for it [US aid] is appropriate, but it behoves the Netherlands, in terms of expressing that gratitude, to not limit itself to words[:] with healthy policy and hard work ... it has shown how the Netherlands is deserving of American aid.⁵⁶

As the ceremonies surrounding the reception of the first Marshall Plan goods had already implied, Dutch recovery through hard work was, in and of itself, an expression of gratitude *as well as* an appropriate settlement of the Dutch moral debt to the United States. That emphasis on hard work cannot simply be explained by a desire to show the US Congress that its money was well-spent. It was also a central aspect of the government's paternalistic approach to national reconstruction: a domestic policy of austerity based on high production and low consumption, which was translated in official propaganda as a moral duty to 'hard work and sober living'.⁵⁷ This energetic, masculine expression of gratitude simultaneously allowed the Dutch to accept the Marshall aid with their pride intact and, in that sense, managed to address the concerns of both US and Dutch audiences. For example, the popular pamphlet '*Het Marshallplan en U*', richly illustrated by the Dutch artist Jo Spier, included a picture of a 'typical' Dutch worker that was consistent with this Dutch self-image: broad chested and cheerfully confident. The accompanying text read: 'head up, shoulder to the wheel, roll up those sleeves, stand on your own feet [but] don't live beyond your means. That is how it's done!' Thus, the Dutch did not self-identify as passive receivers, they were no damsels in distress, but actively shaped their own destiny: 'Receiving [aid] is no challenge', Spier let his readers know, 'We need to get to work!'⁵⁸

By the end of the Marshall Plan, then, Dutch leaders had come to interpret and explain the aid programme as a mutually beneficial endeavour and their expressions of gratitude for it as a confirmation of US–Dutch friendship, cooperation and solidarity, rather than as an acknowledgement of Dutch dependency. Prime Minister Willem Drees highlighted that interpretation in his government's final report of the Marshall Plan: '[I]t is a symbol of what the effect of real co-operation can be for peaceful purposes in the world'.⁵⁹ This message had clearly come across. In May, 1953, the US Embassy in The Hague reported that '[w]hile the Dutch admire our generosity ... there is no real sense of gratitude as such'. This was a conditional kind of appreciation: 'Dutchmen believe American aid to the Netherlands and other Marshall Plan countries is in America's own self-interest, and furthermore, that as a wealthy country richly endowed with natural resources it is an American duty to be generous'.⁶⁰ At this point in time, the ECA mission in the Netherlands may have come to

⁵⁵ De Bruijn, text of radio address, enclosed in Hoogwater to Van der Beugel, 18 Mar. 1950.

⁵⁶ Hirschfeld, untitled transcript of radio address.

⁵⁷ Van der Eng, *Marshall-Hulp*, 125–9; Eric Bloemen, 'Hard Work! Ideology and Interest in Dutch Economic Policy at Home and Abroad Between 1945 and 1951', *Economic and Social History of the Netherlands* 2 (1991): 135–48; Van den Berk, 'The Intermediary', 418–19.

⁵⁸ Jo Spier, 'Het Marshallplan en U' (The Hague: Persdienst van het ministerie van Economische Zaken, 1949), https://geheugen.delpher.nl/nl/geheugen/view?identifier=EVDO02%3ANIOD05_8178 (accessed 10 July 2024). See also: Roza, 'Educating the Nation'. On how gender is a signifier of power and hierarchy among nations, and how countries themselves have gendered national identities, which are at times self-defined or projected on them by other countries and thus shape broader social and global hierarchies, see: Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, 'Gendering American Foreign Relations', in Costigliola and Hogan, eds., *Explaining the History*, 271–83.

⁵⁹ Nederlands Directoraat-Generaal voor het Economisch en Militair Hulpprogramma, *Herwonnen Welvaart: De Betekenis van het Marshallplan voor Nederland en de Europese Samenwerking* (The Hague: Staatsdrukkerij, 1954).

⁶⁰ Philip Clock, secretary US Embassy in the Netherlands, to the Department of State, 'Sensitive points in Netherlands-United States relations', despatch 2132, 28 May 1952, NARA, RG84, entry 3012, box 31, class 350 'Netherlands'.

regret that gratitude did not translate into a claim to more consistent Dutch support for US policies, as it experienced considerable local resistance to its new message that focused on increased defence spending. As part of a report on mutual security, a 1953 assessment of Dutch attitudes noted that the ‘Neth[erlands] is no exception to [the] general rule that gratitude provides no continuing basis for national policy, particularly when recipient nations [are] inclined [to] view acts giving rise to such gratitude as motivated by enlightened self-interest’.⁶¹

Commemorating the Marshall Plan, 1952–Today

Does gratitude have an expiration date? Was the emotional debt incurred by Marshall aid ever repaid? As late as 2018, at the seventieth anniversary of the start of the Marshall Plan, former Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs and NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer argued that the Netherlands owed the US ‘eternal gratitude’, having assumed a debt that by its very nature could never be truly repaid.⁶² The Dutch discourse of gratitude that developed during the Marshall era has indeed proven itself to be remarkably enduring.⁶³ We argue that this discourse did not just continue because the Netherlands owed the United States ‘eternal gratitude’ or because it was considered to be proper diplomatic decorum, but also because a variety of actors on both sides of the Atlantic continued to have an interest in doing so, thus underlining the significance of these emotional expressions in the broader Dutch–American diplomatic process.

We do so in this section by exploring three historical moments that stand out due to frictions in the relationship and, apparently, a particularly strong desire to reconfirm or recalibrate transatlantic ties. While the Dutch–American diplomacy of gratitude was shaped by the specific post-war concerns surrounding changes to the European balance of power and US Marshall aid, it was adopted and adapted over the next eighty years to meet changing needs. Dutch expressions of gratitude during these moments built upon the scripts and practices that had developed during the Marshall Plan period itself and found expression through commemoration ceremonies and the presentation of gifts.⁶⁴

During her 1952 state visit to the United States, for example, Queen Juliana presented a gift ‘from the people of the Netherlands to the people of the United States’ to thank the Americans for their role in the liberation and post-war reconstruction of the Netherlands.⁶⁵ The gift of choice was a carillon, to be placed in a bell-tower situated between Arlington National Cemetery and the Iwo Jima monument overlooking Washington, DC. Together, its fifty bells offered – in the words of the National Parks Service – ‘a song of thanks’.⁶⁶ In his book *Bells for America*, Diederik Oostdijk traces the saga of this official token of Dutch gratitude through the Cold War and into the twenty-first century,

⁶¹ Mutual Security Agency mission in the Netherlands, briefing papers for evaluation team, 19 Feb. 1953, NARA, RG469, entry 1323, box 2. In 1951, ECA missions in Europe became responsible for the local coordination of the Mutual Security Act and the ECA concurrently became the Mutual Security Agency. For the sake of consistency and to avoid confusion, our text here refers to the mission as the ECA. On US attempts to promote rearmament in the Netherlands, consult: David J. Snyder, ‘Domesticity, Rearmament, and the Limits of US Public Diplomacy in the Netherlands during the Early Cold War’, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 15, no. 3 (2013): 47–75.

⁶² Quoted in: Keunen, ‘Je geweten verplicht het’.

⁶³ The commemoration of Marshall Plan aid is not a phenomenon that is shared by all the original recipients. Such a tradition appears to be comparatively strong in Germany and Austria, both having their own national foundations tied to the memory of the Marshall Plan. The German Marshall Fund of the United States, for example, was founded through a gift from the West German government to the United States at the 25th anniversary of the Plan in 1972: <https://www.gmfus.org/about/history> (accessed 10 July 2024).

⁶⁴ On the way in which Americans have used Marshall Plan commemorations and the associated ‘myth’ of the Marshall Plan as a ‘valuable political tool for arguing in favour of an enlightened US-led world order’, see: Giles Scott-Smith, ‘The Necessary Marshall Myth’, *Clingendael Spectator*, 18 Apr. 2018, <https://spectator.clingendael.org/en/publication/necessary-marshall-myth> (accessed 10 July 2024).

⁶⁵ National Park Service, ‘Netherlands Carillon’, <https://www.nps.gov/gwmp/learn/historyculture/netherlandscarillon.htm> (accessed 10 July 2024).

⁶⁶ Oostdijk, *Bells for America*, 12; National Parks Service, ‘A Song of Thanks’, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/netherlands-carillon> (accessed 1 June 2023).

demonstrating how the gift was ‘to a large degree political, self-serving, economically motivated, and more related to the Dutch need to reimagine its own past, present and future, than to thank the United States’.⁶⁷ During a time when significant segments of Dutch society were ambivalent or even explicitly critical towards the United States as a result of its role in the decolonisation of the Dutch East Indies, the carillon offered a chance to publicly reconfirm Dutch–American friendship and appreciation for the US role in the world.⁶⁸

Financed with the help of private contributions, the carillon was also a product of the economic interests of various stakeholders, including the Dutch banking industry, the Netherlands Antilles and KLM Dutch Royal Airlines. The Antilles contributed 20,000 guilders to sponsor the largest bell of the carillon because, according to Oostdijk, ‘the six Caribbean islands were hoping that the prestige of securing the largest bell would lure American tourists’.⁶⁹ KLM, which contributed 5,000 guilders, also had clear commercial interests, embedded in unsuccessful Dutch attempts to acquire landing rights in the United States. This has been a recurring issue in Dutch–American relations since the end of the Second World War, causing significant bilateral friction.⁷⁰ Oostdijk concludes that ‘the primary reason for many of these gifts was thus not gratitude to the United States for its part in Dutch liberation and the Marshall Plan but rather hopes that the United States could offer lucrative economic opportunities’.⁷¹

In 1967, the twentieth anniversary of George Marshall’s 1947 ‘Harvard speech’ provided similar opportunities for Dutch actors eager to pursue both political-diplomatic and economic interests to reconfirm Dutch–American relations through ceremonial expressions of gratitude during a period of increased transatlantic tension. This time the gift was a Lectureship in Dutch Civilization presented to Harvard University by Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. It was not the Dutch government that took the initiative, but the Dutch Atlanticist Ernst van der Beugel. Formerly a top diplomat and the director of the Marshall Plan bureau that coordinated the Dutch side of the Marshall Plan, Van der Beugel had left the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1959 but remained a prominent member of the unofficial Cold War transatlantic elite, for example as secretary-general of the Bilderberg Meetings.⁷²

Van der Beugel was convinced that the security of the West in the context of the Cold War depended on the closest possible transatlantic relations but, in 1967, these faced multiple new challenges. Among these were the breakdown of the Cold War consensus regarding the Soviet threat and the rise of a new generation that had not experienced the Second World War, or the American role in the liberation and reconstruction of Europe. While these had been key formative experiences for Van der Beugel’s generation, many members of the post-war generation grew up associating the United States with racial injustice and the Vietnam War. As Giles Scott-Smith puts it, ‘the US had shifted from being the model to being a problem’.⁷³ Van der Beugel feared that the vocalisation of anti-American sentiments in Dutch society might antagonise the US public and Congress and thus endanger their support for US military engagement on the European continent.

In this context, the presentation of the Lectureship was used to serve multiple purposes. In his speech, Prince Bernhard first of all emphasised the broad popular support for this token of Dutch gratitude, underlining how it was ‘for more than ninety percent a gift of private individuals and

⁶⁷ Likewise, Oostdijk argues that the ‘United States accepted the gift and offered it a prime spot in the American memorial landscape because it resonated with its political agenda and the grandiose plans of the National Parks Service (NPS) to optically connect the memorial sites of the National Mall and Arlington’. Oostdijk, *Bells for America*, 10–11.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 91–2.

⁷⁰ Giles Scott-Smith and David J. Snyder, ‘“A Test of Sentiments”: Civil Aviation, Alliance Politics, and the KLM Challenge in Dutch–American Relations’, *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 5 (2013): 917–45; Bloemendal, *Reframing the Diplomat*, 143–47.

⁷¹ Oostdijk, *Bells for America*, 92.

⁷² On the official and unofficial roles Ernst van der Beugel played in post-war transatlantic relations see: Bloemendal, *Reframing the Diplomat*.

⁷³ Scott-Smith, ‘Maintaining Transatlantic Community: US Public Diplomacy, the Ford Foundation and the Successor Generation Concept in US Foreign Affairs, 1960s–1980s’, *Global Society* 28, no. 1 (2014): 92.

professional organisations and companies in the Netherlands'.⁷⁴ Dutch commercial interests were also clearly represented. Indeed, the prince – a famous goodwill ambassador for Dutch business interests abroad – was accompanied by a delegation of 'Dutch diplomats and business leaders' and frequently emphasised the financial contributions by Dutch 'industrialists and trade representatives' to fund this token of Dutch gratitude.⁷⁵ For US audiences, the repeated emphasis on Dutch popular sentiments in the prince's speech as well as in US newspapers reflected signs of gratitude and goodwill that provided a counter-weight to contemporary criticism emerging from Dutch society. In the Netherlands itself, where the presentation of the Lectureship generated significant attention, it offered a reminder of American generosity and benevolence – the 'good Cold War America' – during a time when newspaper headlines were more likely to be about the violent war in Vietnam or race relations in the United States.⁷⁶

Significantly, the prince also explained how this Dutch token of gratitude was, first of all, 'a symbol of the friendship between our two countries which have had such long lasting and constructive relations with each other'.⁷⁷ He embedded post-war US aid in a longer history of Dutch-American relations, highlighting the contributions of Dutch settlers to US society and how the Netherlands was among the first to recognise the new American Republic in 1782, while also quoting John Adams who, inspired by Dutch society, said: 'In love of liberty and in the defense of it, Holland has been our example'.⁷⁸ During the press conference that followed the official presentation of the Lectureship, Prince Bernhard 'noted with a smile that once Holland was able to help the U.S. financially with a \$12 million loan negotiated in 1786 by John Adams. Twelve million dollars being "the total extent of the debts of the U.S. in those days"'.⁷⁹ This framing of the Marshall Plan as just one 'episode' in a longer reciprocal relationship between two old friends became a key characteristic of the Dutch diplomacy of gratitude after the Marshall Plan and into the twenty-first century.

In 2018, amidst transatlantic frictions surrounding the Trump presidency, the seventieth anniversary of the arrival of the *Noordam* once again offered a good opportunity to reconfirm the strong historical foundations of the transatlantic relationship. That year, Republican Senator Doug Mastriano published an article under the title 'Ungrateful Allies', referring to the European countries that refused to pay their share of defence contributions, thus 'taking advantage of American goodwill'. Similar sentiments existed within the Trump administration.⁸⁰ Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and Dutch Ambassador to the United States Henne Schuwer used these commemorations not just to recognise the aid received, but also as an opportunity to emphasise what the Dutch had contributed to the

⁷⁴ 'An Act Without Peer in History', Address of His Royal Highness Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands at Harvard University on 7 June 1967, Private Family Archive Aukelien van Hoytema-van der Beugel, Leiden, the Netherlands, Box 'Lezingen E.H. van der Beugel'.

⁷⁵ 'Bernhard Endowment to Harvard', *The Boston Globe*, 7 June 1967, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA, United States (henceforth: Harvard), HUC XXX box 63, 23-E1. HUC 5367.2; 'Prins Bernhard gaat Harvard-universiteit leerstoel aanbieden', *Trouw*, 31 May 1967, 3; Thomas Gijswijt, *Informal Alliance: The Bilderberg Group and Transatlantic Relations during the Cold War, 1952–1968* (London: Routledge, 2019), 35.

⁷⁶ Michael Holm, *The Marshall Plan: A New Deal for Europe* (London: Routledge, 2017), xvi. 'In American national memory, the Marshall Plan is recalled as the ultimate act of good will: an economic mission that saved Europe from hunger, despair, and Communism. It continues to instil pride. It represents the good Cold War America, the one that existed before the death knell sounded in Vietnam.'

⁷⁷ 'Dutch Salute Aid in Gift to Harvard', *The Boston Globe*, 7 June 1967, Harvard, HUC XXX Box 63, 23-E1. HUC 5367.2.

⁷⁸ 'An Act Without Peer in History'.

⁷⁹ Airline Grimes, 'Netherlands Prince Endows Harvard Chair', *The Boston Herald*, 8 June 1967, Harvard, HUC XXX Box 63, 23-E1. HUC 5367.2.

⁸⁰ Douglas Mastriano, 'Ungrateful Allies: The United States and NATO', *Providence Magazine*, 11 July 2018, <https://providencemag.com/2018/07/ungrateful-allies-united-states-nato/> (accessed 10 July 2024). On the Trump administration, see for example: Bret Stephens, 'NATO is full of freeloaders. But it's how we defend the free world', *The New York Times*, 5 Dec. 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/05/opinion/trump-nato.html> (accessed 10 July 2024); Michael E. O'Hanlon, 'What Trump gets wrong on allied burden-sharing', *The Brookings Institute*, 11 July 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/07/11/what-trump-gets-wrong-on-allied-burden-sharing/> (accessed 10 July 2024).

United States – again framing the Marshall Plan as one key moment in the long-term development of a deep-rooted transatlantic friendship.

Interestingly, while the prime minister and the ambassador both emphasised the importance of remembering the Marshall Plan, neither of them explicitly thanked the United States. Instead, they framed the aid above all as a great example of *cooperation* and *solidarity* between two countries sharing common interests and friendly historical ties. In doing so, Prime Minister Rutte built upon existing scripts, citing the words of his predecessor Willem Drees in 1954 while also touching upon similar themes as Prince Bernhard did in 1967. When Rutte visited Donald Trump in the White House two years later, the gift he brought for the American president was a copy of the 1782 loan that Dutch bankers provided to John Adams. This gift, according to the Dutch prime minister, served as a ‘wonderful example’ of how the Netherlands had ‘helped’ the United States from the earliest moments of its existence, making it possible for the ‘American experiment’ to survive.⁸¹ Presenting the Marshall Plan as part of this longer history of bilateral reciprocity allowed the Dutch to change the narrative from one of Dutch dependency on American aid to a more equal interpretation of transatlantic cooperation, solidarity and interdependency, creating a framework that allowed them to express gratitude for the Marshall aid without a loss of dignity or national pride.

Conclusion

The narrative of gratitude that developed in Dutch–American relations in the context of the Marshall Plan was initiated by Dutch actors in pursuit of Dutch transatlantic interests, despite the fact that US diplomats – consciously navigating the post-war emotional landscape – did not explicitly demand Dutch expressions of gratitude. While gratitude may at first sight appear as a deferential and ‘feminine’ emotion, this article demonstrates how the Dutch overturned the gendered script. They did so through ‘masculine’ performances of gratitude that allowed them to reframe and negotiate their perceived loss in international status after the Second World War, thus obscuring the asymmetrical transatlantic power relationship. The Dutch government found ways to shape its expressions of gratitude through approaches that promoted Dutch interests – e.g. in the form of the continuation of aid – while also maintaining a sense of dignity that was consistent with the national self-image. During the Marshall Plan period, it was able to do so by the grace of US diplomats who carefully navigated transatlantic emotional sensitivities, toning down Congress’s emotional demands by trying not to offend Dutch pride. The long-term diplomatic significance of this post-war emotional settlement is revealed by the remarkable endurance in the Netherlands of a narrative that revolves around gratitude and return gifts. Particularly during moments of transatlantic drift, Dutch actors with a strong stake in the relationship returned to key features of Marshall Plan gratitude, albeit with variations and differences of emphases that suited the needs of the time. One constant, though, is that the story continues to provide a means to reconfirm Dutch–American relations whilst addressing multiple audiences, providing a space to express appreciation of American support, while simultaneously mediating Dutch anxieties about the obvious inequality of the relationship.

When conceptualised as an emotion in international relations, the study of gratitude offers a particularly promising tool to reveal how power relationships were *actively* calibrated by historical actors through emotional diplomacy. By definition, gratitude is a social emotion that pre-supposes a relationship between giver and receiver and, as we have shown, allows for a balanced understanding of those ties by also focusing on the receiver of aid as an active agent. With regard to the topic of this article, celebrations of the Marshall Plan in contemporary publicity or later commemorations are well-known, but asking questions about how they were invested with emotional-diplomatic meaning offers access to deeper anxieties and attitudes that shaped transatlantic relations over a long period. In this case, it shows how a small nation such as the Netherlands sought to accommodate itself to an unequal

⁸¹ ‘Dit cadeau kreeg Rutte van Trump’, *De Telegraaf*, 3 July 2020: <https://www.telegraaf.nl/video/2249588/dit-cadeau-kreeg-rutte-van-trump> (accessed 10 July 2024).

relationship and at the same time avoid outright deference, thus maintaining room for independent manoeuvre. It is likely that expressions of gratitude and the underlying anxieties that it addressed were part of a wider, transatlantic emotional landscape. For example, these expressions tied into Dutch perceptions of the United States in general and its role in shaping the independence of Indonesia more specifically. Further research should reveal how Dutch and other European emotional responses to post-war US hegemony also shaped contemporaneous issues such as the process of decolonisation or the formation of NATO. On the side of the United States, this article suggests that shaping post-war transatlantic relations required emotional work and a certain level of deference to the emotions of European partners, even in the case of a small nation such as the Netherlands. At the same time, the question of whether and how the hegemonic position of the United States also offered emotional rewards deserves further attention.

Competing interests. The authors declare none.