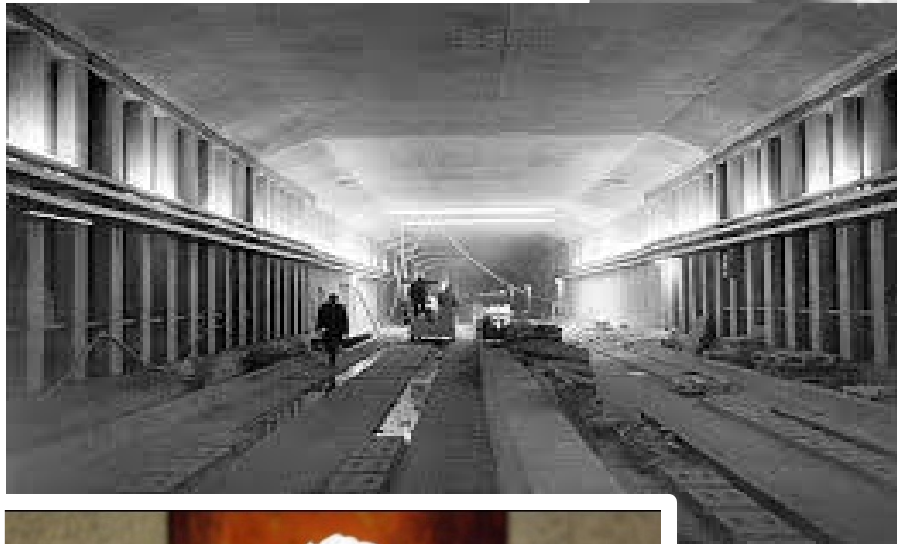




It wasn't me

*political incidents, blame avoidance and ministerial resignation in the Netherlands
2000-2013*



**Master thesis
Minou de Ruyter
November 2013**



Universiteit Utrecht

It wasn't me

Exploring the relation between political incidents, blame avoidance strategies and ministerial resignation in the Netherlands 2000-2013

Minou de Ruiter

w.j.m.deruiter@uu.nl

3381331

Master thesis

Research Master in Public Administration and Organizational Science

Utrecht University, Erasmus University Rotterdam & Tilburg University

Supervisor: dr. S.L. Kuipers (USBO)

Second reader: Prof. dr. Arjen Boin (USBO)

Thesis defense: 12 December 2013, Utrecht School of Governance (USG/USBO), Utrecht

Preface

"The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds the most discoveries, is not 'Eureka!', but 'That's funny...'" Isaac Asimov

After two long years of Research Master, you expect that the writing of your master thesis will be like a walk in the park. You have written so many papers, read so many books and survived it all. And interesting it is. I loved reading different perspectives on the survival of Ministers under pressure. However, in the end it felt more like a really long steeplechase. The steeplechase is an obstacle race in athletics, where runners have to leap over many barriers and water jumps. Like every research, this research had those hurdles. Hard choices had to be made about which cases would be included, how to summarize a 40-page debate truthfully in a couple of sentences and how to write short and active English. During some days it felt like there would be no end to the perpetual debates between parliamentarians who all want to spend as much speaking time as possible. During other days, I could no longer write one English sentence without any grammar mistakes, or without ten subordinate clauses for that matter.

However, the other parts made it worthwhile. Every time I passed a hurdle by completing a piece, it made me go faster. Besides, most of the debates were fun reads. Who would have thought that Ministers and Parliamentarians could bent Dutch in so many versatile ways? Curious metaphors, like *'uitzwaaiers'*, and vague sentences without any substance, such as *'Hij zit er goed in'*, were commonplace. Probably it is parliamentarian humor, when VVD-Parliamentarian Verbugt, criticizes PvdA-Parliamentarian Van Gijzel for having *'GeGijzeld'* (taking hostage) his own party during the debate with Minister Korthals.¹ Interesting was to see how Minister could acknowledge something, while at the same time still trying to mitigate it. Korthals managed to say: *'It is possible that I once heard in a regular consultation that there could be a deal in the future.'*

I hope that these moments are reflected in my research. All faults are mine and mine alone. Without the help of the following people, the mistakes and faults in this research would be too many to bear. First, I would like to thank my parents and my friends Olga, Ulrike, Marlot, Barbara and Karlijn for keeping me company in the library and for putting up with me during the long moments of complaining that it was all bad. Second, my dear sister Atie, who has read each part of my thesis at least twice and who has heard every story about De Grave, Korthals, Donner and Teeven endlessly. And last and most important, my tutor Sanneke Kuipers, who helped me enormously with her sharp and critical comments and her tireless improvements to my poorly written drafts. Thanks to her and Paul 't Hart, I can now try to confirm or falsify the following statement in the new step of my academic life.

"Contrary to what Asimov says, the most exciting phrase in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not 'Eureka!' or 'That's funny...', it's 'Your research grant has been approved.'" John Alejandro King

Minou de Ruiter – 27 November 2013

¹ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2128).

Executive summary

When government policies turn sour, people get hurt, costs escalate, and programs conspicuously fail to deliver, questions of blame and accountability become crucial in both the mass media and the formal political arena. Political incidents trigger calls for resignation of responsible Ministers. This research addressed the question why only some Ministers are able to successfully weather these political blame games. Studies on political incidents and ministerial resignation so far either tried to explain resignation from structural conditions, or as the effect of different framing strategies in blame games. This led to a clear gap in literature on the understanding of ministerial resignation. This comparative case study analyzed both the effects of three structural conditions and Ministers' blame avoidance strategies on ministerial resignation, in four political incidents, between 2000-2013. The key question of this research was: *To what extent and under what conditions do blame avoidance strategies used by Dutch (junior) Ministers in response to political incidents between 2000 and 2013 have an effect on ministerial resignation and survival?*

According to the theoretical framework, three structural conditions are important in explaining ministerial resignation: the individual backgrounds of the Ministers, the characteristics of the political incident and the political landscape at that time. Besides, an overarching framework of three types of blame avoidance strategies, namely political, agency and policy strategies needed to be assessed to explain resignation (in line with: Hood, 2011). These strategies can be used by Ministers to deny the severity of the incident (problem denial), deny responsibility for the incident, or accept responsibility, but in such a way Minister can stay on.

This research employed a structured comparison of cases, in line with Ragin (1987) and George and Bennett (2005), in order to assess the validity of the theoretical framework. Two resignation and two non-resignation cases were selected, in order to avoid a bias towards success or failure of blame avoidance strategies. This study used a process tracing approach, based upon a narrative analysis of parliamentary debates and a consultation of all accessible policy documents.

The process tracing of each of the cases and the subsequent case comparison showed that, in these cases, Ministers' blame avoidance strategies have an effect on ministerial survival and resignation in political incidents. However, the possible use and efficacy of those strategies is constrained by structural conditions in the Ministers' background and political landscape. The Ministers' hazard for resignation increases when Ministers have a Justice portfolio, lack the support of a stable majority coalition and experience a political incident within close proximity to parliamentary elections. When Ministers still find themselves in stable majority coalitions, timing and sequence of Ministers' blame avoidance strategies can help to deflect blame for the political incident. Ministers' agency strategies and political strategies in which the Minister denies responsibility for the incident have been proven unsuccessful in these cases in the long run. Ministers could in most instances help themselves better by acknowledging their responsibilities for the incident and pairing their remorse with policy reform strategies instead of holding on to denial until changes in the political landscape rendered a switch of strategies impossible.

It is hard to generalize these conclusions towards the whole population of political incidents of Ministers in the Netherlands. However, this research showed that research into ministerial resignation needs to include both an assessment of structural conditions and of blame games around political incidents. So far, both literature strands did hint to this lack of combining both factors, but neither one did really incorporate the other strand in a structured fashion.

Table of contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Preface | 3 |
| Executive Summary | 4 |
| Table of Contents | 5 |
| List of Tables and Figures | 9 |
| 1. Introduction: political incidents, blame avoidance and resignation | 11 |
| 1.1 Ministerial resignation: structural conditions | 11 |
| 1.2 The need for (a study of) blame avoidance | 12 |
| 1.3 Zooming in: research focus | 13 |
| 1.4 How to answer this question? | 13 |
| 1.5 Scientific and societal relevance | 14 |
| 1.6 Research outline | 14 |
| 2. Theoretical chapter: the relation between ministerial resignations, structural conditions and blame avoidance in political incidents | 15 |
| 2.1 Resignation: the question of ministerial responsibility and confidence | 15 |
| 2.2 Structural conditions regarding Ministerial resignation and survival: individual, incident related and political conditions | 16 |
| 2.2.1 <i>Individual background of Ministers under attack</i> | 16 |
| 2.2.2 <i>Characteristics of the blame game: media salience and comparable incidents</i> | 17 |
| 2.2.3 <i>Political landscape</i> | 18 |
| 2.2.4 <i>Conclusion: structural conditions</i> | 19 |
| 2.3 The construction of a political incident: different ‘blaming’ phases | 20 |
| 2.3.1 <i>Strategies and the different stages of blame denial</i> | 21 |
| 2.3.2 <i>Strategies and the line of reasoning behind blame denial</i> | 21 |
| 2.4 The types of blame avoidance strategies and the level of blame acceptance | 22 |
| 2.4.1 <i>Political strategies: ‘spin your way out of trouble’</i> | 22 |
| 2.4.2 <i>Agency strategies: ‘find a scapegoat’</i> | 23 |
| 2.4.3 <i>Policy strategies: ‘don’t make contestable judgments’</i> | 24 |
| 2.4.4 <i>Conclusion: blame games, blame denial and adjoining blame avoidance strategies</i> | 25 |
| 2.5 Conclusion: relation between ministerial resignation, political incidents, structural conditions, and blame avoidance strategies | 26 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 3. Research design | 28 |
| 3.1 A comparative case study | 28 |
| 3.1.1 <i>Case selection: Resignation issues in the Netherlands 2000-2013</i> | 29 |
| 3.1.2 <i>Resignation cases: Korthals and Donner & Dekker</i> | 29 |
| 3.1.3 <i>Selection of two non-resignation cases: Pronk, De Vries, de Grave and Teeven</i> | 31 |
| 3.2 Within-case analysis: a process tracing approach | 32 |
| 3.3 Data collection and analysis: timing and triangulation | 33 |
| 3.4 Conclusion: Reliability and validity | 35 |
| 4. One to blame, all to blame. Case 1: Ministers de Vries, Pronk and de Grave and the firework explosion in Enschede | 36 |
| 4.1 Description of the political incident | 36 |
| 4.2 Structural conditions of the incident | 37 |
| 4.2.1 <i>Individual background of the three Ministers</i> | 38 |
| 4.2.2 <i>Media salience of the incident</i> | 38 |
| 4.2.3 <i>Political landscape</i> | 39 |
| 4.2.4 <i>Conclusion: the effect of structural conditions</i> | 40 |
| 4.3 Assessing 'smoking guns': The efficacy of blame avoidance strategies | 40 |
| 4.3.1 <i>Post-incident: making sense of an explosion</i> | 40 |
| 4.3.2 <i>The investigation of the Commission-Oosting: 'fact finding'</i> | 41 |
| 4.3.3 <i>After the Commission-Oosting: establishing causality</i> | 44 |
| 4.2.4 <i>The 'final' accountability debate</i> | 46 |
| 4.4 Conclusion: why did all Ministers survive, albeit with different blame levels? | 49 |
| 5. I did not know, or I cannot remember, honestly... Case 2: Minister Korthals and the Schiphol tunnel construction fraud | 51 |
| 5.1 Description of the incident | 51 |
| 5.2 Structural conditions of the incident | 53 |
| 5.2.1 <i>Individual characteristics of the Minister</i> | 53 |
| 5.2.2 <i>Media salience</i> | 54 |
| 5.2.3 <i>Political landscape</i> | 55 |
| 5.2.4 <i>Conclusion: the effect of structural conditions</i> | 56 |
| 5.3 Assessing 'smoking guns': The efficacy of blame avoidance strategies | 56 |
| 5.3.1 <i>The discovery of a large fraud: sense making and 'fact finding'</i> | 56 |
| 5.3.2 <i>Parliamentary inquiry: establishing causality towards a (Defense) Minister</i> | 62 |
| 5.3.3 <i>Report of the inquiry: liar, liar pants on fire: assessing culpability and responsibility</i> | 64 |
| 5.4 Conclusion: why did the Minister resign? | 65 |

6. The heat of a battle between Ministers and investigator. Case 3: Ministers Donner, Verdonk and Dekker and a fire in a Schiphol detention center

66

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| 6.1 | Description of the political incident | 66 |
| 6.2 | Structural conditions of the incident | 67 |
| 6.2.1 | <i>Individual background of the Ministers</i> | 67 |
| 6.2.2 | <i>Media salience</i> | 68 |
| 6.2.3 | <i>Political landscape</i> | 69 |
| 6.2.4 | <i>Conclusion: the effect of structural conditions</i> | 70 |
| 6.3 | Assessing ‘smoking guns’: the efficacy of Ministers’ blame avoidance strategies | 70 |
| 6.3.1 | <i>Investigation period: quality of ‘aftercare’ contested in multiple debates</i> | 70 |
| 6.3.2 | <i>Investigation period: sense making in the area of fire safety</i> | 75 |
| 6.3.3 | <i>Publication of the report: immediate resignation of Donner and Dekker</i> | 77 |
| 6.3.4 | <i>Accountability debate for Verdonk: Donner did it all</i> | 80 |
| 6.4 | Conclusion: Why were Minister Donner and Dekker forced to resign, while Verdonk could stay on? | 81 |

7. ‘Tough but fair’ or ‘inhumane without care’. Case 4: Junior Minister Teeven and the suicide of asylum seeker Dolmatov

82

| | | |
|-------|---|----|
| 7.1 | Description of the political incident | 82 |
| 7.2 | Structural conditions of the incident | 83 |
| 7.2.1 | <i>Individual background of the junior Minister</i> | 84 |
| 7.2.2 | <i>Media salience of the incident</i> | 85 |
| 7.2.3 | <i>Political landscape</i> | 85 |
| 7.2.4 | <i>Conclusion: the effect of structural conditions</i> | 86 |
| 7.3 | Assessing ‘smoking guns’: the efficacy of Minister’s blame avoidance strategies | 86 |
| 7.3.1 | <i>Post-incident and investigation period: sense making and ‘fact finding’</i> | 86 |
| 7.3.2 | <i>Report of the inspection: assessing causality: incident or not?</i> | 87 |
| 7.3.3 | <i>Accountability debate: assessing culpability and responsibility</i> | 89 |
| 7.3.4 | <i>Aftermath of the debate: ‘a more humane policy’</i> | 92 |
| 7.4 | Conclusion: Why did Minister Teeven survive this incident? | 93 |

8. Case comparison: first answers

94

| | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 8.1 | Individual background of the Ministers | 94 |
| 8.2 | Structural characteristics of the blame game | 95 |
| 8.3 | Political landscape | 96 |
| 8.4 | Blame avoidance strategies in general: a short recap | 97 |
| 8.5 | Timing and sequence of strategies | 98 |

| | | |
|--|--|------------|
| 8.6 | Political strategies: use and efficacy | 99 |
| 8.7 | Agency strategies: use and efficacy | 100 |
| 8.8 | Policy strategies: use and efficacy | 101 |
| 8.9 | Relation strategies and structural conditions | 102 |
| 9. Conclusions and implications | | 103 |
| <hr/> | | |
| 9.1 | Answer to the research question | 103 |
| 9.2 | Limitations and possibilities for generalization | 104 |
| 9.3 | Further research questions | 105 |
| 9.4 | Closing remarks | 106 |
| 10. Appendices | | 107 |
| <hr/> | | |
| | Appendix A: Bibliography | |
| | Appendix B: Bibliography of each of the cases | |
| | Appendix C: overview of excluded resignation cases (in Dutch) | |
| | Appendix D: overview of excluded non-resignation cases | |
| | Appendix E: search terms + time frame + amount of articles of newspaper search on LexisNexis. | |

List of tables and figures per chapter

Chapter 2: Theoretical chapter

Table 2.1: Structural conditions which increase hazard of ministerial resignation

Table 2.2: Blame avoidance strategies grouped on level of blame denial and reasoning behind denial (free from: Hood, 2011; 18).

Figure 2.1: Stylized model of a blame game about a political incident

Chapter 3: Research design

Table 3.1: Information about selected cases

Chapter 4: De Grave, Pronk and De Vries and the firework explosion in Enschede

Figure 4.1: Censure vote against Minister de Grave (Motie De Hoop Scheffer c.s, 27157, nr. 42).

Figure 4.2: Newspaper attention per day for Minister(s) and the firework explosion in Enschede

Table 4.1: Periods within the incident 'Firework explosion'

Table 4.2 Individual background of the Ministers De Grave, Pronk and De Vries

Table 4.3: Blame avoidance strategies in post-incident period

Table 4.4: Blame avoidance strategies in investigation period

Table 4.5: Blame avoidance strategies in later investigation period

Table 4.6: Blame avoidance strategies in report period

Table 4.7: Blame avoidance strategies in first and second term of accountability debate

Table 4.8: blame avoidance strategies in third term of accountability debate

Chapter 5: Minister Korthals and the Schiphol tunnel construction fraud

Figure 5.1: Vote of censure (Motie Rosenmoller/Poppe, 28093, nr. 16).

Figure 5.2: Newspaper attention per day for Minister Korthals and the fraud in the Schipholtunnel

Table 5.1: Periods within the incident of Korthals and the fraud of the Schiphol tunnel

Table 5.2: Background of Minister Korthals

Table 5.3: Blame avoidance strategies during the post incident period

Table 5.4: Blame avoidance strategies during the later post-incident period

Table 5.5: Blame avoidance strategies during the parliamentary inquiry hearings

Chapter 6: Ministers Donner, Verdonk and Dekker and the fire in a Schiphol detention center

Figure 6.1: Newspaper attention per day for Minister(s) and the Schiphol fire

Table 6.1: Periods of the Schipholbrand incident

Table 6.2: Individual backgrounds of Minister Donner, Dekker and Verdonk

Table 6.3: Blame avoidance strategies regarding 'aftercare' in investigation period

Table 6.4: Blame avoidance strategies in later investigation period

Table 6.5: Blame avoidance strategies regarding fire safety in investigation period

Table 6.6: Blame avoidance strategies regarding concept-report

Table 6.8: Blame (avoidance) strategies of Donner and Dekker during resignation

Table 6.9: Blame avoidance strategies of Verdonk during accountability debates

Chapter 7: Junior Minister Teeven and the suicide of asylum seeker Dolmatov

Figure 7.1: Vote of no-confidence against junior Minister Teeven (Motie Gesthuizen c.s.' 19 637, nr. 1652)

Figure 7.2: Newspaper attention per day for junior Minister Teeven and the Dolmatov-incident

Table 7.1: Periods within the incident of Teeven and the suicide of Dolmatov

Table 7.2: Background of junior Minister Teeven

Table 7.3: Blame avoidance strategy in investigation period

Table 7.4: Blame avoidance strategies in report period

Table 7.5: Blame avoidance strategies in first term of accountability debate

Table 7.6: Blame avoidance strategies during second term of accountability debate

Table 7.7: Blame avoidance strategies in new investigation period

Chapter 8: Case comparison: first answers

Table 8.1 Cases and the incidents which were used as comparison in the blame games

1. Introduction: political incidents, blame avoidance and resignation

23 deaths and 500 million of damages due to a firework explosion in a busy residential area, 11 deaths in a fire in a detention center for illegal immigrants, the suicide of a wrongfully detained asylum seeker and 100 millions of lost tax dollars because of fraud in public construction works. These are just a couple of examples when government policy goes sour and, as a consequence, disaster strikes, people get hurt and costs escalate. Immediately media and Parliament ask the questions: ‘how could this have happened?’ and ‘who is responsible, who is to blame?’. This is the start of a blame game, with often (junior) Ministers, as key public executives, at the heart of these debates. (Junior) Ministers and other key actors try to persuade journalists, colleagues, the public and often independent inquiry committees of their account of the events. A historical comparison of Dutch post-war blame games provides many examples of similar fiascos producing different political outcomes for the ministers under blame. Why were the Ministers of Justice and Housing forced to resign after a deadly fire in a detention center, while the Ministers responsible for a deadly firework explosion in a residential area dodged the bullet? This thesis examines how Dutch Ministers, who are under pressure to resign in the face of a political incident, manage these ‘blame games’ and how the difference in the outcome of these games can be explained (Hood, 2011).

1.1 Ministerial resignation: structural conditions

The scattered empirical research on the blame attribution for policy success and failure uses subsequent electoral success as measure of efficacy for blame avoidance (Hellwig & Coffey, 2011; Tilley & Marsh, 2009). However, this research focuses on the behavior of (junior) Ministers, public executives who are not directly chosen. Besides that, it is often difficult to find an individual causal link between the blame avoidance of an individual Minister and subsequent electoral success and failure of his² political party. Therefore, efficacy of blame avoidance strategies is in this research operationalized as not being fired or not having to resign after a public incident.

A growing body of literature on ministerial resignation in parliamentary democracies attempts to relate the hazard of ministerial resignation to the individual characteristics of the Ministers, such as age, experience in Parliament and ministerial portfolio (see Fischer et al, 2006; Berlinski et al, 2007; Bovens et al, 2010). However, the effects of individual characteristics that we find in the literature show ambiguous results between countries. Some studies on ministerial resignation have started to include characteristics of the political incident (resignation call in this strand of literature) and the political landscape in their analysis in order to reach more explanatory power (Fischer et al, 2006; Bakema, 1991; Huberman & Martinez-Gallardo, 2008). However, the weakness of this literature strand is that it focuses on generic hazard of resignation for Ministers after a political incident. It neglects what Ministers, the Prime Minister and opponents actually say and do to influence perceptions of the political incident. In order to truly say something about ministerial resignation after political incidents, the identified structural conditions must be paired with an understanding of Ministers’ framing strategies in blame games.

² In this research, when I refer to Ministers in general, I will refer to the Minister as male. However, this is only done to improve consistency. Of course, Ministers can and will be in many cases female.

1.2 The need for (a study of) blame avoidance

The political incidents cited above underscore the assumption that one of the guiding rationales in representative democracies is the need for blame avoidance (Weaver, 1986; 380; Hood, 2011). This rationale is leading, because there is a 'negativity bias' in politics, which means that voters primarily vote on the basis of their older grievances and perceived losses instead of improvements and progress (Weaver, 1986; 380). Therefore, rational policy makers would be mostly engaged in blame avoiding behavior for losses as opposed to credit claiming for good policy (Arnold 1990; Ellis 1994; Pierson, 1996; Weaver, 1986).

These losses and negative events range from minor mistakes, to 'scandals' and even 'crises'. What they have in common is that they often entail a major shift in the administrative, political or social discourses about these public organizations or public executives (Boin et al., 2009). Often, these events mark the beginning of a search for who is responsible and what has to be done. These 'blame games', as Hood (2002) calls them do not only have negative functions. According to Bovens, blaming is also a fact of life for accountable political executives, as 'being accountable, means being responsible, which, in turn, means having to bear the blame' (2005; 189). Blaming helps the public and organizations to reassure them that 'failure is not an inevitable result of the complex systems that characterize modernity, but that it is preventable and remediable' (Moynihan, 2009; 1). Although blame games could have positive effects for the reassurance of the public, blame attribution can have important negative consequences for individual actors, such as fewer votes, a bad reputation and even firing and resignation.

The negative consequences of blame attribution make it interesting to see how different actors in the public sphere deal with the framing contest within blame games. How can (junior) Ministers successfully use framing strategies to deflect blame and stay in office? Empirical evidence shows that certain political leaders are more apt to 'politically contain crises' and avoid sanctions than others (Boin et al, 2009; 100; McGraw, 1990; 119). 'Accountability and framing determine the fine line between heroes and villains, between fame and blame' (Brändström, Kuipers & Daleus, 2008; 115). On the other hand, McGraw shows in her study that satisfactory justifications lead to 'more positive evaluations of the policy decision, enhanced credit, and a strengthening of the link between the policy judgment and the overall evaluation of the representative' (McGraw, 1991; 1148). What is interesting to see is that while several scholars in crisis and accountability literature have pointed to differences in blame avoidance strategies, the efficacy of these strategies is not yet empirically researched (except Boin et al, 2008; 2009).

This neglect is surprising, because while blame avoidance is often used in informal discussions and 'daily parlance', there are still no clear boundaries to the concept and, according to Hood, it has 'a curiously low profile as a field of study' (Hood, 2011; 14). The body of scientific literature is scattered over different disciplines such as psychology, political science and institutional economics. When it comes to the empirical use of the overarching framework of blame avoidance, the empirical body of literature is mostly focused on experimental research (McGraw, 1990; Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2006) or on cases within the management of health and financial/social risks (Black, 2005; Hood, Rothstein & Baldwin, 2001). Empirical studies on blame avoidance strategies focus mostly on one single type of blame avoidance strategy, such as the presentational framing strategies of political leaders (Hood et al., 2009; Bovens & 't Hart 1996; Brändström & Kuipers, 2003) or the agency strategies of provincial leaders in Denmark (Mortensen, 2012).

However, according to Hood (2011) blame avoidance strategies encompass three broader types of strategies, presentational, agency and policy strategies, which can be found among all levels of government and public organizations, instead of only high level politicians.

1.3 Zooming in: research focus

This empirical research tries to fill some important gaps in knowledge about ministerial resignation, by combining two separate strands of research. While one strand focusses on structural conditions for ministerial resignations (i.e. Berlinski et al, 2007; Bovens et al, 2010; Dowding & Dumont, Fischer et al, 2006; Huber & Martinez-Gallardo, 2008), the other strand focusses mostly on crisis exploitation in blame games (Boin et al, 2009; Brandström et al, 2003; 2008; Bovens et al, 1999; Rudolph, 2003; 2006; Stark, 2011). However, we need both an explanation of the effect of structural conditions for ministerial resignation and the effect of Ministers framing strategies blame in political incidents, to get a grasp on what can explain ministerial survival or resignation. This research tries to make two improvements. First, this research will not only analyze the effects of the different strategies used by different public executives and public organizations, but it will also try to establish under which conditions those strategies can be more successful. Second, this research will not only focus on one of the types of blame avoidance, but tries to use an overarching framework of presentational, agency and policy strategies. This framework is mostly based on the recent blame avoidance framework of Christopher Hood (2011), which is to date not empirically tested. This leads to the following research question:

To what extent and under what conditions do blame avoidance strategies used by Dutch (junior) ministers in response to political incidents between 2000 and 2013 have an effect on ministerial resignation and survival?

This empirical research employs Hood's blame avoidance framework in the Dutch political context. Specifically, this research uses process-tracing methodology to describe, interpret and explain structural conditions, blame avoidance considerations and strategies of Ministers during and after political incidents which have led to so-called 'resignation issues' of Dutch Ministers and Junior Ministers.

1.4 How to answer this question?

Two resignation and two non-resignation cases were selected, in order to avoid a bias towards success or failure of blame avoidance strategies. These cases have been selected on their variance in time (from 2000 onwards) and spread across parties and coalitions, policy sectors and incident types. For each selected case, a 'comprehensive storyline' and a thematic narrative with focus on 'smoking guns' and 'confessions' have been compiled using process tracing methodology (Bennett and George, 2004). This process tracing is based upon a narrative analysis of parliamentary debates and a consultation of all accessible policy documents. Next to parliamentary documents, media accounts were an important source in this research. After all, the 'news media play an important role in the blame game, in offering a public stage for framing strategies and by reporting and commenting on the events and actions' (Brändström, et al, 2008; 115; c.f. Mortensen, 2012; 448).

A triangulation of these sources in the process tracing of four (non)resignation cases of Dutch Ministers helps towards a more authoritatively answer of the research question.

1.5 Scientific and societal relevance

This research will contribute to the literature by marrying two separate strands of literature who both (partly) try to explain survival and resignation of public executives after political incidents. On the one hand, this research provides some qualitative 'meat on the bones' of the quantitative literature on structural conditions. For example, if earlier experience in Parliament does increase the survival chances of the Minister, what is the rationale for this relation and how does it work in relation to the Ministers' strategies? On the other hand, this research tries to give a more structured and literature-oriented account of the efficacy of different blame avoidance strategies used by Ministers. Many typologies of blame avoidance strategies are drawn up in an inductive, case-based fashion. This research will integrate those typologies and use it as a start for a qualitative examination of the efficacy of these strategies.

Besides, better insight into the dynamics of blame games and blame avoidance strategies can improve the abilities of Parliament and other accountability fora to hold public executives accountable. Besides, it can help Ministers and other public executives to distinguish effective blame avoidance strategies and the conditions under which they will more likely succeed. Therefore, this research can help both Parliament and public executives to refrain from unproductive blame games and instead focus on maintenance of political credibility.

1.6 Research outline

This research consists of nine chapters. Chapter two provides the theoretical framework. This chapter will blend the structural research on ministerial resignations, the political crisis/incident literature and the blame avoidance framework of Hood (2011). These three sections will form an overarching theoretical framework on what type of behavioral mechanisms and structural conditions play a role in ministerial resignations after political incidents. Chapter three provides a detailed research design, in order to assess the reliability and validity of this research. This chapter will explain the rationale of case selection, the research technique of process tracing methodology and the data selection and analysis. Chapters four to seven focus on the actual empirical research and analysis of the four cases. In each of the four chapters attention will be given to the structural conditions of each cases, along with a thematic narrative of the cases and the outcomes of the process tracing in explaining ministerial resignation. Chapter eight consists of thematic comparison of the four cases. This study ends with a conclusion and discussion in chapter nine. This chapter focuses to the implications of the findings for the theory of blame avoidance and ministerial resignation and for further research.

2. Theoretical chapter: the relation between ministerial resignations, structural conditions and blame avoidance in political incidents

The introduction pointed to a gap between two strands of literature on ministerial resignation. While one strand focusses on structural conditions for ministerial resignations (i.e. Berlinski et al, 2007; Bovens et al, 2010; Dowding & Dumont, Fischer et al, 2006; Huber & Martinez-Gallardo, 2008), the other strand focusses mostly on crisis exploitation in blame games (Boin et al, 2009; Brandström et al, 2003; 2008; Bovens et al, 1999; Rudolph, 2003; 2006; Stark, 2011). This theoretical chapter tries to incorporate both strands in an overarching framework that focusses both on structural factors and behavioral mechanisms regarding political incidents and ministerial resignation. Part 2.1 conceptualizes ministerial resignation. Part 2.2 presents the three most important types of structural conditions for ministerial resignation. The focus in part 2.3 is on political incidents and framing by Ministers to keep blame attribution in check. Part 2.4 explains a typology of blame avoidance strategies, the conceptual differences between those strategies and the level of blame denial. Finally, part 2.5 concludes with a conceptual model which shows the relation between structural conditions and blame avoidance strategies of Ministers in resignation blame games.

2.1 Resignation: the question of ministerial responsibility and confidence

According to political economists, government Ministers in parliamentary democracies are ‘career politicians’, whose goal is government service and who wish to ‘remain in office as long as possible’ (Berlinski, Dewan & Dowding, 2010; 559, cf. King, 1981; Diermeier, Kean & Merlo, 2005). Therefore, when political incidents occur, Ministers try to avoid blame and to stay on as long as possible. However, when his blame avoidance strategies are not accepted by media and Parliament, the Minister gets blamed for political incidents, up to the point where he is forced to resign. The literature on ministerial survival conceptualizes forced resignation as ‘the premature and non-scheduled (..) resignation of a minister, expressed or implied (..) in response to a negative judgment - or the anticipation thereof - on the actions of the Minister by parliament, the coalition and other members of the government, or private party’ (Fischer et al, 2006; 172; Bovens et al, 2010; 321).

In this research, the focus is on forced resignation as a result of political incidents, instead of personal scandals and similar issues. Political incidents are incidents which refer to ‘issues with a close reference to the execution of a minister’s duties’, where ‘discontent with his policies or performance’ has been expressed (Fischer et al, 2006; 713).³ Therefore, the blame game revolves around the question of ministerial responsibility in the Dutch parliamentary context.

According to the Dutch Council of State, ministerial responsibility is a ‘legal duty’ of the Minister towards Parliament to provide information on and to account for government actions in the defense of the public interest and the performance of the duties attached to the office of Minister (cited in: Visser, 2008; 87). In the constitutional sense, ministerial responsibility is practically endless in matters of ‘public interest’ (Visser, 2008; 112). In order to limit the constitutional definition of ministerial responsibility, constitutional law includes another concept: that of parliamentary confidence.

³ this excludes coalition breakdowns, personal scandals (extramarital affairs, etc.) or non-political reasons such as health or other (political) appointment.

Whether the Minister is forced to resign because of ministerial responsibility depends on parliamentary confidence in the Minister. The utterance of no confidence in the Minister is a political judgment that can pertain to broader matters than sole ministerial responsibility (Visser, 2008; 136). The matter of confidence of Parliament is guided by the 'negative confidence rule', the constitutional principle that there is confidence in a Minister until specifically stated otherwise by a parliamentary majority (Visser, 2008; 85). Often the Minister does not have to resign, but a call for resignation or an explicit statement on loss of confidence by a Member of Parliament can damage his reputation (Boin et al, 2009; 89). A vote of no confidence by Parliament is the 'ultimate sanction' for a Minister (Visser, 2008; 136). The distrust does not have to be explicitly stated. In fact, most Ministers resign on their own accord because they feel that a majority of Parliament no longer has confidence in them (Visser, 2008; 132).

The gray area in literature exists in the explanation of the process between the occurrence of a potential political incident and the eventual forced resignation or survival of a Minister. Therefore, the most important question of this research is: How can we explain the occurrence of these forced resignations?

2.2 Structural conditions regarding Ministerial resignation and survival: individual, incident-related and political conditions

2.2.1: Individual background of Ministers under attack

A growing body of literature on ministerial survival in parliamentary democracies attempts to relate the chances for ministerial survival to the individual characteristics of the Ministers (see Fischer et al, 2006; Berlinski et al, 2007; Bovens et al, 2010). For example, Berlinski and others showed that in Great-Britain individual characteristics of Ministers, such as being a male, being older, and being a junior minister instead of minister, increase the chances of resignation (Berlinski et al, 2007). However, Bovens and others showed that in the Netherlands those characteristics have no effect on ministerial survival (2010; 331). They argue that there are other individual, more politically related characteristics that affect the chances of political survival and their findings confirm this (ref.)

First, earlier experience in cabinets or in Parliament reduces the Minister's chance of resignation with 16% (Bovens et al, 2010; 331). Ministers need a network in Parliament and feeling with the formal and informal rules of the political game in order to survive (Bovens et al, 2010; 330). Both research on the background of Swedish and German Ministers support the Dutch findings (Bäck et al, 2009; 173-174; Fischer & Kaiser, 2011; 209), while research shows that British Ministers with former political experience instead have a higher resignation hazard (Berlinski et al, 2007).

Second, Ministers of political parties who are not necessarily needed for a government majority have to resign more often than Ministers of 'necessary' political parties (Bovens et al, 2010; 332). Third, reputation and perceived performance of the Minister (in the form of resignation calls) affect the resignation hazard (Dewan & Dowding, 2005; Fischer et al, 2006). This is in line with work within crisis exploitation literature (Coombs, 2007; 141; Coombs, 2008). In the Netherlands, there is a weak link between the number of previous votes of no-confidence and higher chance of resignation (Bovens et al, 2010; 332). However, this relation is not clear as there are also Ministers who resigned without prior vote of no confidence and Ministers who stayed on with a vote of no confidence (Bovens et al, 2010; 332).

Fourth, there have been conflicting studies on the effect of particular ministerial portfolios on survival (Fischer et al, 2012; 513). More important portfolios, like Finance, Home Affairs and Justice, are more prone to 'scrutiny in parliament and press than their lower-ranking colleagues (Berlinski et al, 2007; 259-260; Indridason & Kam, 2008; 647). However, Ministers with more important portfolios 'go through a more careful ex ante screening, and so should perform better and stay longer' (Huber & Martinze-Gallardo, 2008; 176; Berlinski et al, 2007; 259). There is a difference between Ministers with portfolio on the one hand and Ministers without portfolio and Junior Ministers on the other. The latter group does not have the full responsibility for a whole department of civil servants, which could give them more chances for survival (Visser, 2008; 111). However, according to Bovens and others, Junior Ministers do not have a significantly different survival rate than Ministers (2010; 331).

In sum, the effects of individual characteristics that we find in the literature are ambiguous. They do not seem to offer a complete explanation. Section 2.2 will therefore zoom in on incident characteristics that may also influence blame attribution and resignation.

2.2.2: Characteristics of the blame game: media salience and comparable incidents

Next to individual characteristics, Fischer and others concluded that the 'position of the media and public, seems to be the strongest predictor of the outcome of resignation debates' in Germany (2006; 726). Dewan and Dowding even showed that when in the UK a public call was made for a Minister to resign, and the issue got a lot of press coverage, government popularity in general increased when the specific Minister under pressure resigned (2005; 54). Media salience of the incident will therefore increase the Minister's chances of resignation, because it can affect the need for blame avoidance of the Prime Minister or Minister's political party. Post-crisis and agenda setting literature also sees media attention as the 'primary stage' on which the saliency and severity of the incident is defined (Brandström & Kuipers, 2003; 282, cf. Rochefort & Cobb, 1994; 17; Baumgartner & Jones year; Schattschneider, 1960). According to Brandström and Kuipers, media salience increases when the incidents include 'shocking pictures, shocking statistics, shocking witness statements' (2003; 291). However, according to Fischer, media salience does not play a 'decisive role' in resignation when seen in relation to for example support of the Minister's own party (2006; 728).

Another characteristic of the incident that could influence the Minister's resignation hazard is the existence of comparable incidents. Again, agenda setting literature points to this direction. Kingdon found in his study on agency setting in the US Congress that incidents with earlier comparable events can have more effect on problem definition, because they cannot be 'dismissed as an isolated fluke' (2003; 98). Together, media salience of the incident and comparable incidents can provide opponents of the Minister with 'a powerful signal and symbol that 'something is rotten'' (Brandström & Kuipers, 2003; 281; cf. Kingdon, 2003; 98). This could harm the survival chances of the Minister; because it could give the Prime Minister and the Minister's own political party an incentive to sacrifice the Minister for the sake of the coalition.

However, whether the Prime Minister will actually react on these characteristics of the political incident, depends on a third factor: the political landscape.

2.2.3 Political landscape

The literature on ministerial survival also focuses on the effects of the institutional and political environment Ministers find themselves in (Fischer et al, 2012; 512). Most of the research compares the effect of government types or party systems between countries.

For example, Huber and Martinez-Gallardo concluded that 'the likelihood of leaving the cabinet is reduced by almost 40% for ministers in a coalition government when we compare them to ministers in single-party majority governments' (2008; 176). The reason for this lower likelihood is that in coalition systems, Ministers are often agents of both the Prime Minister and of their own party (Andeweg, 2000; Dowding and Dumont, 2009). Therefore, both the Prime Minister and the Minister's own party have a say in the possible resignation of a Minister in a coalition system (Fischer et al, 2012; 506).

Besides, the literature on ministerial durability does point to five characteristics within the Dutch political landscape which do have an effect on individual ministerial survival. First, Berlinski, Dewan and Dowding show that the resignation hazard for a British Minister after a resignation call is higher when his colleagues have experienced similar calls (2010; 568). According to Berlinski and others, a Minister 'must bear some of the brunt of his colleagues' failures' (2010; 568). Therefore, not only the Ministers' own reputation is important for ministerial survival, the reputation and durability of his colleagues and the coalition as a whole play an important role.

The second, related condition is the type of coalition. Huber and Martinez-Gallardo show in their work on ministerial stability in 19 parliamentary democracies that coalition minority governments are in general less stable than coalition majority governments (2008; 177). However, in between government terminations, Ministers from coalition minority governments are not more at risk for resignation than Ministers from majority governments (Huber & Martinez-Gallardo, 2008; 177). According to Bakema (1991), resignation hazard does not fluctuate so much between majorities and minorities, but within different majority coalitions. Ministers in minimal-winning coalitions will last longer than Ministers from surplus coalitions (Bakema, 1991).

Third, the difference between minimal-winning and surplus majorities depends on the composition of this majority. In an ideologically diverse majority, Ministers are more at risk of resignation (Huber & Martinez-Gallardo, 2008; 177). The reasoning behind this finding is that in an ideologically diverse majority, one coalition party has to worry more about 'policy damage' to their reputation by Ministers from the other coalition parties (Huber & Martinez-Gallardo, 2008; 172). Therefore, when a Minister is subject to media and parliamentary scrutiny for a political incident, the more ideologically distant coalition parties from that Minister have more incentive to sack this Minister.

The effect of this ideological difference is even more prominent when one considers the fourth condition: policy controversy. Political parties always tend to have considerably different views about policy aims, norms and alternatives (Schön & Rein, 1994). However, when views of the 'mainstream' political parties are so fundamentally different that there is no 'broadly accepted normative 'policy compass'', policy on this subject will likely 'remain unarticulated or fuzzy' (Alink, Boin & Hart, 2001; 296-297). The policy can therefore experience low institutional structure and low levels of legitimacy, leading to legitimacy loss and even an institutional crisis for that policy (Alink et al, 2001; 290; cf. Suchman, 1995). These 'cracks in institutional stability offer opportunities to agents of change' (Alink et al, 2001; 302). Political incidents regarding policies with a controversial and low-legitimacy history give a higher resignation hazard for Ministers.

Fifth, all four already discussed characteristics become more prominent for Ministers close to government termination and parliamentary elections (Boin et al, 2008; 300). According to Bovens, it is the status of the coalition which counts. When the whole coalition loses her majority in Parliament, often caretaker coalitions⁴ are constructed to stay on until new parliamentary elections (Bovens et al, 2010; 340). It is not in the electoral interest of any of the political parties to spare Ministers in caretaker coalitions (Bovens et al, 2010; 340). Therefore, when a coalition already has caretaker status or is otherwise close to parliamentary elections, the coalition parties have an incentive to ‘sack’ failing Ministers as they are ‘highly visible representatives of their party’ (Fischer et al, 2012; 512, cf. Dewan & Dowding, 2005).

2.2.4 Conclusion: structural conditions

The structural conditions which affect the Minister’s chances for resignation are: the individual background of the Minister, characteristics of the incident which caused the blame game and the political landscape at that time. Table 2.1 summarizes the precise expectations for each condition. However, the weakness of this literature is that it focuses on generic hazard for Ministers to resign after a political incident. This literature strand neglects what Ministers, the Prime Minister and opponents actually say and do to influence perceptions of the political incident. In order to truly say something about ministerial resignation after political incidents, the identified structural conditions must be paired with an understanding of what Ministers say and do within the blame game about the incident.

| Conditions influencing chances for resignation | Level | Expectations: conditions which increase chances for ministerial resignation | Source |
|--|-------|---|--|
| Individual background of the Ministers | Micro | - No earlier experience in cabinet/parliament | <i>Bovens et al, 2010; 331</i> |
| | | - Minister of pol. party not necessary for majority | <i>Bovens et al, 2010; 332</i> |
| | | - Reputation: earlier votes of no confidence | <i>Bovens et al, 2010; 332</i> |
| | | - Being a Minister with portfolio and more important portfolio | <i>Indridason & Kam, 2008; 647</i> |
| Characteristics of the incident | Meso | - Saliency of the incident in the media | <i>Fischer et al, 2006; 724</i> |
| | | - Comparable incidents | <i>Kingdon 1995, 2003; Brandström & Kuipers, 2003.</i> |
| Political landscape | Macro | - Other Ministers in coalition also under attack | <i>Berlinski, Dewan & Dowding</i> |
| | | - Majority coalition: surplus majority | <i>Bakema, 1991</i> |
| | | - Larger ideological diversity between coalition parties | <i>Huber & Martinez-Gallardo, 2008</i> |
| | | - Policy controversy + lower legitimacy | <i>Alink, Boin & ‘t Hart, 2001; 296-297</i> |
| | | - Closeness to parliamentary election + caretaker status | <i>Bovens et al, 2010; 34; Fischer et al, 2012; 512</i> |

Table 2.1: Structural conditions which increase hazard of ministerial resignation

⁴ In this research the word ‘caretaker cabinet’ is the English translation of the Dutch ‘demissionair kabinet’. According to the site of the ‘parliamentary documentation center’ of Leiden University, a cabinet is a ‘caretaker cabinet’ when it requested a dismissal from the Queen (because it lost majority support, or other reason). When a cabinet has such a ‘caretaker’ status, it means that the cabinet will only deal with ‘pending affairs’ and will postpone controversial issues until a new cabinet takes over.

2.3 The construction of a political incident: different 'blaming' phases

According to post crisis literature (Boin et al, 2009; Brandström et al, 2003; 2008; Bovens et al, 1999; Rudolph, 2003; 2006; Stark, 2011) and literature on blame avoidance (Weaver, 1986; McGraw, 1990; 1991; Hood, 2009; 2011) structural conditions are not the only factors important for ministerial survival. Instead, as the perception of 'blameworthy' failures, incidents or disasters, depends on who successfully frames these incidents as such in the political arena (Brandström & Kuipers, 2003; 279, cf. Bovens and 't Hart, 1998; Bovens, 't Hart and Kuipers, 2008; Boin et al, 2009). When an event is framed as a political incident, it sparks lots of 'media attention and political upheaval' up to a point where 'some sort of catharsis is required to alleviate it' (Brandström & Kuipers, 2003; 279). This catharsis could be the resignation of a Minister. Therefore, it is important for Ministers to 'monitor or even join the political processes that lead to the construction of policy fiascos' (Bovens et al, 1999; 124; cf. McGraw, 1991; 1133). These constructions mostly end up being a 'blame showdown', in which both 'damage, escape, and rejuvenation' are all possible (Boin et al, 2009; 89). To avoid excessive blame and subsequent resignations, public executives must come up with explanations in the form of blame management strategies for the political incident (McGraw, 1991; 1135, cf. Hood, 2011).

Which strategy is appropriate depends on whether the blame can be completely avoided, or whether the blame game is already going on and can only be managed (McGraw, 1991; 1135). For example, the literature on welfare state retrenchment shows that governments try to stay clear of blame for retrenchment by lowering the visibility of reforms (obfuscation) through appointing the execution of this reform to a lesser known agency, away from the political sphere (Pierson, 1996; Hood, 2011; 67; Moynihan, 2009; 4, cf. Bartling & Fischbacher, 2008; 2; Verhoest et al, 2004; van Thiel, 2004; 195). However, when a political incident has occurred regarding this retrenchment and 'the shit has hit the fan', the Minister can only use such agency strategies as justifications 'to forestall further political damage' by arguing that the agency must be blamed and the Minister is not responsible (McGraw, 1991; 1135).

Ex post justifications lie in the realm of 'framing contests' in which contestants 'manipulate, strategize and fight to have their frame accepted as the as the dominant narrative' after the incident has occurred (Boin et al, 2008; 82, see also 'Hart, 1993; Brandström & Kuipers, 2003; Stone, 2001). 'Framing' as a way of avoiding blame has been often researched, with many examples in post-crisis literature (i.e. Brandström et al, 2008; Boin et al, 2010; Moynihan, 2009; Residohardjo et al, 2012). Framing, according to Entman, can be conceptualized as a way of selecting 'some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation' (1993; 52).

However, Haider-Markel and Joslyn make the cautionary statement that the given frame can only be persuasive when it is more in line with the 'predispositions of those receiving the message' (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2001; 522). Therefore, blame avoidance strategies of public executives are more effective when they are in line with the already formed understanding of social reality by the other actors, the media and the public at large. Researchers have come up myriad typologies of blame avoidance and blame management strategies. This research tries to demarcate the types of strategies clearly by both grouping them on the level of blame denial and the argumentation Ministers provide for this blame denial.

2.3.1 Strategies and the different stages of blame denial

All ex post explanations try to deflect blame away from the public executive. According to Hood, blame can be conceptualized as ‘the product of something that someone sees as an avoidable loss or harm and that is perceived to result from some act of commission or omission’ (2011; 181; cf. McGraw, 1990; 120). Hood himself identifies three elements of blame, which public executives can use to stay clear of blame after political incidents. They can either deny the loss or harm which was caused by the incident; deny being the agent responsible for causing the incident or skew the time frame for the incident (Hood, 2011; 181). In other words, Ministers can deny the severity of the incident, deny their own involvement and responsibility, or admit both and promise improvement for the future (Hood, 2009; 718; Kuipers & Brandström, 2003; 302; 2008).

The first element of blame is ‘some element of perceived and avoidable loss’ (Hood, 2011; 6; cf. Brändström & Kuipers, 2003). The Minister can avoid blame, by arguing that the damage of the event is not so severe or could not have been avoided if even matters had been handled differently. The second element refers to an ‘attribution of agency’, which means that the loss was caused by a handling or non-handling by an identifiable individual or organization, instead of an abstract concept, such as ‘capitalism’ (Hood, 2011; 6, cf. Sulitzeanu-Kenan & Hood, 2005; 3). Ministers can avoid this element of blame by making sure that they are not identified as the actor who caused the loss. The third element of blame is the time element and refers to the relevance of the blame at that moment (Hood, 2011; 6). Ministers can avoid this element of blame by coming up with strategies that argue in the line of ‘this may upset you now, but you’ll thank me for it later’ (Hood, 2011; 6).

Therefore, when public executives try to deflect blame, they will come up with strategies that work on one (or more) of three elements of blame in an incident: severity, agency and responsibility (based on: Brandström & Kuipers, 2003). What is clear by looking at these three elements of blame, is that blame management strategies range from defensive to more accommodative, so from denial of the entire problem towards admission of culpability (cf. Bovens et al., 1999; Brinson and Benoit, 1999). In the last stage of blame denial the Minister is clearly most vulnerable, as he already accepted that the incident was severe and responsibility should be attributed. However, one must also look at the reasoning behind blame denial. Within defensive and accommodative strategies, Ministers can use different arguments to say why there is no problem, why they are not the agency responsible or why the future will be better. In line with part 2.3, the Minister will only survive the blame game if his blame denial frame is seen as credible by media and especially Parliament. The credibility of blame denial depends on what reason the Minister gives for the denial and the quality of this reason. Therefore, the next section deals with a typology on these different lines of reasoning.

2.3.2 Strategies and the line of reasoning behind blame denial

Hood distinguishes three blame avoidance strategies: presentational, policy and agency strategies, which have different reasoning behind the denial of blame for the public executive (2011; 18). According to Giger and Nelson, Hood is one of the few scholars who give attention in his typology for the role of delegation in blame avoidance. Hood’s typology with delegation included, ‘illuminates the relevance of blame avoidance strategies for the implementation stage’ (2011; 4). Mostly, it is in the implementation stage of a policy that incidents occur, and blame games take place. Therefore, in this research the overarching typology of Hood is leading.

First, political strategies⁵ attempt to change the perception of harm or the ascription of blame for the incident by using ‘spin, timing, stage management or various forms of persuasion’ within the political sphere (Hood, 2011; 18, 47). The second type of strategies, the agency strategies, can be described as attempts ‘to deflect or limit blame’ by pointing at other actors out of the political sphere, predecessors or other actors, who have been made responsible for the policy implementation which the incident is about. Public executives can do this by ‘creative allocation of formal responsibility, competency, or jurisdiction among different units and individuals’ (Hood, 2011; 67, also see Hood, 2002; 16). This means that public executives try to delegate actions which can attract blame or to diffuse blame by working in partnerships and with multiple actors, so that they are not the (individual) agency which can be blamed for an act or omission to act in the incident. The third type of strategies typically involves the choosing of the least-blame policy, procedure, or method of operation (Hood, 2011; 90). The difference between agency and policy strategies is that the latter is solely focused on internal procedures or operational activities to diminish blame, whereas the former focuses on appointing or involving other external actors to diminish blame for oneself. The actors try to ‘choose policies or procedures that expose themselves to the least possible risk of blame’, so that when the blame game starts they can point to the fact that normal protocol was followed (Hood, 2011; 20).

The next three parts will cover each of the strategy types individually, in order to clearly show the conceptual differences between the strategies. Besides, within each type will be assessed on which level of blame denial the strategy works.

2.4 The types of blame avoidance strategies and the level of blame acceptance

2.4.1 Political strategies: ‘spin your way out of trouble’⁶

Political strategies try to deflect blame by using reasoning for the incident within the political sphere (Hood, 2011; 18). The fields of corporate crisis management (e.g., Coombs & Holladay, 2008; Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Benoit, 1995; Ulmer et al, 2007) and public psychology (McGraw, 1990; 1991; Arceneaux et al, 2006) used many psychological experiments to assess the effectiveness of presentational strategies. However, these experimental studies have limited external validity and are difficult to translate to the political arena. Therefore, most insights on presentational strategies are derived from case studies within post crisis literature, taking place within the political realm (Bovens et al, 1991; Brandström & Kuipers, 2003; 2008; Boin et al, 2009). Clear is that political strategies come in all shapes and sizes. However, when grouped on the level of blame denial, three types can be distinguished.

The first type of political strategies focuses on the denial of the severity of the incident (Bovens et al, 1999; 141; Brandström & Kuipers, 2003; 290; Boin et al, 2009; 84; McGraw 1990, 1991). According to Bovens et al, Ministers ‘can argue that nothing happened’ (1999; 141). If this is not feasible, Ministers can always deny that there was harm caused by the event, or that at least the ‘the harm done was outweighed by the positive effects’ and by compensation (Bovens et al, 1999; 142). Edelman calls this the ‘omelet’ argument, which argues that the harm for individuals was outweighed by public benefits (1977; 100).

⁵ Hood uses the word: presentational strategies. However, in this research, the focus is on blame avoidance strategies after political incidents. Therefore, the ex-ante agency and policy strategies are in this research visible in ex post presentational strategies of responsibility denial or a positive spin for the future.

⁶ all titles of these sections are taken from the slogans of each strategy in (Hood, 2011; 18)

However, according to Boin and others, the political risk of this problem denial is that Ministers can be easily accused of “blindness’, ‘passivity’ and ‘rigidity’” (Boin et al, 2009; 85). This type is therefore more suited in the early stages of the blame game, before the connection is made by Parliament and media between ‘events and core values of the political system’ (Brandström & Kuipers, 2003; 291, cf. Bovens et al, 1999; 142).

The Minister must move on to the second type of political strategies once powerful actors have decided that the incident is severe and ‘questions about responsibility and blame are put squarely on the table’ (Brandström & Kuipers, 2003; 291). This type of political strategies can be labeled as ‘problem admission, but postponement of responsibility’. This mostly involves the installation of a more or less independent commission of inquiry about the incident (Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2006; McConnell, 2003; Resodihardjo, 2006). Most researchers point to the learning opportunities as reason for appointing an inquiry commission (Howe, 1999; Clarke, 2000). However, according to Brandström and Kuipers, the installation of an inquiry serves a blame avoidance purpose as an “apolitical’, time-consuming investigation process’, which can effectively postpone parliamentary inquiry and media scrutiny (2003; 294). However, Resodihardjo and others show in their study of a local Dutch riot that the appointment of an inquiry can also be ‘perceived as a whitewash’ and therefore lead to more blame for the Minister (2012; 239).

In the last stages of the game ‘when all other tactics have failed’, Ministers can retreat to the third type of political strategies: excuses, ‘repentance’ and change (Bovens, 1999; 144). According to Coombs, apology can be defined as the actor ‘accepting responsibility for the crisis and asking for forgiveness’ (2007; 253; cf. Benoit, 1995; Benoit & Drew, 1997). Coombs shows that these apologies are often accompanied by regret, remorse and measures of reparation (2007; 253; cf. Benoit & Drew, 1997). Bovens and others summarize this type as ‘admitting their failures, asking for forgiveness, and promising it will never happen again’ (1999; 144). In political strategies, the promise of change and ‘it will never happen again’ is broad and not related to a specific agency or policy. Those specific change promises regarding agencies and policies lie in the realm of the other two strategies.

2.4.2 Agency strategies: ‘find a scapegoat’

Agency strategies play a lesser role than political strategies in blame avoidance literature. However, delegation and networking strategies are extensively recognized as ex ante blame avoidance by public executives in for example welfare retrenchment and agencification literature (Pierson, 1996; Hood, 2011; 67; Moynihan, 2009; 4, cf. Vibert, 2007; Bartling & Fischbacher, 2008; 2; Verhoest et al, 2004; van Thiel, 2004; 195). According to Moynihan, ‘although such agency reforms (*delegation to ZBO’s and others*) were justified in terms of performance and democratic control, they also aligned with the political logic of blame avoidance. By creating more formal structural separation and distance from policy implementation, elected officials could hope to delegate away some of the political risk these policies entailed’ (Moynihan, 2009; 4, cf. Bartling & Fischbacher, 2008; 2; Verhoest et al, 2004; van Thiel, 2004; 195; Cohn, 1997).

Therefore, when political incidents occur and Ministers have to admit the severity of the incident, they can use agency strategies to deny responsibility for the event and deflect blame to actors outside the political sphere. According to Brandström and Kuipers, public executives try to frame the event as an isolated incident, in which lower-level delegates and other non-political actors made ad hoc mistakes (2003; 295). Ministers can try to deflect blame towards predecessors, civil servants in (soft or hard) delegated public organizations, whole networks of public organizations or privatized actors (Hood, 2011; 67).

According to Hood, denying responsibility and pointing blame towards delegated actors becomes more credible if (a) the further the delegated body is located from the ministry (for types of autonomy, see Verhoest et al., 2004) and (b) the more difficult it is to diminish the distance towards the Ministry (Hood, 2011; 78). Fiorina points to regulatory agencies as an example of public organizations with 'hard delegation' and good responsibility dodging options for the Ministers (Fiorina, 1982; 47). The 'blamable actors' do not have to be agencies and other organizations, but can also be individuals. These individuals are called 'lightning rods' in American presidential literature (Herring, 1940; Ellis, 1994). Ellis made an influential study of American presidents who used subordinate actors as 'lightning rods' to deflect blame (1994). According to Ellis (1994; 22), this agency strategy was more effective when presidents kept their 'intentions ambiguous', so that opponents could believe 'that if the president had paid closer attention or been more involved, he would have behaved differently than the subordinates' (cited from: Preston, 2008; 53).

However, responsibility denial through agency strategies towards delegates can be risky. According to Hood, the intended 'blame shiftees' are no passive bystanders (2002; 26). Indeed, Brändström and Kuipers found that when these 'blame shiftees' feel they are used as 'scapegoats' by the public executives, they will side with outside critics in expanding the crisis frame (2003; 296). Besides, Mortensen found in his study on agency strategies by Danish local authorities that 'it's the central government's fault' was the most used political account to defend health care cuts (2012; 440).

The second agency strategy is the decision of public executives to blame the work of network structures. According to Brändström and others 'incumbent policy makers are likely to argue that the incident is the result of what we might call a 'network' failure: 'a complex interplay of structures, actors, decisions and actions' (2008; 119). This strategy is also called 'circling the wagons' or the 'many hands' strategy (Thompson, 1969). The strategy can be effective because it is hard to administer sanctions when many actors are only partly responsible and blamed for a political incident (Brändström & Kuipers, 2003; 298; Brändström et al, 2008; 119; Moynihan, 2009; 7). According to Moynihan, 'if all are to blame, no-one is to blame' (2009; 12). However, the risk of this strategy is that during blame phases it is possible that actors in the network will turn on each other and try to deflect blame to specific actors within the network (Weaver, 1986; 389).

The last strategy is the agency strategy of responsibility admission. In this strategy, the Minister accepts the severity of the problem and his responsibility for the event. However, in line with the last political strategies, the Minister tries to give the event a positive spin towards the future as to avoid resignation. The strategy follows the argumentation: yes, multiple things went wrong and I as a public executives am responsible. However, such an event will not happen in the future, because we are going to install a new agency or independent actor with more skills and knowledge of the implementation of this policy.

2.4.3 Policy strategies: 'don't make contestable judgments'

Third, ex ante policy strategies typically involve Ministers choosing policies, procedures, or methods of operation with as goal to avoid blamable incidents altogether (Hood, 2011; 90). An example is protocolization, build 'on routines for consistently putting cases into categories on the basis of procedural rules' (Hood, 2011; 93; cf. Perrow, 1972; Thompson, 1975). When political incidents do occur, the Minister can acknowledge the severity of the incident, but can try to lay the question of blame outside the political sphere.

Contrary to agency strategies, the Minister does not blame specific actors, but instead deflect blame towards policies, protocols and other rules. According to Hood, this strategy is often related to middle and lower level officials (2011; 94; e.g. Lipsky, 1980). However, higher public executives can also use these strategies (Hood, 2011; 94).

The first category of policy strategies can work as an accompaniment to agency strategies which blame lower level actors. In this policy strategy, the Minister denies responsibility for the incident. Hood points to German work on blame avoidance by Astrid Schütz (1998), who identified 'claims of procedural correctness' as a blame avoidance strategy (2011; 153). According to Boin and others, public executives 'are usually cheerleaders' for keeping 'the existing institutional order in their respective portfolio's', because they are responsible for this order (2008; 11, 295). Therefore, Ministers can say that the incident is a 'freak occurrence' within an otherwise defensible policy (Brändström & Kuipers, 2003; 282, 295). Ministers can underline this strategy by announcing the 'fine tuning' of technical and operational protocols (Boin et al, 2008; 295). In this protocolization, Minister will focus on 'formulae, algorithms, computer programs, best practice guidelines, or other kinds of rules, turning human functionaries into some approximation of robots'. In this way, the lower level actors can no longer dysfunction (Hood, 2011; 93).

However, this responsibility denial is not always viable. Incidents can provide opponents of the Minister with 'windows of opportunity' for large reform (Kingdon, 2003; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1993). When the incident is successfully framed by opponents as a 'symptom of a much larger systemic or policy failure' (Brändström & Kuipers, 2003; 295), the Minister's denial of a need for a larger policy reform will be 'politically unsustainable' (Boin et al, 2008; 296).

According to Boin and others, 'embattled policy makers under critical scrutiny after an extreme event can be forced to make symbolic gestures' with regard to key changes in policies (Boin et al, 2008; 10; 90). The most elaborate of key changes would be the paradigm shift, which includes a 'wholesale overturning' of the ideological and intellectual foundations of a policy, like the US change of security policy after 9/11 (Boin et al, 2009; 90, 92). This more accommodative strategy can be riskier because the Minister admits some responsibility for the incident, but it can work well to 'take the wind out of someone's sails' (Boin et al, 2009; 90). In this research, the focus is on framing and the blame game, so it does not matter whether the announced policy reform is later seen as symbolic or is actually accomplished (Boin et al, 2009; 95).

2.4.4 Conclusion: blame games, blame denial and adjoining blame avoidance strategies

Blame avoidance and crisis exploitation literature suggest Ministers can use a myriad of blame avoidance and blame management strategies in order to avoid forced resignation for an incident. In this research, we conclude that these strategies take on different shapes and sizes. The strategies differ in their level of blame denial or blame acceptance about the incident and the reason Ministers give to make this blame denial credible. Table 2.2 shows an overview of the different strategies and indicators of the use of these strategies by Ministers. The table shows these strategies as a 'staged retreat' (Hood et al, 2009; 697; Schütz, 1998; 121), where Ministers first deny there is a problem, then deny responsibility for the problem and last admit both. However, multiple studies showed that this order of retreat does not always take place (Hearit, 2006; Hood et al, 2009). Indeed, Brandström and Kuipers concluded in their case study of politicized incidents that 'it is possible or even likely that actors switch and go back and forth within their positions, depending on the postures taken by others and the general 'public mood' about the issue' (2003; 304).

| Type of strategy | Reasoning behind denial | Level of blame denial | Particular strategy | Visible indicators (words in argument) |
|--------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Political strategy | Reasoning of incident within the political sphere | Problem denial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - problem denial - harm compensated - 'omelet argument' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is a non-issue, nothing went wrong - More important news.. - The individual harm is outweighed by positive effects. |
| | | responsibility denial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Postponement: commissions of inquiry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Before we will make any conclusions about responsibility, it is important to get all facts straight. Therefore, I will appoint inquiry commission |
| | | Problem admission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - apologies - incident is blessing in disguise. From now: change! | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - apology/sorry, my fault (accepting blame) - this incident shows what needs to be improved - From now on... - I will take action to make sure.. |
| Agency strategy | Blame towards implementing agency, who resides outside the political sphere | Problem admission, but responsibility denial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - delegated actor outside political sphere is formally responsible - network of actors responsible (blame sharing) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It wasn't me; it was delegated administrative body/private actor... - I have nothing to do with this incident, but implemented by former public executives - My ministry was only a small actor. This incident is the result of the actions of a large network of (private/delegated) actors |
| | | Part responsibility admission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responsibility admission, new agency to avoid problem in future | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indeed, my Ministry made many mistakes. However, I will set up an independent, knowledgeable agency to make sure it will not happen again... |
| Policy strategy | Blame deflected towards policy, outside political sphere | Problem admission, but responsibility denial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no human fault, the official protocol was followed (which was approved by parliament) - just following the policy line of predecessors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I/my civil servants just followed neatly the official protocol, policy guidelines - we did everything according to the book: just a freak accident out of human control - I just followed the policy line of predecessors - Focus on minor, small technical changes in protocol etc. |
| | | Part responsibility admission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposal new policy for future: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New policy will make sure such an incident will never happen again. - This reform will be a big improvement... |

Table 2.2: Blame avoidance strategies grouped on level of blame denial and reasoning behind denial (free from: Hood, 2011; 18).

2.5 Conclusion: relation between ministerial resignation, political incidents, structural conditions, and blame avoidance strategies

This literature review shows that explanations for ministerial resignation require a focus on both structural conditions and blame management strategies to explain ministerial resignation for political incidents. Figure 2.1 shows a conceptual model for the relation between both factors. The political landscape, characteristics of the incident and individual background of the Minister shape the structural conditions in which the blame game takes place.

In the blame game, the Minister can make choices about the level of blame acceptance and the reason he gives to make any denial credible. Parliament and media can react to the strategies of the Minister, by accepting or rejecting the Minister’s strategies, which can lead to elite damage or (forced) resignation of the Minister.

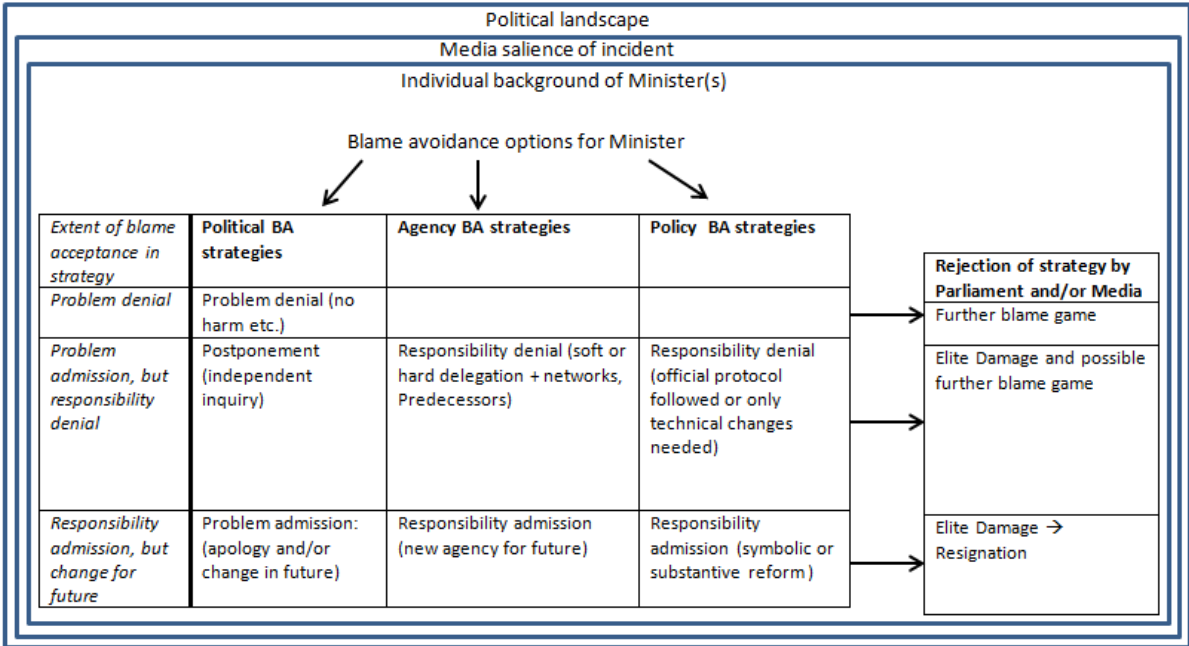


Figure 2.1: Stylized model of a blame game about a political incident

This literature review led to a clear research model. The next chapter will show the research design used to assess the usefulness of this model in the Dutch context of political incidents and ministerial resignation.

3. Research design

According to Bovens et al (1999; 146), in the study of blame avoidance and blame games many intervening variables are at play, which makes it difficult to clearly distinguish what causes what. Therefore, a carefully and cleverly designed research set-up is needed, so that tentative conclusions on the relation between blame avoidance strategies, structural conditions and ministerial resignations are as valid and reliable as possible. The first part of this chapter explains the need for a comparative case study and the rationale behind the selection of the cases. The second describes the process tracing approach used in this study. This process tracing approach builds on the operationalization of the structural conditions and blame avoidance strategies and the overall theoretical model in the theoretical chapter. The fourth part discusses the data collection and analysis. The last part focuses on the effect of the choices made in the research design on the reliability and validity of this research.

3.1 A comparative case study

The theoretical chapter showed the need for a more in-depth examination and a more interpretive approach into behavioral factors regarding ministerial resignation and survival, while still taking account of the structural conditions (Dewan & Dowding, 2005; Bovens et al, 2010). Therefore, this thesis takes the form of a comparative qualitative case study. A structured comparison is employed to account for variation on the critical conditions in order to enable causal inference and systematic theory-building (Ragin, 1987; George & Bennett, 2005). Qualitative case studies have the advantage that they are holistic, which means that they ‘treat cases as whole entities and not a collections of parts’ and therefore are able to richly describe and interpret the strategic behavior of the actors and its effects within their context (Ragin, 1987; ix-x). The depth of qualitative case studies enables the researcher to see outcomes of a case (resignation or non-resignation) as the result of a combination of different actions of actors and contextual conditions (Ragin, 1987; x). With ‘qualitative data one can preserve chronological flow’ and therefore enable the researcher a more open view on which events and which strategies led to which outcomes (Miles & Huberman, 1994; 1). This gives the researcher the opportunity to derive new conceptual frameworks or revise old ones (Miles & Huberman, 1994; 1). In this study these qualities are vital, as there is a grey area in the literature regarding the exact connection between blame avoidance strategies, structural factors regarding the Ministers background and political context and the resulting survival or resignation.

This study uses a similar case design, in order to enhance the reliability of the structural comparison. They are all political incidents that gave rise to resignation calls of Dutch Ministers between 2000 and 2013. The most similar case design and its opposite, most different case design, are some of the oldest recognized procedure for selecting cases (Seawright & Gerring, 2008; 305). The reason for the popularity of the first strategy is that when the selected similar cases are ‘broadly representative of the population, they will provide the strongest basis for generalization’ and will have a low selection bias (Seawright & Gerring, 2008; 298).

This study will focus on most similar cases within the same system, which means that incidents are selected which share some important characteristics (such as: the same political level, the (junior) Ministers as central actors) within the same context.

In order to select cases which really involve blame avoidance, potential cases were identified on the basis of the occurrence of a negative triggering event, leading to allegations of policy failure, and generating accountability processes (inquiry, debate, deliberation, judgment, see Bovens et al, 2008; Boin et al, 2009) in a context of a high level of political contestation. Therefore, these similar cases, of (junior) Ministers who received a resignation call due to political incidents, provide a good opportunity to objectively study the efficacy of blame avoidance strategies.

3.1.1 Case selection: Resignation issues in the Netherlands 2000-2013

In order to get sufficient insight in the conditions and factors which explain both resignation and survival of Ministers after political incident, we need to compare an equal amount of both. While many researchers are critical of selecting cases based on variation of the dependent variable (George & Bennett, 2005; 23), in this case it is a necessary procedure to avoid bias on explaining either success or failure for Ministers. This selection of both non-resignations (success) and resignations (failure) is also used by Dewan and Dowding in their quantitative study on the effect of ministerial resignation on government popularity (Dewan & Dowding, 2005; 48). In line with Dewan and Dowding, resignation issues are defined as ‘an issue deemed serious enough for a call to be made for the minister to resign (or consider his position or such phrase)’ on the first three pages of a national newspaper (Dewan & Dowding, 2005; 47). These calls can be made both by members of Parliament, organizations outside Parliament and the media (Dewan & Dowding, 2005; 47). The comparison of both resignations and non-resignations allows one (1) to establish links between blame avoidance strategies and the dependent variable of the study (ministerial survival), (2) with the use of backward mapping, to assess the impact of the stances and interventions of other (executive and non-executive) actors involved in a resignation issue; (3) to compare the efficacy of blame avoidance strategies across sectors and policy fields.

This research only uses Dutch cases in the period 2000-2013. The reason for this choice is that Bovens and others (2010; 325) have pointed out that in the Netherlands ‘since the turn of the century, the political turbulence has increased strongly’. In more turbulent periods, you would expect more cases in which blame avoidance is needed. Moreover, a selection of cases from the same turbulent period increases the contextual similarity of the cases. The next two parts will explain the exact selection of the four cases in this research: first the selection of the two resignation cases will be explained, second the two non-resignation cases.

3.1.2 Resignation cases: Korthals and Donner & Dekker

To enhance the quality of case selection it is important to distinguish specific criteria to identify cases of ‘push resignations’⁷ which happened as a consequence of discussion resulting from a political incident (Dowding and Kang, 1998; Fischer et al, 2006; Bovens, et al, 2010; Fischer et al, 2006; 712). This research focuses on political and administrative incidents, so it focuses on resignation ‘issues with a close reference to the execution of a minister’s duties’ (personal and departmental error and policy disagreement) (Fischer et al, 2006; 713)⁸.

⁷ According to Fischer, the definition of push resignations is that: ‘resignations can be further differentiated into ‘push’ resignations, where a minister loses his job after having been the object of massive criticism, and ‘pull’ resignations, where a minister heads for a new office outside cabinet (Fischer et al, 2006; 712).

⁸ I will only look at individual resignations and not collective resignations. Collective resignations are not useful for this study on blame avoidance, because for example in Kok-II, the Minister of Education had to resign as a consequence of the

The three resignation issues personal error, departmental error and policy disagreement, are often difficult to separate, so for the moment they will be grouped under the banner 'political incident'. In order to clear this concept of 'political incident', the selection of cases has been compared to the Dutch ministerial resignation cases which Bovens and others (2010) identified under 'breach of trust' and 'due to political incident' in the Netherlands between 1945 and 2009.

The data for the selection of these push resignations due to political incidents, stem from the database of the '*Parlementair Documentatie Centrum*' of the University of Leiden.⁹ This database describes the reshuffling in all Dutch cabinets and has an extensive biography of all Dutch members of government. This database also served as the source of the article of Bovens and others (2010), so when the database was not clear, extra information was taken from the database of Bovens and others (2010).

In the period between 2000 and 2013, six (junior) Ministers resign because they start a new job within the political sphere (mayor, secretary-general of NATO, etc.), eight resign collectively because their political parties cease to support the coalition (D66-Ministers in 2006 and PvdA-Ministers in 2010) and three resign due to personal scandals (extramarital affair, declaration fraud, etc.). Besides that, three (junior) Ministers resign because of personal arguments with other Ministers. Two resignations border on the qualification of 'political incident'. The first is the resignation of 'Administrative innovation' Minister De Graaf in 2005, due to a rejection of a proposal to introduce the elected mayor in the First Chamber. The second resignation is 'Neighborhood and Integration' Minister Vogelaar in 2008, because of lack of trust of her own political party, PvdA, in her policies. However, the first must be excluded because it is related to only proposed policy, while the second must be excluded because it focused more on how the minister presented herself and her 'image' than on an 'actual' political incident. More on the excluded resignation cases can be found in Appendix C.

In the time frame of this thesis (2000-2013), only two resignations qualify as 'political incident', namely Minister Korthals in 2002, and Minister Donner and Minister Dekker¹⁰ in 2006.

1. In the first resignation case, Defense Minister Korthals resigned in 2002 due to misinforming Parliament on the 'building industry fraud deal' of the Schiphol tunnel¹¹. Although this resignation was directly based on an accountability mistake (wrongful information), it is linked to a political incident (construction fraud).
2. In the second resignation case, Justice Minister Donner and Environmental and Housing minister Dekker resigned in 2006. Reason was the harsh conclusions of the Dutch Safety Board on the involvement of their departments in the fire at the Schiphol detention center.

collective blame of the incident in Srebrenica. Therefore, there was no relation to the executions of the duties of an individual Minister. Collective resignations are also considered to have a whole different dynamic and background (Bovens, et al, 2010; 318)

⁹ Database is on the internet as: Parlement.com

¹⁰ Minister Verdonk survived this political incident, but is included in the analysis of this case.

¹¹ Both cases do not have a classical 'resignation call' as identified by Dewan and Dowding (2005; 49). This call is in both cases made when the Ministers already handed in their resignation. However, in both cases, national newspapers opened with headlines like 'harsh opinion by opposition', 'minister under pressure' etc., therefore the cases are seen as fitting within the scope of this research.

3.1.3 Selection of two non-resignation cases: Pronk, De Vries, de Grave, and Teeven

The non-resignation cases were selected by an assessment of the total universe of resignation calls in the Netherlands after 2000, which had as outcome survival of the (junior) Minister. For this period, a newspaper search was made for all resignation calls that met the objectified criteria in line with Dewan and Dowding (2005; 48). The content analysis of the five biggest newspapers (Volkskrant, Telegraaf, NRC, AD and Trouw), using a consistent combination of key words (resignation + name minister/state secretary), yielded 295 hits. 133 of these hits were reported on the first three pages of the newspapers. Only 22 of these boiled down to reports with a clear authoritative claim that one or several specific minister(s) should resign. These 22 resignation calls were made in response to fifteen separate political resignation issues (two involving multiple ministers), and included personal errors and departmental errors.

Of these fifteen political resignation issues, only six resignation calls due to a political incident could be identified. There were multiple reasons to exclude the other eleven issues, such as: leading to resignation (Korthals, Donner and Dekker, Vogelaar); ending in collective resignation (de Grave/Srebrenica); no incident named in article, just 'bad leadership' (van der Hoeven); calls based on public statements instead of occurrences (Borst/suicide pill; Nawijn/death sentences) and calls which were deemed not serious enough by the newspaper itself (de Vries/murder of Fortuyn; Remkes/murder of van Gogh).

Three resignation calls due to a political incident involved the same Ministers that are identified in the resignation cases (Korthals/drug smuggling; Donner/TBS and Verdonk/asylum seekers Congo). Although these three calls referred to different political incidents than the selected cases, for which the ministers had to resign, these calls are not included as separate cases, but are discussed as 'political past' of the three Ministers in the two resignation cases (following paragraph).¹² A fourth resignation call was related to Junior Minister of Finance Weekers in May 2013, over extensive fraud by Bulgarians with health and rent benefits and Weekers' late informing of Parliament. It was decided to exclude the last case of Junior Minister Weekers, due to the fact that this call was made so late in 2013 that the blame game was still out in the open at the time of data collection.

The remaining three resignation calls, in which the outcome was survival, fit the criterion of occurrence due to a political incident and not related to a Minister already identified in the resignation cases:

- Ministers de Vries (Interior), de Grave (Defense) and Pronk (Environment) in 2001, as a consequence of the fireworks explosions in Enschede in May 2000.
- Junior Minister of Justice Teeven in 2013 due to the suicide of a Russian political asylum seeker (Dolmatov) in a Dutch prison.

Table 3.1 on the next page summarizes the four selected cases. It is clear that, besides resignation or non-resignation, the cases differ on multiple other factors, such as policy areas, previous calls of resignation for that Minister and the experience of the Minister in the political arena. These structural conditions are included in the analysis to assess whether they influenced the sacking or non-sacking of a Minister.

¹² a selection of the excluded non-resignation cases can be found in Appendix D

| Minister | Resignation call(s) | Resign | Policy incident(s) | Type of incident | Policy area | Minister previous resignation call |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| <i>De Vries De Grave & Pronk</i> | 24-04-2001 and 27-04 '01 | No | Explosion of fire work company in Enschede | Policy incident | Home affairs, Defense and Housing and environmental affairs | No |
| <i>Korthals</i> | 13-12-2002 | yes | Construction fraud of the Schiphol tunnel (+ past call on battling drug smuggling) | Wrong information (about policy incident) | Defense (but about his past on Justice) | Yes (release of suspects drug trafficking) |
| <i>Donner, Verdonk & Dekker</i> | 22-09-2006 | Yes (but not for Verdonk) | Schiphol detention fire (+ Donner's past with escaped TBS prisoners) | Policy incident | Justice, Immigration affairs and Housing and environmental affairs | Yes Donner (TBS'ers) and Verdonk (the deportation of asylum seekers from Congo) and Dekker: no |
| <i>Teeven</i> | 18-04-2013 | No | Suicide of Russian asylum seeker in Dutch prison cell | Policy incident (according to Parlement.com) | Justice | No |

Table 3.1 Information about selected cases

3.2 Within-case analysis: a process tracing approach

Part 3.1 described the advantage of a comparative qualitative case study, in particular the holistic assumption that multiple behavioral (blame avoidance) and structural (political landscape) conditions can lead to the outcomes in question: resignation or non-resignation. These assumptions form the basis of 'configurational thinking' (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; 80). 'Configurational thinking' starts with the premise that 'there are strong interaction effects between individual causal factors and between specific factors and contexts' (Batter & Haverland, 2012; 18, cf. Ragin, 2000; 109-123). For the within-case analysis, an approach is needed which is based on configurational thinking too: process tracing (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; 80). Process tracing can also be regarded as 'charting the repertoire of causal paths that lead to a given outcome and the conditions under which they occur' (George & Bennett, 2005; 207). This approach is extra important in the light of the central question if and under what conditions blame avoidance influences ministerial resignation. Gerring states that process tracing makes 'it possible to enhance the internal validity of a causal claim that 'x matters'' (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; 79; Gerring, 2007). Therefore, for the analysis of the cases, a process tracing approach means the following.

This research is not solely centred towards one x, blame avoidance strategies, but looks at different structural conditions, such as salience of the incident, individual backgrounds of the Ministers and the political landscape during the time of the political incident. In each of the four cases, the process will be traced from the event which caused political incident to the known outcomes of resignation or the survival (which means the end of the cabinet term). Focus in this tracing will be on causal chains and causal mechanisms which relate the trigger event to the outcome of the case.

According to Goldstone identification of causal chains not easy, because 'to identify the process, one must perform the difficult cognitive feat of figuring out *which* aspects of the initial conditions observed, in conjunction with *which simple principles* of the many that may be at work, would have *combined* to generate the observed sequence of events' (Goldstone, cited in: George & Bennett, 2005; 206).

Therefore, to empirically ground the eventual conclusions of the process tracing, this study builds on three types of observations: a 'comprehensive storyline', 'smoking guns' and 'confessions' (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; 110). First, a longer comprehensive storyline will be developed, which tries to determine the 'temporal order by which the causal process unfolds' (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; 81). Second, zooming in to certain periods is needed to look for 'smoking guns', a group of observations in which conditions (such as BA strategies) are closely linked in time and space to outcome, such as crucial periods in accountability debates (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; 110). A third observation is critical to assess the importance of certain 'smoking guns' and that is the 'confession' of the central actors in which they explain their actions and their reactions (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; 116). Together, these three types of observations provide the empirical grounding for a careful analysis which behavioural and structural causes lead to the outcome in the cases under study.

As process tracing is a within-case approach, the conclusions of those cases are confined to the particular context and development of one case (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; 82). However, a comparison of the individual conclusions of each case affords the drawing of more general conclusions on which set of causal conditions make specific outcomes (resignation or non-resignation) possible. Blatter and Haverland also call this 'possibilistic' or 'configurational generalization' (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; 120).

3.3 Data collection and analysis: timing and triangulation

A triangulation of multiple data sources is vital in process tracing, because the 'cogency' of the process tracing 'depends on the quality and trustworthiness of the empirical evidence' (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; 105). In this research four different data sources are combined and analyzed for each case in order to avoid a biased analysis:

1. Background descriptions of the involved Ministers in the database of the '*Parlementair Documentatie Centrum*' of the University of Leiden and description of the political landscape during the incidents.¹³
2. Official research reports of the (semi)independent investigations which were conducted after the incidents¹⁴.
3. Newspaper articles of the five biggest national newspapers¹⁵, which both relate to the incident¹⁶ and the minister¹⁷ in the headline and lead of the article.¹⁸

¹³ On internet as: Parlement.com

¹⁴ Case 1: Commissie Vuurwerkkramp, 2001. Case 2: parliamentary inquiry 'bouwfraude', 2002. Case 3: Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid, 2006. Case 4: Inspectie voor Veiligheid en Justitie, 2013.

¹⁵ Telegraaf, Volkskrant, NRC, Trouw and AD, see: Cebuco, 2012: <http://www.oplagen-dagbladen.nl/>

¹⁶ Case 1: HLead(vuurwerkkramp) Case 2: HLead(bouwfraude). Case 3: HLead(schipholbrand). Case 4: HLead(Dolmatov). This search proved to be rather accurate, as almost every political incident was named in a consistent way, such as 'vuurwerkkramp' for the explosion of the fireworks factory, or 'schipholbrand' for the fire in the Schiphol prison. More information on actual search terms, dates of search etc, can be found in Appendix E.

¹⁷ in cases were multiple Ministers were involved in the blame game, the searchword in LexisNexis is not the individual name of the Minister, but just 'Minister'.

4. Parliamentary documents¹⁹ which were named after the political incident on the official website of the Dutch parliament²⁰ so that the political incident was the main topic of the debate. For this data selection, the same timeframe as the newspaper selection was used.

Data analysis in this type of in-depth process tracing involves for a large part data reduction. Miles and Huberman acknowledge that the decisions how to group, pull out, pattern and retell the data are analytic choices that ‘sharpen, sort, focus, discard and organize data’ in such a manner that conclusions can be drawn in a reliable way (1994; 11). The first data source provides data for drawing a map of the structural conditions during the political incidents under investigation. The analysis of structural conditions in the cases are based on the hypotheses drawn in Table 2.1 of the literature review. The second data source serves as the input for an ‘independent’ description of the event which led to the political incident and as input for the comprehensive storyline of blame.

The third and fourth data sources, newspaper articles and parliamentary documents, form the basis for a map of the blame avoidance strategies of the Minister and other actors. The mapping of the Ministers’ strategies and the acceptance of these strategies is based on the operationalization of the strategies in table 2.2 in the theoretical chapter. This map forms the basis of the storyline, the smoking guns and confessions in the process tracing for each case. It is important to use both sources as input, because while newspaper articles mostly suffer from a bias towards actors’ ‘ex-post rationalizations’ of their actions, statements in parliamentary debates and letters serve ‘strategic purposes’ (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; 118). Therefore, a triangulation of both sources will give a more balanced account of the different statements and actions of the Minister(s) and their adversaries. This part of the case analysis follows the strategy of Brandstrom, Kuipers and Daleus (2008; 175-175), who performed a content analysis of the national newspaper articles (and in this case also parliamentary debates) on the political incidents, to ‘reveal if, when and how often political actors use blaming strategies, evaluate government behavior, (re)allocate responsibility, or attribute blame to specific culprits’.

In each case, the structural conditions and the strategies in the blame game will weighed against each other in order to assess the usefulness of the model in figure 2.1 of the theoretical chapter. According to Miles and Huberman theory triangulation is vital for improvement of the validity of the research as it ‘is supposed to support a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree with it or, at least, don’ t contradict it’ (1984; 235). A second advantage of this triangulation is that it helps the researcher to look for patterns instead of ‘single occurrences’ (Leininger in Field & Morse, 1996:120). By searching for patterns in processes among all four cases, this thesis can give some insight in the effect of different blame avoidance strategies under diverging ‘conditions, contexts or circumstances’ (Leininger in Field & Morse, 1996:120).

¹⁸ Case 1: 13-05-2000 (fire) until 26-04-2001 (last accountability debate). Case 2: before 12-11-2001 (first newspaper article) until 12-12-2002 (resignation). Case 3: 27-10-2005 until 21-09-2006 (resignation). Case 4: 17-01-2013 (suicide Dolmatov) until 01-10-2013 (last search: still happening). See Appendix E.

¹⁹ letters from the Minister, Parliamentary Q&A, parliamentary debates, etc.

²⁰ officielebekendmakingen.nl.

3.4 Reliability and validity of this research

The quality of this research can be assessed with the concepts of reliability and validity. While reliability focusses on whether the results of one's study are replicable, validity refers to whether the results are accurate and are generalizable beyond the immediate case studies (Yin, 2009; 40). Some qualitative researchers have argued that these concepts only apply to the quality of quantitative research (Leininger, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1981). However, these concepts are also legitimate for qualitative research, because 'the goal of finding plausible and credible outcome explanations is central to all research' (Morse et al, 2002; 14; cf. Yin, 2009; 40).

This research design tried to enhance the replicability of this research, by giving a structured documentation of the steps made in the case selection, data collection and data analysis (Yin, 2009; 119). The internal validity, or accuracy of measurement, of this research was enhanced by both a careful operationalization of the theoretical concepts and by using a process tracing approach. First, the theoretical chapter showed a precise operationalization of both structural conditions (table 2.1) and the conceptual differences between blame avoidance strategies (table 2.2). Besides, the use of both types of literature enhanced the validity of the research due to theory triangulation (Miles and Huberman, 1984; 235). Second, process tracing enhances the internal validity of the research, because it leads to a careful assessment of which causal paths led, under which conditions, led to which outcome (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; 79; Gerring, 2007).

The external validity, or generalizability, of this research is harder to assess. There are multiple limitations to this research, such as the limited time frame (2000-2013), the contextual nature of case study research and the use of only public sources. However, the aim of this research is 'configurational generalization' (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; 120). This means that this research tries to derive conclusions on which set of causal conditions made specific outcomes in resignation and survival possible, instead of looking for 'general laws'. Besides, a structured comparison strategy to account for variation on the critical conditions in order to enable causal inference and systematic theory-building, in line with Ragin (1987) and George and Bennett (2005), affords such 'configurational generalization'. The last chapter will assess the external validity of this research in more detail.

This research design showed the steps which were made in case selection, data collection and data analysis, in order to enhance the reliability and validity of this research. The next four chapters detail the actual case studies of this research in a chronological order, so starting with the oldest case (Enschede firework explosion) and ending with a political incident from the beginning of this year (the suicide of asylum seeker Dolmatov).

4. One to blame, all to blame

Case 1: Ministers de Vries, Pronk and de Grave and the firework explosion in Enschede

4.1 Description of the political incident

On the 13th of May 2000, an ‘initially innocent-looking fire’ at an SE Firework storage in the middle of a residential area in Enschede escalated. The subsequent explosion of the storage wiped away 200 houses.²¹ 22 people died, 950 were injured and the demolition of the neighborhood produced over 1 billion guilders in damage.²² Immediate action was taken by the municipality of Enschede and the central government. Prime Minister Kok held a press conference and ensured that ‘no one should get worse from this disaster’.²³ Three days after the explosion, the government announced an independent commission (Commission Oosting) to investigate who is responsible for the disaster.²⁴ Already on the 19th of May, six days after the explosion, the NRC asks the question: ‘Who is to blame? SE Fireworks, the municipality of Enschede or the central government?’²⁵

Mid-January, eight central government inspections published their reports, which served as input for the report of the Commission-Oosting.²⁶ The Commission published its final report on the 27th of February 2001. The report passed a harsh judgment: all government parties (BZK, Defense, VROM, SZW, and V&W) and the municipality fell short in the licensing and inspection of SE Fireworks. The company itself made big mistakes too.

Parliament reached her final decision about the accountability of the Ministers at the end of three long debating days on the 24th, 25th and 26th of April 2001. Ministers de Vries (BZK), de Grave (Defense) and Pronk (VROM) were the only Ministers compelled to speak on all three days of the debate.²⁷ During this debate, the Socialist Party filed two ‘votes of censure’²⁸, one against Minister Pronk (VROM)²⁹ and one against Minister De Grave (Defense)³⁰. Both votes were only supported by the members of the Socialist Party, with 7 seats in parliament (4,7% of the seats).³¹ However, during this debate, the Christian Democrats (CDA, De Hoop Schaffer), the Green Left (GL, Rosenmoller) and ‘Christian Union’ (CU, Slob), which comprised 29% of the seats in Parliament³², filed a second ‘vote of censure’ against Defense Minister de Grave.³³ This vote of censure was supported by all opposition parties in parliament, who had control over 35% of Parliament.³⁴ Although the entire opposition was in favor of the resignation of Minister de Grave, all Ministers survived the debate.

²¹ (Commissie Onderzoek Vuurwerkramp, 2001; 31).

²² (Commissie Onderzoek Vuurwerkramp, 2001; 31).

²³ (Commissie Onderzoek Vuurwerkramp, 2001; 200). In Dutch: ‘niemand mag minder worden van de ramp’

²⁴ (Kamerstukken (Brief) II, 1999-2000, (16-05-00), 27 157, nr. 1; 10).

²⁵ (NRC, 19-05-00; 1)

²⁶ (Commissie Onderzoek Vuurwerkramp, 2001; 15)

²⁷ (H TK 2000-2001, (24-04-01), nr. 71; H TK 2000-2001 (25-04-01), nr. 72; H TK 2000-2001 (25-04-01), nr. 73; H TK 2000-2001 (26-04-01), nr. 73).

²⁸ In Dutch: motie van afkeuring. In this debate this type of vote is seen as vote of no-confidence (H TK 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), 73; 4813).

²⁹ (Kamerstukken II 2000-2001 (26-04-01), 27157, nr. 39)

³⁰ (Kamerstukken II 2000-2001 (26-04-01), 27157, nr.38).

³¹ http://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhronvx6/zetelverdeling_tweede_kamer_1946_heden

³² ‘CDA’: 29 seats, ‘GL’: 10 seats ‘CU’: 5 seats.

http://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhronvx6/zetelverdeling_tweede_kamer_1946_heden

³³ (Kamerstukken II 2000-2001 (26-04-01), 27157, nr. 42).

³⁴ CDA, GL, CU, SGP (3 seats) and SP (5 seats).

http://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhronvx6/zetelverdeling_tweede_kamer_1946_heden

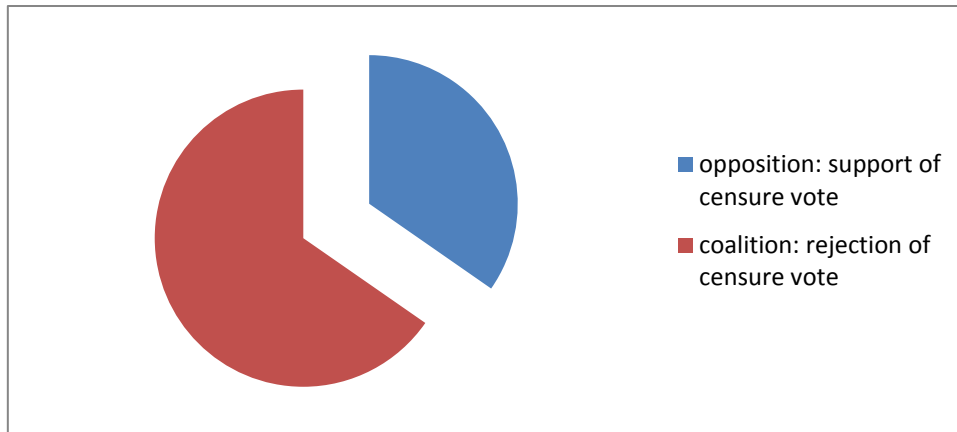


Figure 4.1 Censure vote against Minister de Grave ‘Motie De Hoop Scheffer c.s, 27157, nr. 42).

In this storyline, we can detect four distinctive periods.

| Period | Label of period | Most important events | Period type |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|
| 13-05-2000 until 25-05-2000 | Post-incident | 13-05-2000: Statement of Minister Kok 16-05-2000: Government decides to install independent enquiry Commission | Sense making |
| 25-05-2000 until 26-02-2001 | Investigation period of Commission-Oosting | 26-05-2000: Start of the investigation of the Commission-Oosting Mid-January: Reports of the eight government inspections | ‘Fact finding’ |
| 27-02-2001 until 23-04-2001 | Publication of the report Commission-Oosting | 27-02-2001: Publication of the Oosting-Report 23-03-2001: Official cabinet reaction | Establishing causality |
| 24-04-2001 until 26-04-2001 | Accountability debate + votes of censure | 24/25/26-04-2001: Accountability debate with Parliament | Assessing culpability and responsibility |

Table 4.1: Periods within the incident ‘Firework explosion’

What explains the survival of all three Ministers in these periods? The incident was quite severe, with 22 deaths, a lot of newspaper attention for the disaster³⁵ and a very critical report by the enquiry Commission-Oosting. The following section 4.2 investigates structural conditions that may have influenced political survival. Section 4.3 analyses the identified periods to assess whether behavioral mechanisms (blame avoidance strategies and their acceptance) can be regarded as ‘smoking gun’ evidence to explain the survival of the individual Ministers and their diverging outcomes in terms of blame.

4.2 Structural conditions: individual background, media salience and political landscape

The theoretical chapter showed the need to analyze the individual backgrounds of the Ministers, media salience of the incident and the political landscape. This part will assess whether each these conditions were favorable for the survival of the Ministers or whether they constrained the possibilities for blame deflection by the Ministers.

³⁵ (Kuttschreuter, Gutteling and de Hond, 2011; 206)

4.2.1 Individual background of the three Ministers

| Individual characters ³⁶ | De Grave | Pronk | De Vries |
|--|--|--|---|
| <i>Party affiliation</i> | VVD | PvdA | PvdA |
| <i>'necessary party' for coalition majority</i> | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| <i>Ministry</i> | Defense | Housing, Spatial Planning and Environmental Affairs | Home Affairs (since March 2000) |
| <i>Age at time of incident</i> | 44 | 60 | 57 |
| <i>Earlier experience in Parliament</i> | Yes, 8 years and 3 months: from 09-1982 till 05-1990 and from 05-1998 till 08-1998 | Yes, in total 6 years and 9 months between 1971 and 1998. ³⁷ | Yes, 15 years: from 05-1973 till 09-1988 |
| <i>Earlier experience as (junior) Minister</i> | Junior Minister Social Affairs (07-1996/08-1998) | International Cooperation (3 terms: 05-1973/12-1977 + 11-1989/08-1998). | Social Affairs (08-1998/03-2000: so within this cabinet period) |
| <i>Earlier experience in public sector</i> | Member municipal council Amsterdam (1982-86, 1990-96), city councilor finance, Amsterdam (1990-96) | Deputy secretary-general UNCTAD (1980-85), Deputy secretary-general UN (1980-86) | Civil servant Justice department (1968-1971), Director Association of Dutch municipalities (1988-1996), Chairman Dutch Social-Ec. Council (1996-98) |
| <i>Earlier vote of censure during cabinet period</i> | No | No | No |

Table 4.2 Individual background of the Ministers De Grave, Pronk and De Vries

All three Ministers conform to the individual characteristics which were identified as contributing to Ministerial survival by Bovens and others (2010). All three Ministers belonged to a party which was necessary for having a coalition majority (instead of D66) and all three had extensive earlier experience both in Parliament and as (junior) Minister. None had experienced a vote of censure or a vote of no-confidence during their term as Minister or in previous terms. Therefore, we can conclude that these individual characteristics could partly explain the survival of all three Ministers. However, although the Ministers met the characteristics which contribute to survival, their individual background cannot explain why the blame for Minister De Grave was so much harsher than for the other two.

4.2.2 Media salience of the incident

An analysis of the media salience of the explosion shows quite prominent constraints on blame deflection by the Ministers. Kuttschreuter, Gutteling and de Hond observed a number of 315 articles which referred to the explosion in the three biggest national newspapers in the month after the explosion (2011; 206). This is logical as the incident provided the necessary 'shocking pictures, shocking statistics and shocking witness statements' (Brandstrom and Kuipers, 2003; 291). Therefore, after an explosion with so many casualties, damage and attention, it is hard to argue that only a technical or procedural concerns are at stake (Brandstrom and Kuipers, 2003; 291).

³⁶ Source: Personal descriptions on Parlement.com

³⁷ Periods: 05-1971/05-1973 + 06-1977/09-1977 + 01-1978/08-1980 + 06-1986/11-1989 + 05-1994/08-1994 + 05-1998/05-1998.

However, we can paint a much more moderate picture when we only focus on the newspaper articles which made a link between individual Ministers and the firework explosion. For example, during the time of the investigation of the Commission-Oosting, the total number of articles peaked at four articles at the day (07-12-2000) Minister Pronk had to testify about the explosion in court. Two other peaks emerged during the time of the report of the Commission and the accountability debate. One can be seen at the time of the cabinet response on the report (4 articles, 24-3-2001), while the other is visible after the accountability debate (7 articles a day, 27-04-2001). This moderate picture makes it difficult to draw a line between the salience of the incident and the chances for political survival. However, we can state that the salience of the incident in itself and the amount of casualties and damage reduced the chances that the Ministers could deny the severity of the explosion.

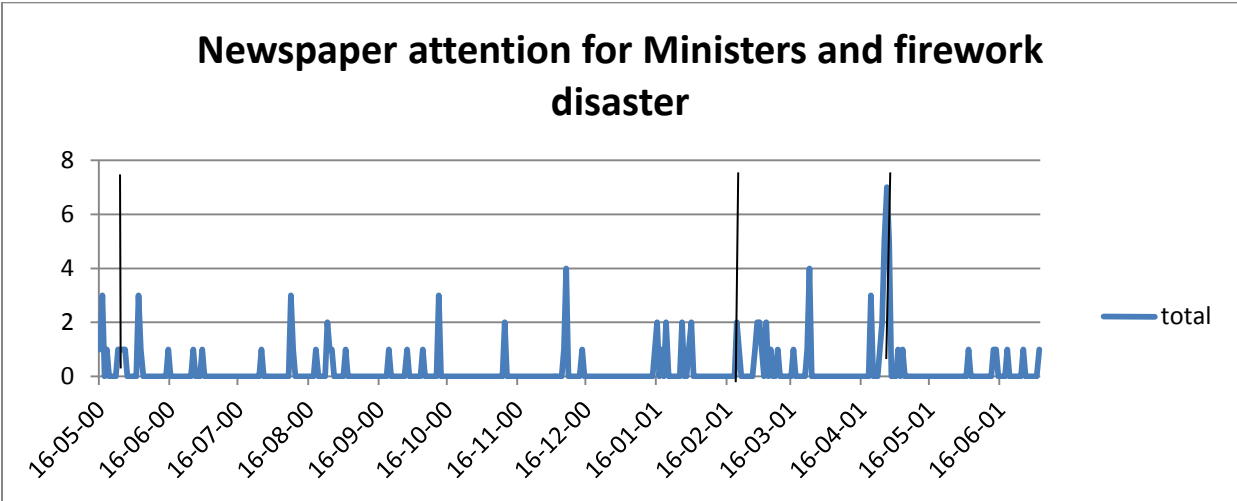


Figure 4.2 Newspaper attention per day for Minister(s) and the firework explosion in Enschede³⁸

4.2.3 Political landscape

At the time of the explosion, the ruling coalition of Prime-Minister Kok (PvdA), Kok II, consisted of three parties: the Social Democrats (PvdA, 45 seats), the Conservative Liberals (VVD, 38 seats) and the much smaller Social Liberals (D66, 14 seats).³⁹ The ‘Purple Coalition’ could rely on an oversized majority of 65% of seats in Parliament. This coalition was already in place for almost two years (since 03-08-1998) when the fire took place. However, if we look at the previous coalition, Kok I, we can see that it had exactly the same parties and the same party background for the Minister of Defense (VVD, Voorhoeve) and Environment and Housing (PvdA, de Boer). Only the background of the Minister of Interior changed from Conservative Liberal (Dijkstal) in Kok I to Social Democrat (de Vries) in Kok II. The oversized, stable majority could have been an advantage for survival in the sense that the chances were slim that opponents would be able to secure majority for a censure vote against a Minister. On the other hand, the relatively long period of the ‘Purple Coalitions’ could have made it harder for individual Ministers to blame predecessors, because that would have implicated their fellow party members.

³⁸ LexisNexis (search words: Minister + vuurwerkcramp in headline+lead). n = 103

³⁹ information: http://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhronvx4/kabinet_kok_ii_1998_2002

In this case, controversy of the policy area and ideological distance of the coalition insignificant conditions. Firework storage policy is in contrast to, for example asylum policy (case 3 and 4) not a contested policy area, but rather a technocratic administrative issue. Therefore, one can assume that there were no big ideological divides between coalition parties on this matter.

4.2.4 Conclusion: the effect of structural conditions

By looking at the structural conditions of the political incident of the firework explosion, we can conclude that most structural conditions were favorable for ministerial survival. The involved Ministers had long experience in the political sphere, came from a vital party in the big and stable majority coalition and there was a relatively low salience of articles which linked the minister(s) to the explosion. On the other hand, some negative conditions for survival can be identified as well. These are, again, the stability of the 'Purple Coalitions' and the high salience of the incident on its own. Therefore, the favorable conditions are not enough to sufficiently explain the survival of all three Ministers. Besides that, these favorable conditions are not able to explain the high blame attribution for Minister de Grave compared to the other two. We must assess the process of blame avoidance in each of the periods of the incident, to properly assess this question.

4.3 Assessing 'smoking guns': The efficacy of blame avoidance strategies

4.3.1 Post-incident: making sense of an explosion

The severity of the explosion was visible in the first statement of Kok after the disaster that 'no one should end up worse as a result of the disaster' (1).⁴⁰ This statement can be seen as a political strategy in which the Prime Minister tried to connect the severity of the incident with a positive interpretation: harm would be compensated (Bovens et al, 1999; 142). Although the severity of the incident was immediately acknowledged, the Ministers would not acknowledge mistakes by the central government until a 'final assessment' was made by an independent enquiry Commission (2)⁴¹.

Besides these two political strategies, the appointed coordinating Minister De Vries started his agency strategies to deflect blame towards the municipality of Enschede (3) and towards the other Ministers (4). In his first letter, De Vries stressed the legal responsibility of the municipality to instigate the Oosting-investigation and added, almost as an afterthought: 'And the Commission will also (besides the municipality) focus on the performance of other responsible public authorities.'⁴² In the first Parliamentary debate, on the 31th of May 2000, De Vries argued he was no 'front office' for questions related to for example the VROM-Minister Pronk. De Vries stressed that when Parliament wanted to ask specific policy questions, they should invite the responsible Ministers.⁴³

⁴⁰ (Commissie Onderzoek Vuurwerkkramp, 2001; 200).

⁴¹ (Kamerstukken II 1999-2000 (16-05-2000), 27 157, nr. 1; 11).

⁴² (Kamerstukken II 1999-2000 (16-05-2000), 27 157, nr. 1; 10)

⁴³ (Kamerstukken II, 1999-2000 (31-05-2000), 27 157, nr. 6; 12).

| Type of strategy | Minister | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Newspaper quote | Date |
|------------------|--------------------|--|---|--|---------------------------------|
| Political | Prime-Minister Kok | Accept severity with positive interpretation | | No one should end up worse as a result of the disaster ⁴⁴ | 13-05-2000/ 14-05-2000 |
| Political | De Vries | Delay of political judgment: independent enquiry | 'After the report of the Commission-Oosting, a final assessment will be made' | | 16-05-2000 ⁴⁵ |
| Agency | De Vries | Municipality is first responsible for investigation (and therefore disaster) | 1. 'In view of the primary responsibility of the local government in dealing with the disaster' 2. 'And the Commission will also focus on the performance of other responsible public authorities.' | | |
| Agency | De Vries | Refer to other Ministers responsibilities | 1. 'The Minister is no front office'... 2. 'Parliament must hold responsible ministers accountable for things that they are responsible for.' ⁴⁶ | | 31-05-2000 and 25-04-2001 |

Table 4.3 Blame avoidance strategies in post-incident period

Although newspaper attention linking Ministers to the explosion was moderate, the link was made from the start. Only six days after the explosion, the NRC opened with the headline: Who is to blame? SE Fireworks, municipality of Enschede or the central government?⁴⁷ The parliamentary attention for the strategies of De Vries was low. In this phase of the incident, the political delay strategy of appointing an independent commission was sufficient in postponing political judgment about the actions of government parties. However, the start of the investigation of the independent commission also marked the start of a new period, which focused less on the severity of the incident, but more on the agency dimension. Was this an ad hoc incident, and were lower level actors responsible or was the explosion a symptom of larger, and higher level policy failure?

4.3.2 The investigation of the Commission-Oosting: 'fact finding'

The strategies of the post-incident phase were repeated in the investigation phase. The continued strategies included the political strategy of compensation (1), the delay of political judgment by the delay of the input reports of the Government Inspections for Oosting (2) and the agency strategy of De Vries towards the municipality (3). The Commission would initially receive the investigations of the Government Inspections in September 2000 and would use them as input for her own investigation. However, the Inspections reports were delayed with four months to January 2001. In this period, one could distinct one new strategy. Pronk was first visible in the newspapers in August 2000, when he deflected the blame for a lack of firework control by pointing towards his civil servants, the Inspection for 'Environmental Health'.

⁴⁴ (Commissie Onderzoek Vuurwerkcramp, 2001; 200).

⁴⁵ (Kamerstukken II 1999–2000 (16-05-2000), 27 157, nr. 1; 10)

⁴⁶ (H TK 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4751).

⁴⁷ (NRC, 19-05-00; 1)

According to Pronk, the environmental health inspectors had to act more like ‘cowboys’ during their control of the municipal licenses for firework storage companies.⁴⁸

| Type of strategy | Minister | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Newspaper quote | Date |
|------------------|---|---|---|--|---|
| Political | De Vries and Zalm (Finance) | Will compensate harm | ‘all those affected will be compensated adequately’ and ‘no one will get lost between the cracks’ ⁴⁹ | Minister Zalm has an extra billion guilders available’ ‘in a confidential proposal he wants to spend part of this money for the effects of the explosion in Enschede’. ⁵⁰ | 31-05-2000 and 28-06-2000 (repeated 26-04-01) |
| Political | All (central government inspections) | Delay of reports (should be September ended up being January) ⁵¹ | Commission-Oosting: 1. ‘The Commission hoped that the inspections would report according to their own schedule (report in September 2000)’... 2. ‘During the summer it became clear the Commission could not count on this’ ⁵² . | | 09-2000/ 15-01-2001 |
| Political | De Vries | ‘progress reports’ ⁵³ | | | 05-2000/ 11-2000 |
| Agency | De Vries (supported by report government inspections) | Blame municipality | 31-05-00: 1. ‘Enschede has the legal obligation to investigate and analyze a disaster when it happens’.. 28-06-00: 3. ‘The minister holds that the municipality is primary responsible for the settlement of the disaster’. ⁵⁴ | | 31-05-2000 and 28-06-2000, however not mentioned after 24-03-2001 |
| Agency | Pronk | Inspectors need to be more like cowboys | ‘The inspection has been given the assignment to – it has become jargon in the department to act more as ‘cowboys’ and inspect more’ ⁵⁵ . | ‘I notice that the Inspection was not locally present to control the municipality in recent years’ ⁵⁶ .. right after my start as Minister I changed this approach of the Inspection, but municipalities need more supervision than thought’ ⁵⁷ | 08-08-2000, 19-08-2000, repeated 25-04-2001 |

Table 4.4 Blame avoidance strategies in investigation period

⁴⁸ (H TK 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4771). and: (NRC, 19-08-2000; 2) (Trouw, 08-08-2000; 3: title: ‘Pronk gispt zijn eigen inspecteurs’) (NRC, 08-08-2000; 3; Volkskrant, 08-08-2000; 7).

⁴⁹ (Kamerstukken II, 1999–2000 (31-05-2000), 27 157, nr. 6; 9) and (Kamerstukken II, 1999–2000 (28-06-2000), 27 157, nr. 7; 8).

⁵⁰ (AD, 24-08-2000; 2).

⁵¹ (Kamerstukken II, 1999–2000 (16-05-2000), 27 157, nr. 1; 10: setting up investigation by inspections, vital for report Commission-Oosting. Commissie Onderzoek Vuurwerkramp, 2001; 15: due September, ended up being 15-01-2001.

⁵² (Commissie Onderzoek Vuurwerkramp, 2001; 15).

⁵³ (Kamerstukken II, 1999-2000 (31-05-2000), 27 157, nr. 6), (Kamerstukken II, 1999-2000 (11-09-2000), 27 157, nr. 9) and (Kamerstukken II, 1999-2000 (22-11-2000), 27 157, nr. 13).

⁵⁴ (H TK, 1999–2000 (28-06-2000), 27 157, nr. 7; 8)

⁵⁵ (H TK 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4771). and: (NRC, 19-08-00; 2)

⁵⁶ (Trouw, 08-08-2000; 3: title: ‘Pronk gispt zijn eigen inspecteurs’)

⁵⁷ (NRC, 08-08-2000; 3; Volkskrant, 08-08-00; 7).

Both agency strategies were heavily contested by sources outside of Parliament in the media. First, the agency strategy of Minister Pronk backfired when he had to acknowledge that firework was also not a policy priority of his whole ministry and that he had little attention for firework before the disaster.⁵⁸ Second, the agency strategy of Minister de Vries was heavily contested by the municipality. On the 15th of January 2001, the municipality agitated heavily against the input reports of the Government Inspections. These reports concluded that 'especially the municipality, but also the local fire department failed with regard to supervision, enforcement and prevention'.⁵⁹ According to Enschede's Mayor, Jan Mans, the central government tried to make the municipality the 'only guilty party' in reports in which the government acted as 'judge in its own cause'.⁶⁰ The head of the independent enquiry commission, Mr. Oosting agreed with the complaints of the municipality. Oosting decided therefore to publish the general conclusions of his report in an earlier state, because he feared that otherwise only the municipality and province would be blamed, while the central government failed too.⁶¹

During the criticism on these agency strategies, newspaper made a link between 'Enschede' and an earlier firework explosion in Culemborg in 1991. On the 14th of December 2000, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Justice had to acknowledge that nothing was done with the conclusions of the public prosecutor that policy improvements needed to be made after Culemborg.⁶² On the 20th of February, several Government Inspections concluded that the policy recommendations given after the Culemborg explosion were 'not sufficiently communicated and they did not lead to a substantial change of policy'.⁶³ This inclusion of the Culemborg explosion in the debate about the Enschede explosion shifted the focus to higher political actors. This is in line with research by Bovens and 't Hart, who state that 'going back means going up' (1996).

We can conclude that the agency strategies were insufficient to deflect blame for the political incident towards lower level agents. Instead, the protest of the municipality and the existence of a comparable incident made sure that the explosion could be seen a symptom of failing national government and failing Ministers. This did not mean that lower level officials, like the municipal actors stayed clear of blame. Indeed, after the report of the Commission-Oosting, two city councilors decided to resign.⁶⁴

Failure of these agency strategies coincided with the start of a policy strategy of Minister Pronk, who publicly announced a new 'Firework Decree' on the 31st of January 2001. The Decree would lay the groundwork for much stricter rules regarding the amount and place of storage.⁶⁵ Before, on the 16th of January, Minister De Vries announced that the entire government would have to make 'a clean sweep' towards a better guarding of the safety of its citizens.⁶⁶ This change away from agency strategies shows that both De Vries and Pronk saw that it would be hard to totally deflect blame away from them and their Ministries.

⁵⁸ (Volkskrant, 7-12-2000; 3).

⁵⁹ (AD, 16-01-2001; 1)

⁶⁰ (Trouw, 15-01-01; 3: Oosting agrees).

⁶¹ (Trouw, 15-2001-01; 3).

⁶² (Trouw, 14-12-2000; 8).

⁶³ Inspectie Brandweezorg en Rampenbestrijding, et al, 2001: 49).

⁶⁴ (Volkskrant, 02-03-2001, ?).

⁶⁵ In letter of Pronk to municipalities according to newspapers. Both first mentioned: (AD, 10-11-2000; 4). 800 meter rule mentioned in: (NRC, 27-01-2001; 2), (Trouw, 31-01-2001; 4). (Trouw, 07-03-01; 4), (Telegraaf, 13-06-2001; ?), (Trouw, 07-03-2001; 4). 6000 kilo rule: (Telegraaf, 07-12-2000; ?), (Trouw, 31-01-2001; 4). (Trouw, 07-03-2001; 4).

⁶⁶ (AD, 16-0120-01; 1/NRC, 18-01-2001; 7).

| Type of strategy | Minister | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Newspaper quote | Date |
|------------------|----------|--|--|--|--------------------------------|
| Political | De Vries | Change we need! (severity, but positive interpretation) | <i>The government should fulfill his role as promoter of safety better, is one of the lessons from the Report. Urgent action is required to make change.</i> ⁶⁷ | <i>'We should not compromise on the safety of citizens. The trust of citizens is falling.. The government needs to make a clean sweep'</i> ⁶⁸ | Both 16-01-2001 and 23-03-2001 |
| Policy | Pronk | Whole new firework policy | | <i>Among others: Storage of firework not within 800 meters of residential area and amount of firework cannot exceed 6000 kilogram.</i> ⁶⁹ | 31-01-2001 |

Table 4.5 Blame avoidance strategies in later investigation period

The harsh conclusions by the Commission-Oosting towards all government actors ensured the end of the attempts of De Vries and Pronk to blame lower level agents. The Commission showed that the explosion was a symptom of failing national government policy. This was visible in the acknowledgement of De Vries with the presentation of the official government reaction on the 24th of March 2001: 'Even if one can shift the focus of responsibility towards one actor, then this not relevant for the judgment about the own actions of each government layer in political-administrative sense'⁷⁰

With this acknowledgement of agency responsibility during the investigation phase, the incident moved to the next phase: assessing final responsibility towards the Ministers.

4.3.3 After the Commission-Oosting: establishing causality

The Commission-Oosting published her final report on the 27th of February 2001. The report passed a harsh judgment: all government parties (BZK, Defense, VROM, SZW, and V&W) and the municipality fell short in the licensing and inspection of SE Fireworks. The company itself made big mistakes too. Thereby, all involved actors had to bear part of the responsibility for what happened.⁷¹ Newspaper called the report 'a shocking story about a failing local and national government: Fragmentation, compartmentalization and lack of coordination were rule instead of isolated incidents. The company could expand unchecked until it was a danger for the environment'.⁷² Other newspapers posed questions such as: 'Whose heads must be on a plate?' (Trouw)⁷³ and 'How to settle the blame after Enschede?' (AD).⁷⁴

First, it is interesting to see that the Ministers chose not to make individual public statements, but let Minister De Vries react for all Ministers in an official reaction.

⁶⁷ (Kamerstukken II, 2000-2001 (23-03-2001), 27 157, nr. 20; 2).

⁶⁸ (AD, 16-01-2001; 1/NRC, 18-01-2001; 7).

⁶⁹ In letter of Pronk to municipalities according to newspapers. Both first mentioned: (AD, 10-11-2000; 4). 800 meter rule mentioned in: (NRC, 27-01-2001; 2), (Trouw, 31-01-2001; 4). (Trouw, 07-03-01; 4), (Telegraaf, 13-06-2001; ?), (Trouw, 07-03-2001; 4). 6000 kilo rule: (Telegraaf, 07-12-2000; ?), (Trouw, 31-01-2001; 4). (Trouw, 07-03-2001; 4).

⁷⁰ (NRC, 24-03-2001; 2): 'Zo er al een zwaartepunt valt aan te geven dan is dat niet relevant voor het oordeel over eigen handelen van de overheden in politiek-bestuurlijke zin.

⁷¹ (Commissie Onderzoek Vuurwerkcramp, 2001)

⁷² (AD, 28-02-01; 3)

⁷³ (Trouw, 02-03-01; 3), In Dutch: *Wie heeft schuld, moeten er koppen rollen en, zo ja, van wie?*

⁷⁴ (AD, 02-03-01; 11)

In the official reaction to the report of the Commission-Oosting on the 24th of March 2001, the government accepted responsibility for the severity of the explosion. The government acknowledged ‘shortcomings in the actions of the government’, such as ‘failure to ensure timely and adequate regulations for professional fireworks’ and ‘failure in her supervising role of the municipalities’.⁷⁵ This acceptance of government responsibility could be most damaging for two Ministers. First, Minister Pronk, who was responsible for the Environmental Health Inspection and the Firework Decree. The second Minister was not named yet. Defence Minister de Grave did not know he had a small bureau under his supervision which was responsible for advising municipalities on the licensing of firework companies, a bureau which failed very badly.

Both Ministers reacted with an agency strategy. In the official reaction, they announced the transfer of the advising tasks away from the Defense bureau towards a new ‘center of expertise’. This ‘new center of expertise’ would fall under the responsibility of VROM-Minister Pronk. This strategy could have been aimed to reduce the blame for the Minister De Grave as a single actor. It seems that the government was most concerned about this Minister.

| Type of strategy | Minister | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Newspaper quote | Date |
|------------------|--------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Political | De Grave and Pronk | Let De Vries react | | ‘Despite heavy criticism of chairman Oosting towards six ministers, the individual ministers do not want to go a statement. They leave this for now to Minister de Vries’ ⁷⁶ | 01-03-2001 |
| Political | All | Accept full responsibility | ‘Shortcomings in the actions of the government are unambiguously described by the Commission’.. Government has ‘failed to ensure timely and adequate regulations for professional fireworks’ and the government failed in her supervising role of the municipalities’ | | 24-03-2001 |
| Agency | Pronk and De Grave | New ‘center of expertise’: successor of Bureau Milan | All: the Minister of Defense, and his bureau, will no longer be responsible for advising in firework issues. .. Instead a new ‘center of expertise’ will be set up by VROM. ⁷⁷ | The two ‘scientific advisors firework storage’ will not be too busy at the new expert center ‘Safety and Firework’ which is opened by Minister Pronk. ⁷⁸⁷⁹ | 24-03-2001 (announcement) – 23-01-2002 (start) |

Table 4.6 Blame avoidance strategies in report period

⁷⁵ (Kamerstukken II, 2000-2001 (23-03-2001), 27 157, nr. 20; 11/referred to in AD, 23-03-2001; 2 and NRC, 24-03-2001; 2).

⁷⁶ (Telegraaf, 01-03-01; ?/AD, 01-03-2001; 1).

⁷⁷ (Kamerstukken II 2000-2001, (20-03-2001), 27 157, nr. 20; 12-13)

⁷⁸ (Trouw, 23-01-2002; 3).

⁷⁹ ‘Center of expertise’ cannot be found on site RivM, but mentioned in revision of ‘Firework decree’ in 2010. (Strct., 2010 (07-10-2010), nr. 15526; 19).

Parliament did not really respond to these strategies, but instead waited for the final accountability debate. This debate took place on the 24th, 25th and 26th of April 2001.

4.3.4 The 'final' accountability debate

During the final accountability debate, a myriad of blame avoidance strategies could be identified. In the first term of the debate,⁸⁰ Minister De Vries opened the political ball by framing resignation of own accord (before the debate) as 'walking away from your responsibilities' (1). In later newspaper articles this strategy was summarized as 'not stepping down, but stepping up'.⁸¹ Hereby De Vries still accepted the responsibility of the government for the explosion, but framed accountability as a noble treat, while he framed resignation as 'ignoring responsibility'.

After De Vries, Minister De Grave started his blame avoidance strategies. De Grave began his opening speech acknowledging the mistakes of the Inspection under his supervision. However, at the same time he denied responsibility for these mistakes by attributing these mistakes to civil servants of the bureau itself (2) and his predecessors (3). In the first term he acknowledged he had no knowledge of the bureau before the incident, because of both its small size (only 3,5 FTE)⁸² and because it had not been put on the political agenda.⁸³ He then lamented: 'If only someone had written a letter that the bureau could not perform her tasks with only 3,5 people. Then I could have taken new measures'.⁸⁴ Second, he deflected the responsibility for failures of the bureau towards his predecessors, as 'a large part of the criticism on the bureau was based on the actions after Culemborg and that is a long time ago'.⁸⁵ Third, De Grave also introduced a policy strategy, by linking the closed-off organizational culture of Defense to his ignorance of the existence of the bureau (4). When a culture change would be successfully implemented, this ignorance would not happen again. However, the problem of this policy strategy is that it was not linked to the incident, because the Minister of Defense had no longer responsibility in the policy area of firework storage at the time of the debate.

Minister Pronk ended the blame avoidance input of the second term, by sticking to his policy strategy of the new Firework Decree in the previous period (5). He even argued the work on a new 'Firework Decree' started already halfway 1999. He summarized his policy strategy as: 'therefore, I took my responsibility already before the disaster and not only after. This is a reason for Parliament to trust me'.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ first term is for the opening statements of the spokespersons of every political party. (H TK 2000-2001 (24-04-2001) nr 71).

⁸¹ (NRC, 26-04-2001; 2)

⁸² (H TK, 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4783)

⁸³ (H TK, 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4782)

⁸⁴ (H TK, 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4783)

⁸⁵ (H TK, 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4786).

⁸⁶ (H TK, 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4772-4773).

| Type of strategy | Minister | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Date |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Political | De Vries (as coordinating minister) | No resignation of own accord (niet aftreden maar optreden) | 1. De Vries: 'Our parliamentary system shows us the road: not walking away, but being accountable. At the end of the debate it will be clear what Parliament thinks of this. Without trust a minister cannot function' ⁸⁷ 2. In theoretical sense can everybody walk away from his responsibilities, but I feel more for stepping up. ⁸⁸ | 24-03-2001 and 25-04-2001 |
| Agency | De Grave | No knowledge about involvement civil servants Defense | De Grave: 'the existence of the bureau was not known to me... 73.000 people work under my responsibility. A bureau of 3 people is only made known to me when there is a reason for political or administrative' ⁸⁹ -- During my time as Minister, the bureau did not appear on political agenda. That is not good, but it is a fact ⁹⁰ -- 'If only someone had written a letter that the bureau could not perform her tasks with only 3,5 people. Then I could have taken measures to solve this' ⁹¹ | 25-04-2001 |
| Agency | De Grave | Blaming predecessors (small) | I do not believe that the Commission-Oosting has drawn her conclusions based on only one year. A large part of the criticism on the bureau was based on the actions after Culemborg and that is a long time ago. ⁹² | 25-04-2001 |
| Policy | Pronk | Already working on new policies concerning firework before disaster | 1. 'The Firework Decree' has been sharpened from halfway 1999. Therefore, I took my responsibility already before the disaster and not only after. This is a reason for trust from Parliament. ⁹³ 2. 'This is no headlong rush forwards, no: mea culpa, and now we are going to do things totally different'. I explained everything which is already happening. ⁹⁴ | 25-04-2001, denial of court testimony on 07-12-2000, |
| Policy | De Grave | New 'culture shift' since disaster | 1. A cultural shift must make sure that at the Defense department – no longer the bureau, this task went to another department, and the information is optimal. ⁹⁵ – 2. 'I only want to explain Parliament why it is so important to make this shift, so this never happens again' ⁹⁶ . - 3. I am a 100% motivated for his new policy. ⁹⁷ | 25-04-2000 |

Table 4.7 Blame avoidance strategies in first and second term of accountability debate

The reactions of the Parliamentarians at the end of the second term were not entirely positive. Few Parliamentarians reacted to the political strategy of Minister De Vries. However, the main criticism to this strategy came from coalition party D66. Although spokesperson Scheltema-de Nie saw 'insufficient arguments to vote for a no-confidence vote'⁹⁸, she thought that any Minister should reconsider whether they had enough authority left to stay in office.⁹⁹

⁸⁷ (AD, 24-03-2001; 5).

⁸⁸ (H TK 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4757).

⁸⁹ (H TK, 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr; 72; 4783)

⁹⁰ (H TK, 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr; 72; 4783)

⁹¹ (H TK, 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4783)

⁹² (H TK, 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4786).

⁹³ (H TK, 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4772-4773).

⁹⁴ (H TK, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), nr. 73; 4843).

⁹⁵ (H TK, 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4782)

⁹⁶ (H TK, 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4784)

⁹⁷ (H TK, 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4785)

⁹⁸ (H TK, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), nr. 73; 4816)

⁹⁹ (H TK, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), nr. 73; 4818).

Scheltema-De Nies (D66) therefore rejected the strategy of De Vries who framed resignation as 'walking away from responsibilities'.¹⁰⁰ The policy strategy of Pronk was favorably accepted, as it was in line with his earlier blame avoidance strategy. This is also visible in the fact that a vote of censure against Pronk for bad firework policy was only supported by one party: the far left Socialist party.

However, the acceptance of the strategies of Minister De Grave did not go as smooth. Most attention and most blame went to his agency strategy of ignorance about the responsible bureau. Even the coalition party D66 did not go along with the agency strategy of the Minister. D66 spokeswoman Scheltema-de Nie even said 'it looked a lot like Defense left the bureau to fend for its own.'¹⁰¹ This criticism was shared by the opposition. For example GL reacted on the strategy with the remark 'how on earth was it possible that the Minister did not know about the bureau, while at the same time he could reduce the FTE of the bureau from 5 to 3.5?'¹⁰² GL reminded Parliament that two city councilors in Enschede resigned and added that maybe the Ministers should do the same.¹⁰³ As can be expected, VVD (the Ministers own party) joined the Minister in deflecting blame towards the individual civil servants and towards the relation between VROM and Defense.¹⁰⁴ Coalition party PvdA was very critical on De Grave in the first term. However, apparently the blame avoidance strategies of de Grave convinced the party in the second term (or coalition considerations were too important), because PvdA-spokesperson concluded that she hoped that De Grave's speech would be 'the standard for other political actors the next years in Parliament and in the rest of the Netherlands.'¹⁰⁵

The three opposition parties filed a second 'vote of censure' against Defense Minister de Grave.¹⁰⁶ Together, Christian Democrats (CDA, De Hoop Scheffer), the Green Left (GL, Rosenmoller) and 'Christian Union' (CU, Slob), held 29% of seats in Parliament¹⁰⁷. Parliament seemed to blame one individual Minister in particular, who did not have a very effective blame avoidance strategy.

In the third term of the debate, the political strategy of the previous period resurfaced, namely the framing of the responsibility dimension as a network failure. Again, Minister de Vries opened by stressing that all Ministers were fully committed to change and improvement.¹⁰⁸ However, he linked this commitment to collective responsibility (1). The 'chain of responsibilities' of Oosting evolved into a political strategy in which to blame one Minister was to blame all Ministers (2). According to De Vries: 'the sum of mistakes made by multiple departments over many years could not justify the denouncement of trust in one or some Ministers'.¹⁰⁹ The other two Ministers agreed. In this political strategy, the resignation of one Minister meant the resignation of the other two Ministers and therefore the start of a cabinet crisis.

¹⁰⁰ (H TK, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), nr. 73; 4818).

¹⁰¹ (H TK, 2000-2001 (24-04-2001) nr. 71; 4699).

¹⁰² (H TK, 2000-2001 (24-04-2001), nr. 71; 4715).

¹⁰³ (H TK, 2000-2001 (24-04-2001), nr. 71; 4715).

¹⁰⁴ (H TK, 2000-2001 (24-04-2001), nr. 71; 4691).

¹⁰⁵ (H TK, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), nr. 73; 4811)

¹⁰⁶ Motie de Hoop Scheffer, c.s. 27157, nr. 42. Filed in (H TK, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), nr. 73; 4853)

¹⁰⁷ 'CDA': 29 seats, 'GL': 10 seats 'CU': 5 seats.

http://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhronvx6/zetelverdeling_tweede_kamer_1946_heden

¹⁰⁸ (H TK, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), nr. 73; 4867)

¹⁰⁹ (H TK, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), nr. 73; 4867).

| Type of strategy | Minister | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Newspaper quote |
|------------------|---|-------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Political | De Vries (as coordinating minister) | All Ministers fully committed | 'The cabinet is as a whole fully committed to learn from the mistakes and to draw lessons in the form of an action program and to carry out this program consequently and with zeal. This holds for all Ministers, who were fully committed in problems of the disaster' ¹¹⁰ | 26-04-2001 |
| Political | All three (but most evident De Vries in third term of debate) | One to blame, all to blame | 1. De Grave: 'my conclusion is that all involved Minister share a bot of the responsibility, or speaking with Oosting: a chain of responsibilities.' ¹¹¹ 2. De Vries: 'The sum of mistakes made by multiple departments among many years cannot justify the denounce of trust in one or some Ministers.' ¹¹² 3. Pronk: 'Until 1994 the supervision on firework storage went from VROM to Defense. I am still responsible for this choice and feel shared political responsibility for the actions of the bureau'. ¹¹³ | 26-04-2001 |

Table 4.8 Blame avoidance strategies in third term of accountability debate

The opposition did not agree with this political network strategy. They called it 'dodging away from responsibility' (CU)¹¹⁴, a 'questionable practice', only used as last resort to save De Grave (GL)¹¹⁵ and a 'dubious flight into collectivity' (CDA).¹¹⁶ Therefore, the entire opposition voted in favor of a censure vote against De Grave. Although coalition party D66 criticized Minister De Grave harshly, they chided the CDA for choosing 'the easy way out' of voting against an 'excuse Minister, as sacrifice'.¹¹⁷

Therefore, we can conclude that the Ministers Pronk and De Vries reaped the benefits of their earlier blame avoidance strategies in the last accountability period of this incident and attracted less blame than Minister de Grave. De Grave fell behind in steering clear, because of his late timing. His blame allocation towards lower level civil servants was less convincing, because Oosting and others already concluded that the Enschede explosion was a symptom of larger policy failure of the central government. Besides that, De Grave could not show in his policy strategy that he had linked the announced cultural change of his department to firework and safety policy before the accountability debate.

4.4 Conclusion: why did all Ministers survive, albeit with different blame levels?

We can draw four conclusions about this incident. First, most structural conditions favored survival of the Ministers, which could explain why they all survived. However, these conditions were not sufficient in the sense that the conditions could not explain the differences in blame attributed to the three Ministers. Therefore, the second conclusion is that behavioral mechanisms could help to fill this caveat left by the structural conditions.

¹¹⁰ (H TK, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), nr. 73; 4867)

¹¹¹ (H TK, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), nr. 73; 4846).

¹¹² (H TK, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), nr. 73; 4861).

¹¹³ (H TK, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), nr. 73; 4863).

¹¹⁴ (H TK, 2000-2001 (25-04-2001), nr. 72; 4766).

¹¹⁵ (H TK 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), nr. 73; 4862).

¹¹⁶ (H TK, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), nr. 73; 4864).

¹¹⁷ (II 2000-2001 (26-04-2001), nr. 73; 4816).

Third, the incident showed that Ministers who start their blame avoidance strategies early on had time to develop a more consistent strategy and could adjust their strategy when necessary. Even though the blame game could not be confined to the level of 'a technical failure', or a 'lower level incident', Minister Pronk showed that starting earlier with policy strategies in which both severity and agency were acknowledged, blame could be diminished. Minister De Grave showed the opposite. Fourth, it was a combination of structural conditions, the fact that the incident related to multiple policy fields and Ministers, and the successful exploitation of this in a political strategy (one to blame, all to blame), which was needed uphold the position of Minister de Grave.

5. I did not know, or I cannot remember, honestly...

Case 2: Minister Korthals and the Schiphol tunnel construction fraud

5.1 Description of the political incident

On the 9th of November 2001, a journalistic investigation program, Zembla, disclosed the existence of 'substantial malpractice in the procurement of construction projects in the Netherlands'.¹¹⁸ The former Technical Director of one of the involved construction companies, Ad Bos, showed evidence that the company used two sets of accounting books between 1988 and 1999. This evidence revealed an extensive 'black payment circuit' between companies, which existed in order to compensate each other for the costs of public tendering and to keep the prices for public projects artificially high.¹¹⁹ Ad Bos also revealed that he informed the Ministry of Justice in 1999, but that the handed over the accounting forms bounced, because the Ministry to not agree to pay the compensation payment Bos requested.¹²⁰

At the same time, the fraud regarding another construction project, the expansion of the train tunnel at Schiphol, surfaced again. The 'Schiphol tunnel' project started in 1989, was completed in 2001 and cost around 1,2 billion guilders.¹²¹ Due to time constrains, the client, the Dutch Railways (NS), decided in 1989 to skip the public tender procedure. Instead, the NS used a special 'umbrella contract' to grant the project to two construction builders, HBS and Strukton, working under one consortium, KSS.¹²² Already since 1998, Justice Minister Korthals and Parliament knew that these two builders had used over 189 false invoices and used a 'shadow cash register' to artificially decrease the profit of their consortium by 58 million and to burden the NS with 29 million in extra costs.¹²³ Four days after the Zembla-broadcast, on the 13th of November 2001, the two builders, the NS and the Public Prosecution Service¹²⁴ closed a deal to settle the issue. They agreed the builders and the consortium would pay one million each and on top of this, the builders would pay ten million in subsidies back to the NS to compensate for their fraud. The Minister responsible for the NS, Netelenbos, informed Parliament in a letter.¹²⁵

The party chairman of the largest coalition party PvdA, Melkert, announced he wanted to 'get to the bottom' of the construction fraud on the 12th of November.¹²⁶ Two days later, PvdA Parliamentarian Van Gijzel criticized the deal harshly.¹²⁷ The deals between de PPS, the builders and the NS received a lot of criticism and instigated many parliamentary debates. During the debate of the 14th of November 2001, Justice Minister Korthals denied that he knew about a possible deal with the construction companies in the Schiphol tunnel case. When the Minister argued he could not oppose the deal in court, the opposition parties SP and GL filed a censure vote against Korthals (together 11% of Parliament). The censure vote was not supported by other parties.¹²⁸

¹¹⁸ (Kamerstukken II, 2002-2003 (12-12-2002), 28 444, nr. 5-6; 15).

¹¹⁹ (Kamerstukken II, 2002-2003 (12-12-2002), 28 444, nr. 5-6; 15), (Volkskrant, 12-11-2001; 3).

¹²⁰ (Kamerstukken II, 2002-2003 (12-12-2002), 28 444, nr. 5-6; 15).

¹²¹ (Kamerstukken II, 2002-2003 (12-12-2002), 28 444, nr. 5-6; 211).

¹²² (Kamerstukken II, 2002-2003 (12-12-2002), 28 444, nr. 5-6; 211).

¹²³ (Kamerstukken II, 2002-2003 (12-12-2002), 28 444, nr. 5-6; 213).

¹²⁴ In Dutch: Openbaar Ministerie.

¹²⁵ (Kamerstukken II, 2001-2001 (13-11-2002), 18 986, nr. 76)

¹²⁶ (Volkskrant, 12-11-2001; 1)

¹²⁷ (Telegraaf, 14-11-2001; ?)

¹²⁸ Motie Rosenmöller/Poppe c.s., 28093, nr. 16. In H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2129).

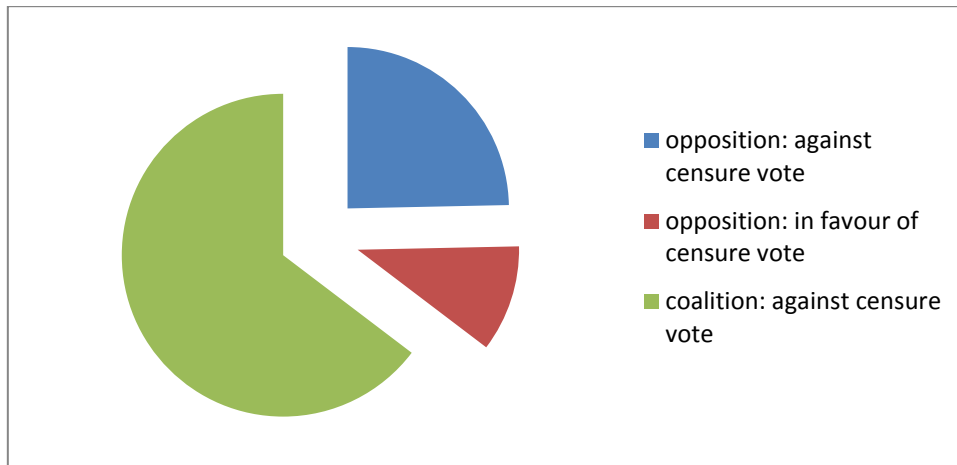


Figure 5.1 Vote of censure (Motie Rosenmoller/Poppe, 28093, nr. 16).

On the 5th of February 2002, Parliament decided to install an official Inquiry Commission to investigate the construction fraud. The Parliamentary Inquiry Commission published her report on the 12th of December 2002. Around this time, Minister Korthals changed office to the Ministry of Defense in the new Cabinet Balkenende I. The Inquiry Commission concluded that the construction companies maintained an extensive system of price fixing, market sharing and other illegal arrangements.¹²⁹ Many of the involved public organizations knew about this system, but no one, not even the Ministers, really acted to end the fraud.¹³⁰ Besides, it turned out that Minister Korthals did know beforehand about the deal with the construction companies in the Schiphol tunnel case.¹³¹ Minister Korthals subsequently resigned. In this incident, three distinctive periods can be identified.

| Period | Label of period | Most important events | Period: |
|-----------------------------|---|--|--|
| 09-11-2001 until 05-02-2002 | Post-incident | 14-11-2001: First interpellation debate 28-11-2001: Second debate + vote of lament + vote inquiry 05-02-2002: Vote Vos to start parliamentary inquiry in larger building fraud + Schiphol tunnel | Sense making and 'fact finding' |
| 06-02-2002 until 11-12-2002 | Parliamentary inquiry: Defense Minister | 20-03-2002: Large prosecution raid in construction companies 22-07-2002: Start new Cabinet Balkenende I: Korthals Defense Minister 16-09-2002: Testimony chief prosecutor de Wijkerslooth and Korthals | Establishing causality |
| 12-12-2002 until 27-05-2003 | Resignation + aftermath | 12-12-2002: Parliamentary inquiry report + resignation of Minister Korthals 27-05-2003: Start of new cabinet Balkenende II | Assessing culpability and responsibility |

Table 5.1 Periods within the incident of Korthals and the fraud of the Schiphol tunnel

¹²⁹ (Kamerstukken II, 2002-2003 (12-12-2002), 28 444, nr. 5-6; 12).

¹³⁰ (Kamerstukken II, 2002-2003 (12-12-2002), 28 444, nr. 5-6; 12).

¹³¹ (Kamerstukken II, 2002-2003 (12-12-2002), 28 444, nr. 5-6; 222).

How can we explain the resignation of Korthals as Defense Minister for his past as Justice Minister? The first part of the analysis, 5.2, will delve deeper into the structural conditions at the beginning of the incident and the changes of these structural conditions during the incident. Do these conditions by themselves sufficiently explain Korthals' resignation? Section 5.3 will look at four identified periods within the incidents to see which blame avoidance strategies Korthals used. Is it the failure of these blame avoidance strategies that sealed Korthals' fate?

5.2 Structural conditions: individual background, media salience and political landscape

This section discusses three factors that may influence political survival: the individual characteristics of the Minister (micro), the characteristics of the incident (meso) and the political landscape at the moment of the incident (macro).

5.2.1 Individual characteristics of the Minister

| Individual characteristics ¹³² | Korthals |
|--|--|
| <i>Party affiliation</i> | VVD (1977-present) |
| <i>'necessary party' for coalition majority</i> | Yes |
| <i>Ministry</i> | Defense |
| <i>Age at time of resignation</i> | 58 |
| <i>Earlier experience in Parliament</i> | Yes, 16 years and 1 months (09-1982/08-1998) |
| <i>Earlier experience as Minister</i> | Justice (08-1998/07-2002) (resigned because of incident during these years) |
| <i>Other long-time experience</i> | Barrister (1974-1998) |
| <i>Earlier vote of censure during cabinet period</i> | No |
| <i>Vote of censure during incident, but not related to this incident</i> | Yes (1. by Balkenende (CDA → his PM during resignation), vote of censure (seen as no-confidence) in January 2002 for the release and return of drug traffickers on Schiphol, supported by entire opposition: 35% of members of Parliament ¹³³ 2. by Wolfsen (PvdA), vote of censure on the 5 th of November 2002, regarding wrong information about the building of cells drug traffickers, later changed in vote of lament, only supported by PvdA ¹³⁴) |

Table 5.2 Background of Minister Korthals

Korthals' background shows a peculiarity: the Minister changes office during the incident as a consequence of a new cabinet coalition. Until the 22nd of July 2002 Korthals was the Minister of Justice, but in the new Balkenende I coalition he changed to Minister of Defense. According to the unwritten rules of ministerial responsibility, it was the temporary Justice Minister (which is Donner at the time of the Parliamentary report), who was responsible for the actions of the previous Justice Minister (Korthals). Therefore, this change could have given Korthals the chance to dodge the bullet that would lead to resignation. Another positive characteristic of Korthals was his vast experience in Parliament and as Minister. He had been in office for more than 3 years, when the Schiphol tunnel became an issue by the end of 2001.

¹³² http://www.parlement.com/id/vg09lnex2ja/a_h_benk_korthals

¹³³ Motie Balkenende, c.s., 28192, nr. 4. In H TK 2001-2002 (23-01-2002), nr. 41; 3051. Supported by: GL, SGP, SP, CU and CDA (together 53 seats in Parliament).

¹³⁴ Motie Wolfsen, 28192, nr. 20. In H TK 2002-2003 (06-11-2002), nr. 17; 971.

Besides, Korthals was an experienced barrister, so he was supposed to be well-schooled in legal terms and practice, an asset in the difficult legal case of the Schiphol tunnel fraud. The last positive characteristic is that Korthals' party VVD was pivotal for a majority of the coalition both before and after July 2002.

However, Korthals' background shows one big disadvantage for his chances of blame avoidance. During the time frame of the Schiphol fraud, Korthals got two more votes of censure. Both votes of censure involved the Schiphol area and both votes blamed Korthals for misinforming Parliament (just as in the fraud case), albeit they dealt with drug trafficking policies. The first vote of censure was filed in January 2002 by then opposition leader Balkenende (CDA) and was supported by the entire opposition (35% of members in Parliament). In this debate, the SP referred directly to the debate about the Schiphol fraud and the censure vote they filed against Korthals on the 28th of November 2001. The Socialist Party called it a 'sum' of cases.¹³⁵

The second vote of censure was a curious one. PvdA filed this censure vote in November 2002 against Korthals as previous Justice Minister, then acting Minister of Defense, in a debate with the current Justice Minister Donner.¹³⁶ Again, this vote of censure was filed because Korthals had misinformed Parliament, this time regarding failing to mention the stop of the building of detention centers of drug smugglers in August 2002.¹³⁷ However, this vote was actually against caretaking Justice Minister Donner, because Korthals was no longer Justice Minister. Korthals was not even present during this debate. Therefore, the other parties did not support the vote, which was eventually toned down by PvdA to a vote 'of lament'.¹³⁸ Both D66 (Dittrich) and GL (Halsema) referred to the 'stains' on Korthals regarding the construction fraud of the Schiphol-tunnel. D66 decided against supporting the vote because of the curious construction of the vote.¹³⁹ Only PvdA, GL and LeefbaarNederland supported the 'vote of lament' against Korthals, which was 23% of all members in Parliament.¹⁴⁰

On the one hand, Korthals could have avoided blame, because he had a lot of experience, was from a pivotal party and changed office to Defense Minister at the end of the incident. On the other hand, Korthals was severely stained by two votes of censure, which both claimed that Korthals previously misinformed Parliament.

5.2.2 Media salience

A newspaper search for the entire Dutch construction fraud between the 1st of January 2001 and the end of the cabinet Balkenende I (27th of May 2003), led to 586 articles. This is an average of 20 articles per month.¹⁴¹ However, the amount of newspaper articles which linked the construction fraud to Minister Korthals during this period is only 51. This is quite low compared to the other cases in this research. Therefore, this newspaper attention did not necessarily constrain survival chances of Korthals.

¹³⁵ (H TK 2001-2002 (23-01-2002), nr. 41; 30470).

¹³⁶ (H TK 2002-2003 (05-11-2002), nr. 16).

¹³⁷ Motie Wolfsen, 28192, nr. 18. In H TK 2002-2003 (05-11-2002), nr. 16; 896.

¹³⁸ Motie (van treurnis) Wolfsen, 28192, nr. 20. In H TK 2002-2003 (06-11-2002), nr. 17; 971.

¹³⁹ (H TK 2002-2003 (05-11-2002), nr. 16; 902).

¹⁴⁰ (H TK 2002-2003 (06-11-2002), nr. 17; 973)

¹⁴¹ LexisNexis search: Bouwfraude(HLead): Volkskrant (138 articles), Trouw (134), AD (129), NRC (129) and Telegraaf (57).

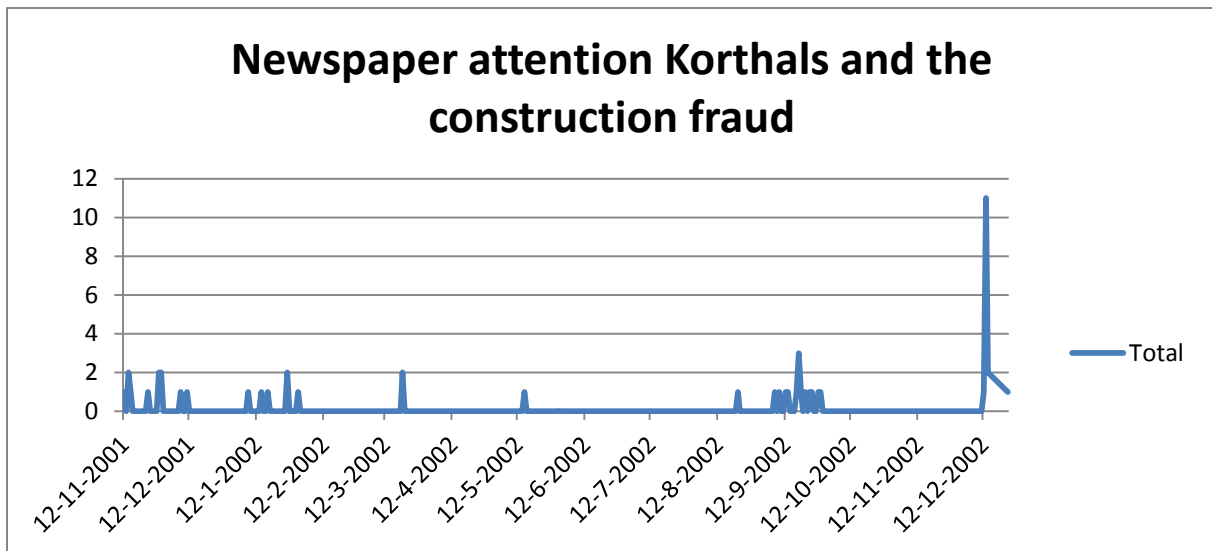


Figure 5.2 Newspaper attention per day for Minister Korthals and the fraud of the Schiphol tunnel¹⁴²

5.2.3 Political landscape

New Parliamentary elections took place in May 2002. Subsequent loss of a majority for the ‘Purple Coalition’ was an important complicating factor in this case. Therefore, this part describes both the political landscape during Korthals’ time as Justice Minister (until the 22nd of August 2002) and the political landscape during his time as Defense Minister.

At the time of the fraud, the ruling coalition of Prime-Minister Kok (PvdA), Kok II, consisted of three parties: the Labor Party (PvdA, 45 seats), the Conservative Liberals (VVD, 38 seats) and the much smaller Social Liberals (D66, 14 seats).¹⁴³ Together they formed an oversized majority of 65% in Parliament. The coalition could be seen as a stable majority, which diminished the chances of a passing a censure vote against the Minister. This coalition governed for more than three years (since 03-08-1998) when the fraud was discovered. The two previous Justice Ministers had a different party background, with D66-Minister Sorgdrager during Kok I (1994-1998) and CDA-Minister Hirsch Ballinn during Lubbers III (1989-1994). This could have provided an opportunity to blame predecessors (agency and policy), if it weren’t that the Public Prosecution Service (and therefore the Justice Ministry) only got involved since the start of the criminal investigation in 1998.¹⁴⁴

Ideological divide over the policy area and policy controversy within the cabinet did not seem to play a big role in this case, because fraud was not an issue for an ideological divide. Contrary, one could expect all (mainstream) political parties to be against corruption and fraud in a low corruption country like the Netherlands.

The parliamentary elections of May 2002 caused an upheaval in the political landscape. After the political murder on Pim Fortuyn, the ‘Purple Coalition’ lost 43 seats and a new right wing party, LPF, entered Parliament with 26 Parliamentarians.¹⁴⁵ It was a turbulent time, with a loss of the old power base of PvdA, VVD and CDA. On the 22nd of July 2002, a new coalition of CDA, VVD and LPF started, who also formed a big majority of 93 members in Parliament (62% majority).

¹⁴² LexisNexis (search words: Minister + toeslagen in headline+lead). n = 51

¹⁴³ information: http://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhronvx4/kabinet_kok_ii_1998_2002

¹⁴⁴ (Kamerstukken II (parlementaire enquête), 2002-2003 (12-12-2002), 28 244, nrs. 5–6; 220).

¹⁴⁵ http://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrp8wsx/tweede_kamerverkiezingen_2002

This coalition proved to be less stable than the previous coalition, because it included the LPF, a party without any parliamentary or governing experience. The teething problems of the new party resulted in a fight between LPF-Ministers Bomhoff and Heinsbroek, which escalated to such a point that another LPF Minister, De Boer, tried to instigate their resignation.¹⁴⁶ However, before this could happen, the CDA and VVD withdrew their trust in the coalition. On the 16th of October 2002, the cabinet ceased to hold its majority and became a caretaker cabinet. New parliamentary elections were held on the 22nd of January 2003, just little over a month after the publication of the Parliamentary inquiry conclusions.

The transition to a new cabinet is ultimately a seriously constraining condition. The instability and especially the closeness to new elections seriously limited Korthals' chances for blame deflection.

5.2.4 Conclusion: the effect of structural conditions

The analysis of structural conditions leads to mixed conclusions. On the one hand, Minister Korthals had multiple conditions against him, such as the instability of the Balkenende I cabinet, the proximity of the inquiry conclusions to the new elections and two additional votes of censure. However, this was partly countered by the positive conditions of his long experience, his change of Ministerial office and the relatively low media salience linking Korthals to the incident. Therefore, although the structural conditions were partly negative, they could not fully explain his resignation. In order to understand this case fully, we have to look at behavioral mechanisms; Korthals' blame avoidance strategies during the four periods of this incident.

5.3 Assessing 'smoking guns': The efficacy of blame avoidance strategies

5.3.1 The discovery of a large fraud: sense making and 'fact finding'

In the days after the 9th of November, the Zembla-broadcast with whistle blower Ad Bos stirred criticism in Parliament. PvdA-Parliamentarian Van Gijzel and CDA-Parliamentarian Leers immediately demanded a debate between Parliament and Minister Korthals, Netelenbos and Jorritsma. One day before the debate, on the 13th of November 2001, Minister Netelenbos, responsible for the Dutch Railways (NS), sent a letter to Parliament announcing the deals between her and the NS and between the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) and the construction companies in the Schiphol train tunnel fraud.¹⁴⁷ Although the debate was supposed to cover the construction fraud and the evidence of Ad Bos, Minister Korthals had to spend most of his time defending the PPS deal in the Schiphol case.

In the debate, Korthals used no less than seven strategies to defend himself against the criticism of Parliament. First, he defended himself against the criticism of Parliament regarding the late reaction of the PPS on negotiations with whistle-blower Ad Bos. He tried to fend this criticism off by saying that the hands of the PPS could only respond to this fraud when whistle-blowers would actually come forward with evidence (1). Second, he tried to take away the concerns of Parliamentarians, by saying: We do not have all information yet regarding the fraud, Parliament has to refrain from drawing conclusions about the scope of the fraud (2). However, most of his strategies were related to the deal of the PPS regarding the Schiphol tunnel fraud.

¹⁴⁶ http://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrpfxup/kabinet_balkenende_i_2002_2003

¹⁴⁷ (Kamerstukken II, 2001-2001 (13-11-2002), 18 986, nr. 76)

Korthals tried to downplay the severity of the deal. According to Korthals, the deal followed official protocol of the PPS (3) and it was actually quite sound considering the sum of money the construction companies payed to the PPS and the NS (4). Besides, the Minister was 'not at all' informed about the deal, so he could do nothing to stop or reverse it (5). This is a clear agency strategy to deflect the blame towards the lower level of the PPS. Also, Korthals claimed he could do nothing to reverse the deal like Parliament demanded of him (6). Reversal of the deal in court would not only make the Minister look unreliable, the statutory provision for the court complaint was only meant for private stakeholders. Finally, Korthals tried to separate the larger, newly discovered tendering fraud from the Schiphol tunnel. According to Korthals, Parliament would not have made such a problem of the deal if it weren't for the discovery of the larger tendering fraud at the same time (7).

| Type of strategy | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Date |
|------------------|---|---|---|
| Policy | PPS relies on help of whistle blowers like Ad Bos in investigation (hands are tied) | In previous year, Public prosecution Service (PPS) did constantly investigate when they heard about signs of construction fraud... However, only sporadic reporting by injured parties. ¹⁴⁸ // Bos waited with information only because he wanted material gains. ¹⁴⁹ | 14-11-2001 |
| Political | Not enough information yet to assess scope of the Bos case (maybe not that big) | We have a disadvantage compared to Van Gijzel and Leers, who can better estimate the severity of the case (Bos accounting forms). However, we took the case seriously from the beginning. ¹⁵⁰ // At the moment there are little facts. People think this is the biggest fraud of the 21 st century, but we don't know. I hope we will show restraint, because maybe it is not so big and the construction world will be demonized without cause. ¹⁵¹ | 14-11-2001 |
| Policy | PPS followed official protocol in deal | OM acted in accordance with the protocol high transactions in criminal cases. Under the scope of Article 74a of the Criminal Code, the OM may not reasonably refuse a transaction when the companies are willing to pay the maximum fine of 1 million. ¹⁵² The procedure does not state that the Minister must be informed in these cases. ¹⁵³ | 14-11-2001 // 26-11-2001 ¹⁵⁴ |
| Political | The deal is better than the result in court would be | The sentencing likely will not lead to a heavier punishment or other modality in a court case. The Board of Procurators General and I therefore consider this method of settlement justified. ¹⁵⁵ // 26-11-2001: No buying off of the punishment by the companies, because deal is not lower than would be obtained in criminal case. ¹⁵⁶ | 14-11-2001 // 26-11-2001 |
| Agency | I did not know about the deal until it was signed | The deal was decided completely without my knowledge ¹⁵⁷ // Again, we were not at all informed on the upcoming deal. ¹⁵⁸ | 14-11-2001 |

¹⁴⁸ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1625).

¹⁴⁹ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1625).

¹⁵⁰ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1624).

¹⁵¹ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1649).

¹⁵² (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1626).

¹⁵³ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1644).

¹⁵⁴ (Kamerstukken II 2001-2002 (26-11-2001), 28 093, nr. 8; 3).

¹⁵⁵ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1626).

¹⁵⁶ (Kamerstukken II 2001-2002 (26-11-2001),), 28 093, nr. 8; 5-6).

¹⁵⁷ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1644).

¹⁵⁸ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001); nr. 23; 1645).

| | | | |
|-----------|--|---|------------|
| Policy | Cannot complain about deal of OM because of need for unity and consistency | The OM is a part of the Dutch government. It would be weird if one part would make a deal and the other part would complain about the deal. ¹⁵⁹ // The OM made a deal under my responsibility. It would make my position unreliable if I would complain about it ¹⁶⁰ // 26-11-2001: The section of the law the Leers/Gijzel vote is based upon is not meant for the government ¹⁶¹ . | 14-11-2001 |
| Political | Construction fraud and Schiphol Tunnel to really separate cases | Although Bos-fraud and Schiphol tunnel have no relation with regard to structure and background, they became intertwined in the debate on the 14-11-2001. ¹⁶² // 28-11-2001: No one will deny now this is a political case, however it became political because of the timing of the deal ¹⁶³ . In 2000, no one could have suspected that the deal would come at the same time as the other and larger construction fraud regarding tendering. ¹⁶⁴ | 26-11-2001 |

Table 5.3 Blame avoidance strategies during the post incident period

The reaction of Parliament focused mostly on the Ministers' strategies regarding the Schiphol deal (so strategy 3 and further). The strategies of Korthals to downplay the 'harm' of the deal (official protocol and large sum) were not accepted by any of the parties. The Ministers' own party VVD put the criticism most mildly, by asking: 'would it in this case, in light of the public debate and public interest, not have been better if the case would have been tried in court?'¹⁶⁵ The other coalition party D66 went a step further, saying that a court case would have been 'more appropriate'. The issue at stake was not only money, but also the exclusion of fraudulent companies from public tendering.¹⁶⁶ Interestingly, PvdA (coalition) and CDA (opposition) Parliamentarians van Gijzel and Leers, who are partly the instigators of this incident, teamed up together in the debate on the 14th of November 2001.¹⁶⁷ Both Parliamentarians, along with the rest of Parliament, were very critical of the deal, because the punishment would be too light for the companies and the deal 'harmed public interest' (wording SGP).¹⁶⁸ Although all Parliamentarians believed the Minister when he said he did not know about the deal, even the D66-Parliamentarian Giskes said she was surprised the Minister did not seem to care he was not informed.¹⁶⁹ PvdA spokesman Van Gijzel and the CDA even stated according to protocol the Minister should have been informed.¹⁷⁰

If the Minister would not have denied knowing about the deal, the criticism could have been worse. The strategies of the Minister were clearly not very successful. In the end of the first debate, a large majority of coalition party PvdA, and opposition parties CDA, SP, GL and CU supported a vote which requires the Minister to oppose the deal in court.¹⁷¹ Only the coalition parties of D66 and VVD, and the SGP voted against, because they agreed with the Minister that this vote was legally not possible.

¹⁵⁹ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001); nr 23; 1646).

¹⁶⁰ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001); nr 23; 1646).

¹⁶¹ (Kamerstukken II, 2001-2002 (26-11-2001), 28 093, nr. 8; 4).

¹⁶² (Kamerstukken II, 2001-2002 (26-11-2001), 28 093, nr. 8; 1).

¹⁶³ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2111).

¹⁶⁴ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2112).

¹⁶⁵ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1636).

¹⁶⁶ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1644).

¹⁶⁷ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1623).

¹⁶⁸ (In: Motie van treurnis (van den berg), 28093, nr. 5. In: H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1637).

¹⁶⁹ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1645).

¹⁷⁰ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1630, 1645).

¹⁷¹ (Motie Van Gijzel/Leers, 28093, nr. 1. In: H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1630).

Besides, all Parliamentarians, except VVD, voted in favor of a profound investigation into the scope and depth of the construction fraud, including the Schiphol fraud.¹⁷² The normally very cautious SGP even touched upon a full blown parliamentary inquiry into the fraud.¹⁷³

During the debate, coalition party PvdA acted as the instigator of those two critical votes. It is interesting to see that PVDA Parliamentarian Van Gijzel was removed as spokesperson of this subject by PVDA-leader Melkert before the second debate on the 28th of November 2001.¹⁷⁴ After Van Gijzel was stripped of his spokespersonship, he gave up his PvdA parliamentary seat altogether. Van Gijzel explained he did not want to be a 'silenced Parliamentarian'.¹⁷⁵ Possibly, this incident with Van Gijzel was coalition politics to protect the Minister. Indeed, in the debate on the 14th of November, coalition parties D66 and VVD were busier attacking Van Gijzel than questioning the Minister.¹⁷⁶

On the 28th of November, a new debate about Minister Korthals ensued, which focused on the refusal of the Minister to meet Parliament's demand to contest the deal in court. In this debate the Minister used the same strategies as before, such as explaining that the deal was the best thing the PPS could do under the circumstances¹⁷⁷ and that the criticism on the deal can mostly be explained by 'bad timing'.¹⁷⁸ However, the Minister made some strategy changes in this debate. First, he explained that the principal of the Dutch railways, the Ministry of Transport and Public Works (Netelenbos), knew about the deal beforehand, as her Ministry closed part of the deal (1).¹⁷⁹ This is a clear agency strategy to shift the blame for the deal away from himself toward Minister Netelenbos. Besides, he added the political nuance that although marginally speaking (considering the sum of money) the deal was good, this does not say that he is happy with it or would have chosen the same solution (2).¹⁸⁰ This is a departure from his wholehearted, and badly received, defense of the deal in the first debate. Then, Korthals added four policy strategies. He proposed, in line with parliamentary demands, three policy changes: an increase in the maximum sum for deals to an amount over one million (3), stricter internal procedures for larger deals (4) and broader possibilities to exclude fraudulent companies from public tendering (5). However, Korthals still maintained that both he and Parliament should not interfere too much in individual cases of the PPS (6). Therefore, he pleaded against a parliamentary inquiry (7).¹⁸¹

¹⁷² (Motie Van Gijzel/Leers, 28093, nr. 3. In: H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1633)

¹⁷³ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1637).

¹⁷⁴ (Kamerstukken II 2001-2002 (26-11-2001),), 28 093, nr. 8; 5-6).

¹⁷⁵ (NRC, 28-11-2001; 3). in Dutch: slot op de mond

¹⁷⁶ (H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1631-1633, 1635, 1641).

¹⁷⁷ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2111).

¹⁷⁸ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2112).

¹⁷⁹ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2106-2107).

¹⁸⁰ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2113).

¹⁸¹ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2130).

| Type of strategy | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Date |
|------------------|---|--|------------|
| Agency | Department of Transport & Public Works arranged second part of the deal (paying 20 million in subsidies back) so Minister Netelenbos did know more. | We have two deals. The first is the deal between V&W and the NS. Of course the department of V&W knew about that. // Apparently did she (Netelenbos and her department) think the deal was big enough ¹⁸² . // You could all read that Minister of V&W did write a letter on the 13th of November 2001 about the deal. So, she knew it before I did ¹⁸³ I did not know. ¹⁸⁴ | 28-11-2001 |
| Political | Korthals distances himself from Netelenbos' deal (suggesting he had other preferences) | You know that I use a marginal evaluation when I say the deal is justified. That does not say that a. I would have made the deal in the same way. b. I am happy with the deal. ¹⁸⁵ // Don't know if I would have made the same choice, I don't have all the information now. | 28-11-2001 |
| Policy | Minister needs to be careful to interfere in individual cases of OM (Minister not legally required to be informed) | The entire Parliament is very reluctant towards the OM informing and involving the Minister in individual cases, because the danger would be that the Minister would meddle with individual case. ¹⁸⁶ | 28-11-2001 |
| Policy | Change: Deal of 1 million (PPS) is the maximum possible by law: legislation needs to be changed | I said before that the maximum penalties in these cases, however little used, should be raised for special cases. ¹⁸⁷ // It is true that for big companies with high profits the penalty/sum of maximum deals is too low. That is why I am in favor of raising this maximum ¹⁸⁸ | 28-11-2001 |
| Policy | Change: stricter procedure for larger deals | First, I promised Parliament that I will evaluate with the board of prosecutors the procedure for larger deals. I will speak with Parliament later about stricter rules for deciding on a deal instead of a court case before a judge ¹⁸⁹ | 28-11-2001 |
| Policy | Change: look at broader possibilities to exclude fraudulent companies for public tendering. | It is appropriate to reconsider the possibilities to exclude companies for public tendering. (Asked by GL in debate 14-11-2001). ¹⁹⁰ // A deal regarding forgery of document can be included in the review whether a professional misconduct took place (exclusion). I will come back to this. ¹⁹¹ | 28-11-2001 |
| Political | Parliamentary inquiry could interfere with criminal investigation | The Parliamentary Inquiry brings certain dangerous risks, because testimonies during a parliamentary inquiry hearing are not admissible in court. ¹⁹² | 28-11-2001 |

Table 5.4 Blame avoidance strategies during the later post-incident period

Again, the criticism of Parliament was quite severe. Of course, the opposition parties were most critical. The SP and GL even filed a vote of censure against the Minister.¹⁹³ CDA asked the Minister in another vote to take his political responsibility, which was no vote of censure according to CDA.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸² (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2106-2107).

¹⁸³ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2109).

¹⁸⁴ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2110).

¹⁸⁵ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2113).

¹⁸⁶ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2110).

¹⁸⁷ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2109).

¹⁸⁸ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2113).

¹⁸⁹ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2113).

¹⁹⁰ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2113).

¹⁹¹ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2114).

¹⁹² (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2130).

¹⁹³ Motie Rosenmöller/Poppe c.s., 28093, nr. 16. In H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2129).

¹⁹⁴ Motie Leers, 28093, nr. 10. In H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29).

Both votes were only supported by the filing parties.¹⁹⁵ However, the coalition parties did not let the Minister pass the buck easily. D66 still called the deal ‘a tremendous mistake’ by the PPS¹⁹⁶, VVD talked about ‘discontent’¹⁹⁷ and PvdA explained they only accepted the Ministers’ decision to not complain about the settlement ‘through gritted teeth’.¹⁹⁸ Three important votes against the Minister were supported by a considerate majority of Parliament. First, all parties except the CU and PvdA supported a SGP-filed vote of lament on the existence of the deal.¹⁹⁹ Second, all parties, except VVD, supported a vote which explicitly laid the foundation for a parliamentary inquiry.²⁰⁰ VVD argued that a parliamentary commission was already working on this and therefore the vote was a sign of PvdA and CDA ‘flexing their muscles’ to save their faces for the ‘empty’ vote in the last debate.²⁰¹ The third adopted vote of the coalition party D66 stated that the Minister must be informed of these types of deals before they are concluded.²⁰² Again, all parties, except VVD, agreed with this vote. The reaction of Parliament could be summarized by the conclusion of the PvdA: ‘Parliament will ensure further inquiries and the Minister will fairly drastically change the policy with regarding to deals’.²⁰³

On the 12th of December, the Minister confirmed the policy changes with regard to stricter internal procedures for entering into deals²⁰⁴ and consultation of the Minister in deals concerning over one million.²⁰⁵ Only VVD showed her disapproval of these changes, by referring to the Minister’s earlier strategies that the Schiphol deal is just an ‘extensive, but nevertheless incidental case’.²⁰⁶ A bit later, the newspaper AD reported that VVD ‘felt saddled with the hesitant performance’ of Korthals, who showed ‘undue restraint’ in his performance before Parliament’.²⁰⁷ VVD leader Dijkstal nuanced this article by saying that Ministers always get ‘some dents and bruises’.²⁰⁸

On the 18th of January 2002, the Minister tried for the last time to avoid a parliamentary inquiry into the construction fraud, especially in the Schiphol fraud. Korthals argued that a parliamentary inquiry would ‘harm’ cases under criminal investigation, so ‘it would be preferable if there is no parliamentary inquiry on these cases’.²⁰⁹ Nevertheless, if an inquiry would take place, the Minister proposed that the PPS would have the control over the hearing of witnesses.²¹⁰ However, the preliminary commission did not agree with the Minister. Even Prime Minister Kok said that Korthals should just hurry the PPS so that the Parliamentary Inquiry could just go on without problems.²¹¹ The preliminary commission proposed a full-on/exhaustive preliminary inquiry, with the Schiphol fraud as one of the major cases.²¹²

¹⁹⁵ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2132).

¹⁹⁶ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2094).

¹⁹⁷ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2127).

¹⁹⁸ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2097).

¹⁹⁹ (Motie van den berg, 28093, nr. 5. In: H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1637).

²⁰⁰ (Motie Leers/Van Oven, 28093, nr. 11. In: (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2121).

²⁰¹ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2128).

²⁰² (Motie de Graaf c.s., 28093, nr. 14. In: H TK 2001-2002 (14-11-2001), nr. 23; 1637).

²⁰³ (H TK 2001-2002 (28-11-2001), nr. 29; 2127).

²⁰⁴ (Kamerstukken II 2001-2002 (10-12-2001), 28 093, nr. 20; 3).

²⁰⁵ (Kamerstukken II 2001-2002 (10-12-2001), 28 093, nr. 20; 3).

²⁰⁶ (Kamerstukken II, 2001-2002 (12-12-2001) 28 093; nr. 21; 4).

²⁰⁷ (AD, 17-01-2002; 9).

²⁰⁸ (AD, 26-01-2002; 5).

²⁰⁹ (Kamerstukken II 2001-2002 (18-01-2002), 28 093, nr. 24; 5).

²¹⁰ (Kamerstukken II 2001-2002 (18-01-2002), 28 093, nr. 24; 5).

²¹¹ (Trouw, 26-01-2002; 4).

²¹² (Kamerstukken II 2001-2002 (24-01-2002), 28 093, nr. 22–23; 36).

In the debate about the conclusions of the commission on the 31th of January 2002, the chairwomen Vos argued that the Minister ‘painted too dark a picture’ of the implications of the inquiry for criminal investigations.²¹³ Parliament would have its own ‘right and duty to inquire into the fraud’.²¹⁴ Parliament agreed they had the control over the inquiry, without interference in the criminal investigation of course.²¹⁵ Therefore, in this period, only the ‘I did not know’ and ‘policy change’ strategy of the Minister survived the criticism of Parliament. The other political strategies of the Minister to pass the buck proved to be insufficient.

5.3.2 Parliamentary inquiry: establishing causality towards a (Defense) Minister

Just before the collapse of the government over another scandal (the Srebrenica case), the Public Prosecutors Service started a large string of ‘raids’ on construction companies suspected of fraud.²¹⁶ The newspaper ‘Telegraaf’ reported 500 criminal investigators raiding more than 45 places in the investigation into the construction fraud.²¹⁷ In addition, the PPS and acting Minister Korthals arranged with the Parliamentary inquiry commission on the 17th of April 2002 to inform the Justice Minister on which witnesses will be heard at what time.²¹⁸

The parliamentary inquiry hearings only started after Korthals took office as Defense Minister in the new Balkenende I cabinet. The newspapers AD and Volkskrant predicted that the Minister would mostly be questioned about the bickering between the PPS and whistle-blower Ad Bos over Bos’ evidence for the larger tendering fraud.²¹⁹ However, the hearings took a new turn for Minister Korthals when discarded PvdA-parliamentarian Van Gijzel testified. Van Gijzel stated that already in an informal conversation in October 2001 Korthals said that ‘the PPS and the companies were trying to sort things out together’ with regard to the Schiphol fraud.²²⁰ Van Gijzel also testified that his party leader at that time, Ad Melkert, stated that coalition politics had to prevail over the incident and that the incident should not ‘lead to Ministers getting into trouble’.²²¹ This testimony is followed four days later by a testimony of Chief Public Prosecutor De Wijkerslooth.²²² De Wijkerslooth blamed the lower district attorneys of The Hague for deciding on a deal instead of a court case.²²³ However, most important for Minister Korthals is that De Wijkerslooth testified that ‘he notified the Minister in one of the regular consultations on the 2nd of July 2001 (informally and shortly) about the upcoming deal’.²²⁴ De Wijkerslooth nuanced his statement by arguing that this notification happened during an informal meeting and that the Minister at this stage could not prevent the deal anymore.²²⁵ Therefore, the Minister did not lie according to the chairman. After all, the Minister was not **officially** informed.²²⁶

²¹³ (H TK 2001-2002 (31-01-2002), nr. 45; 3258).

²¹⁴ (Kamerstukken II 2001-2002 (29-01-2002), 28 093, nr. 24; 1).

²¹⁵ (H TK 2001-2002 (31-01-2002), nr. 45; 3250).

²¹⁶ (Volkskrant, 20-03-2002; 15)

²¹⁷ (Telegraaf, 20-03-2002; ?).

²¹⁸ (Kamerstukken II 2001-2002 (14-05-2002), 29 244, nr. 3; 9).

²¹⁹ (AD, 07-09-2002; 51) and (Volkskrant, 07-09-2002; 5).

²²⁰ (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (12-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 992).

²²¹ (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (12-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 995).

²²² (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (16-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 995). hearing nr. 61.

²²³ (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (16-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 1196).

²²⁴ (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (16-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 1208).

²²⁵ (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (16-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 1208).

²²⁶ (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (16-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 1209).

Immediately after the testimony of De Wijkerslooth, it was Korthals' turn to testify. During his testimony, the Minister repeated three earlier strategies. First, he reiterated there was no relation between the Schiphol fraud and the other tendering fraud cases.²²⁷ Second, he claimed again that the deal was 'really good', considering the sum of money the State got out of the deal.²²⁸ Third, he blamed Minister Netelenbos for publishing the deal at 'the most unfortunate moment', meaning right after the Zembla broadcast.²²⁹ Korthals repeated that the timing of the deal made the deal political, because in this way the Schiphol case became connected to the larger tendering fraud.

However, Korthals had to change strategies regarding the information he had about the deal beforehand. He had to admit 'it is possible that I once heard in a regular consultation that there could be a deal in the future'.²³⁰ He vehemently denied he lied to Parliament, because according to him he did not know that the deal was actually made.²³¹ Besides, stated Korthals, he 'honestly' did not realize during the debate that he was informed, because people 'inform me every day, about everything, as much as possible'.²³²

| Type of strategy | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Date |
|------------------|--|--|------------|
| Political | Possibly once heard informally about future deal | 'It is possible that I once heard in a regular consultation that there could be a deal in the future' ²³³ // I don't remember what was said exactly' | 16-09-2001 |
| Political | No lie towards Parliament: Did honestly not remember deal, one of many things at that time | 'I did not know at that time (before debate) that the PPS really entered a deal. I meant to say that (when denying knowledge of the deal) // 'I don't know if I realized at that moment, honestly' ²³⁴ // people 'inform me every day, about everything, as much as possible'. ²³⁵ | 16-09-2001 |

Table 5.5 Blame avoidance strategies during the parliamentary inquiry hearings

Of course, the newspapers reported Korthals' testimony. The AD published an article 'Korthals confesses sin'.²³⁶ On the 18th of September 2002, the Volkskrant quoted anonymous sources close to the cabinet, who said that Korthals would resign if the parliamentary inquiry deemed him guilty of misinforming Parliament.²³⁷ However, one day later Korthals himself declared that the denial was not 'severe' enough to resign.²³⁸ In these days, De Wijkerslooth tried to defend Korthals, by arguing he informed the Minister on a lot of things during that consultation and that this was no formal notification. The Trouw, who reported this statement, reminded the public that Korthals said he did not 'know anything' about the deal.²³⁹

²²⁷ (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (16-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 1219-1220).

²²⁸ (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (16-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 1226).

²²⁹ (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (16-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 1230).

²³⁰ (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (16-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 1221).

²³¹ (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (16-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 1227).

²³² (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (16-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 1227,1229).

²³³ (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (16-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 1221).

²³⁴ (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (16-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 1227).

²³⁵ (Kamerstukken II 2002–2003 (16-09-2002), 28 244, nr. 7; 1227,1229).

²³⁶ (AD, 18-09-2002; 5).

²³⁷ (Volkskrant, 18-09-2002; 2).

²³⁸ (Telegraaf, Meurs, 19-09-2002).

²³⁹ (Trouw, 21-09-2002; 4). and again: (Trouw, van Heese, 27-09-2002;4)

During one of the later hearings, former Justice secretary-general Borghouts defended Korthals by saying the Minister got '50 to a 100 notifications a day' and that after a week 'you don't know when you heard what'.²⁴⁰ However, it is the report of the inquiry commission which 'sealed Korthals' faith' as Minister.²⁴¹

5.3.3 Report of the inquiry: liar, liar pants on fire: assessing culpability and responsibility

On the 12th of December 2002, the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the construction fraud was published. At this time Korthals was already acting Minister of Defense and parliamentary elections would be in one month. The Commission concluded that in the Schiphol construction fraud, Korthals should have 'reacted more actively to the notification' of De Wijkerslooth, as Korthals knew it was a 'political sensitive case'.²⁴² Besides, the Minister did misinform Parliament on the 14th of November 2001, when he said he did not know 'anything at all' about the deal.²⁴³ However, the Inquiry Commission did go along with Korthals in blaming Minister Netelenbos for not informing Korthals on the progress of the deal with the NS.²⁴⁴ Immediately after the report, Minister Korthals resigned. He explained the Ministry of Defense had to make severe cutbacks in the future and that this would not be possible with a 'somewhat crippled' Minister who would be at 'the mercy' of the political discussion (Korthals' words).²⁴⁵ However, the Minister did say he thought the conclusions of the Commission were 'too strong'²⁴⁶ and that 'any gaps in his memory should not have counted so heavily against him'.²⁴⁷ Besides, Korthals attributed the blame for the bad performance of the PPS during his time as Minister towards then acting Justice Minister Donner (CDA).²⁴⁸

| Type of strategy | Strategy | Quote in newspaper articles | Date |
|------------------|---|---|------------|
| Political | Do not want to stay on as 'crippled Minister' | 1. I do not want to keep 'dangling' until the debate ²⁴⁹ 2. 'The Ministry of Defence would not benefit from a somewhat crippled Minister' | 12-12-2001 |
| Political | Conclusions of parliamentary inquiry too strong | 'As a Minister you get daily 15 files, 100 letters on your desk and then you also have all kinds of people who have to talk with you. Should you remember them all?' ²⁵⁰ | 12-12-2001 |
| Agency | Bad performance of PPS is responsibility of current Justice Minister Donner | 'I do not take responsibility for the supposed lack of performance by the PPS. This is something the current Justice Minister should account for.' ²⁵¹ | 12-12-2001 |

Table 5.6 'Blame avoidance' strategies during announcement of resignation

²⁴⁰ (Trouw, 28-09-2002; 5).

²⁴¹ (AD, 12-12-2002; 5).

²⁴² (Kamerstukken II 2002-2003 (12-12-2002), 28 244, nr. 5-6; 223-224).

²⁴³ (Kamerstukken II 2002-2003 (12-12-2002), 28 244, nr. 5-6; 223-224).

²⁴⁴ (Kamerstukken II 2002-2003 (12-12-2002), 28 244, nr. 5-6; 223-227).

²⁴⁵ (Volkskrant, 13-12-2002; 1; NRC, 13-12-2002; 1).

²⁴⁶ (Volkskrant, Koele, 13-12-2002; 2).

²⁴⁷ (AD, 14-12-2002; 5).

²⁴⁸ (NRC, 13-12-2002; 1).

²⁴⁹ (NRC, 13-12-2002; 1).

²⁵⁰ (AD, 14-12-2002; 5).

²⁵¹ (NRC, 13-12-2002; 1).

Of course CDA-leader Verhagen said that Korthals did take the responsibility for the PPS' bad performance by resigning.²⁵² Prime Minister Balkenende sided with Verhagen, saying 'it would be very difficult for a Minister to continue if the inquiry Commission concluded he misinformed Parliament'.²⁵³ VVD-leader Zalm backed Korthals, saying that he 'deeply respects' Korthals' decision to resign, but that the conclusion about the misinforming was 'just a detail in the report'.²⁵⁴

5.4 Conclusion: why did the Minister resign?

When we look at the resignation of Korthals in the Schiphol fraud deal, we can conclude that three factors were vital. First, all political strategies of the Minister to put the deal in a more positive light and to stop a parliamentary inquiry failed. Therefore, Korthals could only rely on the 'I did not know anything about the deal' strategy. Second, the exposure of the incorrectness of this last strategy came at a very bad moment: one month before new parliamentary elections. If Korthals would have stayed in office, he would have been a serious hazard in these elections for both the CDA (prime minister's party) and especially his own party VVD. Third, the Schiphol fraud deal was not the only incident in which the Minister was accused of misinforming Parliament. Only one month before the Inquiry report came out, the Minister was condemned by PvdA on his failure to inform Parliament about the building of cells for drug traffickers. We can conclude that the Minister's long parliamentary experience and his change to the Ministry of Defense were not enough to save him. Therefore, we can conclude that in this case, the worsening structural conditions pushed the Minister towards resignation when his last strategy was proven false.

²⁵² (NRC, 13-12-2002; 1).

²⁵³ (Volkskrant, 13-12-2002; 1)

²⁵⁴ (AD, 14-12-2002; 5).

6. The heat of a battle between Ministers and investigator

Case 3: Ministers Donner, Verdonk and Dekker and the fire in a Schiphol detention center

6.1 Description of the political incident

In the night of 26 to 27 October 2005, a fire broke out in a detention center for rejected asylum seekers, in the vicinity of Schiphol airport.²⁵⁵ The employees of the detention center managed to release 32 prisoners from their cells. However, eleven prisoners perished in the fire that night. Fifteen people, among them prison guards, were injured by the fire, while 298 prisoners needed to be transferred to other locations.²⁵⁶ Three Ministers were involved in the incident of the ‘Schiphol-fire’: the Justice Minister Donner, VROM Minister Dekker, and Minister of Immigration and integration Verdonk. Minister Donner was the primary responsible official for the safety and care for detainees before, during and after fire. Minister Dekker was responsible for the Government Buildings Agency, while Minister Verdonk was the responsible official for the (health) care and support of the rejected asylum seekers.

Immediately during the fire, the Dutch Safety Board announced an independent investigation. During this investigation, Parliament was very critical on both Minister Donner and Verdonk about the level of care that was given to the survivors of the fire, but no censure votes were filed against them. On the 30th of June, the Social Liberals (D66) withdrew from the coalition, thereby causing the fall of the majority cabinet.

The Safety Board presented its official report on the 21st of September 2006, two months before new parliamentary elections. This report contained very harsh conclusions: if the involved government institutions would have paid more attention to the issue of ‘fire safety’, the fire would have caused less or even no casualties.²⁵⁷ The Dutch Safety Board held the Ministers responsible in the report for ‘fire safety’ in the complex. A couple of hours after the presentation, Minister Donner and Dekker resigned of own accord. In November 2006, Parliament did debate the conclusions of the Dutch Safety Board that the care for the detainees after the fire was not sufficient. The Minister Verdonk survived this debate without a censure vote.²⁵⁸

| Period | Label of period | Most important events | ‘Fiasco layer’ + sequence of blame |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|
| 26-10-2005 till 20-09-2006 | Independent investigation period | 27-10-2005: Announcement of investigation by Dutch Safety Board. 30-06-2006: Resignation D66 from cabinet, new minority cabinet of VVD and CDA (Balkenende III) | Fact finding and sense making + establishing causality |
| 21-09-2006 till 24-10-2006 | Publication of Safety Board report | 20-09-2006: Publication of report 21-09-2006: Resignation of Minister Donner and Minister Dekker | Assessing culpability and responsibility |
| 24-10-2006 till 22-02-2007 | Accountability debate + aftermath | 24-10-2006: Accountability debate 22-11-2006: New parliamentary elections 22-02-2007: Cabinet Balkenende IV (CDA, PvdA, CU) | Assessing culpability and responsibility (on Verdonk) |

Table 6.1 Periods of the Schiphol fire incident

²⁵⁵ (Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid, 2006; 7).

²⁵⁶ (Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid, 2006; 7).

²⁵⁷ (Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid, 2006; 12)

²⁵⁸ (H TK 2006-2007 (25-10-2006), 17-1242).

How can we explain both the resignation of two Ministers and the survival of one other Minister in this political incident? Section 6.2 assesses the structural conditions at the beginning of the incident, to see whether they by themselves form a sufficient explanation for survival or resignation. Section 6.3 investigates the identified periods to assess whether behavioral mechanisms (blame avoidance strategies and their acceptance by Parliament) can be regarded as ‘smoking gun’ evidence to explain the survival of the individual Ministers.

6.2 Structural conditions: individual background, media salience and political landscape

In the theoretical chapter, the individual background of the Minister is identified as having an influence on the chances for Ministerial resignation, along with media salience of the incident and the political landscape. This part will assess whether these conditions facilitated the survival of the Minister or whether they constrained the possibilities for survival.

6.2.1. Individual background of the Ministers

| <i>Individual characteristics</i> ²⁵⁹ | Donner | Dekker | Verdonk |
|---|--|--|---|
| <i>Party affiliation</i> | CDA | VVD | VVD (2002-2007) |
| <i>'necessary party' coalition majority</i> | Yes (after 07-2006 temporary minority cabinet CDA and VVD) | Yes (idem) | Yes (idem) |
| <i>Ministry</i> | Justice | Housing, Spatial Planning and Environmental Affairs | Portfolio of Immigration and Integration |
| <i>Age</i> | 57 | 63 | 50 |
| <i>Earlier experience in Parliament</i> | No | No | No |
| <i>Earlier experience as Minister</i> | Minister of Justice for 9 months (Balkenende I) | No | No |
| <i>Other long-time experience public sector</i> | Civil servant Economic Affairs and Home affairs (1976-1990) + scientific council for government policy (1990-1997) + council of state (1997-2002). | Civil servant of Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Safety (1979-1990) + board Employers Federation (NVOB '90-'96 and AWWN 1996-2003 | Management board of 2 prisons (1988-1996) + civil servant Ministry of Justice (1992-1996 and Ministry of Interior (1996-1999). |
| <i>Earlier vote of censure of no-confidence during cabinet period (not this incident)</i> | Yes (1. vote of no-confidence 06-2004, by LPF, supported by PvdA: escape TBS'er (33%). 2. Vote of no-confidence 17-06-2005 by LPF, support by LijstWilders: escape of second TBS'er (6%) 3. Vote of no-confidence 13-09-2005 by GL: wrongful conviction in 'Schiedammer Parkmoord') (5%). ²⁶⁰ | No | Yes (three censure votes on 12-2005 (asylum seekers Congo), 04-2006 (asylum seekers Syria) and 06-2006 (Ayaan Hirschi Ali), supported by respectively: 41%, 43% and 45% of Parliament. The three censure votes were all supported by PvdA, SP, GL and CU.) ²⁶¹ |

Table 6.2 Individual backgrounds of Minister Donner, Dekker and Verdonk

²⁵⁹ Source: Personal descriptions on Parlement.com

²⁶⁰ http://www.parlement.com/id/vg9fgopqa1o0/j_p_h_piet_hein_donner

²⁶¹ 1. censure vote 12-2005, by PvdA, supported by 41% of seats in parliament: (SP, GL and CU) with regard to wrong information on asylum seekers Congo (Motie De Vries, c.s., 19637, nr. 993). Filed in (H TK 2005-2006 (22-12-2005), nr. 34; 2414). 2. censure vote 04-2006, by SP, supported by same parties as vote 1 + SGP (Motie De Wit, c.s., 19637, nr. 1032). Filed in (H TK 2005-2006 (06-04-2006), nr. 68; 4321). 3. censure vote 06-2006, by GL, supported by PvdA, SP, GL, CU and D66, regarding Verdonks' handling of the Hirshi Ali case (motie Halsema c.s., 30599 nr. 7). Filed in (H TK 2005-2006 (30-06-3006), nr. 96; 6025).

These 'rap sheets' of the three Ministers show some negative structural conditions. First, all three Ministers did not have earlier experience in Parliament and only Donner had short experience as Minister in the cabinet Balkenende I. According to Bovens and others, this lack of parliamentarian and cabinet experience increases the hazard of resignation (2010). However, all three Ministers had long experience as civil servants, so this could have neutralized their lack of political experience. Second, Minister Donner had an extra disadvantage at the beginning of the political incident, because he had already three votes of no-confidence during this cabinet period. Of these censure votes, only the first vote was supported by more than one party. Therefore, it is unclear whether these censure votes really constituted a negative condition for the survival of this Minister.

Most important is that individual background of the Minister changed during the political incident. First, Minister Verdonk got three censure votes, albeit on different policy subjects, which were supported by respectively 41%, 43% and 45% of Parliament. The last censure vote on the 30th of June 2006 was even supported by coalition party D66. This led to the fall of the majority cabinet Balkenende II. After this fall, a new temporary minority cabinet was set up by CDA and VVD. Therefore, there is a second negative structural change in the sense that all Ministers could no longer rely on a majority coalition. We can conclude that there are multiple negative structural conditions which diminish the chances for the survival of the Ministers and the possibilities for blame avoidance strategies. These are the lack of experience, the lack of 'political credit' (censure votes) and the change to a minority coalition. However, these individual conditions do not explain the difference in survival between the three Ministers.

6.2.2 Media salience

Media salience paints a more mixed picture regarding constraints on survival for Ministers. Two surges emerge in newspaper attention from the five biggest national newspapers, which linked a Minister to a 'fire' on 'Schiphol' or the 'Schiphol-fire'. In the first month after the Schiphol fire, attention peaked with seven articles per day on the 28th of October 2005 and nine articles per day on the 12th of November 2005 (the day after a parliamentary debate)²⁶². The second surge in attention appeared in the days before and after the publication of the report of the Safety Board, with six and seven articles on the 5th and 6th of September (preliminary conclusions report leaked) and 17 articles on the day after the resignation of Minister Dekker and Donner.²⁶³ As you can see, both attention waves followed events in the political arena, which probably means that the media arena follows the political arena, and therefore the political arena is leading in deciding the faith of the Ministers. Second, there was a large period of media silence on this incident and the involved Ministers. Although the political incident was prominent in the media and therefore it provided a bigger need for blame avoidance, this attention mostly followed the political events and was only confined to two periods.

²⁶² these articles all come from the newspaper search which uses: Minister + Schiphol + fire in HLEAD

²⁶³ these articles all come from the newspaper search which uses: Minister + Schipholbrand in HLEAD

Minority status and upcoming elections greatly constrain chances for blame avoidance and survival for the three Ministers. Yet it does not explain the difference in resignation between Donner and Dekker on the one hand and Verdonk on the other hand.

Besides, since the 1985, asylum policy has been a hot and contested issue in Dutch politics (Alink, Boint & t Hart, 2001; 292). Since the beginning of the 1990's Dutch public opinion polls noted an growth towards in people who saw immigration as an 'unfortunate development' (Alink et al, 2001; 296). Therefore, incidents within asylum policy are prone to politicization and form a risk for incumbent Ministers.

6.2.4 Conclusion: the effect of structural conditions

By looking at the structural conditions surrounding the fire in the Schiphol detention complex, we can conclude that the structural conditions are mostly unfavorable. The constraining conditions were the inexperienced background of the Ministers, the existence of censure and no-confidence votes against Donner and Verdonk and the unstable and small government majority. A more nuanced structural condition was the moderate newspaper attention. Moreover, these negative structural conditions worsened during the progress of the political incident. The 'highlight' was the coalition rift on the 30th of June 2006 and the issuing of new parliamentary elections for the 22th of November 2006. Therefore, we can conclude that these structural conditions could have been mostly sufficient in explaining the resignation of the Ministers Donner and Dekker. However, the question remains is why Minister Verdonk survived, even though the same conditions applied to her. In fact, she suffered even more constraints, such as the existence three of almost accepted votes of no-confidence related to her during the period of the political incident. In order to explain the differences in survival between Donner and Dekker on the one hand and Verdonk on the other hand, we have to look at behavioral mechanisms, or the blame avoidance strategies each of the actors employed.

6.3 Looking for 'smoking guns': Ministers' blame avoidance strategies and their acceptance

6.3.1 Investigation period: quality of 'aftercare' contested in multiple debates

Media salience of the incident was relatively high. These articles were very critical of Minister Verdonk. For example, the group 'a royal gesture' started a petition in November 2005 to indict Verdonk and Donner on 'death by negligence' and this received 15.000 signatures²⁶⁷. At the same time, Verdonk did report banners of protesters with texts like 'Rita Verdonk murderer'.²⁶⁸

In the first three months after the incident, the parliamentary debates focused on the 'aftercare' and shelter for surviving detainees and rejected asylum seekers. Responsible Ministers Verdonk and Donner were summoned four times by Parliament to explain themselves regarding the care for and the deportation of the surviving detainees, while Verdonk needed to show up two extra times on her own.²⁶⁹ However, Parliament did not debate on the Ministers' responsibility and blame for the outbreak of the fire and the death of eleven prisoners. With regard to blame avoidance strategies, a difference with case one and four can be noted. Contrary to those cases, the Ministers in this case did not instigate the independent investigation.

²⁶⁷ (Volkskrant, 12-11-2005; 4) and (NRC, 21-11-2005; 6)

²⁶⁸ (NRC, 21-11-2005)

²⁶⁹ (H TK 2005-2006 (01-11-2005), 15; 853-857), (H TK 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20), (Kamerstukken II 2005-2006 (17-11-2005), 24 587, nr. 156), (H TK 2005-2006 (23-11-2005), 25) and (H TK 2006-2007 (31-01-2006), 43).

Instead, the investigation was instigated by the Dutch Safety Board itself.²⁷⁰ During the five debates in November, December and January, we can find a myriad of eleven blame avoidance strategies. Four strategies were executed by both Ministers together, three by Verdonk and four by Donner. On the night of the fire, the Minister showed involvement, by explaining they already went to the complex where the fire was still blazing (1).²⁷¹ Verdonk even added that day that they are deeply affected by this 'tragedy' (2). On the 10th of November, she referred to the 'impressive memorial service' they held for the victims (3).²⁷²

Although the Ministers showed empathy for the victims in these political strategies, they did later argue against the expansion of the idea of 'a big tragedy' with regard to care for the survivors. This was done in the debates of the 1st, 10th and 17th of November 2005. First, they used the political strategy that the employees did the best they could under the difficult circumstances (4). As Donner explained; 'If you have to evacuate 248 people in one night, not everything will go perfectly'.²⁷³ Second, Donner complained that Parliamentarians tried to use individual examples to argue that the whole 'aftercare' is not adequate (5).²⁷⁴ According to Donner, the left opposition parties 'politicized the issues at the expense of the victims'.²⁷⁵ Besides, the individual examples were also hard to refute for him. He could after all, not account for the care for every individual survivor, due to privacy reasons (6).²⁷⁶ However, both the fourth and fifth strategy were not very successful, because Donner was forced to issue an investigation by the Inspectorate on the quality of 'aftercare' for survivors (input for Safety Board) (7).²⁷⁷ Still, he argued on the 23rd of November 2005 that Parliament cannot constantly ask for new investigations every time they read something about an individual case (8).²⁷⁸

The last topic needed to be dealt with by Verdonk, namely the deportation of survivors to their homeland. Verdonk argued that these survivors were rejected asylum seekers and that according to official protocol; they had to be deported in the future (9).²⁷⁹ According to her, this was no problem, because the protocol ensured that each case would be carefully²⁸⁰ and individually assessed²⁸¹, based on an independent medical judgment by professionals.²⁸² Therefore, the political parties had no reason to worry about the welfare of the deported. However, on the 31st of January 2006 a fifth debate was held. During this debate, Verdonk needed to change her policy statements regarding deportations. Verdonk stated that 'she listened to the concerns of Parliament'. She would make sure that asylum seekers could add the judgment of later introduced, independent physicians in the deportation decision (10).²⁸³

In the beginning of 2006, Donner and Verdonk asked Parliament to wait with their judgment until after the final report of the Safety Board (11).²⁸⁴ This is the last strategy both used.

²⁷⁰ (Kamerstukken II 2005-2006 (27-10-2005), 24 587, nr. 137; 2) and (Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid, 2006;191).

²⁷¹ (H TK 2005-2006 (27-10-2005), 14; 834).

²⁷² (H TK 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20; 1293).

²⁷³ (H TK 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20; 1290).

²⁷⁴ (H TK 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20; 1286).

²⁷⁵ (Kamerstukken II 2005-2006 (17-11-2005), 24 587, nr. 156; 7).

²⁷⁶ (Kamerstukken II, 2005-2006 (17-11-2005), 24 587, nr. 156; 7).

²⁷⁷ (Kamerstukken II, 2005-2006 (22-11-2005), 24 587, nr. 144; 1).

²⁷⁸ (H TK 2005-2006 (23-11-2005), 25; 6).

²⁷⁹ (H TK, 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20; 1295).

²⁸⁰ (H TK 2005-2006 (31-01-2006), 43; 2882).

²⁸¹ (H TK, 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20; 1296).

²⁸² (Kamerstukken II, 2005-2006 (17-11-2005), 24 587, nr. 156; 9).

²⁸³ (H TK 2005-2006 (31-01-2006), 43; 2880).

²⁸⁴ (H TK 2005-2006 (31-01-2006), 43; 2879).

| Type of strategy | Minister | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Date |
|------------------|--------------------|--|---|---|
| Political | Donner & Verdonk | Immediately went to scene on the evening of the incident | It is not really clear what happened, besides the facts I just told. Minister Verdonk and I visited the center to see what has happened. ²⁸⁵ | 27-10-2005 |
| Political | Verdonk | Tragic situation, deeply affected | First, I want to give our thoughts to the tragedy of these events and especially the deceased. Our hearts go out to the family of the deceased, but also the other prisoners and the employees. It was a traumatic event for all involved ²⁸⁶ . 'it was a tragic event' ²⁸⁷ | 27-10-2005 and 01-11-2005 |
| Political | Donner | Too much focus on individual cases not on general picture | 1. People paint all kinds of pictures about the care now. That is why Minister Verdonk and I visited the place ourselves. The survivors said to the Ministers that their care was of good quality. ²⁸⁸ 2. In this debate, a couple of cases are mentioned to paint a general picture. ²⁸⁹ 3. The stories about the aftercare concentrate on a few individual cases. Parliament politicize the issue at the expense of the victims. ²⁹⁰ | 10-11-2005 and 17-11-2005 |
| Agency | Verdonk and Donner | Lower civil servants not to blame, did the best they could | Donner 27-10-05: The emergency staff had to work under extremely difficult circumstances ²⁹¹ . If we used the term appropriate, than that was not meant as final judgment. ²⁹² Verdonk: If you imagine that night: kicking and screaming people, a lot of black smoke. The employees are also traumatized! The employees are named and shamed now by many organizations, institutions, people and media. ²⁹³ Donner: If you have to evacuate 248 people in one night, not everything will go perfectly. ²⁹⁴ | 01-11-2005 and 10-11-2005 |
| Political | Verdonk | Held memorial service for victims | I thank the spokespersons for their recap of the impressive memorial service we have attended along with the relatives of the deceased. ²⁹⁵ | 10-11-2005 |
| Political | Donner | Also 'aftercare' investigation by the Health Care Inspectorate (as input Safety Board) | We will contact the Health Care inspectorate. However, the inspectorate has no framework to test what was good or not. ²⁹⁶ The investigation of the Inspectorate on the quality of the aftercare is part of the investigation of the Dutch Safety board, in which the aftercare is a separate sub study ²⁹⁷ | 10-11-2005, officially started 22-11-2005 |
| Policy | Donner | Privacy: not allowed to provide information on survivors | Indeed, the Minister stated that when Parliament asks information about individual survivor, he can say if it is correct or not. He cannot give full information however, due to privacy reasons. ²⁹⁸ | 17-11-2005 |

²⁸⁵ (H II 2005-2006 (27-10-2005), 14; 834).

²⁸⁶ (Kamerstukken 2005-2006 (27-10-2005), 24 587, nr. 136; 1).

²⁸⁷ (H TK 2005-2006 (01-11-2005), 15; 853).

²⁸⁸ (H TK 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20; 1286).

²⁸⁹ (H TK 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20; 1288).

²⁹⁰ (Kamerstukken II 2005-2006 (17-11-2005), 24 587, nr. 156; 7).

²⁹¹ (H TK 2005-2006 (27-10-2005), 14; 834)

²⁹² (H TK 2005-2006 (27-10-2005), 14; 835).

²⁹³ (H TK 2005-2006 (01-11-2005), 15; 856).

²⁹⁴ (H TK 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20; 1290).

²⁹⁵ (H TK 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20; 1293).

²⁹⁶ (H TK 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20; 1293).

²⁹⁷ (Kamerstukken II, 2005-2006 (22-11-2005), 24 587, nr. 144; 1).

²⁹⁸ (Kamerstukken II, 2005-2006 (17-11-2005), 24 587, nr. 156; 7).

| | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| Policy + Agency | Verdonk | Detainees have to be send to homeland: standard policy, careful and professional | I repeat that the deportations, with individual guarantees, will be resumed. I don't want to talk about it further. ²⁹⁹ Of course there will be an individual scrutiny of each case, no ruthless deportation ³⁰⁰ . Repetition 23-11-2005: the judgment about fit for deportation is done by professionals. Why does Parliament constantly ask for guarantees? ³⁰¹ //again 31-01-2013: I constantly say that we are very careful with these survivors. I want to stick to the official procedures.. ³⁰² I rely on the judgment of independent doctors. ³⁰³ | 10-11-2005, 17-11-2005 and 31-01-2005 |
| Political | Donner | Keep number of investigation inspections/actors to minimum | The aftercare happened the way it did, people did what they could. We cannot constantly ask another institutions to investigate every dossier again ³⁰⁴ | 23-11-2005 |
| Political | Verdonk & Donner | Wait for investigation Safety Board (no control) ³⁰⁵ | Started 27-10-2005 (Donner): We will not anticipate on the background of the fire, but wait for the investigation. ³⁰⁶ 31-01-2006: For now I believe the aftercare was adequate. However, we will wait for the investigation report. ³⁰⁷ – 20-02-2006: I do not have a preliminary report. The Dutch Safety Board wants to report about the whole investigation at once. I do not know when this report will be published ³⁰⁸ | 31-01-2006 and 20-02-2006 |
| Policy | Verdonk | Deportation policy: to include judgment of new doctors upon request | I listened to the concerns of Parliament and I will send you a letter in which it is made clear that people can fill in a declaration of consent. This declaration makes it possible to include the judgment of later doctors in the deportation decision. ³⁰⁹ I will be very careful; I constantly accommodated Parliament in these concerns. ³¹⁰ | 31-01-2006 |

Table 6.3 Blame avoidance strategies regarding 'aftercare' in investigation period

No less than six debates with Minister Donner and Verdonk were held about the 'aftercare' for survivors and the possibility of deportations. This indicates that their blame avoidance strategies are not very successful. Of course, The arguments of coalition parties VVD and CDA were mostly in line with the strategies of their Ministers. However, the left wing opposition parties and also more left wing coalition party D66 were very critical about the strategies of Donner and Dekker. The criticism focused on the 'criticism only individual cases' (5) strategies of Donner and the 'policy is deportation' (9) strategy of Verdonk.

²⁹⁹ (H TK, 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20; 1295).

³⁰⁰ (H TK, 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20; 1296).

³⁰¹ (H TK 2005-2006 (23-11-2005), 25; 5).

³⁰² (H TK 2005-2006 (31-01-2006), 43; 2882).

³⁰³ (H TK 2005-2006 (31-01-2006), 43; 2883).

³⁰⁴ (H TK 2005-2006 (23-11-2005), 25; 6).

³⁰⁵ de vraag of dit een strategie is: Minister mogen überhaupt geen inzicht hebben in tussenrapporten.

³⁰⁶ (H TK 2005-2006 (27-10-2005), 24 587, nr. 136; 2).

³⁰⁷ (H TK 2005-2006 (31-01-2006), 43; 2879).

³⁰⁸ (Kamerstukken 2005-2006 (20-02-2006), 24 587, Nr. 164; 1).

³⁰⁹ (H TK 2005-2006 (31-01-2006), 43; 2880).

³¹⁰ (H TK 2005-2006 (31-01-2006), 43; 2882).

D66 spokeswoman Lambrechts mocked Donner for painting a picture 'that the aftercare went actually really well'.³¹¹ Even VVD-man Weekers said that the 'complaints of the victims are not in line with what the Minister says'.³¹² In fact, a couple of Parliamentarians had the same criticism a week after a visit to a shelter for the survivors by the Ministers.³¹³³¹⁴ Green Left spokesperson Vos acknowledged that Parliament could only understand the situation if she matched it with some individual faces'.³¹⁵ The subject is only once discussed after the pledge of Donner that the quality of care and shelter after the fire will be investigated by the Inspectorate and the board on the 10th of November. Therefore, this new political strategy of postponing judgment is sufficient.

With regard to the policy strategy of Verdonk, the criticism of Parliament has been much harsher. On the 10th of November, the entire Parliament supported a vote which asks the government not to deport survivors before 'there has been a careful independent medical and psychological evaluation'.³¹⁶ During the debate on the 23rd, D66 was extra critical that Minister Verdonk does not change her policy regarding deportation.³¹⁷ PvdA lamented on the 31st of January 2006 how 'appalling it is that Parliament again has to talk about the deportation policy in an emergency session'.³¹⁸ Even right wing party SGP criticized sticking to official protocol, claiming that it showed 'a lack of empathy', while the Minister needed to show 'some generosity' in this respect.³¹⁹ Therefore, all parties approved the policy strategy change of the Minister at the end of the debate on the 31st of January.³²⁰ The left wing parties and coalition party D66 still said that their concerns were not completely gone.³²¹³²²

Criticism on the deportation policy did abate in subsequent months. On the 31st of August 2006, Minister Verdonk even went further in her policy change, by using her discretionary space to let 39 survivors file a request for a residence permit.³²³ There is only one upheaval in the otherwise quiet period of the first half year of 2006. On the 7th of April, the Safety Board Chairman approached the media with the story that the Safety Board could not hear six witnesses of the fire because they were either released from custody or deported.³²⁴ Donner and Verdonk did vehemently deny this in the media and in the resulting emergency session in Parliament.³²⁵ Donner went as far as saying that 'formally and objectively all points of criticism are false and can be refuted by notifications of the Board itself'.³²⁶ On the 9th of May the statements were indeed refuted by the Safety Board, so this could be characterized as a proverbial storm in a teacup.³²⁷

³¹¹ (H TK 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20; 1289).

³¹² (H TK 2005-2006 (17-11-2005), 24 587, nr. 156; 5).

³¹³ (H TK 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20; 1286).

³¹⁴ (H TK 2005-2006 (17-11-2005), 24 587, nr. 156; 6).

³¹⁵ (H TK 2005-2006 (31-01-2006), 43; 2875).

³¹⁶ H TK 2005-2006 (10-11-2005), 20; 1305).

³¹⁷ Motie Lambrechts, 24587, nr. 145. In debate: H TK 2005-2006 (23-11-2005), 25-1663; 2.

³¹⁸ (H TK 2005-2006 (31-01-2006), 43; 2872).

³¹⁹ (H TK 2005-2006 (31-01-2006), 43; 2887).

³²⁰ (H TK 2005-2006 (31-01-2006), 43; 2880).

³²¹ (H TK 2005-2006 (31-01-2006), 43; 2886).

³²² (H TK 2005-2006 (31-01-2006), 43; 2883).

³²³ (H TK 2005-2006 (31-08-2006), 24 587, nr. 187; 2).

³²⁴ (NRC, 07-04-2006; 3).

³²⁵ (H TK 2005-2006 (11-04-2006), 69; 4355).

³²⁶ (H TK 2005-2006 (11-04-2006), 69; 4355).

³²⁷ (H TK 2005-2006 (25-10-2006), 17; 1225).

| Type of strategy | Minister | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Date |
|------------------|------------------|---|--|------------|
| Political | Verdonk & Donner | Articles which say that investigation of the Board is obstructed by deportation witnesses are false | Verdonk: We fully cooperated in the investigation. The media accounts stating otherwise, are false ³²⁸ // Donner: After the media accounts, I got a text of Van Vollenhoven in which he said the Board has no complaints and the Ministers did not frustrate the investigation. ³²⁹ // Donner: I will say formally and objectively all points of criticism are false and can be refuted by notifications of the Board itself. ³³⁰ | 11-04-2006 |
| Policy | Verdonk | Use discretionary space: 39 'survivors' eligible for residence permit | The survivors need long time medical treatment. The doctors explained that it would improve their health if the survivors have clarity on their future stay in the Netherlands. I will use my discretionary space to make them eligible for a permit. The exceptionality of the fire strengthened my decision. ³³¹ 39 survivors can file a request for a residence permit. ³³² | 31-08-2006 |

Table 6.4 Blame avoidance strategies in later investigation period

We can conclude that there was a lot of criticism by the media and Parliament regarding the care for survivors and their possible deportation. The Ministers were in the beginning not successful in refuting this blame. They needed multiple debates before they changed their strategies for the better. In both changes, the Ministers went along with some wishes of coalition party D66 and to lesser extent the left opposition. This has been successful to such a point that attention quieted down in the first half of 2006. However, in the beginning of the incident the subject of fire safety stirred concerns from Parliament as well.

6.3.2 Investigation period: sense making in the area of fire safety

During the first months after the fire, the blame not only focused on the 'aftercare' for the survivors of the fire, but also on fire safety within the detention complexes. Already in the debate of the 17th of November 2005, Minister Donner explained that his department started with new and better instructions for employees in emergency evacuations.³³³

However, the buck did not stop there. Instead, the situation escalated the moment the municipality of Haarlemmermeer decided to close the rest of the detention center Schiphol-Oost.³³⁴ The municipality argued that she needed to react to the 'public upheaval' and that she could no longer bear the responsibility for a center of which the Minister cannot guarantee its fire safety.³³⁵ Trouw concluded after this letter that 'Minister Donner is already in the dock before the investigation is completed'.³³⁶

Minister Donner reacted with a big show of force. He overruled the decision of the municipality and forced the municipality to keep the detention center open. According to Donner, the fire safety in the detention center was deemed fine by the fire department and the Inspectorate

³²⁸ (H TK 2005-2006 (11-04-2006), 69; 4354).

³²⁹ (H TK 2005-2006 (11-04-2006), 69; 4354).

³³⁰ (H TK 2005-2006 (11-04-2006), 69; 4355).

³³¹ (H TK 2005-2006 (31-08-2006), 24 587, nr. 187; 1).

³³² (Kamerstukken II, 2005-2006 (31-08-2006), 24 587, nr. 187; 2).

³³³ (Kamerstukken II, 2005-2006 (17-11-2005), 24 587, nr. 156; 8).

³³⁴ (Trouw (Marlet), 3-12-2005; 7)

³³⁵ (Brief B&W, Kamerstukken 2005-2006 (datum brief: 6-12-2005) 24587 nr. 153, bijlage 3; 1).

³³⁶ (Trouw (Marlet), 3-12-2005; 7)

for Public Safety at that time.³³⁷ Besides, the public interest in the detention center was too high, because the center was needed for the imprisonment of drug traffickers on Schiphol airport.³³⁸ At the same time, the Minister needed to acknowledge two investigations. There is a preliminary report by the Safety Board and one by its own Inspectorate, that show that fire safety is insufficient in some detention centers.³³⁹³⁴⁰ In order to counter this, the Minister proposed three policy changes. First, he decided to close one center that was deemed too old. Secondly, he proposed new regulations for the other centers. Third, he did propose a re-examination of all detention centers by the Buildings Agency, in reaction to the Safety Board. Interestingly, these policy strategies deal with the Buildings Agency. This agency is actually the responsibility of VROM-Minister Dekker.

| Type of strategy | Minister | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | date |
|------------------|----------|--|--|--|
| Policy | Donner | New fire instructions employees | The personnel were not properly instructed before the fire, how they had to act in emergency evacuations. This week, conversations took place to solve concrete complaints. ³⁴¹ | 17-11-2005 |
| Policy | Donner | the complex of Schiphol-Oost meets the fire-safety requirements + cannot be closed by the municipality till 24-04-2006 | 1: Fire safety in the center was ok, so this is not the reason for closure. Therefore, the decision of the municipality is against public interest. ³⁴²³⁴³ The fire department of the municipality did deem the fire safety adequate, likewise for the controls of the Inspectorate Public Safety. ³⁴⁴ 2. We did decide to suspend the decision of the municipality to close the detention center. The center is needed for the fight against drug trafficking on Schiphol airport. ³⁴⁵ | 07-12-2005 and 8-12-2005 |
| Policy | Donner | Assessment of DCI on fire safety all detention centers: 1 center closed + 5 new policies for others | The survey revealed that in only one detention center fire safety could not be guaranteed. This center in Doetinchem is closed ³⁴⁶ Besides, policy changes: 1. quick scans by Government Buildings agency. 2. Better norms for night controls 3. Improvement of survey with employees' councils 4. Improved practice for emergencies. 5. investigation for more appropriate management ³⁴⁷ | Announced: 01-11-2005, results: 08-12-2005 |
| Policy | Donner | New improvements made by Buildings Agency ³⁴⁸ | The Safety Board considered a provisional warning justified. ³⁴⁹ On the 9 th of December 2005, the Dutch Buildings Agency, along with the architect of the detention centers started a new examination of all detentions centers, which takes time. ³⁵⁰ | 13-12-2005 |

Table 6.5 Blame avoidance strategies regarding fire safety in investigation period

³³⁷ (Kamerstukken 2005-2006 (08-12-2005), 24 587, nr. 153, bijlage 2; 2-3).

³³⁸ (Kamerstukken 2005-2006 (08-12-2005), 24 587, nr. 153; 2).

³³⁹ (Kamerstukken II 2005-2006 (8-12-2005), 24 587, nr. 154;2).

³⁴⁰ (Kamerstukken II, 2005-2006 (13-12-2005), 24 587, nr. 155; 1).

³⁴¹ (Kamerstukken II, 2005-2006 (17-11-2005), 24 587, nr. 156; 8).

³⁴² (Kamerstukken 2005-2006 (08-12-2005), 24 587, nr. 153; 2).

³⁴³ zie ook: Kamerstukken II, 2005-2006 (05-12-2005), 24 587, nr. 152; 5).

³⁴⁴ (Kamerstukken 2005-2006 (08-12-2005), 24 587, nr. 153, bijlage 2; 2-3).

³⁴⁵ (Kamerstukken 2005-2006 (08-12-2005), 24 587, nr. 153; 2).

³⁴⁶ (Kamerstukken II 2005-2006 (8-12-2005), 24 587, nr. 154;2).

³⁴⁷ (Kamerstukken II 2005-2006 (8-12-2005), 24 587, nr. 154; 3-4).

³⁴⁸ Interesting: all about the 'Building Agency', which falls under Minister Dekker, but letter from Minister Donner

³⁴⁹ (Kamerstukken II, 2005-2006 (13-12-2005), 24 587, nr. 155; 1).

³⁵⁰ (Kamerstukken II, 2005-2006 (13-12-2005), 24 587, nr. 155; 1).

There are few reactions of Parliament, except for a committee meeting with the Justice spokespersons of the parties on the 20th of December.³⁵¹ In this meeting, all parties criticize the Minister for his ‘flexing his muscles’ towards the municipality, even the coalition parties.³⁵² The coalition party VVD calls this strategy ‘unedifying’.³⁵³ Apart from this criticism, all parties decided to wait for the conclusions of the Safety Board investigation.

Surprisingly, the parties got a ‘sneak preview’ of the conclusion of this report on the 6th of September 2006. At that day, the preliminary conclusions were leaked towards the media. Newspapers reported harsh conclusions towards Donner and Dekker.³⁵⁴ Donner, as spokesperson for the entire cabinet, used two strategies: waiting for the final conclusions³⁵⁵ and attacking the preliminary conclusions. According to Donner, the leaked report was ‘just a concept’.³⁵⁶ Donner refuted the conclusions that there were no fire drills and that there was no contact with the fire department during the construction of the complex.³⁵⁷ This reaction was leaked as well. According to the NRC, this strategy can be described as: ‘some things went wrong, but there was no formal negligence’.³⁵⁸

| Type of strategy | Minister | strategy | Quote in newspaper articles | Date |
|------------------|----------|--|---|------------------------|
| Political | Donner | Wait for official report | It is just a concept; we will wait for the final conclusions. | 06-09-2006 (newspaper) |
| Political | Donner | Preliminary conclusions contain mistakes | ‘Donner refutes the conclusions that there were no fire drills and that there was no contact with the fire department during the construction of the complex’ | 06-09-2006 (newspaper) |

Table 6.6 Blame avoidance strategies on concept-report

However, it soon became clear that these strategies would not work. The chairman of the Dutch Safety Board stated that there would be no negotiations about the results with Ministers beforehand. According to him, it was only important ‘whether the facts mentioned in the report are correct or not’.³⁵⁹ That did not sound positive for Donner and Dekker.

6.3.3 Publication of the report: immediate resignation of Donner and Dekker

The Board presented its final report on the 21st of September 2006, two weeks after the leak of the concept report. The Board held a press conference during which they showed a reconstruction movie of the events before, during and after the fire. The movie started with a long shot of the burnt-out outside and inside of the center. During this shot, a voice-over talked about people ‘suffocated by the smoke’, ‘burnt out cells’, ‘catastrophic fire’ and in the end the voice asked: ‘why did authorities not make sufficient use of previous recommendations regarding fire safety?’³⁶⁰ The Board answered this question in the accompanying 188-page investigation.

³⁵¹ (KamerstukkenII, 2005-2006 (20-12-2005), 24 587, nr.158).

³⁵² (KamerstukkenII, 2005-2006 (20-12-2005), 24 587, nr.158; 2).

³⁵³ (KamerstukkenII, 2005-2006 (20-12-2005), 24 587, nr.158; 2).

³⁵⁴ (Telegraaf (06-09-2006); 1).

³⁵⁵ (Telegraaf (06-09-2006); 1)

³⁵⁶ (Telegraaf (06-09-2006); 1)

³⁵⁷ (NRC, Kalse (06-09-2006); 3).

³⁵⁸ (NRC, Kalse (06-09-2006); 3).

³⁵⁹ (Volkskrant (06-09-2006); 3).

³⁶⁰ (Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid, film 20-09-2006).

In this report, the Board concluded that ‘while a fire can never be excluded, this fire should not have gotten such a disastrous end’.³⁶¹ They even boldly stated that it was ‘justified to assume that there would have been none or fewer victims if fire safety would have gotten the attention from the authorities involved’.³⁶² According to the Board, the most important authorities were the ‘Department of Correctional Institutions’ of the Justice Ministry, the ‘Buildings Agency’ of the Ministry VROM and the municipality of Haarlemmermeer.³⁶³ The Department of Correctional Institutions was primarily responsible for fire safety and it failed to make a framework and conditions for a fire emergency plan.³⁶⁴ The Buildings Agency failed to build the wings where the fire started (J and K) according to the fire safety protocol in construction regulations.³⁶⁵ The municipality of Haarlemmermeer was wrong in granting the construction permit for the detention complex and supervised requirements of this permit only superficially.³⁶⁶

The Safety Board compared their conclusions to the conclusion of the Commission-Oosting in the firework explosion in Enschede (case 1). According to the Board, the failure to take responsibility in the Schiphol fire was ‘more worrisome compared to Enschede, because in this case the involved parties are mostly government authorities who need to be role models with regard to fire safety’.³⁶⁷ At last, the Board concluded that the quality of aftercare for the survivors was lacking at key moments.³⁶⁸ However, the care for the family of the victims, the employees of the center and aid workers had been of good quality.³⁶⁹

Immediately after the presentation of this report, a closed meeting is held between Justice Minister Donner, VROM-Minister Dekker, Prime Minister Balkenende, vice-PM Zalm, CDA-leader Verhagen and VVD-leader Rutte.³⁷⁰ The fact that also the leaders of both coalition parties of the Minister were present shows that the stakes regarding this incident were higher than just the faith of the Ministers. A couple of hours after the meeting, Minister Donner and Dekker gave a speech to Parliament in which they explained their decision to resign.

Donner explained that he resigned, because he wanted to show to the families of the victims that the mistakes that were attributed to the department of correctional institutions were not without consequences.³⁷¹ However, even in his resignation speech, Donner used blame avoidance strategies. First, Donner explained that the decision regarding the building of the complex and the framework of fire safety were taken by his predecessors.³⁷² Besides, the Safety Board attributed too much responsibility for the prevention of disasters to the hands of the government, according to Donner.³⁷³ He claimed he would have liked to debate these questions with Parliament. However, Donner feared that the entire accountability debate would have revolved only around his position if he would have stayed.³⁷⁴

³⁶¹ (Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid, 2006; 17).

³⁶² (Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid, 2006; 11).

³⁶³ (Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid, 2006; 176).

³⁶⁴ (Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid, 2006; 174-176).

³⁶⁵ (Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid, 2006; 177).

³⁶⁶ (Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid, 2006; 178).

³⁶⁷ (Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid, 2006; 12).

³⁶⁸ (Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid, 2006; 179).

³⁶⁹ (Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid, 2006; 180).

³⁷⁰ http://www.parlement.com/id/vhe7k0yaazes/nieuws/ministers_donner_en_dekker_afgetreden_om

³⁷¹ (H TK 2005-2006 (21-09-2006), 3; 113).

³⁷² (H TK 2005-2006 (21-09-2006), 3; 113).

³⁷³ (H TK 2005-2006 (21-09-2006), 3; 113).

³⁷⁴ (H TK 2005-2006 (21-09-2006), 3; 113).

Dekker's speech was in line with Donner's. She only added that the fire happened because of 'a most unfortunate concurrence of events'.³⁷⁵ The mistakes of her Buildings Agency were 'technical' and she denied that the Agency neglected construction safety regulations. The statement of the Board that there could have been no casualties if the authorities performed better is in her eyes 'hypothetical'.³⁷⁶

| Type of strategy | Minister | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | date |
|------------------|-----------------|---|---|------------|
| Political | Donner & Dekker | Resignation to show responsibility toward victims | Dekker: I feel responsibility towards the families for the dramatic consequences of the disaster. ³⁷⁷ | 21-09-2006 |
| Agency | Donner & Dekker | Predecessors made the mistakes | Donner: The decisions around the building of the complex, the organization of fire safety and emergency policy are mostly taken in earlier cabinet periods. However, we are also responsible for decision we did not take personally. ³⁷⁸ | 21-09-2006 |
| Political | Donner | Safety Board attributes too much responsibility for prevention of disasters on government | Donner: the report lays such a responsibility with the government for the prevention of disasters and dangers that we have to ask ourselves if this responsibility can still be borne. If only this responsibility counts, the democracy and rule of law are in danger. ³⁷⁹ Dekker: Statement of Safety Board about casualties is hypothetical. ³⁸⁰ | 21-09-2006 |
| Political | Dekker | Safety Board is too harsh for Buildings Agency | My opinion is that the Buildings Agency could have been more aware of fire safety and needs improvement. However, the Agency did work carefully in line with construction law regarding fire safety, contrary to what the Board states. ³⁸¹ | 21-09-2006 |

Table 6.8 Blame (avoidance) strategies of Donner and Dekker during resignation

Both Ministers used a broad interpretation of ministerial responsibility. The PM's letter about the resignation suggests that this decision could have been 'encouraged' by the Prime Minister: 'with their decision to resign, they have paved the way for a future cabinet reaction on the content of the report.'³⁸² Newspapers reported 'Donner could not dangle too long, Balkenende lets crisis pass' (NRC)³⁸³, 'decent retreat' (AD)³⁸⁴ and 'swift action to minimize damage' (Telegraaf).³⁸⁵ The title of Volkskrant's lead editorial shows the dual nature of the resignation: 'Resignation was inevitable, as amend and as a means to minimize political damage in the elections'.³⁸⁶

³⁷⁵ (H TK 2005-2006 (21-09-2006), 3; 114).

³⁷⁶ (H TK 2005-2006 (21-09-2006), 3; 114).

³⁷⁷ (H TK 2005-2006 (21-09-2006), 3; 114).

³⁷⁸ (H TK 2005-2006 (21-09-2006), 3; 113).

³⁷⁹ (H TK 2005-2006 (21-09-2006), 3; 113).

³⁸⁰ (H TK 2005-2006 (21-09-2006), 3; 114).

³⁸¹ (H TK 2005-2006 (21-09-2006), 3; 114).

³⁸² (Kamerstukken II, 2006-2007 (21-09-2006), 24 587, nr. 195)

³⁸³ (NRC, Kalse (22-09-2006); 1).

³⁸⁴ (AD (22-09-2006); 1).

³⁸⁵ (Telegraaf (22-09-2006); 7).

³⁸⁶ (Volkskrant, Remarque (22-09-2006); 1).

Besides, a Telegraafs' headline 'Will Donner come back?'³⁸⁷ shows that resignation does not have to lead to a shortcut of someone's political career. Indeed, Donner returned as Minister of Interior Affairs in the next cabinet.

6.3.4 Accountability debate for Verdonk: Donner did it all

Verdonk managed to stay on as acting Minister in the following months. First, the blame of the Safety Board regarding her position was just less than the other two. Her department had not been named as 'head culprit' in the conclusions of the report and the care for employees and families was deemed adequate. Therefore, Verdonk stuck mostly to her past strategies in the accountability debate on the 25th of October 2006: it was tragic, everyone did the best they could, they stuck to protocol and we fully cooperated with the Safety Board. However, she did propose some minor policy changes. She also introduced the agency strategy of blaming Justice Minister Donner. First, 'in hindsight, some improvements are needed'.³⁸⁸ These improvements consisted of technical adjustments, such as checklists regarding the communication between the Department of Correctional Institutions (Justice) and doctors.³⁸⁹ However, the most important strategy has been her agency strategy of putting almost all responsibility for the mistakes in aftercare with the resigned Justice Minister Donner. Verdonk remarked multiple times; 'of course I felt responsible for certain parts, but the Minister of Justice bears formal responsibility'.³⁹⁰

| Type of strategy | Minister | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Date |
|------------------|----------|---|--|---------------------------|
| Policy | Verdonk | Change: introduction of checklists | 'In hindsight, some improvements are needed'. ³⁹¹ Therefore, we introduced some checklists or assistance for communications with the DCI and doctors of the asylum seekers. ³⁹² | 25-10-2006 and 31-10-2006 |
| Agency | Verdonk | Resigned Minister of Justice responsible for mistakes | 'Miss Halsema tries to let me react to problems which were not my responsibility. I only feel responsible for certain parts ³⁹³ The rules you speak of are from the DCI, of the Justice Ministry, not my policy area. I am solely responsible for the deportations.' ³⁹⁴ | 25-10-2006 and 31-10-2006 |

Table 6.9 Blame avoidance strategies of Verdonk during accountability debates

The Minister received some negative reactions by the left parties of SP, GL and CU, but no formal votes were filed. A month later, parliamentary elections took place.

³⁸⁷ (Telegraaf (22-09-2006); 1).

³⁸⁸ (H TK 2006-2007 (25-10-2006), 17; 1227).

³⁸⁹ (H TK 2006-2007 (25-10-2006), 17; 1227).

³⁹⁰ (H TK 2006-2007 (25-10-2006), 17; 1229).

³⁹¹ (H TK 2006-2007 (25-10-2006), 17; 1227).

³⁹² (H TK 2006-2007 (25-10-2006), 17; 1227).

³⁹³ (H TK 2006-2007 (25-10-2006), 17; 1230).

³⁹⁴ (H TK 2006-2007 (31-10-2006) 19;1436).

6.4 Conclusion: Why were Minister Donner and Dekker forced to resign, while Verdonk could stay on?

In this case study of the Schiphol fire incident, we can conclude four things. First, this incident consisted of two really separate periods: the early blaming period about the aftermath of the incident ('aftercare' and to lesser extent fire safety) and the later blaming period about the causes of the incident. The Ministers were not successful in the early blaming period with their strategies to minimize the scope of the bad 'aftercare' and to stick to official protocol. However, they lowered blame for both policy areas when they changed their strategies in this regard (investigation and policy change). Second, during the later period, this was no longer possible. The harshness and almost 'advocacy' of the investigation report made blame avoidance for the two 'culprit ministries' of Donner and Dekker almost impossible. These conclusions coincided with very unfavorable structural conditions. Third, the closeness to parliamentary elections made the blame avoidance of the PM and the coalition parties prevail over the individual need for blame avoidance of the Ministers. Fourth, we can conclude regarding Verdonk that the saying 'one man's loss is another man's gain' is appropriate here. Both the resignation of Donner and the Boards' harsh criticism of the Justice department paved the way for Verdonk's agency strategy.

7. 'Tough but fair' or 'inhumane without care'

Case 4: Junior Minister Teeven and the suicide of asylum seeker Dolmatov

7.1 Description of the political incident

On the 17th of January 2013 a tragic incident took place. Aleksandr Dolmatov, a Russian asylum seeker committed suicide in his cell in a detention center in Rotterdam. Already two days after the suicide junior Minister Teeven of 'Security and Justice' asked his 'Inspection Security and Justice' to 'put all facts together' about the suicide.³⁹⁵ The Inspection Security and Justice reports directly to junior Minister Teeven, so this investigation was not an independent investigation such as the enquiries in the other three cases.

On the 12th of April 2013, junior Minister Teeven forwarded the inspection report to Parliament, along with his official reaction. The inspection reports that during three moments in the 'immigration chain' people have been negligent in the handling of the Dolmatov-case: 1) due to a ticking of the wrong 'checkbox' Dolmatov was erroneously detained (his appeal was not over, so he could not be deported), 2) his legal aid was not in line with Dutch laws and 3) the medical care has fallen short.³⁹⁶ According to the inspection, this incident showed structural failures of the justice system regarding detention of asylum seekers³⁹⁷. Teeven announced that he accepted all conclusions by the inspection and would immediately take action to ensure this kind of incident will not happen again.³⁹⁸

However, Teeven's response did not stop the 'accountability debate' with Parliament one week later on the 18th of April 2013. During this time the newspaper attention for the subject increased, with a peak of 10 articles on the day of the debate (18-04-13). Especially the first negligent act was subject of discussion in the resulting debates. This failure even got its own name 'the checkbox' (*het vinkje*), which is referred to 53 times in the 'accountability debate' on 18th.³⁹⁹ On the day of the debate, newspapers opened with headlines such as 'Teeven under heavy fire'⁴⁰⁰, 'Teeven has to leave'⁴⁰¹, 'Teeven is finished'⁴⁰². Therefore we can claim that blame attribution was quite severe for junior Minister Teeven and that the question of resignation was put squarely on the table.

In the 'accountability debate' Junior Minister Teeven received a vote of no-confidence, which is filed by the Socialist Party (SP, Gesthuizen), the Green Left (GL, Voortman) and the Animal Rights Party (PvdD, Thieme).⁴⁰³ These three parties have respectively 15, 4 and 2 seats in Parliament and therefore comprise 14% of the seats in Parliament.⁴⁰⁴ At the end of the debate, the censure vote was supported by all opposition parties except the Freedom Party (PVV, 15 seats), the Dutch Reformed Party (SGP, 3 seats) and the 50plus (2 seats). In total 34% of all members of Parliament supported the vote.⁴⁰⁵

³⁹⁵ (NRC, 19-01-13).

³⁹⁶ (Kamerstukken II, 2012-2013 (12-04-13), kenmerk: 361683;1).

³⁹⁷ (Kamerstukken II, 2012-2013 (12-04-13), kenmerk: 361683; 1).

³⁹⁸ (Kamerstukken II, 2012-2013 (12-04-13), kenmerk: 361683; 1)

³⁹⁹ (H TK, 2012-2013 (18-04-13), 77, nr. 3 & 6).

⁴⁰⁰ (AD, Wiegman, 17-04-2013; 1).

⁴⁰¹ (Volkskrant, Sommer, 18-04-2013;29)..

⁴⁰² (NRC, 18-04-2013; ?).

⁴⁰³ (Motie Thieme, 19 637, nr. 1652. In: H TK, 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), nr. 6).

⁴⁰⁴ http://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhronvx6/zetelverdeling_tweede_kamer_1946_heden

⁴⁰⁵ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), 77-6; 7). SP (15 seats), CDA (13 seats), D66 (12 seats), CU (5 seats), GL (4 seats) and PvdD (2 seats)

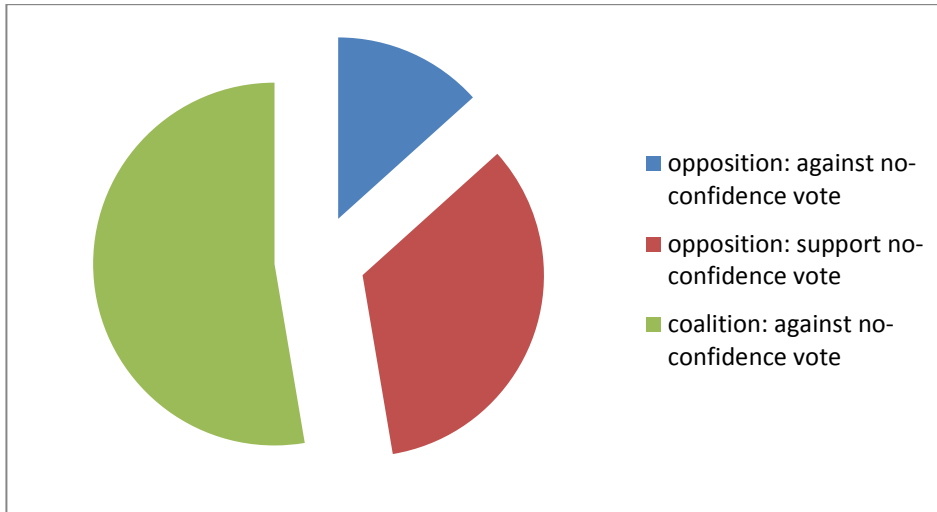


Figure 7.1 No-confidence vote against Junior Minister Teeven (*'Motie Gesthuizen c.s.'*, 19 637, nr. 1652)

The following periods need to be further investigated to see which strategies junior Minister Teeven employed to survive this political incident.

| Period | Label of period | Most important events | Period: |
|--|---|--|--|
| 17-01-2013 until 11-04-2013 | Post-incident + during the investigation | 19-01-2013: Start of the investigation of the inspection | Sense making and 'fact finding' |
| 12-04-2013 until 17-04-2013 | Report of the inspection public + prelude to debate | 12-04-2013: Publication of report inspection + official reaction Teeven | Establishing causality |
| 18-04-2013 | Accountability debate + vote of no-confidence | 18-04-2013: Accountability debate with Parliament | Assessing culpability and responsibility |
| 19-04-2013 until 10-10-2013 ⁴⁰⁶ | Couple of parliamentary debates | 22-05-2013: Parliamentary debate on loosening detention for rejected asylum seekers 19-06-2013: Idem 04-10-2013: Letter about new cabinet plans asylum seekers | More 'fact finding' |

Table 7.1 Periods within the incident of Teeven and the suicide of Dolmatov

How can we explain his 'escape' from forced resignation? Section 7.2 assesses the structural characteristics to see whether such characteristics form a sufficient explanation for his survival. Section 7.3 analyses the post-incident debates to identify whether behavioral mechanisms (blame avoidance strategies and their acceptance) can explain the survival of Teeven.

7.2 Structural conditions: individual background, media salience and political landscape

7.2.1 will identify how the individual background of the Minister influences the chances for Ministerial resignation in this case. In 7.2.2, the influence of media salience of the incident is considered.

⁴⁰⁶ (end of this enquiry).

Third, 7.2.3 assesses what the structural characteristics of the political landscape were in this case. The last section will address whether these conditions could have affected the survival of the Minister in a positive or a negative way.

7.2.1 Individual background of the junior Minister

| Individual background ⁴⁰⁷ | Teeven |
|---|---|
| <i>Former party affiliation</i> | Leefbaar Nederland (2002-2003) |
| <i>Party affiliation</i> | VVD (2005-present) |
| <i>'necessary party' for coalition majority</i> | Yes |
| <i>Ministry</i> | Security and Justice (junior) |
| <i>Age at time of incident</i> | 44 |
| <i>Earlier experience in Parliament</i> | Yes, 8 months for Leefbaar Nederland (05-2002/01-2003) and 4 years VVD (11-2006/10-2010 and 09-2012/11-2012) |
| <i>Earlier experience as (junior) Minister</i> | Junior Minister Security and Justice (10-2010-present, from 11-2012 also asylum and migration included) |
| <i>Other long-time experience public sector</i> | Detective FIOD (1980-1992) - Public prosecutor (1993-2001 and 2003-2006) ⁴⁰⁸ |
| <i>Earlier vote of censure or no-confidence during cabinet period</i> | Yes (vote of censure 19-12-2012, by SP on shelter for rejected asylum seekers, only supported by SP and PvdD, 17 seats). ⁴⁰⁹ |

Table 7.2 Background of junior Minister Teeven

The 'rap sheet' of junior Minister Teeven shows three background characteristics of importance for this research. First, it portrays a politician who belongs to the 'tough' right side of the Liberal Party, especially because of his past as a public prosecutor who tackled organized crime. Also his past support for the populist, right-wing party 'Leefbaar Nederland'⁴¹⁰ is in line with this profile. Second, Teeven does not have the characteristics which play a role in resignation hazard of Dutch Ministers according to Bovens and others (2010). Teeven's party is pivotal for a coalition majority and he has experience both in Parliament and as junior Minister in the first Rutte coalition. However, the fact that he was also junior Minister in the previous cabinet limited the possibility for blaming predecessors with regard to both agency and policy. On the other hand, Teeven did not have asylum policy in his portfolio, so although Teeven was junior Minister Justice, asylum policy is new for him. Third, an imported constrain to blame avoidance could be that in the end of 2012 (one month before the suicide of Dolmatov), Teeven got a 'vote of censure' regarding asylum policy (the shelter of asylum seekers). This vote is only supported by two far left parties (SP and PvdD) in Parliament. While the support for the censure vote was low, it could give Teevens' opponents the possibility to frame Dolmatov as a symptom for bad policy on Ministry level.

⁴⁰⁷ Source: Personal descriptions on Parlement.com

⁴⁰⁸ http://www.parlement.com/id/vg9fgopufnzg/f_fred_teeven: involved in couple of high profile organised crime cases: Bouterse, Mink K. and Johan V. (alias 'De Hakkelaar').

⁴⁰⁹ (Motie van Gesthuizen, 29344, nr. 110. In H TK 2012-2013 (19-12-2012), 38, nr. 62; 179).

⁴¹⁰ according to the 'Documentatiecentrum Politieke Partijen' of the University of Groningen: <http://dnpp.ub.rug.nl/dnpp/pp/in>

7.2.2. Media salience of the incident

The amount of newspaper articles linking Teeven to the suicide of Dolmatov is quite low. Only during the time of the ‘accountability debate’, the 15th of April and the 20th of April, the newspaper attention rises to three or more articles per day.

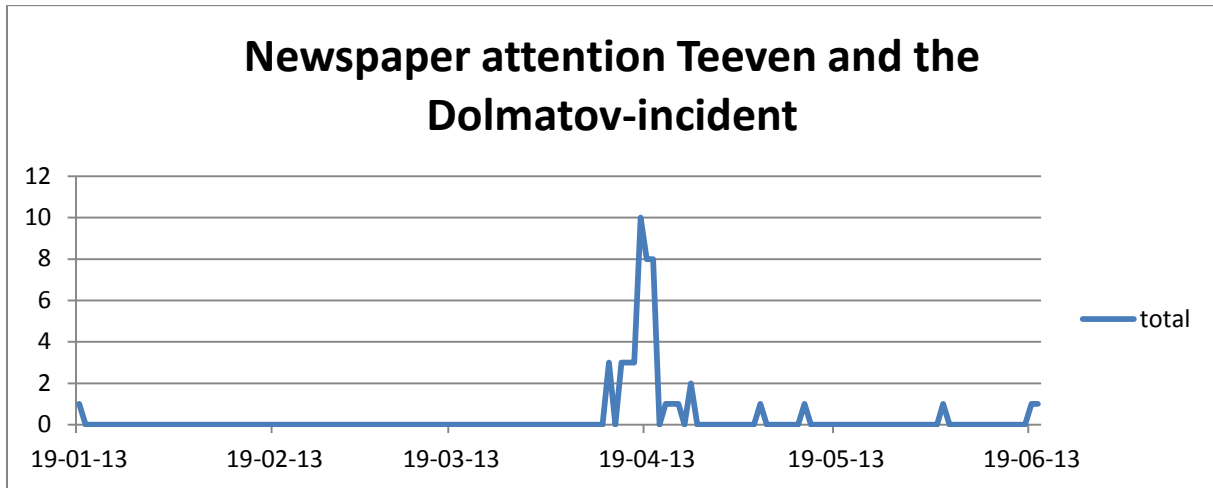


Figure 7.2 Newspaper attention per day for junior Minister Teeven and the Dolmatov-incident.⁴¹¹

Therefore, Teeven did not have to deal with a media ‘firestorm’, which increased his odds for survival.

7.2.3 Political landscape

The ruling coalition during the time of the incident was a collaboration of two big parties, the Labor Party (PvdA) and the Conservative Liberal Party (VVD), which was only in place since the 5th of November 2012 (2 months before suicide).⁴¹² Together these two parties had a minimal majority of 79 seats in Parliament, which is a narrow 52,7% of Parliament. In the First Chamber they had no majority. This narrow majority could mean a less stable coalition, which is more prone to incidents, as it is under threat from both the left and right side of Parliament. Besides that, VVD is much more conservative and strict than PvdA regarding immigration possibilities and integration requirements within the coalition (Van Kersbergen & Krouwel, 2008; 407). This is also visible in the composition of the cabinet Rutte I, which ruled from 2010 until 2012, in which a minority coalition of Conservative Liberals and the Christian Democrats ruled with the active support of right-wing party PVV. The PVV has a ‘radical anti-immigration position’ (Van Kersbergen & Krouwel, 2008; 410). A small government majority, along with a coalition divided on immigration and asylum policy indicated the potential of the Dolmatov case to be a ‘dangerous’ political incident for the survival of Teeven.

Besides, since the 1985, asylum policy has been a hot and contested issue in Dutch politics (Alink, Boint & t Hart, 2001; 292). Since the beginning of the 1990’s Dutch public opinion polls noted an growth towards in people who saw immigration as an ‘unfortunate development’ (Alink et al, 2001; 296). Therefore, incidents within asylum policy are prone to politicization and form a risk for incumbent junior Ministers.

⁴¹¹ LexisNexis (search words: Minister + Dolmatov in headline+lead). n = 50

⁴¹² http://www.parlement.com/id/vj47glycfix9/kabinet_rutte_ii_2012_heden

7.2.4 Conclusion: the effect of structural conditions

Looking at the structural conditions of the political incident of Dolmatov, we can conclude that they form partly a constraint for the survival of junior Minister Teeven. Constraining factors were: a previous vote of censure, disagreement within the minimal majority coalition on asylum policy and asylum policy as a contested issue on its own. However, other structural conditions would support the survival of the Minister. These conditions were: experience in the political arena, a tough reputation and a low salience of the incident in the media. Therefore, we can conclude that these structural conditions play an important role in the chances of the junior Minister for survival, but that there are enough conditions who would point towards resignation. In order to sufficiently explain the survival, we must assess the process of blame avoidance in each of the periods of the incident.

7.3 Assessing ‘smoking guns’: Minister’s blame avoidance strategies and their acceptance

7.3.1 Post-incident and investigation period: sense making and ‘fact finding’

Two days after the suicide of Dolmatov, junior Minister Teeven announced an ‘independent investigation’ by his inspection for Security and Justice in order ‘put all facts together regarding the suicide’.⁴¹³ Apart from the announcement of an investigation by the inspection, the junior Minister did not comment on the suicide. The first time the suicide of Dolmatov was discussed in parliamentary debates is during a discussion with the parliamentary commission on asylum policy on the 14th of February, more than four weeks after the suicide. Teeven reacted to questions from Socialist Party member Van Gesthuizen, by explaining what is included in the investigation and that the asylum procedure itself regarding Dolmatov is not included in the investigation because he ‘already looked into this himself’.⁴¹⁴ During this debate Teeven committed himself to a policy response after the investigation in which also the asylum procedure itself is included.⁴¹⁵ In his answers to questions posed by Labor Party member Arib, on the 7th of March Teeven responded three times: ‘I will wait for the findings of the investigation’.⁴¹⁶

It is interesting to see that Teeven at this stage did not address the severity of the issue, he did not use words of ‘incident’ or tried to downplay the event. He only remarked that he is of course ‘shocked’ about the suicide.⁴¹⁷ However, he instigated an independent investigation, so that the debate in media and parliament was postponed.

| Type of strategy | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Date |
|------------------|-----------------|---|-------------------------|
| Political | Wait for report | 1. The investigation will be as fast as possible, but it has to be thorough as well. I saw a schedule. We have to see if this is feasible. ⁴¹⁸ 2. I will wait for the findings of this investigation (3 times). ⁴¹⁹ | 14-02-13 and 07-03-2013 |

Table 7.3 Blame avoidance strategy in investigation period

⁴¹³ (NRC, 19-01-2013; ?)

⁴¹⁴ (Kamerstukken II 2013-2013 (14-02-2013), 19 637, nr. 1643; 25).

⁴¹⁵ (Kamerstukken II 2013-2013 (14-02-2013), 19 637, nr. 1643; 26).

⁴¹⁶ (Kamerstukken II 2012-2013 (07-03-2013), 1522, nr 1278; 1-2).

⁴¹⁷ (Kamerstukken II 2012-2013 (07-03-2013), 1522, nr 1278; 1-2).

⁴¹⁸ (Kamerstukken II 2013-2013 (14-02-2013), 19 637, nr. 1643; 26).

⁴¹⁹ (Kamerstukken II 2012-2013 (07-03-2013), 1522, nr 1278; 2).

The suicide of Dolmatov was only brought up two times in the political debate during this stage. First, Labor party member Arib asked short questions immediately on the day of the suicide. The second time was on the 14th of February in the question time of Socialist parliamentarian Van Gesthuizen (the other parties stayed silent). The attention in the five biggest national newspapers was more visible, with 29 articles regarding Dolmatov in the first three weeks after the incident. However, only two of those articles linked Teeven to this incident. Therefore, during this stage it did not appear to be a case in which the Minister would be severely blamed or would have to use other blame avoidance strategies than instigating the investigation of the inspection. In the next stage we will see this changed after the publication of the inspection report.

7.3.2 Report of the inspection: Dolmatov more than ‘just an incident’

On the 28th of March, the Inspection of Security and Justice finished her report on the question whether the authorities exercised due care in the detainment of Dolmatov.⁴²⁰ However, Teeven only made this report accessible for Parliament on the 12th of April as an accompaniment to his official reaction.⁴²¹ The NRC wondered whether this period was a deliberate delay to wait for the end of the visit of Russian President Putin to the Netherlands on the 8th of April.⁴²² Though, the opposition only hinted on this possible delay strategy once during the questions before the debate⁴²³ and Teeven vehemently denied that the delay was strategic and intentional.⁴²⁴ He points to the fact that he sends the report well within the official term of six weeks.⁴²⁵ Therefore, we will disregard the timing of the publication of the report for the moment.

In the report, the Inspection concluded that on ‘several moments, several organizations in the immigration chain did not act with due care’⁴²⁶ and that this ‘negligence is not only caused by acts or omissions of officials, but also by the overt dependence on – and trust in – systems, procedures and formulas which were supposed to support officials in their decisions’.⁴²⁷ Among others, Dolmatov was wrongly detained, he did not have the proper and legal aid and the medical care fell short.⁴²⁸ According to the Inspection, authorities have failed because ‘the information systems, procedures and forms contain often too little, unclear and sometimes even wrong information’ and they are not ‘accurate and up-to-date’. Yet these ‘system omissions’ were known by the involved authorities.⁴²⁹ The Inspection thus concluded that the incident constituted a serious violation of the safety policies for detainees.

In his accompanying reaction, Teeven used both a policy and a political strategy. First, he said he would ‘follow all recommendations of the inspection’ and that he had ‘immediately taken measures to avoid recurrence in the future’.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁰ (Inspectie Veiligheid en Justitie, 28-03-2013, Het overlijden van Alexander Dolmatov).

⁴²¹ (Kamerstukken II, 2012-2013 (12-04-2013), kenmerk: 361683; 1).

⁴²² (NRC, 15-04-2013; nr. 1).

⁴²³ (Kamerstukken II, 2012-2013 (17-04-2013), 19 637, nr. 1649; 7).

⁴²⁴ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), 77, nr. 6; 29).

⁴²⁵ (Kamerstukken II, 2012-2013 (17-04-2013), 19 637, nr. 1649; 29).

⁴²⁶ (Inspectie Veiligheid en Justitie, 28-03-2013; 8).

⁴²⁷ (Inspectie Veiligheid en Justitie, 28-03-2013; 8).

⁴²⁸ (Kamerstukken II, 2012-2013 (12-04-13), kenmerk: 361683; 1).

⁴²⁹ (Inspectie Veiligheid en Justitie, 28-03-2013; 8).

⁴³⁰ (Kamerstukken II 2012-2013, 12-04-13, kenmerk: 361683; 1).

His reaction consisted of seven pages of precise and mostly operational improvements, such as a new protocol regarding the time of the medical intake in the detention centre⁴³¹ and an new protocol sure the ‘checkbox’ of a suspensive effect has been switched on (which means that the asylum seeker is cleared from detention because of appeal on the deportation decision).⁴³² Secondly, Teeven not only acknowledged and followed the conclusions of the Inspection, he added a personal touch by emphasizing how ‘deeply affected’ he was by the death of the asylum seeker.⁴³³

By using these strategies, Teeven admitted that mistakes were made in the handling of Dolmatov by the authorities. However, he only addressed on which level the negligence occurred in the response to written questions by parliamentarians. He labeled the suicide of Dolmatov several times as an unfortunate incident, which happened due to mistakes made by low level servants (agency strategy). For example he called it ‘an incredible concurrence of circumstances’ and claims ‘where people work, errors are made’. Besides that, he added on the 17th of April that already before the suicide of Dolmatov, many measures were taken to improve the asylum policy chain. The focus on operational improvements supported Teevens’ agency strategy, as it implicated lower civil servants as the culprits of this incident.

| Type of strategy | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Date |
|------------------|---|---|---------------------------|
| Policy | Follow all recommendations and take immediate action | 1. ‘I will follow all recommendations of the inspection. Besides, I have immediately taken measures to avoid recurrence in the future.’ ⁴³⁴ ‘Observed errors must be restored and the quality of the immigration chain must be guaranteed’. ⁴³⁵ | 12-04-2013 and 18-04-2013 |
| Political | Tragic situation, deeply affected | 1. The death of mister Dolmatov affected me greatly ⁴³⁶ – 2. I am not just saying sorry because people expect me to, but I am sincerely affected by this case. ⁴³⁷ | 12-04-2013 and 17-04-2013 |
| Agency | Incident, implementation errors | 1. ‘An incredible concurrence of circumstances’, ‘where people work, errors are made’, ‘the IND invest constantly in the development, training and coaching of employees to guarantee that the use of the system is correct’ ⁴³⁸ | 17-04-2013 |
| Policy | Already before the incident multiple operational improvements | ‘Besides the announced measures, in the last years there were already multiple measures taken in the migration chain to enhance collaboration’. ⁴³⁹ | 17-04-2013 |

Table 7.4 Blame avoidance strategies in report period

The vast majority of reactions to these strategies took place in the media arena. For example, the Ombudsman, Mr. Brenninkmeijer, blamed Teeven for the Dolmatov-incident, by pointing to his six-month old report about ‘system omissions’. According to Brenninkmeijer, Teeven would not listen and was only interested in ‘how to be able to get away with these omissions in Parliament’.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³¹ (Kamerstukken II, 2012-2013 (12-04-13), kenmerk: 361683; 9).

⁴³² (Kamerstukken II, 2012-2013 (12-04-13), kenmerk: 361683; 5).

⁴³³ (Kamerstukken II, 2012-2013 (12-04-13), kenmerk: 361683; 2).

⁴³⁴ (Kamerstukken II 2012-2013 (12-04-13) kenmerk: 361683; 1).

⁴³⁵ (Kamerstukken II 2012-2013, (18-04-2013), 77-6; 28)

⁴³⁶ (Kamerstukken II, 2012-2013 (12-04-13), kenmerk: 361683; 2).

⁴³⁷ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), 77-6; 41).

⁴³⁸ (Kamerstukken II 2012-2013 (17-04-2013), 119 637, nr. 1649; p. 26-27)

⁴³⁹ (Kamerstukken II 2012-2013 (17-04-2013), 119 637, nr. 1649; p. 26-27)

⁴⁴⁰ (NRC, 15-04-2013; nr. 2).

However, this doubt on the sincerity of Teevens' emotions was not reflected by the political parties. Christian Democrat Van Toorenborg even claimed the opposite that 'Teeven sees Dolmatov as a victim' and that although 'Teeven carries out a bad policy, he is essentially a good man'.⁴⁴¹

Most criticism focused around Teevens' agency strategy of presenting Dolmatov as an isolated incident. Analyses by newspapers focused on the 'structural shortcomings for which the government has been regularly warned' (Trouw)⁴⁴², the 'unsafe system which detained Dolmatov' (NRC)⁴⁴³ and the Volkskrant quoting Van Thijn who assessed the death as 'a system failure, not just an incident'.⁴⁴⁴ However, only the two left, progressive parties SP and D66 criticized the entire system of asylum policy in the media arena.⁴⁴⁵ Only Teevens' own coalition party, VVD, openly supported the junior Ministers' agency strategy. VVD-faction leader Halbe Zijlstra compared Dolmatov favorably to the Schiphol fire (case 3). According to Zijlstra, the fire was more serious because it showed policy mistakes, while the suicide pointed towards execution errors.⁴⁴⁶ However, it is clear that Teevens' strategies at this time were openly criticized by newspapers, the Ombudsman and a couple of left wing, progressive political parties. Only one of the coalition parties, his own party, supported the agency and policy strategies of Teeven, while the Labor party stayed quiet. Therefore, we can conclude that at this time, the strategies of Teeven were not sufficient to pass the buck for this incident.

7.3.3 Accountability debate: assessing culpability and responsibility

In contrast to, for example, the first case of the Firework explosion, the accountability debate started without the Junior Minister accepting part of the blame for the incident. Instead, the Junior Minister attempt to deflect blame towards lower level echelons. This approach was clearly criticized in the media, but not rejected altogether. Therefore, the focus of the accountability debate would be both aimed assessing the scope of the incident and assessing Teevens' responsibility for this incident. Before the debate, columnist Sommer of the Volkskrant pointed to the instability of the coalition with regard to its small majority in parliament. He predicted that Teeven would probably stay on because the coalition parties needed to stick together.⁴⁴⁷ Interesting to see is that while VVD-leader Zijlstra shared beforehand he expected that Teeven could stay on, PvdA-leader Samson was only willing to share that 'Teeven was on top of it' (not clear what 'it' is).⁴⁴⁸

During first term of the debate, Teeven continued with his previous strategies, which focus on lower level negligence already repaired by new operational measures. This strategy is labeled by D66 as 'administrative laziness or indifference'.⁴⁴⁹ Teeven, also copied his VVD-colleague Zijlstra by comparing this incident positively to the Schiphol fire (case 3). In the Dolmatov case the 'crucial mistakes' happened at the implementation level and not the policy level.⁴⁵⁰ Teeven complemented this joint strategy by two political strategies, in which he linked the prior agency and policy strategy to his political survival.

⁴⁴¹ (AD, Jongejan & Wiegman, 18-04-2013; 6).

⁴⁴² (Trouw, 16-04-2013; 2).

⁴⁴³ (NRC, 15-04-2013; nr. 1).

⁴⁴⁴ (Volkskrant, Bakker, 18-04-2013; ?).

⁴⁴⁵ (Trouw, 13-04-2013;)

⁴⁴⁶ (AD, Wiegman, 17-04-2013; 1).

⁴⁴⁷ (Volkskrant, Sommer, 18-04-2013; 29).

⁴⁴⁸ (AD, Wiegman, 18-04-2013; 1). and (Volkskrant, Sommer, 18-04-2013; 29).

⁴⁴⁹ (H TK 2012-2013, (18-04-2013) 77-6; 37).

⁴⁵⁰ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013) 77-6; 55).

First, he argued that he is the best person to implement policy change and that he wants to ‘step up’, instead of stepping down and resign (comparable to De Vries in the Firework case). Second, Teeven argued that for the correct execution of these policy improvements, he needs full trust by Parliament.

| Type of strategy | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Date |
|------------------|---|---|------------|
| Agency | Dolmatov is incident | ‘To answer the question: this is an incident. This is no trend. This combination of mistakes and events is really an incident. This goes far beyond the normal errors of the department. ⁴⁵¹ Let’s be clear, the policy describes what employees have to do when someone arrives in the evening, this is described until the tiniest details. If this is not executed, that is really tragic, but not a structural mistake. ⁴⁵² | 18-04-2013 |
| Policy | Multiple measures are already taken | In the incident-Dolmatov, the implementation we not correct, but enormous improvement measures are taken. ⁴⁵³ About the medical program: from the first moment I was responsible for detention in the Netherlands (October 2010), improvements were made. ⁴⁵⁴ | 18-04-2013 |
| Political | ‘Step up, don’t step down: best person to implement change ⁴⁵⁵ | ‘It is up to Parliament to assess whether I get enough trust to implement the improvement measures. I think I can and I will be able to do that. ⁴⁵⁶ – I think I have to step up and not step down. I thought long and hard about it and that is the choice I made ⁴⁵⁷ | 18-04-2013 |
| Political | Needs full trust | ‘In relation to remarks of Miss Thieme that the junior Minister will get the benefit of the doubt of the coalition parties, let it be absolutely clear that I don’t want to be a junior minister who gets the benefit of the doubt. I heard from the Labor Party that this doubt does not exist. I also heard from the Liberals that this doubt does not exist. ⁴⁵⁸ | 18-04-2013 |

Table 7.5 Blame avoidance strategies in first term of accountability debate

The left wing opposition parties had most criticism on Teeven’s four strategies, with GL, SP, PvdD and D66 most as critical adversaries. The Socialist Party for example called Teeven ‘two-faced’ and accused him of ‘cleaning the administrative stairs from the bottom up’, because he blamed civil servants, while at the same time he wanted to stay on himself.⁴⁵⁹ The D66 called the new policy measures ‘placing a small bucket under a leaking roof’, a denial of structural problems.⁴⁶⁰ The assessment of D66 was shared by the more central Christian opposition parties of CU and CDA and even by the left coalition Labor party. The PvdA did not buy into the joined ‘incident and technical measures’ strategy of Teeven, but instead acknowledged that they preferred a milder asylum policy.

⁴⁵¹ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013)77-6; 34).

⁴⁵² (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013) 77-6; 41).

⁴⁵³ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013) 77-6; 30).

⁴⁵⁴ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013)77-6; 39).

⁴⁵⁵ in relation to: ‘verschil toerekenen en aanrekenen: <http://nos.nl/video/495890-teeven-fouten-zijn-mij-politiek-toe-te-rekenen.html>

⁴⁵⁶ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013) 77-6; 53).

⁴⁵⁷ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013) 77-6; 54).

⁴⁵⁸ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013) 77-6; 68).

⁴⁵⁹ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013) 77-6; 56).

⁴⁶⁰ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013) 77-3; 17).

Although PvdA ‘did not want to force the junior Minister’ towards a certain policy, its representative Mr. Recourt stated ‘we would like to have a risk analysis to see how this culture, which is focused on efficiency, on toughness, can be less vulnerable’.⁴⁶¹ Only the right wing parties, VVD, PVV and SGP supported the explanation of the Junior Minister. All three parties claimed that including the need for a more humane policy would stretch the border of the accountability debate too much.⁴⁶²

Teeven responded during of the second term of the debate by changing his strategy. First, he accepted that the incident could be the symptom of a larger system omission. However, he postponed the acceptance of responsibility for this failure by announcing a new enquiry by the Dutch Safety Board, which is more independent and broader of scope than the Inspection.⁴⁶³ Second, he broadened the scope of policy measures towards a ‘more humane policy’ regarding the detention of asylum seekers.⁴⁶⁴ Both strategies were fully in line with the demands of coalition partner PvdA at the beginning of the second term and some of the demands of the left and center opposition parties.

| Type of strategy | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Date |
|------------------|--|---|--------------------------|
| Political | New independent enquiry by Dutch Safety Board | Through the research of the Dutch Safety Board, we can check how it is possible that people slack...We have to do a thematic enquiry into that. ⁴⁶⁵ The Inspection has already stated that there were also structural components. Those are exactly the components for the investigation of the Safety Board. ⁴⁶⁶ | 18-04-2013 (second term) |
| Policy | More focus on ‘humane dimension’ alien detention | Look at the ‘humane dimension’ alien detention. ⁴⁶⁷ ‘We will reassess the policy towards administrative law (instead of criminal law) and will come with a couple of alternatives for alien detention.’ ⁴⁶⁸ | 18-04-2013 (second term) |

Table 7.6 Blame avoidance strategies during second term of accountability debate

The PvdA clearly accepted the strategy change, by pointing in the third term towards the commitments of the Junior Minister towards ‘improvements’, ‘investigation’ and ‘change’, which the Junior Minister would implement under supervision of Parliament.⁴⁶⁹ The left and center opposition parties were more divided. Three left parties (SP, GL and PvdD) considered the commitments of the Junior Minister as insufficient and filed a vote of no-confidence.⁴⁷⁰ The three other left and center opposition parties (D66, CU and CDA) did accept the strategy change of the Teeven.

However, in the end all three argued that they did not accept the political strategies of the junior Minister. CU and CDA argued that the incident was so important that stepping up by Teeven would be a good sign towards society and the civil servants.⁴⁷¹ D66, and again CDA, argued that Teeven did not want to stay on with the benefit of the doubt, but that both parties could not give Teeven full trust.⁴⁷² Therefore, six parties voted in favor of the no-confidence vote, so 34% of Parliament.

⁴⁶¹ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), 77-6; 57).

⁴⁶² (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), 77-3; 14 and 10).

⁴⁶³ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), 77-6; 70).

⁴⁶⁴ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), 77-6; 63).

⁴⁶⁵ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), 77-6; 63 and 66).

⁴⁶⁶ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), 77-6; 70).

⁴⁶⁷ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), 77-6; 63).

⁴⁶⁸ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), 77-6; 62).

⁴⁶⁹ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), 77-6; 71).

⁴⁷⁰ (Motie Thieme, 19 637, nr. 1652. In H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), 77-6).

⁴⁷¹ (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), 77-6; 72-72).

⁴⁷² (H TK 2012-2013 (18-04-2013), 77-6; 71, 73).

We can conclude that Teeven's policy strategy change allowed him to stay in office. His change of blame management strategies was successful, because it provided the coalition partner, PvdA with a policy window towards a more humane policy. At the same time Teeven's gestures were not enough for the left wing and central opposition parties. The political strategy of asking for full support even backfired for the CDA and D66. In the end, it could be that Teeven did only postpone the attribution of responsibility by Parliament. When the conclusions of the new independent investigation are harsh, this could instigate a whole an even more serious accountability debate on 'humaneness' of Dutch asylum policy.⁴⁷³

7.3.4 Aftermath of the debate: 'a more humane policy'

After the accountability debate two 'policy offshoots' occurred: first Teeven's used his discretionary space to give a residence permit to a 'thirst striker', in contrast to normal practice. Second, on the 19th of June Teeven announced in the Volkskrant a new detention policy for rejected asylum seekers. Only criminal and aggressive asylum seekers would be detained in the future, while other asylum seekers would reside in an open detention facility or would have to report regularly.⁴⁷⁴

| Type of strategy | Strategy | Quote in parliamentary documents | Newspaper quote | Date |
|------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Policy | Use of discretionary space: asylum for 'thirst striker' | | 'While Teeven was under attack by Parliament for Dolmatov, he gave on own authority a residence permit for a 'thirst striking' asylum seeker... This residence permit goes against the policy of not giving in to thirst striking asylum seekers. ⁴⁷⁵ | 29-04-2013 |
| Policy | Reappraisal of policy due to Dolmatov: not new, already said on 18-04 | 'As a result of the Dolmatovdebate you reorient yourself. ⁴⁷⁶ .. I am a little surprised that Mr. Schouw sees my announcement in the newspaper as something new. It will be undoubtedly new, but it is something we exchanged on the 18 th of April. ⁴⁷⁷⁴⁷⁸ | Only criminal and aggressive asylum seekers will end up in jail in the future. Other asylum seekers will reside in an open detention or have to report regularly. ⁴⁷⁹ According to Teeven this change did not happen because of PvdA, but he himself derived new insights ⁴⁸⁰ | 22-05-2013 (debate) and 19-06-2013 (announcing of precise change) |

Table 7.7 Blame avoidance strategies in new investigation period

Teeven argued that these two policy strategies were totally in line with what was committed to during the accountability debate. Therefore refused acknowledge the last strategy as a strategic change. The left opposition parties and PvdA reacted positively towards these strategies, because according to newspaper Trouw it showed that Teeven's 'promises were not empty'.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷³ for the future: research still ongoing.

⁴⁷⁴ (Volkskrant, 19-06-2013; 1).

⁴⁷⁵ (Volkskrant, 29-04-2013; 10).

⁴⁷⁶ (Kamerstukken II, 2012-2013 (22-05-2013), 19637, nr. 85; 5)

⁴⁷⁷ (Kamerstukken II 2012-2013 (19-06-2013), 19 637, Nr. 1705; 2).

⁴⁷⁸ (Kamerstukken II 2012-2013 (19-06-2013) 19 637, Nr. 1705; 4).

⁴⁷⁹ (Volkskrant, 19-06-2013; 1).

⁴⁸⁰ (Trouw, 20-06-2013; 3).

⁴⁸¹ (Trouw, 20-06-2013; 3).

7.4 Conclusion: Why did Minister Teeven survive this incident?

In the case of the suicide of asylum seeker Dolmatov and junior Minister Teeven, four conclusions can be made. First, all structural conditions in this case were quite favorable, except for the matter of policy controversy and ideological divide in the coalition over asylum policy. The latter conditions caused the politicization of the suicide. Second, we can conclude that, like in the other cases, the agency strategy of Teeven was not a successful one. Teeven did not succeed in confining Dolmatov's suicide on the level of an incident. He tried to keep Dolmatov an incident, by attributing the blame for the incident to lower level civil servants. Third, he had to temporarily save himself, by acknowledging that the responsibility for this incident could lie in the broader asylum policy. This worked, because it was in line with the policy window supported by coalition partner PvdA. Teeven proposed two new forthcoming strategies: an independent investigation into the 'broader asylum policy' and a 'more humane asylum policy'. We can conclude that this change 'saved' Teeven, but it made him also more vulnerable for asylum incidents in the future. Therefore the Volkskrant reported Teeven has gotten a 'considerable dent in his reputation as a junior Minister'.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸² (Volkskrant, 19-04-2013; 3)

8. Case comparison: first answers

A systematic comparison of the four cases will give us a first insight in the relation between political incidents, blame avoidance and ministerial resignation. In this chapter the following questions are addressed: How did structural conditions and blame avoidance strategies relate to the outcome of resignation or survival? And: what additional differences between the cases would potentially explain diverging outcomes? This chapter compares the cases on three structural factors: individual background of the Ministers, characteristics of the incident and political landscape. Then, the chapter focuses on the effect of Ministers' timing and sequence of the blame avoidance strategies. The final part assesses the effect of both strategies and conditions on resignation during political incidents.

case 1: *Enschede firework explosion (Pronk, De Vries and De Grave): no resignation*

case 2: *Deal over construction fraud Schiphol tunnel (Korthals): resignation*

case 3: *Schiphol detention fire (Donner, Dekker, Verdonk): resignation (Donner, Dekker)*

case 4: *Dolmatov suicide (junior Minister Teeven): no resignation*

8.1 Individual background of the Ministers

In line with the conclusions from Bovens and others (2010), age and gender do not seem to play a role in the four cases. Besides, all (junior) Ministers in the cases came from a party which was necessary for a coalition majority, so the effect of this factor could not be assessed properly. For the factors of political experience and reputation (no-confidence votes), the cases paint a more diverse picture. In the cases of the Enschede explosion (case one), the construction fraud (case two) and the suicide of Dolmatov (case four), all Ministers had between six and sixteen years of experience as Parliamentarian and/or Minister. In the resignation case of the Schiphol detention fire (case three), none of the three Ministers had any former experience in Parliament, or only short experience as Minister (Donner, eight months Justice Minister). However, resigning Minister Donner had a reputation as a capable Minister, while inexperienced Minister Verdonk even survived the Schiphol fire incident. Besides, the other resignation, in case two, involved the most experienced of all researched Ministers. Korthals had sixteen years of experience as Parliamentarian and four years as Justice Minister and still had to resign because of the Schiphol construction fraud deal.

An assessment of the role of Ministers' reputation (in terms of prior censure votes) shows the same variance in relation to resignation. In case one, none of the Ministers received an earlier censure vote and all survived. In case two and three, Korthals and Donner received respectively two and three no-confidence votes and had to resign because of the later incident. However, in case three, the Minister who got no no-confidence votes had to resign (Dekker), while Verdonk received three censure votes (each supported by more than 40% of Parliament) and yet stayed on after the incident.

Portfolio seems to play a more important role as an individual background characteristic than experience or reputation. The Ministers who were most under pressure in all of the four cases were Justice Ministers (Korthals, Donner, Teeven) or had Justice-related related tasks (Verdonk = immigration policy). All four of these (junior) Ministers had previous votes of censure or no-confidence against them. This shows that the Justice Ministry is a contested area, which is more prone to incidents and resignation than others.

This is in line with the conclusions of Bovens and others (2010; 326). It is interesting that both Ministers in the Justice area who survived, had either no portfolio (Verdonk) or were junior Minister (Teeven). This finding supports the findings of Visser that these types of Ministers, who do not have full responsibility over the whole department of civil servants, have more chances for survival (Visser, 2008; 111). This assessment shows that the individual background of Ministers is clearly not the defining factor in the hazard of resignation. One must look at other structural conditions and/or behavioral mechanisms.

8.2 Characteristics of the blame game

Media saliency and comparable incidents play a minor role in the ministers’ hazards for resignation. Or rather, the manner in which these two factors are measured is not sufficient to establish their importance. In all four cases, the number of newspaper articles which linked the Minister to the incident was around 50 articles per Minister. Moreover, the saliency of the incident in the newspapers over time did not really show specific patterns in each of the cases. However, this research did not assess the tone of the articles under investigation, or the full newspaper attention about the incident itself in relation to the attention which made a link to the Minister. It is therefore not really possible to conclude anything on the effect of media saliency for the researched cases, apart from the conclusion that media saliency did not differ significantly between the cases. We will discuss this shortcoming further in the next chapter.

In all cases, actors used comparable incidents in their blame game arguments. The following table shows the cases and incidents which were used as comparison.

| Cases | Incidents used as comparison in blame game |
|--|--|
| <i>1: Firework explosion in Enschede</i> | Firework explosion in Culemborg in 1991 |
| <i>2: Construction fraud Schiphol tunnel</i> | Larger construction fraud, uncovered by Ad Bos (same time frame) |
| <i>3: Fire in detention center Schiphol</i> | Firework explosion in Enschede (case 1) |
| <i>4: Suicide asylum seeker Dolmatov</i> | Fire in detention center Schiphol (case 3) |

Table 8.1 Cases and the incidents which were used as comparison in the blame games

In the first three cases, opponents used the comparable incidents as an argumentative tool to put more blame on the Minister. For example in case three, the Dutch Safety Board compared the actions of government actors in the Schiphol fire negatively to government actions in the Enschede explosion. The Dutch Safety Board used the Enschede explosion to blame Minister Donner and Dekker more harshly for their role in the fire. In all three cases, the Ministers were not able to refute this connection between the incident and the comparable incidents. However, in the case of the Enschede explosion (1), the emergence of the Culemborg explosion as a comparable in the blame game coincided with Minister de Vries and Pronk moving to more responsibility admmissive strategies and starting their ‘change’ strategies. In this way, both Ministers acknowledged that the firework explosion could have been a symptom of a larger mistakes. This shows that the use of comparable incidents by opponents does not have to attract more blame, if met with effective blame management strategies. Besides, in case four, junior Minister Teeven himself used the Schiphol fire to show that his case was less severe and that he should be less blamed.

Comparable incidents cannot be regarded as structural conditions. Rather, the influence of comparable incidents depends on whether they are used effectively by opponents to show that the temporary political incident is the symptom of failing policy (and a failing Minister). Therefore, both characteristics of the political incidents do not work as structural conditions, but are part of the blame game itself and need to be investigated as such in future research.

8.3 Political landscape

A comparison of the resignation cases and the non-resignation cases indicates the importance for the Minister to be backed by a majority coalition, a majority which is also not close to elections. During the Enschede explosion incident and the Dolmatov suicide incident, the Ministers were backed by a majority coalition, which during the first incident even consisted of an oversized majority. However, during the Schiphol tunnel construction fraud incident and the Schiphol fire, there was major instability and both coalitions fell and went into caretaker status before the publication of the investigation reports. Minister Korthals, in case two, even experienced a whole process of coalition breakdown (Kok II), new parliamentary elections, a new portfolio (Defense) and again a coalition breakdown (Balkenende I). In both resignation cases, the investigation reports were published one month before new parliamentary elections.

The connection between these political conditions and resignation could be that closeness to parliamentary elections increases the blame avoidance pressure for the Prime Minister and the Ministers' own political party. When in caretaker status⁴⁸³, both the Prime Minister and the coalition parties lose their incentive to support the blame avoidance strategies of the Minister (Bovens et al, 2010). Instead they will have an incentive to use the Minister as a scapegoat in the election struggle to deflect blame for the incident away from themselves or the party. Two events in both resignation cases support this assessment. First, in both cases, the Ministers resigned before a highly visible accountability debate could take place. Second, in both cases the Prime Minister was an active actor in the last period of the blame game. In the construction fraud case, 'sources' around Prime Minister Balkenende announced beforehand that Korthals would resign if the Parliamentary inquiry commission would conclude that Korthals misinformed Parliament. In the Schiphol fire case (3), Minister Donner and Dekker were summoned to a meeting with the Prime Minister and the coalition parties before they announced their resignation.

Ideological diversity between the coalition parties did not seem to play an important role in the outcome of resignation. In both cases of ministerial survival, a quite diverse coalition of Conservative Liberals (VVD) and Social Democrats (PvdA) was in place (in case 1 also D66). However, the matter of ideological diversity seems to have played a role in policy controversial cases. The assessment of individual background factors showed that justice, especially immigration issues, is a controversial policy area. The suicide of a wrongfully detained asylum seeker was a rather small event compared to 22 deaths in a firework explosion, 180 million fraud and eleven deaths in a fire of a detention center. However, the controversy regarding immigration policy made it possible that the suicide became a political incident. Due to the ideological divide of the coalition parties VVD and PvdA over the issue of immigration, PvdA as a coalition party had an incentive to politicize the suicide. Ideological divide and policy controversy cannot really explain the difference in outcome in these cases, but can explain why Dolmatov's suicide escalated as a political incident.

⁴⁸³ A footnote in the theoretical chapter already explained that in this research, 'caretaker cabinet' is the English translation which is chosen for the Dutch word 'demissionair'

Therefore, we can conclude that several conditions in the political landscape did play an important role in the occurrence of a political incident and the outcome in the four cases.

8.4 Blame avoidance strategies in general: a short recap

The theoretical chapter established the need to assess the sequence of each blame game and look at whether Ministers used defensive (problem and responsibility denial) or accommodative (responsibility admmissive) strategies and whether they used political, agency or policy strategies.

In case one, the Enschede explosion, the Ministers tried to diminish both the severity of the incident (harm compensated) and postponed responsibility decision by appointing an inquiry commission. Goal was to deflect blame in the first instance of the incident. After that, De Vries and Pronk used agency strategies against the municipality of Enschede and lower civil servants to deny responsibility for the incident. Just before the inquiry reports were published, both Ministers changed strategy and acknowledged responsibility for the incident by announcing extensive policy reform. After the publication of the inquiry report, they continued these strategies. At this time, De Grave emerged in the blame game. Contrary to his colleagues, De Grave still denied responsibility for the incident, by blaming lower civil servants and predecessors in agency strategies and by announcing a culture change among civil servants (policy strategy). This led to more blame attributed to De Grave compared to De Vries and Pronk for the firework explosion in Enschede. This is visible in the fact that De Vries received no censure vote and Pronk received a censure vote only supported by the Socialist Party, while De Grave received a censure vote which was backed by the whole opposition.

In the deal in the Schiphol tunnel construction fraud, case two, Korthals started with denying the severity of the incident. He argued that the deal involved a bigger sum than the government would have received in court (political strategy). At the same time, he denied responsibility for the deal, by using the agency strategy that his civil servants (the PPS) did not inform him about the deal. Despite severe criticism, Korthals proceeded with political strategies revolving about problem denial (Ad Bos and Schiphol different cases) and agency strategies in which he denied responsibility. When Korthals later announced some smaller, administrative policy changes, all these changes were due to pressure of Parliament. In contrast to the first case, Korthals did not initiate the independent inquiry. Instead Korthals tried to stop the parliamentary inquiry, by arguing that the inquiry could interfere with the criminal investigation. During public hearings, Korthals had to acknowledge that he did possibly know about the deal beforehand. This responsibility admission was however accompanied by the argument that he forgot that he was informed about the deal. After the report, he resigned while still maintaining that the accusations of him intently misinforming Parliament were too strong.

In the third case regarding the Schiphol detention fire, Ministers Donner and Verdonk did not deny the severity of the incident, but tried to show engagement and affection in their political strategies (visits, memorial service, etc.). They did deny the overall problems in the aftercare for survivors. At the same time, they denied responsibility for the fire and problems in the aftercare, by steering attention towards civil servants and immigration doctors in agency strategies. These agency strategies were supplemented by policy strategies in which new administrative fire safety protocols were announced and small changes in aftercare were made. Minister Donner did at this point also deny the problem in the fire safety of the Schiphol detention center, by forcing the municipality to keep the center open.

Similar to case two, the Ministers had not instigated the independent investigation, although the Ministers constantly announced they were fully cooperating in the investigation. Minister Dekker did only appear in the limelight after the publication of the investigation report by the Safety Board. Both Dekker and Donner announced they would resign, while still maintaining that the report was too harsh (political strategy) and most mistakes were made by predecessors (agency strategy). After their resignation, Minister Verdonk deflected all responsibility for the fire and problems in the aftercare towards Minister Donner.

In case four, Junior Minister Teeven did not deny the severity of the political incident surrounding the suicide of the asylum seeker Dolmatov. He did, similar to the Ministers after the Enschede explosion, postpone the responsibility debate by ordering an investigation by the Inspection Safety and Justice (political). After the publication of the investigation report, junior Minister Teeven denied responsibility for the incident, by focusing on mistakes of lower civil servants in an agency strategy. Similar to the Schiphol fire, Teeven supported the agency strategy by introducing policy strategies which focused on operational improvements. Teeven proceeded with these strategies and added political strategies which asked of full trust and focused on 'stepping up, instead of stepping down' in the accountability debate. Teeven changed strategies, only when the coalition party PvdA showed disapproval for these strategies. In the second part of the debate, Teeven acknowledged responsibility for the incident, by announcing broader policy reform. However, at the same time, Teeven postponed a political decision about his responsibility by asking the Safety Board for a new investigation into problems with asylum policy. This report by the Dutch Safety Board is still not published, so it could be that Teeven will have to resign for the incident in the future.

These short recaps of the political incidents gives us two leads with regard to the relation between blame avoidance strategies and subsequent resignation or survival: both timing and type of strategy are important.

8.5 Timing and sequence of strategies

The recap of the four blame games shows that the sequences described by Brändström and Kuipers (2003; 302) do not fit every blame game neatly. For example, the Ministers immediately acknowledged the severity of the incident in their strategies in the Schiphol fire incident and the suicide of Dolmatov. However, Minister Donner and Verdonk denied the existence of problems in 'aftercare' for survivors in the fire. Minister Donner even reversed strategy, by denying problems with fire safety later in the incident, when he forced the municipality to keep the detention center open. In the case of the firework explosion, Ministers only briefly focused on the political problem denial strategy of 'harm compensated'. The fast acknowledgement of the severity of the incident in case one, three and four could be explained by the case selection choices. All cases were selected on the basis of a resignation call, which means that in all cases media already reported a problem for which Ministers should possibly resign.

Ministers used multiple strategies together in all cases. For example, Minister Korthals adhered in the first two months of the construction fraud incident to both problem denial and responsibility denial and used many political, agency and grudgingly policy strategies to underscore both blame denials. However, we already concluded that the number of strategies does not seem to make a difference for resignation. What seems to be most important for all cases is timing. In all cases, Ministers started with denying responsibility for the incident.

In all cases, responsibility denial was supported by blaming of civil servants, predecessors or municipalities and supported by policy strategies which pointed at wrong operational protocols or 'hands are tied by policy' arguments. The Ministers only acknowledged responsibility for the incident in both cases of ministerial survival. In the case of the Enschede explosion, Minister Pronk and De Vries started acknowledging responsibility for the incident even before Oosting's investigation report was published. Teeven was a bit slower in this change to accommodative strategies and had to be 'pushed' by coalition partner PvdA, but he still made the change. Other Ministers did not make this change to accommodative strategies. In the Enschede firework explosion, Minister De Grave did still deny responsibility for the incident.

It seems that exactly his late timing, denying responsibility while the others already acknowledged it, which caused him to bear the brunt of the blame for the incident in an opposition censure vote. Also, in both resignation cases the lack of responsibility admission is striking. In the construction fraud and the Schiphol detention fire, even the reasons the Ministers gave for resignation were spiked with responsibility denial strategies. Korthals, Donner and Dekker all criticized the conclusions of the independent investigations and blamed predecessors and other actors.

The latter phase of the incident is the point where Ministers' strategies can be overruled by a changing political landscape. In the non-resignation cases, Ministers could change to more accommodative strategies and could pair the acknowledgement of responsibility with sweeping policy reform during publication of the independent investigation or during the accountability debate. However, in both resignation cases, the Ministers did not have this option. At the time of the publication of the reports, the Ministers were already in a caretaker position and could no longer promise any sweeping reforms to prevent such incidents from ever happening again. Korthals even changed Ministry, from Justice to Defense. Therefore, when former responsibility denial strategies (whether agency or policy related) were rendered void by investigation reports, the Ministers had no strategies left and resignation was almost imminent.

We can conclude that the sequences in a blame game (problem denial, responsibility denial and responsibility admission) do not follow each other in a neat linear fashion. However, the use of these sequences does show that pro-active timing in blame games seems to help ministerial survival. The next question is whether the reason Ministers give for this blame denial or admission (political, agency or policy) also have an effect on ministerial survival?

8.6 Political strategies: use and efficacy

The recaps show that all Ministers used political strategies and that these were used in almost every stage of the blame games. In the beginning of the blame games, Ministers used political strategies which denied blame, such as 'harm will be compensated' (case one), or strategies that showed their involvement, such as pointing at 'memorial services' (case three). Besides, in the cases of the Enschede fire explosion and the Dolmatov suicide, the Ministers established inquiry commissions to investigate incident. In line with findings from Brändström and Kuipers (2003; 294) these inquiries also helped to postpone blame for the incident. Even in the cases where the Ministers did not establish the inquiries themselves, Ministers referred to these investigative inquiries to urge Parliament to wait with their judgment. At the end of the blame game, most Ministers used political strategies to frame themselves in a better light. Strategies included phrases like 'fully committed' (case one), 'needs full trust' and 'stepping up not stepping down' (cases one and four).

In the resignation cases, the Ministers mostly used political strategies to attack the conclusions of the investigations.

Political strategies were almost always accompanied by agency or policy strategies, so it is hard to assess their individual effect. However, political strategies pointing at problem denial did not seem to work in their aim to downplay the severity framing of the incident. Another political strategy that backfired is the 'need full trust' strategy by Teeven in case four. This strategy is even used by opposition parties CDA and D66 as a reason for their support of a no-confidence vote. However, the strategy which does seem to help is the establishment of an independent inquiry. In both cases of ministerial survival, the investigation was set up by the Ministers themselves. This is contrary to the resignation cases, in which the investigations were set up by either Parliament (case two) or the Dutch Safety Board (case three). Initiation of an investigation could show Parliament and other actors that Ministers do want to get 'to the bottom of things'. Besides, in cases where Ministers set up the investigation themselves, the investigative actor was an administrative actor (Inspection: case four) or expert based investigation (Oosting: case one). In line with earlier research, we concluded that the Minister can in this way control the investigation better and ward off more politically oriented investigations (such as a parliamentary inquiry).

One can conclude that political strategies were mostly used to 'glue' the Ministers' strategies together throughout the whole blame game. Some political strategies clearly backfired, while the establishment of an inquiry commission was successful in warding off blame for a while.

8.7 Agency strategies: use and efficacy

Agency strategies were used in all cases immediately after political strategies in the opening of the blame game. In these agency strategies, Ministers tried to deflect blame towards a variety of actors: municipalities, civil servants, preceding Ministers and colleague Ministers. In the Enschede explosion and the Schiphol detention fire, De Vries and Donner blamed the involved municipality for the mistakes made in the incident. In all cases, one of the involved Ministers did at one point blame lower civil servants for causing the incident by mistake (except De Vries and Dekker) or for not informing the Minister on time (De Grave and Korthals). In the Enschede explosion and the Schiphol detention fire, De Grave, and Donner and Dekker blamed preceding Ministers for causing the incident with their actions. Finally, both Korthals and Verdonk blamed colleague Ministers for being responsible for the incident.

Interestingly, in only one case we can say that the agency strategy was successful in warding off blame from the Minister. Only Verdonk was successful in deflecting blame towards her colleague Minister Donner. However, she could do this, because Minister Donner already resigned as a consequence of the blame game about the Schiphol detention fire. The other agency strategies were not successful, because the agent deflected blame back to the Minister in the media (case one)⁴⁸⁴, the strategy was later proved to be wrong (case two), the strategy did not really lead to any reactions in Parliament (case three), or it went against the preferences of the other coalition party (case four). With regard to the agency strategies of De Grave, we already concluded that they came too late in the blame game and were so unsuccessful that they caused more blame than before.

⁴⁸⁴ This does not say that the municipalities were able to steer clear of blame. Contrary, both in the Enschede explosion and the Schiphol detention fire, prominent municipal actors were forced to resign. Two Enschede city councilors resigned because of the conclusion about the firework explosion, while in the Schiphol fire, the mayor of Haarlemmermeer resigned on the same day as Donner and Dekker.

Although the Dutch doctrine of ministerial responsibility leaves room for passing the buck by blaming lower civil servants, in these cases agency strategies were not very successful for decreasing blame. Only when for example a colleague Minister (Donner) already resigned and thereby accepted blame, was an agency strategy successful in warding off blame for the Minister (Verdonk).

8.8 Policy strategies: use and efficacy

According to the theoretical chapter, policy strategies by Ministers can be grouped in two types: the minor operational improvements and the broader policy reforms. The minor operational improvements often accompany agency strategies. They seem to serve the same purpose: steering the focus away from the Minister towards lower service employees and correct operational procedures. Multiple of those lower level policy strategies were visible in the cases of the construction fraud, the Schiphol fire, and Dolmatov's suicide. Examples are: stricter procedures for the Public Prosecutor Service in making deals (case two), new fire safety instructions for prison staff (case three), and multiple procedural improvements regarding 'checkboxes' in the asylum procedure (case four). In the resignation cases, Ministers proposed these operational improvements only after a couple of parliamentary debates and more than half a year before the publication of the investigation.

Only in the non-resignation cases did Ministers opt for broader policy reform. Part 8.5 showed the possible blame reducing effect of these reform strategies, particularly the new Firework Decree (case one) and the 'more humane asylum policy' (case four). These policy reform strategies seemed to reduce blame in the sense that Ministers could later show that they understood the severity of the incident and were making sweeping reforms to prevent them in the future (case one). Or, in the case of Teeven and Dolmatov, they worked in the end, because the policy change coincided with the policy change desired by coalition party PvdA.

However, in the assessment of policy strategies, two conceptual difficulties arise. First, it was often difficult to distinguish between agency strategies and operational improvement strategies. They were often used as twin-strategies, making it hard to discern their conceptual difference. Second, it is sometimes difficult to make the distinction between operational improvements and broader policy reform. In line with findings from previous research (Boin et al, 2008; 2009), the border between both strategies is a fuzzy one. However, in this research, the focus was on framing of the strategies, not the actual implementation of new policies. In the cases of broader policy reform, Ministers announced the reform as a 'clean sweep', or as a 'new, more humane policy'. In future research, it would be interesting to edge out some clear boundaries between these two types of policy strategies.

Therefore, the more accommodative strategies of announcing policy reform seem to work better for Ministers and holding on to defensive agency or operational policy strategies. However, a more refined conceptual elaboration is needed draw the border between policy and agency strategies, and between operational and reform policy strategies.

8.9 Relation strategies and structural conditions

The case comparison supports the main hypothesis of this research: both structural conditions and Ministers' blame avoidance strategies have an effect on ministerial resignation in political incidents in the cases studied here.

Ministers with Justice, or Justice-related portfolio's in an outgoing cabinet which has to deal with subsequent oncoming parliamentary elections, face serious constraints in their blame avoidance attempts. In an unstable, caretaker coalition at the brink of parliamentary elections, the blame avoidance incentives of the Prime Minister and the coalition parties seem to seal the fate of individual Ministers. Minister who found themselves in these situations at the end of a blame game, ended up as 'scapegoats' in the political incidents to deflect blame for the Prime Minister and coalition parties.

However, the timing and sequence of Ministers' blame avoidance strategies does play a role in ministerial survival as well. Although the blame games do not develop in a neat linear fashion of problem denial, responsibility denial and responsibility admission, it is interesting to see that the Ministers who acknowledged responsibility in a pro-active and timely fashion, were able to survive the political incident. These Ministers were able to pair acknowledgement of blame and apologies to the promise of policy reform and 'change'. On the other hand, responsibility denial in the form of agency strategies did only work to deflect blame in one instance. Therefore, Minister have to both consider the political context they find themselves in and have to be careful in their rhetorical strategies, when they find themselves in a political incident and a protracted blame struggle. Ministers would better acknowledge their responsibilities for the incident and pair their remorse with a promise of 'Change!', instead of holding on to denial until changes in the political landscape make it impossible to switch between strategies.

These conclusions are now confined to the four cases. The next chapter will address the generalizability of these conclusions towards other blame games and other cases of ministerial resignation and survival.

9. Conclusions and implications

When government policies turn sour, people get hurt, costs escalate, and programs conspicuously fail to deliver, questions of blame and accountability become crucial in both the mass media and the formal political arena. Political incidents trigger calls for resignation of responsible Ministers. This research examined how Ministers respond to such resignation pressures. It addressed the question why only some Ministers are able to successfully whither these political blame games. Studies on political incidents and ministerial resignation so far either tried to explain resignation from structural conditions or as the effect of different framing strategies in blame games. This led to a clear gap in literature on the understanding of ministerial resignation. This comparative case study analyzed both the effects of three structural conditions and Ministers' blame avoidance strategies on ministerial resignation, in four political incidents, between 2000-2013. The key question of this research was: *To what extent and under what conditions do blame avoidance strategies used by Dutch (junior) Ministers in response to political incidents between 2000 and 2013 have an effect on ministerial resignation and survival?*

9.1 Concluding: why do only some Ministers survive political incidents?

Ministers' blame avoidance strategies have an effect on ministerial survival and resignation in political incidents. However, the possible use and efficacy of those strategies is constrained by structural conditions in the Ministers' background and political landscape, namely portfolio, a stable majority coalition and proximity to parliamentary elections.

Justice Ministers, or Ministers who have asylum policy in their portfolio, find themselves in a policy area which is more prone to incidents and resignations than the other portfolios. Controversial policies, like immigration policy, give opponents an incentive to politicize the incident. When policy controversy is paired with an ideologically diverse coalition, a relatively minor incident can be politicized, such as the suicide of a rejected asylum seeker. This politicization can escalate to such an extent that the Minister can no longer use agency strategies to portray the suicide as an incident for which lower level servants can be blamed.

The lack of a stable majority coalition that is far from upcoming elections is another constraining structural condition. In an unstable, caretaker coalition at the brink of parliamentary elections, the blame avoidance incentives of the Prime Minister and the coalition parties seem to take precedence over the survival of individual Ministers. Ministers who found themselves in this situation at the end of a blame game, could no longer switch their blame avoidance strategies and ended up as 'scapegoats' in the political incidents to deflect blame for the incident away from the Prime Minister and coalition parties. This is in line with the case study of Bovens and others (1999), who analyzed the 'policy fiasco' surrounding the performance of interregional police investigation teams in 1994. Bovens and other (1999; 146) concluded that the Ministers who were forced to resign in this case, Van Thijn and Hirsch Ballinn, partly had to resign because they 'had the ill luck of being in office at the end of the political cycle'. However, in order to clearly explain ministerial resignation, structural conditions must be paired with an assessment of the Ministers' blame avoidance strategies.

When Ministers still find themselves in stable majority coalitions, timing and sequence of Ministers' blame avoidance strategies can help to deflect blame for the political incident. Although the blame games did not develop in a neat linear sequence of problem denial, responsibility denial and responsibility admission (Brändström & Kuipers, 2003; 302), these layers are very useful to discern levels in the blame avoidance strategies. This analysis showed that political strategies could use all three layers and therefore were mostly used as some kind of 'cement' to glue the Ministers strategies together throughout the whole blame game. However, some political strategies clearly backfired, like strategies that denied the severity of the incident or that asked Parliament's full trust. The establishment of an inquiry commission was successful in postponing responsibility decisions of Parliament and therefore Ministers warded off blame for a while. Further, it is interesting to see that the Ministers were able to survive the political incident if they acknowledged responsibility from early on, in a pro-active way. Ministers who acknowledged responsibility just before or after the investigation report or during the accountability debate were able to pair acknowledgement of blame and apologies to the promise of policy reform and 'change'. On the other hand, responsibility denial in the form of agency strategies did only work to deflect blame in one instance, when the Minister (Verdonk) could deflect blame to an already resigned Minister (Donner).

Therefore, Ministers who find themselves in a protracted blame struggle have to consider both the political context and be aware of the timing of their framing strategies in the game. Ministers could in some instances help themselves better by acknowledging their responsibilities for the incident and pairing their remorse with policy reform, instead of holding on to denial until changes in the political landscape render a switch of strategies impossible.

Concluding, research into ministerial resignation needs to include both an assessment of structural conditions and of blame games around political incidents. So far, both literature strands did hint to this lack of combining both factors, but neither one did really incorporate the other strand in a structured fashion.

9.2 Limitations and possibilities for generalization

We have to be careful to generalize the research conclusions to the general relation between political incidents, blame avoidance strategies and ministerial resignations. The first limitation of this study is that all cases fall within the time period after 2000. Bovens and others (2010; 333) concluded that the cabinets after 2000 are 'trendsetters' in forced resignations of Ministers, while these forced resignations happened less often before 2000. It could be that blame games after 2000 have a very different political, more unstable dynamic than in earlier periods. Therefore, it is hard to generalize the conclusions to the general Dutch context, or translating the conclusions to other countries.

Second, process tracing is very suitable for enhancing the internal validity of a research (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; 79; Gerring, 2007). However, its findings are hard to generalize, due to the contextual nature of the case study approach. The third limitation of this research is that it focused on a content analysis of public sources. The conclusion of this research is that the blame avoidance incentives of the Prime Minister and coalition parties could be important in relation to the individual survival of a Minister. However, a thorough assessment of the intentions, incentives and motivations of the actors is not possible as this would take place 'behind the scenes'. Future research needs to include interviews with people with access 'behind the scenes', such as civil servants, personal staff of the Minister and the protagonists themselves.

This research employed the approach of ‘configurational generalization’ by Blatter and Haverland (2012; 120) and thus tried to derive conclusions on which set of causal conditions made specific outcomes in resignation and survival possible instead of looking for ‘general laws’. A structured comparison strategy to account for variation on the critical conditions in order to enable causal inference and systematic theory-building, in line with Ragin (1987) and George and Bennett (2005) affords such ‘configurational generalization’. The puzzle of this research was how structural conditions and blame avoidance strategies interacted and which configuration of factors led to the outcome of ministerial resignation or survival. The grey area of the relation between structural conditions and blame avoidance strategies required a qualitative case study as opposed to a large scale quantitative study. This research showed that future research needs to both assess the Minister’s background (portfolio), the political landscape and the strategic framing of the Minister in order to provide an authoritative answer as to why the Minister survived or was forced to resign. Besides, this research unearthed some puzzles for further research, which will be addressed in the next part.

9.3 Further research questions

This research would be a good qualitative start for a more systematic, longitudinal and international comparison of ministerial resignation and survival after blame games in political incidents. A cross-national comparison would give us a broader insight into the relative importance of structural conditions and blame avoidance strategies in different parliamentary systems. Also, one could envision the advantage of a multi-method study, for a proper incorporation of both structural conditions and blame avoidance strategies in one research. Structural conditions could be better captured in a quantitative fashion, while an assessment of the blame game cases would include both content analysis of media, parliamentary documents and the earlier mentioned in-depth interviews.

Besides, building on the explorative conclusions of this research, future research could address new questions which surfaced in the case comparison. First, the case comparison made clear that it is hard to assess the effect of media attention and comparable incidents as structural conditions. This research measured media attention in a very limited manner. During the tracing of the blame game, media was treated as a platform that simply reported views of opponents and stakeholders. Media attention as a constraining factor could be broader assessed in the future, including the tone of the articles and the attention for the incident itself. Besides, agenda-setting scholar McCombs has argued for the leading role of the media in political incidents, by pointing at the newspapers ability to influence the attention for certain topics and stories. Indeed, ‘newspapers (...) do considerably more than signal the existence of major events and issues (...)’ (McCombs, 2004; 1).

At the same time, the effect of a comparable incident also appears to be less suitable to be studied as a constraining factor by itself than as a strategic tool for actors. In this research, the influence of comparable incidents in the blame game depended on whether they were used effectively by opponents to show that the temporary political incident is the symptom of failing policy (and a failing Minister). The theoretical model treated both media and comparable incidents as structural conditions surrounding the blame game. Future research should focus on an incorporation of media as an actor and comparable incidents in the process tracing of the blame game.

Second, the research showed that a lack of research in the political landscape as a structural condition in blame games. Future research should focus on a structured comparison of factors in the political landscape. The case comparison indicated that this research focused possibly too much on the Minister as individual actor in a blame game about a political incident. The resignation cases indicated an active role of the Prime Minister and the coalition parties in influencing the fate of the Minister. Therefore, future research should address the influence of those actors on responsibility attribution and the fate of Ministers.

Third, this research showed the added value of a refined model of blame avoidance strategies, which both includes the different levels of blame denial (problem denial, responsibility denial and responsibility acceptance) and the different types of strategy (political, agency and policy strategies). However, the case comparison concluded that a more refined conceptual elaboration is needed to discern between policy and agency strategies, and between operational and reform policy strategies. Future research should address these questions in order to expand our knowledge on the relation between political incidents, structural conditions, blame avoidance strategies and ministerial resignation.

9.4 Closing remarks

Political incidents often entail a major shift in the administrative, political or social discourses about Ministers and their ministries. Blame games emerging from these political incidents have the power to 'make or break' the careers of these Ministers. A better understanding of the dynamics of blame games and blame avoidance strategies will improve the abilities of Parliament and other fora to hold public executives accountable. Parliamentarians should be able to better assess Ministers' blame avoidance strategies on their value, such as responsibility denial through 'smokescreens' of operational improvements and frames such as 'it is possible that I once heard in a regular consultation that there could be a deal in the future' (Korthals). On the other hand, Ministers should be better able to distinguish between effective and ineffective blame avoidance strategies and the conditions under which strategies will more likely succeed. For example, Ministers should be aware of the hazard of ending up as a 'scapegoat' for the Prime Minister and the coalition parties once their cabinet has fallen. Therefore, this research can help both Parliament and public executives to increase accountability process and thereby enhance political credibility.

10 Appendices A to E

Appendix A: Bibliography

- Alink, F., Boin, A. and 't Hart, P. (2001) Institutional crises and reforms in policy sectors: the case of asylum policy in Europe. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 8(2); 286-306.
- Andeweg, R.B. (2000) Consociational democracy. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 3(1): 509-536.
- Arceneaux, K. and Stein, R.M. (2006) 'Who is held responsible when disaster strikes? The attribution of responsibility for a natural disaster in an urban election.' *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 28(1): 43-53.
- Arnold, R.D. (1990) *The Logic of Congressional Action*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Back H., Persson T. and Vernby K.(2009) In tranquil waters: Swedish cabinet ministers in the post war era. In: Dowding K. and Dumont P. (eds.) *The Selection of Ministers in Europe: Hiring and Firing*. London: Routledge; 159-178.
- Bakema W.E. (1991) The ministerial career. In: Blondel J. and Thiebault J.L. (eds.) *The Profession of Government Ministers in Western Europe*. Basingstoke: Macmillan; 70-98.
- Bartling, B. and Fischbacher, U. (2008) *Shifting the Blame: On Delegation and Responsibility*. Zurich: Institute for Empirical Research in Economics, Working Paper No. 380
- Baumgartner, F.R. and Jones, B.D. (1993) *Agendas and instability in American Politics*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Benoit, W.L. (1997) 'Image repair discourse and crisis communication.' *Public Relations Review*, 23(2): 177-186.
- Benoit, W. L., & Drew, S. (1997) Appropriateness and effectiveness of image repair strategies. *Communication Reports*, 10; 153-163.
- Berlinski, S., T. Dewan, and K. Dowding (2007). The Length of Ministerial Tenure in the UK, 1945-97. *British Journal of Political Science*, 37 (2): 245-62.
- Berlinski, S., Dewan, T. and Dowding, K. (2010) 'The Impact of Individual and Collective Performance on Ministerial Tenure.' *The Journal of Politics*, 72(2): 559-571.
- Blatter, J. and Haverland, M. (2012) *Designing Case Studies: Explanatory Approaches in Small-N Research*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Boin, A., McConnell, A. and 't Hart, P. (2008) Governing after crisis. In: Boin, A., McConnell, A. and 't Hart, P. (eds.) *Governing after Crisis: The Politics of Investigation, Accountability and Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 3-30.
- Boin, A., McConnell, A. and 't Hart, P. (2008) Conclusions: the politics of crisis exploitation. In: Boin, A., McConnell, A. and 't Hart, P. (eds.) *Governing after Crisis: The Politics of Investigation, Accountability and Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 285-316.
- Boin, A., Hart, P. 't and McConnell, A. (2009) Crisis exploitation: political and policy impacts of framing contests. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 16(1): 81-106.
- Boin, A., Hart, P. 't, McConnell, A. and Preston, T. (2010) Leadership style, crisis response and blame management: the case of hurricane Katrina. *Public Administration*, 88(3); 706-723.
- Bovens, M. & 't Hart, P. (1996). *Understanding policy fiascoes*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Bovens, M.A.P, Hart, P. 't, Dekker, S., and Verheul, G. (1999) 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance: Defensive Tactics in a Dutch Crime-Fighting Fiasco.' in: H.K. Anheier (ed.) *When Things go Wrong: Organizational Failures and Breakdowns*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: 123-147.

- Bovens, M., 't Hart, P. and Kuipers, S. (2008), The Politics of Policy Evaluation, in Moran, M., Rein, M. and Goodin, R.E. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*. Oxford University Press, Oxford; 319–335.
- Bovens, M.A.P., Brandsma, G.J., Thesingh, D. and Wever, T. (2010) 'Aan het pluche gekleefd? Aard en achtergrond van het aftreden van individuele bewindslieden 1946-2009.' *Beleid en Maatschappij*, 37(4): 319-340.
- Brandstrom, A. and Kuipers, S.L. (2003) 'From "normal incidents" to political crises: understanding the selective politicization of policy failures.' *Government and Opposition*, 38(3): 279–305.
- Brandstrom, A., Kuipers, S.L. and Daleus, P. (2008) 'The politics of tsunami responses: comparing patterns of blame management in Scandinavia.' in: A. Boin, A. McConnell and P. 't Hart (eds.) *Governing After Crisis: The Politics of Investigation, Accountability and Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 114–47.
- Brinson, S.L. and Benoit, W.L. (1999) The Tarnished Star: Restoring Texaco's Damaged Public Image. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 12(4); 483-510
- Coombs, W.T. (2007) 'Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing and responding' (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (1996). Communication and attributions in a crisis: An experimental study of crisis communication. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 8; 279–295.
- Coombs, W.T. and Holladay, S.J. (2008) Comparing apology to equivalent crisis response strategies: Clarifying apology's role and value in crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, 34; 252–257
- Dewan, T. and Dowding, K. (2005) 'The Corrective Effect of Ministerial Resignations on government Popularity.' *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(1): 46–56.
- Diermeier, D. Kean, M. and Merlo, A. (2005) A Political Economy Model of Congressional Careers. *The American Economic Review*, 95(1); 347-373
- Dowding, K. and Kang, W.T. (1998) 'Ministerial Resignations 1945–97.' *Public Administration*, 76: 411–29.
- Dowding, K. and Dumont., P. (2009) 'Structural and Strategic Factors Affecting the Hiring and Firing of Ministers.' in: K. Dowding and P. Dumont (eds.) *The Selection of Ministers in Europe: Hiring and Firing*. London: Routledge; 1-20.
- Edelman, M. (1977) *Political language: words that succes and policies that fail*. New York: Academic Press.
- Ellis, R.J. (1994) *Presidential lightning rods: The politics of blame avoidance*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Elliott, D. and McGuinness, M. (2002) Public Inquiry: panacea or placebo? *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 10(1); 14-25.
- Entman, R.M. (1993) Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4); 51–58.
- Fiorina, M. (1982) Legislative Choice of Regulatory Forms: Legal Process or Administrative Process? *Public Choice*, 39(1); 33-66.
- Fischer, J., Kaiser, A. and Rohlfing, I. (2006) 'The Push and Pull of Ministerial Resignations in Germany, 1969–2005.' *West European Politics*, 29(4): 709-735.
- Fischer, J. Dumont, K. and Dowding, P. (2012) The duration and durability of cabinet ministers. *International Political Science Review*, 33(5): 505-519

- George, A.L and Bennett, A. (2005) *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Gerring, J. (2007) *Case study research: Principles and practices*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Giger, N. and Nelson, M. (2011) The electoral consequences of welfare state retrenchment: Blame avoidance or credit claiming in the era of permanent austerity? *European Journal of Political Research*, 50(1): 1-23.
- Goldstone, J. (1991) Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World. In: George, A.L and Bennett, A. (2005) '*Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*.' Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Guba, E. G. and Lincoln, Y. S. (1981) *Effective evaluation: Improving the usefulness of evaluation results through responsive and naturalistic approaches*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Herring, P. (1940) *Presidential Leadership*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart
- Haider-Markel, D.P. and Joslyn, M.R. (2001) Gun Policy, Opinion, Tragedy, and Blame Attribution: The Conditional Influence of Issue Frames. *Journal of Politics*, 63(2); 520–543.
- Hart, P. 't (1993) Symbols, Rituals and Power: The Lost Dimensions of Crisis Management. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 1(1); 36–50.
- Hearit, K. M. (2006). *Crisis management by apology: Corporate response to allegations of wrongdoing*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hellwig, T. & Coffey, E. (2011) Public opinion, party messages, and responsibility for the financial crisis in Britain. *Electoral Studies*, 30 (3): 417–426.
- Hering, M. (2008) Welfare State Restructuring without Grand Coalitions: The Role of Informal Cooperation in Blame Avoidance. *German Politics*, 17(2): 165-183.
- Hood, C. (2002). The risk game and the blame game. *Government and Opposition*, 37: 15–37.
- Hood, C. (2011) '*The blame game: spin, bureaucracy, and self-preservation in government*.' Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Hood, C., Jennings, W., Dixon, R., Hogwood, B. and Beeston, C. (2009) 'Testing times: exploring staged responses and the impact of blame management strategies in two examination fiasco cases.' *European Journal of Political Research*, 48(10): 695-722.
- Hood, C. Rothstein, H. and Baldwin, R. (2001) *The Government of Risk: Understanding Risk Regulation Regimes*. Oxford: University Press.
- Howe, G. (1999) The Management of Public Inquiries. *The Political Quarterly*, 70(3); 294–304
- Huber, J.D. and Martinez-Gallardo, C. (2008) 'Replacing Cabinet Ministers: Patterns of Ministerial Stability in Parliamentary Democracies.' *American Political Science Review*, 102(2): 169-180.
- Indridason, I.H. and Kam C. (2008) Cabinet shuffles and ministerial drift. *British Journal of Political Science* 38: 621–656.
- King, A. (1981) The Rise of the Career Politician and its Consequences. *British Journal of Political Science*, 11(1); 249–85.
- Kingdon, J. (2003) *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*. New York: Longman (2nd edition).
- Leininger. In: Field, P.A., Morse, J.M. (1996) *The application of qualitative approaches*, Cheltenham: Stanley Thorens Ltd.: pp. 103-122.
- Lipsky, M. (1980) *Street-level bureaucracy: dilemmas of the individual in public services*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Marsh, M., & Tilley, J. (2009). The attribution of credit and blame to governments and its impact on vote choice. *British Journal of Political Science*, 40(1), 115.

- McCombs, M. E. (2004) *Setting the agenda: The mass media and public opinion*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- McConnell, A. (2003) Overview: Crisis Management, Influences, Responses and Evaluation. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 56(3); 363-409.
- McGraw, K.M. (1990). Avoiding blame: An experimental investigation of political excuses and justifications. *British Journal of Political Science* 20(1): 119–132.
- McGraw, K. (1991) 'Avoiding Blame: An Experimental Investigation of Political Excuses and Justifications.' *British Journal of Political Science*, 20(1): 119-131.
- Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1984) *Qualitative data analysis*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd edn.), London & Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Morse, J.M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson K. and Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(2); 13-22.
- Mortensen, P.G. (2012) "It's the Central Government's Fault": Elected Regional Officials' Use of Blame-Shifting Rhetoric. *Governance*, 25(3); 439–461. [gove_1585 439](https://doi.org/10.1177/1043986211415854)
- Moynihan, D.P. (2009) *Blame Avoidance and Network Coordination: Evidence from Crisis Response*. Paper prepared for the 2009 American Political Science Conference, Toronto, September 3-6
- Pal, L. and Weaver, R. (2003). *The government taketh away: The politics of pain in the United States and Canada*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Pierson, P. (1996). The new politics of the welfare state. *World Politics*, 48(2): 143–179.
- Preston, T. (2008) Weathering the politics of responsibility and blame: the Bush administration and its response to Hurricane Katrina. In: Boin, A., McConnell, A. and 't Hart, P. (eds.) *Governing after Crisis: The Politics of Investigation, Accountability and Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 33-61.
- Ragin, C.C. (1987) *The Comparative Method: Moving beyond qualitative and quantitative strategies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Resodihardjo, S.L. (2006) 'Wielding a Double-Edged Sword: The Use of Inquiries at Times of Crisis'. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 14(4); 199–206.
- Resodihardjo, S.L., Eijk, C.J.A. van & Carroll, B.J. (2012) Mayor vs. Police Chief: The Hoek van Holland Riot. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 4(2); 231-243.
- Rochefort, D. A., & Cobb, R. W. (1994). *The politics of problem definition: Shaping the policy agenda*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Rudolph, T.J. (2003) 'Who's Responsible for the Economy? The Formation and Consequences of Responsibility Attributions.' *American Journal of Political Science*, 47(4): 698-713.
- Rudolph, T.J. (2006) 'Triangulating Political Responsibility: The Motivated Formation of Responsibility Judgments.' *Political Psychology*, 27(1): 99-122.
- Sabatier, P.A. and Jenkins-Smith H.C. (1993) *Policy change and learning : an advocacy coalition approach*. New York: Westview Press
- Schattschneider, E.E. (1960) *The Semisovereign People*. New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston.
- Schön, D. and Rein, M. (1994) *Frame Reflective Policy Analysis: Towards the Resolution of Intractable Policy Controversies*, New York: Basic Books.
- Schütz, A. (1996) Selbstdarstellung in der Defensive-Reaktionen in politischen Skandalen. In: Laux, L. and Schütz, A. (eds.) *Wir, die wir gut sind*. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag.

- Seawright, J., and Gerring, J. (2008) Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options. *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(2), 294-308.
- Stark, A. (2011) 'The tradition of ministerial responsibility and its role in the bureaucratic management of crises.' *Public Administration*, 89(3): 1148–1163.
- Stone, D. (2001) *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*. London: W. W. Norton & Company
- Suchman, M.C. (1995), Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(3); 571–610.
- Sulitzeanu-Kenan, R. (2006) 'If they get it right: an experimental test of the effects of UK public inquiries' appointment and reports.' *Public administration*, 84(3): 623-653.
- Sulitzeanu-Kenan, R. and Hood., C. (2005). *Blame Avoidance with Adjectives? Motivation, Opportunity, Activity and Outcome*. Paper presented at ECPR Joint Sessions, Granada, Spain.
- Thiel, S. van (2004) Why politicians prefer quasi-autonomous organizations. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 16(2): 175–201.
- Thompson, D. (1980) Moral responsibility of public officials: the problem of many hands. *The American Political Science Review*, 74(4); 905-916.
- Ulmer, R.R., Seeger, L.W. and Sellnow, T.L. (2007) 'Post-crisis communication and renewal: Expanding the parameters of post-crisis discourse.' *Public Relations Review*, 33: 130–134.
- Verhoest, K. B.G., Peters, G., Bouckaert, G. & Verschuere, B. (2004). The study of organisational autonomy: a conceptual review. *Public Administration and Development*, 24(2), 101–118.
- Vibert, F. (2007) *The rise of the unelected: democracy and the new separation of powers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Visser, R.K. (2008) In dienst van het algemeen belang: *Ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid en parlementair vertrouwen*. Proefschrift Universiteit Leiden. Amsterdam : Uitgeverij Boom
- Weaver, R.K. (1986).The politics of blame avoidance. *Journal of Public Policy* 6(4): 371–398.
- Yin, R.K (2009) *Case study research (Fourth edition)*. London: Sage Publications

Appendix B: Bibliography of each of the cases

Case 1:

Parliamentary documents:

Commissie Onderzoek Vuurwerkramp (2001) *De vuurwerkramp: eindrapport*. Rotterdam: Phoenix & den Oudsten bv

Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2000-2001 (24-04-2001) *Behandeling van het Rapport over de vuurwerkramp in Enschede (27157)*. nr. 71; 4684- 4715

Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2000-2001 (25-04-2001) *Voortzetting van de Behandeling van het Rapport over de vuurwerkramp in Enschede*. nr. 72; 4743-4800

Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2000-2001 (26-04-2001) *Voortzetting van de Behandeling van het Rapport over de vuurwerkramp in Enschede*. nr. 73; 4810-4864

Inspectie Brandweezorg en Rampenbestrijding, Arbeidsinspectie, Inspectie Milieuhygiëne, Rijksverkeersinspectie (2001) *Onderzoek Vuurwerkramp Enschede: Follow-up Culemborg*. Consulted on 18-08-2013 on:

http://www.google.nl/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CC4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nbdc.nl%2Fcms%2Fservlet%2Fnl.gx.nibra.client.http.GetFile%3Fid%3D599300%26file%3D14_followup_culemborg_2-01.pdf&ei=kBt0Uo_xH-SYOQXf34HAAw&usg=AFQjCNE36M_GlnZ0vp91BldJwAOCRoSj3A&bvm=bv.55819444,d.d2k

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer 1999-2000 (16-05-2000) *Brief van de Minister van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties over de Ramp in Enschede*. 27 157, nr. 1

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer 1999-2000 (31-05-2000) *Verslag van een algemeen overleg over de brieven van de minister van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties d.d. 16 mei 2000 en d.d. 29 mei 2000 inzake de ramp op en rondom S.E. Fireworks vuurwerkopslagplaats te Enschede (27 157, nr. 1 en nr. 2)*. 27 157, nr. 6

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 1999-2000 (28-06-2000) *Verslag van een algemeen overleg over de brief van de minister van BZK d.d. 9 juni 2000 inzake het plan van aanpak voor afstemming van de onderzoeken van de rijksinspecties naar de vuurwerkramp in Enschede (27 157, nr. 3) en de brief van de minister van BZK d.d. 26 juni 2000 inzake voortgangsbericht vuurwerkramp Enschede en beantwoording van vragen terzake (27 157, nr. 5)*. 27 157, nr. 7

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 1999-2000 (11-09-2000) *Brief van de Minister van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties over de afwikkeling van de vuurwerkramp te Enschede*. 27 157, nr. 9

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2000-2001 (23-03-2001) *Kabinetsstandpunt naar aanleiding van het rapport Commissie vuurwerkramp Enschede en de 8 rijksinspectie*. 27 157, nr. 20

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001) *Motie waarin het gevoerde vuurwerkbeleid van onder meer de rijksoverheid wordt afgekeurd*. 27157, nr.38

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001). *Motie waarin het vuurwerkbeleid van de rijksoverheid wordt afgekeurd*. 27157, nr. 39

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2000-2001 (26-04-2001) *Motie waarin het beleid van de Minister van Defensie wordt afgekeurd op grond van de fouten van DKML*. 27157, nr. 42

Staatscourant, 2010 (07-10-2010) *Ontwerpbesluit tot wijziging van het Vuurwerkbesluit en enkele algemene maatregelen van bestuur (verbetering uitvoerbaarheid en handhaafbaarheid Vuurwerkbesluit)*. nr. 15526; 19

Newspaper articles:

- Algemeen Dagblad (24-08-2000) *Commissie-Oosting wil in November klaar zijn*; 2
- Algemeen Dagblad (16-01-2001) *De Vries: Strenger toezicht ; 'Geen compromissen meer over veiligheid na ramp in Enschede*; 1
- Algemeen Dagblad (Besse, A. and Knegt, P. de) (28-02-2001) *Het leervermogen na Enschede*; 3
- Algemeen Dagblad (01-03-2001) *Iedereen zit een beetje fout*; 1
- Algemeen Dagblad (02-03-2001) *Hoe afrekenen na Enschede?*; 1
- Algemeen Dagblad (Besse, A. and Knegt, P. de) (23-03-2001) *Kabinet erkent falen voor vuurwerkcramp*; 2
- Algemeen Dagblad (24-03-2001) *Ministers treden niet uit zichzelf af om Enschede*; 5
- Algemeen Dagblad (10-11-2001) *Enschede schrikt van rapporten*; 4
- Kuttschreuter, M., Gutteling, J.M. and Hond, M. de (2011) Framing and tone-of-voice of disaster media coverage: The aftermath of the Enschede fireworks disaster in the Netherlands. *Health, Risk and Society*, 13(3); 201-220.
- NRC Handelsblad (Meijnen, J.)(19-05-2000) *De vergunning, het toezicht en het bedrijf*; 1
- NRC Handelsblad (08-08-2000) *Inspecteurs VROM niet in het veld ; Pronk belooft verbetering*; 3
- NRC Handelsblad (Straaten, F. van) (19-08-2000) *'Je moet harde kant van je gezicht tonen' ; Milieuinspectie gaat scherper controleren*; 2
- NRC Handelsblad (18-01-2001) *Schoon schip*; 7.
- NRC Handelsblad (27-01-2001) *Munitie TNO weg bij huizen*; 2
- NRC Handelsblad (24-03-2001) *'Overheid in gebreke, niet schuldig' ; Vuurwerkcramp Enschede*; 2
- NRC Handelsblad (26-04-2001) *'Niet aftreden maar optreden'*; 2
- Telegraaf (07-12-2000) *PRONK VERDIEPTE ZICH NIET IN VUURWERK*
- Telegraaf (01-03-2001) *FALENDE OVERHEID SCHOKT KAMER*
- Telegraaf (13-06-2001) *PRONK VERTROUWT VUURWERKBRANCHE NIET MET REGELS*
- Trouw (08-08-2000) *Pronk gispt zijn eigen inspecteurs ; Inspectie; Milieuhygiene: gemeenten controleren vergunningen sinds '93 zelf*; 3
- Trouw (14-12-2000) *'OM waarschuwd in '91 al voor vuurwerk'*; 8
- Trouw (15-01-2001) *Enschede ongelukkig met 'eenzijdig beeld' ; Rapport rijksinspecties*; 3
- Trouw (31-01-2001) *'Pronk speelt paniekvoetbal' ; Vuurwerkbesluit*; 4
- Trouw (Bessems, K.) (02-03-2001) *Niemand deed expres iets verkeerd' ; Oud-bewindslieden; 'Ministers moeten soms weg, al kunnen ze ergens niets aan doen'*; 3
- Trouw (Haastrecht, R. and Marlet, G.) (07-03-01) *Strenger regime pas in 2004 ; Nasleep vuurwerkcramp*; 4
- Trouw (Marlet, G.)(23-01-2002) *Expertisecentrum veiligheid en vuurwerk*; 3
- Volkskrant (08-08-2000) *Pronk: inspectie slordig in toezicht milieuvergunning*; 7
- Volkskrant (07-12-2000) *Overheid leerde niet van vuurwerkcramp Culemborg*; 3
- Volkskrant (02-03-2001) *Wethouder wil daad stellen met aftreden*

Case 2:

Parliamentary documents:

- Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2001-2002 (14-11-2001) *Interpellatie-Van Gijzel, gericht tot de ministers van Justitie en van Verkeer en Waterstaat, en de interpellatie-Leers, gericht tot de ministers van Verkeer en Waterstaat en van Economische Zaken, over bouwfraude en corruptie van ambtenaren.* nr. 23; 1622-1657
- Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2001-2002 (28-11-2001) *Behandeling van de brief van de minister van Justitie over de uitvoering van moties voorgesteld tijdens het interpellatiedebat bouwfraude (28093, nr. 8).* nr. 29; 2089-2133
- Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2001-2002 (31-01-2002) *Behandeling van het Rapport van de Tijdelijke Commissie onderzoek bouwfraude.* nr. 29; 3243-3264
- Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2002-2003 (05-11-2002) *Debat naar aanleiding van een algemeen overleg op 3 oktober 2002 over het plan van aanpak inzake drugsmokkel op Schiphol.* nr. 16; 896-907
- Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2002-2003 (06-11-2002) *Stemmingen over moties, ingediend tijdens het debat over bolletjesslikkers.* nr. 17; 971-973
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2001-2002 (13-11-2001) *Brief van de Minister van Verkeer en Waterstaat over de stand van zaken inzake de oplossing van mijn geschil met de N.V. Nederlandse Spoorwegen over de subsidie ten behoeve van de bouw van de Schipholtunnel.* 18 986, nr. 76
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer (14-11-2001) *Motie over het niet vervolgen van de betrokken bedrijven.* 28093, nr. 1
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer 2001-2002 (14-11-2001) *Motie over het instellen van een onderzoek naar de strafbare feiten, de aanbestedingspraktijk en de mogelijke corruptie.* 28093, nr. 3
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer 2001-2002 (14-11-2001) *Motie over het tot verdere vervolging overgaan in dergelijke gevallen en niet te schikken.* 28093, nr. 5
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer 2001-2002 (26-11-2001) *Brief van de Minister over de problematiek van de aanbestedingsfraude (zaak-Bos) en de Schipholtunnelzaak.* 28093, nr. 8
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer 2001-2002 (28-11-2001) *Motie over de invulling van de politieke verantwoordelijkheid van de Minister van Justitie.* 28093, nr. 10.
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2001-2002 (28-11-2001) *Motie over het verder instellen van een onderzoek (enquête) naar de aard en omvang van de fraude in de bouw.* 28093, nr. 11
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2001-2002 (28-11-2001) *Motie over aanpassing van de Aanwijzing hoge transacties in misdrijfzaken.* 28 093, nr. 14
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer 2001-2002 (28-11-2001) *Gewijzigde motie waarin het beleid van de Minister van Justitie in deze zaak wordt afgekeurd.* 28 093, nr. 16
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2001-2002 (23-01-2002) *Motie van afkeuring ten aanzien van het beleid van Minister Korthals (Jus) inzake de bestrijding van cocaïnesmokkel op Schiphol.* 28192, nr. 4.
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2001-2002 (10-12-2001) *Brief Minister over de gedragslijn in geval van hoge transacties.* 28 093, nr. 20
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2001-2002 (12-12-2001) *Verslag algemeen overleg op 12 December 2001 over hoge transacties.* 28 093; nr. 21
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2001-2002 (18-01-2002) *Brief van de Minister van Justitie inzake de*

gevolgen van mogelijke interferenties tussen parlementair en strafrechtelijk onderzoek.
kenmerk: 5145300/502/DP

- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2001-2002 (24-01-2002) *Brief inzake aanbieding van het rapport van de Tijdelijke Commissie onderzoek bouwfraude.* 28 093, nr. 22-23
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2001-2002 (29-01-2002) *Brief van de Tijdelijke Commissie onderzoek bouwfraude inzake de gevolgen van mogelijke interferenties tussen parlementair en strafrechtelijk onderzoek.* 28 093, nr. 24
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2001-2002 (14-05-2002) *Brief van de Enquêtecommissie Bouwfraude inzake het tweede voortgangsverslag van haar werkzaamheden.* 28 244, nr. 3
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2002-2003 (12-09-2002) *Openbaar Verhoor Enquêtecommissie nummer 52, R. van Gijzel.* 28 244, nr. 7; 987-1004
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2002-2003 (16-09-2002) *Openbaar Verhoor Enquêtecommissie, nummer 61, jhr. mr. J.L. De Wijkerslooth, voorzitter van het college van procureurs-generaal.* 28 244, nr. 7; 1185-1211
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2002-2003 (16-09-2002) *Openbaar Verhoor Enquêtecommissie, nummer 62, mr. A.H. Korthals, Van 3 augustus 1998 tot 22 juli 2002 minister van Justitie.* 28 244, nr. 7; 1213-1235
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2002-2003 (05-11-2002) *Motie van afkeuring over het onvolledig en onjuist informeren van de Kamer door de Minister van Justitie.* 28192, nr. 18
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2002-2003 (06-11-2002) *Motie van treurnis over het onvolledig en onjuist informeren van de Kamer door de Minister van Justitie.* 28192, nr. 20
- Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2002-2003 (12-12-2002) *Eindrapport Parlementaire Enquetecommissie bouwnijverheid.* 28 244, nrs. 5-6

Newspaper articles:

- Algemeen Dagblad (17-01-2002) *VVD in verwarring;* 9
- Algemeen Dagblad (Boom, W. and Goossens, L) (26-01-2002) *'Je loopt altijd wat butsen en schrammen op';* 5
- Algemeen Dagblad (07-09-2002) *Commissie hoort waslijst politici;* 51
- Algemeen Dagblad (18-09-2002) *Korthals biecht zonde op ;Minister lichtte Kamer onjuist in over Schiphol-schikking;* 5
- Algemeen Dagblad (Broek, H.v.d. and Zwart, M.d) (12-12-2002) *Ex-paarse ministers ondergaan tefal-test ;Rapport bouwfraude vooral spannend voor lot Korthals;* 5
- Algemeen Dagblad (14-12-2002) *'Manke' Korthals sneuvelt ;Aftreden moet schade voor VVD in campagne beperken;* 5
- NRC Handelsblad (28-11-2001) *Van Gijzel (PvdA) verlaat Tweede Kamer ;'Monddood door Melkert' ;* 3
- NRC Handelsblad (13-12-2002) *Minister Korthals (VVD) neemt ontslag ;Na rapport commissie bouwfraude;* 1
- Telegraaf (14-11-2001) *VANDAAG SPOEDDEBAT KAMER. MINISTERS ONDER VUUR VANWEGE BOUWFRAUDE;* ?
- Telegraaf (20-03-2002) *Massale politie-ival bouwreuzen;?*
- Telegraaf (Meurs, M.v.) (19-09-2002) *Minister Korthals: Niemand friste mijn geheugen op; ?*
- Trouw (26-01-2002) *Kok: OM moet tempo maken;* 4
- Trouw (Cornelisse, L.) (21-09-2002) *Geen leugens: informeren is iets anders dan vertellen;* 4
- Trouw (van Heese, R.) (27-09-2002) *De nauwe schoentjes van minister Korthals ;Bouwfraude ;*4

Trouw (28-09-2002) *Korthals deels vrijgeleit ;Oud-topambtenaar: minister wist echt niet meer van Schiphol-schikking; Bouwfraude*; 5

Volkskrant (12-11-2001) *Bewijzen van bouwfraude binnenkort naar justitie*; 1

Volkskrant (20-03-2002) *Fraude schuurt in Haagse kringen*; 15

Volkskrant (07-09-2002) *Ministers geven uitleg aan enquêtecommissie*; 5

Volkskrant (Koele, T.) (18-09-2002) *Korthals zal eer houden aan zichzelf ;Minister treedt af na 'schuldig' commissie*; 2

Volkskrant (13-12-2002) *Korthals weg wegens bouwfraude ;Harde conclusies van enquêtecommissie*; 1

Volkskrant (Koele, T.) (13-12-2002) *Overlever met een lange politieke carrière ;Benk Korthals werd enige 'paarse' minister in kabinet-Balkenende*; 2

Case 3:

Parliamentary documents:

Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (27-10-2005) *Debat naar aanleiding van de brand in het cellencomplex op de luchthaven Schiphol*. 14; 831-836.

Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (01-11-2005) *Mondelinge vragenuur met Vragen van het lid Vos aan de minister voor Vreemdelingenzaken en Integratie over de opvang van de overlevenden van de Schipholbrand*. 15; 853-857

Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (10-11-2005) *Debat over de opvang van de slachtoffers van de brand in het detentiecentrum Schiphol*, nr. 20; 1279-1305

Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (23-11-2005) *Debat naar aanleiding van een algemeen overleg op 17 november 2005 over nazorg overlevenden Schipholbrand*. 25; 1662-1668

Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2005-2006 (22-12-2005) *Stemmingen over moties, ingediend bij het debat over het rapport-Havermans over feitenonderzoek naar uitzettingen naar de Democratische Republiek Congo*. 34; 2414-2415.

Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2006-2006 (31-01-2006) *Debat over de uitzetting van de slachtoffers van de Schipholbrand*. nr. 43; 2872-2888

Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (06-04-2006) *Debat naar aanleiding van algemene overleggen op 16 maart en 28 maart over Syrische asielzoekers*. 68; 4296-4321. Handelingen

Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (11-04-2006) *Mondelinge vragenuur over Vragen van het lid Vos aan de minister van Justitie en de minister voor Vreemdelingenzaken en Integratie over het onderzoek naar de Schipholbrand, naar aanleiding van de uitspraken van de heer Van Vollenhoven over het niet kunnen horen van een aantal getuigen*. 69; 4353-4357

Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2005-2006. *Stemming over de motie Halsema c.s.* 96; 6925-6026.

Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2005-2006 (21-09-2006) *Verklaring van Minister Donner en Dekker*. 3; 113-114

Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2006-2007 (25-10-2006) *Voortzetting van de behandeling van het rapport Brand cellencomplex Schiphol-Oost (24587, nr. 191) en de regeringsreactie op het rapport Brand cellencomplex Schiphol-Oost (24587, nr. 199)*. 17; 1190-1233

Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2006-2007 (31-10-2006) *Voortzetting van de behandeling van: het rapport Brand cellencomplex Schiphol-Oost (24587, nr. 191), de regeringsreactie op het rapport Brand cellencomplex Schiphol-Oost (24587, nr. 199) en de brief van de minister van Justitie d.d. 31 oktober 2006 over toezeggingen Schipholdebat en AO tbs*. 19; 1419-1437

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (27-10-2005) *Brief Minister over de brand op detentiecentrum Schiphol op 27 oktober 2006*. 24 587, nr. 136

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (01-11-2005) *Brief Ministers over Schipholbrand*. 24 587, nr. 137

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (17-11-2005) *Verslag algemeen overleg gehouden op 17 november 2005, over de nazorg overlevenden Schipholbrand*. 24 587, nr. 156

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (22-11-2005) *Brief Minister over de nazorg voor de overlevenden van de brand in het detentiecentrum Schiphol*. 24 587, nr. 144

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (05-12-2005) *Brief Minister over de mogelijke gevolgen van de sluiting van detentiecentrum Schiphol*. 24 587, nr. 152

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (08-12-2005) *Besluit van 7 december 2005 tot schorsing van de besluiten van 6 december 2005 van het college van burgemeester en wethouders van de gemeente Haarlemmermeer (kenmerk 05.0034701v&h en 05.0034700\v&h) tot intrekking van de gebruiksvergunningen voor het cellencomplex Schiphol-Oost*. 24 587, nr. 153

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (13-12-2005) *Brief minister over het 'tussentijds bericht onderzoek brand cellencomplex Schiphol-Oost'en de 'Rapportage over brandveiligheid detentiecentrum Schiphol'*. 24 587, nr. 155

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (20-12-2005) *Verslag algemeen overleg gehouden op 20 december 2005, over detentiecentrum Schiphol-Oost*. 24 587, nr.158

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (22-12-2005) *Motie-Klaas de Vries c.s. houdende afkeuring van het onjuist informeren van de Kamer*. 19 637, nr. 993.

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (20-02-2006) *Brief minister over de tussenrapportage van de Onderzoeksraad voor veiligheid met de bevindingen van de Inspectie voor de Gezondheidszorg naar de nazorg aan de overlevenden van de brand in het detentiecentrum Schiphol*. 24 587, Nr. 164

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (06-04-2006) *Motie inzake afkeuring van het handelen van Minister Verdonk (VI) waardoor asiel gerelateerde informatie in handen is gekomen van de Syrische autoriteiten*. 19637, nr. 1032.

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (30-06-2006). *Motie inzake afkeuring van het handelen van Minister Verdonk (VI) bij onderzoek en eigenschuldverklaring mw. A. Hirsi Ali*. 30 599, nr. 7.

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2005-2006 (31-08-2006) *Brief minister over verlening verblijfvergunning aan aantal overlevenden Schipholbrand, vanwege discretionaire bevoegdheid*. 24 587, nr. 187

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2006-2007 (21-09-2006) *Brief minister-president over gevolgen rapport Schipholbrand*. 24 587, nr. 195

Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid (2006) *Brand cellencomplex Schiphol-Oost. Eindrapport van het onderzoek naar de brand in het detentie- en uitzetcentrum Schiphol-Oost in de nacht van 26 op 27 oktober 2005*. Den Haag, projectnummer: M2005CH1026-1

Newspaper articles:

Algemeen Dagblad (22-09-2006) *WAARDIGE AFTOCHT - Keihard rapport Schipholbrand brengt ministers Donner en Dekker tot aftreden*; 1

NRC Handelsblad (21-11-2005) *Aangifte tegen Verdonk na cellenbrand; Actie schrijfster Bloem*; 6

NRC Handelsblad (Kalse, E.) (06-09-2006) *Vooraf Donner zal beslissen over Donner; Zware kritiek op ministers in zaak-Schipholbrand vooral pijnlijk voor premier Balkenende*; 3

NRC Handelsblad (07-04-2006) *'Zes getuigen van brand te snel uitgezet'*; *Kritiek Onderzoeksraad*; 3

NRC Handelsblad (Kalse, E.) (22-09-2006) *Donner mocht niet te lang bungelen Balkenende laat crisis aan zich voorbij gaan; aftreden; 1*

Onderzoeksraad voor de Veiligheid (21-09-2006) *Persbericht: Tekortschieten drie instanties oorzaak fatale afloop Schipholbrand*. Gevonden op 01-09-2013 op:
<http://web.archive.org/web/20090116102448/http://www.onderzoeksraad.nl/nieuws/pb20060921.htm>

Parlementair Documentatiecentrum. *De Paascrisis*. Gevonden op 01-09-2013 op:
http://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrsk1yj/de_paascrisis

Parlementair Documentatiecentrum (21-09-2006) *Ministers Donner en Dekker afgetreden om Schipholbrand*. Gevonden op 01-09-2013, op:
http://www.parlement.com/id/vhe7k0yaazes/nieuws/ministers_donner_en_dekker_afgetreden_om

Telegraaf (06-09-2006) *Dekker en Donner in knel; 1*

Telegraaf (22-09-2006) *MINISTERS DIRECT WEG; 1*

Telegraaf (22-09-2006) *Snelle actie om de schade te beperken; 7*

Trouw (Marlet, G.) (3-12-2005) *Gemeente neemt voorschot op onderzoek celbrand; schipholbrand analyse; 7*

Volkskrant (12-11-2005) *'Ministers schuldig aan dood door nalatigheid'; 4*

Volkskrant (06-09-2006) *Politiek schrikt van hard oordeel; 3*

Volkskrant (Remarque, P.) (22-09-2006) *Donner rukt pleister in één keer van de knie; Aftreden ministers was noodzakelijk, als genoegdoening voor de dood van elf personen én om de politieke schade bij verkiezingen te beperken; 1*

Case 4:

Parliamentary documents:

Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2012-2013 (19-12-2012) *Aan de orde is het **debat** naar aanleiding van een algemeen overleg op 19 december 2012 over **de ontruiming tentenkampen***. 38, nr. 62; 179-180

Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2012-2013 (18-04-2013) *Debat over het rapport van de Inspectie Veiligheid en Justitie inzake een zelfmoord van een gedetineerde*. 77, nr. 3; 3-24

Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 2012-2013 (18-04-2013) *Voortzetting van het debat over het rapport van de Inspectie Veiligheid en Justitie inzake een zelfmoord van een gedetineerde*. 77, nr. 6; 28-75

Inspectie Veiligheid en Justitie (28-03-2013) *Het overlijden van Alexander Dolmatov*.

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer (19-12-2012) *Motie van Gesthuizen c.s. over afkeuring van de handelswijze van de Staatssecretaris van Veiligheid en Justitie*. 29344, nr. 110.

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2013-2013 (14-02-2013) *Verslag van algemeen overleg ten aanzien van verschillende brieven met betrekking tot het vreemdelingenbeleid*. 19 637, nr. 1643

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2012-2013 (07-03-2013) *Antwoorden op vragen van het lid **Arib** (PvdA) aan de staatssecretaris van Veiligheid en Justitie over de zelfmoord van een Russische politieke vluchteling in het uitzetcentrum in Rotterdam (ingezonden 22 januari 2013)*. 1522, nr 1278; 1-2).

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2012-2013 (12-04-13) *Brief van de Staatssecretaris van Veiligheid en*

Justitie in reactie op het onderzoek betreffende het overlijden van de heer Dolmatov in Detentiecentrum Rotterdam. kenmerk: 361683

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2012–2013 (17-04-2013) *Antwoorden op vragen inzake het onderzoek betreffende het overlijden van de heer Dolmatov in Detentiecentrum Rotterdam (Kamerstuk 19 637, nr. 1648).* 19 637, nr. 1649

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2012-2013 (22-05-2013) *Dertigledendebat over de versoepeling van het vreemdelingenbeleid die mogelijk gepaard gaat met de invoering van strafbaarstelling van illegaliteit.* 19637, nr. 85

Kamerstukken Tweede Kamer, 2012-2013 (19-06-2013) *Verslag van een algemeen overleg met Staatssecretaris Teeven van Veiligheid en Justitie over het vreemdelingen- en asielbeleid.* 19 637, Nr. 1705

Newspaper articles:

Algemeen Dagblad (Hakkenberg, D.) (13-04-2013) *Overheid faalde bij dood Dolmatov ;* 5

Algemeen Dagblad (Wiegman, M.) (17-04-2013) *Teeven zwaar onder vuur;* 1

Algemeen Dagblad (Jongejan, D. and Wiegman, M.) (18-04-2013) *Teeven vecht voor wat hij waard is;* 6

Nos (17-04-2013). Nieuws: Teeven zijn mij politiek toe te rekenen. Gevonden op:

<http://nos.nl/video/495890-teeven-fouten-zijn-mij-politiek-toe-te-rekenen.html>

NRC Handelsblad (Smeets, H.) (19-01-13) *Onderzoek naar zelfmoord Rus; Asielzoeker schreef in afscheidsbrief dat hij 'een eerlijk mens verraadde; ?*

NRC Handelsblad (15-04-2013) *Waar staat Teeven voor? Commentaar;* nr. 1

NRC Handelsblad (Kas, A.) (15-04-2013) *Kwestie-Dolmatov staat niet op zichzelf: inspecties hadden eerder al kritiek;* nr. 2

NRC Handelsblad (Kranenburg, M.) (18-04-2013) *Aftreden is 'een zweepslag' voor ambtenaar; Staatssecretaris Fred Teeven onder vuur na fouten van ambtelijke diensten; voor het aftreden van bewindspersonen bestaan geen heldere regels; ?*

Trouw (13-04-2013) *Hard rapport over dood Rus, Teeven onder vuur;* 1

Trouw (16-04-2013) *De dood van asielzoeker Dolmatov was geen incident; hier faalde de overheid;* 2

Trouw (Zandbergen, K.) (19-06-2013) *Het nieuwe inzicht van Fred Teeven;* 3

Volkskrant (Meerhof, R.) (17-04-2013) *VVD zet partijgenoot Teeven als net iets te zielig neer ;* 2

Volkskrant (Sommer, M.) (18-04-2013) *Teeven moet gaan;* 29

Volkskrant (Bakker, M.) (18-04-2013) *Teeven zal zich moeten bewijzen ; ?*

Volkskrant (Heijmans, T.) (29-04-2013) *Geplaagde Teeven geeft dorststaker verblijfstitel;* 10

Volkskrant (Bakker, M.) (19-06-2013) *Meer vrijheid voor asielzoekers ;* 1

Appendix C: overview of excluded resignation cases (in Dutch)

| lijst afgetreden ministers en staatssecretarissen vanaf 1945 | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|--------------------|--|-------------------------|
| kabinet | Naam Minister | Post | datum van aftreden | reden aftreden (voor zover bekend) | kort: reden aftreden |
| | Dr. M.J. Cohen (pvda) | Staatssecretaris van Justitie | 01.01.2001 | wordt burgemeester van Amsterdam | andere functie |
| | De Vries, Vermeend (PvdA) | | | in database Bovens et al, 2010, opgenomen: allemaal wegens interne verschuivingen in het kabinet | |
| Kabinet-Balkenende I | dr. E.J. Bomhoff (LPF), | Vice-minister-president en minister van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport | 16.10.2002 | Op 16 oktober nemen de ministers Bomhoff en Heinsbroek ontslag, nadat samenwerking tussen beiden niet meer mogelijk was. De ministers De Geus en Hoogervorst nemen de taken van de afgetreden ministers over. LPF-minister De Boer wordt vicepremier. | gezondheid/persoonlijk |
| | mr. A.H. Korthals (VVD), | Minister van Defensie | 12.12.2002 | Na het verschijnen van het rapport van de enquêtecommissie bouwnijverheid i op 12 december treedt minister Korthals van Defensie af. Korthals had als minister van Justitie in het vorige kabinet de Tweede Kamer onjuist ingelicht over een schikking tussen het Openbaar Ministerie en bouwondernemingen. Minister Kamp neemt het ministerschap van Defensie op zich. http://www.parlement.com/9291000/bio/01855 | incident |
| | mr. H.Ph.J.B. Heinsbroek (LPF), | Minister van Economische Zaken | 16.12.2002 | Op 16 oktober nemen de ministers Bomhoff en Heinsbroek ontslag, nadat samenwerking tussen beiden niet meer mogelijk was. De ministers De Geus en Hoogervorst nemen de taken van de afgetreden ministers over. LPF-minister De Boer wordt vicepremier. | gezondheid/persoonlijk |
| | R.R.Ph. Bijlhout (lpf) | staatssecretaris van familie en emancipatiezaken | 24.07.2002 | Al enkele uren na de beëdiging van het kabinet maakt Philomena Bijlhout bekend af te treden i als staatssecretaris van familie en emancipatiezaken. Zij had de formateur verkeerd ingelicht over haar deelname aan Surinaamse milities ten tijde van en na de decembermoorden in 1982. | persoonlijk |
| Kabinet-Balkenende II | mr. Th.C. de Graaf (D66), | Vice-minister-president, minister voor Bestuurlijke vernieuwing en Koninkrijksrelaties | 23.03.2005 | Op 23 maart 2005 treedt minister De Graaf, vice-premier en minister van Bestuurlijke vernieuwing en Koninkrijksrelaties af. De avond daarvoor had de Eerste Kamer de Grondwetswijziging waarmee de benoeming van de burgemeester en de commissaris van de Koningin uit de Grondwet werd gehaald, weggestemd. | verschil visie/incident |

| | | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|---|------------|---|--|
| | | | | Voor een Grondwetswijziging is een tweederde meerderheid nodig. De coalitie stemde voor, maar PvdA, GroenLinks, SP, ChristenUnie en SGP stemden tegen, waardoor die meerderheid ontbrak. De Graaf zag één van zijn ambities in rook opgaan. http://www.parlement.com/9291000/biof/01855 | |
| | mr. L.J. Brinkhorst (D66), | Vice-minister-president (31 maart 2005), Minister van Economische Zaken | 03.07.2006 | D'66 bewindsleden boden hun ontslag aan wegens affaire rondom nationaliteit Ayaan Hirsi Ali, niet meenemen | gezamenlijk aftreden |
| | mr. J.G. de Hoop Scheffer (CDA), | Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken | 03.12.2003 | In september 2003 wordt bekend dat minister De Hoop Scheffer van Buitenlandse Zaken secretaris-generaal van de NAVO wordt. | andere functie |
| | drs. A. Pechtold (D66), | Minister voor Bestuurlijke vernieuwing en Koninkrijksrelaties | 03.07.2006 | D'66 bewindsleden boden hun ontslag aan wegens affaire rondom nationaliteit Ayaan Hirsi Ali, niet meenemen | gezamenlijk aftreden |
| | Drs. A.D.S.M. Nijs MBA (vvd) | Staatssecretaris van Onderwijs, cultuur en wetenschappen | 09.06.2004 | Na rel rond een interview met weekblad Nieuwe Revu treedt in juni 2004 staatssecretaris Nijs van Onderwijs af. In het interview blijkt dat de verhouding tussen Nijs en minister Van der Hoeven slecht is. Na excuses ziet een Kamermeerderheid geen reden voor het vertrek van Nijs, maar een dag na het Kamerdebat geeft de top van de VVD aan dat Nijs beter kan aftreden. | persoonlijk (geen beleidsgerelateerd incident) |
| | Drs. M. Rutte (vvd) | Staatssecretaris van Onderwijs, cultuur en wetenschappen | 27.06.2006 | treedt af om fractievoorzitter van de VVD in de Tweede Kamer te worden en de lijsttrekker voor de verkiezingen te zijn | andere functie |
| | Drs. M. Rutte (vvd) | Staatssecretaris van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid | 17.06.2004 | Opgenomen in database Bovens: Interne wijzigingen: Rutte is de opvolger van Nijs. | |
| Kabinet-Balkenende III | mr. J.P.H. Donner (CDA), | Minister van Justitie | 21.09.2006 | Na publicatie van het rapport-Van Vollenhoven over de Schipholbrand waarbij elf asielzoekers de dood vonden, treden de ministers Donner en Dekker af op 21 september 2006. http://www.parlement.com/9291000/biof/01855 | incident |
| | mw. S.M. Dekker (VVD), | Minister van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en | 21.09.2006 | Na publicatie van het rapport-Van Vollenhoven over de Schipholbrand waarbij elf asielzoekers de dood vonden, treden de ministers Donner en | incident |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---|------------|--|-------------------------|
| | | Milieubeheer | | Dekker af op 21 september 2006. | |
| Kabinet-Balkenende IV | drs. W.J. Bos (PvdA), | Viceminister-president, minister van Financiën | 23.02.2010 | gezamenlijk opstappen PvdA-bewindslieden over missie Uruzgan, niet meenemen | gezamenlijk aftreden |
| | mw. dr. G. ter Horst (PvdA), | Minister van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties | 23.02.2010 | gezamenlijk opstappen PvdA-bewindslieden over missie Uruzgan, niet meenemen | gezamenlijk aftreden |
| | dr. R.H.A. Plasterk (PvdA), | Minister van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap | 23.02.2010 | gezamenlijk opstappen PvdA-bewindslieden over missie Uruzgan, niet meenemen | gezamenlijk aftreden |
| | mw. dr. J.M. Cramer (PvdA), | Minister van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer | 23.02.2010 | gezamenlijk opstappen PvdA-bewindslieden over missie Uruzgan, niet meenemen | gezamenlijk aftreden |
| | drs. A.G. Koenders (PvdA), | Minister voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking | 23.02.2010 | gezamenlijk opstappen PvdA-bewindslieden over missie Uruzgan, niet meenemen | gezamenlijk aftreden |
| | mw. drs. C.P. Vogelaar (PvdA), | Minister voor Wonen, Wijken en Integratie | 14.11.2008 | Onzekerheid over de financiering van de wijkaanpak verstoort haar relatie met PvdA-leider Bos. Ongelukkig mediaoptredens ondermijnden daarnaast haar gezag. Op 14 november 2008 trad zij af, nadat de partijleiding het vertrouwen in haar had opzegd. http://www.parlement.com/9291000/biof/01855 | verschil visie/incident |
| | mr. E.E. van der Laan (PvdA), | Minister voor Wonen, Wijken en Integratie | 23.02.2010 | gezamenlijk opstappen PvdA-bewindslieden over missie Uruzgan, niet meenemen | gezamenlijk aftreden |
| | C. van der Knaap (cda) | staatssecretaris van Defensie | 18.12.2007 | wordt benoemd tot burgemeester van Ede | andere functie |
| | Drs. J.G. de Vries (cda) | staatssecretaris van Defensie | 23.02.2010 | persoonlijke redenen (relatie met medewerker op ministerie Defensie) | persoonlijk |
| | Ing. A. Aboutaleb (pvda) | Staatssecretaris van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid | 12.12.2008 | wordt benoemd tot burgemeester van Rotterdam | andere functie |
| Kabinet-Rutte | mr. J.P.H. Donner (CDA), | Minister van Binnenlandse Zaken | 16.12.2002 | wordt vice-voorzitter Raad van State | andere functie |

Appendix D: overview of excluded non-resignation cases

| News paper | resignation call? | resign | why (not) selected | Minister | cabinet | date | page | incident | kind of incident' |
|------------|-------------------|--------|---|--|---------|------------|------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| AD | x | no | not really policy incident, just wrong statement | Borst (VWS) | Kok II | 18.04.2001 | 3 | pil van Drion | public statements minister |
| NRC | x | no | selected, policy incident, multiple ministers (part of the non-resignation) | meerdere ministers: o.a. De Vries (BZK), Pronk (VROM), van Hoof (Defensie --> SS), De Grave (defensie) | Kok II | 24.04.2001 | 2 | vuurwerkramp Enschede | policy incident |
| Trouw | x | no | .-. | de Grave (Defensie) | Kok II | 27.04.2001 | 1 | vuurwerkramp Enschede | policy incident |
| Trouw | x | no | .-. | De vries (bzk) | Kok II | 27.04.2001 | 3 | vuurwerkramp Enschede | policy incident |
| Trouw | x | no | Korthals already selected in 'bouwfraude' case | Korthals (Justitie) | Kok II | 24.01.2002 | 3 | drugssmokkel schiphol | policy incident |
| AD | x | no | connected to the cabinetscrisis and the fall of the entire Kok II (different logic) | de Grave (Defensie) --> hele kabinet | Kok II | 13.04.2002 | 1 | Srebrenica (NIOD) | policy incident (but of predecessor) |
| Trouw | x | no | .-. | de Grave (Defensie) --> hele kabinet | Kok II | 15.04.2002 | 1 | Srebrenica (NIOD) | policy incident (but of predecessor) |
| AD | x | no | .-. | de Grave (Defensie) --> hele kabinet | Kok II | 15.04.2002 | 3 | Srebrenica (NIOD) | policy incident (but of predecessor) |
| Trouw | x | no | not sure if really demand to resign (only brother of | de vries (bzk) | Kok II | 04.06.2002 | 1 | moord op Pim Fortuyn | policy incident |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|------------------|-----|---|--|-------------|------------|---|--|--|
| | | | Fortuyn) | | | | | | |
| Trouw | x | no | .-. | de vries (bzk) | Kok II | 21.06.2002 | 3 | moord op Pim Fortuyn | policy incident |
| AD | x | no | no policy incident, but 'wrong' statements. | Nawijn (Vreemde lingenzak en) | Balkende I | 20.11.2002 | 2 | uitspraken over doodstraf | public statements minister |
| NRC | x (al opgestapt) | yes | Resignation case | Korthals (Defensie, maar Justitie in Kok II) | Balkende I | 13.12.2002 | 1 | onjuiste info over bouwfraude schipholtunnel | policy incident + wrong information to parliament |
| Trouw | x | no | Donner already selected in Schiphol fire | Donner (Justitie) | Balkende II | 04.06.2004 | 1 | ontsnapte TBS'er in de fout | policy incident |
| AD | x | no | not so much 1 incident, but accumulation of incidents | van der Hoeven (OCW) | Balkende II | 15.09.2004 | 3 | hbo-fraude, het aftreden van ss Nijs en de riante bonussen voor ambtenaren | policy incident (actually accumulation of smaller incidents) |
| Trouw | x | no | not sure if really demand to resign | Remkes (BZK) | Balkende II | 12.11.2004 | 1 | moord op Theo van Gogh (inlichtingendienst) | policy incident |
| NRC | x | no | Donner already selected in Schiphol fire | Donner (Justitie) | Balkende II | 16.06.2005 | 3 | proefverlof TBS | policy incident |
| NRC | x | no | Verdonk already selected in Schiphol fire | Verdonk (Vreemde lingenzak en en Integratie) | Balkende II | 22.06.2005 | 1 | verkeerde info terugsturen asielzoekers Congo | wrong information to parliament |
| NRC | x (al opgestapt) | yes | Resignation case | Donner (Justitie) en Dekker (VROM) | Balkende II | 22.09.2006 | 1 | Schipholbrand | policy incident |
| NRC | x | yes | Resignation case | Vogelaar (WWI) | Balkende IV | 14.11.2008 | 3 | beeldvorming, uitspraken joods/christelijk/islamitische traditie, Vogelaarwijken | policy incident/public statements |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---|----|---|------------------------------|----------|------------|---|--|--------------------|
| AD | x | no | selected, clear policy incident | Teeven (ss Justitie) | Rutte II | 18.04.2013 | 2 | dood Russische vluchteling in NL Cel (Dolmatov) | policy incident |
| Telegr aaf | x | no | .-. | Teeven (ss Justitie) | Rutte II | 18.04.2013 | 3 | dood Russische vluchteling in NL Cel (Dolmatov) | policy incident |
| Telegr aaf | x | no | Too far into 2013 for data collection | Weekers (ss Financien) | Rutte II | 06.05.2013 | 3 | fraude belastingdienst | policy incident |

Appendix E: search terms + time frame + amount of articles of newspaper search on LexisNexis.

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Case 1 | | |
| Search terms | Hlead(<i>vuurwerkramp</i>) + Hlead(<i>Minister</i>) | |
| Time frame | 13-05-2000 | 15-05-2002 |
| | <i>Firework explosion Enschede</i> | <i>New Parliamentary elections</i> |
| Amount of articles | 142 | |

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Case 2 | | |
| Search terms | Hlead(<i>bouwfraude</i>) + Hlead(<i>Korthals</i>) | |
| Time frame | 09-11-2001 22-01-2003 | 22-01-2003 |
| | <i>Zembla broadcast</i> | <i>New Parliamentary elections</i> |
| Amount of articles | 51 | |

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Case 3 | | |
| Search terms | 1.Hlead(<i>Schipholbrand</i>) + Hlead(<i>Minister</i>) 2.Hlead(<i>Schiphol</i>) + Hlead(<i>brand</i>) + Hlead(<i>Minister</i>) | |
| Time frame | 27-10-2005 | 22-11-2006 |
| | <i>Schiphol detention fire</i> | <i>New Parliamentary elections</i> |
| Amount of articles | 1. 117 2. 67 | |

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| Case 4 | | |
| Search terms | Hlead(<i>Dolmatov</i>) + Hlead(<i>Teeven</i>) | |
| Time frame | 17-01-2013 | 05-10-2013 |
| | <i>Suicide of Dolmatov</i> | <i>End of period for data collection</i> |
| Amount of articles | 50 | |