

WORLDWIDE FOR A MORE SECURE NETHERLANDS

LEGITIMATION AND SECURITIZATION OF THE DUTCH
PARTICIPATION IN ISAF, SFIR, AND MINUSMA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the legitimation for the Dutch participation in the missions to Afghanistan (ISAF), Iraq (SFIR), and Mali (MINUSMA). By analyzing the dynamics of the corresponding political decision-making processes, a thorough basis is given on which the legitimation is positioned and understood. The distinctive characteristic of this research is the focus on securitization. The decision to embark on a mission to achieve security from potential threats invokes securitizing argumentation. Securitizing arguments have the ability to provide an effective way to clear the legitimacy threshold in place for decisions regarding the deployment of armed forces. Hence, this research analyzes what position securitization holds in the legitimation for the three missions. Securitization, as developed by the Copenhagen School, also provides the analytical tool to discern the stages of the political process. Finally, the research comprises a comparing effort to indicate recurrent tendencies of the Dutch twenty-first century cabinets. Extensive primary source analysis results in the finding that broadly applicable, universal arguments such as arguments of international solidarity and international responsibility prevail in the legitimation for participation. Furthermore, mission-specific securitizing arguments can be traced back in the legitimation of all missions, although they are most visible with MINUSMA.

JUNE 12 – DUTCH PARTICIPATION IN MINUSMA STOPS

Three days before handing in the final version of this thesis, the news came to the world that the Dutch contribution to MINUSMA will be terminated at the beginning of 2019. The participation in Mali, still consisting of around 240 troops, would according to the cabinet have lost its priority as these priorities now “lay elsewhere.” The resulting freedom of movement of Defense will be used to deploy a number of troops to the mission in Afghanistan, as a reaction to a request by NATO and the US. The mission in Iraq is likely to receive additional soldiers also.¹

The decision of Rutte III came a day before the publication of a critical report of the Court of Auditors on the Dutch involvement in MINUSMA. The Court addresses that “Defense has been barely able to keep the mission up and going.”² Amongst other deficits are the lack of material and training mentioned. Furthermore, the risk for the operability of the armed forces that comes along involvement in 18 different missions, is underscored. In political decision-making, according to the Court, this operability should be taken into account more.³

The report concludes the Dutch cabinet to prioritize the continuation of the mission over its military feasibility. This finding does not come as a surprise as it relates closely to the conclusion of this thesis: universal arguments often take in the dominant position in political decision-making. Furthermore for Mali specifically, securitizing arguments were used as a tool to reach a broad base of support. Because of this weighty legitimation, other concerns may receive less contemplation as they become of subordinate importance. More practical concerns, like military feasibility, will consequently be overshadowed. Whereas extensive mechanisms of control like the Toetsingskader and article 100 have been brought into existence to enhance political decision-making, it still seems a struggle to make the right choices. Thus, when a decision to participate in a mission has been made on the highest political level, the mechanisms of control are seemingly much handled like a formality: their boxes are easily ticked off.

¹ “NOS Journaal,” *NOS*, June 12, 2018.

² “Rekenkamer: Defensie kan missie Mali maar ternauwernood aan,” *NOS*, June 13, 2018.

³ *Ibid.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali
CDA	Christen-Democratisch Appèl (Christian Democratic Appeal)
D66	Democraten 66 (Democrats 66)
EU	European Union
EUTM	European Union Training Mission
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
LPF	Lijst Pim Fortuyn (List Pim Fortuyn)
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
NATO	North- Atlantic Treaty Organization
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PvdA	Partij van de Arbeid (Labour Party)
PvdD	Partij voor de Dieren (Animal Party)
PVV	Partij voor de Vrijheid (Freedom Party)
SFIR	Stabilization Force Iraq
SGP	Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (Reformed Political Party)
SP	Socialistische Partij (Socialist Party)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy)
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

INTRODUCTION

Military security has been a theme receiving substantial interest in international relations. The discipline of international relations was even founded because of the post-World War I preoccupation with the study of war.⁴ From the onset of the modern state system, the traditional duty of the state has mostly revolved around its obligation to preserve peace and security from external dangers for its inhabitants, as described by the eminent English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes in his monumental work *Leviathan*.⁵ Hence, throughout the twentieth century, the field of war studies placed most focus on state security from external state-based threats. With the end of the Cold War, the scope of the term security broadened, resulting in an increased difficulty to exactly define threats.⁶ This expanded definition led to a perception of a diffusion of threats, that was further spurred by 9/11, which caused an increased awareness of the vulnerability of Western states with a conventional orientation to applying military force towards non-state actors with irregular warfare methods.⁷ As the result of these countries becoming more aware of their vulnerabilities in the contemporary world, attempts to create a threat-free world have increasingly been endeavored.

On the basis of the argument of this “globalized insecurity” and to combat “evil” abroad, foreign missions have been increasingly justified by Western states as important instruments.⁸ States see the necessity of a military commitment abroad to achieve security in relation to potential future threats, also known as “security exporting.”⁹ This is also part of Dutch policy, which distinctly incorporates the possibility of foreign interventions to prevent potential conflicts or dampen their impact.¹⁰ Support for these missions is often tricky to achieve because of the potentially high costs, not only in material and human terms but also regarding credibility, as with interventions norms of noninterference and national sovereignty are often infringed upon. Nevertheless, since the end of the Cold War multiple missions have been initiated and foreign interventions remain a recurring topic of discussion on the international political level.¹¹

⁴ Michael Sheehan, “Military Security,” in *Contemporary Security Studies*, ed. Alan Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 186.

⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London: Penguin Books, 1968 [1651]), 223-228.

⁶ Sheehan, “Military Security,” 186.

⁷ Martin van Creveld, “Technology and War II: From Nuclear Stalemate to Terrorism,” in *The Oxford History of Modern War*, ed. Charles Townshend (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 361.

⁸ Didier Bigo, “Globalized (in)Security: the Field and the Ban-opticon,” in *Translation, Biopolitics, Colonial Difference*, eds. Naoki Sakai and Jon Solomon (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 2006), 110.

⁹ Hubert Zimmermann, “Exporting Security: Success and Failure in the Securitization and Desecuritization of Foreign Military Interventions,” *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 11 (2017): 2, 225.

¹⁰ Rijksoverheid, “Nederland draagt bij aan internationale vrede en veiligheid,” Rijksoverheid.nl, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/internationale-vrede-en-veiligheid/internationale-aanpak-vrede-en-veiligheid> (accessed May 23, 2018).

¹¹ Aidan Hehir, “Humanitarian Intervention,” in *Routledge Handbook of Security Studies*, eds. Myriam Dunn Cavelty and Thierry Balzacq (New York: Routledge, 2017), 415-416.

In addition to dilemmas on the international level, the connected high costs and risks make decisions to embark on a mission potentially hard to sell on the domestic level too. Western governments usually have either a legal obligation to get the permission of the parliament or need to inform the parliament beforehand about the feasibility of a mission. Therefore, to gather support for a mission the parliament needs to be persuaded into the belief that a military commitment abroad, a so-called extraordinary practice of politics, is required.

The framing of a military mission as imperative to solve a security concern invokes the securitization approach of the Copenhagen School.¹² Negative connotations surround securitization, as issues are taken out of the 'regular' political sphere and moved into a state of exemption. According to the Copenhagen School, this can be problematic as extraordinary practices of politics may open the door to potential power abuse by cabinets.¹³ Because securitization can be an effective way to clear the legitimacy threshold normally in place for decisions regarding the deployment of the armed forces, this may lead to unintended consequences. Because of the weight of heavily security-related arguments in the legitimization, other concerns may receive less contemplation and become of subordinate importance, according to military securitization scholars at the Philipps University of Marburg.¹⁴ Furthermore, because securitization legitimizes a military response in the sense of it supposedly bringing increased security to the intervener, this creates a greater distance between the intervener and the host country. This may open the door to complications in military missions.¹⁵

When focusing on the Netherlands, the Dutch cabinet has made considerable contributions to military missions, especially since the end of the Cold War. These missions have ranged from interventions to protect specific (inter)national interests to humanitarian missions and rescue operations.¹⁶ Also, stabilization interventions authorized by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) such as Stabilization Force Iraq (SFIR) and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan have received substantial contributions from the Dutch. Currently, the Netherlands is involved with personnel in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations, mostly in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The contingent of around 240 makes the

¹² Zimmermann, "Exporting Security," 226.

¹³ Ralf Emmers, "Securitization," in *Contemporary Security Studies*, ed. Alan Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 173.

¹⁴ Zimmermann, "Exporting Security," 239.

¹⁵ Stefanie Kappler, "The Securitization of International Peacebuilding," in *Securitization in Statebuilding and Intervention*, eds. Thorsten Bonacker, Werner Distler, and Maria Ketzmerick (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2017), 39-40.

¹⁶ For the full overview of missions with Dutch participation see <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/historische-missies>

Netherlands the eleventh largest European contributor, number 50 on the overall list.¹⁷ It could hence be argued that the Netherlands is a stable partner to peacekeeping efforts by the UN.

A past of missions marked by both successes and failures show that interventions do not always come without pitfalls. This understanding has contributed to an increased realization that international military missions may not always lead to envisioned results. Especially attempts to build peace with missions may well be called challenging in countries with often a post-civil war environment, multiple ethnic identities, and corrupt or even destroyed state institutions.¹⁸ In some cases, missions even fail to such an extent that they open the door to large-scale atrocities, as happened with the massacre of over eight thousand Bosnian Muslims at the 'safe area' of Srebrenica in 1995. The presence of the blue helmets was not enough to prevent the largest European massacre since the end of World War II from happening.¹⁹ The ultimate failure of the UN to bear responsibility for these events led to a considerable loss of face and still invokes a lot of guilt and shame in the international community as of today.²⁰ With a Dutch infantry battalion trying to secure the Muslim enclave, the sense of having a share in the drama was especially felt by the Dutch cabinet. The ensuing resignation of Kok II in 2002 underscored this sense of political responsibility.

With Srebrenica, the public opinion changed dramatically in the Netherlands. According to the Dutch public opinion, risks were too substantial and not worth the lives of Dutch soldiers.²¹ The "national trauma" led to the Dutch cabinet being hesitant with their contributions to UN interventions in the years after Srebrenica. Still, this reticent attitude would only be of a temporary nature as already at the end of 1996 the Netherlands showed a renewed attachment to foreign missions to promote principles of international human rights and to support victims of war.²² Since 1996, the Dutch have hence participated in numerous military missions.

A question worth examining would be how cabinets in the post-Srebrenica era continue to be able to actively decide on contributing Dutch armed forces to risky military missions. Stated in article 100 of the Dutch Constitution, an article established in 2000 to provide parliament with a stronger voice, is the duty of the cabinet to inform parliament beforehand, at the earliest possible moment, about the deployment of the armed forces in missions.²³ Article

¹⁷ United Nations Peacekeeping, "Troop and police contributors," [Peacekeeping.un.org, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors](https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors) (accessed January 31, 2018).

¹⁸ Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War & Building Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 19.

¹⁹ Isabelle Duyvesteyn and Luuk Arlar, "Nederland en humanitaire interventie," in *De wereld volgens Nederland: Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek in historisch perspectief*, eds. Jacco Pekelder, Remco Raben, and Mathieu Segers (Amsterdam: Boom, 2015), 224.

²⁰ Sarah Perkins, "The Failure to Protect: Expanding the Scope of Command Responsibility to the United Nations at Srebrenica," *University of Toronto Faculty of Law Review* 62 (2004), 194-196.

²¹ J.S. van der Meulen, "Stemmingen aan het thuisfront. De postmoderne samenleving en haar soldaten," in *Lessen uit Srebrenica: Nederland en internationale vredesmissies*, ed. Jan Weerdenburg (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Prestige, 1998), 34-35.

²² Christ Klep and Richard van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul* (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 2005), 141-143; Duyvesteyn and Arlar, "Nederland en humanitaire interventie," 236.

²³ Dutch Constitution, art. 100.

100 is different from article 96 in the sense that the former does not require the government to get the *de jure* permission of the parliament whereas the latter, in which war is declared, does.²⁴ Still, a decision by the cabinet to send armed forces on a mission without a solid base of political support is unthinkable.²⁵ Therefore, *de facto* the parliament exerts strong, even decisive influence on the decision-making to embark on a military intervention. For the cabinet, this translates to an even stronger need to convince the parliament of the necessity and importance of such a response to a possible foreign challenge. An effective way to legitimize a mission, according to the Copenhagen School, would be to frame the specific situation abroad as a pressing security concern, thus to securitize the issue.²⁶

As stressed by military securitization scholars, by securitizing the issue, the legitimacy threshold for foreign missions is quite easily cleared. Whereas underlying motivation for participation may be based on different considerations, there is a substantial chance to gain support when applying securitization legitimation. Therefore, it is interesting to examine what role securitization arguments played in the dynamics of the Dutch decision-making process for military missions. Whereas numerous studies into the processes of military securitization have been published, these often have a somewhat limited focus on the United States (US) as the leading actor. Furthermore, these studies generally focus on single case studies and do not aim to discover particular trends and consistencies over multiple missions. This stands in contrast with the fact that military security traditionally has always been a topic of broad interest.²⁷ Therefore, by focusing specifically on the Dutch involvement in military missions, more knowledge about the political decision-making and legitimation of foreign missions in the Netherlands can be established. Especially the involvement in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Mali is interesting to analyze as all three missions have received a considerable number of Dutch soldiers, and hence were undertaken in the spotlight of national interest and attention.

In this research, therefore, I will analyze the legitimation for the participation in ISAF, SFIR, and MINUSMA employed on the national level by the Dutch cabinet. In the analysis of the legitimation, notable emphasis will be placed on language signifying securitization argumentation, as arguments of this kind could provide an effective way to clear the legitimacy threshold. Also, the analytical tool that securitization theory offers will be used to discern different stages in the Dutch decision-making process. Each mission will be analyzed in a separate chapter with the subsequent stages of securitization providing the structure of the paragraphs. Naturally, this approach will require a preliminary analysis of the decision-making

²⁴ Dutch Constitution, art. 96.

²⁵ Parlementair Documentatie Centrum Universiteit Leiden, "Geen instemmingsrecht voor Kamer bij inzet van militairen," Parlement.com, <https://www.denederlandsegrondwet.nl/9353000/1/j9vvihlf299q0sr/vib0cxg7t2ws> (accessed June 15, 2018).

²⁶ Emmers, "Securitization," 172.

²⁷ Zimmermann, "Exporting Security," 226.

process concerning the participation in itself, to provide a thorough basis on which the legitimation can be positioned and understood. The political dynamics of this process will thus receive the needed consideration as well. Finally, after the missions are analyzed separately, in the conclusion a comparing effort will be made to indicate whether particular trends are present.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL DEBATE

The legitimation of military operations has received a considerable amount of academic interest. According to the Japanese political scientist Chiyuki Aoi, legitimacy of the intervening force is vital to the success of stability operations. This legitimacy needs to be established on multiple levels: amongst the host government and the local actors, amongst states in the international community and amongst the general public worldwide, including the domestic constituencies of the intervening parties.²⁸ On the host country level, legitimacy of the intervening party is often addressed as a critical factor for consent and support by local actors. By being regarded as legitimate, the chances of success of the operation are significantly enhanced.²⁹ On the international level, most debate on legitimacy follows the legal versus moral responsibility theme as it touches upon the friction between norms of strict noninterference on the one hand and broad human rights in international law on the other. Scholars with often a legal background have repeatedly directed their interest to this friction between both norms and the increased role of international organizations in this sense. Especially the UNSC has played a steadily growing role on the international level since 1989. With the UNSC authorizing a military operation, it appears to receive its collective legitimacy on the international level.³⁰

When turning the attention to the third level, legitimation amongst the general public, more specifically amongst the domestic constituencies of the intervening parties, studies have extensively focused on the concept of public opinion. Most scholars agree that domestic public support is vital to the success of a mission.³¹ Still, on the question how to achieve a favorable public opinion, many factors are determined to be important, ranging from the perceived value of the mission to the level of multilateral support.³² British leading authority on war and politics Lawrence Freedman, however, proposes the concept of strategic narrative as imperative to the public opinion. A strategic narrative is a deliberately constructed compelling story that

²⁸ Chiyuki Aoi, *Legitimacy and the Use of Armed Force* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1.

²⁹ Michael Mersiaides, "Peacekeeping and legitimacy: lessons from Cambodia and Somalia," *International Peacekeeping* 12 (2005): 2, 205-206.

³⁰ Erik Voeten, "The Political Origins of the UN Security Council's Ability to Legitimize the Use of Force," *International Organization* 59 (2005): 3, 527-528.

³¹ Louis Klarevas, "The 'Essential Domino' of Military Operations: American Public Opinion and the Use of Force," *International Studies Perspectives* 3 (2002), 417.

³² George Dimitriu and Beatrice de Graaf, "Fighting the War at Home: Strategic Narratives, Elite Responsiveness, and the Dutch Mission in Afghanistan, 2006–2010," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12 (2016): 1, 4–5.

“communicates a sense of cause, purpose, and mission.” As strategic narratives are about the framing of issues and the suggestion of certain responses, they are not necessarily grounded in evidence but more often appeal to emotion.³³ A government can thus use a strategic narrative to influence public opinion and hence legitimize the response by deploying a military mission to a certain problem. Further elaborating on the legitimization of military missions Leon Wecke, founder of the Dutch study center for peace issues, remarks that “up to the present, the most important instrument of legitimization of military operations is still an enemy or at least a serious threat.” Also, he emphasizes the importance of framing an issue: “Legitimizing threats does not necessarily have to be true. Crucial is the fact whether people believe it to be true or not.”³⁴ Hence, a very effective way to legitimize a military mission would be to communicate a serious threat that needs an appropriate response. This framing and communicating an issue to be a security matter, whether this is true or not, is also known as securitization.

The application of securitization to military interventions has further been worked out by German political scientist Hubert Zimmermann in his article “*Exporting Security: Success and Failure in the Securitization and Desecuritization of Foreign Military Interventions.*” According to Zimmermann, the decision to embark on a mission to achieve security from potential threats is known as security exporting. Legitimation of a military mission by portraying it as a necessary response to counter potential threats invokes securitization argumentation.³⁵ A military commitment abroad for security concerns constitutes an extraordinary practice of politics. Securitization can thus be used to clear the legitimacy threshold normally in place for decisions of this kind.³⁶ Zimmermann analyzes foreign interventions undertaken by Germany, Japan, and the US.

Colleagues of Zimmermann at the Philipps University of Marburg, Thorsten Bonacker, Werner Distler, and Maria Ketzmerick, conflict researchers, provide a more general examination of military securitization with their book *Securitization in Statebuilding and Intervention*. With the discussion of interventions in regions ranging from Tajikistan to South Sudan, they apply securitization to a diverse range of missions. The commencing chapter by German conflict researcher Stefanie Kappler, “*The Securitization of International Peacebuilding,*” explains the application of securitization to peacebuilding interventions. According to Kappler, even peacebuilding and stabilization missions are subject to increased securitization.³⁷ As weak statehood, conflict, and underdevelopment in foreign countries are

³³ Lawrence Freedman, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 23.

³⁴ Leon Wecke, “Legitimation of Military Operations,” in *Beyond the UN Charter: Peace, Security and the Role of Justice*, ed. Olivier Ribbelink (The Hague: Hague Academic Press, 2008), 149-150.

³⁵ Zimmermann, “Exporting Security,” 226.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 239.

³⁷ Kappler, “The Securitization of International Peacebuilding,” 33-34.

portrayed as threats to the West, missions on the basis of these security-related legitimations have increasingly been launched. Security of the West has, therefore, become the driver for peacebuilding interventions, offering opportunities for an interventionist approach. British political scientist Edward Newman has also underlined this observation in his article *"Peacebuilding as Security in 'Failing' and Conflict-Prone States."*³⁸ Hence, the discursive framing of "peacebuilding for peace" has moved towards the framing of "peace as security."³⁹ These understandings connect closely with Zimmermann's notion of security exporting. Security-related legitimation, therefore, currently allows the survival of foreign interventions in times where such efforts have increasingly been exposed to a considerable amount of debate.⁴⁰ For a diverse range of military interventions, securitization can thus be used as legitimation.

For the remaining research, military securitization has been the subject of somewhat confined academic interest. Studies with an explicit focus on the application of securitization to the military sector mainly revolve around the successful securitization of the Soviet Union in times of the Cold War.⁴¹ After the Cold War, as most Western European states did not face severe military threats anymore, most successful securitizations were not in the military, but in the societal and economic sector. Nevertheless, 9/11 brought revived interest to the military sector, and the response of a Global War on Terror constitutes a quite successful twenty-first-century example of military securitization.⁴² Still, many military securitization scholars focus on the US as the main securitizing actor and the invasion of Iraq as a consequence of securitization.⁴³ Extensive research on the securitizing behavior of other states in military missions is almost absent. Also, as many studies focus on single cases of securitization, no attempt has been made to see whether over time a repetitive pattern can be distinguished. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap in military securitization research by focusing on securitization in the Dutch political sphere by analyzing three missions: ISAF in Afghanistan, SFIR in Iraq, and MINUSMA in Mali.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To get a grasp on the political dynamics in the decision-making process of the Dutch government, the two-level game theory will be used. American political scientist Robert D.

³⁸ Edward Newman, "Peacebuilding as Security in 'Failing' and Conflict-Prone States," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 4 (2010): 3, 306.

³⁹ Kappler, "The Securitization of International Peacebuilding," 29.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 33-32.

⁴¹ Barry Buzan, "The Changing Agenda of Military Security," In *Globalization and Environmental Challenges: Reconceptualizing Security in the 21st Century*, eds. Hans Günter Brauch et al. (New York: Springer, 2008), 555-556.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 557-558.

⁴³ For example, see Fred Vultee, "Securitization: A new approach to the framing of the "war on terror"," *Journalism Practice* 4 (2010): 1, 33-47.

Putnam introduced this theory in his essay “*Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games*” from 1988. In his essay Putnam applies the game-theoretic mathematical model of logical decision-making to the political level, taking into account two different levels. For international decision-making, negotiation on these two levels, consisting of the intra-national or domestic level and the international level, are both important for the eventual outcome of the process.⁴⁴ Negotiators face on the two levels different constituencies with whom they need to negotiate and reach an agreement. On the intra-national level, the negotiator faces domestic groups like political parties and interest groups. As these domestic groups apply pressure to make certain decisions, the negotiator often constructs coalitions between the groups to augment power. On the international level, the negotiator faces his foreign counterparts. On this level, the negotiator has the main task to augment his competence in satisfying the domestic needs and simultaneously minimizing the adverse effects of foreign developments. The negotiator needs to play both games, neither of them can be ignored.⁴⁵ Negotiations can thus only lead to an agreement when there is an overlap between what is acceptable to the intra-national level and the international level.⁴⁶ When an overlap is not possible, the negotiator will generally prioritize the intra-national level. The negotiator is often reluctant to ratify an international agreement when this means a significant loss of domestic support.⁴⁷

The two-level game theory has the advantage that it not assumes states to be unitary actors, an assumption that is present in the realist tradition.⁴⁸ In this way, the intra-national political dynamics that bind a state can be accounted for. Therefore, the political decision-making process can be explained in a more encompassing manner than would be achievable without taking into account a state’s internal dynamics. In this way, the theory offers the possibility to describe intra-level conflicts of interest, as not all domestic groups share the same preferences over foreign policy.⁴⁹ The theory is hence very suitable for examining the decision-making process of the Dutch cabinet. As Putnam addresses the abundance of illustrations of entanglement between both levels, I will not aim to construct the research by making a clear but artificial division between the two.⁵⁰ Rather, the understanding of a two-leveled game will be used as a tool to discern the political dynamics. It is therefore vital to identify the most essential intra-national and international actors for the decision-making process of the Dutch cabinet regarding missions.⁵¹ As the cabinet is bound to desire a broad base of support for

⁴⁴ Robert D. Putnam, “Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games,” *International Organization* 42 (1988): 3, 434.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 434.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 441.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 457-458.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 455.

⁴⁹ Keisuke Iida, “When and How Do Domestic Constraints Matter?” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37 (1993): 3, 406.

⁵⁰ Putnam, “Diplomacy and domestic politics,” 459.

⁵¹ For an overview of the Dutch cabinets in the researched time period see appendix “Overview of Dutch cabinets 1998-2018”.

decisions to deploy the armed forces, the biggest political parties in parliament are the vital domestic actors. These parties are the Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA), the Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD), the Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA), Democraten 66 (D66), the Socialistische Partij (SP), and the Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV).⁵² These parties have different visions regarding foreign policy and missions. For the researched time frame, VVD and CDA have the most dominant Atlantic orientation and prefer cooperation in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) context. Still, increased focus towards the European Union (EU) will also lead to a pragmatic EU orientation.⁵³ PvdA places most focus on the importance of the civilian aspect of military missions and also classifies as Euro-pragmatic. D66 however, has a strong preference towards cooperation in EU context.⁵⁴ SP and PVV are in general more skeptic about the underlying considerations on which military missions are undertaken and therefore tend to reject decisions to participate. On the international level, the most vital actors comprise of the leaders of international alliances, such as the Secretary-General of NATO. As decisions to engage in missions are often made in NATO, UN, or EU context, these alliances are essential for the Netherlands. Also, prominent countries that are a member of these alliances are significant on the international level. Since the US often plays a part in shaping Dutch decision-making, in part because several big political parties have an Atlantic orientation, the US is an example of a prominent international actor. This proposition will be taken into account whilst developing the content of this thesis.

With the political dynamics outlined, it is essential to analyze how exactly decisions to contribute to a mission have been accepted on the national level. The legitimization of participation is hence essential to examine to fully grasp why political decisions were made. Securitization can be a very effective way to legitimize an intervention, as argumentation of this kind persuades the public into the idea that an unconventional response is needed. Therefore, as already indicated above, to provide a comprehensive answer to this research, the securitization theory will be used. Theorists of the Copenhagen School, a school of academic thought centered around rethinking the concept of security, first developed this theory. The School played an essential role in the creation of a broadened view on the concept of security, as well as in the introduction of a framework for security analysis.⁵⁵ With its origins at the end of the Cold War, the School was part of a broader attempt to redefine security studies and aimed to provide answers to the broadened and deepened debate about

⁵² Big political party from fifteen seats and up anytime between 1998 and 2018. Only parties that still exist are included in the list. Parlementair Documentatie Centrum Universiteit Leiden, "Zetelverdeling Tweede Kamer 1946-heden," Parlement.com, https://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhronvx6/zetelverdeling_tweede_kamer_1946_heden (accessed May 9, 2018).

⁵³ Duco Hellema, *Nederland in de Wereld* (Houten: Uitgeverij Unieboek, 2010), 410, 422.

⁵⁴ Hans Vollaard and Gerrit Voerman, "Nederlandse partijen over Europese integratie: van eenheidsworst naar splijtzwam?" *Internationale Spectator* 2 (2017), 10.

⁵⁵ Emmers, "Securitization," 168-169.

security.⁵⁶ The approach adopted by the Copenhagen School represents a shift from the strong focus on military security emphasized in traditional security studies, to a more comprehensive definition of security. In 1998, political scientists Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde of the Copenhagen School introduced securitization in their book *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. The authors identify five sectors of security: military, environmental, economic, societal, and political security. Securitization can take place in all of the five sectors and has, therefore, been applied to very diverse topics of interest from the securitization of migration to securitization of climate change.⁵⁷

The dynamics in the sectors are determined by securitizing actors and referent objects. The former consist of the actors that, by making the claim of an existential threat to a particular referent object, securitize issues. These actors can be not only political leaders and governments but also lobbyists and pressure groups. The latter are those matters that are being existentially threatened but possess a legitimate claim to survival.⁵⁸ These referent objects vary over the different sectors of security and can comprise for instance of the state, as with military security; of a collective identity, as with societal security; or of national sovereignty, as with political security.⁵⁹ The concept of securitization focuses on the importance of the speech act by securitizing actors. By sending a discursive message of an existential threat to a referent object, a relevant audience can accept unconventional responses that fall outside of the normal bounds of politics.⁶⁰ Therefore, a two-stage process of firstly portraying a referent object as existentially threatened and secondly convincing the relevant audience of this threat lays the ground for the possibility of the enforcement of so-called extraordinary measures.⁶¹ To comprehend this process for the case of Dutch participation in missions, it is necessary to identify the securitizing actor, the relevant audience, and the referent object. For this research, the securitizing actor is the Dutch cabinet that needs to convince the relevant audience, primarily the parties in parliament, of the necessity of participation. To achieve this, the referent object, the security of the Netherlands, must be portrayed to be threatened.

Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde furthermore propose a securitization spectrum in which specific matters of all of the five sectors can be plotted. Securitization happens when matters move from the low or middle end of the spectrum to the high end of the spectrum; from non-

⁵⁶ Juha A. Vuori, "Constructivism and Securitization Studies," in *Routledge Handbook of Security Studies*, eds. Myriam Dunn Cavelty and Thierry Balzacq (New York: Routledge, 2017), 65.

⁵⁷ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 7; for example, see Ayse Ceyhan and Anastassia Tsoukala, "The Securitization of Migration in Western Societies: Ambivalent Discourses and Policies," *Alternatives* 27 (2002): special issue, 21-39; for example, see Michael Brzoska, "The securitization of climate change and the power of conceptions of security," *S&F Sicherheit und Frieden* 27 (2009): 3, 137-145.

⁵⁸ Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security*, 36.

⁵⁹ Emmers, "Securitization," 169.

⁶⁰ Vuori, "Constructivism," 65.

⁶¹ Emmers, "Securitization", 170.

politicized or politicized to securitized. Issues are non-politicized when a state does not cope with the issue and it is not publicly debated. Issues become politicized when the state deals with the issue, but still within the measures of the standard political system. Securitization happens when issues move up the spectrum as being portrayed as a security question that requires necessary actions that fall beyond the standard political procedures of the state.⁶² Desecuritization takes place when an issue moves back from the securitized realm on the spectrum to the politicized or even non-politicized state. The issue hence moves back to the ordinary public sphere and is at that instant no longer portrayed as an existential threat.⁶³ With this spectrum of different stages, securitization offers a theoretical tool of analysis.⁶⁴

When focusing specifically on the political process for the decision-making around participation in foreign missions, securitization provides an applicable tool too. As decisions regarding the deployment of armed forces for these purposes need to be rooted in a base of solid support, there is a strong need for legitimization. Securitization can provide this needed legitimation. Whereas securitization has faced criticism, the tool it offers is still the most practical tool available in security studies.⁶⁵ It offers a possibility to draw a closer connection between the domestic and foreign faces of security. It also provides an instrument to unravel the political decision-making process and outline political and personal decisions.⁶⁶ Hence in this research, this tool will be used to analyze and comprehend the political process. By examining the Dutch decision-making process for the participation in missions, it can be decided how securitization argumentation was positioned in the legitimation. Important to keep in mind is that the aim of this research is not to prove the veridicality of securitization or to make any claims about whether developments in distant countries actually pose threats requiring extraordinary responses. Instead, securitization will be used in its broad sense, as a tool to discover security arguments, in order to grasp the legitimization of participation.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The securitization approach offers a valuable spectrum to identify three political stages: politicization, securitization, and desecuritization. These stages will be determined and

⁶² Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security*, 23-24.

⁶³ Buzan, "The Changing Agenda of Military Security," 553.

⁶⁴ Rita Taureck, "Securitization theory and securitization studies," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 9 (2006), 55.

⁶⁵ Critique has not exhaustively focused on the unsuitability of the theory outside Western countries and the absence of gender. For example, see Claire Wilkinson, "The Copenhagen School on Tour in Kyrgyzstan: Is Securitization Theory Useable Outside Europe?" *Security Dialogue* 38 (2007): 1, 5-25, and Lene Hansen, "The Little Mermaid's Silent Security Dilemma and the Absence of Gender in the Copenhagen School," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29 (2000): 2, 285-306. Other criticism has aimed more on the groundings of the theory. For example, see Holger Stritzel, "Towards a Theory of Securitization: Copenhagen and Beyond," *European Journal of International Relations* 13 (2007): 3, 357-383.

⁶⁶ Beatrice de Graaf, "Nederland en de collectieve veiligheid," in *De wereld volgens Nederland: Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek in historisch perspectief*, eds. Jacco Pekelder, Remco Raben, and Mathieu Segers (Amsterdam: Boom, 2015), 46-47.

analyzed to find the underlying political process of the missions and the legitimation for participation used by the Dutch cabinet. For this research, the Dutch contribution to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, the SFIR mission in Iraq and the MINUSMA mission in Mali will be analyzed.

Halfway the nineties, a realization grew in the Netherlands that the political decision-making on the deployment of the armed forces should be subject to more stringent and extensive mechanisms of overview and control. The tragic outcome of the Dutch attempts at protection of Srebrenica in the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) mission increased this realization. Clear guidelines like article 100 of the Dutch Constitution, established in 2000, and the 'Toetsingskader', established in 1995, have hence since then been put into use. Article 100 is closely associated with article 90 and article 97. Article 90 prescribes the duty of the cabinet to promote the development of the international legal order, and article 97 states that the armed forces are to carry out this duty.⁶⁷ When decisions regarding the deployment of the armed forces to maintain or promote the international legal order are made, the cabinet has the duty, as stated in article 100, to inform parliament in advance about this. Only in the case of compelling reasons like operational secrecy or international obligations that prevent the immediate provision of information, can the cabinet provide information at a later stage, but still as soon as possible.⁶⁸ Decisions regarding the deployment of the armed forces are subject to an assessment framework consisting of fourteen indicators, known as the Toetsingskader. To analyze three twenty-first century missions is thus to examine whether these extended mechanisms of overview have led to improved decision-making.

Important for the choice of these three missions is that all three have received a compelling amount of attention as the cabinet contributed a quite large number of Dutch soldiers. Additionally, the missions that were completed have their relevance today as much academic research still focuses on questions regarding the responsibility of involved actors and the actual benefits of past involvement. The choice for these three case studies is also based on some differences. Whereas the missions in Afghanistan and Iraq commenced around the same time, the mission in Mali, which only started in 2014, contributes to a current-day application of the theory. Therefore, with the choice of these three twenty-first century missions, research will be done in an encompassing way and, for that reason, could result in findings revealing specific tendencies in the legitimation of the Dutch cabinet.

⁶⁷ Dutch Constitution, art. 90; Dutch Constitution, art. 97.

⁶⁸ Dutch Constitution, art. 100.

Politicization stage

In the politicization stage, an issue that formerly did not receive interest enters the public debate and is managed within the standard political system. An issue, therefore, moves along the securitization spectrum from non-politicized to politicized.⁶⁹ To trace this transition, the first parliamentary documents that focus on the situation in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Mali will be analyzed. To mark the beginning of this phase, news sources will be used as they give a clear indication about the start of raised domestic concern on specific issues. From the time point on when the domestic concern translates to a political issue, parliamentary documents will be analyzed. These documents mostly consist of letters of the cabinet to parliament. Additionally, news sources and additional secondary literature are useful to reconstruct the subsequent political process and will be used too. The end of the politicization stage is indicated by the so-called notification letter, based on article 100 of the Dutch Constitution, in which the cabinet communicates to parliament the intent to investigate the desirability and feasibility of a contribution to a mission.

Securitization stage

In the securitization stage, an issue moves along the spectrum from politicized to securitized: an issue is upgraded to a security question that requires a necessary response.⁷⁰ This transition can be traced back by means of the so-called article 100 letter. This letter constitutes the follow-up on the notification in which the cabinet provides information regarding a decision to parliament as stated in article 100. It presents an assessment of the mission on its political desirability and military feasibility and provides details regarding the period and size of the contribution. Hence, to get a clear grasp on the argumentation of the cabinet during the securitization stage these article 100 letters will be examined. Also, the general consultation with parliament following the article 100 letter gives an indication about the legitimation and political process. Furthermore, news sources will be analyzed to get an understanding of the broader political dynamics of the securitization stage.

Desecuritization stage

With the deployment of the armed forces, initial successful securitization has taken place. However, this initial success often unfolds into a subsequent stage when the issue slowly loses traction as a security concern and the state of exceptionality slowly dissolves. As a consequence, the securitized issue moves back from the securitized realm to the ordinary public sphere.⁷¹ This transition, desecuritization, has the consequence that fundamental

⁶⁹ Emmers, "Securitization," 170.

⁷⁰ Emmers, "Securitization," 170.

⁷¹ Zimmermann, "Exporting Security," 229.

arguments underlying the core reasons and values behind the foreign deployment are re-evaluated. Desecuritization can be analyzed with the use of subsequent article 100 letters, which inform parliament about termination or continuation after the period of the first troop commitment, usually one or two years, is completed. Also, the recurrent updating letters on the mission, the 'Stand van Zaken' letters, will be used. In these letters, developments are discussed and changes in the mission are addressed. Information about decisions to significantly reduce or withdraw the contribution to a mission are indications for desecuritization. The subsequent general consultations with parliament will be analyzed too. For the desecuritization stage likewise, news sources and secondary literature come in as useful to reconstruct the political process. As MINUSMA is still active in 2018, a full description of the desecuritization stage for Mali cannot be given. Still, discovered dynamics in the analysis show a common thread that gives an indication about future decision-making: for Mali, desecuritization is also set in motion.

Structure of the research

Each mission will be analyzed in a separate chapter, with the first chapter focusing on ISAF, the second chapter on SFIR, and the third chapter on MINUSMA. The subsequent stages of securitization will provide the structure of the paragraphs, with the stage of politicization composing the first paragraph, securitization the second, and desecuritization the third. In the fourth paragraph of each chapter, an interim conclusion for the mission will be provided. A final comparison between the three contributions, aimed at signaling trends and characteristics of the Dutch cabinets, will be presented in the conclusion.

CHAPTER 1 – ISAF AFGHANISTAN

The attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, formed the starting point for a response in the shape of a Global War on Terror declared by President George W. Bush. The first outcome, targeting Afghanistan already a month later, was Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The Islamic fundamentalist group in power of Afghanistan, the Taliban, supposedly provided Al Qaeda a safe base of operations. Therefore, in order to undermine Al Qaeda, according to the US, the Taliban had to be removed from power. OEF was led by the US and supported above all by the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, and the Northern Alliance, a military front mostly formed by fighters from the north of Afghanistan.⁷² The coalition managed to conquer territory quickly, and at the beginning of December, the Taliban regime was overthrown. Most of the ousted members were able to escape to Pakistan.

The rapid victory of the coalition raised questions from the international community concerning the plan for the future of Afghanistan. To avoid the country slipping back in the hands of terrorists and to prevent a political power and security vacuum, the agreement of Bonn created a new interim government, led by President Hamid Karzai. Also, with resolution 1386 adopted by UNSC in December 2001, ISAF was created.⁷³ ISAF had the initial assignment mainly to assist with keeping Kabul secure.⁷⁴ With resolution 1510 in October 2003, ISAF would be extended to the rest of the land.⁷⁵ The extension of ISAF happened in four phases, with each phase focusing on a different part of the country. The Netherlands would deploy contributions to ISAF from 2002 to 2010, with the biggest contribution in phase three focusing on South-Afghanistan. The province of Uruzgan would fall under the responsibility of the Dutch.⁷⁶

1.1 POLITICIZATION

The US and NATO considered the attack on September 11 to be not only an attack on the US but also an attack on all members of NATO, as detailed in article 5 of the NATO treaty. For the first time in history, article 5 would be used as the legitimation for NATO members to participate in OEF in Afghanistan.⁷⁷ The Netherlands would contribute to the coalition with maritime and air support after a request by the US, but remained quite reluctant to supply boots on the ground.⁷⁸ The controversy surrounding the US-led OEF, as some viewed the operation to be

⁷² Klep and van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 442-443.

⁷³ United Nations Security Council, S/RES/1386, December 20, 2001.

⁷⁴ Klep and van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 452.

⁷⁵ United Nations Security Council, S/RES/1510, October 13, 2003; Klep and van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 453.

⁷⁶ Christ Klep, *Uruzgan* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2011), 22.

⁷⁷ Ministerie van Defensie, "Het Nederlandse aandeel in operatie Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan," Defensie.nl, <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/historische-missies/missie-overzicht/2001/ending-freedom/nederlands-aandeel> (accessed April 16, 2018).

⁷⁸ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 24, November 9, 2001, 2.

an impulsive reprisal attempt, was the reason for the Dutch government to focus on the more constructive part after the invasion. As the Dutch cabinet and parliament became skeptical of the anti-terrorism focus of OEF and its increasingly deteriorating reputation, contributing to a constructive stabilization force like ISAF was hence, seen as a preferable option. With this indicated commitment of the Netherlands, Afghanistan won its place on the Dutch political agenda, and thus politicization was achieved. Whereas Minister of Foreign Affairs Jozias van Aartsen on December 7 would argue not to want to speculate about a possible contribution without a robust mandate in place, four days later the cabinet communicated its willingness to consider a possible Dutch contribution to a stabilization force.⁷⁹ With the willingness of the Brits to lead the mission and resolution 1386 of the UNSC creating ISAF on December 20, an optimal opportunity would be created for the Dutch. A substantial contribution to ISAF was preferred over OEF, by both the cabinet and a majority of parliament.⁸⁰

1.2 SECURITIZATION

After Frank de Grave, Minister of Defense of the Kok II government, had already indicated the decision to contribute to a security force with around 300 soldiers at the meeting of the NATO Ministers of Defense on December 18, the official announcement of the decision to contribute to ISAF followed on December 21 with an article 100 letter.⁸¹ ISAF would consist of around 3000 troops with the Dutch contribution being a reinforced airmobile infantry company of approximately 200 soldiers. The participation of the Netherlands was planned for an initial period of six months.⁸² The legitimation to participate in ISAF was mainly based on the call for all members to contribute to ISAF with personnel, equipment, and other resources, as was indicated in section two of resolution 1386.⁸³ According to the cabinet, a Dutch contribution would promote the international legal order as it constituted an opportunity to support the process of reconciliation and rebuilding of the country. In this way, tensions in the whole region could be diminished, and political rapprochement between nations in the region could be further stimulated.⁸⁴ By rebuilding Afghanistan and showing dedication to invest in the long term, a lessening of refugee problems in the region and Europe were to be expected. This would also have consequences for the refugee flows towards the Netherlands where already around 30000 refugees were accommodated. Additionally, by contributing to an international military presence in Afghanistan, a commitment to the global fight against terrorism would be

⁷⁹ "Binnenkort vredesmacht Afghanistan"; Minister Powell bij NAVO," *NRC*, December 7, 2001; Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 32, December 11, 2001, 1.

⁸⁰ "Duitsers en Britten: vredesmacht leiden," *NRC*, December 8, 2001; Klep, *Uruzgan*, 15-18.

⁸¹ "Commando's naar Kabul," *NRC*, December 19, 2001; Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 35, December 21, 2001, 1.

⁸² Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 35, December 21, 2001, 2, 11, 15.

⁸³ United Nations Security Council, S/RES/1386, December 20, 2001, 2.

⁸⁴ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 35, December 21, 2001, 3.

shown.⁸⁵ By making the connection between the situation in Afghanistan and refugee flows and terrorism in the Netherlands, the cabinet hence used some level of securitizing argumentation to substantiate their decision.

In the general consultation with parliament, Minister of Foreign Affairs Van Aartsen stressed the importance of stability in the region once more and the Dutch interest to not let Afghanistan turn into a new black spot on the map. Furthermore, the connection between a stable state and an alleviation of the refugee problem would be drawn again.⁸⁶ In the general consultation, the most hotly debated issues were the decision to contribute six F-16 fighter jets for air support to the American armed forces and the question of what would happen after the end of the British leadership of ISAF at the end of April. Still, the level of broad support would never be endangered as all parties, except the Socialists of SP, showed to approve the decision of the cabinet.⁸⁷ With this solid base of political support in parliament in place, the cabinet would both have the opportunity to fulfill its duty to promote the international legal order, as indicated in article 90 of the Dutch Constitution, and remain a loyal partner to NATO. With securitization of the Afghanistan issue achieved, the first Dutch forces arrived at the beginning of the new year.

1.3 RESECURITIZATION AND DESECURITIZATION

With the Dutch contingent of 221 soldiers fully operational in mid-February and ISAF in total now consisting of around 4500 soldiers, the Dutch cabinet would communicate an improved situation in Kabul in the first 'Stand van Zaken' letter. Still, the authority of the interim government would not reach any further than Kabul, and the risks for the ISAF troops deployed remained.⁸⁸ In the letter, the cabinet communicated it would seriously consider a continuation of the Dutch contribution if a follow-up to resolution 1386 would be in place.⁸⁹ With this new resolution adopted in May, the now interim cabinet communicated the decision to extend the Dutch ISAF contribution for another six months in June. The responsibility of the mission would, after the resignation of the Kok II cabinet on April 16 because of the damning report on Srebrenica by the Dutch Institute for War Documentation (NIOD), be in the hands of the future government under the leadership of Christian Democrat Jan Peter Balkenende: Balkenende I. According to Kok II, to still contribute to current problems like terrorism and refugee flows, a continuation of the support of the international community would be much needed.⁹⁰ As the Bonn agreement indicated that holding elections and bringing a chosen government into office

⁸⁵ Ibid., 3-4.

⁸⁶ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 42, December 22, 2001, 12.

⁸⁷ "Kamer akkoord met deelname vredesmacht," *NRC*, December 24, 2001.

⁸⁸ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 55, April 12, 2002, 5-6.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 8.

⁹⁰ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 61, June 14, 2002, 2.

would take up to two years, the cabinet communicated its willingness in principle to appeal once more for an extension of the Dutch contribution.⁹¹ And indeed in November, the new – but by now itself interim – Balkenende I government would not only communicate another decision to continue the contribution but also communicate the decision to fulfill the role of lead nation of ISAF together with Germany for six months. The total Dutch contribution would hence be extended with an additional 400 soldiers.⁹² Because of good relations between both countries, Germany's informal suggestion in August to take charge of ISAF together was positively received by the new cabinet.⁹³ By having the position of a lead nation, a strong amount of influence on the operation would be guaranteed. The decision to lead ISAF would be based on the precondition that ISAF would not be extended geographically farther than Kabul and with the reassurance of NATO to help find a successor at the end of the term.⁹⁴ Whereas the security situation remained uncertain and tense with the Taliban and Al Qaeda still present, the majority of parliament would support the decision of Balkenende I.⁹⁵ With an assurance of this being the final Dutch contribution to ISAF, according to Minister of Foreign Affairs Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Germany and the Netherlands took over command in Kabul in February 2003.⁹⁶

The increased commitment to ISAF indicates that full desecuritization would not come until a later stage. And indeed, as 2003 progressed it became quite clear that the leadership of the Netherlands in Kabul would not be the last contribution, at least not in the strict terms communicated by Minister De Hoop Scheffer. With the decision of NATO taking the lead of ISAF from August on, it would become self-evident that this would result in a continued NATO involvement in Afghanistan.⁹⁷ In June 2003 the new Balkenende II cabinet would decide that the Netherlands again should still be prepared to take its international responsibility. Whereas the Dutch reinforced company returned to the Netherlands, thirty-five new Dutch soldiers would still participate in ISAF, this time under the flag of NATO.⁹⁸

The reduction in the Dutch contribution to thirty-five soldiers would only be temporary as the leadership of NATO brought prospects of a possible extension of the scope of ISAF closer. Also, in the parallel OEF mission so-called Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were increasingly being established to bring security also outside Kabul.⁹⁹ Not surprisingly, in October NATO made its decision to extend the scope of ISAF to the rest of Afghanistan.¹⁰⁰

⁹¹ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 61, June 14, 2002, 13.

⁹² Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 71, November 6, 2002, 2.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁹⁵ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 75, December 12, 2002, 19-22.

⁹⁶ "Kamer stemt in met opperbevel in Kabul; Nederland en Duitsland leiden missie," *NRC*, November 26, 2002.

⁹⁷ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 92, April 28, 2003, 5; "NAVO gaat missie Afghanistan leiden," *NRC*, April 16, 2003.

⁹⁸ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 95, June 25, 2003, 1, 5-6.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰⁰ "NAVO: in principe buiten Kabul," *NRC*, October 6, 2003.

However, it would be a tough task to find countries willing to send troops for carrying out the extended mandate as many were involved in operations in Iraq too. After having been approached by the Secretary-General of NATO, the Dutch cabinet supported the extension of ISAF and signaled the possibility of a resumed Dutch-German cooperation in an ISAF-led PRT.¹⁰¹ Despite the willingness of the Dutch cabinet to provide its part of the share in early 2004, by contributing several Apache helicopters and 135 soldiers in a supporting role to ISAF for six months, NATO would still struggle to build a substantial base of material and manpower support. Countries were reluctant to contribute as the unstable security situation in Afghanistan lingered on.¹⁰² Nevertheless, the temporary lessening and desecuritization of the Afghan issue since June 2003 was stalled and even brought Afghanistan back to the top of the political agenda again.

As the till then only ISAF-led PRT in Kunduz under the leadership of the Germans was positively evaluated, NATO felt a need to examine whether it would be possible to extend the number of ISAF-led PRTs by also taking over PRTs from the command of OEF.¹⁰³ The Dutch government, once more stressing the need to fulfill its international responsibility, would show to be willing to provide another contribution.¹⁰⁴ In June, the cabinet communicated the definitive decision to lead a PRT in the Baghlan province. The 120 to 150 soldiers would stay in principle for one year.¹⁰⁵ According to the cabinet, as the situation in Afghanistan remained a threat to international peace and security, lasting improvement would require a long-term effort.¹⁰⁶ The Dutch team would be one of the five PRTs in phase one of the extension of ISAF, focusing on North-Afghanistan. Earlier plans of 18 to 20 PRTs by NATO would remain a distant aspiration because of the lack of contributors.¹⁰⁷

In the general consultation with parliament following the decision, members repeatedly referred to the feeling of the Dutch being “the best boy in class” toward NATO. As a response, minister of Defense Henk Kamp would refer to the idealist perception of Dutch foreign policy: “Why keep everything to our own, when we can do so much good with it abroad? Our people want it. The parliament wants to make funds available.”¹⁰⁸ When the remaining concerns about the emergency evacuation possibilities were taken away with the reassurance that the Dutch Apache helicopters would be available to the soldiers in Baghlan too, all parties, except SP,

¹⁰¹ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 100, October 21, 2003, 2-3.

¹⁰² Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 109, January 30, 2004, 1-3; “NAVO: verder uitbreiden in Afghanistan; Nog geen concrete steun,” *NRC*, February 7, 2004.

¹⁰³ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 109, January 30, 2004, 9-10.

¹⁰⁴ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 119, March 5, 2004, 1.

¹⁰⁵ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 133, June 28, 2004, 1-2.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 3, 14.

¹⁰⁷ “Groeierende druk op de NAVO en haar chef; De Hoop Scheffer wil 'structureel feilen' in Afghanistan aanpakken op top,” *NRC*, June 26, 2004.

¹⁰⁸ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 142, July 5, 2004, 36-37.

supported the decision of Balkenende II.¹⁰⁹ The subsequent decision in August to extend the helicopter contribution once more would, therefore, be accepted without much meddling from parliament. Additionally, another temporary contribution of six F-16s and a tanker aircraft connected to the upcoming Afghan presidential elections would add to the safety of the Dutch ISAF soldiers.¹¹⁰

The temporary character would fade when in February 2005 the cabinet decided to contribute four F-16s together with an additional number of 100 troops to ISAF for a period of one year. After a general request from NATO, the Dutch cabinet showed to be willing to answer its call. Whereas in the general consultation this decision would be accepted by the majority of parliament, another topic received most discussion: the decision of the cabinet to contribute 250 special forces to OEF in South-Afghanistan.¹¹¹ The intention of the cabinet to not search for a solid base of support in parliament, using article 97 instead of article 100 as the legal basis, would cause a high level of dissatisfaction in parliament.¹¹² In a requested general consultation with parliament on this disputed topic, three of the nine parties would show to be against the decision. Whereas PvdA, SP, and GroenLinks could not reach a majority together this development, showing first signs of principled unease of parliament, would mark the onset of more turmoil on the topic of Afghanistan on the national political level.¹¹³

As the Dutch contribution to the SFIR mission in Iraq would terminate in April, the cabinet foresaw an opportunity to increase the contribution to ISAF even more. After first communicating the extension of the deployment of the PRT team, Balkenende II would also communicate the temporary deployment of a marines battalion of around 750 forces to support upcoming elections.¹¹⁴ Additionally, as phase two of the extension of ISAF, focusing on West-Afghanistan, was set into motion, plans for phase three, regarding South-Afghanistan from 2006 onwards, needed to be made. In the general consultation with parliament, Minister Kamp stated he had already addressed the willingness of the Dutch to contribute at an earlier NATO meeting. He also communicated his desire to investigate the possibility of another PRT under Dutch command in South-Afghanistan. The circumstances in the south would, however, be very different from the province of Baghlan.¹¹⁵ The ongoing engagements with fighters of Al Qaeda and the Taliban by OEF forces in the south would need to be finished before ISAF would set foot in these regions.¹¹⁶ When, despite the efforts of OEF, the intensity of the conflict

¹⁰⁹ "Nederlands leger leidt deel wederopbouw Afghanistan," *NRC*, June 29, 2004; Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 142 27.

¹¹⁰ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 141, August 20, 2004, 1-2.

¹¹¹ "Kabinet: elitemacht naar Afghanistan; Voor het eerst belast met gevechtstaken," *NRC*, February 25, 2005; "Missie naar Afghanistan: 250 soldaten," *NRC*, February 26, 2005.

¹¹² "Mooie beloften over missie Afghanistan," *NRC*, March 9, 2005.

¹¹³ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 167, March 10, 2005, 38-40.

¹¹⁴ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 177, June 3, 2005, 1-2, 17.

¹¹⁵ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 183, June 28, 2005, 22-23.

¹¹⁶ "Afghaanse show onder toezicht; Mariniers zien toe op rustig verloop verkiezingen van 18 september," *NRC*, September 1, 2005.

deteriorated even more in November, the possible deployment as communicated by strong advocate Minister Kamp was brought into even greater question.¹¹⁷ Greater synergy between OEF and ISAF as envisioned by NATO in September would mean an entanglement of ISAF forces into fighting tasks, a point of concern many Dutch parties voiced repeatedly.

The decision on whether to contribute would become even more complicated when at the beginning of December signs of disagreement showed within Balkenende II. On December 9, after having received reassurances of NATO to support the Dutch forces in emergency circumstances, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ben Bot and Minister Kamp introduced the proposal to deploy 1200 Dutch soldiers for a PRT in the province of Uruzgan for two years.¹¹⁸ Ministers of the Social Liberal party D66 within the government nonetheless showed to be against the decision.¹¹⁹ In order to keep the D66 ministers aboard, the ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense would use the vaguer term “intention” to contribute, rather than decision, in the article 100 letter issued at the end of December.¹²⁰ The uncertain situation would carry on into the new year in which the reluctance to compromise of the D66 ministers and the increased pressure of NATO and the US to come to a decision would result in Uruzgan being the political talk of the town.¹²¹ The fragile position of D66 was highlighted even more when D66, after first suggesting it would be willing to risk a cabinet crisis, surprisingly revoked these comments.¹²² With the support of the biggest opposition party, the Social Democrats of PvdA, ensured at the end of January, a solid base of support in parliament was created. Hence, even before the final debate in parliament D66 already needed to accept its loss.¹²³

In February broad support by parliament would indeed be given for the mission to Uruzgan. The majority of the parties agreed with the statements of Prime-Minister Balkenende that the Netherlands needed to make its strongly enhanced contribution to ISAF, in which almost all members of the EU participated. Also, loyalty and international solidarity were mentioned as values the Dutch traditionally always have stood up for: “Our responsibility reaches further than our borders.”¹²⁴ The duty of the Dutch as the guardian of the worldwide legal order, as indicated in article 90, was referred to once more. Furthermore, the extended contribution to ISAF in Uruzgan would also serve the fight against terrorism and cooperation with allies.¹²⁵ The debate would be concluded with the opposition of only SP and GroenLinks

¹¹⁷ “Twijfel over missie naar Afghanistan,” *NRC*, November 18, 2005.

¹¹⁸ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 193, December 22, 2005, 2-3.

¹¹⁹ “Ministers achter missie Uruzgan,” *NRC*, December 9, 2005.

¹²⁰ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 193, December 22, 2005, 1; “Missie behoeft een besluit,” *NRC*, December 24, 2005.

¹²¹ “Ministers D66 blijven bij 'voornemen'; Over missie Afghanistan,” *NRC*, January 9, 2006; “Druk VS en NAVO op missie Uruzgan; 'Nederland moet militairen sturen',” *NRC*, January 10, 2006.

¹²² “Voor D66 spelen andere belangen, D66 kan nog heel moeilijk terug,” *NRC*, January 12, 2006; “Dittrich wil geen kabinetscrisis,” *NRC*, January 13, 2006.

¹²³ “Bij de PvdA zijn ze voorzichtig 'voor'; PvdA-leider Bos wordt mogelijk de doorslaggevende speler in stemming over 'Uruzgan',” *NRC*, January 26, 2006; “PvdA dwong kabinet in het gareel bij missie,” *NRC*, February 1, 2006.

¹²⁴ *Handelingen 2005-2006*, nr. 45, February 2, 2006, 3030.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3033.

in addition to D66. The position of D66 would get even more complicated by the statement of party leader Boris Dittrich that the threat of a cabinet crisis was only meant to put pressure on the PvdA, which had long remained undecided about Uruzgan.¹²⁶ Heavily criticized for his political opportunism, Dittrich resigned two days later.¹²⁷

With the preparation for the mission on its way and an increasingly deteriorating security situation in Uruzgan, in April the cabinet communicated its intent to contribute additional soldiers so that the total number of forces would be around 1400. The cabinet also specified that because of the upcoming responsibility for the PRT in Uruzgan, the PRT in Baghlan would be transferred to the command of another NATO-member from October on.¹²⁸ As the situation in Uruzgan was such a hot topic, the worsening security situation as the mission drew closer would also be discussed in television programs. When Minister Kamp in the television news show Buitenhof suggested that the Dutch forces might be withdrawn if they would prove to be unable to contribute to security and the rebuilding process, this created additional uncertainty within the armed forces.¹²⁹ Attempting to clarify the situation, Minister Bot stated a few days later that the Dutch would fulfill their term of two years.¹³⁰ With the planned start of the mission on August 1st, the government would, over the summer, first have to solve an internal struggle as D66, already weakened by the Uruzgan imbroglio, withdrew its support to the cabinet after a conflict with VVD Minister Rita Verdonk. The new government Balkenende III, a transition government of the remaining parties CDA and VVD, would from July 7 onwards be in charge, until the formation of a new government after the November elections.

Whereas the fight against the Taliban would still continue, the transfer of authority over South-Afghanistan from OEF to ISAF on July 31 marked the beginning of a new period with a stronger focus on the rebuilding process.¹³¹ Nevertheless, several violent contacts with the Taliban in which the Dutch engaged sent out different signals.¹³² The parallel decision to extend the length of the deployment for 130 soldiers would bring the total number of the Dutch contribution to around 1540 soldiers. This number would be even higher from November 2006 until May 2007 when the Netherlands took control over the entire ISAF Southern Command.¹³³ In the meantime, the start of phase four focusing on East-Afghanistan would bring the entirety of the country under the intended control of ISAF. As Dutch public opinion would still be wary of what ISAF could achieve in a fragile state with a persistent offensive of the Taliban, the

¹²⁶ "127 Kamerleden voor gevaarlijke missie Uruzgan," *NRC*, February 3, 2006.

¹²⁷ "Dittrich stapte op als partijleider van D66; Wegens 'fouten' in kwestie-Uruzgan," *NRC*, February 4, 2006.

¹²⁸ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 213, April 18, 2006, 7-9, 11.

¹²⁹ "Troepen terug bij mislukken wederopbouw; Kamp over missie-Uruzgan," *NRC*, May 1, 2006.

¹³⁰ "We maken de 2 jaar vol!"; Minister Bot over missie naar Afghanistan," *NRC*, May 10, 2006.

¹³¹ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 221, July 21, 2006, 5.

¹³² Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 226, September 1, 2006, 4-5; "Het blijft om opbouwen gaan," *NRC*, September 19, 2006.

¹³³ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 237, October 20, 2006, 3, 5.

Prime-Minister saw the need to stress the Dutch contribution to be of extra great importance.¹³⁴ With the Balkenende IV government formed in February, consisting of CDA, PvdA, and ChristenUnie, new ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defense would take office: Maxime Verhagen and Eimert van Middelkoop. Their task of decision-making would not get any easier as the Dutch soldiers in Uruzgan remained targets of suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices. The ensuing lingering speculation about leaving Afghanistan after 2008 was harmful to the mission as it would open the door for exploitation by the Taliban.¹³⁵ At the same time, Minister Middelkoop would increasingly be subject to foreign pressure to continue the contribution after August 2008.¹³⁶ Notwithstanding the public opinion, the cabinet would communicate that Afghanistan could still count on “continued Dutch involvement” to create peace, security, and democracy. Desecuritization of the involvement in Afghanistan was thus still not set into motion. The final decision whether to continue involvement in ISAF after August 2008 would be made in the summer of 2007.¹³⁷

The first deaths of Dutch soldiers in April and June as direct consequences of the conflict would again trouble the national public opinion.¹³⁸ Still, according to Minister Verhagen, the ongoing fights with the Taliban underscored the necessity of a continued presence as they posed a “direct threat to our security.”¹³⁹ At the end of June, the official notification followed: Balkenende IV communicated it would look into the possibility and feasibility of a continued contribution to ISAF in Uruzgan after August 1, 2008, whether or not in an altered form.¹⁴⁰ As the fighting in the mission area continued to dominate over the focus on rebuilding, the ministers of PvdA were increasingly skeptical about a continuation. Decisions regarding Afghanistan thus put repeated pressure on the coalition.¹⁴¹ Consequently, at the end of August the parliament was informed that because of the importance of a careful decision-making procedure, a final decision would take longer than first stated.¹⁴²

That fall would be marked by accumulating comments of the Secretary-General of NATO De Hoop Scheffer aimed at swaying the Dutch to stay and increasing signals of the cabinet’s willingness to stay.¹⁴³ When after a lengthy search additional assistance in South-Afghanistan from several countries was secured, the decision of Balkenende IV was finalized. Having *de facto* already set its own trap by inquiring about assistance via diplomatic channels

¹³⁴ “Premier: belang van Uruzgan blijft groot,” *NRC*, November 27, 2006.

¹³⁵ “Nu al discussie over weggaan uit Uruzgan,” *NRC*, March 27, 2007.

¹³⁶ “Rice: blijf in Afghanistan,” *NRC*, April 3, 2007.

¹³⁷ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 248, March 23, 2007, 1-2.

¹³⁸ “Missie Uruzgan gaat door, ook na dood militair,” *NRC*, April 21, 2007; “Nederlander in Uruzgan gedood,” *NRC*, June 16, 2007.

¹³⁹ “Oorzaak van dood militair onduidelijk; Achtste slachtoffer missie,” *NRC*, June 19, 2007.

¹⁴⁰ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 264, June 29, 2007, 1.

¹⁴¹ “Verdeeldheid over besluit Uruzgan,” *NRC*, August 17, 2007.

¹⁴² Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 270, August 30, 2007, 1.

¹⁴³ “Er kan niemand weg uit Afghanistan! 'Het gaat in Afghanistan niet goed genoeg'; NAVO-chef Jaap de Hoop Scheffer over verlengen missie Uruzgan,” *NRC*, September 19, 2007.

in spring and communicating an intention to stay in summer, the official article 100 letter would follow on November 30.¹⁴⁴ Meeting formal requests by NATO, the UN, and the Afghan government, the Netherlands would extend the mission *a final time* for two years. The decision to stay would not only be based on solidarity with the Afghan population but also on international solidarity, credibility, and security. The decision to extend would furthermore still serve the Dutch national security interest.¹⁴⁵ In this new mission, the military contribution would be reduced to around 1400 soldiers, still a substantial number. The end date would also mean that the Dutch military responsibility for Uruzgan would “anyhow” be terminated on August 1, 2010.¹⁴⁶ After a nine hour long general consultation and a final debate in parliament, the decision received the required ‘broad’ level of support: besides the coalition parties, a yes was obtained from VVD and the Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (SGP).¹⁴⁷ The end date of August 2010 was, however, an absolute condition for this support. Still, 47 members of parliament showed to be against the decision; no other number had ever been this high with regard to expeditionary missions.¹⁴⁸ For the parliament it was now unambiguous: the departure in 2010, showing the transition to desecuritization, equaled the end of the Dutch presence in Uruzgan. For the cabinet, however, it would remain a struggle to harmonize its international and national reputation as an overlap between the needs on both levels, essential for political decisions as argued in Putnam’s two-level theory, became increasingly unlikely.

The beginning of 2008 would be a period of relative calm in Uruzgan. Commander of the Armed Forces Peter van Uhm would even speak of “tentative progress.”¹⁴⁹ With the last contribution to ISAF operative from August 2008, the discussion about the end date would slowly gain traction again as political parties viewed comments of the Minister of Defense, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Prime-Minister as contradictory and unclear.¹⁵⁰ In December, Prime-Minister Balkenende hinted at the possibility of a possible appeal by the US, which he would consider as a new moment for “contemplation.”¹⁵¹ Leaving Afghanistan in 2010 thus remained a broadly interpretable concept. Still, in March 2009, Secretary-General of NATO De Hoop Scheffer confirmed his understanding of the Netherlands leaving its leading position in Uruzgan after 2010.¹⁵² An understandable comment, after NATO’s liberation of its awkward manpower position with the announced contribution of 17.000 soldiers to ISAF by

¹⁴⁴ “Nederland moet blijven in Uruzgan: Gaan we op- of afbouwen?” *NRC*, November 23, 2007; Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 279, October 30, 2007, 1.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5, 38.

¹⁴⁷ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 294, December 17, 2007; Handelingen 2007-2008, nr. 37, December 18, 2007, 2953-2968.

¹⁴⁸ “Eindelijk groen licht, na half jaar denken; Kamer stemt in met verlenging Nederlandse missie in Uruzgan,” *NRC*, December 19, 2007.

¹⁴⁹ “Nederlandse soldaat komt om in Uruzgan; Vijf gewonden door bermbom,” *NRC*, September 8, 2008.

¹⁵⁰ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 325, October 28, 2008, 3.

¹⁵¹ “Leger blijft mogelijk langer in Afghanistan,” *NRC*, December 19, 2008.

¹⁵² “De Hoop Scheffer: rek uit krijgsmacht; NAVO-chef voorziet kleinere Afghanistan-missie,” *NRC*, March 28, 2009.

the new President of the US Barack Obama.¹⁵³ With Uruzgan being relatively calm in the spring and summer, the Dutch would get a final chance to implement the civilian-oriented rebuilding part of their contribution.¹⁵⁴ Still, in September the twentieth Dutch death since the beginning of the mission fell, making the discussion about an extension in Uruzgan even more complicated.¹⁵⁵

The discussion about Uruzgan would revive a final time in the fall of 2009. When CDA Minister Verhagen speculated about a possible extension of the contribution, PvdA and ChristenUnie dissociated themselves from his comments. The relationship between the coalition partners on the topic of Uruzgan would turn increasingly bitter.¹⁵⁶ Especially for the PvdA, which strongly insisted on the departure of the Dutch in August 2010, another extension would be unacceptable. At the same time, both the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Foreign Affairs were pressured by their international partners to stay.¹⁵⁷ When in February another request by the NATO was received to continue contributing to ISAF, even though smaller and limited in time, the government proved would be unable to bridge the emerged gap between the coalition parties anymore.¹⁵⁸ The division in the government now became abundantly clear: unanimity on the topic of Uruzgan was impossible. After a lengthy consultation on February 20 and the inability to settle on Uruzgan, Balkenende IV fell with the PvdA ministers resigning from their position. It would constitute the first fall of a cabinet on a matter of foreign policy. As a consequence, the Dutch forces were to be redeployed from August on. Still, with a motion by D66 and GroenLinks in April, the interim government would be urged to investigate the possibility of a contribution to a police training mission in Afghanistan.¹⁵⁹ The new government from the Conservative-Liberal Mark Rutte would, early in 2011, manage to agree on a contribution to a European Union and NATO police training mission. Around 545 Dutch soldiers remained in Afghanistan, mostly in the province of Kunduz.¹⁶⁰ The repeatedly voiced promise of “continued Dutch involvement” thus led to Afghanistan staying on the political agenda in 2010 as well. Complete desecuritization at the end of the contribution to ISAF cannot be claimed.

1.4 INTERIM CONCLUSION

The contribution to ISAF has been the responsibility of six different governments and, therefore, multiple parties with varying goals and visions regarding Afghanistan. Whereas a

¹⁵³ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 330, March 13, 2009, 3.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.; Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 344, June 17, 2009, 3.

¹⁵⁵ “Militair sneuvelt in strijd Uruzgan,” *NRC*, September 7, 2009.

¹⁵⁶ “Kabinet sterk verdeeld over Afghanistan,” *NRC*, September 18, 2009; “Verhagen wekt ergernis binnen coalitie over missie in Uruzgan,” *NRC*, September 24, 2009.

¹⁵⁷ “Ook druk op Nederland om te blijven,” *NRC*, December 2, 2009.

¹⁵⁸ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 383, February 9, 2010, 1.

¹⁵⁹ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 405, September 28, 2010, 1, 8.

¹⁶⁰ Kamerstukken 27 925, nr. 415, January 7, 2011, 2.

broad base of support was often the case for the first years of ISAF in Kabul and Baghlan, the Dutch presence in Uruzgan played negatively on the minds of many parties. Especially for D66 in the Balkenende II and PvdA in the Balkenende IV government, the Dutch presence in this southern province showed to be a topic of such magnitude that divisions between coalition parties reached exceptional heights. Whereas in 2006 a cabinet crisis was avoided, four years later Uruzgan led to the fall of Balkenende IV. From the start, Uruzgan was in the picture of the media and the portrayal of the intervention as a controversial 'fighting mission' instead of a 'rebuilding mission' contributed to the small chance of succeeding. With the national opinion turning increasingly bitter, it appeared to be difficult to balance domestic and international needs.

Whereas the initial argumentation to go to Afghanistan was mostly based on solidarity with the Afghans and contributing to the global fight of terrorism, later argumentation shifted more towards values of international solidarity and credibility. Especially after the takeover by NATO of ISAF-command from 2003 and the Dutch contribution in Uruzgan from 2006 on, the Dutch seemed susceptible to international pressure to extend or expand their participation. The Atlantic orientation of the various governments often led to, as captured fittingly by Mat Herben from the Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF) party, the Dutch trying to be "the best boy in class" whenever a NATO request was made. Furthermore, by cautiously communicating the willingness to investigate the possibilities after a request, the Dutch tended to set their own trap. With NATO and the US confident another Dutch extension, there were difficulties in finding a successor. This basket trap in which the argument went that the Afghans could not be left to their fate resulted in an awkward position with a possible loss of face for the Netherlands in case of retreat. This would be detrimental to the good reputation the Dutch long for so much, especially after Srebrenica.

The eight years that the Netherlands have been involved in Afghanistan cannot easily be marked by clearly defined subsequent periods of politicization, securitization, and desecuritization. Especially because of the decision to increase the number of troops involved from 2006 onwards for the PRT in Uruzgan, in terms of the securitization theory, one could speak of re-securitization: the issue is securitized again after a period of low intensity. Also, even after the fall of Balkenende IV because of the inability to reach an agreement on ISAF, the new Rutte I government managed to agree on another mission to Afghanistan. Full desecuritization at the end of ISAF is thus not the case. With the repeatedly addressed dedication to help Afghanistan in the long term, the Dutch seemingly could not leave the Afghans to their own fate, not even after a tenuous international involvement for almost a decade.

CHAPTER 2 – SFIR IRAQ

Not only Afghanistan would be subjected to the Global War on Terror following the 9/11 attacks, but Iraq would be too. By declaring Iraq, Iran, and North Korea the “axis of evil” in his State of the Union speech in January 2002, President Bush laid the grounds for the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. According to Washington, Saddam Hussein, the non-democratically elected leader of Iraq for over twenty years, allegedly possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and was believed to support terrorist organizations. With resolution 1441 adopted by the UNSC in November 2002, it was stipulated that Iraq would have a final chance to reveal its hand and give clarity regarding its WMD program.¹⁶¹ When the deadline of thirty days passed, members of the UNSC felt the uncooperative attitude of Iraq should be sanctioned. A number of members – Russia, China, and France – not considered the resolution to legitimize military action against Iraq. Still, the US and the UK decided, without an approved additional and clear-cut mandate, to invade Iraq together with the support of more than forty other countries. Whereas Operation Iraqi Freedom was backed militarily by Poland and Australia, the majority of the countries supported the operation politically or provided troops for the post-invasion phase. Not even a month after the invasion on March 20, the last stronghold of Hussein’s birthplace Tikrit fell. The second part of the operation that would focus on the rebuilding of the country, reforming of government institutions and creating stability and security would be carried out by SFIR.¹⁶² The Dutch would participate from August 2003 until March 2005.

2.1 POLITICIZATION

At the beginning of 2003, there was quite some unrest on the Dutch national political level. The first government of Balkenende had fallen in October because of a power struggle within the LPF party after the murder of party leader Pim Fortuyn in May. Because of heightened tensions, trust in the government diminished and around seven months were needed for the interim government to be replaced by Balkenende II. After the elections in January, the former coalition partners of the Balkenende I government, CDA and VVD, could not reach a parliamentary majority together. A coalition with the third largest party, PvdA, seemed an option but was strongly hindered by the differences in opinion regarding the support of a military operation in Iraq. Whereas PvdA was strongly against support without a new and unequivocal UNSC mandate, the interim government chose to support the invasion of Iraq politically. Parallel to the political support of Operation Iraqi Freedom by Balkenende I, the Netherlands made a promise to focus on problems of peacebuilding and reconstruction after

¹⁶¹ United Nations Security Council, S/RES/1441, November 8, 2002.

¹⁶² Klep and van Gils, *Van Korea Tot Kabul*, 470.

the termination of the immediate conflict. Whereas boots on the ground were not considered a viable option during the invasion, military presence in the phase afterward would not be ruled out.¹⁶³ This interest in a possible contribution voiced by the cabinet meant the topic would be placed on the political agenda. The politicization of the issue would thus be completed. And indeed, twenty-one days after the start of the invasion of Iraq, the cabinet communicated its intent to explore the possibility and feasibility of a military contribution to a stabilization force after the termination of the fighting.¹⁶⁴ The interim government would, however, decide to leave the final decision to the new government, Balkenende II, that as a result of the broken relationship between CDA and PvdA because of the Iraq issue, would be formed with another third party: D66.¹⁶⁵

2.2 SECURITIZATION

In June the definitive decision was made; the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense of the new cabinet decided to contribute a battalion of marines together with support units for six months to the SFIR mission in Iraq.¹⁶⁶ The military would be stationed in the province of al-Muthanna, under the command of a British division. As underscored in the article 100 letter, the cabinet envisioned a support role for the stabilization force needed to create security and stability in Iraq. The presence of the stabilization force would not only be required immediately after the end of the military campaign but up until the installation of a representative Iraqi government. The legitimation to join the mission in Iraq was mainly based on the preamble of resolution 1483 of the UNSC: “Welcoming further the willingness of Member States to contribute to stability and security in Iraq by contributing personnel, equipment, and other resources under the Authority.”¹⁶⁷ The Authority, consisting of the US and the UK, would bear the role of occupying powers whereas other contributing states would not be regarded in this sense. Furthermore, the UN would appeal to all member states to assist the Iraqi people in rebuilding their country, reforming their government institutions, and to contribute to the creation of stability and security in Iraq. The government underlined that resolution 1483, therefore, constituted the political and judicial base for participation in SFIR.¹⁶⁸

The decision of the cabinet was not accepted easily by members of parliament, as they drafted an extensive list of questions about the decision to contribute to SFIR.¹⁶⁹ The cabinet substantiated its decision by indicating the importance of far-reaching international

¹⁶³ “Naar Irak,” *NRC*, June 7, 2003.

¹⁶⁴ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 105, April 11, 2003, 1.

¹⁶⁵ Parlementair Documentatie Centrum Universiteit Leiden, “Kabinetsformatie 2003,” Parlement.com, https://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrqeym1/kabinetsformatie_2003 (accessed May 29, 2018).

¹⁶⁶ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 116, June 6, 2003, 1.

¹⁶⁷ United Nations, Security Council, S/RES/1483, May 22, 2003, 2.

¹⁶⁸ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 116, June 6, 2003, 2.

¹⁶⁹ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 117, June 18, 2003.

involvement to deal with the situation after the military intervention and the dissolution of Saddam Hussein's regime. Security and stability would remain keywords used by the government, stressing that these factors in Iraq would be essential for the rebuilding process and stability in the region.¹⁷⁰ Not remarkably, the cabinet confirmed that the US and the UK had consulted with the Dutch on the possibility to contribute. It was emphasized, however, that the Dutch themselves made the final decision to join and that the cabinet would not just follow the US in its decision-making.

The subsequent general consultation with parliament would show more of the legitimation behind the decision to join SFIR.¹⁷¹ According to Minister De Hoop Scheffer, the Netherlands would bear the responsibility to contribute to the goal of a stable Iraq. Additionally, the mission would serve more than just the purpose of bringing security and stability: it would have a regional and even supra-regional outlook. If the build-up of a functioning state in Iraq would succeed, this would have an enormously positive impact. However, if the mission should fail to deliver peace, justice, and stability in Iraq, the consequences would reach much further than Iraq.¹⁷² Minister De Hoop Scheffer stressed that participation in SFIR would not just be a quick way to boost the Dutch image, but give the Netherlands a more substantial voice in the political process. Therefore, joining the stabilization force would provide the Netherlands with a position in the democratization of Iraq.¹⁷³ Furthermore, the connection between the security of Iraq and the Netherlands was re-emphasized by Minister Kamp. Minister Kamp argued that the most essential task of Defense, to contribute to crisis-control operations in other places in the world, would also contribute to security back home, in the Netherlands.¹⁷⁴ As this argumentation draws on a link between the problems in Iraq and national security, this indicates some level of securitization. However, political mission-specific considerations would show to be critical for most of the legitimation.

After a lengthy general consultation, only GroenLinks and SP opposed the decision to join SFIR. Additionally, a minority of PvdA would dissent because of the belief that the war in Iraq was still not over, and therefore, the Netherlands should not get involved.¹⁷⁵ The informal acceptance of parliament would finalize the decision to go to Iraq. On August 1st, the command in al-Muthanna was taken over by the Dutch from their American predecessors.¹⁷⁶ With the presence of Dutch armed forces in al-Muthanna, the initial stage of securitization was concluded.

¹⁷⁰ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 117, June 18, 2003, 3.

¹⁷¹ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 120, June 25, 2003.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁷⁵ "Kamer stemt in met missie Irak," *NRC*, June 26, 2003.

¹⁷⁶ Klep and van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 471.

2.3 DESECURITIZATION

Already in the first 'Stand van Zaken' letter, the cabinet communicated that because of climatic conditions the deployment of the battalion would be shortened from six to four months.¹⁷⁷ This would have the consequence that already mid-November, a follow-up decision had to be made about the extension of the mission. The cabinet would stress that whereas the security in Iraq worsened with attacks on UN targets, non-governmental targets, and members of the coalition, the province of al-Muthanna remained relatively quiet and stable.¹⁷⁸ In November the decision to extend reached parliament: the Dutch would stay for an additional six months. The size of the detachment of around 1100 personnel would remain unchanged.¹⁷⁹ Resolution 1511 adopted by the UNSC further strengthened the mandate of the international military presence in Iraq.¹⁸⁰ Therefore, to bring the situation in Iraq to a successful conclusion, security and stability for the people in al-Muthanna still needed to be guaranteed. Continued Dutch support would hence be essential, according to Balkenende II.¹⁸¹

The increased sense of insecurity in al-Muthanna and rumors about preparations for new attacks did not go down well with parliament. The attack on an Italian base in South-Iraq earlier in November contributed to the perception that the mission should be reconsidered.¹⁸² The parliament's concern with the safety of the Dutch armed forces as the security deteriorated would show in a list of 185 mission-related questions and in the general consultation in December. Multiple parties placed critical remarks regarding the cabinet's preoccupation with its international reputation. As a response, Minister Kamp would emphasize that relationships with countries like the US and the UK are important when it comes to the provision of security in the Netherlands. A decision to start with a mission and after that leaving without solid reasons would have future consequences for this self-evident relationship. Hence, investing in stable relationships through the means of participation in these missions could also be a valid consideration.¹⁸³ Minister of Foreign Affairs Bot, newly appointed after De Hoop Scheffer left to join NATO as Secretary-General, stressed that leaving would mean leaving a job unfinished. As the Netherlands always stated the importance of peace operations, human rights, and bringing peace and stability, the responsibility should thus be taken in trying to get the job done. Not only would success in Iraq be critical to the Iraqi population, but it would also help to protect peace and stability in the region and hence in the whole world. Minister Bot

¹⁷⁷ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 122, August 19, 2003, 9.

¹⁷⁸ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 131, October 22, 2003, 7.

¹⁷⁹ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 134, November 28, 2003, 2.

¹⁸⁰ United Nations Security Council, S/RES/1511, October 16, 2003.

¹⁸¹ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 134, November 28, 2003, 2.

¹⁸² "Tweede Kamer: bekijk missie opnieuw," *NRC*, November 13, 2003.

¹⁸³ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 140, December 11, 2003, 14.

furthermore argued that the Netherlands would not stay because of a possible loss of face, but because of the broader goal that the Netherlands pursues.¹⁸⁴

The argumentation, stressing the connection of security in the Netherlands and partaking in international missions because of the good relations with international partners, shows an indirect type of securitization. Furthermore, by underlining the stance of the Netherlands as a committed partner that would take its international responsibility, the argumentation of the ministers was sufficient to win five parties in favor of continued participation. SP and GroenLinks remained the opposing parties. Whereas Minister Bot denied the loss of face claimed by critics, the cabinet made it quite clear that because of this decisive factor Balkenende II would not have another option but staying in Iraq.¹⁸⁵

At the beginning of 2004, before a next decision on the participation in SFIR was made, in television program Buitenhof, Minister Kamp communicated the possibility of the Dutch staying longer than planned. After the official transfer of sovereignty from the US to the Iraqi government planned on June 30, SFIR might take up another role in Iraq.¹⁸⁶ The statement of Minister Kamp resulted in confusion in parliament and the strong request to Prime-Minister Balkenende to be careful with his promises to the US, even after the cabinet's earlier announcement of the start of military planning for a possible continuation of the Dutch contribution.¹⁸⁷ Following the wishes of parliament, in his meeting with President Bush Prime-Minister Balkenende indeed only provided verbal solidarity. Whereas President Bush would claim that Iraq constituted the frontline of the Global War on Terror, Prime-Minister Balkenende distanced himself from this alleged connection between Iraq and terrorism.¹⁸⁸

Around the same time, the still present security concerns resulted in a growth of opposition especially from PvdA, once more strengthening its critical stance to the mission. Whereas the situation in al-Muthanna fared relatively well, coalition troops and SFIR-units would still be prone to be targeted by attacks, even in South-Iraq. Central Iraq would even experience more attacks than at the start of SFIR. This increased domestic skepticism from critics and the ensuing distancing by Balkenende II of the securitizing arguments used by President Bush indicated the increased caution of the cabinet with handling the issue. The problem of the Iraq mission, therefore, would seem to be treated in a desecuritizing manner.

The months before the next deadline for a decision on SFIR were marked by a national and international political struggle regarding the Dutch presence in Iraq. Whereas domestic skepticism, especially after the first Dutch casualty in the mission in May, resulted in increased

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 19-21.

¹⁸⁵ "Vertrek uit Irak was voor kabinet geen optie," *NRC*, November 29, 2003.

¹⁸⁶ "Kamp: militairen langer in Irak," *NRC*, January 26, 2004.

¹⁸⁷ "Premier mag bij Bush geen beloften doen over verlenging missie Irak," *NRC*, March 10, 2004; Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 151, March 5, 2004, 3.

¹⁸⁸ "Vooral verbale solidariteit voor Bush; Balkenende praat in VS over Irak en over normen en waarden," *NRC*, March 17, 2003.

differences in opinion between the coalition parties about continued participation, the US would stress that the Dutch could not leave the Iraqi people to their fate.¹⁸⁹ Some alleviation of the pressure came with the adoption of resolution 1546 by the UNSC that, with a renewed legitimization of foreign forces and a schedule for elections taking place no later than the end of January 2004, would bring the critical PvdA back on board.¹⁹⁰ The article 100 letter in June communicated the decision to extend for an additional eight months.¹⁹¹ With the transfer of sovereignty from the US and the UK to the Iraqi interim government taking place at June 30, eight months would give enough time to help the Iraqis on the way to a secure, stable, and democratic Iraq. The continuation of Dutch support was requested by both the Prime-Minister of the Iraqi interim government as well as the UK.¹⁹² Safety and stability in Iraq would remain essential prerogatives to successfully rebuild the country and contribute to stability in the whole region. The Dutch therefore were to stay dedicated to the mission; however, in case of deteriorating circumstances, an early termination would still be possible. In a briefing from the Minister of Defense, he showed that cabinet itself was still uncertain about the fate of Iraq in the long term. Still, for al-Muthanna, the picture would be less pessimistic as their "own province" fared relatively well.¹⁹³

The concerns of parliament with the security of the Dutch contingent would heighten again with subsequent updates of security incidents in August, including another Dutch casualty as a consequence. Whereas Balkenende would emphasize not to quail for terror, concerns about the Dutch soldiers in Iraq surged again as these soldiers reported to feel increasingly threatened and even targeted by hostile militias.¹⁹⁴ The loss of spirit for the mission by most parties in parliament and the pressure of the US and the UK to extend the contribution would even result in the Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs communicating different visions regarding SFIR. Whereas Minister Kamp communicated the end date to be fixed in October, in November Minister Bot stated not to want to rule out an extension.¹⁹⁵

Nevertheless, mid-November the cabinet would communicate the Dutch willingness to contribute to a NATO training mission. The cabinet emphasized that "the departure of the Dutch contingent from al-Muthanna, therefore, does not mean the end of the Dutch military involvement in Iraq."¹⁹⁶ With the last requests to extend the Dutch presence in the form of a

¹⁸⁹ "In Den Haag knaagt twijfel over missie," *NRC*, May 11, 2004; "Nederland mag Iraakse volk niet laten vallen; Veiligheidsadviseur Condoleezza Rice over militaire missie," *NRC*, May 13, 2004; "Het gaat om Irak, niet om de coalitie"; Dittrich over verlenging missie Irak," *NRC*, May 14, 2004.

¹⁹⁰ United Nations Security Council, S/RES/1546, June 8, 2004; "PvdA moet na VN-resolutie opeens positie hervinden over missie-Irak," *NRC*, June 9, 2004.

¹⁹¹ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 164, May 11, 2004, 1.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 168, June 18, 2004, 3.

¹⁹⁴ "Politiek denkt niet aan verlaten Irak; Tweede Nederlandse militair gedood," *NRC*, August 16, 2004; "Soldaten voelen zich schietschijf," *NRC*, August 18, 2004.

¹⁹⁵ "Bot sluit verlenging 'Irak' niet uit; Weinig animo in Kamer," *NRC*, November 2, 2004.

¹⁹⁶ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 181, November 12, 2004, 4.

delayed phasing out made in early 2005 by the Iraqi interim government, the UK, the US, and Japan, Balkenende II decided that these extra efforts would outweigh the added value. With a “This is our country and we make the decisions” statement, the cabinet underscored the satisfaction of having resisted the lobby of international partners.¹⁹⁷ The needs on the domestic level were hence prioritized as a decision deemed acceptable to both the domestic and international level could not be found anymore.

With the departure of the Dutch contingent from Iraq, the situation in Iraq would be handled within the ‘standard’ practices of Dutch politics again. With the issue moving away from its state of exemption, desecuritization was set into motion. And so, in March the operational transfer to the British successors would take place, and at the beginning of April, the last Dutch soldier would leave Iraqi grounds.¹⁹⁸ Still, the NATO training mission would obtain 25 Dutch soldiers, a decision supported by a majority of parliament.¹⁹⁹ This confirms the difficulty of talking about full desecuritization of the Dutch Iraq-involvement after the termination of the contribution to SFIR. The Netherlands would stay involved and continue to be prepared to take its international responsibility, a duty anchored in article 90 of the Constitution.

2.4 INTERIM CONCLUSION

As the political support for the invasion of Iraq was subject to considerable discussion in parliament, the ensuing decision to contribute to the stabilization force was likewise not made without obstacles. The one and a half year lasting contribution was characterized by multiple periods of political unease, starting already at the beginning of 2003 because of the political support to the invasion of Iraq by the interim Balkenende I cabinet. With the second Balkenende II cabinet also being Atlantic orientated, this focus would often lead to frictions between international and national expectations. Also because the mission would mostly be subject to skepticism from the biggest opposition party on the national level, PvdA, Balkenende II had to constantly find a balance between what would be approved by a majority in parliament and what would be expected of the Netherlands as a reliable international partner, illustrating the mechanisms of two-level game theory.

Whereas al-Muthanna indeed constituted a relatively quiet province where certain accomplishments could be made, the overall worsening security concerns led to a fading belief that Iraq could be effectively transformed. For Balkenende II, whereas the original legitimation was formulated in the terminology of bearing international responsibility for the Iraq-issue, after some time this turned into the impossibility of withdrawing from Iraq without a loss of face. The

¹⁹⁷ “Wij nemen hier de besluiten”; Minister Kamp over weerstaan van Amerikaanse druk,” *NRC*, January 18, 2005.

¹⁹⁸ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 192, June 10, 2005, 3.

¹⁹⁹ Kamerstukken 23 432, nr. 188, January 26, 2005, 2; Kamer steunt trainingsmissie Irak,” *NRC*, January 28, 2005.

"international political blunder," as formulated by PvdA member Bert Koenders, of Minister Kamp to speculate about a continued Dutch presence in a television program, formed in a way the starting point of a predominance of parliamentary involvement in the topic. This also indicated the start of a transition to desecuritization. Because of the ambiguous comments about a possible Dutch continuation of the SFIR-mission by the cabinet, setting its own trap for a difficult departure, continuous international pressure was especially strong. Still, Balkenende II ultimately realized the importance of putting an end-date on the mission to avoid increased national political unrest.

In contrast with President Bush, the Dutch cabinet often chose to avoid a securitizing legitimation. Prime-Minister Balkenende tried to use the word "war" as little as possible and stressed the importance of separating terrorism and Iraq. Nevertheless, the securitization framework does explain some of the arguments of the Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs. Most of the legitimation for the mission revolved around the importance to get involved in SFIR because of political considerations: the relations with international partners that would provide security back home in the Netherlands. Whereas a direct link between Iraq and the Netherlands is only argued a few times, the indirect link of stable relations for Dutch security is more often mentioned by the cabinet. Furthermore, again looking at the subsequent securitization stages, complete desecuritization of the Iraq-issue after the termination of the involvement in SFIR is hard to claim. As the contribution to SFIR would be followed by a contribution to a NATO training mission, the Dutch showed to continue their military involvement in Iraq. The involvement in Iraq can hence not easily be phased into clear stages of politicization, securitization, and desecuritization.

CHAPTER 3 – MINUSMA MALI

Whereas Mali long had the reputation of a stable democratic state with Amadou Toumani Touré as president, it experienced a repercussion of violence in other North-African countries as a consequence of the Arab Spring. The Libyan Civil War attracted Malian Tuareg fighters and their return in late 2011 together with heavy weaponry of the former Libyan regime spurred rebellion in North-Mali. In March 2012, the Malian army, feeling unable to adequately deal with the Tuareg under President Touré, used the unstable situation to resort to a coup d'état.²⁰⁰ From there the situation went downhill as foreign development aid to the government was increasingly suspended because of the illegitimate coup.²⁰¹ The subsequent collapse of democratic institutions opened the door even more to rebellion in North-Mali. The unstable north showed to be a suitable place to increasingly harbor fundamentalist terrorist organizations as well.

France, the former colonial power of the African country, alarmed about the aggravating situation, already stated in June that a terrorist threat in North-Mali would not only destabilize Mali but even the whole continent and perhaps further.²⁰² France's call for an intervention led by African states and supported by Western countries under the authorization of the UN, led to the adoption of resolution 2085 by the UNSC in December, creating the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA).²⁰³ The French also contributed through a military operation, *Operation Serval*, that focused on preventing the rebels from moving more southwards. Additionally, members states of the EU would answer the call of the UNSC to support the reform and training of the Malian armed forces through a European Union Training Mission (EUTM) Mali. When the situation seemed to stabilize a bit, MINUSMA was adopted by resolution 2100 on April 25, 2013.²⁰⁴ MINUSMA would be an effort to reach long-term stability and be the successor for AFISMA.²⁰⁵ The Netherlands would participate in MINUSMA from 2014 on.

3.1 POLITICIZATION

In January 2013 as a response to resolution 2085 and the call for EUTM Mali, the cabinet gave the first indication of its willingness to contribute to the training mission. The desirability and feasibility of a Dutch contribution were announced to be investigated.²⁰⁶ Whereas five months

²⁰⁰ Walter Lotze, "United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)," in *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, eds. Joachim A. Koops, Norrie Macqueen, Thierry Tardy, and Paul D. Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 856-857.

²⁰¹ Kamerstukken 32 605, nr. 85, April 5, 2012, 1.

²⁰² "Hollande waarschuwt voor terroristenstaat in Noord-Mali," *NRC*, June 12, 2012.

²⁰³ United Nations Security Council, S/RES/2085, December 20, 2012.

²⁰⁴ United Nations Security Council, S/RES/2100, April 25, 2013.

²⁰⁵ Lotze, "MINUSMA," 860.

²⁰⁶ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 202, January 18, 2013, 1.

later it was communicated that because of high interest of other European countries the positions had been filled, the underlying reason to not participate for the Dutch could be found on the national political level.²⁰⁷ The second government of Mark Rutte, consisting of VVD and PvdA, could not seem to reach an agreement to participate. PvdA, in favor of an African mission after years of interventions in the Middle-East, collided with the reserved attitude of VVD towards such a mission. VVD favored missions in another continent and rather in a NATO setting. In the *NRC* newspaper in February, PvdA member of parliament Désirée Bonis emphasized that the discussion had an overly ideological tone as “military involvement in Afghanistan is seen as right and involvement in Africa is seen as left.”²⁰⁸ As VVD ultimately dominated the discussion on the topic, EUTM consequently did not receive a contribution of the Netherlands. The Netherlands would be one of the few EU countries not involved. This dominance of VVD in decisions on foreign policy matters would constitute the reason why Bonis would leave her seat in parliament a few months later.²⁰⁹

After missing the boat for participation under the umbrella of the EU because of internal disagreement, another door would be opened in April with the announcement of MINUSMA. With this proper successor for the African forces of AFISMA in place, another shot for a contribution from the Netherlands was discussed. Participation in MINUSMA could solve the loss of face the Dutch cabinet incurred after the EUTM debacle. Furthermore, as the head for the UN mission in Mali would be Koenders, former Minister of Development Cooperation for PvdA, the cabinet would risk another hit on its reputation by not getting involved.²¹⁰ VVD would eventually be susceptible to this important political consideration to participate in a UN mission: international prestige. Especially after the painful police training mission in Kunduz, the reputation of the Dutch armed forces could use some improvement. Successful involvement in MINUSMA would furthermore bring the coveted seat in the UNSC for the Netherlands a step closer. Accordingly, Mali would somewhat arduously receive its place on the political agenda, completing the stage of politicization of the issue. And indeed, on July 2nd, the cabinet would notify parliament of the probe into a possible Dutch contribution to MINUSMA.²¹¹

3.2 SECURITIZATION

In November, VVD and PvdA reached an accord to contribute to MINUSMA. Almost 370 soldiers, tasked mainly with intelligence collection, would join the mission. The Netherlands would be the biggest Western contributor. The Dutch were to operate from Bamako and Gao,

²⁰⁷ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 209, June 24, 2013, 1.

²⁰⁸ “Coalitie oneens over militaire missie in Mali,” *NRC*, February 28, 2013.

²⁰⁹ “Daarom stapte ik op als Kamerlid; Eervoller als de fractie meer afstand neemt,” *NRC*, August 24, 2013.

²¹⁰ “Koenders gaat voor VN missie in Mali leiden,” *NRC*, April 27, 2013.

²¹¹ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 210, July 2, 2013, 1.

areas without threats of considerable armed conflicts but with terrorist activity.²¹² The contribution was meant for an initial period of two years, until the end of 2015.²¹³ In the article 100 letter, the cabinet communicated the willingness of the UN to guide Mali in building a functioning government that provides security and services to the population in the whole country. For the Netherlands, the letter stated, it would be important to take up part of the responsibility as the Dutch traditionally benefit strongly from international cooperation. Additionally, the perceived shift in focus of the US towards Asia would have the consequence that Europe, and thus the Netherlands too, increasingly needed to protect its own interests. Unstable situations in regions close to Europe hence need to be managed within an adequate and timely manner to prevent a spill-over, in terms of extremism and migration, to Europe and the Netherlands.²¹⁴ The cabinet also stressed that solidarity with the Malian population would form another vital consideration for participation as Malians were profoundly affected by the crisis in their country. By referring to article 90 of the Constitution, the promotion of the international legal order by the government, the overall and 'higher' importance of this mission was underscored.²¹⁵ Furthermore, the cabinet showed the 'lessons learned' from past missions. Unlike Srebrenica and Uruzgan, no responsibility for a specific area would be borne by the Dutch. Also, the intelligence capacity of the Dutch would be transferable in case of a termination of participation.²¹⁶

The legitimization in the subsequent general consultation with parliament adhered to much of the reasoning present in the article 100 letter. Minister of Foreign Affairs Frans Timmermans often emphasized the connection between the terrorist threat and the Netherlands. With an absence of authority and control and the development of extremist networks in the Sahel region, access to Europe would be simple. Because of the proximity of Mali, there would be an evident threat.²¹⁷ Additionally, the Netherlands would already be a legitimate target because of the past Dutch participation in missions in several Islamic countries.²¹⁸ Minister Timmermans emphasized the ability to make a direct contribution to stability and to counter the threat to the Netherlands.²¹⁹ The direct connection between the state building problem in Mali and security in the Netherlands in the legitimization hence shows much of a securitizing connotation. Whereas the parliament succeeded in establishing a noteworthy list of over 370 questions about the Dutch contribution, the argumentation by the ministers led to the completion of the general consultation without fundamental critical issues

²¹² Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 213, November 1, 2013, 16-17.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

²¹⁷ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 230, December 11, 2013, 32.

²¹⁸ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 215, November 27, 2013, 6.

²¹⁹ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 230, December 11, 2013, 36.

remaining. With the most substantial concern, the absence of Dutch transport helicopters, taken away with the cabinet's guarantee of other countries fulfilling this demand, eight parties voted in favor of Dutch participation in MINUSMA. Only three parties opposed the plan: SP, the Partij voor de Dieren (PvdD), and PVV.²²⁰

The relatively easy agreement by parliament stood in stark contrast with previous debates about the operations of the Dutch military, for example in Kunduz, Afghanistan. Whereas the mission in Mali would indeed be different with its focus on intelligence, this could also be explained by the different national political climate in the Netherlands. The vision of the coalition parties on participation in MINUSMA as beneficial for the reputation of the Netherlands, especially after the chaotic mission in Kunduz, was shared by a majority of the opposition parties. Furthermore, as the coalition and opposition parties assented on other important political points, a confrontation on the topic of Mali was unlikely.²²¹ With the *de facto* permission of parliament and even PvdA authority Koenders as head of the mission, initial successful securitization would be achieved. The government would unfold the PvdA flagship mission in Mali. For the PvdA, the mission meant a long-desired opportunity to exercise their foreign policy vision.

3.3 INITIAL DESECURITIZATION

With a demand by parliament to inform on a half-yearly basis about MINUSMA, the first 'Stand van Zaken' letter of May 2014 would communicate the security situation to be stable but also very fragile. The buildup of MINUSMA was running behind schedule, having the consequence of a shortage of capacities. This deficiency, paired with the inability to reach an arrangement with rebel groups in the north, resulted in North-Mali remaining a volatile region.²²² To ensure the security of the Dutch armed forces, transport helicopters would be added to the Dutch presence, bringing the total amount of troops in the field up to around 450 from October on.²²³ As a reaction to the still substantial threat level in Mali, Minister of Defense Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert underscored in the general consultation with parliament the extra measures taken to ensure the safety of the Dutch in Mali. Because of the delay in some of these additional measures, the tight budget of Dutch Defense, falling well below the NATO-norm of 2 percent, received some discussion.²²⁴ Nevertheless, most parties still agreed on the necessity of MINUSMA.

In June, the mandate of MINUSMA was extended and reinforced. The power to use all necessary means to carry out the chapter VII mandate, the cabinet underlined, should enable

²²⁰ Handelingen 2013-2014, nr. 36 item 13, December 12, 2013, 1-4.

²²¹ "Kamer steunt missie Mali," *NRC*, December 12, 2013.

²²² Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 243, May 12, 2014, 3-4.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 8.

²²⁴ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 250, May 21, 2014, 25.

contributors to MINUSMA to better achieve the priority tasks.²²⁵ In October the cabinet, with former MINUSMA head Koenders as the new Minister of Foreign Affairs after the departure of Timmermans to become European Commissioner, informed that even with this stronger mandate, the security situation in North-Mali deteriorated from May on. Ongoing security concerns led to 31 killed and 90 injured UN forces since the beginning of MINUSMA.²²⁶ Moreover, the demise of two Dutch pilots in a helicopter crash in March 2015 did not benefit the national public opinion. Although the event appeared to be an accident with a technical cause, adequate security of the Dutch troops was increasingly doubted by the Dutch population.²²⁷

Whereas the security concerns in Mali would remain, the Dutch cabinet's idealist perception of their crucial contribution showed once again in the interim evaluation for 2014 in May. In the evaluation, it was emphasized that the UN, as well as several international partners, stressed that the intelligence function of the Netherlands would continue to be essential for MINUSMA. The use of this international level legitimacy to legitimize participation on the domestic level shows the entanglement between the two, as defined in Putnam's theory. With this reasoning, the cabinet could, therefore, renew its claim that the Dutch played a vital role in the stabilization of Mali and thus in the prevention of a further increase of terrorist threats and refugee flows towards Europe.²²⁸ Additionally, the Dutch armed forces would learn from participation in this 'purely' UN mission as in the recent past cooperation often took place in NATO or EU setting. Given the Dutch devotion to ameliorate UN missions in the past years, participation would also serve these efforts. Furthermore, with this substantial contribution to MINUSMA, the cabinet stressed the ambition to inspire other European countries to participate.²²⁹ Not surprisingly, a month after the evaluation the cabinet decided to extend the Dutch contribution to MINUSMA for another term, until the end of 2016.²³⁰ The positive perception of the contribution was shared too in parliament as only SP and PVV showed to be against an extension.²³¹ The Dutch participation would continue to be presented by cabinet as a model type mission, both for Defense and politics.²³²

After a seemingly quiet period at the beginning of 2016, the security situation in Mali deteriorated again at the beginning of the summer. Not only were MINUSMA forces attacked in the north, extremists also started to target the middle part of the country.²³³ Additionally, the

²²⁵ United Nations, Security Council, S/RES/2164, June 25, 2014, 6; Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 251, July 7, 2014, 1.

²²⁶ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 268, October 13, 2014, 7-8.

²²⁷ "Eerste Nederlandse doden in Mali," *NRC*, March 18, 2015; Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 292, May 7, 2015, 1.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²³⁰ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 293, May 19, 2015, 1.

²³¹ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 300, December 18, 2015, 45-46.

²³² "Steun voor 'troetelmissie' in Mali," *NRC*, September 9, 2015.

²³³ "Al-Qaeda slaat nu ook toe in Midden-Mali," *NRC*, July 21, 2016.

demise of another two Dutch soldiers because of an accident with a faulty mortar constituted the second event troubling the impression of security of the Dutch troops.²³⁴ Still in October, following the UN decision to extend MINUSMA for another year and the positive interim evaluation for 2015, the cabinet communicated to extend their contribution for the second time. As the Netherlands made efforts to get other Western countries involved in MINUSMA, the contribution would be reduced to a size of around 290 soldiers in 2017. According to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense, the strategic importance of the Sahel and the connected importance of a stable Mali would make a continued military contribution of crucial importance.²³⁵ The cabinet's additional decision to withdraw the helicopter contribution caused most discussion in the general consultation. According to parliament, air transport and protection from Apache helicopters to carry out emergency medical evacuations would be crucial for any Dutch presence, resonating the more than twenty-year-old trauma of having no air support in Srebrenica. Pleased with the cabinet's guarantee that Germany would fulfill the helicopter demand, a conditional yes was given by five opposition parties. PVV and SP once more showed their disapproval towards the decision.²³⁶

With the increased transfer of responsibilities to other contributors happening and a reduced size of the Dutch contribution, the transition to desecuritization manifested itself. Still, the Mali-issue remained on the political agenda as, according to the cabinet, the deteriorated security situation could continue to have implications for the Netherlands. A military presence would hence remain required.

In 2017 too, MINUSMA would not show to be able to improve the security conditions in Mali. The worsened security in central Mali even needed to be handled by a more extensive presence of MINUSMA. Because of the shortage of critical capacities in the mission, the mandate was hard to carry out effectively.²³⁷ At the same time, the Dutch would increasingly try to transfer their responsibility to other partners. The command over the main military base of the Dutch, Camp Castor in Gao, was even planned to be transferred to the Germans in 2017.²³⁸ Whereas the contribution of the Dutch would be decreasing steadily, in the interim evaluation for international operations for 2016 published in May, the cabinet addressed the disturbing reality of "an international security situation that deteriorates, especially in the ring of instability around Europe, that makes internal and external security more interconnected than ever."²³⁹ For the Netherlands, this meant that by cooperating within a UN, NATO, or EU setting, long-term efforts increasingly would need to be made as it was not expected that the

²³⁴ Ongeval kost leven twee militairen," *NRC*, July 7, 2016.

²³⁵ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 327, October 7, 2016, 2-3.

²³⁶ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 339, December 22, 2016, 53-55.

²³⁷ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 346, May 11, 2017, 8-9.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

²³⁹ "Evaluatie Nederlandse bijdrage aan missies en operaties in 2016," bijlage bij kamerstuk 29 521, nr. 345, May 17, 2017, 33.

international security situation, especially in regions in the so-called ring of instability, would improve quickly.

The evaluation in May corresponded closely with the decision of the cabinet that followed in September: another extension of the Dutch contribution. Whereas Rutte II needed yet to be replaced with a new cabinet after the March elections, the decision could not wait any longer as military planning for a continuation had to be made. By emphasizing that “Mali, for the time being, cannot do without MINUSMA” and again indicating that Dutch intelligence efforts to be essential, the cabinet extended the contribution for the third time.²⁴⁰ By staying committed to the problems in Mali, the cabinet would remain loyal to the motto of their Foreign and Defense strategy “Worldwide for a more secure Netherlands.”²⁴¹ Still, the slow but steady reduction of the size of the contribution continued to show desecuritization.

The end of September 2017 would be marked by a noteworthy event on the national political level when the Research Council on Security published a report about the mortar accident that killed two Dutch soldiers in Mali. According to the Council, the ministry of Defense fell short in the provision of security for the deployed Dutch armed forces.²⁴² As a consequence Minister Hennis-Plasschaert, after having served the full parliamentary term in Rutte II, resigned. The crux of the problem was revealed when the Commander of the Armed Forces Tom Middendorp resigned too. His departure, symbolizing the military loss of faith in politics, would indicate the frustration in the armed forces about the inability to adequately protect soldiers after years of cutbacks on defense.²⁴³ The quality of the armed forces was seriously impeded.

In October, the newly formed Rutte III government consisting of VVD, CDA, D66, and ChristenUnie acknowledged the armed forces’ immediate need: more of the budget for 2018 was accredited to Defense.²⁴⁴ Also, the new cabinet had the task to finalize the decision on MINUSMA by consulting with parliament. In this general consultation, the cabinet came across a lot of concerns about the mission as MINUSMA would already be labeled to be the most deadly UN mission in history.²⁴⁵ Furthermore, as a reaction to the mortar report, concerns about the safety of Dutch soldiers were highly present. Still, the ministers managed to take away most uneasiness from the members of parliament by emphasizing the importance of the mission’s higher goal. Minister of Foreign Affairs Halbe Zijlstra would stress that a continued contribution remained important: the Netherlands needed to take its responsibility in striving

²⁴⁰ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 349, September 11, 2017, 4, 12.

²⁴¹ Rijksoverheid, “Wereldwijd voor een veilig Nederland - Geïntegreerde Buitenland- en Veiligheidsstrategie 2018-2022,” <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2018/03/20/wereldwijd-voor-een-veilig-nederland--geintegreerde-buitenland--en-veiligheidsstrategie-2018-2022> (accessed March 20, 2018).

²⁴² “Defensie ernstig falen verweten,” *NRC*, September 28, 2017.

²⁴³ “Vertrek Middendorp toont de echte crisis,” *NRC*, October 6, 2017.

²⁴⁴ “Meer geld naar Defensie,” *NRC*, October 11, 2017.

²⁴⁵ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 349, September 11, 2017, 4, 14.

for security throughout the world.²⁴⁶ Only PVV, SP, PvdD, and DENK were again not convinced after the consultation. The rest of the parties in parliament supported the cabinet's decision: in 2018 also, the Dutch would stay in Mali.²⁴⁷ Continued involvement in Mali shows that desecuritization, although set in motion, has not been finalized yet.

3.4 INTERIM CONCLUSION

After the somewhat laborious start in the decision-making process, the ongoing Dutch involvement in MINUSMA has not been subject to extensive discussion on the national political level, when compared to Afghanistan and Iraq. This can be explained by the relative well-outlined contribution, with the choice for an intelligence function and therefore the circumvention of Dutch armed forces being in direct contact with local fighters, which made the mission less controversial. Consequently, a deteriorating public opinion was prevented, although the helicopter and mortar incidents did raise a national debate about the security of the Dutch armed forces. The contribution to MINUSMA itself would, up until the beginning of 2018, not be subject to a sizable level of skepticism.

Additionally, the national political climate from 2014 to 2017 was very favorable towards a mission and can further explain the more than four year duration of the contribution to MINUSMA. Coalition partners of Rutte II, PvdA with its 'heart for Africa' and ergo a strong supporter of an African mission, and VVD being susceptible to the political argument of increased international prestige, saw the UN mission in Mali as an opportunity to present Dutch willingness and capabilities. Together, they could attain the needed broad base of support for mission in parliament. For 2017, the political climate turned even more favorable for the government as four parties (VVD, CDA, D66, and ChristenUnie) would form the coalition of Rutte III. This construction brought more parties on the side of political decision-making in comparison with Rutte II. Consequently, whereas MINUSMA became the most deadly mission in UN peacekeeping history, it encountered notably little national political objection. Showing the interlinked two-level structure as defined by Putnam, the UN and several other partners on the international level grabbed the opportunity to present the Dutch intelligence function as of essential importance to the mission. The Dutch cabinet was, therefore, enticed to extend its contribution.

The legitimation for the mission also provides part of the explanation for the continuing Dutch contribution since 2014. Next to the arguments of international solidarity and international responsibility, the cabinet chose to rest most of the initial argumentation on the

²⁴⁶ Kamerstukken 29 521, nr. 358, December 4, 2017, 4, 20.

²⁴⁷ Handelingen 2017-2018, nr. 33 item 21, December 12, 2017, 1-10; "Mali en Afghanistan Kamer definitief akkoord met militaire missies," *NRC*, December 13, 2017.

direct connection between Mali and Europe. As Mali would lay in the “ring of instability around Europe,” a vulnerable and unstable situation providing a safe haven for extremist and rebel groups meant an easy passage for extremists and ensuing refugees to Europe. This language of a direct threat to the security in the Netherlands indicates the use of securitization argumentation. Also, after the initial decision to contribute in 2013 this legitimation was used, although it would lose some of its power as the situation in Mali, even with the presence of over ten thousand international troops, did not seem to improve a lot.

As for a transition to desecuritization, initial signs are distinguishable. The insistence of the cabinet on a fair rotation schedule for contributors to UN missions and the slow but steady reduction of the number of Dutch armed forces in MINUSMA show that apparently, the proclaimed threat is not as grave as to keep the Netherlands involved for the whole process of making Mali secure and stable. In the cabinet’s reasoning, when the Dutch take their international responsibility, other countries need to “get their hands dirty” too. As the Dutch mission in Mali is still active in 2018 and a final decision on withdrawal has not yet been made, desecuritization has not been finalized. However, as can be remarked from the decreasing contribution to MINUSMA, Mali seems to be portrayed less as a vital problem than at the beginning of the mission in 2014. The securitizing arguments hence seem to lose traction.

CONCLUSION

With the political decision-making process and legitimation for the Dutch contribution to ISAF, SFIR, and MINUSMA analyzed, the dynamics behind the three contributions can be compared. What can be said about the decisions regarding missions of the Dutch cabinet is that these were highly determined by domestic and international level dynamics. This made the two-level theory by Putnam especially suited to analyze this topic. The display of recurrent tendencies can signal trends that characterize the Dutch cabinets and their decision-making.

When focusing on the dynamics between the national and international political level, what stands out is that the Dutch contribution to ISAF and SFIR eventually had to be terminated as the result of increased national skepticism. To avoid further escalation of political unrest, the cabinet realized the importance of ceasing the participation in SFIR in 2005 and even resigned because of the inability to agree on the involvement in ISAF in 2010. Increased skepticism in parliament, generally coming from the sizable PvdA, was often directed at the inability to enhance security conditions in both countries, despite the presence of a large number of international troops. This led to a perception of the actual utility of the contribution being vague, risking the lives of Dutch soldiers to achieve an unfeasible goal. Additionally, discontent in parliament often revolved around the tendency of the cabinets to voice signals of willingness to extend the Dutch contribution to the international community. These signals, making international partners confident of a continued Dutch commitment, complicated the transfer of responsibilities to other contributors. The cabinet would thus often set its own trap, one that either the US and the UK or NATO were pleased to set off.

The contribution to MINUSMA has, in comparison, received considerably fewer fervent national discussions. This thesis has identified two main factors. Firstly, the inclusion of PvdA in the coalition of Rutte II brought a big opposition party on the side of political decision-making. The agreement on an African mission under the flag of the UN would be the opportunity for the PvdA to finally be heard on a matter of foreign policy. Secondly, the choice for an intelligence function, no responsibility for a specific area, and the insistence on fair rotation schedules for the contributors to the mission showed the learning process from past missions. This learning process is also revealed by the reappearing urge for air support to ensure the security of Dutch soldiers, a point of concern that was also present in ISAF and SFIR. A traumatic experience like Srebrenica would not befall the Dutch again. These factors made MINUSMA less controversial and subject to discussion compared to its predecessors, although the helicopter and mortar incidents did raise a thorough debate about the security of the Dutch armed forces.

When focusing on the legitimation of participation in the missions, they have several elements in common. What stands out is that broad arguments, the so-called universal

arguments, took a dominant position in the initial argumentation. Especially the reasoning behind the importance of a contribution to a collaborative mission was repeatedly emphasized and shows to be quite similar for all three. Whether it would be in an alliance led by the US and the UK, by NATO, or by the UN, the Dutch cabinet often stressed the value of participation in an international coalition. A successful Dutch contribution would be a way to enhance the international reputation and invest in relationships with international partners. Contributions to ISAF, SFIR, and MINUSMA were therefore increasingly used as political tools of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, the tendency to mostly operate in coalitions with a strong role of the US showed the transatlantic orientation of the twenty-first century Dutch cabinets.²⁴⁸ After all, all cabinets from 2002 on were led by either the CDA or the VVD, parties with both a strong Atlantic focus.²⁴⁹ Essential positions of minister of Foreign Affairs and minister of Defense were, not coincidentally, also often assigned to party members of one of these two.²⁵⁰

Further universal legitimation to get involved would often revolve around the idealistic values the cabinet aimed to pursue on the international level. The importance of international solidarity and international responsibility often constituted much of the initial, quite abstract argumentation used by the cabinet to reach a broad base of support. The inclination to reach for these arguments can further be explained by article 90 of the Dutch Constitution. This article prescribes the *duty* of the Dutch government to promote the international legal order. It is unique in the sense that it provides a legal basis for the cabinet to get involved whenever, wherever the international legal order is violated. Article 90 was therefore often used to substantiate decisions to participate.

As the aforementioned universal arguments are very broad, they can often be applied to any situation and could hence be used to provide legitimation for any mission. This creates the possibility for the cabinet to delve into an inexhaustible source of abstract arguments that can be quite randomly selected and applied to a mission, which can also explain the finding that much of the initial legitimation changed during the three missions examined in this thesis. As the missions progressed, new arguments of credibility and a possible loss of face following a retreat without solid reasons replaced the original universal arguments of international solidarity. Next to the prevailing weighty and idealistic universal argumentation used to substantiate decisions, legitimation also rested on the use of arguments more specifically tailored to the missions. Whereas participation in SFIR would provide the Dutch with a substantial voice in the Iraqi democratization process, participation in ISAF became necessary to bring the mission as test-case of NATO to a successful conclusion.

²⁴⁸ Duco Hellema, *Dutch Foreign Policy: The Role of the Netherlands in World Politics* (Dordrecht: Republic of Letters Publishing, 2009), 377-378.

²⁴⁹ Hellema, *Nederland in de Wereld*, 410, 422.

²⁵⁰ See appendix "Overview of Dutch cabinets 1998-2018".

Whereas there were self-evident differences in the mission-specific arguments, all three missions showed to have some level of security-related argumentation. By portraying the situation abroad as a security concern for the Netherlands, securitizing arguments also constituted the mission-specific legitimation. Hence, in all three missions, securitization played a role. As for the positioning of securitization in the legitimation, decisions for either the start or extension of the participation in a mission were often subject to some level of securitizing argumentation. Still, a dominant position of securitizing arguments in the legitimation can only for MINUSMA be argued. By communicating the unstable situation in Mali as a threat to Dutch security, a direct securitizing connection was made by the Dutch cabinet. Security arguments were hence applied to magnify the situation in Mali to an international problem and were actively used as a tool to create legitimacy and reach a broad base of parliamentary support. Security-related argumentation was also used after the initial decision to contribute, although it lost some of its original traction as international presence could not prevent Mali from turning more unstable.

For ISAF and SFIR, direct securitizing argumentation was less present, as legitimation for involvement in these countries with an evident post-war environment was more straightforward to achieve. Nevertheless, for ISAF the contribution to the international fight against terrorism was repeatedly used as legitimation, with the remark that the Taliban posed a direct threat to Dutch security. A securitizing connection was hence still made, although it would be less prevailing in comparison with MINUSMA. An indirect securitizing argument was moreover present for ISAF, one that was also particularly visible for SFIR: the importance of participation for Dutch security, by collaborating in an alliance. For SFIR specifically, the cabinet underscored the importance of participation to remain on good terms with the US and the UK, as they would be able to provide security to the Netherlands when needed. Through involvement either in a coalition of countries, NATO, or UN context, the Netherlands would thus invest indirectly in its own security. By maintaining good relations and reacting adequately to requests of the international community, hence by behaving like the best boy in class, Dutch security would indirectly be served.

Important to mention is that securitizing, mission-specific arguments formed one of the many elements of the legitimation for Dutch participation. They were hence not always the sole argument constituting the foundation on which a solid base of support was achieved. This finding contrasts with the vision of security-related argumentation taking in the dominant position, as formulated in securitization theory. Because of the general absence in the cabinet's communication of the foreign situation posing an 'existential threat' and the importance of other argumentation for decisions to participate, the positioning of securitization

by the Dutch cabinet can be seen as limited, especially in comparison with the level of securitization used by President Bush to legitimize the Global War on Terror.²⁵¹

Moreover, whereas the spectrum – based on the different stages of securitization – was useful in organizing the various steps in the political decision-making process, in reality, clear stages of politicization, securitization, and de-securitization were often hard to distinguish. For missions such as ISAF, that range over multiple years, there was even an additional stage of resecuritization before the commencement of the stage of desecuritization. The exact transition to the stage of desecuritization is hence hard to define. Also, for both ISAF and SFIR, claiming full desecuritization at the termination of participation is hard, as other initiatives followed both missions. With the repeated claim of the Dutch cabinet to remain dedicated to the problem and retain a military presence, although often in much smaller and more constructive orientated training missions, complete desecuritization is hard to infer. This finding can be supported by the fact that, even today, in many areas of past foreign interventions the Netherlands remains involved, albeit with a small number of troops.²⁵²

To conclude this research, it thus can be said that universal arguments were dominant in the Dutch legitimation for the ISAF, SFIR, and MINUSMA missions. Although securitizing arguments did play a role, they were less prevailing compared with what is seen in military securitization studies with a focus on the US as the primary actor. Still, the persisting presence of securitizing legitimation, even in this research on foreign missions undertaken by the Netherlands, touches upon an important matter that deserves to be underscored. This is the increased perception of a “globalized insecurity” and the possibility to undertake missions abroad on the basis of this notion. The raised focus on security results in missions increasingly being used as tools to provide security back home. The twenty-first century Dutch cabinets thus have, not coincidentally, acted in a way integrating the motto of their newest, recently published Foreign and Defense strategy: “Worldwide for a more secure Netherlands.”

²⁵¹ Bryn Hughes, “Securitizing Iraq: The Bush Administration's Social Construction of Security,” *Global Change, Peace & Security* 19 (2007): 2, 101.

²⁵² Ministerie van Defensie, “Huidige missies,” Defensie.nl, <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/missies/huidige-missies> (accessed May 8, 2018).

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- “NAVO: in principe buiten Kabul,” *NRC*. October 6, 2003.
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“Vooraf verbale solidariteit voor Bush; Balkenende praat in VS over Irak en over normen en
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“Coalitie oneens over militaire missie in Mali.” *NRC*. February 28, 2013

“Koenders gaat voor VN missie in Mali leiden.” *NRC*. April 27, 2013.

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“Kamer steunt missie Mali.” *NRC*. December 12, 2013.

“Eerste Nederlandse doden in Mali.” *NRC*. March 18, 2015.

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“Defensie ernstig falen verweten.” *NRC*. September 28, 2017.

“Vertrek Middendorp toont de echte crisis.” *NRC*. October 6, 2017.

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APPENDIX

OVERVIEW OF DUTCH CABINETS 1998-2018

Kok II

Period	August 3, 1998 – July 22, 2002
Date of resignation	April 16, 2002
Coalition parties	PvdA, VVD and D66
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Jozias van Aartsen (VVD)
Minister of Defense	Frank de Grave (VVD)
Reason for resignation	Research Council on Security critical report on Srebrenica

Balkenende I

Period	July 22, 2002 – May 27, 2003
Date of resignation	October 16, 2002
Coalition parties	CDA, LPF and VVD
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Jaap de Hoop Scheffer (CDA)
Minister of Defense	Benk Korthals (VVD) until December 12, 2002 Henk Kamp (VVD)
Reason for resignation	Internal power struggle in the LPF party

Balkenende II

Period	May 27, 2003– July 7, 2006
Date of resignation	June 30, 2006
Coalition parties	CDA, VVD and D66
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Jaap de Hoop Scheffer (CDA) until December 3, 2003 Ben Bot (CDA)
Minister of Defense	Henk Kamp (VVD)
Reason for resignation	Withdrawal of support of D66 after conflict with VVD Minister Rita Verdonk

Balkenende III

Period	July 7, 2006 – February 22, 2007
Date of resignation	November 22, 2006
Coalition parties	CDA and VVD
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Ben Bot (CDA)
Minister of Defense	Henk Kamp (VVD)
Reason for resignation	Transition cabinet until the elections

Balkenende IV

Period	February 22, 2007 – October 14, 2010
Date of resignation	February 20, 2010
Coalition parties	CDA, PvdA and ChristenUnie
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Maxime Verhagen (CDA)
Minister of Defense	Eimert van Middelkoop (ChristenUnie)
Reason for resignation	Resignation of PvdA ministers after inability to agree on ISAF

Rutte I

Period	October 14, 2010 – November 5, 2012
Date of resignation	April 23, 2012
Coalition parties	VVD and CDA (supported by PVV)
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Uri van Rosenthal (VVD)
Minister of Defense	Hans Hillen (CDA)
Reason for resignation	Withdrawal of support by the PVV after inability to agree on budget cuts

Rutte II

Period	November 5, 2012 – October 26, 2017
Date of resignation	March 14, 2017
Coalition parties	VVD and PvdA
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Frans Timmermans (PvdA) until October 17, 2014 Bert Koenders (PvdA)
Minister of Defense	Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert (VVD) until October 2, 2017 Klaas Dijkhoff (VVD)
Reason for resignation	Served its full term

Rutte III

Period	October 26, 2017 - now
Coalition parties	VVD, CDA, D66 and ChristenUnie
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Halbe Zijlstra (VVD) until February 13, 2018 Stef Blok (VVD)
Minister of Defense	Ank Bijleveld (CDA)