

Remote Warfare Comes Home

An inquiry in the Dutch government's development of discourse on airstrikes and
drones between 1998-2020

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to understand the development of the reasoning behind the use of remote warfare as an ethical way of warfare, with the Dutch government as a case study. Remote warfare is a strategy that aims to remain at a distance, characterised by a shift away from boots on the ground. Instead of a large military presence, remote warfare involves air and drone strikes from above, together with on the ground special forces, intelligence operatives, private military companies and security cooperation through military training teams. The precision that is involved in remote warfare is used by Western states to legitimize the violence as ethical. Thereby showing the influence discourse can have on the perception of reality. Taking the Kosovo War, the Coalition against IS and the debate on weaponizing drones as case studies, this research examines how discourse is developed to legitimize the Dutch use of remote warfare in these cases. Document analysis is used to analyse Dutch governmental statements to identify the collective action frames used by the Dutch government. Frames help give meaning, and collective action frames specifically can be applied to legitimize violence. This research demonstrates that the discourse used by the Dutch government develops more towards an emphasis on precision and minimizing collateral damage, thereby legitimizing remote warfare as the best option, and creating a basis to legitimize armed drones. This is in line with the international trend of discourse on precision legitimizing Western interventions as ethical. Therein this thesis contributes to our understanding of the legitimization of remote warfare, and the role discourse has in violence.

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Introduction

But could the coalition, with its superior high-tech resources, really not have known how many people were in the vicinity of the warehouse that night? "They have satellite imagery and drones, don't they?" says Sheikh Shihan. "They see everything. They know the area like the back of their hand."¹

In the night of 2 June 2015, a Dutch aircraft bombed what was called a bomb factory in the Iraqi city of Hawija as part of the operations of the international Coalition against IS. Secondary explosions wiped out the entire neighbourhood, which within days led to reports of over 70 civilian casualties. 15 June 2015, the Dutch minister of Defence, Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the United States Central Command (Centcom) and discussed a preliminary report of Centcom. The report stated that it was plausible that civilian casualties had occurred during the Dutch attack in Hawija. The report of Centcom referred to reports by Reuters and Al Jazeera who spoke of an estimated 70 civilian deaths.² Fifteen days later the same minister told the parliament that there had been no reports of civilian casualties due to military actions of the Netherlands in the Coalition against IS. Two sentences earlier, the minister had emphasised that "the Netherlands only uses so-called smart weapons, i.e. GPS or laser-controlled and with board cannon, and thus operates very precisely."³ It took until 2018 for the Dutch government to inform the parliament of three missions that the Ministry of Defence investigated for potentially having led to civilian casualties. One of these missions was a bombardment on an IED factory, where "it turned out that the IED facility contained many more explosives than was known or could have been estimated in advance. It is highly probable that civilian casualties occurred during this attack."⁴ Hawija was not named.

It was only when, four years after these events, the Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad and the Nederlands Omroep Stichting (NOS) reviewed the bombardment in Hawija and highlighted the Dutch involvement that the public and the parliament took note and started asking questions. The parliament mostly focused on the lack of transparency of the Ministry of Defence.

The emphasis the Dutch minister put on the precision and care with which bombardments such as the bombardment of Hawija were conducted illustrates a new trend in Western warfare.

¹ Maar had de coalitie met haar superieure hightech middelen echt niet kunnen weten hoeveel mensen er die nacht in de buurt van de opslagplaats waren? „Ze hebben toch satellietbeelden en drones?“ zegt sjeik Shihan. „Ze zien alles. Ze kennen het gebied als hun eigen huis.“ J. Schipper and K. Versteegh, "De Nederlandse 'precisieboom' op een wapendepot van IS," *NRC Handelsblad*, October 18, 2019, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2019/10/18/de-nederlandse-precisieboom-op-een-wapendepot-van-is-a3977113>.

² K. Versteegh, "'Strik eromheen en klaar', mailt OM-ambtenaar," *NRC Handelsblad*, February 18, 2020, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2020/02/18/strik-eromheen-en-klaar-mailt-om-ambtenaar-a3990823>.

³ Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 560, 52.

⁴ In de IED-fabriek bleken later veel meer explosieven te hebben gelegen dan vooraf bekend was of kon worden ingeschat. Het is zeer waarschijnlijk dat bij deze aanval burgerslachtoffers zijn gevallen. Kamerstukken II, 2017-2018, 27925, nr. 629, 12.

Increasingly, Western states are relying on precision strikes in military intervention. These precision strikes are enabled by modern technologies, such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and precision-guided munition.⁵ This 'new' way of warfare waged predominantly by Western states using precision bombing is a case of risk-aversion. Here this way of warfare will be referred to as remote warfare. Remote warfare is a strategy that aims to remain at a distance, and a preference to outsource the burden of war. To reduce the risk for one's own military, remote warfare is characterised by a shift away from boots on the ground.⁶ Instead of a large military presence, remote warfare involves air and drone strikes from above, together with on the ground special forces, intelligence operatives, private military companies and security cooperation through military training teams.⁷ The risk of military casualties is reduced by avoiding the deployment of ground troops as much as possible.⁸ This new way of remote warfare in intervention has become accepted as the best choice for Western states who legitimise interventions as humane.

This thesis aims to further the understanding of how remote warfare has become a legitimate choice for Western democratic states. To understand this, one needs to understand how the legitimisation of an intervention using remote warfare as a strategy has developed over time. Therefore, I am asking the question:

What collective action frames were developed by the Dutch Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to legitimise the use of airstrikes in the Dutch mission in the Kosovo War, in the Coalition against IS and in the debate on weaponising drones between 1998 and July 2020?

In answering this question, I will use the three case studies as my sub-questions to show the development of legitimising discourse over time. Therefore, this research question is a development puzzle.

The answer to this question is academically and socially relevant for several reasons. Academically, I aim to contribute to the debate on remote warfare. Remote warfare has become the primary strategy for international interventions by Western states and is accepted as a legitimate mode of violence by Western societies, but little attention has been paid to the development of how remote warfare has become an accepted practice in Western democratic states. To understand why remote warfare has become accepted, the development of legitimising discourse on remote warfare has to be examined. On the societal level, understanding the discourse that legitimises remote

⁵ M. Mutschler, *On the Road to Liquid Warfare? Revisiting Zygmunt Bauman's Thoughts on Liquid Modernity in the Context of the "New Western Way of War,"* (Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) Working Paper, 2016), 5.

⁶ R. Biegon and T. Watts, "Defining Remote Warfare: Security Cooperation," *Oxford Research Group*, (2017): 4.

⁷ Biegon and Wats, "Defining Remote Warfare," 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*: 4.

warfare can contribute to reflecting on decisions that are made by the government. Currently, reflection on the acceptance of remote warfare is especially important because the Netherlands is in the process of deciding whether to weaponise its new drones. I do not aim to discuss ethical or juridical considerations of remote warfare and the use of weaponised drones but to understand how they are legitimised, with a further aim to encourage people to be aware of the framing of remote warfare and lethal drones.

First, I will review the academic debate on the development of remote warfare and on the legitimisation of interventions as humanitarian.

Remote warfare

Several authors have argued that warfare and especially international interventions by Western countries such as the United States of America (US), the United Kingdom (UK) and France are changing. Increasingly, interventions such as those of the Coalition Against IS in Iraq and Syria are characterised by risk aversion and waging war from a distance. The best-known authors on the subject, such as Waldman⁹, Krieg¹⁰, Shaw¹¹, Gould and Demmers¹² agree that there is an increasing emphasis on risk aversion in Western warfare. This is seen as a 'new' way of warfare. Each author uses a different term to refer to this 'new' way such as: 'Surrogate warfare' (Krieg), 'vicarious warfare' (Waldman), 'liquid warfare' (Gould and Demmers), and 'risk-transfer warfare' (Shaw). These different terms can be subsumed under the more general term 'remote warfare'.

A point of debate on remote warfare is how 'new' it is. Risk aversion is not new in military strategy. As early as 1621 with the development of new artillery weapons, John Donne, an English poet, lawyer and priest, forecast that war would be brought to "quicker ends than heretofore" while avoiding the 'great expanse of blood' and reducing the number of men slain¹³. Contrary to this positive prediction, weapons that create distance between warring parties historically often have been criticised. Crossbows and gunpowder, at the time they were invented, were perceived as unfair and weapons of cowards¹⁴. Illustrating the historicity of these tactics, Krieg shows that these tactics are nothing new because already the Romans employed 'barbarian' tribes as proxy forces through security cooperation¹⁵. The recent way of warfare is new in the sense that the tactics employed to

⁹ T. Waldman, "Vicarious warfare: The counterproductive consequences of modern American military practice," *Contemporary Security Policy* 39, no. 2 (2018): 181-205.

¹⁰ A. Krieg, "Externalizing the burden of war: the Obama Doctrine and US foreign policy in the Middle East," *International Affairs* 92, no. 1 (2016): 97-113.

¹¹ M. Shaw, *The New Western Way of War: Risk-Transfer War and its Crisis in Iraq* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005).

¹² J. Demmers en L. Gould, "An assemblage approach to liquid warfare: AFRICOM and the 'hunt' for Joseph Kony," *Security Dialogue* 49, no. 5 (2018): 364-381.

¹³ J. Galliot, *Military Robots: Mapping the Moral Landscape* (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2015), 1.

¹⁴ M. Ekelhof, "Autonome wapens: Een verkenning van het concept Meaningful Human Control," *Militaire Spectator*, June 25, 2015, <https://www.militairespectator.nl/thema/recht-ethiek/artikel/autonome-wapens>.

¹⁵ Krieg, "Externalizing the burden of war," 100.

create distance have become more widespread and that they employ more of these tactics in conjunction, thereby creating a new strategy of warfare out of old tactics. All authors discussed here indicate that the 'new' risk aversion stems from a long history of Western warfare. Most see the Cold War as the moment when risk aversion turns into a 'new' strategy, although others see it emerge only in the War on Terror. The Kosovo War is often mentioned as the first 'new' war, in which NATO used remote warfare as a strategy. The War on Terror, following the attacks of 11 September 2001, significantly accelerates this development. Shaw calls this the new phase of Western warfare.¹⁶

The research on the history of remote warfare is focussed primarily on the practical evidence of the development of remote warfare. In order to add to the field of research on remote warfare, I use discourse analyses to show the development of the rhetoric that legitimised this strategy. This thesis builds on research on the framing of violence by Western states as ethical.

Humane violence

Western states accepting remote warfare as the primary strategy have used a discourse that legitimises violence as precise and riskless, making warfare appear as humane and hence, compared to the adversaries, the 'better' way of warfare. This narrative of humane interventions increasingly justifies them as being "the least of all possible evils."¹⁷ States rationalise the violence they use as violence that prevents far worse harm and brutal measures of others.¹⁸ In arguing the good that can be done in a military intervention, the violence used by Western states is claimed to be humanitarian. Chamayou perfectly illustrates the paradox of humane violence by arguing that:

It is a power that both kills and saves, wounds and heals, and it performs those double tasks in a single gesture, in an integrated manner: an immediate synthesis of a power of destruction and a power of caring, murder at the same time as care.¹⁹

The danger of representing violence as humanitarian is, according to Weizman, that the use of the lesser evil argument to legitimise violence can work counterproductive and lead to more violence, because "less brutal measures are also those that may be more easily naturalised, accepted and tolerated – and hence more frequently used, with the result that a greater evil may be reached cumulatively."²⁰ Chamayou continues in the same vein when he argues that: "Lives are saved. But saved from what? From oneself, from one's own power of death. The violence could have been worse, and since one tried in good faith to limit its deadly effects, one acted morally."²¹

¹⁶ Shaw, *The New Western Way of War*, 24.

¹⁷ E. Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza* (London: Verso, 2011), 4.

¹⁸ Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils*, 9

¹⁹ G. Chamayou, *A Theory of the Drone*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: New Press, 2015), 139.

²⁰ Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils*, 10.

²¹ Chamayou, *A Theory of the Drone*, 139.

Hannah Arendt has also warned against using the argument that the choice to use violence was the lesser evil: “Politically, the weakness of the argument has always been that those who choose the lesser evil forget very quickly that they chose evil.”²²

The paradox in the legitimisation of violence as humane becomes especially evident when one considers that the bombardment of Hawija was a part of the Coalition against IS that has been represented as “the most precise war in history.”²³ The precision of the weapons that are deployed, therefore, becomes a crucial part in the legitimisation of violence. Bonds coins the term ‘humanized violence’, arguing that “the practice of humanized violence, with its precision weaponry, calculations and adjustments, and procedural processes to minimise civilian deaths, is one means by which state killing is again made to seem moral.”²⁴ The use of precision weapons seems to enable Western states to reliably hit ever-smaller targets. In being able to hit the intended target, the expectation is raised that these weapons reduce collateral damage, and make it increasingly possible to protect the civilian population during an intervention from violence. War then becomes less destructive, and the precision of warfare is given ethical significance.²⁵ The more precise the warfare of the Western state, the more ethical it is claimed to be.

For violence to be humanitarian it is essential that civilians are separated from enemies, because civilian casualties must be explained by the state using violence because the narrative of precision warfare leads to an expectation of a low death toll among civilians.²⁶ The discourse on humane violence is “challenged but not shattered by incidences of ‘collateral damage’ which are explained away as accidental, marginal, excusable.”²⁷ The discourse on humane violence is, therefore, also characterised by expressing sympathy and regret.²⁸ Surveillance and data collection, which are part of precise bombings, are used to identify and, even more, construct enemies. Especially for drone strikes that target people who are not identified as militants, but simply match ‘characteristics’ of militants, the construction of these characteristics that make someone an enemy is necessary. Only when an enemy is constructed can targeting them become the moral decision.²⁹ Therefore, according to Bonds, “humanized violence is both a practice, requiring the use of new surveillance and precision-killing technologies, and also a legitimating discourse.”³⁰

²² Quoted in Chamayou, *A Theory of the Drone*, 139.

²³ E. Bonds, “Humanized Violence: Targeted Killings and Civilian Deaths in the Us War against the Islamic State,” *Current Sociology* 67, no. 3 (2019): 439.

²⁴ Bonds, “Humanized Violence,” 442.

²⁵ M. Zehfuss, “Targeting: Precision and the Production of Ethics,” *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 3 (2011): 1-2.

²⁶ Zehfuss, “Targeting,” 19.

²⁷ *Ibid.*: 19.

²⁸ Bonds, “Humanized Violence,” 449.

²⁹ *Ibid.*: 442.

³⁰ *Ibid.*: 442.

Within this debate on humanitarian violence, there is a sub-field on drones. Drones are a part of both the new surveillance and precision-killing technologies. Furthermore, drones are the epitome of risk-avoidance because the pilots do not have to be in the field anymore. In this context of relating drones to humanitarian violence, the sub-field is mostly concerned with the association of drones with ethical killing.³¹ A further consideration is given to the influence of the surveillance carried out by drones on violence.³² As Espinoza argues: “These technologies – so the argument goes – are not only a solution, but an ethical solution since they allow for more accurate targeting that reduces “collateral damage”.”³³

This research shows that Western states frame the violence they perpetrate as so precise that the violence becomes humane and ethical. This narrative has significant implications for remote warfare and the acceptance of war in Western states. To understand the importance of the framing of precise warfare by Western states as humane violence, we need to place it within the broader theoretical framework considering the relation discourse and violence.

³¹ See: E. Schwarz, “Prescription Drones: On the Techno-Biopolitical Regimes of Contemporary ‘Ethical Killing,’” *Security Dialogue* 47, no. 1 (2016): 59–75, C. Holmqvist “Undoing War: War Ontologies and the Materiality of Drone Warfare,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 41, no. 3 (2013): 535–52, Chamayou, *A Theory of the Drone* and B. Strawser, “Moral Predators: The Duty to Employ Uninhabited Aerial Vehicles,” *Journal of Military Ethics* 9, no.4 (2010): 342-368.

³² See: M. Espinoza, “State Terrorism: Orientalism and the Drone Programme,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 11, no. 2 (2018): 376–393, T. Wall and T. Monahan. “Surveillance and Violence from Afar: The Politics of Drones and Liminal Security-Scapes,” *Theoretical Criminology* 15, no. 3 (2011): 239–254, L. Wilcox, “Embodying Algorithmic War: Gender, Race, and the Posthuman in Drone Warfare,” *Security Dialogue* 48, no. 1 (2017): 11–28.

³³ Espinoza, “State Terrorism,” 378.

Theoretical framework: Discourses Legitimising Violence

The legitimisation of violence as ethical by Western states shows the importance of discourse in the acceptance of war. This thesis concerns itself with how Western democratic states legitimise war to understand why they go to war. Jabri stresses the importance of researching discursive trends that legitimise war as follows:

War as a social phenomenon involves individuals, communities and states and any attempt to uncover its genesis must incorporate the discursive and institutional continuities which render violent conflict a legitimate and widely accepted mode of human conduct.³⁴

According to Jabri, war is not innate to human behaviour, but a product of human actions and choices that are made within the context of the rules defined by a society of that time.³⁵ Democracy is the set of rules that these states must adhere to when telling their stories. States are not independently existing entities, the communities and individuals within make up a state.³⁶ The government of a democratic state needs support from the parliament for a war to be perceived as legitimate.³⁷ To gain this support a narrative that explains why a state has to go to war is necessary, which has become harder since the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of a “single overarching bogeyman.”³⁸ Governments now must do more convincing than before to convince the parliament of the necessity of war. Legitimisation of war has become an “essential component of waging war.”³⁹ Therefore, it is crucial to study how Western democratic states legitimise their involvement in wars for its politics and ultimately for its population, on whom the legitimacy of the whole political institution relies.

The ontological foundation for the theoretical framework of this thesis lies in the middle ground between agency and structuralism. Agency-based theories emphasise the ability of human beings to make their own choices, while structuralist theories emphasise the social relations that structure human beings’ behaviour. A discursive approach rejects choosing a single point of departure but sees both as complementary,⁴⁰ just like Giddens’ conceptualisation of the duality of structure. This approach understands that human beings can make their own choices, but within the

³⁴ V. Jabri, *Discourses on Violence: Conflict Analysis Reconsidered* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 1.

³⁵ Jabri, *Discourses on Violence*, 4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 1.

³⁷ J. Strong, “Why parliament now decides on war: Tracing the growth of the parliamentary prerogative through Syria, Libya and Iraq,” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 17, no.4 (2015): 605.

³⁸ Strong, “Why parliament now decides on war,” 605.

³⁹ *Ibid.*: 605.

⁴⁰ J. Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict: An Introduction*, Seconded (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 126-127.

limits of the social structures they live in. These social structures both influence people, and also are influenced by people.⁴¹

Building on the debate on remote warfare and the legitimisation of ethical violence I will first discuss how discourse and power are related, which then can be taken further to examine how violence can be reproduced through discourse. To make this theory practical, I will then explain how frames are used in discourse to legitimise actions, which can be applied to the legitimisation of violence as the ‘ethical’ choice.

Power and Discourse

Understanding of the relationship between power, discourse and violent practices, can best start with the concept of discourse. For discourse analysts, ‘discourse’ usually means: “actual instances of communicative action in the medium of language.”⁴² Discourse analysts influenced by Foucault add that discourse is a social phenomenon. Discourses in this context are “stories about social reality,” where social processes form discourse, and discourse forms society.⁴³ In this vein, too, Jabri defines discourse as: “social relations represented in texts where the language contained within these texts is used to construct meaning and representation.”⁴⁴ Discourse does not merely describe things; it is an active process to construct a version of the things it reflects and therefore constructs a meaning, a reality or a truth.⁴⁵ Discourse can become so embedded in the cultural and political landscape that most people lose awareness of its constructed significance and may no longer be consciously aware of it being anything but reality.⁴⁶ Because of this critical influence discourse has on constructing society, Fairclough reasoned: “nobody who has an interest in modern society, and certainly nobody who has an interest in relations of power in modern society, can afford to ignore language.”⁴⁷

The scholar most associated with thinking about power and discourse is Foucault. He argued that language represents reality, but language is determined by a culture that governs language or discourse.⁴⁸ Foucault’s theory highlighted how discourse is both produced by reality and determines reality. He argued that:

Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanics and instances which

⁴¹ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 127.

⁴² B. Johnstone, *Discourse Analysis* (Newark: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2018), 2.

⁴³ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 125, 133.

⁴⁴ Jabri, *Discourses on Violence*, 94.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 95.

⁴⁶ R. Jackson, “Genealogy, Ideology, and Counter-Terrorism,” *Studies in Language & Capitalism* 1 (2006): 186-187.

⁴⁷ N. Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Longman, 1989), 3.

⁴⁸ S. Foss, and A. Gill, “Michel Foucault’s Theory of Rhetoric As Epistemic,” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 51, no. 4 (1987): 386-387.

enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.⁴⁹

When speaking about truths, Foucault does not mean an independent, objective truth that can be discovered; he means the discourse that determines what is true and what is false.⁵⁰ In Foucault's use of the term 'power', power determines individuals' behaviour, so it is productive of reality. Power makes things happen and has effects; hence it is not only externally controlling people through coercion or repression, but internally, mentally controlling the decisions of individuals how they behave.⁵¹ At the same time, like any social process, discourse is subject to social power relations. In this way, Gourevitch, examining the history of Rwanda, explains the relation between power and discourse clearly as: "power consists in the ability to make others inhabit your story of their reality – even, as so often is the case, when that story is written in their blood."⁵² This is the understanding of discourse and power, as used in this thesis.

How can one use this understanding of discourse influencing reality to understand war? As Jabri argues, to understand the genesis of war, one has to understand the continuities in discourse that legitimate violent conflict.⁵³ Foucault has given a theoretical approach to understanding the genesis using discourse, which he called genealogy.⁵⁴ A genealogical account of events shows discontinuities instead of proposing a meta-narrative of some grand design that determined the past. Foucault identified genealogy as a history of the present.⁵⁵ Foucault, in his use of genealogy as a method, was interested in the construction of 'knowledges,' and he argues that power or knowledge is constructed through discourse.⁵⁶ So, genealogies are accounts of how power produces truth, and how these powers are themselves again products of power.⁵⁷ This is done by using genealogy as a "re-assessment and re-evaluation of the discourses and knowledge of the 'human sciences' to question official accounts, their effects, and how they work to limit and subject

⁴⁹ M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon (New York: Vintage Books, 2015), 131.

⁵⁰ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 132.

⁵¹ U. Crowley, "Genealogy, method," In *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Elsevier, 2009), 6.

⁵² P. Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (London: Picador, 2000), 48.

⁵³ Jabri, *Discourses on Violence*, 1.

⁵⁴ Nietzsche saw genealogy as a "historical-philosophical account of how reality comes into being." Foucault later developed this into "political histories of truth." The difference between Nietzsche and Foucault is that Foucault assumes the constructed power relations determine the actions of individuals, whereas Nietzsche maintains there is a freedom to act. For more information see: C. Prado, *Starting with Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2000), 33-37 and S. Vucetic, "Genealogy as a research tool in International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 3 (2011): 1295.

⁵⁵ Vucetic, "Genealogy as a research tool in International Relations," 1302; Crowley, "Genealogy, method," 3.

⁵⁶ Crowley, "Genealogy, method," 5.

⁵⁷ Prado, *Starting With Foucault*, 35-39.

individuals in modern society” as stated by Crowley.⁵⁸ I will use genealogy as a theory and basis for a methodology to think about continuity and how discourse shaped the path of institutions in their decision-making process, leading to the use of violence.

Discourse and violence

A discursive approach to understanding violence looks at the shared stories, placed in their historical and power context, that provide the narrative for violence.⁵⁹ Discourse is mobilised to legitimate the interests of the hegemonic power of that time.⁶⁰ Especially for institutions with power such as governments and organisations, discourse can be a tool.⁶¹ Conflict emerges when “the language of politics becomes a discourse of exclusionist protection against a constructed diabolical, hated enemy who is deserving of any violence perpetrated against it.”⁶² This enemy is also constructed by the language used to define it and its attributed characteristics.⁶³ Discourse analysis in such a case studies the formation of discourses on war, such as the above-mentioned construction of an enemy. Researchers using the discursive approach try to understand at least two functions of discourse; Firstly, the use of discourse to recruit supporters, and secondly legitimising violence through discourse.⁶⁴ It is the latter function of discursive representation that this thesis will focus on.

Violent action has to be legitimised, convincing the parliament to support the decision to use violence, and then also to gain the support of the public. Apter says on legitimisation: “people do not commit political violence without discourse, they need to talk themselves into it.”⁶⁵ Hence, if one examines the communication before and during a violent action, we might be able to discern the genesis of a conflict. Jabri states that communication is a central aspect of conflict, but for communication to have meaning it needs a shared “symbolic representational system.”⁶⁶ This symbolic representational system can be seen as a shared narrative imagining the violence before it is implemented. This narrative must be strong enough to convince parliamentarians and citizens that violence is the best solution for the problem at hand. Therefore Schmidt and Schröder argue that violence first has to be imaginable before it can be carried out.⁶⁷ The step towards conflict is thus made through legitimisation which means that: “wars are made by those individuals, groups or

⁵⁸ Crowley, “Genealogy, method,” 3.

⁵⁹ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 126.

⁶⁰ Jabri, *Discourses on Violence*, 96.

⁶¹ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 134.

⁶² Jabri, *Discourses on Violence*, 134.

⁶³ *Ibid.*: 134.

⁶⁴ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 134.

⁶⁵ Apter quoted in Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 139-140.

⁶⁶ Jabri, *Discourses on Violence*, 95.

⁶⁷ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 140.

classes that have the power successfully to represent violence as the appropriate course of action in a given situation.”⁶⁸ This they call ‘violent imaginaries’.

This thesis is a case study of these theories, analysing the discourse in a small country used to legitimise violence. The forming of violent imaginaries has primarily been done by large countries or organisations that determine that conflict is necessary, and small countries decide whether to participate in that conflict. The aim of this thesis is to further build on the theory of discourse and violence and fill the gap in knowledge on how discourse is developed when a small state has to legitimise its own involvement in a coalition. To do this, I will use the analytical framework framing presents.

Framing

The concept of ‘violent imaginaries’ points to the use of fixed sets of narratives, performances and inscriptions, of which this thesis will focus on narratives.⁶⁹ Recurrent narratives allow for building up a discourse over time without the need to re-build an argument from the ground up every time. Narratives are parts of reality delimited by a frame; hence frame analysis is a useful tool to analyse discourse.⁷⁰ Goffman defines frames as “schemata of interpretation” which help people make sense of their life and the world around them. Frames enable people to label, perceive and identify occurrences, which helps give them meaning and function.⁷¹ Benford and Snow offer a toolkit to analyse the framing used to legitimate actions, which can be applied to the legitimisation of violent actions. They call these frames ‘collective action frames.’

According to Benford and Snow, collective action frames are: “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meaning that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organisation.”⁷² Collective action frames consist of core framing tasks and of the discursive processes that enable these core framing tasks. They are constructed to develop a consensus on (1) what are the problematic conditions of a situation that need to change and to apportion the blame; (2) to develop an answer to the situation; and lastly, (3) to urge others to act according to this answer and to change the situation.⁷³

The authors build on Wilson’s approach to collective action framing in three parts. Benford and Snow refer to the three components as “diagnostic framing”, “prognostic framing,” and

⁶⁸ B. Schmidt, I. Schröder and European Association of Social Anthropologists, *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2001), 5.

⁶⁹ Schmidt and Schröder, *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict*, 9.

⁷⁰ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 137.

⁷¹ Goffman quoted in R. Benford and D. Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 614.

⁷² Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movement,” 614.

⁷³ *Ibid.*: 615.

“motivational framing.”⁷⁴ The diagnostic framing task is concerned with constructing the problem. For this, the source of the problem is identified and who is to blame for this situation. This includes constructing boundaries between what is right and evil, who the antagonist is and who is the protagonist. Benford and Snow call this an ‘adversarial frame,’ where attributes are prescribed to an enemy. The diagnostic framing task also uses ‘injustice frames’. These frames identify a victim, and to legitimise action amplify the victimhood of the identified victim.⁷⁵ The second framing task is prognostic framing. This involves developing a solution to the problem and potentially counterframing the solutions that opponents have proposed. The last core framing task is motivational framing, which gives a rationale for engaging in action, including the development of a discourse that supports the call to action.⁷⁶ The motivational framing task involves constructing a vocabulary of motive to engage in the action, such as a vocabulary on precision.

In the case of a country following decisions made by leading partners in a coalition or international cooperation, the diagnostic and prognostic framing tasks may already have been partially determined. The motivational is the most crucial framing task in the sense that it has to establish why a particular state should contribute to the coalition or cooperation, and this is a task each country must solve itself. Therefore, I have used the approach of Benford and Snow to structurally analyse the legitimising discourse of the Dutch government, with a focus on the motivational framing task.

⁷⁴ Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movement,” 615.

⁷⁵ Ibid.: 615-616.

⁷⁶ Ibid.: 615-617.

Method

Research puzzle and sub-questions

As formulated in the introduction, my research puzzle is:

What collective action frames were developed by the Dutch Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to legitimise the use of airstrikes in the Dutch mission in the Kosovo War, in the Coalition against IS and in the debate on weaponising drones between 1998 and July 2020?

Most existing literature on remote warfare is based on the policies, strategies and discourses of the US as the major Western country. It is an almost unquestioned assumption in the theories on discourse and violence that the government has full power to decide autonomously on the deployment of its military and the legitimising narrative for the conflict. The literature does not consider the position of small countries, which are more dependent partners in international organisations such as NATO or the EU dominated by the major powers. A small country such as the Netherlands must legitimise its decision to intervene for its parliament and citizens from a different position: how can it justify taking part in conflicts started by others? The Netherlands is one of the few democratic partners that has consistently contributed significantly to US-led coalitions.⁷⁷ Therefore, the Netherlands is an eminent context to broaden the understanding of discursive paths towards remote warfare.

The research puzzle is broken down into three sub-questions using significant case studies to look at the collective action frames the Dutch government developed. Finally, the comparison across the three cases answers the concluding sub-question: How do the continuities and discontinuities in the collective action frames across the cases broaden our understanding of discourse on remote warfare?

The case studies have been chosen to show the most prolonged historical development of the discourse used by the Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. The Kosovo War is the first case of Dutch involvement in remote warfare. The Coalition against IS is the most recent example of an international intervention in which the Netherlands heavily participated that used remote warfare. This active participation required much legitimisation of the government. The final case study, the debate on weaponising drones, shows whether and how the discourse used in the earlier cases is applied to further moves towards remote warfare by the Dutch government.

The selected time frame is based on these case studies. The Kosovo War started in 1999, but framing tasks for the Dutch government started in 1998 in the run-up to the Kosovo War. The

⁷⁷ J. Massie, "Why Democratic Allies Defect Prematurely: Canadian and Dutch Unilateral Pullouts from the War in Afghanistan," *Democracy and Security* 12, no. 2 (2016): 87.

debate on weaponising drones is ongoing with recent developments, and to represent this debate as comprehensively as possible, I include the debate up to July 2020.

This thesis will focus on these cases using airstrikes and drones because it is this characteristic of remote warfare that is debated most and thus needs legitimisation the most. As the quote at the beginning of the thesis illustrates, drones and airstrikes are interwoven in the sense that the information drones can provide is directly linked to the precision of airstrikes. Mutschler further argues that armed drones used for targeted killings are the most extreme and illustrative case of the Western turn away from ground troops and increasing reliance on precision strikes.⁷⁸ Thus, I choose not to analyse the boots on the ground, but the eyes—and bombs—in the sky.

Research design and methodology

To answer the research question, a research design should be constructed to analyse the evidence systematically.⁷⁹ As Fairclough says: “without detailed analysis one cannot really show that language is doing the work one may theoretically ascribe to it.”⁸⁰ Because this is a case study of the discourse used in the Dutch government, the needed data are government statements, primarily letters to parliament and debates with parliament. Methodically, I divided the research into three phases.

The first phase was to gather the data on governmental discourse. The thesis will be based purely on qualitative research of documents. For the sampling, I have decided to focus on the crucial ministries when it comes to military decision making and interventions, i.e., the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Throughout the thesis, I will refer to these ministries as the Dutch government. The documents that I analysed are the *Kamerstukken*, which are official publications by the Dutch government, of which I only used those sent to the Dutch Parliament (Tweede Kamer). Where applicable, I also analysed debates in parliament on the cases. The documents were sampled based on the dossier number.⁸¹ For the case of the Kosovo War dossier number 22181 was used to select samples pertaining to the Kosovo War (N=43). The dossier number 27925 was used to find samples on the Coalition against IS (N=27). Due to the large number of documents the *Kamerstukken* that were both sent to the Dutch parliament and senate were selected, supplemented mostly with *Kamerstukken* of the time period 2014-2016. On drones, the dossier number is 30806 (N=17). The debate on weaponising drones was a smaller sample size since less has been published on this topic yet.

⁷⁸ Mutschler, *On the Road to Liquid Warfare*, 5.

⁷⁹ C. Ragin and L. Amoroso, *Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method*, Thirded (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE, 2019), 26.

⁸⁰ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 137.

⁸¹ All officially published documents were retrieved from: <https://www.officielebekendmakingen.nl/>

The second phase of the research was to analyse the documents and code the findings. Analysing the documents I have made use of discourse analysis through document analysis. Like all qualitative methods, document analysis is mainly focussed on searching for underlying meanings and patterns.⁸² Discourse analysis as an approach is not concerned with analysing language in its abstract sense but the analysis of communication that is taken as the manifestation of discourse. Discourse analysis can mean to break down the discourse into functions of the communication, so, for example, breaking it down in narratives.⁸³ To structurally analyse the government's official narrative, I have used the core framing tasks as identified by Benford and Snow.⁸⁴ To analyse the documents per case study systematically, the three frames were used as codes in data analysis software NVivo.

In the last step, the results of the case analyses were compared to see if the patterns form a trend in line with the academic debate on remote warfare and humane violence.

Limitations

In conducting my research, I was limited in several ways. First, the government's discourse is not necessarily the same as the discourse in all of the debate in parliament and society. However, since it is the government that has to make decisions and has to legitimise these to parliament and society, it may be assumed that the main arguments in the discourse will be reflected in the government's statements. Secondly, I could not analyse every source. I have also only been able to analyse official documents, so unofficial discourse has not been considered. Furthermore, the documents were sampled, so not all were analysed; however, saturation was found to occur. Thirdly, the MALE UAVs have not yet arrived in the Netherlands, the decision to weaponise them has not yet been made, and they have not yet been deployed. Therefore, the framing tasks for this debate until now are not as elaborate as the frames used in other case studies. This is something future research can elaborate on, but for now, it is vital to see the development of discourse and how this does already influence the framing of MALE UAVs. Fourthly, I have only been able to use three cases. To thoroughly use genealogy as a method, more cases would have been preferential, but this was impossible. Lastly, I have not been able to triangulate my findings using other research methods. I have conducted confidential interviews for my internship that did not raise different results.

⁸² D. Altheide, "Tracking Discourse and Qualitative Document Analysis," *Poetics -The Hague-* 27, no. 4 (2000): 290.

⁸³ Johnstone, *Discourse Analysis*, xvi – xiv.

⁸⁴ Diagnostic frames, prognostic frames and motivational frames. Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movement," 614-617.

Case study: the Kosovo War

Context

Yugoslavia had been re-established after WWII by Josip Broz, known under his partisan name Tito, combining several provinces and republics in the Western Balkans, but after his death in 1980 Yugoslavia disintegrated. Relationships between different groups living in Yugoslavia deteriorated rapidly, and in 1991 the Yugoslav Wars began.⁸⁵ These wars were separate but related conflicts framed in nationality and ethnicity. The Kosovo War was one of these wars that came from the collapse of Yugoslavia.⁸⁶

Kosovo had been an autonomous region of Serbia, and mainly Albanians lived in Kosovo. Between the Kosovar Albanians and the Serbian minority there was a history of tensions, which was exasperated by Slobodan Milošević, then Serbia's Communist Party chief. The Serbian minority living in Kosovo had been promised in 1987 by Milošević that "no one should dare to beat you."⁸⁷ Such outspoken Serbian ethnic nationalism earned Milošević support of Serbian nationalists, and in 1989 he revoked the position of Kosovo as an autonomous province.⁸⁸ Milošević dismantled all official ethnic Albanian institutions, which led to the Albanian majority losing its political representation. A small group, the KLA or UCK (Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës), was formed as opposition by Kosovar Albanians, using terrorist tactics. The KLA grew, mostly after harsh reprisals by the Serbian security forces that also cost civilian lives, and the KLA became an army claiming territories for its own, saying the territory had been 'liberated.' In June 1998, the Yugoslav Army and Serbian police intervened and completely overwhelmed the weak KLA, burning homes and forcing many Albanians to flee.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ N. Thomas, K. Mikulan, and D. Pavlovic, *The Yugoslav Wars (1): Slovenia & Croatia, 1991-95*. (Oxford: Osprey, 2006), 4-6.

⁸⁶ The NATO states were ashamed in their failure to respond cohesively and decidedly in the years 1991 until 1995 in the wars in former Yugoslavia. Especially for the Dutch, the Yugoslav wars had been traumatic. Dutch participation in the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), since 1991, had turned into a disaster in 1995, with over 7000 Muslim men being massacred by Serbian forces while the men should have been under the protection of Dutch UN peacekeepers. Air support never came for the Dutch peacekeepers, and the 'safe space' of Srebrenica was safe no longer. These harrowing experiences led to collective trauma, and many questions about who was guilty of this disaster remained. Afterwards, the Dutch public was not favourable towards contributing ground troops to peace operations. For more information see: A. Roberts, "Nato's 'Humanitarian War' Over Kosovo," *Survival* 41, no. 3 (1999): 102-123, and B. Stahl, H. Boekle, J. Nadoll, and A. Johannesdottir, "Understanding the Atlanticist-Europeanist Divide in the Cfsp: Comparing Denmark, France, Germany and the Netherlands," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 9, no. 3 (2004) : 417-441.

⁸⁷ Quoted in A. Schinella, *Bombs Without Boots: The Limits of Airpower* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2019), 47.

⁸⁸ Milošević went further in this nationalism and in 1992 he accused not only the Bosnian Muslims but also the Kosovar Albanians of plotting a 'holy war' against the Serbs. For more information on his policies see: N. Thomas, D. Pavlovic, and K. Mikulan, *The Yugoslav Wars (2)* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013), 41.

⁸⁹ Schinella, *Bombs Without Boots*, 48.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) after this escalation decided to deter further Serbian aggression in Kosovo. On 15 June 1998, NATO deployed more than eighty aircraft to fly close to the borders of Kosovo. This one-day exercise, Determined Falcon, was meant to show NATO's power and to deter Serbian violence in Kosovo.⁹⁰ German General Klaus Naumann, NATO's Military Standing Committee chairman, later conceded: "Milošević rightly concluded the NATO threat was bluff (...) and finished his summer offensive."⁹¹ Therefore it was quickly concluded that more international intervention would be necessary to change the situation.

In September 1998, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1199, calling for the withdrawal of Yugoslavian forces, an immediate ceasefire, and the return of refugee Kosovars. US envoy Holbrooke also demanded a verification mission. NATO, based on these demands and non-compliance of the Serbians, prepared another campaign based on airpower.⁹² Following a massacre of civilians in Racak by the Serbian forces, the Serbian rejection of a peace agreement, and the Yugoslav army resuming its campaign against Kosovars, the NATO in March 1999 was convinced that air operations were necessary to force compliance.⁹³ The purpose was, according to US president Bill Clinton, to demonstrate "the seriousness of NATO's purpose," in deterring the Serbian forces from more aggression towards the Kosovars and "to seriously damage the Serb military's capacity' to carry out any such offensive."⁹⁴ Operation Allied Force (OAF) began.

Dutch involvement in OAF

The Kosovo War of 1999 was the first time that the Dutch Army mainly relied on airstrikes in a conflict, as the entire Kosovo War existed predominantly of airstrikes by NATO members. The Kosovo War was the first time that the NATO alliance used sustained force in its 50-years existence.⁹⁵ The only ground troops were those of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), as the war was fought without ground troops of NATO. For NATO members, this was to be a war without casualties. Therefore, Ignatieff argues that for the intervening states, the Kosovo War became a 'virtual' war. Death was not part of their experience of this war, but war without death is not truly 'real' to people.⁹⁶

OAF intensified significantly over the short time the operation was active. In total 38,004 sorties (combat missions of aircraft) were flown, of which 10,484 were strike sorties. Strike sorties in

⁹⁰ Schinella, *Bombs Without Boots*, 49.

⁹¹ Quoted in Schinella, *Bombs Without Boots*, 49.

⁹² *Ibid.*: 49-50.

⁹³ *Ibid.*: 49-50.

⁹⁴ Quoted in M. Webber, "The Kosovo War: A Recapitulation," *International Affairs (royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 85, no. 3 (2009): 450.

⁹⁵ A. Roberts, "Nato's 'Humanitarian War' Over Kosovo," *Survival* 41, no. 3 (1999): 102.

⁹⁶ M. Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000), 5.

the first week of OAF averaged thirty to fifty per day, grew to a hundred in the first month, and reached around 300 per day by the end of May. At the beginning of OAF, there were 344 allied aircraft, but at its end, their number had risen to 1031. The targets chosen for the strike sorties broadened over time as well, as NATO later included civilian infrastructure that could be used by the military.⁹⁷ The Netherlands contributed to OAF with sixteen F-16 aircraft. The modernised F-16 aircraft contributed by the Dutch were mostly used to attack ground targets.⁹⁸

Diagnostic

The diagnosed problem in the narrative of the Dutch government was twofold. The crisis contained, first, a humanitarian catastrophe that could influence the entire region and hurt many innocent civilians, and second, a 'terrorist' government that did not adhere to international demands. In identifying these two problems, the Dutch government made use of an injustice frame and an adversarial frame.

Injustice framing

The Dutch government used an injustice frame to argue that there was a looming humanitarian crisis in the Balkan. The people living in Kosovo were framed as innocent victims of injustices done to them by the regime of Milošević. Though the Serbian authorities claimed that they were fighting terrorists, the Dutch government argued ethnic cleansing and cruelties against civilians were happening, violating human rights. The actions taken by the Serbian government went beyond a counterterrorism operation, as during these operations many of the casualties were women and children. The Dutch government addressed rumours of summary executions, and that bodies were quickly hidden by the Serbian authorities, contrary to the wishes of surviving relatives of the victims. The term 'police brutality' was used to denote these actions.⁹⁹ The government did not use the term genocide, but the terms ethnic cleansing and ethnic violence were. These terms were used because the actions of the Serbian forces seemed aimed at preventing refugees from returning, as evidenced by:

Although, according to the authorities, the actions are directed against terrorists, the Serbian troops, according to refugees, are guilty of atrocities against the civilian population. Given that houses are also being destroyed and livestock killed, the question arises as to whether there is any 'ethnic cleansing' in the border area with Albania.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Webber, "The Kosovo War," 450-451.

⁹⁸ Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 243, 2.

⁹⁹ Kamerstukken II, 1997-1998, 22181, nr. 198, 2.

¹⁰⁰ Hoewel de acties volgens de autoriteiten tegen terroristen zijn gericht, maken de Servische troepen zich, volgens vluchtelingen, schuldig aan wreedheden tegen de burgerbevolking. Aangezien ook huizen worden

The Serbian actions led to many refugees. The refugee crisis was framed not only as a humanitarian crisis but also as a security issue, as the crisis could spill over to other Balkan countries. A spillover would further destabilise the region due to heightened internal tensions and lead to more conflicts. The quote underneath, emphasising this problem, is interesting because it links a lack of democracy and the violation of human rights.

Milošević's action on Kosovo does not stand alone, but is part of a broad political agenda which we reject. Europe is ready to invest in all aspects of the Balkans, including the FRJ [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia], for the stability of the region and of Europe as a whole. This policy is incompatible with a policy based on contempt for democratic principles and systematic violations of human rights.¹⁰¹

Adversarial framing

Condemning the Serbian government for violations of human rights was not the only way to designate the antagonist. The Dutch government engaged in adversarial framing by using terms such as 'barbaric actions'¹⁰² and 'terrorist politics'¹⁰³ on top of the terms 'police brutality' and 'ethnic cleansing' shown above. These terms were used to portray the regime of Milošević as the enemy. The actions of the Serbian government were called 'wrongdoings',¹⁰⁴ 'crimes' and 'violations of international law'.¹⁰⁵ The refusal to halt these actions was also condemned. The NATO, including the Dutch government, concluded that the political solution had failed.¹⁰⁶ When the designated antagonist Milošević rejected the Rambouillet accords and UN resolutions, resolving the situation diplomatically became impossible. This situation became the legitimisation for airstrikes to protect the victims and stop the enemy.

Prognostic

Military intervention as solution

verwoest en vee wordt gedood, rijst de vraag of er sprake is van een «etnische schoonmaak» in het grensgebied met Albanië. Kamerstukken II, 1997-1998, 22181, nr. 204, 2.

¹⁰¹ Het optreden van Milošević ten aanzien van Kosovo staat namelijk niet op zichzelf, maar maakt deel uit van een brede politieke agenda die wij verwerpen. Europa is bereid in alle opzichten te investeren in de Balkan, dus ook in de FRJ, terwille van stabiliteit van de regio en van Europa als geheel. Die politiek is onverenigbaar met een beleid gebaseerd op minachting voor de democratische beginselen en op systematische schendingen van de rechten van de mens. Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 266, 6.

¹⁰² Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 253, 2.

¹⁰³ Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 263, 8.

¹⁰⁴ Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 243, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 253, 2.

¹⁰⁶ Gisteravond heeft de NAVO-raad geconstateerd dat alle mogelijkheden om met diplomatieke middelen een oplossing voor Kosovo te bereiken op dit moment zijn uitgeput. Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 241, 1.

The use of military means to force a solution was framed as a backing for the diplomatic efforts. The Dutch government was vocal in its conviction that no other option than a military intervention was possible and took a strong stance in this, more robust than most of the other NATO partners.¹⁰⁷ The mediation efforts of US Ambassador Holbrooke and Russian Secretary of State Ivanov and many other international initiatives – including those of the OSCE – are aimed at persuading President Milošević to implement Resolution 1199 in full. But if he continues to refuse to comply with the demands made on him by the international community, there comes a time when the need arises to enforce these demands – including by military means.¹⁰⁸

The international community used the threat of violence as a tool to pressure Milošević into compliance. The Dutch Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs explicitly said about the military intervention: “I say again: not as an end but as a means.”¹⁰⁹ They emphasised heavily that the intervention was not a military solution, but that the military intervention would support diplomatic efforts. Therefore, the military efforts would be determined by the reaction of Milošević on the diplomatic negotiations:

The minister stressed that the deployment of the air weapon must be in line with political objectives. It is logical to use a phased structure in which the Serbian anti-aircraft units and command centres will be the targets in first instance. If there is no response, military units in Kosovo and ultimately military units throughout the FRY will be targeted. The intention is, of course, that the air strikes can be ended as soon as possible and that, instead, new negotiations can take place on the basis of conditions set by the international community.¹¹⁰

This threat had to be believable. Milošević had made evident by ignoring the exercise Determined Falcon that intimidation alone would not work.

Airstrikes the unavoidable military means

¹⁰⁷ Kamerstukken II, 1997-1998, 22181, nr. 204, 6.

¹⁰⁸ De bemiddelingspogingen van de Amerikaanse ambassadeur Holbrooke en de Russische minister Ivanov en vele andere internationale initiatieven – ook van de OVSE – zijn erop gericht president Milošević ertoe te bewegen resolutie 1199 onverkort uit te voeren. Maar indien deze blijft weigeren tegemoet te komen aan de eisen die de internationale gemeenschap aan hem stelt, komt er een moment waarop de noodzaak zich aandient deze eisen – ook met militaire middelen – af te dwingen. Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 213, 2.

¹⁰⁹ Ik zeg nogmaals: niet als doel maar als middel. Handeling II, 1999, 66-4014.

¹¹⁰ De bewindsman benadrukte dat de inzet van het luchtwapen in lijn moet zijn met de politieke bedoelingen. Het ligt voor de hand om een gefaseerde opbouw te hanteren waarbij allereerst de Servische luchtafweereenheden en commandocentrales het doelwit zullen zijn. Indien daar geen reactie op volgt, zullen militaire eenheden in Kosovo en uiteindelijk ook militaire eenheden in de gehele FRJ het doelwit vormen. De bedoeling is natuurlijk dat de luchtaanvallen zo snel mogelijk kunnen worden beëindigd en dat in plaats daarvan opnieuw overleg kan plaatsvinden aan de hand van door de internationale gemeenschap gestelde voorwaarden. Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 240, 9.

The responses of Milošević to the airstrikes would determine the targets of future airstrikes, which NATO had divided into stages. The first stage consisted of destroying the Serbian air defence systems to minimise the risk for the NATO soldiers:

Serbia has a considerable number of diverse, modern air defence systems. There is a large NATO capability and in particular a large American capability to disable such systems, but that can never be done one hundred percent. This means that if Dutch F-16s were to take part in NATO actions, there would be explicit risks involved.¹¹¹

After taking the anti-aircraft systems out of the equation, other military-strategic targets were chosen in stage two. If there still was no reaction from Milošević, the plan was to broaden the understanding of the term 'military-strategic'. Broadening the targets meant that also civilian infrastructure such as power stations and oil storage units could be targeted.¹¹² If even this did not lead to the desired reaction, military units in Kosovo, and later in the entire Former Yugoslavia would be targeted as well.

Airstrikes were the only proposed military solution, and the Dutch government framed airstrikes as unavoidable, even emphasising that all the ministers unanimously agreed with this assessment.¹¹³ According to Shaw, the US already had admitted they would not contribute ground troops, so an intervention with ground troops would not be a credible threat.¹¹⁴ The minister of Foreign Affairs said that airstrikes were the only tool that worked against terrorist politics: It has been shown that conventional deterrence with the air weapon is the only instrument that can be used effectively against a very large-scale terrorist policy. It takes a very long time to deploy an army to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. In the meantime, Milošević can then continue with his cruel practices.¹¹⁵

Here the minister emphasised that it is inevitable to use consistent air attacks while reasoning against using ground troops. So, the framing of the solution has shown that military intervention was unavoidable, and airstrikes were the only military means that would get results.

¹¹¹ Servië beschikt over een aanzienlijk aantal verschillende, moderne luchtverdedigingssystemen. Er is een groot NAVO-vermogen en met name een groot Amerikaans vermogen om dat soort systemen uit te schakelen, maar dat kan nooit voor honderd procent. Dit houdt in dat bij eventuele deelname van Nederlandse F-16's aan NAVO-acties nadrukkelijk risico's worden gelopen. Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 221, 10.

¹¹² Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 221, 9.

¹¹³ Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 271, 1.

¹¹⁴ Shaw, *The New Western Way of War*, 21.

¹¹⁵ Gebleken is dat conventionele afschrikking met het luchtwapen het enige instrument is dat effectief kan worden gebruikt tegen een zeer grootschalige terroristische politiek. Het kost erg veel tijd om een troepenmacht op de been te brengen om etnische zuiveringen in Kosovo te stoppen. In de tussentijd kan Milošević dan doorgaan met zijn wrede praktijken. Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 263, 8.

Motivational

In the motivational framing tasks, the Dutch government showed two reasons why specifically the Netherlands should be involved in the intervention. Firstly as a member of the NATO to preserve credibility and secondly, because the Netherlands could offer a high degree of precision in its airstrikes that would minimise collateral damage.

Keeping face

The Dutch government argued that it was important that NATO would maintain its credibility by acting on its threats. The NATO in itself would lose face if it were not consequent in doing what it had said it would do if the demands were not met. The air campaign had to show the determination of the alliance.¹¹⁶ If it did not show determination, its credibility would become compromised.¹¹⁷ The minister argued: “If Milošević continues with the ethnic cleansing, then the international community must be consistent and put its money where its mouth is.”¹¹⁸ This sort of activating language was used to highlight the need to be consequent and do something after threatening with actions. The motivational framing task is about creating a narrative that requires its people to act.

Precision discourse

The Dutch government used discourse that focussed on the precision it could offer to the intervention, thereby minimising collateral damage. NATO was embarrassed by collateral damage, such as the accidental massacre of refugees in a convoy and people on a train.¹¹⁹ Therefore the precision of the Dutch airstrikes became an essential factor in legitimising the airstrikes.

The Dutch government always emphasised it would take all possible measures to prevent collateral damage. This was illustrated when the government discussed targeting, by significantly emphasising that civilian targets would not be attacked. However, the government did acknowledge that chosen targets such as electricity plants, important traffic intersection or a media centre could have negative consequences for the civilians. These targets were legitimised by saying that Milošević left them no choice.¹²⁰ Moreover, the fear existed that the Serbian forces would use civilians as human shields or would place the military targets close to civilians to dissuade airstrikes.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Shaw, *The New Western Way of War*, 20.

¹¹⁷ Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 240, 8.

¹¹⁸ Gaat Milošević toch door met de etnische zuiveringen, dan moet de internationale gemeenschap consequent zijn en de daad bij het woord voegen. Kamerstukken II, 1997-1998, 22181, nr. 263, 8.

¹¹⁹ Shaw, *The New Western Way of War*, 22.

¹²⁰ Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 276, 2.

¹²¹ Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 274, 2.

The government focused its discourse on the conviction that the Dutch could hit the targets very precisely. The Dutch F-16s' 'midlife' update was a major argument:

The Netherlands has F-16s that have undergone a midlife update, which means that they can fire precision weapons. This poses the least risk of collateral damage. The Netherlands can therefore make a contribution to that goal.¹²²

The term "smart weapons" was used to refer to these precision weapons that the F-16's could fire.

Emphatically it is not the intention to attack civilian targets. A great deal is being done to optimally limit collateral damage. For this purpose, smart weapons are used, as was also done in Iraq.¹²³ By using terms like "smart weapons" a vocabulary is constructed that frames these weapons as good, legitimising their use. It was explicitly said that this is where the involvement of the Netherlands can be beneficial.¹²⁴ The government called weapons that were not precise "stupid weapons." An example of these "stupid weapons" were cluster bombs, which were used for targets that had almost zero chance of leading to collateral damage, such as airports.¹²⁵

The focus on precision did not mean that there was no collateral damage. Strike sorties had hit a hospital and residential area, but something that gained far more attention was an airstrike in Belgrade accidentally hitting the Chinese embassy. The embassy was not a target, but a mistake. The minister of Foreign Affairs did not call it an error, but a "stommiteit" (a blunder). He also said that the Dutch had expressed regret twice in the UN and offered their condolences to the next of kin.¹²⁶ However, collateral damage was less important than the goals of the intervention:

The minister stressed that this blunder should not distract the countries concerned from the main objective of halting ethnic cleansing and ensuring the safe return of the refugees. This can only be achieved through a political solution. In order to achieve that political-diplomatic solution, the continuation of the aerial campaign is essential. The air campaign supports diplomacy. For the Dutch government, the principle of proportionality applies.¹²⁷

¹²² Nederland beschikt over F-16's die een midlife update hebben ondergaan, hetgeen inhoudt dat zij precisiewapens kunnen afvuren. Dit levert het minste risico op voor collateral damage. Nederland kan dus een bijdrage leveren voor dat doel. Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 221, 10.

¹²³ Nadrukkelijk niet de bedoeling is burgerdoelen aan te vallen. Er wordt bijzonder veel gedaan aan het optimaal beperken van collateral damage. Daarvoor worden slimme wapens ingezet, zoals ook in Irak gebeurde. Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 221, 9.

¹²⁴ Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 221, 10.

¹²⁵ Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 280, 13.

¹²⁶ Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 280, 9.

¹²⁷ De minister benadrukte dat deze stomiteit de betrokken landen niet moet afbrengen van het hoofddoel, te weten het stopzetten van de etnische zuiveringen en de veilige terugkeer van de vluchtelingen. Dat kan alleen worden bewerkstelligd door een politieke oplossing. Voor het bereiken van die politiekediplomatieke oplossing is het doorzetten van de luchtcampagne essentieel. De luchtcampagne ondersteunt de diplomatie. Voor de Nederlandse regering geldt daarbij het beginsel van de proportionaliteit. Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 280, 10.

The Dutch government did not discuss the measures to prevent collateral damage in depth. Furthermore, the legitimacy of the claim that the aim was a minimum of collateral damage was somewhat undermined by the altitude at which the bombers flew. By flying higher to lessen the risks for the NATO bombers faced by Serbian anti-aircraft guns, civilian lives were risked. The minister explained that flying lower would be possibly beneficial for the precision of the strikes, but would leave the aircraft at a higher risk of being hit with anti-aircraft weapons and might also lead to human errors in identifying the target. The risk to the Dutch soldiers weighed more substantial than the risk of collateral damage in motivating the parliament to continue airstrikes, as it was this reason that the minister used to explain the decision to continue flying high.¹²⁸ Not a single NATO soldier was lost due to the enemy force, so this strategic choice was successful in that regard.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Kamerstukken II, 1998-1999, 22181, nr. 280, 13.

¹²⁹ Shaw, *The New Western Way of War*, 22.

Case Study: The Coalition against IS

Context

The regions of Iraq and Syria are wrought with violence and war. In 2003 the US invaded Iraq, which led to exacerbated conflicts between Sunni, Shia and Kurdish groups in Iraq, which destabilised the country further. In 2011 in Syria an ongoing civil war erupted. While upheaval was rampant in both countries, IS was born from these circumstances.¹³⁰ IS is a group of fundamentalist jihadi fighters with military experience from these wars in Iraq and Syria.¹³¹ IS rose rapidly in both Iraq and Syria, and in June 2014 easily captured the city Mosul. The Iraqi army was not capable of mounting a defence and melted away.¹³² After the success of taking over Mosul, IS went on a rampage through Iraq and Syria, killing or displacing everyone opposing them or not conforming to their variant of Islam and established its caliphate.¹³³ Meanwhile, IS was perceived as such a big threat that old-time rivals, such as the US and Iran, and Saudi Arabia and Sunni monarchies of the Gulf, were willing to work together to stop IS, thereby changing the status quo in the Middle East.¹³⁴ For Turkey the effects of IS' rise to power were felt keenly, and it was one of the first to condemn IS internationally. Regionally, besides the earlier mentioned countries, states such as Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon perceived IS as a threat and supported actions against IS.¹³⁵ In June 2014, two weeks after the fall of Mosul, Iraq submitted a request for military support to the United Nations (UN), which they reiterated on 20 September 2014.¹³⁶

After the request for help by the Iraqi government, the United States established a Coalition in September 2014 to halt IS.¹³⁷ The goal of the Coalition was: "destroying ISIL's parent tumor in Iraq and Syria, combating its worldwide spread, and protecting all homelands."¹³⁸ Operation Inherent Resolve consisted of three military components: coordinated airstrikes, special operations and training and equipping local forces.¹³⁹ According to McInnis, writing for the US government, the philosophy of the operation was that Iraq and its neighbours should take the lead, with the Coalition

¹³⁰ P. Cockburn, *The Rise of Islamic State: Isis and the New Sunni Revolution* (London and New York: Verso, 2015), 8.

¹³¹ IS is also referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Islamic state of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Daesh. In this thesis the term Islamic State (IS) is used, as it is the most generic name. The Dutch government uses mostly ISIS, but other Coalition partners have also used different names.

¹³² Cockburn, *The Rise of Islamic State*, x- xi.

¹³³ Cockburn, *The Rise of Islamic State*, x, xi.

¹³⁴ Cockburn, *The Rise of Islamic State*, x

¹³⁵ Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 506, 4.

¹³⁶ Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 506, 5.

¹³⁷ The US had already been bombing in Iraq from August, and had added Syria in September. Cockburn, *The Rise of Islamic State*, 23.

¹³⁸ K. McInnis and Library of Congress, "Coalition Contributions to Countering the Islamic State," *Congressional Research Service*, 24 August, 2016, 2.

¹³⁹ McInnis, "Coalition Contributions to Countering the Islamic State," 2.

supporting them rather than become involved in ground combat themselves.¹⁴⁰ The reasoning being the avoidance of ground combat by the Coalition might be found in the Afghanistan War that was winding down when the Coalition was established.¹⁴¹ According to Saideman, the experiences in Afghanistan made the Western countries unwilling to engage in a ground operation. All of the Western countries contributing to the airstrikes in the Coalition had incurred casualties in Afghanistan while spending significant amounts of money, time and effort.¹⁴²

Dutch involvement in the Coalition

Airstrikes supported local forces on the ground, and trainers were sent to train and advise these local forces. The Dutch contributed 6 F-16s in October 2014, initially for a year, and participated in training of Iraqi and Kurdish forces in Iraq.¹⁴³ Towards the end of 2015, it became apparent that the campaign had not been successful yet after its first year. Only few ground troops remained available, even though vast amounts of money had been spent, and IS still managed to expand its influence in the region and to inspire or organise attacks in Western countries.¹⁴⁴ The Dutch government decided to continue its involvement for another year in June of 2015. After this year, Belgium would relieve the Dutch aircrafts.

The U.S. Department of Defence on June 28, 2016, said that the Coalition had conducted 13,470 airstrikes.¹⁴⁵ In April of 2018, the Dutch government told parliament that Dutch F-16s had been involved in 2100 missions, in more than 1800 of which weapons had been deployed.¹⁴⁶ The Ministry of Defence investigated three missions for potentially having led to civilian casualties, of which one mission was the bombardment on Hawija, although the cities were not named.¹⁴⁷

Initially, the Dutch government was not convinced of a legal basis for airstrikes in Syria, but only in Iraq. After the attack claimed by IS in November 2015 in France, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2249, calling on member states to contribute to the intensified fight against IS.

¹⁴⁰ McInnis, "Coalition Contributions to Countering the Islamic State," 2-3.

¹⁴¹ The war in Afghanistan had been initiated by the US after the attacks of 9/11, to stop the Taliban and al-Qaeda. NATO engaged with the mission International Security Assistance Force, to which the Netherlands also contributed since 2006, establishing a relatively sizeable military presence. Due to the mounting Dutch casualties and declining public popularity, the Dutch government were the first ally to withdraw, in 2010. This, despite that the Netherlands was known as one of the most reliable allies. For more information see: J. Massie, "Why Democratic Allies Defect Prematurely: Canadian and Dutch Unilateral Pullouts from the War in Afghanistan," *Democracy and Security* 12, no. 2 (2016): 85–113.

¹⁴² S. Saideman, "The Ambivalent Coalition: Doing the Least One Can Do against the Islamic State," *Contemporary Security Policy* 37, no. 2 (2016): 293.

¹⁴³ Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 506, 2.

¹⁴⁴ McInnis, "Coalition Contributions to Countering the Islamic State," 3.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 3.

¹⁴⁶ Kamerstukken II, 2017-2018, 27925, nr. 629, 11.

¹⁴⁷ Kamerstukken II, 2017-2018, 27925, nr. 629 12.

Additionally, in December 2015, the US also asked the Netherlands to intensify their contribution, and France asked EU member-states for assistance in the fight against IS. The Dutch government reconsidered its stance after these multiple requests for more aid and used the UN Resolution as the basis for broadening its targets and intervened in Syria.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, until July 2016, when Belgian jet-fighters would take over, the Dutch would also bomb strategic targets in East Syria that were part of the supply lines for IS.¹⁴⁹ The decision was made in January 2016, which meant that the Dutch would bomb East Syria for only four months, using 4 F-16s.¹⁵⁰ As only few partners in the Coalition were willing to participate in airstrikes, the consistent Dutch willingness to contribute stands out.

Diagnostic

The Dutch government used both an injustice frame and an adversarial frame to identify the problems the Coalition addressed. The injustice frame focused on the people who were victimised by IS. The adversarial frame was used to show that IS a threat to not only the local people but also the Western world and the Netherlands specifically.

Injustice framing

The government identified people living in parts of Syria and Iraq as victims of IS, because their human rights were violated by IS and the region was disrupted by the violence. The violence perpetrated against them was called "unprecedented."¹⁵¹ Furthermore, emphasis was put on that women and minorities specifically were targets of these serious violations of fundamental human rights.¹⁵² Therefore the Dutch government said that the Dutch contribution to the Coalition "is aimed at preventing and ending these violations and protecting the civilian population," while also supporting the "legitimate Iraqi government."¹⁵³ Ominous terms as 'crimes against humanity' and 'genocide' were used.¹⁵⁴

Another problem was the number of refugees the violence led to. The government admitted that the pressure because of the migratory flows was an essential catalyst in Europe to highlight the urgency to find a sustainable solution in Syria. The government said: "Of course, this is not the main reason why we need to contain the problem in Syria, but it is important when we look at our own

¹⁴⁸ G. Molier and M. Hekkenberg, "The Dutch Contribution to the Armed Coalition against Isis," *Netherlands Yearbook of International Law* 47 (2017): 330-331.

¹⁴⁹ Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 570, 4.

¹⁵⁰ Molier and Hekkenberg, "The Dutch Contribution to the Armed Coalition against Isis," 332.

¹⁵¹ "ongekend" Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 506, 1.

¹⁵² Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 539, 2.

¹⁵³ Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 539, 2.

¹⁵⁴ Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 506, 2.

interests.”¹⁵⁵ So the efforts to protect the civilians were not only because of the injustices done to them but also because these acts of violence had direct consequences for the Netherlands. The injustice frame was also used to emphasise the victimhood of people in the Western World, including the Netherlands. Because of the terrorist attacks of IS directly in Europe, IS was not only a threat in the region but far exceeded the borders of Syria and Iraq. Internally the threat was that Foreign Fighters would come back and attack. The fear was that the situation in Iraq and Syria would be a trigger for young people to believe they should do something, and then join “horrific” organisations.¹⁵⁶ The Dutch government therefore called IS and returnees a threat to national security:

The ring of instability at the external borders of the EU and NATO Alliance and the attractiveness of ISIS to EU residents ensure that the threat posed by ISIS continues to exist within Europe. This threat is manifested, inter alia, in ISIS-driven or inspired terrorist attacks. The threat posed by jihadists (including returnees) also affects our national security.¹⁵⁷

Adversarial framing

Adversarial framing was used to condemn the ideology of IS and highlight its contrast with the ‘Western’ values. That IS violated human rights was used to show it was evil, but it was further emphasised by arguing that IS had no respect for lives and by calling the organisation ‘apocalyptic’:

It is also a struggle against an organisation that is apocalyptic and has no respect for life, which positions rape almost as a prayer in the way people in Raqqa and elsewhere are treated.¹⁵⁸

Due to the contrast between the values of IS and the Western values, the Dutch government named IS a threat to “our” fundamental values.¹⁵⁹ Specific words were used to emphasise the ‘evilness’ of IS, and in contrast, how ‘good’ the Western World is. The ideology and actions of IS were framed as “barbaric” and juxtaposed to the values of “humanity”:

¹⁵⁵ “Dat is natuurlijk niet de hoofdreden waarom we het probleem in Syrië moeten inperken, maar het is wel belangrijk als we kijken naar ons eigen belang.” Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 583, 17.

¹⁵⁶ Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 523, 46.

¹⁵⁷ “De ring van instabiliteit aan de buitengrenzen van de EU en het NAVO-bondgenootschap en de aantrekkingskracht van ISIS op ingezetenen van de EU, zorgen ervoor dat de dreiging van ISIS ook binnen Europa blijft bestaan. Die dreiging uit zich onder andere in door ISIS aangestuurde of geïnspireerde terroristische aanslagen. De dreiging die van jihadgangers (waaronder terugkeerders) uitgaat raakt ook onze nationale veiligheid.” Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 597, 2-3.

¹⁵⁸ “Het is ook een strijd tegen een organisatie die apocalyptisch is en geen enkel respect voor leven heeft, die verkrachting bijna als een gebed positioneert in de manier waarop men met de mensen in Raqqa en elders omgaat.” Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 583, 16.

¹⁵⁹ Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 539, 2. and Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 597, 3.

It is a struggle between the nihilistic ideology based on barbarism and humanity that wants to operate on the basis of values, tolerance and respect for religious and ethnic diversity. That is the struggle, and that is why the Dutch government is also committed to looking at all options, in which we do not rule out anything to counter this threat to humanity where it currently occurs.¹⁶⁰

The injustice frame was used more intensively than the adversarial frame as the adversarial framing seemed to be not as necessary to prove IS was the antagonist. IS was publicly known as a terrorist organisation, and therefore it was easy to see that IS was the enemy in this case because the government could built on already established framing of terrorism as 'evil.' This also meant that the public already understood that the government should stop terrorism, which the Dutch government mentioned in the Kamerstukken.¹⁶¹

Prognostic

Military intervention as solution

To solve the problems identified in the diagnostic framing a military intervention was a necessity. The Dutch government presumed the region would be further destabilised without immediate action and two problems identified in the diagnostic framing could be solved by military intervention.¹⁶²

The first problem that would be solved by using violence to destroy IS would be the safety of the people there. The Dutch contribution was linked to stopping these violations: “The Dutch deployment is aimed at defeating ISIS and preventing and ending these violations and protecting the civilian population.”¹⁶³ Intervention would also help stop the significant migratory flow from Syria by bringing a political solution closer after the defeat of IS.¹⁶⁴ The second problem that would be fixed with the military intervention was the threat IS posed for national security. The Dutch government directly linked security of the Netherlands to the situation in Iraq and Syria. As soon as military intervention could stabilise the region, the threat for the Netherlands would become less: “the threat level in the Netherlands remains substantial (...) The height of the current threat level is

¹⁶⁰ “Het is een strijd tussen de nihilistische op barbarij gebaseerde ideologie en de mensheid die op basis van waarden, tolerantie en respect voor religieuze en etnische diversiteit wil opereren. Dat is de strijd en daarom is ook de Nederlandse regering geïmmiteerd aan het bekijken van alle opties, waarbij wij niets uitsluiten om deze bedreiging voor de mensheid het hoofd te bieden daar waar zij zich nu voordoet.” Handelingen II, 10 September 2014, 107-9-29.

¹⁶¹ Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 570, 21

¹⁶² Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 506, 4.

¹⁶³ De Nederlandse inzet is gericht op het verslaan van ISIS en het voorkomen en beëindigen van deze schendingen en het beschermen van de burgerbevolking. Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 597, 3.

¹⁶⁴ Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 565, 13.

largely related to the jihadism of ISIS in Syria and Iraq.”¹⁶⁵ Therefore, the Dutch contribution to the fight against ISIS was aimed at “substantially reducing the terrorist threat posed by ISIS.”¹⁶⁶ Military intervention would contribute to the goal of reducing the ability to strike and the ideological appeal of IS. Strikingly, almost the same sentence is used several times to emphasise this, one example being: “In order to counter this threat, the clout of ISIS must be broken and its ideological appeal undermined.”¹⁶⁷ A part of the threat to national security was the return of Foreign Terrorist Fighters. European residents were recruited due to the ideological appeal of IS, so by undermining that appeal, fewer people would be recruited and potentially be used for terrorist attacks.¹⁶⁸

Airstrikes as solution

To solve the diagnosed problems, airstrikes were the chosen form of violence, supporting the local forces. According to the Dutch government, remoteness from the fight and a small military footprint was the best choice as military intervention. The reasoning for this was twofold.

The first reason for using remote warfare was because of the threat IS posed to the soldiers that would be sent. IS was perceived as a more severe threat to the soldiers present than other enemy forces. A small military presence not engaged in ground combat would lessen the risks for the soldiers employed in the Coalition. The deployment of F-16s did mean that anti-aircraft systems could be a risk. However, calling attention to almost 200 American and French airstrikes without losses, the Dutch government said of these anti-aircraft systems: “their effectiveness (and especially their range) seems limited.”¹⁶⁹

The second reason was the local reaction to a large military presence. The Dutch government expected that the attitude of the militias would become negative towards a military presence by the Coalition:

Moreover, several militias are suspicious of a large-scale Western military presence in Iraq.

Although the presence of Western military personnel is tolerated for pragmatic reasons, this

¹⁶⁵ Het dreigingsniveau in Nederland blijft substantieel (...) De hoogte van het huidige dreigingsniveau hangt voor een groot deel samen met het jihadisme van ISIS in Syrië en Irak. Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 539, 13.

¹⁶⁶ De Nederlandse bijdrage aan de strijd tegen ISIS is er op gericht om (op termijn) de terroristische dreiging die uitgaat van ISIS substantieel te verminderen. Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 539, 13.

¹⁶⁷ Om deze dreiging het hoofd te bieden, moet de slagkracht van ISIS worden gebroken en de ideologische aantrekkingskracht worden aangetast. Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 539, 2. The other examples are in Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 597, and Kamerstukken II, 2016-2017, 27925, nr. 612.

¹⁶⁸ Kamerstukken II, 2016-2017, 27925, nr. 612, 2.

¹⁶⁹ lijkt de effectiviteit (en dan vooral het bereik) hiervan echter beperkt. Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 506, 7.

may change over time if the perception emerges that the Western military presence in Iraq lasts too long or is larger than necessary.¹⁷⁰

In this way, the government claimed that remote warfare was the best option. Using airstrikes and local forces negated the need for a large military presence. In line with this narrative, the Dutch government said about the intervention: “Initially, the advance of ISIS will be halted by the deployment of the airforce.”¹⁷¹ The government stressed the importance of the airstrikes saying they were necessary and of great importance.¹⁷²

Motivational

The Dutch government had to show why the Netherlands specifically should contribute to the Coalition using military means, while most other countries in the Coalition only contributed politically.¹⁷³ The legitimisation started with highlighting that almost the entire parliament shared the government’s view: “It is perhaps historic that there is such broad support in the Chamber for such a mission: high in the spectrum of violence and in the short term.”¹⁷⁴ As this quote illustrates, the necessity of the Dutch participation seemed evident and was not elaborated upon. The diagnostic and prognostic framing tasks had made the necessity of this war obvious enough apparently. The government proudly highlighted how much the Netherlands did, for a small country, which leads to the assumption that it was important for the Dutch government to be a big player in the Coalition. Why the Dutch had to contribute with military means was elaborated upon extensively, emphasising the Dutch capacity to strike precisely and therefore prevent collateral damage.

A small country but a big player

A reason for the Netherlands to actively contribute to the military aspect of the Coalition seems to have been a yearning to be an essential player, instead of being just an executive of the US.

Illustrating the importance for the Netherlands to be included, the minister of Foreign Affairs said:

“(…) it was written that I would have called [U.S. Secretary of State] Kerry to beg to join, but that's all

¹⁷⁰ Bovendien staan verschillende milities wantrouwend tegenover een grootschalige westerse militaire presentie in Irak. Hoewel de aanwezigheid van westerse militairen uit pragmatische overwegingen wordt gedoogd, kan dit op termijn veranderen indien de perceptie ontstaat dat de westerse militaire presentie in Irak te lang aanhoudt of groter is dan noodzakelijk. Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 597, 14.

¹⁷¹ In eerste instantie zal de opmars van ISIS door de inzet van het luchtwapen worden gestopt. Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 506, 6.

¹⁷² Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 539, 7.

¹⁷³ Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 526, 6.

¹⁷⁴ Het is misschien wel historisch te noemen dat er in de Kamer zo’n brede steun is voor een dergelijke missie: hoog in het geweldsspectrum en op korte termijn. Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 523, 39.

nonsense; The Netherlands doesn't have to beg for anything.”¹⁷⁵ About the participation of the Netherlands, it was often emphasised that for a small country the Netherlands was extremely active in the military aspect of the Coalition: “I don't know of any small country so active in the fight against ISIS. So somehow giving the impression that the Netherlands is hiding behind other countries is wrong.”¹⁷⁶ In this quote, it also becomes apparent that the Dutch government did not want to be seen as a free rider. Within parliament, the fear existed that by participating in the Coalition the Netherlands would just be an executive of the leading US, but the minister of Foreign Affairs tried to alleviate those fears.¹⁷⁷ However, the Dutch government acknowledged that large countries could decide more than the important but relatively small Netherlands.¹⁷⁸ These fears show an awareness of the Netherlands being a small country.

Why the Dutch had to be involved

The Dutch capacity to strike with high precision, avoiding collateral damage, was the focus of the motivational framing by the Dutch government.

It was highlighted that ‘precision munition’ was the only sort of ammunition that would be used, to prevent collateral damage.¹⁷⁹ No ‘stupid bombs’ would be used anymore, instead, the term ‘smart bombs’ was used again to denote precision weapons, while linking the use of ‘smart bombs’ to preventing collateral damage:

The Netherlands uses precision weapons in its attacks, including the Small Diameter Bomb, a small «smart» bomb that further reduces the risk of unwanted collateral damage.¹⁸⁰

Building on the ‘smart’ weapons vocabulary was the argument that the Dutch were experts in the use of precision weapons, while other countries were not. This was used to argue that the Dutch had to contribute military means. The Coalition had a need for aircraft that could use precision weapons. The Dutch F-16s, next to the American aircraft, were the only ones with weapons that were

¹⁷⁵ er werd geschreven dat ik naar Kerry zou hebben gebeld om te bedelen om mee te mogen doen, maar dat is allemaal onzin; Nederland hoeft nergens om te bedelen. Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 523, 44.

¹⁷⁶ Ik ken geen klein land dat zo actief is in de strijd tegen ISIS. Dus op de een of andere manier de indruk wekken dat Nederland zich verschuilt achter andere landen, is onjuist. Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 583, 39.

¹⁷⁷ Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 523, 54.

¹⁷⁸ We zijn natuurlijk een relatief kleine speler die al zeer actief is. (...) is het uiteraard ook, juist omdat we weliswaar een belangrijke maar toch kleinere speler zijn, afhankelijk van wat andere, grotere landen al dan niet besloten hebben, zodat er een zekere mate van logica in de situatie zit. Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 583, 19.

¹⁷⁹ Kamerstukken II, 2014-2015, 27925, nr. 526, 11.

¹⁸⁰ Nederland maakt bij de aanvallen gebruik van precisiewapens, waaronder ook de Small Diameter Bomb, een kleine «slimme» bom die de kans op ongewenste nevenschade verder verkleint. Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 565, 10.

particularly suitable for this.¹⁸¹ By arguing that collateral damage had to be prevented and not every country could do that, the point is made that the Netherlands should contribute to the airstrikes: Every effort is made to prevent unintentional collateral damage as much as possible. This has the highest priority for everyone and that is precisely why not everyone who participates in the Coalition and possesses the air weapon is simply deployed at random. One country is good at it and has specific precision munitions, but another country does not. This is always considered in order to prevent as much collateral damage as possible.¹⁸²

According to the Dutch government, the capability of the Netherlands to use precision weapons made the Dutch contributions of aircraft necessary for the Coalition. This need was given as a reason why the Netherlands extended the mission against IS with a year.¹⁸³

Careful targeting as a motivator

New efforts to illustrate the importance of precision for the Dutch military contribution to the Coalition were made by highlighting targeting process. The Dutch government seemed to have perceived that more transparency on these processes would show the care that was put into preventing collateral damage, contrary to others who might not take the same measures. Thus further legitimising why specifically the Netherlands, with its precision weapons, should be involved in the airstrikes. Always emphasising that the minimising of unintentional collateral damage and civilian casualties had the highest priority, the Dutch government emphasized a careful target selection process.

First, showing why the Dutch were the right choice to conduct airstrikes, it was emphasised that the Dutch engaged in careful observation of the target before striking; “The same meticulous target selection process is used in both Iraq and Syria. Minimising collateral damage is a top priority for all coalition partners.”¹⁸⁴ Only after a target selection process could it be “carefully” determined whether they would be eliminated by “precise intervention”.¹⁸⁵ This care was illustrated by saying:

¹⁸¹ Kamerstukken II, 2016-2017, 27925, nr. 612, 11.

¹⁸² Er wordt alles aan gedaan om onbedoelde nevenschade zo veel mogelijk te voorkomen. Dat heeft de hoogste prioriteit voor iedereen en dat is ook precies de reden waarom niet iedereen die deelneemt aan de coalitie en beschikt over het luchtwapen zomaar wordt ingezet. Het ene land is er namelijk wel goed in en beschikt over bepaalde precisie-munitie, maar een ander land weer niet. Dat weegt men steeds af om zo veel mogelijk nevenschade te voorkomen. Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 583, 31.

¹⁸³ Kamerstukken II, 2016-2017, 27925, nr. 612, 1.

¹⁸⁴ In zowel Irak als Syrië wordt hetzelfde zorgvuldige doelselectieproces gehanteerd. Hierbij heeft het minimaliseren van nevenschade voor alle coalitiepartners de hoogste prioriteit. Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 590, 9.

¹⁸⁵ Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 570, 15.

Where strategic locations in supply lines are located in urbanised areas, extreme care and precision as well as proportionality should be paramount. If this strict test cannot be fully passed, densely populated areas will be avoided.¹⁸⁶

Second, the targeting process that the Dutch engaged in was used to illustrate the carefulness and proportionality that the Dutch would adhere to in conducting airstrikes. The Dutch government framed the targeting process as crucial because: “Air actions are only carried out if the targeting process has been fully completed and the risk of collateral damage is minimal.”¹⁸⁷ Last, the government was transparent about how it analysed the consequences of the strike in terms of collateral damage, thereby further illustrating the carefulness of the Dutch military contribution. It was highlighted that if there were potential civilian casualties, the Ministry of Defence would immediately start an additional investigation into the deployment.¹⁸⁸

The government could use these targeting processes and collateral damage estimation to show its dedication to precision and preventing collateral damage. For example, “the maximum is done to prevent collateral damage”¹⁸⁹ because “every targeting process is extremely precise in terms of what the target is. Many Intel [intelligence] meetings precede, and precision ammunition is used. So it's certainly not like we're just bombing there randomly.”¹⁹⁰ By having a story about the targeting process, it was easier to argue for the Dutch government that all had been done to prevent collateral damage, saying: “the Ministry of Defence is as transparent as possible in reports on deployment.”¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 570, 5.

¹⁸⁷ Luchtacties worden alleen uitgevoerd als het targeting proces volledig is doorlopen en het risico van nevenschade minimaal is. Kamerstukken II, 2017-2018, 27925, nr. 629, 11.

¹⁸⁸ Kamerstukken II, 2017-2018, 27925, nr. 629, 11.

¹⁸⁹ het maximale wordt gedaan om nevenschade te voorkomen Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 583, 31.

¹⁹⁰ bij ieder targettingproces buitengewoon precies gekeken wordt naar wat het doel is. Er gaan veel Intelvergaderingen aan vooraf en er wordt met precisiemunitie opgetreden. Het is dus zeker niet zo dat we daar maar wat bombarderen. Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 27925, nr. 583, 31.

¹⁹¹ Het kabinet hecht aan open communicatie over wapeninzet. Met inachtneming van de noodzakelijke (nationale en operationele) veiligheidsoverwegingen, is Defensie zo transparant mogelijk in rapportages over de inzet. Kamerstukken II, 2016-2017, 27925, nr. 612, 12.

Case study: the debate on weaponising drones

Context

Drones in the Netherlands

Intelligence and reconnaissance are the main tasks of UAVs.¹⁹² For countries like the Netherlands that do not (yet) have armed drones, intelligence and reconnaissance are the only tasks drones perform.¹⁹³ The Dutch government has identified four kinds of deployment for the newly bought MALE UAV.¹⁹⁴ 1. Viewing a sea or land area (surveillance); 2. Gather information about a specific object or area (reconnaissance); 3. Accurately determine the position of a target (target acquisition); 4. Assess the extent to which an attacked target has been damaged (battle damage assessment).¹⁹⁵ These are all support tasks, so in none of these tasks identified by the Dutch government is the drone the mode of violence.¹⁹⁶ Internationally, MALE UAVs are also used for drone strikes.

International use of drones

Besides the US, Israel, Great Britain and very recently, with their first drone attack in December 2019, France, among others, possess armed drones.¹⁹⁷ As far as we know, more than thirty-six countries currently have armed UAVs, although not all of them have already deployed them in attack.¹⁹⁸ Drone strikes promise a risk-free war, as it is “so accurate as to eliminate collateral damage and so remote as to remove virtually all threat to the pilot.”¹⁹⁹ Chamayou also views drone

¹⁹² There are many terms for drones. Simply drone is the most popular term, and the most common other option is the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV). A UAV is a part of an Unmanned Aerial System (UAS), which also includes the operator of the vehicle and the system of communication between operator and UAV. In a military context, the term UAS can be preferable, as it also takes into account the support a UAV needs in order to be operational. Recently a new name has come into use, the Remotely Piloted Aerial System (RPAS). Smaller UAVs are computer-controlled, so an operator does not need to fly the drone from a cockpit. Drones are occasionally referred to as ‘eyes in the sky,’ especially when their task is intelligence or reconnaissance. In this thesis, the terms UAV and drone are used interchangeably.

¹⁹³ For more information on the history of drone warfare see: D. Sloggett, *Drone Warfare: The Development of Unmanned Aerial Conflict* (South Yorkshire, England: Pen & Sword Aviation, 2014).

¹⁹⁴ MALE means medium-altitude and long-endurance, so the MALE UAV can fly higher than other drones and remain in the air longer. The new MALE UAV that the Dutch Ministry of Defence has bought, the MQ-9 Reaper, can remain in the air for 24 hours. Medium-altitude is vital to remain unseen, as drones are mostly used for covert operations.

¹⁹⁵ Kamerstukken II, 2011-2012, 30806, nr. 10, 2.

¹⁹⁶ Kamerstukken II, 2006-2007, 30806, nr. 2, 2.

¹⁹⁷ J. Rae and J. Crist, *Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killings, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Pivot, 2014), 11.; Agence France-Presse (AFP), “French army deploys drone strike for first time in Mali operation,” *The Guardian*, 23 December, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/23/french-forces-kill-40-jihadists-during-operation-in-mali>.

¹⁹⁸ P. Bergen, M. Salyk-Virk and D. Sterman. “World of Drones,” *New America*, accessed July 22, 2020. <https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/world-drones/who-has-what-countries-with-armed-drones/>.

¹⁹⁹ Rae and Crist, *Analyzing the Drone*, 3.

airstrikes as “projecting power without projecting vulnerability.”²⁰⁰ It is the precision of drone strikes that justifies their deployment. Employees of the US government have repeatedly stated that drone attacks are “exceptionally surgical and precise”, and that drones can hit their intended target with high precision and without collateral damage.²⁰¹ Obama said: “Conventional airpower or missiles are far less precise than drones, and are likely to cause more civilian casualties and more local outrage.”²⁰²

Drone strikes are increasingly used for *targeted killings*, instead of using other approaches such as sending a special operations unit or aircraft. What distinguishes targeted killing from other aerial bombardments is the aim to eliminate one or a few individuals. A definition of targeted killing is: “the use of lethal force attributable to a subject of international law with the intent, premeditation and deliberation to kill individually selected persons who are not in physical custody of those targeting them.”²⁰³ This strategy is mainly used for three purposes: 1. The destruction of a person on the way to an attack; 2. The killing of crucial figures to reduce the combativeness of the enemy (such as the killing of crucial terrorist bomb makers) and 3. Killing enemy leaders as an act of coercion or to make the organisation politically unstable.²⁰⁴ Targets for drone strikes are chosen in two ways. The first way is *personality strikes*, an attack on a predetermined person who has been investigated and identified as an enemy. The second way to select a target is much broader and is called a *signature strike*. In this process, persons of fighting age who are at a specific location and follow a pattern of behaviour associated with terrorism are selected as targets.²⁰⁵

Diagnostic

In the diagnostic framing to legitimise the use of UAVs, the Dutch government could not make use of the injustice or adversarial frames, as acquiring drones is not connected to a single war or

²⁰⁰ Chamayou, *A Theory of the Drone*, 12.

²⁰¹ A. Ali, “US Drone Policy: Contested Global and Local Narratives,” *World Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2017): 45.

²⁰² B. Obama, “Remarks by the President at the National Defense University,” 23 May, 2013, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/23/remarks-president-national-defense-university>.

²⁰³ Rae en Crist, *Analyzing the Drone Debates*, 3.

²⁰⁴ D. Jordan et al, *Understanding Modern Warfare* Second ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 72.

²⁰⁵ After a signature strike in Afghanistan that killed three possible leaders of Al Qaeda, Victoria Clark, spokesman for the Pentagon, said: “We’re convinced that it was an appropriate target,” but: “We do not know yet exactly who it was.” These Al Qaeda leaders seemed to have a meeting on a hill where there used to be a terrorist camp. With hindsight, most likely, these men were farmers, who happened to stand still in the wrong place, and one of the men seemed to be about as tall as Osama Bin Laden. See: J. Burns, “A Nation Challenged: The Manhunt,” *The New York Times*, Februari 17, 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/17/world/a-nation-challenged-the-manhunt-us-leapt-before-looking-angry-villagers-say.html>.

intervention.²⁰⁶ Instead, diagnostic framing has focused on the gap in information that UAVs could fill. The government deemed intelligence or surveillance necessary to react quickly, but also to be precise and prevent collateral damage. When soldiers are in the field, real-time information is necessary to react quickly and anticipate the situation.²⁰⁷ Drones would be able to gain this information. Precision in military action is only possible when the information is up-to-date, detailed and validated. If the gathered intelligence does not meet these requirements, precision during operations becomes impossible and therefore, will result in more collateral damage.²⁰⁸

The need for a flexible UAV was a problem that was diagnosed by the Dutch government. The explanation was that to gain a good understanding of a situation, one needs systems that can cover the entire spectrum of ground observation. However, one system cannot do all of it, and therefore large countries have a wide range of resources at their disposal. Unfortunately, the Netherlands is portrayed as a small country that does not have the budget for this.²⁰⁹ To cover as much ground as possible, one has to choose tools that are flexible and offer many possibilities.²¹⁰ Diagnosing the problem in this way helps to legitimise buying an RPA that can be used for many tasks.

Prognostic

The prognostic framing task has been utilised frequently by the Dutch government. The focus has been mostly on what UAVs can offer in terms of information since the diagnostic problem mostly focused on the gap in information. Drones were framed as the necessary tool to bridge the gap in intelligence and surveillance.

In the diagnostic frame, the Dutch government argued that information was necessary to attack targets effectively. The government argued that especially in modern military actions, precision was a requirement to prevent collateral damage or “(own) casualties.”²¹¹ MALE UAVs would have the supporting tasks to make this precision possible, therefore: “the need to act with great precision during operations and to prevent collateral damage as much as possible makes aerial intelligence gathering all the more important.”²¹² The ‘eyes in the sky’ provide the possibility to

²⁰⁶ Only once a specific enemy was named when the government used Al Qaeda in Afghanistan as an example of a threat that the Dutch armed forces would need tools to identify. See: Kamerstukken II, 2013-2014, 30806, nr. 24, 21.

²⁰⁷ Kamerstukken II, 2006-2007, 30806, nr. 1, 1.

²⁰⁸ Kamerstukken II, 2011-2012, 30806, nr. 10, 2.

²⁰⁹ Kamerstukken II, 2006-2007, 30806, nr. 1, 2.

²¹⁰ Kamerstukken II, 2006-2007, 30806, nr. 1, 2.

²¹¹ (eigen) slachtoffers Kamerstukken II, 2006-2007, 30806, nr. 2, 2.

²¹² De noodzaak tijdens operaties met grote precisie op te treden en nevenschade zoveel mogelijk te voorkomen, maakt informatievergaring vanuit de lucht van des te groter belang. Kamerstukken II, 2011-2012, 30806, nr. 10, 2.

oversee large areas above land and sea.²¹³ Later, identified important objects can be examined in detail by the drone.²¹⁴ The government emphasised the possibilities of a MALE UAV the most in legitimising buying these RPAS:

MALE UAVs can observe, locate, identify and pinpoint the target before, during and after an attack by other systems, such as fighters, ships or artillery. In this way, very precise action can be taken.²¹⁵

UAVs are posed as beneficial in military actions, not only for being precise and preventing collateral damage in that way but also for contributing to the safety of troops and the local people. In the diagnostic framing, the Dutch government did not posit that there were problems with the safety of troops. Therefore it is interesting that the government emphasises that prognostically, drones become part of the solution of providing safety for soldiers and the local people.

First, MALE UAVs contribute to identifying potential threats in difficult terrains, such as mountains and urbanised areas. Examples of threats include ambushes, roadside bombs, suspicious vessels and illegal roadblocks.²¹⁶ The information on threats can be passed on in time to the units on the ground to prevent their falling victim to these threats.²¹⁷ The government argues that local people will also benefit from the identification of these threats.²¹⁸ Secondly, drones are posited as contributing to the safety of those that are directly involved with the drone. Not only the pilot of a UAV is saved from threats because it is remotely piloted, but the analysts of the images captured by the drone also do not have to be in the relatively dangerous deployment area. The government emphasised that thanks to possibilities like satellite connection all of this can be done from the safety of home. Further establishing the desirability of MALE drones was that personnel for take-off and landing and first-line maintenance could also be stationed at some distance from the actual area of operation, so that the risks for them are also reduced.²¹⁹ Interestingly none of these advantages is compared by the government to risk of an aircraft.

The final problem that had been identified was that the Dutch had to buy flexible UAVs and a MALE UAV that could potentially easily be weaponised offered the solution.²²⁰ This observation was based on the idea that in the future Dutch armed forces might need to be able to take on

²¹³ Kamerstukken II, 2006-2007, 30806, nr. 1, 2.

²¹⁴ Kamerstukken II, 2011-2012, 30806, nr. 10, 2.

²¹⁵ MALE UAV's kunnen voor, tijdens en na een aanval door andere systemen, zoals jachtvliegtuigen, schepen of artillerie, het doel observeren, lokaliseren, identificeren en aanwijzen. Zodoende kan zeer precies worden opgetreden. Kamerstukken II, 2006-2007, 30806, nr. 2, 3.

²¹⁶ Kamerstukken II, 2013-2014, 30806, nr. 22, 18.

²¹⁷ Kamerstukken II, 2006-2007, 30806, nr. 2, 3-4.

²¹⁸ Kamerstukken II, 2013-2014, 30806, nr. 22, 18.

²¹⁹ Kamerstukken II, 2006-2007, 30806, nr. 1, 3.

²²⁰ Kamerstukken II, 2011-2012, 30806, nr. 10, 3.

diverse tasks “in order to achieve a higher operational efficiency with the available resources.”²²¹

This is further linked to the intelligence task that the MALE UAV would already have because a weaponised drone could immediately act on the intelligence it had gathered, which is especially important if the information is time-sensitive.²²² Even though this narrative of the Dutch government seems favourable in regard to weaponising drones, the government always ended an assessment of the usefulness of a weaponised drone with the conclusion that weaponising is not “part of the needs assessment.”²²³

Motivational

There is minimal motivational framing in the debate on drones, and specifically on weaponised drones. The government’s position remained for a long time that weaponised drones were not in the needs assessment of the Dutch armed forces. Furthermore, the decision to weaponise has not yet been made, nor have weaponised drones been deployed. Therefore little motivational framing has been necessary as of yet. This will change in the future if and when the decision to deploy weaponised drones is made.

The Dutch government seemed to have mostly been working on alleviating the fears surrounding the idea of a weaponised Reaper and making it less threatening, by arguing that it will not be an autonomous ‘killer drone’, and that the deployment of the MQ-9 will remain within the rules of engagement. The government emphasised that an MQ-9 Reaper technically is no different from any other manned attack platform, saying it is not an autonomous weapon and that there will always be qualified personnel that deploy the Reaper within the relevant laws, regulations and applicable rules of engagement.²²⁴

The most recent development is that the Dutch government has given the green light to research the possibility of weaponising the Reaper, among other “growth possibilities.”²²⁵ The Dutch government reasoned this research is necessary because “of the importance of further development and the operational added value.”²²⁶ Therefore, a weaponised Reaper is framed as growth and development, as well as adding to operations. This builds further on the idea that the MALE UAV the Netherlands decides to buy should be as flexible as possible.

²²¹ teneinde met de beschikbare middelen een hoger operationeel rendement te bereiken. Kamerstukken II, 2006-2007, 30806, nr. 2, 3.

²²² Kamerstukken II, 2013-2014, 30806, nr. 22, 2.

²²³ geen onderdeel van de behoeftestelling. Kamerstukken II, 2006-2007, 30806, nr. 2, 3.

²²⁴ Kamerstukken II, 2019-2020, 30806, nr. 52, 2.

²²⁵ doorgroeimogelijkheden Kamerstukken II, 2019-2020, 30806, nr. 52, 2.

²²⁶ het belang van doorontwikkeling en de operationele meerwaarde Kamerstukken II, 2019-2020, 30806, nr. 52, 2.

Discussion and conclusion

Comparison of the three cases shows several continuities and discontinuities in the collective action frames that can help broaden our understanding of discourse on remote warfare. This approach was based on Foucault's method of genealogy, aiming to find both continuities and discontinuities to reassess the discourse in official accounts.²²⁷ First, in the diagnostic framing, the government constructed the enemy, as "deserving of any violence perpetrated against it."²²⁸ Then, prognostic framing was used to legitimise the choice to use airstrikes. Last, the motivational framing of the Dutch government argued why the Netherlands should be involved in these conflicts, arguing that the Dutch could offer precision. A strong trend was found towards a discourse of precision and minimising collateral damage. Drones are the continuation of the trend to this precision discourse; the framing tasks on the use of UAVs depend entirely on it. The discourse used to legitimise remote warfare uses the idea of humane violence prominently to show that the Netherlands' modes of violence are legitimate and ethical.

Diagnostic

The diagnostic framing task in the two conflicts centred on constructing an enemy, using injustice and adversarial framing to do so. In the debate on weaponising drones, the diagnostic framing task focussed on the need for information to enable precise targeting.

The injustice framing in the cases of the Kosovo War and the Coalition against IS was largely based on the violation of human rights, more outspokenly in the case of the Coalition. Contrary to the Kosovo War, the actions by IS were explicitly called genocide, which was a more forceful condemnation of the actions of IS than had been used in the Kosovo War. Furthermore, the victims in the case of the Coalition were not only the innocent people in Iraq and Syria but also the people in Europe and the Netherlands who were threatened with attacks.

Constructing the enemy by using adversarial framing was far less explicit for Milošević than for IS. Milošević was condemned for violation of human rights, and his regime was called a terrorist government lacking democracy, but much stronger language was used to denote IS. For IS, an image of barbaric terrorists was constructed, capable of all evil. Using the term terrorism to frame the enemy strengthened the message that strong measures must be taken. As Schmidt and Schröder argue, history can be used to develop a narrative that represents violence as the appropriate action. Possibly, the strength used in adversarial framing was related to different intentions behind using

²²⁷ Crowley, "Genealogy, method," 3-5.

²²⁸ Jabri, *Discourses on Violence*, 134.

violence. In Kosovo, violence was a tool of political pressure, while the Coalition aimed to eradicate IS's threat, so IS should be constructed as deserving of all violence against it.

Prognostic

In the prognostic framing task, the use of remote warfare is reasoned. In both the Kosovo War and the Coalition against IS airstrikes are proposed as the best – even only – choice in military means and UAVs were framed as the risk-averse solution to collecting intelligence.

Risk-aversion has become more prominent over time in prognostic framing. During the Kosovo War, not much attention was given to why airstrikes were the best choice, except to say that they were an effective pressure tool. In the case of the Coalition more attention was given to the mode of intervention, mostly focussing on the threat IS would pose to soldiers and the local aversion to a large military footprint. Airstrikes were far less risky for soldiers and only required a small footprint. While risk-aversion was also present in the Kosovo War, it was framed more in the sense that the government was not willing to sacrifice safety to minimize collateral damage. In the case of the Coalition, risk-aversion completely seemed to determine the military means for intervention. Going even further, the narrative on drone warfare focused on minimising the risks for Dutch soldiers even more than in both earlier cases. Drones were framed as significantly safer for soldiers and locals. The UAV is framed as the epitome of remote warfare because drones provide precision while close to riskless.

Motivational

The motivational framing task is the most consistent in the discourse of the Dutch government, with the focus on the precision the Dutch military could offer in airstrikes only becoming more potent over time. In the case study on the Kosovo War, we see this motivator for the Dutch involvement already, but in the Coalition against IS precision and collateral damage become predominant in the Dutch government's motivational framing; thereby as a small state the Dutch discourse was in line with the broader international trends. It seemed that the Dutch government wanted to show that even though the Netherlands was a small player, it was an important one, linking the value of the Netherlands to its expertise in precision.

In both cases, the Dutch government argued that the involvement of the Netherlands was essential to achieve the proposed solution of airstrikes because the Netherlands could contribute to their precision. Constructed vocabulary denoted precision weapons as 'smart,' and the Dutch military was framed as an expert in precision bombing. While this discourse already began in the Kosovo War, it became more prominent and more focussed on minimising collateral damage in the

framing of the Coalition. The Dutch force was portrayed as, together with the US, the only one that could achieve the desired level of precision in airstrikes. Therefore, the government claimed a responsibility to contribute aircraft to the Coalition. Precision in the Coalition became increasingly linked to the continuous emphasis on minimising collateral damage. This could be linked to preventing political and public backlash, which nevertheless occurred once the collateral damage in Hawija became known. Careful choice of targets and the process of using airstrikes practically had been absent in the discourse during the Kosovo War, but in the Coalition, this became a significant reasoning for Dutch involvement in airstrikes, as especially 'we' would be 'careful' in targeting.

Development in discourse towards remote warfare

Throughout the core framing tasks, the emphasis on precision to prevent collateral damage became more potent with each case. The regard for humanity through precise airstrikes legitimised the Dutch use of violence. The narrative to legitimise violence was thus one of an exceptional capability to be precise. The use of this narrative can already be seen in the Kosovo War, gained weight during the Coalition against IS, and became the primary discourse for why the Dutch should use UAVs – potentially weaponised.

The Dutch development of discourse is an example of how Western states represent remote warfare as humane violence because it is precise and riskless. The discourse used, in its emphasis on precision, targeting processes and surveillance, evokes how much 'care' is given to the airstrikes, precisely as Bonds had argued.²²⁹ The narrative of precision can be seen as the "symbolic representational system" Jabri proposes, in which remote warfare is represented as humane, and therefore as ethical.²³⁰ If violence is imagined as ethical, it can be carried out.²³¹ Accordingly, airstrikes and drone surveillance are proposed as not only a solution but as the unavoidable ethical solution in the prognostic framing task, while preventing 'worse' violence by stopping the enemy constructed in the diagnostic framing task. These framing tasks have only become more influential in framing the violence by Western states as moral, and the motivational framing task is used to legitimise the involvement of the Netherlands because as an expert in precision Dutch involvement makes wars less destructive and thus more ethical.²³²

The future and further research

If the identified trend continues, remote warfare will continue as the Dutch government identified it: the ethical way of waging war. In the nearest future, this framing will influence the decision-making

²²⁹ Bonds, "Humanitized Violence," 442.

²³⁰ Jabri, *Discourses on Violence*, 95.

²³¹ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 140.

²³² M Zehfuss, "Targeting," 1-2.

on armed drones. The Dutch government's entire narrative on the use of drones focuses on the potential for precision of drones, thereby 'saving' lives. Considering not only the increasing focus on the narrative of precision but also the legitimisation that was used to buy the Reaper as needing to have the possibility to be weaponised, and the recent decision to research the costs of weaponising the Reaper, it seems highly likely that eventually, the government wants the MQ-9 to be weaponised.

At the moment, the Dutch government acknowledges the possibility of weaponised drones little. Most of its responses to parliamentary questions are that weaponised drones are not budgeted for now and that this will first be discussed with the parliament. After the counternarrative of autonomous 'killer drones' had been addressed by the government, it decided to research weaponising, so it is likely that a narrative framing armed UAVs as precise and riskless may emerge soon.

Weaponised drones probably will not appear in the Netherlands in the immediate future, because, unrelated to the discourse on weaponised drones, the government must also find the budget to weaponise drones. Further efforts will have to be made to convince parliament of the necessity to spend significant sums on arming drones, so weaponising of the Dutch Reapers is unlikely to happen soon. However, with the precision discourse, the foundations are there. Future research to see if the trends identified here will materialise seems called for.

Arising from the practical impossibility to study more cases in this thesis, future research on a case temporally in between Kosovo and the Coalition against IS would be preferable; the Dutch involvement in Afghanistan would be interesting since many Western states did engage in ground combat there so that it might be a discontinuity in the trend of remote warfare. An analysis of the legitimisation of intervention in Afghanistan might enhance understanding of the reasoning behind remote warfare, and give a better idea of how discursive trends develop.

[Remote warfare comes home](#)

With the backlash on the bombardment of Hawija by the Dutch F-16s remote warfare suddenly seemed to hit home in the Netherlands. The minister of Defense had to account for the blunders several times, and the Dutch government will likely have to compensate the victims of 'collateral damage.' Is an intervention with results such as these the "least of all possible evil" as Weizman aptly questioned? One can never know what the situation had been if no intervention would have occurred, which will always give merit to the rationale that the Western violence prevents worse and will always legitimise the use of remote warfare to prevent the loss of life. Hannah Arendt acknowledges this idea by saying: "There is hardly a better way to avoid discussion than by releasing an argument from the control of the present and by saying that only the future will reveal its

merits.”²³³ Therefore, we will never know what could have been and if a conflict was the best choice, but we can be aware of the narratives that help determine the merits we will have in the future.

²³³ H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 346.

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