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Deadly Embrace?

The Decision Paths to Uruzgan and Helmand

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Deadly Embrace?

The Decision Paths to Uruzgan and Helmand

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“Experience without theory is blind, but theory without experience is mere intellectual play” -

- Immanuel Kant

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Prologue

My deployments to Afghanistan made me wonder and at times question the use of international military engagements. Sure, an armed servant is trained not to question the political use and necessity of endeavours but my curiosity led me to dig into the concepts that had put us there. But, whilst reflecting upon our engagements with the Afghan population, these suddenly seemed rather shallow concepts. This is not to say I came to reject them, but more so these deployments came to cater an interest to further investigate our stabilisation efforts in (post-) conflict states.

In 2005, whilst preparing a conference with prof. dr. Myriame Bollen of the Netherlands Defence Academy, she asked me whether I would be interested in conducting a PhD research project to analyse my operational experiences from operations from an academic perspective. My commander at that time, Colonel Harry Knoop, was a great supporter of the initiative and encouraged me to discuss the matter with the director of our personnel department. Armed with his letter of recommendation and an evaluation report of my competences, I was determined to convince the personnel department of the need to allow me to conduct a PhD project. However, it was the head of the personnel department who convinced me that an academic tour would seriously hamper and endanger a military career. My ambition prevailed and I chose to listen to her. Some years later, I realised that my interest in broadening my view and to further investigate the theories and concepts on practices in the field, was greater than my initial desire to seek safety in trying to follow a traditional career path. This in itself had been questionable from the outset, since my career in the military so far had been everything but traditional.

The time that I was allowed by the army to fully indulge myself into the wonders of academia allowed me the hindsight that is often needed to gain discerning insights. As so expressively formulated by a former commander of the NATO forces in Afghanistan: "It is much harder to be an active practitioner than to be an analyst/historian/academic/journalist, etc., especially when they have the benefit of hindsight and no pressure of time and events".¹

The initial academic journey started out in the summer of 2010 at the Netherlands Defence Academy with critically analysing the concept of the comprehensive approach. I had been a firm believer in the concept on paper but when put into practice some defies with regard to its underlying assumptions surfaced. It was not so much the often discussed differences between the civilian and military actors in the field that seemed to hamper the implementation of the comprehensive approach, but more so the ability and willingness of the state subject to the stabilisation project.

■
1 Sir General Richard quoted in Jack Fairweather, *A War of Choice: The British in Iraq 2003-9* (Random House, London). 217

As such, I came to redirect my intention to those who design and implement military operations: the senior civil and military decision-makers. On the basis of what premise do they come to design missions like to ones to Afghanistan? And what informs their decision-making and ultimately their strategy? Questions like these came to guide the research that evolved into this dissertation.

Part One

Theories, Concepts and Methods

1

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research Puzzle

'What happened?', 'Why did we end up here', 'For what purpose?' - just a collection of questions raised by practitioners¹ and scholars² when addressing the two major Western military interventions of the last two decades: Iraq and Afghanistan. The recurring theme primarily exposes an everlasting search for a sound strategy, linking the use of these military endeavours to a predefined political outcome. Western governments are encountering great difficulties with formulating political goals explicating the purpose of the intervention: without a sense of purpose or political meaning it is rather difficult to engage in the making of policy, or strategy for that matter.³ Consequently, military interventions are increasingly justified in moral or value based terms, and by doing so, providing legitimacy to the actions.⁴

Hence, the 'grammar of war seems to be dictating the logic'⁵ of the campaign in countries like Afghanistan. Some practitioners even argue operations in Afghanistan to be the reverse of the classic Clausewitz adage and claim that 'politics has become an extension of war'⁶ potentially heralding a completely novel reading of events. Often, the underlying rationale of the engagement in general, and the reasoning underpinning the actions of those designing the engagement, remains unclear. Consequently, general and vague terminology is employed to articulate the purpose leaving many to guess and consequently even to question the road taken by their respective governments.

1 Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: the Art of War in the Modern World* (London 2005); Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-first Century Combat as Politics* (Oxford 2012); Wilfried Rietdijk, 'De 'comprehensive approach' in Uruzgan, schaken op vier borden tegelijk', *Militaire Spectator* 177 (2008) 472-486; Jonathan Bailey, Richard Iron and Hew Strachan, *British Generals in Blair's Wars* (London 2013).

2 Hew Strachan, 'Making Strategy: Civil-Military Relations after Iraq', *Survival* 48(3) (2006) 59-82; Jan Ångström and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (eds), *Modern War and the Utility of Force: Challenges, Methods and Strategy* (London 2010); David Chandler, 'War Without End(s): Grounding the Discourse of Global War', *Security Dialogue* 40(3) (2009) 243-262; King, A., 'Military command in the last decade', *International Affairs* 87(2) (2011) 377-396.

3 This argument is put forward by David Chandler who largely builds his argument on perspectives provided by Alain Badiou and Zaki Laïdi. They argue that Western political elites refrain from embracing a strong political vision and are believed to hold a transformed perception of, and relationship to, political power. As such, governments and policy-makers are supposedly experiencing their policy-making power more as a 'risk' or a cause of potential embarrassment, than as an opportunity. In other words, they seem to reject rather than welcome the responsibilities of power, seeking to devolve policy-making responsibilities either to regional and local authorities or to higher bodies such as the European Union or other international institutions. See: David Chandler, 'Hollow Hegemony: Theorising the Shift from Interest-based to Value-based International Policy-making', *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 35(3) (2007) 703-723; Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London 2002); Zaki Laïdi, *A World without Meaning: The Crisis of Meaning in International Relations*, trans. June Burnham and Jenny Coulon (London 1998).

4 Chandler, 'Hollow hegemony', 719.

5 Hew Strachan, 'Strategy and the Limitation of War', *Survival* 50(1) (2008) 31-54.

6 Stabilisation Conference, London, December 2010.

The dearth of strategy and the involvement of the military in the act of strategy making for recent operations have brought to light the fact that in practice the actions of those involved challenge the traditional predicates that have dominated Western thought on how to best design and plan a military operation; civil military relations and strategy.

These prescriptions are informed by the belief that the military needs to be restricted in order to prevent them from taking power over the state. The difficulties of crafting strategy for contemporary operations cannot be separated from traditional models and consequent prescriptions on civil military relations. By itself, the distinction made between the political [strategic level] and the operational level [situated between the tactical level and the strategic level] has been closely guarded, as the drafting of strategy is believed to be a 'civilian responsibility'.⁷ However, some concerns are voiced addressing the potential danger for Western democracies in neglecting the development of coherent strategy due to the fact that current prescriptions of civil military relations limit the role of the military in policy making.⁸

However, as witnessed in Afghanistan when then ISAF commander Stanley McChrystal⁹, presented the 'Afghanistan Strategy' in October 2009¹⁰, the operational level fills the void when the strategic level neglects to draft a comprehensive strategy. Shortly thereafter, NATO and EU officials indicated their support for the strategy.¹¹ The guiding authority of this document for the stabilisation efforts in Afghanistan, painfully illustrated the remissness of the international community and its civilian agencies in providing political direction for what had become a predominantly military campaign.

But what underlies the act to assign military means in the first place? The principal held belief holds that states articulate their ambition and assign means accordingly. But is this really what occurs? What are in fact the circumstances that shape the decision to deploy military forces? How does that decision translate into an actual deployment? What about the actors that have engaged in the decision-making process to commit military forces and the setting in which they operate? What conditioned and informed their actions?

7 Hew Strachan, 'Strategy or Alibi? Obama, McChrystal and the operational level of war', *Survival* 52(5) (2010) 157-182, 159. Strachan points to the Cold War era as foundational for this clear separation.

8 Strachan, 'Making strategy'.

9 The proneness of General McChrystal to draft an overarching strategy for Afghanistan however should not too easily be mistaken with the often expressed assumption that the military would like to 'run the show'. One only has to hark back to the conflict between him and President Obama when General McChrystal, openly expressed his frustrations with his political masters for neglecting to provide political guidance. See: Micheal Hastings 'The runaway general' (22 Juni 2010), <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-runaway-general-20100622> (10.07.2013). By doing so, he briefly injected new momentum in the debate about the need for political strategy and a review of traditional civil military relations, only before the discussion went silent again.

10 *Commander's Initial Assessment*, 30 August 2009. *Headquarters International Security Assistance Force* (2010 Kabul) 2-10.

11 Valentina Pop, 'Nato in face-saving mode after top general sacked' (24 July 2010) <http://euobserver.com/9/30357> (30.09.2011).

A problem calling for foreign policy action generally tends to get structured into a series of decisions that involve different segments of government. Occasions for decisions are moments when those involved feel they need to act even if the action itself is not to act at all or to inquire more information. Consequentially, there might be various occasions for the decision that may be addressed across time by the same decision unit or by different decision units. The specific occasions studied are strategic actions that lead to authoritative actions on the part of governments.¹²

In this dissertation, the way decisions to commit military forces came about and how respectively a strategy for this deployment was designed, is at the centre of attention. The study seeks to go beyond generally held assumptions about how decisions are made with regard to the use of military means (civil military relations) and the use of strategy at the strategic level (strategic studies). The act of deciding if and how military forces will be deployed lies at the heart of what is known as the strategic *civil military interface*. In this interface¹³, the design and direction of the military operations is constructed by a group of senior civil and military decision-makers. This *decision unit*¹⁴ is situated within the wider context of their respective political system.

Consequently, this study takes the agency of individuals seriously and scrutinises the ways in which they came to make up their minds and acted accordingly. In the process of figuring out what to do, actors routinely twist and intertwine what conventional scholarly accounts of human action struggle to keep neat and separate. This twisting and intertwining, in turn, has crucial repercussions for their political efficacy. Hence, whether they fail or succeed to influence political decisions and transform social relations, and for what cause, defines the result of their actions.¹⁵

It is the actions of the senior civil and military decision-makers in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, whilst deciding to deploy their troops to South Afghanistan, that will serve as cases in point, in order to be able to answer the following central research question: 'Why

12 Margaret G. Hermann, 'How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy: a Theoretical Framework', *International Studies Review* 3(2) (2001) 47-81, 54.

13 The term *civil military interface* is used to describe the strategic level. It does not only include a level in the chain of command, but it also provides the funds, as well as the physical and conceptual directions that are necessary to implement the decisions of the political leadership. In this arena decisions are taken regarding the size, organization, materiel and deployments of the military are made. It is at this level where the campaign plans are created and implemented. See: Robert Egnell, 'Explaining US and British Performance in Complex Expeditionary Operations: *The Civil-Military Dimension*', *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 29(6) (2006) 1041-1075, 1042, 1045-1046.

14 This terminology is taken from Margaret G. Hermann and her work on foreign policy decisions. See: Hermann, 'How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy'; Ryan K. Beasley et al, 'People and Processes in Foreign Policymaking: Insights from Comparative Case Studies', *International Studies Review* 3(2) (2001) 217-250; Margaret G Hermann, Charles F. Hermann and Joe D. Hagan, 'How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy Behavior' in: Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley, Jr., and James N. Rosenau (eds.), *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy* (Londen 1987) 309 - 336.

15 Markus Kornprobst 'The Agent's Logics of Action: Defining and Mapping Political Judgement', *International Theory* 3 (2011) 70-104, 70-72.

did the senior civil and military decision-makers of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom decide to provide military means for the stabilisation of South Afghanistan and how was the political ambition to stabilise South Afghanistan converted into a military operation [2004-2006]?¹⁶

1.2 Objectives and Relevance

The research objective of this study is to reconstruct why and how it was decided to use military means for the stabilisation of South Afghanistan by the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. By doing so, the black box of senior civil military decision-making on the use of military means unfolded. Hence, it entails a particular focus on systematically comparing the actions of these decision-makers and thus asks questions about how this decision unit¹⁷ came about assigning government means (the military).

This study in consequence asks why and how the senior civil military decision-makers engaged in the use of military means for the stabilisation of South Afghanistan; did the primacy of politics, as the text books would prescribe, guide the actions of senior civil and military decision-makers; how did this decision group interpret and make sense of the task at hand; was there a strategy and a subsequent narrative articulating the purpose of the use of the military means? Systematically reconstructing and comparing the activities of the senior civil and military decision-makers will allow us to reach a sound judgment about why and how the decision to commit military troops was made.

Instead of solely focussing on the conditions that resulted in this decision, a particular focus will be directed towards the members of this decision unit. It does so by closing in on the configuration and the dynamics of the decision unit within the process of committing military resources for the stabilisation of South Afghanistan. During this process, the decision unit perceives and interprets pressures and constraints posed upon them by domestic and international actors.¹⁸

The research objectives are both theoretical and empirical. The study offers a detailed account of how the senior civil and military decision-makers came to the decision to employ their military means and subsequently aimed to draft their respective strategies. By doing

16 This period is limited in time in the sense that after once the military plan was drafted and political approval was granted, the investigation ceases. This will be further explicated in chapter 3.

17 The use of the model of decision units is grounded in the work of Margaret Hermann. Her studies examine occasions for decisions that lead to authoritative actions on the part of the government in dealing with a perceived foreign policy problem. By doing so, it focuses on understanding the processes that affects the commitment of government's resources and its choice of policy. See Hermann, 'How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy', 55.

18 Beasley et al, 'People and Processes in Foreign Policymaking', 219.

so, it explores the conversion process of political goals into military operations against the background of stabilisation missions and addresses the underlying process mechanisms within their own political and organisational context (NL/UK), whilst testing underlying theoretical prescriptions, on civil military relations and strategy.

Investigating why and how it was decided to use military means for the stabilisation of South Afghanistan seems pointless if the context of why such operations are used is not delineated. Military means are often treated as if they are neutral, an 'all-in-one toolkit' to be employed when other methods of achieving a particular political goal fail. Yet, the methods adopted may affect the ability to achieve the specified goal. The 'how' is as important as the 'why'.¹⁹ By learning about how these foreign policy decisions are made, we gain information about the intentions and strategies of governments and how their definitions of the situation are translated into action.²⁰

Scholars, with a few exceptions, tend not to engage that much in operational analysis of contemporary military missions. This might be related to the fact that, as already outlined by Richard Betts, political science no longer encourages scholars to conduct operational analysis as a prime undertaking. As a result, few political scientists learn sufficiently about the processes of decision-making and military operations to grasp the difficulties of implementing strategic plans. 'Few focus on the conversion processes that open gaps between what government leaders decide to do and what government leaders actually do'.²¹ It is this conversion process [within the current context of stabilisation operations] and the inherent tensions and difficulties as illustrated above, that constitute the core of this dissertation.

1.3 Research Strategy

This study is interdisciplinary since the phenomenon of deciding why and how military means are used cannot be limited to one field of science. The analysis will include perspectives from the field of international relations, social and organisational theory, and foreign policy analysis. It follows from generic insights of social and organisational theory that the context in which human beings operate is constructed around rules, identities, and roles.²² A context

19 Isaiah Wilson, *Thinking Beyond War: Civil-military Relations and why America Fails to Win the Peace* (Basinstoke and New York 2007) XXIII; Mary Kaldor and Andrew Salmon, 'Military Force and European Strategy', *Survival* 48(1) (2006) 19-34, 20; Smith, *The Utility of Force*.

20 Hermann, 'How Decision Units shape Foreign Policy', 48.

21 Richard K. Betts, 'Is Strategy an Illusion?', *International Security* 25(2) (2000) 5-50, 7.

22 Anthony Giddens, *Central problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradictions in Social Analysis* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1979); Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical reason: On the Theory of Action* (Stanford 1998); Bob Jessop, 'Interpretive Sociology and the Dialectic of Structure and Agency' *Theory, Culture & Society* 13(1) (1996) 119-128; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International*

that by definition conditions all actions of the actors: being either the calculation of costs and benefits (consequences), abiding of identity-constituting rules (appropriateness), generating a convincing argument (argumentation), or following tacit common sense (practice).²³ The conceptualisation of the senior civil and military decision-makers originates from the framework of decision units.²⁴

The interdisciplinary approach is supposed to advance to a more thorough understanding of the decision-making process on the use of military means for contemporary operations. As indicated by Lawrence Freedman, many important academic cleavages though cut across these boundaries. Consequently, practical problems such as the use of military means can rarely be encapsulated in terms of a single discipline. Every so often an interdisciplinary approach facilitates innovation and influences new thinking.²⁵

Comparative case study

The empirical part of this research is based on a comparative case-study research design. The actions of the senior civil and military decision-makers of both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom as to how their political ambition to stabilise South Afghanistan was translated into a military campaign are scrutinised. The case selection is based on the criteria of most-dissimilar cases combined with a sense of pragmatism due to funding and possibilities to access data. As the exact description of the case selection will be provided in chapter three, only the most central features of the two cases will be highlighted here. The major dissimilarities between the cases lie in the differences between their political systems, the differences in the decision-making process with regard to the use of military means and the assumed differences between the group of senior civil and military decision-makers and their perspectives on the role of their nation within the larger international security context.

By comparing why and how it was decided to use the armed forces of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom for the stabilisation of South Afghanistan, prevalent patterns of why and how Western states use their military means for stabilisation purposes will be highlighted. The data for this study has been collected through qualitative methods and techniques. The research employs a structured and focused comparison.

The process of why and how the decisions were made by the senior civil and military decision-makers is reconstructed by studying a large amount of primary and secondary

Politics (Cambridge 1999); James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, 'The Logic of Appropriateness' in: Martin Rein, Michael Moran, Robert Goodin (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy* (Oxford 2005) 689-708.

²³ Kornprobst, 'The Agent's Logics of Action', 71.

²⁴ Hermann, 'How Decision Units shape Foreign Policy'.

²⁵ Lawrence Freedman, 'Does Strategic Studies have a future?', in: John Baylis, James J. Wirtz, and Colin S. Gray, eds. *Strategy in the contemporary world* (third edition, 2010), 391-406, 400.

documents and conducting over one hundred semi-structured interviews with key actors in both the political and military arena in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Document analysis, interviewing and observation were structured by means of a set of broad topics and general questions reflecting the theoretical focus of this study. Propositions were developed to shape the data plan and provided priorities to the relevant analytic methods.²⁶

1.4 Book Outline

The dissertation is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the conceptual, theoretical, and, methodological issues of the research. Chapter One presents the theme of the study by introducing the topic and the research design. It sets out the rationale behind the research project and presents structure of the dissertation. Chapter Two introduces the main concepts and their status quaestionis. First of all, the context of contemporary military interventions will be delineated, with a particular focus on the concept of stabilisation operations. This concept was, and arguably still is, the dominant concept wherein the decisions that are at the centre of attention for this study were made. Subsequently, the senior civil and military decision-makers and the nature of their relations will be attended to. These actors are the main unit of analysis in this research project and as such need to be conceptualised. Successively, a theoretical description of their core process, the act of strategy making, will be presented. From than onwards, the analytical framework that will provide the prism of the research project will be introduced. It commences with the sketching the institutional context and its conditioning mechanisms, thereby providing the setting in which the senior civil and military decision-makers are to come to a decision. Successively, the analytical framework that sets out how to reconstruct the decision paths of the group of senior civil and military decision-makers. The chapter is concluded with listing the dispositions that will guide the data collection and analysis of this research project.

Chapter three explicates the methods and techniques applied for the data collection and analysis. It commences with embarking upon the unit of analysis, after which the multiple case study as a research strategy is explained, followed by a description of the applied method 'structured focussed comparison'. Subsequently, an overview of the techniques for the collection and analysis of the data is presented. The last section discusses the reliability, validity, and to what extent the study can be generalised. The chapter is concluded with an overview of the limitations of the study.

■
26 Robert K. Yin, *Case study research: Design and methods* (Thousand Oaks 2008) 130-131.

Part Two of the book presents the context, the cases and the analysis of the collected data. It starts off by providing a short overview of the genesis of the Western intervention in Afghanistan until the time that the Netherlands and the United Kingdom decided to employ their military means for the stabilisation of South Afghanistan (Chapter Four). This chapter serves merely to set out the developments in Afghanistan since the intervention of the ‘coalition of the willing’: a formation of Western military powers led by the United States that invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 until NATO’s expansion to the South of Afghanistan in the summer of 2006. The chapter is designed to provide an understanding of the environment in which the Netherlands and the United Kingdom felt they needed to engage by contributing to NATO’s expansion in this country.

Successively, chapter five discusses the foreign and security policy of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom and provides a description of their senior civil and military decision-makers and the procedures of deciding to use military means all within their specific political context. The two cases are presented in the successive chapters, the Dutch case (Chapter Six) and British case (Chapter Seven). In these chapters the actions and decisions of the senior civil military decision-makers in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom are carefully reconstructed. The structure of the reconstruction is founded on the analytical framework as presented in chapter two. Subsequently, a cross case comparison is conducted in Chapter Eight. The workings of the actions undertaken and the decisions made by the senior civil and military decision-makers in both nations will be compared in this chapter. The findings will be structured along the lines of the propositions that have guided the research project.

Part Three of the book presents the concluding chapter in which the questions that instigated and guided this research will be answered. First of all, the question of why the senior civil and military decision-makers in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom decided to provide military means for the stabilisation of South Afghanistan will be answered. Secondly, the question as to how this political ambition was converted into a military operation will be answered, followed by theoretical deductions, inductions, and recommendations. Subsequently, avenues for future research are proposed for advancing the findings of this study.

2

Chapter 2 Theoretical Foundations

Interventions, Strategies and Decision-Makers

2.1 Introduction

The act of deciding if and how military force will be deployed lies at the heart of what is known as the strategic *civil military interface*. In this interface¹, military operations are designed and directed by a group of senior civil and military decision-makers. They and their actions are the focus of the theoretical and empirical puzzle of this study. Before outlining the theoretical prescriptions on the relations among senior civil and military decision-makers, this chapter first briefly sketches the international setting in which they operate. One cannot comprehend the 'how' of decision-making - responding to foreign policy problems and occasions for decision² - without an understanding of the context. This perspective is founded in the constructivist belief that the world should be seen and analysed as a (social) construction whilst being appreciative to differences across context.³

Therefore, first of all, the context of contemporary military interventions will be delineated, with a particular focus on the concept of stabilisation operations. This concept was, and arguably still is, the dominant concept wherein the decisions that are at the centre of attention for this study, were made. Subsequently, the senior civil and military decision-makers and the nature of their relations will be attended to. These actors are the main unit of analysis in this research project and need to be conceptualised. Successively, a theoretical description of their core process, the act of strategy making, will be presented. From then onwards, the analytical framework that provides the prism of the research project will be introduced. It commences with sketching the institutional context and its conditioning mechanisms, thereby providing the setting in which the senior civil and military decision-makers are to come to a decision. Successively, the analytical framework that sets out how to reconstruct the decision paths of the group of senior civil and military decision-makers

1 The term *civil military interface* is used to describe the strategic level. It not only includes a level in the chain of command, but it also provides the funds, as well as the physical and conceptual directions that are necessary to implement the decisions of the political leadership. In this arena, decisions are taken regarding the size, organisation, materiel and deployment of the military are made. It is at this level that the campaign plans are created and implemented. See: Egnell, 'Explaining US and British Performance in Complex Expeditionary Operations', 1042, 1045-1046.

2 Hermann, 'How Decision Units shape Foreign Policy', 51.

3 Karin M. Fierke, 'Constructivism', in: Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, Steve Smith (eds) *International Relations Theories. Discipline and Diversity* (second edition Oxford 2010) 187-204; Vendulka Kubáľková (ed.), *Foreign policy in a constructed world*. Vol. 4. ME Sharpe, (2001) 60-74.

is presented. The chapter is concluded with listing the propositions that will guide the data collection and analysis of this research project.

2.2 Contemporary Military Interventions

The history of military intervention by Western states has been variable and cyclical in nature, rather than progressing in a clearly defined direction. Military interventions have exhibited considerable variation in terms of the normative dimension.⁴ Hence, the pattern of military intervention throughout the last decades cannot be understood in isolation from the changing normative context in which it occurs; the context shapes the various conceptions of interest. Standard analytical [mostly realist] assumptions about states and other actors pursuing their interests tend to leave the sources and motivations of interests vaguely defined or unspecified.⁵

The end of the Cold War heralded a rapid and dramatic transformation in the practice of military interventions. Now, the majority of interventions came to be multinational peacekeeping operations instead of unilateral intervention by world powers. Ever since, the number of this type of mission increased greatly.⁶ Moreover, a qualitative shift in the nature of peacekeeping: 'second-generation' peacekeeping missions emerged. Since the early nineties of the last decade an increase of intrastate conflicts was seen to endanger international security. Consequently, peacekeepers were sent to intrastate conflicts, thus stretching the traditional peacekeeping principles of consent, neutrality, and limited use of force. Hence, in addition to the traditional truce observation role of peacekeepers⁷, this type

4 Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, 'Democratization and War', *Foreign Affairs* 74(3) (1995) 79-97; James Burk, 'What Justifies Peacekeeping?', *Peace Review* 12(3) (2000) 467-473; Alex J. Bellamy, 'The great beyond: Rethinking military Responses to new Wars and complex Emergencies', *Defence Studies* 2(1) (2002) 25-50; Roland Paris, *At War's End: building Peace after civil Conflict* (Cambridge 2004); Mary Kaldor, *New and old Wars: Organised Violence in a global Era* (Cambridge 2013); Helen Dexter, 'New War, Good War and the War on Terror: Explaining, Excusing and Creating Western Neo interventionism', *Development and Change* 38(6) (2007) 1055-1071; Mark Duffield, *Development, Security and unending War: governing the World of Peoples* (Cambridge 2007); David A. Lake, 'Building Legitimate States after Civil Wars' in: Matthew Hoddie and Caroline A. Hartzell (eds.), *Strengthening Peace in Post-civil War States: Transforming Spoilers into Stakeholders* (Chicago 2010) 29-51; Andrew J. Enterline and J. Michael Greig, 'The History of Imposed Democracy and the Future of Iraq and Afghanistan', *Foreign Policy Analysis* 4(4) (2008) 321-347; Sonja Grimm and Wolfgang Merkel, 'War and Democratization: Legality, Legitimacy and Effectiveness', *Democratization* 15(3) (2008) 457-471.

5 Martha Finnemore, 'Constructing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention' in: Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York 1996) 153.

6 United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations web site, www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.shtml

7 This typology is taken from Michael Lipson, 'A "Garbage Can Model" of UN Peacekeeping', *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* 13(1) (2007) 79-97, 79. He uses the term to describe post-Cold War missions that increasingly undertake peace enforcement or peace building activities in addition to traditional interposition and truce observation functions. Typologies of peacekeeping generations include Michael W. Doyle, *UN Peacekeeping in Cambodia: UNTAC's Civil Mandate* (Boulder 1995) 25-26; Karen A. Mingst and Margaret P. Karns, *The United Nations in the Post-Cold War Era* (2nd ed. Boulder 2000) 78-108; Ramesh Thakur and Albrecht Schnabel, 'Cascading Generations of Peacekeeping: Across the Mogadishu Line to Kosovo and Timor' in: Ramesh Thakur and Albrecht Schnabel (eds.) *United*

of peacekeeping also entailed significant nation-building activities in various places like Cambodia, Angola, Namibia, Rwanda, Mozambique, Bosnia, Croatia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Liberia, Sierra Leone, East Timor and Kosovo.⁸

One of the striking features of these peacekeeping operations is that they all sought to remake (post-) conflict states into liberal democracies on the grounds that this is the 'appropriate' model of domestic political organisation for states to adopt.⁹ These set objectives however were not without their own difficulties. One of the most prominent peacekeeping operations, which revealed the growing difficulties of competing mandates and unclear political objectives, were the UN and NATO missions in the Balkans.

In addition to the transformation of types of interventions, Western powers demonstrated a growing reluctance to intervene without justification in terms of widely-shared normative principles. Although political interest continued to play a significant role in contemporary intervention by major powers, these powers were now required to justify their actions in terms of general normative principles. Consequently, they rarely intervened in the internal affairs of other states without authorisation based on these general principles from legitimate multilateral institutions¹⁰, in particular the United Nations.

In turn, the notion that sovereignty is conditional and contingent upon state performance in terms of protecting the rights of citizens, became increasingly influential. The legal prescription for intervention¹¹ became weaker as a consequence, as applicability of the principle of non-intervention started to depend on 'standards of civilisation'. More specifically, 'civilised' states engaged in the protection of norms whereas 'uncivilised' states or polities did not.¹² In fact, Russia, after the end of the Cold War more and more viewed

Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Ad Hoc Missions, Permanent Engagement (New York 2001) 3–25; John Mackinlay and Jarat Chopra, 'Second Generation Multinational Operations', *The Washington Quarterly* 15(3) (Summer 1992) 113–131; Marrack Goulding, 'The Evolution of United Nations Peacekeeping', *International Affairs* 69(3) (July 1993) 451–464 cited in: Lipson, 'A "Garbage Can Model" of UN Peacekeeping', 79.

8 Roland Paris, 'Peacekeeping and the Constraints of Global Culture', *European Journal of International Relations* 9(3) (2003) 441–473; Niels van Willigen, 'International administration and institutional autonomy in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo', *East European Politics* 28.4 (2012): 429–451; Frans Osinga and James A. Russel, 'Conclusion: Military Adaptation and the War in Afghanistan', in Theo Farrell, Frans Osinga and James A. Russell, eds. *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan* (Stanford University Press, 2013) 288–236, 289.

9 Roland Paris, 'International Peacebuilding and the "Mission Civilisatrice"', *Review of International Studies* 28(4) (2002) 637–55; Roland Paris, 'Saving Liberal Peacebuilding', *Review of international studies* 36(2) (2010) 337–365.

10 Chiyuki Aoi. *Legitimacy and the Use of Armed Force: Stability Missions in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York 2010); James Dobbins et al., *The UN's role in nation-building: From the Congo to Iraq II* (Arlington, 2005); Simon Chesterman 'Legality Versus Legitimacy: Humanitarian Intervention, the Security Council, and the Rule of Law', *Security Dialogue* 33(3) (2002) 293–307; Neil S MacFarlane, Carolyn J. Thielking, and Thomas G. Weiss, 'The Responsibility to Protect: is Anyone Interested in Humanitarian Intervention?', *Third World Quarterly* 25(5) (2004) 977–992; Andreas Krieg, 'National Interests and Altruism in Humanitarian Intervention' in: Andreas Krieg, *Motivations for Humanitarian Intervention* (London 2013) 37–58.

11 See: Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton 1999); Stephen D. Krasner, 'Compromising Westphalia', *International Security* 20(3) (1995) 115–151; Stephen D. Krasner (ed.), *Problematic Sovereignty: Contested Rules and Political Possibilities* (New York 2013); Janice E. Thomson, 'State Sovereignty in International Relations: Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Empirical Research', *International Studies Quarterly* 39 (1995) 213–233; Winston P Nagan and Craig Hammer, 'The Changing Character of Sovereignty in International Law and International Relations', *Colum. J. Transnat'l L.* 43(1) (2004) 141.

12 S. Neil MacFarlane, *Intervention in Contemporary World Politics*, Adelphi Paper 350 (Londen 2002) 77–78.

as an ‘uncivilised state’¹³ and was mostly excluded from participating in multinational interventions.

Engaging the term ‘humanitarian’ in concordance with military intervention became rather prominent about a decade ago. One of the legacies of the NATO operation *Allied Force* in Kosovo¹⁴ was the emergence of a new predicament known as *humanitarian intervention*.¹⁵ Ever since, many prominent political leaders have become strong proponents of the use of force for humanitarian purposes and the principle of the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P).¹⁶ Although the causal weight of these principles in determining state behaviour in the international arena is contestable, it on the one hand limited (Western) states’ flexibility in contemplating intervention on the pure grounds of self-interest.¹⁷ On the other hand, interventionist behaviour of states in internal affairs of other states, was in fact facilitated by employing a normative framework as a justification for the intervention.¹⁸

Consequently, interventions are increasingly often accompanied by normative justification and rhetoric.¹⁹ Collective values such as conflict resolution, the protection of human rights, and the promotion of democracy have gained influence at the expense of more clearly self-interested political objectives.²⁰ One of the critiques voiced against this type of contemporary mission is the discernible trend toward less clear political guidance and less profound or even absent objectives that are to guide them.²¹ Some describe the

- 13 Daniel C. Thomas, ‘Human Rights Ideas, the Demise of Communism, and the End of the Cold War’, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7(3) (2005) 110–141, 129. Also, Russia viewed the international normative environment as a means for Western powers to secure their economic resources and/or as an alternative for possible cultural isolation of other states. *Ibid.*
- 14 NATO conducted a 78 day air campaign (From 24 March 1999 until 10 June 1999) in the Southern Yugoslav province of Kosovo. The campaign was directed against Serbia and Serbian forces who were supposedly committing genocide against ethnic Albanians. For more information about operation *Allied Force* see: Adam Roberts, ‘NATO’s ‘Humanitarian War’ over Kosovo’, *Survival* 41(3) (1999) 102–123; Alex J Bellamy, *Kosovo and international society* (New York 2002).
- 15 Humanitarian intervention as an act of foreign involvement in internal affairs of another state was no novelty at all. Throughout history one can witness various interventions by states under the banner of ‘relieving human suffering’. The use of the term however as a predicament became very prominent after the intervention in Kosovo.
- 16 There seems to be a common belief among governments (particularly members of the Non-Aligned Movement) that the principle simply encompasses a more sophisticated way of conceptualising and legitimising humanitarian intervention. In fact, since 2005, it has been widely suggested that R2P ‘legalises’ or ‘legitimises’ non-consensual intervention potentially without the sanction of the UN Security Council. Others claim that the principle is inadequate because it did not provide clear guidance about the circumstances in which coercive military intervention might be justified or about the appropriate decision-making process in situations where the Security Council is deadlocked. They argue that the set of criteria proposed by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2001 to guide international decision-making in times of major humanitarian emergencies was an important casualty of pre-summit diplomacy in 2005 and should be put back on the international agenda. See Alex J. Bellamy, ‘The Responsibility to Protect and the problem of military intervention’, *International Affairs* 84(4) (2008) 616–617.
- 17 MacFarlane, *Intervention in Contemporary World Politics*, 81.
- 18 See: Dexter, ‘New War, Good War and the War on Terror’, 1055–1071.
- 19 See: Daniel Charles Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton 2001).
- 20 Kaldor and Salmon, ‘Military Force and European Strategy’, 19–34; MacFarlane, *Intervention in Contemporary World Politics*, 78.
- 21 Hew Strachan, ‘The lost meaning of strategy’, *Survival* 47(3) (2005) 33–54; David Betz and Anthony Cormack, ‘Iraq, Afghanistan and British Strategy’, *Orbis* 53(2) (2009) 319–336; David E. Johnson, ‘What are you prepared to do? NATO and

contemporary era of value-based foreign policy making, as it is short on instrumental policy making and marked by the inability to construct a clear political goal, coherent values, frameworks, and strategic interests.²²

However, the way interests are defined does depend on one's theoretical standpoint. Does one view interest as being material in its existence or as a 'social construction'? The realist interpretation of interest, the basis for state action in pursuit of power, is an often-heard axiom in the debate about the stabilisation of (post) conflict states. In essence, stabilisation of (post-) conflict states is argued to be about powerful Western states seeking to forge, secure, or support, a particular political order in line with their particular strategic objectives.²³

If interest, however, is viewed as a social construction, there is argued to be a process of interpretation that is required in order to understand both what situation the state faces and how they should respond to it. It presupposes a shared language by those who determine state action and for its public. In addition, rhetoric is produced by interests as well as used to justify the pursuit of those interests. This rhetoric mediates between clear state interests as dictated by the international system and state action.²⁴ In the case of contemporary operations, the construction of legitimacy seems to be an inextricable part of the process

the Strategic Mismatch between Ends, Ways, and Means in Afghanistan—and in the Future', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34(5) (2011) 383-401; Chandler, 'War Without End (s)', 243-262.

22 David Chandler, 'Hollow Hegemony', 703-723. To him, the Cold War era represented a convergence of clear values and distinct interests, reflected in instrumental policy-making, and the post-Cold War period is seen as an epoch where the value/interest framework (based on consequentialist reasoning) has collapsed, resulting in ad hoc and non-instrumentalist policy-making (based on habitual responses and appropriateness reasoning). See: Chandler, 'Hollow Hegemony', 703-723; David Chandler, 'The Security-Development Nexus and the Rise of 'Anti-Foreign Policy'', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 10(4) (2007) 362-386; David Chandler, 'Rhetoric without Responsibility: the Attraction of 'Ethical' Foreign Policy', *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 5(3) (2003) 295-316. Chandler's views are influenced by the works of the French philosopher's Zaki Laïdi and Alain Badiou who denounce the key to understanding value-based projections of power by Western nations, as the incapacity of their ruling elites to formulate a collective project and the retreat from political responsibility for taking society forward. As such, the post-cold war era is viewed to portray a 'gap between power and meaning'. See: Laïdi, *A World without Meaning*, 11; Badiou, *Ethics*, 31. Put differently, linking the pursuit of national interest to the pursuit of perceived global values does nothing more than to remove politics from the 'earthly realm of a struggle over interests into an idealised realm of the struggle over 'values'. David Chandler, *Hollow Hegemony*, 19.

23 Sarah Collinson, Samir Elhawary and Robert Muggah, 'States of Fragility: Stabilisation and its Implications for Humanitarian Action', *Disasters* 34(3) (2010) 275-296; Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War*; Mark Duffield, 'Governing the Borderlands: Decoding the Power of Aid', *Disasters* 25(4) (2001) 308-320.

24 As outlined by Bill McSweeney, identity and interests are mutually constituted by knowledgeable agents, monitoring, managing, and manipulating the narrative of one in respect to another. To say that both are chosen by human individuals is to make a constructivist claim that the behavior of states is an effect of cognitive and material structures, of the distribution of power informed by ideas and the choice is made in the context of interaction with other states in the international arena and with sub-state groups within the domestic. In addition, and in fact in opposition to constructivist claims, is that state choices are not only constrained by structure; they effect the progressive transformation of structure within a reflexive structure-agent relationship which can never be dissolved in favor of the determinative role of the actor or of the structure and the conception of action. This implies, the concept of structure and the conception of causality in the social sciences to be radically distinct from the ideas applicable from our understanding of the natural order. To affirm to co-constitution of behavior by agent and structure is to affirm causality in the social order, but is not to affirm what we mean by cause in respect of the natural order. See: Bill McSweeney, *Security, Identity and Interests: a Sociology of International Relations* (Cambridge 1999) 210.

of national interest construction.²⁵ In other words, this perspective acknowledges norms as instrumental to the structuring of state's interests. The contra position on the use of normative rhetoric is that norms are in fact employed as a vehicle to acquire justification for purely self-serving purposes of states.²⁶

As postulated earlier, the influence of norms²⁷ with regard to military intervention has been manifest over the last three decades. It has evolved into a requirement for states to combine their interests with prescriptive norms since these norms not only affect their interests, but also shape the instruments or means that states deem available and appropriate to use. Hence, even when actors are aware of a wide array of means to accomplish their policy objectives, they may nevertheless reject some means as inappropriate due to normative constraints'.²⁸

The most recent Western incarnation of value-laden intervention is known as *stabilisation operations*. Current writings on stabilisation of (post-) conflict states and stabilisation operations draw heavily on operations as conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a matter of fact, the stabilisation discourse emerged on the basis of the experiences of Western stabilisation efforts in these countries. The foundation and objectives of stabilising (post-) conflict states and the process of meeting these objectives remain deeply controversial, reflecting competing mandates, priorities, interests, and capacities of the many different actors involved. Approaches tend to be divided between prioritising security imperatives and taking direct and immediate action to counter perceived threats such as insurgents and pursuing wider peace-building, state-building and development goals.²⁹

The (post-) conflict states that are subject to the stabilisation efforts of Western states are often characterised by weak governments which, more often than not, lack a monopoly on violence and by the presence of various groups, mostly known and defined as insurgents. It is for this reason that the terms 'counterinsurgency' (COIN) and 'stabilisation operations' are intertwined and have been used interchangeably.³⁰ This highlights the lack of conceptual

25 Jutta Weldes, 'Constructing national interests', *European Journal of International Relations* 2(3) (1996) 276-277, 303.

26 Dexter, 'New War, Good War and the War on Terror', 1058

27 Norms, like for example laws and habits, prescribe social behaviour and aim to regulate human behaviour. They can take many forms but the kinds of norms that are of particular interest for this study are those norms that regulate the behaviour of actors in international politics. An authoritative norm when looking at foreign interventions is the 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) prescribing rules for international conduct like the alleviation of human suffering. Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, 'Norms, Identity, and their Limits: a Theoretical Reprise', *The Culture of national Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (1996) 451-97.

28 Kowert and Legro, 'Norms, Identity, and Their Limits', 463.

29 Collinson, Elhawary and Muggah, 'States of fragility', 280; Ann Fitz-Gerald and Stephanie Blair, 'Stabilisation and Stability Operations: a Literature Review', (2009) https://dspace.lib.cranfield.ac.uk/bitstream/1826/4247/1/Stabilisation%20article_statebuilding_intervention_FitzGerald.pdf 1-26, 24; Clare Lockhart and Ashraf Ghani, *Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World* (Oxford 2008); Wilson, *Thinking Beyond War*.

30 The concept of COIN is viewed by leading nations such as the United Kingdom as the 'the heart of stabilisation and an integral part of providing stability in fragile states' notwithstanding that 'stabilisation may be broader than counterinsurgency'.

clarity surrounding stabilisation and is indicative of the overwhelming influence of, and current focus on, the Afghanistan and Iraq experience.³¹

The intangibility of the two concepts seems to be founded in military operations conducted as a response to the events of 9/11. Ever since then, the relationship between peace operations and counterinsurgency has grown significantly: rapid offensive successes in Afghanistan and Iraq were followed by classical protracted ‘pacification campaigns’. These type of operations encompass a diverse range of activities falling somewhere between peace operations, state-building, counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism. Consequently, labels like ‘stabilisation’, or ‘reconstruction’ have been attached to these missions.³²

Hence, the term stabilisation operation is in fact a ‘catch all’ description. More often than not, such operations contain a substantive military component, although the potentially violent aspects of the stabilisation effort are habitually down played for various (domestic) political reasons.³³ The principle of military response in this complex politicized context concerns the use of force, but explicitly recognises the limitations of the use of force.³⁴ Hence, military successes alone are no longer sufficient in and of themselves, but must also facilitate and foster sustainable peace or stability.³⁵

Nevertheless, the contemporary role of the military in stabilisation operations is seen to be in creating conditions for the attainment of stability. In fact, many scholars³⁶ argue military operations with political aims of stability, democratisation, and economic development are the most prominent since the end of the Cold War. Studies have indicated a sharp increase in the number of responses and interventions seeking to stabilise (post-)

The major common denominator for both counterinsurgency and stabilisation operations is the understanding that local population is the centre of gravity. See: Fitz-Gerald and Blair, ‘Stabilisation and Stability Operations’, 8.

31 Fitz-Gerald and Blair, ‘Stabilisation and Stability Operations’, 8.

32 Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, ‘Counterinsurgency and peace operations’ in: Paul B. Rich and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency* (London and New York 2012) 80–98, 92.

33 Brocades Zaalberg, ‘Counterinsurgency and peace operations’, 82; Martha Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs about the Use of Force* (Ithaca and London 2004); Ian Manners, ‘Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(2) (2002) 235–258; Hanns W Maull, ‘Germany and the Use of Force: Still a “Civilian Power?”’, *Survival* 42(2) (2000) 56–80.

34 Kaldor and Salmon, ‘Military Force and European Strategy’; MacFarlane, *Intervention in Contemporary World Politics*, 26–27; Smith, *The Utility of Force*.

35 As a result, nowadays military operations are supposed to impact decisively on political outcomes. This idea is referred to as the ‘peace paradox’ The paradox explains the difficulty of achieving and maintaining peace on the long term. Lasting results and success of contemporary operations depend on the ability to preserve the peace or some form of stability. This is more closely related to restoring for example governance and civil society which means extending military tasks and functions. See: Wilson, *Thinking Beyond War*.

36 See: David Chandler, ‘Introduction: Peace without Politics?’, *International Peacekeeping* 12(3) (2005) 307–321; Steven L Burg, et al. *Military intervention: cases in context for the twenty-first century*. Eds. William J. Lahneman. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004); Robert Egnell, ‘Winning ‘Hearts andMminds’? A Critical Analysis of Counter Insurgency Operations in Afghanistan’, *Civil Wars* 12(3) (2010) 282–303; Strachan, ‘Strategy or Alibi?’; Colin S. Gray, ‘Strategic Thoughts for Defence Planners’, *Survival* 52(3) (2010) 159–178.

conflict states.³⁷ In fact, military means are increasingly applied as a viable instrument for transforming non-liberal countries or regions – like for example Iraq and Afghanistan – into liberal ones, thereby extending the ‘zone of peace’.³⁸

The normative dimension of these interventions is part of the broader conception of intervention as a political/military instrument that states use to pursue their perceived interests.³⁹ The concept of stability operations is new to both scholars and practitioners in the field. The term stabilisation and its derived ‘type of operation’ have been used primarily by Western governments and are shaped by their political and strategic interests and priorities. Hence, following the prominence of the terms peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions, the current discourse of stabilisation is now on the agenda of the United Nations and a growing array of regional organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.⁴⁰

As a result, integrated responses most commonly known as ‘comprehensive approaches’ have been developed, taking in all three elements of power: military, economic, and political. The concept contains various elements of the best counterinsurgency practices; a mix of economic, political, and security components, civil-military hybrids (provincial reconstruction teams) as implementing tools, and a focus on strengthening local governance and security forces. The main aim is to foster development that will create a local host-nation administrative capacity, capable of providing security, meeting basic needs and providing services to citizens in a manner which is perceived as legitimate in the eyes of the local population.

The application of the term stabilisation operation also reveals changes in the language used to describe contemporary military undertakings by Western states. The application of the term war has proven to be problematic in a number of countries – depending on their background – for several reasons. First of all, there are different conceptions of what war is. Originally, war was understood as an instrument of policy, but it is equally an instrument in terms of the analytical framework it provides for the military: the ability to use force to

37 Collinson, Elhawary and Muggah, ‘States of Fragility’, 4.

38 Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, ‘The Imperial Peace: Democracy, Force and Globalization’, *European Journal of International Relations* 5(4) (1999) 403-434; Mark Laffey, ‘Discerning the Patterns of World Order Noam Chomsky and International Theory after the Cold War’, *Review of International Studies* 29(4) (2003): 587-604, 593. For more on the *liberal peace paradigm* also known as the *democratic peace* see: Michael W. Doyle, ‘Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs’, *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (1983) 205-235; Bruce Russett et al., ‘The Democratic Peace’, *International Security* 19(4) (1995) 164-184; David Chandler, ‘The Uncritical Critique of ‘Liberal Peace’’, *Review of International Studies* 36(1) (2010) 137-155; David E. Spiro, ‘The Insignificance of the Liberal Peace’, *International Security* 19(2) (1994) 50-86; Roland Paris, ‘Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?’, *International Security* 26(2) (2001) 87-102; Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond, ‘Myth or Reality: Opposing Views on the Liberal Peace and Post-War Reconstruction’, *Global Society* 21(4) (2007) 491-497.

39 Neil MacFarlane, *Intervention in Contemporary World Politics*, Adelphi Paper 350 (London 2002).

40 Collinson, Elhawary and Muggah, ‘States of Fragility’, 277.

transmit a political intention.⁴¹ Secondly, force is often not a 'role' states like to employ, regardless of whether or not the ends they seek are ultimately the same as those countries who *do* employ this terminology. Here, a distinction can be made between smaller European military powers and great military powers such as the United States.⁴² As where in the United States the use of the word 'war' in foreign policy and foreign policy actions does not seem to disturb its citizens, the employment of the term does cause nuisance amongst constituents of smaller European nations.⁴³

Thirdly, war as an interpretive unit assumes a mutual understanding of the term,⁴⁴ but this is not always the case amongst those who wage it, let alone those who have it forced upon them, like the recent examples of Iraq and Afghanistan. In traditional interstate war, the use of force was intended to yield a military outcome, facilitating a political solution. Consequently, in order for force to be used in an effective manner, an enemy needs to be identified and subsequently the purpose of the war needs to be defined.⁴⁵ However, the identification of (and often agreement upon) 'the enemy' has proven to be a complex endeavour since it is often a diverse grouping of actors that constitutes a threat. Secondly, the purpose of the armed engagement often remains vague for primarily political (diplomatic) purposes.⁴⁶

In summary, the contemporary approaches of Western states with regard to intervention are entangled with normative prescriptions of how states should behave amongst each other at the international level. Moreover, these prescriptions, derived from neo-liberal models of governance, set out how states should be designed and ruled. The various debates about these Western military undertakings portray the beliefs and desires that have conditioned its use. This, however, does not diminish the importance of the ever-present dynamic of interests – however constructed – of states in their international relations. The most recent label attached to these interventions is stabilisation operations. The term carries with it a considerable degree of conceptual indistinctiveness about what it is and is not, but it nevertheless remains a powerful normative mobilising concept on the basis of which Western nations engage in the 'stabilisation' of (post) conflict states.

41 Simpson, *War from the Ground Up*, 27.

42 Adrian Hyde-Price, 'European Security, Strategic Culture, and the Use of Force', *European Security* 13(4) (2004) 323-343; Pascal Vennesson et al., 'Is there a European Way of War? Role Conceptions, Organizational Frames, and the Utility of Force', *Armed Forces & Society* 35(4) (2009) 628-645.

43 See: David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis 1992); Ole Waever, 'European Security Identities', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 34(1) (1996): 103-132.

44 Simpson, *War from the Ground Up*, 64

45 Smith, *The Utility of Force*; Angstrom and Duyvesteyn (eds.), *Modern War and the Utility of Force*; Isabelle Duyvesteyn, 'Exploring the Utility of Force: Some Conclusions', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 19(3) (2008) 423-443; Simpson, *War from the Ground Up*.

46 Simpson, *War from the Ground Up*, 64; King, A., *The transformation of Europe's armed forces: from the Rhine to Afghanistan*. (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

2.3 Senior Civil and Military Decision-Makers and the Nature of Their Relations

The act of deciding if and how military forces will be deployed lies at the heart of what is known as the *civil military interface*. Within this interface, also known as the strategic level, funds, as well as the physical and conceptual directions that are necessary to implement the decisions of the political leadership, are provided. Hence, in this arena decisions regarding the size, organization, materiel and deployments of the military are made and where the campaign plans ought to be created and implemented⁴⁷ by the senior civil and military decision-makers.⁴⁸

Within International Relations (IR) and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) literature, these groups of actors are often referred to as civil-military elites, foreign policy elites or epistemic communities.⁴⁹ However, these concepts often take either a very broad view of what is meant by the civil military interface, or do not define it at all, allowing space for subjective interpretation of this grouping of actors.

The relationship between senior civil and military decision-makers is predominantly seen as an end in itself, not necessarily as a way of making the state more efficient in its use of military means.⁵⁰ This is a result of Western prescriptions for how civil and military decision-makers should engage with one another.⁵¹ The nature of civil-military relations, which has been studied extensively from a normative perspective, addressing the need for civilian control over the military, derives from the work of two key authors: Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz. Both works put forward an American perspective on civil military relations founded in the realities of the Cold War, but nevertheless remain to be authoritative works primarily adhered to by Western states.

The Huntingtonian approach advocates a clear divide between civilian and military leadership and the Western liberal societal ideology that supports objective control of the military, allowing the military to develop its own skill set based on its own view of

47 Egnell, 'Explaining US and British Performance in Complex Expeditionary Operations', 1042, 1045, 1046.

48 In order to embark the group of senior civil and military decision-makers for this study, Margaret Hermann's definition of a decision unit as a group of actors that have the ability to commit government resources and the power or authority to make a decision that cannot be easily reversed is employed. The conceptualisation will be dealt with later on in the chapter. See: Hermann, 'How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy', 48, 56. See also: Hermann, Hermann and Hagan, 'How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy Behavior', 311; Beasley et al., 'People and Processes in Foreign Policymaking', 219.

49 Margriet Ellen Drent, *A Europeanisation of the Security Structure: The Security Identities of the United Kingdom and Germany* (PhD dissertation, Groningen 2010); Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Lonely Superpower', *Foreign Affairs* 78(2) (1999) 35-49; Thomas Risse Kappen, 'Exploring the Nature of the Beast: International Relations Theory and comparative Policy Analysis meet the European Union', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 34(1) (1996) 53-80; Emanuel Adler and Peter M. Haas, 'Conclusion: Epistemic Communities, World Order, and the Creation of a Reflective Research Program', *International Organization* 46(1) (1992) 367-390; Eva Etzioni-Halevy, 'Civil-Military Relations and Democracy: The Case of the Military-Political Elites' Connection in Israel', *Armed Forces & Society* 22(3) (1996) 401-417.

50 Strachan, *Making Strategy*, 66.

51 Jan Angstrom, 'The Changing Norms of Civil and Military and Civil-Military Relations Theory', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 24(2) (2013) 224-236.

the *functional imperative*.⁵² It assumes that it is possible to segregate an autonomous area of military science from political purpose.⁵³

Military deference to civilian control, rooted in a conservative realist perspective, is one of the core premises of Huntington's work and has dominated thought on civil-military relations up to the present time. This perspective was challenged by Samuel Finer, over five decades ago, in his work on the role of military in politics, where he argued that it is exactly the 'professionalism' of the military that may lead them to see themselves as servants of the state rather than servants of those in power.⁵⁴ Also Sam Sarkesian expressed his doubts about the 'professionalism' of the military as described by Huntington when he stated 'the generally accepted idea of acceptance of the military in democratic societies as an apolitical organization, characterized by civilian control and supremacy is, in practice, mere ignorance of history and reality'.⁵⁵ Only recently, mainly due to experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, have the Huntingtonian prescriptions about civil-military relations been challenged again. Those who have operated at various levels while planning and executing present-day operations, especially, have experienced the untenability of categorising the military as politically inert operators only executing policy.⁵⁶

The contemporary context of civil-military relations, the belief in a concerted civilian-military effort to stabilise (post-) conflict states, adheres more to the framework of the work of yet another prominent theorist in the field of civil-military relations, Morris Janowitz. His framework prescribes a politically attuned military and therefore advocates civil-military integration in order to create coordinated advice and to develop increased mutual understanding and trust between the actors in the civil-military interface. The logic informing his argument is the belief he holds about the need for intertwined political and military policy and decision-making. Janowitz's notion of civil-military relations advocates that the officer corps be politically educated in order to be able to function well in the political domain. He refers to the military as a 'constabulary force' and denounces a clear separation of the civil-military domain, since to him civilian control cannot be achieved through a professional military tradition not to intervene in politics, but through 'self-imposed professional standards and meaningful integration with civilian values'.⁵⁷

52 Huntington distinguishes two imperatives: the functional and societal. The former aims to potential threats to a society's security, as where the later derives from ideologies, social forces and institutions that are dominant within the society. See: Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA 1957) 79.

53 Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*.

54 Samuel Edward Finer, *The man on horseback: The role of the military in politics* (London, 2002) 25.

55 Sam C. Sarkesian, 'Military Professionalism and Civil-Military Relations in the West', *International Political Science Review* 2(3) (1981) 283-297 quoted in: Rene Moelker, 'Culture's Backlash on Decision-making', *Nação e Defesa* 107(2) (2004) 11-35, Pgnummer citaat!

56 Simpson. *War from the Ground Up*, 113-116.

57 Morris Janowitz. *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York 1960) 41.

Even though the founding fathers of civil-military relations and their (Western) prescriptions still very much dominate the discourse, more novel insights have begun to materialise. For example, James Burk, when reviewing the theories on civil-military relations, points to the danger of total military obedience because the military could potentially be forced to follow the passions of the civilian majority in control of the democratic state. Blindly obeying public opinion could reduce military strength, distracting it from its purpose to provide (inter-) national security.⁵⁸

More recently, Peter Feaver has expanded the body of literature on civil-military relations by applying the principal-agent theory and exposing the ‘civil–military problematique’⁵⁹ as a strategic game. Civilians control the military through monitoring and punishment whereas the military either ‘work or shirk’. He suggests civilians might exercise oversight of the military by monitoring or non-monitoring whether the military has obeyed their orders. In the event that the military has not executed its orders, civilians can decide to either punish the military or not. In the whole process of managing the military, the civilians – according to Feaver – have the ‘right to be wrong’, i.e. to make mistakes in their strategic guidance directing key decisions, even when the military disagrees with that direction.⁶⁰

The case of Kosovo is used by Feaver to illustrate what refers to as a highly detailed and efficient monitoring of the American force commander and his operations by Washington. He argues that during this campaign, American civilians could sufficiently access information to exercise near-term tactical control over their military agents. The case demonstrates that cheap and effective (information) technology provides information to civilians to detect and punish commanders’ deviations from their guidance. The principal-agent model then puts forward the assumption that military agents would therefore adhere strictly to a suboptimal use of military resources because civilian principals stipulate and efficiently enforce political constraints.⁶¹

An interesting, but lesser known perspective on civil-military relations, has been developed by Rebecca Schiff. She sees the citizenry as a party, in addition to the civil and military actors and articulates that these parties should aim for a cooperative relationship, one that may or may not involve separation, but does not require it in and of itself. Her ‘concordance theory’ argues that the type of civil-military relationship adopted matters less than the ability of the three partners to agree on the social composition of the officer

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58 James Burk, ‘Theories of Democratic Civil-Military Relations’, *Armed Forces & Society* 29(1) (2002) 7–29.

59 He refers to this problematique as the tension between a strong military protecting society versus being a threat to the civil liberties of society themselves. See: Peter Feaver. *Armed servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA 2005).

60 Feaver, *Armed Servants*.

61 Damon Coletta and Peter D. Feaver, ‘Civilian monitoring of US military operations in the information age’, *Armed Forces & Society* 33(1) (2006) 106–126. 109,110,116,120.

corps, the political decision-making process, the recruitment method, and military style. In addition, she argues for the inclusion of elements of society, amongst which culture is central in both the prescriptions and descriptions related to civil-military relations.⁶²

As mentioned above, the dominant approaches within civil-military relations derive from American perspectives on this relationship and focus very much on institutional analysis. Despite the dominance of these American views, even in the majority of other Western nations, it is worthwhile to draw some distinctions. First of all, smaller nations with a lesser military capability have tended to view the potential ability of the military to seize control as a less likely option.⁶³ They might, therefore, provide the military with some more 'space to manoeuvre' in the sense that they are not overly worried about the military's potential influence on policy, for example. This is notwithstanding the fact that the civil-military structures embedded within their political system and the consequent rules and roles assigned to the civil and military actors originated from the American models and are no longer reflective of the way the civil military is believed to operate best.

However, the majority of European studies of civil-military relations focus on the cooperation and relations of these actors during operations.⁶⁴ A particular focus is directed toward trying to identify when and how civil and military organisations should work together in the field. As said, this includes another angle of civil-military relations that extends beyond the scope of this study, but is indicative of the European operational focus on the matter.

In conclusion, despite the shortcomings of the organisational and American-centric view on civil-military relations, Janowitz's and Huntington's models still very much underpin the thoughts of theorists and - arguably to a lesser extent - practitioners. Their prescriptions are embedded in the organisational setting, rules, and codes that exist between civil and military actors. However, as outlined above, these models have proven to be quite problematic when preparing and executing strategies for contemporary operations.

62 Rebecca L. Schiff, 'Civil-military Relations Reconsidered: A Theory of Concordance', *Armed Forces & Society* 22(1) (1995) 7-24, 7.

63 See for example: Erik Hedlund, 'Civil-Military Control over the Swedish Military Profession An Analysis from the Perspective of Officer Rank and Officer Education', *Armed Forces & Society* 39.1 (2013): 135-157.

64 See for example: Sebastiaan Rietjens and Myriame Bollen (eds.), *Managing civil-military Cooperation: a 24/7 Joint Effort for Stability* (Aldershot and Burlington 2008); Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and civil Power: Supporting or Substituting Civil Authorities in Modern Peace Operations* (Amsterdam 2006); Hugo Slim, 'The Stretcher and the Drum: Civil Military Relations in Peace Support Operations', *International Peacekeeping* 3(2) (1996) 123-140; Robert Egnell, 'The Missing Link: Civil-Military Aspects of Effectiveness in Complex Irregular Warfare' (PhD Dissertation, London 2007); Angstrom, 'The Changing Norms of Civil and Military and Civil-Military Relations Theory'; Chiara Ruffa, Christopher Dandeker, and Pascal Vennesson, 'Soldiers Drawn into Politics? The Influence of Tactics in Civil-Military Relations', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24(2) (2013) 322-334.

2.4 Strategy as The Product of a Dialogue Between Politicians and Soldiers

The current debate about strategy draws largely on recent experiences in the field. The cases of both Afghanistan and Iraq have illustrated a trend in which the military has been shaping and formulating strategy before and during the campaign. Put differently, the operational level of the military is seen as filling the gap created by an absent strategy.⁶⁵ Moreover, military courses of action of Western states are often based on a feeling that ‘something must be done’⁶⁶ and are not necessarily grounded in a realistic evaluation of possibilities and costs. As such, the constitutive act⁶⁷ of strategy-making seems to be complicated by the absence of ends-based meaning or purpose, i.e. political responsibility. Hence, subjective intentions of state-actors seem to be prioritised above broader strategic or long-term policy-making.⁶⁸ This by and large can be attributed to the fact that states are often limited by the complexities of the demands they face and by the institutionalised with pressure to act appropriately, resulting in the ad hoc and non-instrumentalist policy-making characteristic of modern-day interventions.⁶⁹

The tension between what is militarily possible and politically desirable and vice versa, lies at the heart of civil-military relations when it comes to the use of military means. In other words, the dialogue between the two is vital for the drafting of policy, the possibility of its implementation,⁷⁰ and, ultimately, the provision of (inter-) national security through the use of military means.⁷¹ In addition to linking political goals to the use of military means, strategy should also be seen as the link between official political ‘talk’, ‘decisions’, and ‘actions’. The stronger the linkages, the better the strategy will be. If contradictions between official talk and subsequent actions of a respective government arise, the question should be asked if this in fact serves a purpose. A state could e.g. very well engage in international talks about the stabilisation of a potential region without actually being able to really commit itself with relevant resources. Thus, disparity between talk, decisions, and ultimately the actions of states can arise from inconsistent material and normative-ideational⁷² like for

65 Strachan, ‘Making strategy’, 60–61.

66 Desmond Bowen, ‘Something Must be Done—Military Intervention’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 23(1) (2000) 1–19.

67 David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (2nd ed. Minneapolis 1998); Thomas Diez, ‘Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering Normative Power Europe’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33(3) (2005) 613–36.

68 Laidi, *A World without Meaning*, 11–13.

69 March, J.G. and J.P. Olsen, ‘The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders’, *International Organization* 52(4) (1998) 943–69. Reprinted in: P.J. Katzenstein, R.O. Keohane and S.D. Krasner (eds.), *Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics* (Cambridge, MA 1999) 303–329.

70 Simpson. *War from the Ground Up*, 111.

71 Strachan, ‘Making strategy’, 66.

72 Michael Lipson and Catherine Weaver, ‘Varieties of Organized Hypocrisy’, Paper delivered at the ISA 49th annual convention, San Francisco. See: http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p252179_index.html. (2008) 4–6.

example the cases of Sudan and Liberia. Here, nations agreed that human suffering needed to be alleviated yet hardly anything was done.

The harmonisation of the civil-military interface would ultimately be a product of interaction between politicians and soldiers: a dialectical relationship between desire and possibility. The core problem, however, seems to be ‘what comes first’? Ideally, the articulation of desire should be grounded in possibility in terms of resources and political will. In turn, the assessment of possibility requires a clear idea informing any analysis.⁷³ In other words, a clear harmonisation of ways, ends, and means, i.e. strategy, is required in order to effectively employ military means.

Traditionally, both in the domains of scholars and practitioners, the existence of strategy is believed to be a crucial determinant of military efficacy since it entails linking political objectives to military means. Thus, the state ought to have an interest in directing and controlling the deployment of its troops. To effectively match means to ends therefore, a state preferably begins by identifying clear [underlying] interests. Subsequently, theory prescribes that foreign policy ends advancing these interests should be identified, allowing an evaluation of the best available resources for the attainment of the stated ends.⁷⁴

Strategy in this study will be defined as the harmonisation of political goals with military means facilitated by a dialogue between civil and military decision-makers. This definition heavily draws on the work of Hew Strachan on strategy.⁷⁵

Most, if not all, of the traditional theoretical prescriptions of Western military strategy are founded upon the writings of Carl von Clausewitz. His definition of strategy as ‘the use of the engagement for the purpose of the war’ is probably the most cited, but also often misunderstood since he made a distinction between the concept *Politik* and strategy. In doing so, he emphasised the two are in fact interwoven.⁷⁶ As delineated by military historians Hew Strachan and Andreas Herberg-Rothe, ‘On War is the ‘prism through which we have come to look at war (...) military commentators have used this text as a departing point at least for their questions, if not for their answers’.⁷⁷

The ideas following from classic writings present the making of strategy as a linear process. After the nature of the conflict has been properly analysed, theory prescribes strategy to manage and direct the conflict. However, it cannot do so if it starts from an incorrect premise. In practice, strategy is more often than not pragmatic since it habitually

73 Strachan, ‘Making Strategy’, 20, 60-61, 67; Simpson. *War from the Ground Up*, 116.

74 David Stevens and Matthew S. Winters, ‘When the Means Become the Ends: Two Novel Pathways to Foreign Policy Failure’, paper delivered at *International Studies Association Annual Conference*. 2006, 10.

75 See: Strachan, *Direction of War*.

76 Clausewitz cited in: Strachan, ‘The lost meaning of strategy’, 34.

77 Hew Strachan and Andreas Herberg-Rothe, ‘Introduction’, in Hew Strachan and Andreas Herberg-Rothe, eds. *Clausewitz in the Twenty-first Century* (Oxford New York, 2007) 1- 13, 1

derives from underlying assumptions and educated guesses about the situation at hand. For this very reason, most strategic theory was retrospective by design and was itself grounded in military history. By means of explaining events that had seemed unclear at the time, it provided interpretative and didactic tools for the future, as is the case with the writings of many strategists.⁷⁸

Does the insight of strategy and strategic studies⁷⁹ provide the roadmap for effectively employing military means? In theory it does. It prescribes a linear process, objectives driven and based on rationalist calculations made by the political elite. However, in practice the prescriptions for strategy have proven far more difficult to employ and to an extent are too unrealistic to be of use for present complex operations. Hence, the theory tends to downplay the dynamic interaction between the political and military levels, which cannot be described as a linear process based on rational calculation. In the current complex international order, threats, in particular, are no longer as static as during for example the Cold War and the attainment of political objectives no longer requires military victory in a traditional sense.

The narrow interpretation of the Clausewitzian dictum of war to be an extension of policy by other means only recognises the actual use of force as the instrument by which war affects policy.⁸⁰ As military writer Rupert Smith argues, military objectives must be chosen for their value in achieving the political objective, not merely because they are possible. As such, activity should not be confused with outcome. Furthermore, Smith stresses the need to understand the nature of the problem on its own terms, in order for force to have political utility. He points to the tendency in Western nations to analyse contemporary conflicts through dogmatically applied ideological or doctrinal⁸¹ lenses.⁸²

This touches upon a fundamental problem, namely that before one even considers the use of military means, the degree of intractability of the conflict should be understood. Before intervention can be considered, accurate assessments must be made and are crucial to understanding the development of the conflict at hand. Only by starting from the perspective of the conflict, its causes, and the factors affecting its continuation, can a proper

78 Strachan, 'Strategy and the Limitation of War', 38; Hew Strachan, 'Making Strategy', 67.

79 The discipline of strategic studies has mainly engaged itself with studying world powers and their use of the military instrument. As a result, their capability to solve security problems by armed force is an a priori for the entire conception of armed force in most studies of strategic issues. In focusing on the most military capable states, like the United States and China, one habitually focuses on the ability of military power to redress balances of power and world order. See: Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, 'What's the Use of It?': Danish Strategic Culture and the Utility of Armed Force', *Cooperation and Conflict* 40(1) (2005) 67-89, 68.

80 Simpson, *War from the Ground Up*.

81 Western doctrinal guidance commands political primacy and civil-military cooperation but does not abundantly explain the central importance of the political process. It neither confines the potential peace building role of the military as explained by Ben Lovelock in his work about the military's role in political processes during interventions. Richard B. Lovelock, *The General as Statesman? Exploring the Professional Need for Commanders to Support viable Political Outcomes in Peace and Stability Operations as Typified by the UK military Approach* (PhD dissertation, Cranfield 2010).

82 Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 374.

set of instruments be developed to address it.⁸³ The political context of the conflict, and less so the identity of those who are parties to it, seem to be the key characteristics.⁸⁴ However, a thorough comprehension of the complexity of contemporary conflicts is quite demanding for the civil-military decision-makers who are required to draft the strategy.

The lack of information and understanding⁸⁵ of the political and social makeup of the societies that are to be stabilised and even more so, the persistent belief amongst Western nations in ‘their own ways of doing things’ complicates matters even more. This has also been alluded to by Matt Waldman, when reflecting on the underlying causes of deficiencies in American policy-making with regard to Afghanistan. The respondents in his study have identified organisational weaknesses in the acquisition, interpretation, processing of information and self-evaluation as main drivers for failing policy.⁸⁶

In addition, the difficulties of formulating coherent strategy seem to be rooted in the fact that the well-ordered, policy-operational distinction, firmly rooted in both strategic thought and in states’ very constitutions, has proved to be untenable in modern conflicts.⁸⁷ In current operations the operational level often fills the gap created by a lack of strategy. Difficulties with formulating how *democracy or rule of law* should be delivered in a (post-) conflict state regularly result in failing to define clear goals. Ideally, for military operations to be successful, the political objective should be defined in terms of a concrete, immediate-term outcome to be attained through the employment of military means. Subsequently, the political goals need to be operationalised by politicians in order to provide the military with a directive.⁸⁸ In return, the military needs to learn and understand where war policy derives its purpose and to understand the role the military serves in terms of achieving political objectives.⁸⁹

The actual articulation of the objective that needs to be attained through the deployment of military means⁹⁰ is, as mentioned earlier, often missing in contemporary missions. This

83 Colin McInnes, ‘A different kind of war; September 11 and the United States’ Afghan War’, 109–134 in Isabelle Duyvesteyn and Jan Angstrom (eds.), *Rethinking the Nature of War* (Abingdon and New York 2005), 109–134, 124.

84 Thomas G. Mahnken, ‘Strategic Theory’, in: John Baylis, James J. Wirtz, and Colin S. Gray, eds. *Strategy in the contemporary world* (third edition, 2010) 67–83, 69; Nat J. Colletta and Robert Muggah, ‘Context Matters: Interim Stabilisation and Second Generation Approaches to Security Promotion’, *Conflict, Security & Development* 9(4) (2009) 425–453, 427.

85 The phenomenon of drafting strategy in complex environments with too much or a limited amount of information and the demands posed on those who are to develop strategy – in this case the senior civil and military decision-makers – served to cater the ‘*science of muddling through*’ introduced by Charles Lindblom to the field of organisational theory. See: Charles E. Lindblom, ‘The science of “muddling through”’ *Public administration review* (1959):79–88.

86 Matt Waldman, ‘System Failure: the Underlying Causes of US Policy-Making Errors in Afghanistan’, *International Affairs* 89(4) (2013) 825–843, 839.

87 Simpson, *War from the Ground Up*, 111.

88 Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War. Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge 2013); Smith, *The Utility of Force*; Kaldor and Salmon, ‘Military Force and European strategy’; Patricia L Sullivan and Michael T. Koch, ‘Military Intervention by Powerful States, 1945—2003’, *Journal of Peace Research* 46 (5) (2009) 707–718.

89 Wilson, *Thinking Beyond War*; Lovelock, *The General as Statesman?*

90 Simpson, *War from the Ground Up*.

could possibly be explained by the fact that Western nations have fallen out of the habit of strategy making and, arguably, may have never even been engaged in strategy-making as described in the textbooks. Whatever the reading of events may be, ever since the end of the Cold War, Western military powers have not engaged themselves much in the development of strategy, including the formulation of grand strategy and the drafting of strategic-level military appreciations. Classic strategy-making, dating back to the nuclear era, entailed threat-based planning whereas post-modern strategy-making entails capacity-based planning. Consequently, current strategy-making is much more about addressing issues of uncertainty, ambiguity, and unpredictability and often originates from the bottom up instead of the top down, which used to be the case during the Cold War.⁹¹

Nowadays, contingent strategic factors [political, geographical, economic, social, or military] are not adequately assessed before courses of action are designed and often, the defining of necessary strategy followed the decision to deploy military force rather than preceded it. In addition, Western foreign policy habitually views the use of force as an instrument to attain a political objective, but often seems – as addressed earlier – insufficiently understand the implications of its use.⁹²

However, the lack of understanding of the nature of the problem at hand cannot be solely explained by a shortage of experience in strategy-making and lack of sufficient information. Acknowledging the importance of experienced strategists and understanding the problem at hand, there seems to be a more structural cause at play, seriously complicating the drafting of strategy for the stabilisation of (post-) conflict states, namely the normative disposition of stabilisation operations: the Western belief in bringing about stability through democratisation of (post-) conflict states. In the process of managing inconsistent and irreconcilable operational aims of stabilisation operations, decoupling of rhetoric, decisions, and activities seems to be both a political and organisational response.⁹³ It allows states to maintain systemic stability and legitimacy by managing irreconcilable pressures that might otherwise force them to operate ineffectively.⁹⁴

Put differently, senior civil and military decision-makers are required to reconcile normative external demands with internal demands or restrictions such as the desire not to

91 Mungo Melvin, 'Learning the Strategic Lessons from Afghanistan', *The RUSI Journal* 157(2) (2012) 56-61, 58; Todor Tagarev and Petya Ivanova, 'Classic, Modern, and Post-Modern Approaches to Making Security Strategy' (2009) http://www.gcmarsshall.bg/KP/new/TT_PI_og.pdf, 7.

92 Melvin, 'Learning the strategic lessons from Afghanistan', 58; Isabelle Duyvesteyn, 'Strategic Illiteracy. The Art of Strategic Thinking in Modern Military Operations', Inaugural lecture on the acceptance of her position of Special Chair in Strategic Studies at Leiden University (2013), <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/20944/Oratie%20Duyvesteyn%20Eng.pdf>.

93 Nils Brunsson, *The Organization of Hypocrisy: Talk, Decisions and Action in Organizations* (New York 1989); Krasner, *Sovereignty*; Michael Lipson, 'Peacekeeping: Organized Hypocrisy?' *European Journal of International Relations* 13(1) (2007) 5-34.

94 Robert Egnell, 'The Organized Hypocrisy of International State-building', *Conflict, Security & Development* 10(4) (2010) 465-491, 467.

engage in combat operations. Hence, the international community often only articulates a set of idealised aspirations instead of interests. These aspirations, however, are difficult to gauge in a strategically coherent manner. Consequently, a contradictory process where political elites seem keen to express the rhetoric of high moral responsibility in the international sphere, but are in fact rather reluctant to take responsibility for either policy-making or policy outcomes, is witnessed.⁹⁵ Again, one only has to call to mind the various atrocities committed on the African continent in which Western nations decided not to intervene.

As a result, the moral responsibility referred to by senior civil and military decision-makers to justify the deployment of military troops is not necessarily founded in a political meaning or goal. However, policymaking entails taking responsibility for choices founded in the articulation of a political goal. The belief in political ends, stated in policy, enables governments to justify and legitimise the inevitable costs (money, soldiers/civilian lives, and other resources)⁹⁶ of achieving these policy-ends through the deployment of forces. Yet, in current stabilisation operations, ends and means are often separated,⁹⁷ thereby illustrating the aforementioned inconsistency between expressions of morality and the resulting actions.⁹⁸

However, the aforementioned lack of strategy did cause a rise in emergent strategies designed in the field instead of in capitals of the troop contributing nations. Even though this contradicts the traditional Clausewitzian logic, one could pose the question as to whether emergent strategies are as worrisome as expected. These bottom-up initiatives originating in the field did facilitate adaptive behaviour which is crucial in the complex environments of current operations. Instead of focusing on certain predefined desired effects, it allowed field operations to rely on the ability to respond to the unpredictable nature of the conflict.⁹⁹ It also allowed more room for a civil military dialogue on how best to use military means for contemporary operations.

95 David Chandler, 'Hollow Hegemony', 720.

96 Paul Williams, 'How Can We Improve the Formulation and Implementation of UK Foreign Policy?', paper for IPPR and LSE event on 'Progressive Foreign Policy for the UK', London School of Economics (2006).

97 Strachan, 'The Lost Meaning of Strategy'; Johnson, 'What are you prepared to do?'; Rudra Chaudhuri and Theo Farrell, 'Campaign Disconnect: Operational Progress and Strategic Obstacles in Afghanistan, 2009–2011', *International Affairs* 87(2) (2011) 271–296.

98 Chandler, 'Hollow Hegemony', 720–721.

99 Zoltán Jobbyagy, *From Effects-based Operations to Effects-based Force: on Causality, Complex Adaptive System and the Biology of War* (PhD dissertation, Leiden 2009).

2.5 The Analytical Framework

The implication of having selected senior civil and military decision-makers as the main unit of analysis for this research project is to induce analytical inferences from actor-oriented approaches within the field of international relations. As such, the construction of the analytical lens applied to this study draws, but not solely, on the field of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)¹⁰⁰ since this field of inquiry relies on an actor-specific focus. It focuses on ‘agents of the state’ based on the argument that all that occurs in the international order is ultimately grounded in human decision-makers, acting in groups or alone.

As pointed out by Joe Hagan, decision-making approaches are well suited to contribute to further advance international relations theory especially by enlightening inconsistencies in systemic explanations of state behaviour in conflict and war.¹⁰¹

The main strength of FPA is its acknowledgement of human agency. It moves beyond the ‘black boxing of states’ – approximating all decision-making units as rational, unitary actors or the equivalent of states – often done in the field of international relations. The difficulty of attempting to define a group derives from the fact that agency [agency concerns events of which the individual is the perpetrator]¹⁰² often evolves and cannot always be predefined. Hence, empirical data often illustrates how agency emerges and follows a certain path that becomes instrumental to the outcome.¹⁰³

As such, FPA develops an actor-specific theory that does not view decision-making units – individuals or groups – as rational, unitary actors equivalent to the state. It features six hallmarks, as identified by Valerie Hudson, namely multi-factorial, multilevel, interdisciplinary, integrative, agent-oriented, and actor-specific.¹⁰⁴ The actor-based approaches within the field of FPA draw heavily on cognitive and psychological approaches, bureaucratic politics, and the interpretative actor perspective.¹⁰⁵ The structural perspectives in the field – neo-realism, neo-liberalism/institutionalism and social constructivism¹⁰⁶ –

100 Foreign Policy Analysis derives from the field of international relations which is grounded in the same ground as all social sciences in the sense that it aims to understand ‘how humans perceive and react to the world around them, and how humans shape and are shaped by the world around them’. Valerie Hudson, ‘Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor- Specific theory and the Ground of International Relations’, *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1(1) (2005) 1-30.

101 Hagan, J. D., ‘Does Decision-making Matter?’, *International Studies Review* 3 (2) (2001) 5- 46:6.

102 Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society Outline of a Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1984) 4.

103 Markus Kornprobst, ‘The Agent’s Logics of Action: Defining and Mapping Political Judgement’, *International Theory* 3(1) (2011) 70-104.

104 Hudson, ‘Foreign Policy Analysis’, 1.

105 Walter Carlsnaes, ‘Actors, Structures, and Foreign Policy Analysis’, in *Foreign Policy*, edited by Smith, Hadfield and Dunne: 118-123; Brian Ripley, ‘Psychology, Foreign Policy and International Relations Theory’, *Political Psychology* 14(3) (1993) 403-416, 403.

106 Hudson, ‘Foreign Policy Analysis’.

predominantly focus on structural or systemic causes of agents' behaviour and, in doing so, often offer a deterministic approach that neglects the creativity of agents.¹⁰⁷

The major assumption of systemic explanations is that decision-makers straightforwardly respond to systemic international emergencies. Foreign policy problems are predominantly, but not solely, explained by the systemic logic of structural realism¹⁰⁸. Systemic explanations assume, and therefore only account for, decision-makers having information certainty, and a shared understanding of the goals and their possible maximisation, and are in essence unitary rational actors. The unitary rational actor model, however, does not hold up very well because it tends to downgrade the complexity and conditions in which decisions are taken. Historical analyses demonstrate that decision-makers are constantly confronted with trade-offs across competing goals and operated in decision structures in which political authority was fragmented and dispersed. It follows from this that advancing the understanding of decision-making as a way to respond to international issues, is fundamental to explaining, possibly even predicting how decision-makers will respond.¹⁰⁹

As the famous models of Irving Janis (*Victims of Groupthink*)¹¹⁰ and Graham Allison (*Essence of Decision*)¹¹¹, demonstrated how the dynamic character of the decision process can shape foreign policy behaviour.¹¹² They have identified that, in complex foreign policy cases concerned with the use or non-use of military means, members of decision groups are central to the decision-making process as they define the nature of the problem and present courses of action.¹¹³

107 See for example: Andrew Moravcsik, 'Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics', *International Organization* 51(4) (1997) 513-553; David Patrick Houghton, 'Reinvigorating the Study of Foreign Policy Decision-making: Toward a Constructivist Approach', *Foreign Policy Analysis* 3(1) (2007) 24-45; Joseph S. Nye, 'Neorealism and Neoliberalism', *World Politics* 40(2) (1988) 235-251.

108 See for example: Waltz, K. N., *Theory of international politics* (Waveland Press, 2010); Keohane, R. O., 'Theory of world politics: structural realism and beyond', *Neorealism and its Critics* 158 (1986) 190-97; Krasner, S. D., 'Structural causes and regime consequences: regimes as intervening variables', *International Organization* 36 (2) (1982) 185-205.

109 Hagan, J. D., 'Does Decision-making Matter?', *International Studies Review* 3 (2) (2001) 5- 46:6-11.

110 Janis' insights into the dynamics of foreign policy were novel in the sense that they could explain policy failures. The case he investigated was the decision made by John F. Kennedy about invading the Bays of Pigs in Cuba. His findings illustrate suboptimal policy choices, limiting choices of the actors involved as a consequence of what he coined to be 'groupthink'. This phenomenon is characterised by consensus seeking behaviour and intolerance of opposing viewpoints amongst members of a decision group. Janis Irving, *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-Policy Decisions and Fiascos* (2nd edition, Boston 1982).

111 The work of Graham Allison about the workings of interaction within decision groups have become known as 'bureaucratic politics'. He argues individuals to bargain also known as 'pulling and hauling' about decisions that need to be taken. See: Graham T. Allison, *The Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston 1971). He further developed this line of thought with Morton H. Halperin. See: Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, 'Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications', *World Politics* 24 (1972) 40-79. Morton Halperin himself advanced the work on bureaucratic politics in his work on the Johnson administration. See Morton H. Halperin, 'The Decision to Deploy the ABM: Bureaucratic and Domestic Politics in the Johnson Administration', *World Politics* 25(1) (1972) 62-95.

112 Jean A. Garrison, 'Foreign Policymaking and Group Dynamics: Where We've Been and Where We're Going' *International Studies Review* 5(2) (2003) 155-202, 155.

113 Garrison, 'Foreign Policymaking and Group Dynamics'.

One of the most damaging claims made by these models against the dominant rational actor model [which views (human) action as the product of a cost-benefit analysis] is that decisions and actions within government are political in nature. It follows from this disposition that political competition between the various actors in government results in compromises that emerged out of bargaining between the actors¹¹⁴ i.e. decisions are made on the basis of bargaining and in fact reflect no one's specific and/or pre-defined interests.

The actions of actors involved are constituted by their interests posited against anticipated consequences, and by the rules entrenched in their identities and political institutions. Consequently, they calculate consequences and follow rules often in a subtle tandem.¹¹⁵ Throughout the whole process, the act of communication is ever present. The authenticity of actors and their charisma greatly influences the way their arguments are perceived and accepted or rejected within decision-making processes. Those who are most able to forward convincing lines of argument, or whose authority is broadly accepted, are very likely to have it 'their way'.¹¹⁶

2.5.1 Institutional Setting and Roles of the Actors

The primary foundation for action in an organisational setting (the primary setting in which the actors under study operate) largely constitutes a cognitive concept [a process of interpretation] but it also contains a normative component.¹¹⁷ Hence, 'actors seek to fulfil the obligation encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices, and expectations of its institutions. Embedded in a social collectivity, they do what they see as appropriate for themselves in a specific type of situation'.¹¹⁸

Moreover, the actions of decision-makers occur in the context of shared meanings and practices.¹¹⁹ These can be best described as expressions of what is acceptable and exemplary behaviour according to the (internalised) purposes, codes, and methods and techniques of the principal group and the self. Accordingly, actions within organisational settings are believed to commence from these rules, identities, and roles and less so from consequences

114 Graham Allison, 'Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis', *The American Political Science Review* 63(3) (1969) 689-718, 708.

115 James G. March, and Johan P. Olsen. 'The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life', *American Political Science Review* 78(3) (1983) 734-749.

116 See: Thomas Risse, "'Let's Argue!': Communicative Action in World Politics', *International Organization* 54(1) (2000) 1-39.

117 James G March and Johan P. Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions* (New York 1989); James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, 'Institutional Perspectives on Governance' in: H.U. Derlien, U. Gerhardt and F.W. Scharpf (eds.), *Systemrationalität und Partialinteresse*. Festschrift für Renate Mayntz (Baden-Baden 1994) 249-270 cited in: James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, 'Institutional Perspectives on Political Institutions', *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration* 9(3) (1996) 247-64, 252.

118 March and Olsen, 'The Logic of Appropriateness', 689.

119 James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics* (New York 1989).

and preferences,¹²⁰ in contrast to of the rationalist approach to explaining human behaviour, which starts from the premise that collective or individual action is based on material gain only.¹²¹

Hence, the prescriptions of civil-military relations theory and strategic thought have developed into roles¹²² and identities, rules, and codes, acquired by senior civil and military decision-makers in Western democratic societies. This reflexive part of their reasoning often derives from habits [unintentional, unconscious, involuntary, and effortless, actions]¹²³ and allows for rapid, but not necessarily accurate, classification of people and events.¹²⁴

However, senior civil and military decision-makers are not simply confined to acting according to their roles¹²⁵ (rule-based behaviour), but may actively be involved in the reconstruction of their roles through their interaction with other (inter-) national actors (communicative action). In addition, they often have to mediate between various – often competing – demands that arise from different institutional contexts.¹²⁶ Hence, the ‘art

120 Carl J. Friedrich, *Constitutional Government and Democracy* (rev. ed. Boston, MA 1950) cited in: March and Oleson, ‘Institutional Perspectives on Political Institutions’, 251-252.

121 For a rational choice account on this matter see: Michael Hechter and Satoshi Kanazawa, ‘Sociological Rational Choice Theory’, *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997) 191-214; Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, ‘Rational Choice and the Framing of Decisions’, *Journal of Business* 59(4.2) (1986) S251-S278; Jack L. Goldsmith and Eric A. Posner, ‘Moral and Legal Rhetoric in International Relations: A Rational Choice Perspective’, *The Journal of Legal Studies* 31(51) (2002) S115-S139; Jeffrey Friedman (ed.), *The Rational Choice Controversy: Economic Models of Politics Reconsidered* No. 1-2 (rev. ed., New Haven 1996). Or for discussions on its use: Donald P. Green et al. *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science* (New Haven 1994).

122 Decision-makers employ own definitions of general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules, and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems. See: Kalevi J. Holsti, ‘National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy’ *International Studies Quarterly* 14(3) (1970) 233-309.

123 That is, they do not consume limited cognitive processing capacity. See: Ted Hopf, ‘The Logic of Habit in International Relations’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 16(4) (2010) 539-561, 541. See also: Paul ‘t Hart and Anchrit Wille, ‘Ministers and Top Officials in the Dutch Core Executive: Living Together, Growing Apart?’, *Public Administration* 84(1) (2006) 121-146, 125.

124 Henk Aarts and Ap Dijksterhuis, ‘Habits as Knowledge Structures: Automaticity in Goal-directed Behavior’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 78(1) (2000) 53-63, 60; C.N. Macrae, A.B. Milne, and G.V. Bodenhausen ‘Stereotypes as Energy-Saving Devices’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 66(1) (1994) 37- 47; D.M. Wegner and J.A. Bargh, ‘Control and Automaticity in Social Life’, in: Gilbert D.L., Fiske S.T., and Lindzey G. (eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology* 1 (Boston 1998) 446-497, 472-473 cited in: Hopf, ‘The Logic of Habit in International Relations’. 541

125 The concept of role was initially developed within the disciplines of sociology and social psychology to indicate agent’s characteristic patterns of behaviour provided by a certain position. The role performance of actors includes their behaviour in terms of decisions and actions undertaken. Within this behaviour they often act on the role they are expected to play, anticipating on roles of their counterparts are expected to portray. See Liesbeth Aggestam, ‘Role Conceptions and the Politics of Identity in Foreign Policy’, ARENA Working Papers, WP 99/8, (1999) 12. See http://www.deutschaussenpolitik.de/resources/seminars/gb/approach/document/wp99_8.html

126 Aggestam, ‘Role Conceptions and the Politics of Identity in Foreign Policy’, 10. This process constitutes the intersection of structure and agency and inclines or disposes actors to do certain things. Its premise being that a set of individual dispositions is in fact profoundly social. Pierre Bourdieu captured habit with the concept of doxa: an ‘automatic, unthinking, and unreflective responses of actors in their interpretation of the world’. See: Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge 1977) 164-170. In *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Bourdieu claims that ‘habitus engenders all the thoughts, all the perceptions, and all the actions consistent with [the particular conditions in which it was constituted] and no others’. The *habitus* itself ‘could be considered a system of internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group’. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 86- 95. His work is criticised by, amongst others, Anthony King who argues that Bourdieu mistakes the nature of human society. He postulates that instead of conceptualising society in terms of structure and agency, mediated by habitus, society should be understood

of inventing' that introduces contingency in social action: the same dispositions could potentially lead to different practices depending on the social context.¹²⁷

Furthermore, in their analysis, be it in terms of the goal or the use of applicable means, the beliefs of senior civil and military decision-makers on which basis they are prepared to act, are positioned in their minds¹²⁸ and constitute, as indicated in many studies, a great normative force.¹²⁹

Moreover, much of their behaviour is – as mentioned earlier – more often than not caught up in habitual behaviour rather than reflection.¹³⁰ This does not withstand the fact that actors are socialised into playing roles through interaction within domestic and international institutional contexts, yet their practices are also caught in so-called position roles allowing less scope for interpretation.¹³¹

The role (perception) of these actors constitutes a mixture of values and descriptions of a reality that may be partial or general and more or less manifest. It does not, however, imply that actors passively act in accordance with a script. Instead, they are actively involved in the categorisation of themselves.¹³² Indeed, the fulfilling of an identity or a role constitutes matching 'a changing (and often ambiguous) set of contingent rules to a changing (and often ambiguous) set of situations'.¹³³

in terms of social interaction. King defines this interaction as webs of social relations in which humans mutually develop shared understandings and co-operate in collective ventures. See: Anthony King, 'The Habitus Process: A Sociological Conception', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 35(4) (2005) 463-468, 467.

127 As postulated by Vincent Pouliot: 'While social scientists have all the time to rationalise action post hoc, agents are confronted with practical problems that they must urgently solve. Hence, one cannot reduce practice to the execution of a model. Social action is not necessarily preceded by a premeditated design. A practice can be oriented toward a goal without being consciously informed by it. In addition, in the heat of practice, hunches and habits often take precedence over rational calculations'. Vincent Pouliot, 'The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities', *International Organization* 62(2) (2008) 257-288, 262, 274.

128 It is the essence of constructivist research to study the acts of social agents. Ultimately, observation is interpretation: social reality constitutes meanings and cannot be studied in any 'objective' manner. However, the impossibility of objective observation should by no means justify not trying to pragmatically interpret social reality with as much detachment as possible. Finally, 'to know if social reality is really real makes no analytical difference: the whole point is to observe whether agents take it to be real, and to draw the social and political implications that result' See: Vincent Pouliot, 'The Essence of Constructivism', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 7(2) (2004) 319-336, 328-329; Nicolas Onuf, 'The Politics of Constructivism' in: Karen Fierke and Knud Eric Jorgensen (eds.), *Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation*, (Armonk NY 2001) 236-254.

129 Marijke Breuning,, 'Words and Deeds: Foreign Assistance Rhetoric and Policy Behavior in the Netherlands, Belgium, and the United Kingdom', *International Studies Quarterly* 39(2) (1995) 235-254; Cameron G. Thies and Marijke Breuning, 'Integrating Foreign Policy Analysis and International Relations through Role Theory', *Foreign Policy Analysis* 8(1) (2012) 1-4; Cameron G Thies, 'Role Theory and Foreign Policy', *The International Studies Encyclopedia* 10 (2010): 6-335; Cristian Cantir and Juliet Kaarbo, 'Contested Roles and Domestic Politics: Reflections on Role Theory in Foreign Policy Analysis and IR Theory', *Foreign Policy Analysis* 8(1) (2012) 5-24.

130 Hopf, 'The Logic of Habit in International Relations', 548.

131 Michael Barnett, 'Institutions, Roles, and Disorder: The Case of the Arab States System', *International Studies Quarterly* (1993) 271-296 cited in: Aggestam, 'Role conceptions and the Politics of Identity in Foreign Policy', 10.

132 Aggestam, 'Role conceptions and the Politics of Identity in Foreign Policy', 12. See: http://www.deutsche-aussenpolitik.de/resources/seminars/gb/approach/document/wp99_8.htm

133 Bruce J. Biddle, 'Recent Development in Role Theory', *Annual Review of Sociology* 12 (1986) 67-92; Ellen Berscheid, 'Interpersonal relationships', *Annual Review of Psychology* 45(1) (1994) 79-129, cited in: March and Olsen, 'Institutional

Consequently, role conceptions¹³⁴ structure the behaviour of their agents, as is most apparent when employed in domestic discourse over contested roles.¹³⁵ In both the Danish and Dutch debates about Afghanistan, studied by Juliet Kaarbo and Christian Cantir, role conflicts were evident and influenced by domestic processes, involving particular political actors and their institutional contexts. In the Dutch case, domestically contested roles even became the centre of the international community's attention as world leaders sought to influence the internal debate,¹³⁶ hoping the Netherlands would conform to external expectations.¹³⁷

Throughout the process of making decisions, actors interpret and debate about the problem that requires a decision.¹³⁸ In doing so, they try to figure out in 'a collective communicative process whether their assumptions about the world and about cause-and-effect relationships in the world are correct (the realm of theoretical discourses); or whether norms of appropriate behaviour can be justified, and which norms apply under given circumstances (the realm of practical discourses)'.¹³⁹ Hence, they seek to reach communicative consensus about their understanding of a situation as well as justifications for the principles and norms guiding their action.

By itself, the actions in the decision-making are largely mediated by language: individuals figure out what to do by exchanging arguments with one another.¹⁴⁰ At first glance, this seems to be a habitual practice. However, the very act in itself requires actors to develop trust in the authenticity of each other's' speech acts. In this process, actors implicitly raise three types

perspectives on political institutions', 251-252.

134 Holsti, 'National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy'; Stephen G. Walker (ed.), *Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis* (Durham NC 1987); Breuning, 'Words and Deeds'; Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*; Cantir and Kaarbo, 'Contested Roles and Domestic Politics', 19; Stephen G Walker, Ed. *Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis*. (1987 Durham, NC: Duke University Press).

135 Cantir and Kaarbo, 'Contested Roles and Domestic Politics'. The concept of role was initially developed within the disciplines of sociology and social psychology to indicate agent's characteristic patterns of behaviour provided a certain position. The role performance of actors includes their behaviour in terms of decisions and actions undertaken. Within this behaviour they often act on the role they are expected to play, anticipating on roles of their counterparts are expected to portray. See Aggestam, 'Role conceptions and the Politics of Identity in Foreign Policy', 12.

136 This debate will be attended to in chapter 5: the Dutch case.

137 Juliet Kaarbo and Cristian Cantir, 'Role conflict in recent wars: Danish and Dutch debates over Iraq and Afghanistan', *Cooperation and Conflict*, published online 7 August 2013, 2 See also: March and Olsen, 'The institutional dynamics of international political orders'.

138 Risse, "'Let's Argue!'", 6.

139 Risse, "'Let's Argue!'", 7.

140 Most theorising about argumentation within the field of international relations, see: Harald Müller, 'Arguing, Bargaining and All That: Communicative Action, Rationalist Theory and the Logic of Appropriateness in International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations* 10(3) (2004) 395-435; Risse, "'Let's Argue!'" is informed by the *Theory of Communicative Action* of Jürgen Habermas. See: Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action I* (Boston 1984); Habermas, Jürgen, *The Theory of Communicative Action II: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Boston 1985). The main line of thought of his work focuses on an 'ideal-speech situation', which supposedly constructs the social context of the argumentative encounter in such a way that it does not interfere with the 'force of the better argument'. Kornprobst, 'The Agent's Logics of Action', 74.

of validity claims¹⁴¹: the propositional truth of speech acts, the moral rightness, and the authenticity of the speakers. As long as these claims remain unchallenged, communicative action displays itself as a habitual practice. Once these claims are challenged, 'normal' communication becomes problematic and the outcome remains undecided. Consequently, a more reflective form of communication will occur since the problematic validity claim will be evaluated with reference to shared norms and principles.¹⁴²

The logic mediating communicative action is not to attain certain fixed preferences, but to seek a reasoned consensus. Hence, where argumentative rationality prevails, actors do not seek to maximise or satisfy their given interests and preferences, but instead challenge and justify the validity claims inherent in them. This in itself, reveals the willingness of actors to change their views of the world in light of the better argument, despite their respective interests.¹⁴³

It is within this collective, interactive decision process, in which all members that are required to make authoritative commitments participate. However, the ability to commit or withhold resources does not require group members themselves to actually implement the decision. This, in fact, creates the possibility of potential discrepancies between choice and action.¹⁴⁴

2.5.2 Decision Units and Decision Paths

The senior civil and military decision-makers are – as explained earlier on in chapter, conceptualised as a 'decision unit'. The concept of a decision units allows a focus on how a group of actors acquires agency, its primary feature being the ability to commit government resources. The concept of a decision unit moves beyond the dominant understanding of unitary rational actors and allows for a more comprehensive and dynamic understanding of decision-making and decision-makers. The work of Margaret Hermann on decision units builds upon the afore mentioned extant body of research on foreign policy decision-making that has traditionally focussed on bureaucratic politics, group dynamics, and presidential advisory systems. The research on decision-making units aims to facilitate an understanding

141 These claims relate to the corresponding presuppositions of participants engaged in a communicative dialogue: that they share the same objective 'world' of facts, feel compelled by the same social context of norms, and – approximately – share similar subjective 'worlds' of feelings and emotions. See: Nicole Deitelhoff and Harald Müller, 'Theoretical Paradise – Empirically Lost? Arguing with Habermas', *Review of International Studies* 31(1) (2005) 167–179, 168.

142 Deitelhoff and Müller, 'Theoretical Paradise – Empirically Lost?', 168, 171.

143 Risse, "Let's Argue!", 7, 34.

144 Margaret G. Hermann and Charles F. Hermann, 'Who Makes Foreign Policy Decisions and How: An Empirical Inquiry', *International Studies Quarterly* 33(4) (1989) 361–387, 363.

of foreign policymaking by offering an explanation of the essence of decision incorporating existing insights in a complementary framework.¹⁴⁵

Furthermore, it takes into account the variety of ways in which those involved in policymaking can shape events instead of focusing on constraints that limit what decision units can do. Hence, decision units are often active participants in the making of foreign policy. Lastly, the model of a decision unit facilitates research on foreign policy decisions beyond the current models, focussed largely on the American political system, which allows for a more inclusive and comparative approach to studying how decisions are made in and between other political systems.¹⁴⁶

Most importantly, especially for this particular study, the model allows a systematic analysis of sequential decisions whereby the decision unit potentially changes and/or shifts back to the initial configuration, depending on the type of decision within space and time. The contingency-based logic of the model facilitates a dynamic analysis of the series of decisions that are made.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, this level of analysis bridges the individual and organisation level, facilitating switching between levels.¹⁴⁸

Within the specific institutional setting in which the actors operate, as described above, a collection of rules, roles, and practices are embedded in structures of resources that allow action.¹⁴⁹ These notions are taken into consideration whilst employing the framework [explicated below] as advanced by Hermann in order to reconstruct the actions and decisions of the group under study.¹⁵⁰

145 Hermann, 'How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy', 48.

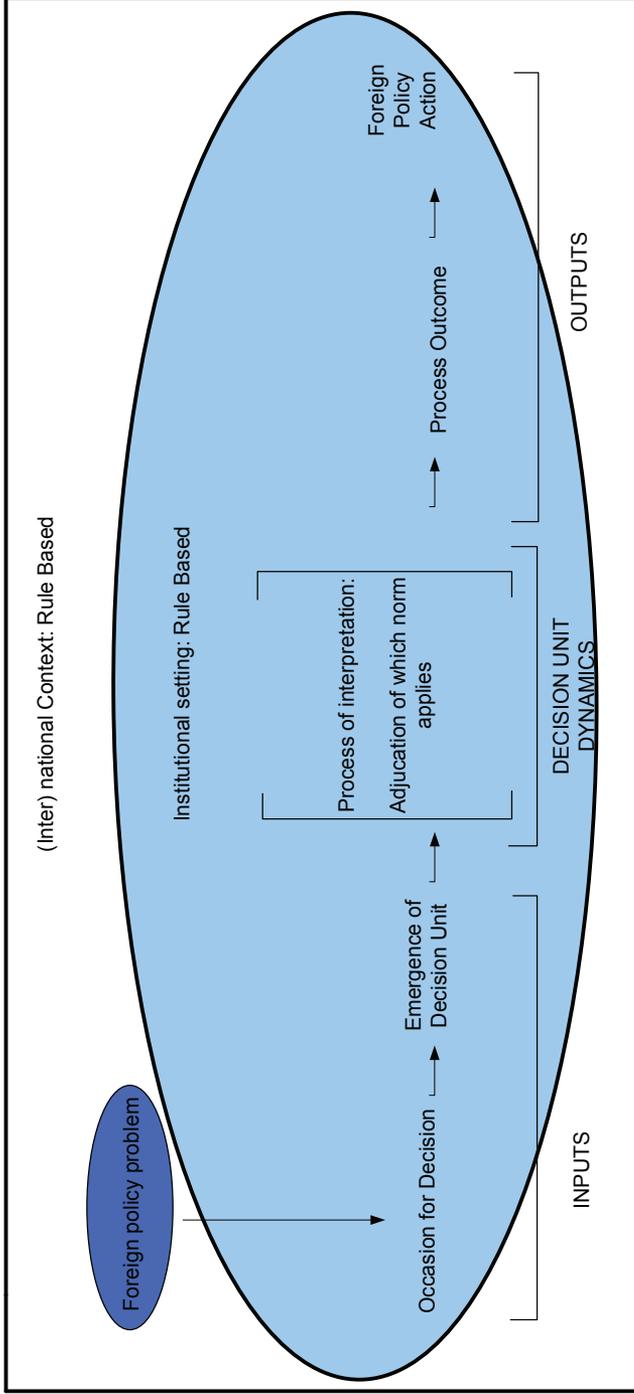
146 *Ibid.*, 48.

147 *Ibid.*, 76.

148 Garrison, 'Foreign Policymaking and Group Dynamics:', 155. See also: Paul 't Hart, Eric K. Stern and Bengt Sundelius (eds.), *Beyond Groupthink: Political Group Dynamics and Foreign Policy-making* (Ann Arbor 1997), 6.

149 James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, *Democratic Governance* (New 1995); March and Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions*.

150 The following paragraphs are taken from the work of Margaret Hermann on decision units. See: Hermann, 'How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy'.



I The Foreign Policy Problem

The foreign policy problem – a perceived discrepancy between present conditions and what is desired¹⁵¹ – is, by definition, subjective and dependent on the perception of the decision-makers involved. They can either pose opportunities or difficulties for the decision-makers and their respective governments. The ‘problem’ is a trigger or the reason for engaging the decision-making framework since it allows for the identification of who will be able to commit government resources and how that individual or set of individuals will, in fact, make that decision.¹⁵²

II The Occasion for Decision

A problem calling for foreign policy action generally tends to get structured into a series of decisions that involve different segments of government. Occasions for decisions are moments when those involved feel they need to act even if the action itself is inaction or to acquire more information. Consequently, there might be various occasions for the decision that may be addressed across time by the same decision unit or by different decision units. The specific occasions studied are strategic actions that lead to authoritative actions on the part of governments.¹⁵³

III Emergence of Decision Unit

Three types of decision units can be distinguished: the predominant leader, the single group, or the coalition. The presence of relevant actors outside government can potentially change the nature of the decision unit. At this point, the formal structures of the respective government, whether a predominant leader, or a single group, becomes less explanatory in terms of the nature of the decision unit.¹⁵⁴

IV Decision Unit Dynamics

The process of interpretation of what problem is actually at hand and how it should be dealt with very much depends on the nature of the decision unit. The unit will often proceed according to institutionalised practices of a collectivity, based on mutual, habitual tacit understanding of what is considered to be reasonable.¹⁵⁵ However, the actors within the unit are limited by the complexities of the demands imposed upon them, by the regulations and distribution of resources and their competencies and organising capacities.¹⁵⁶



151 Hermann, ‘How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy’, 53.

152 *Ibid.*, 53-54.

153 Hermann, ‘How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy’, 54.

154 For a more detailed outline on the different types of decision units, see: Hermann, ‘How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy’, 56-57; Hermann and Hermann, ‘Who Makes Foreign Policy Decisions and How’.

155 March and Olsen, ‘The Logic of Appropriateness’, 690, 694.

156 *Ibid.*, 695.

Furthermore, information about the domestic and international environment shapes the definition of the problem at hand as well as the formulation of feasible alternatives. The decision unit is structured according to the way in which decision-makers seek information from outside the unit to understand where important constituencies stand. Consequently, they determine their options, deduce a certain responsibility to these external forces and bring them into the decision process.¹⁵⁷

In the interpretation and the framing of the problem, cultural and political norms come into play. They give rise not only to the roles of the actors involved, but also to the expectations of the decision unit about the role its nation is to play on the international stage in relation to the problem they are addressing. It may take time to re-frame the problem once policymakers lock onto an initial perception of what is occurring.¹⁵⁸

The matching of identities of those in the unit, with the situation and the aforementioned behavioural rules will very likely be based on experience, expert knowledge, or intuition. It entails the pairing of the problem at hand with a problem-solving action.¹⁵⁹ Hence, the process of interpretation requires assigning rules to situations and is mediated by language. The process upholds consistency of action predominantly through establishing typologies of similarity rather than through deriving action from stable interests or wants.¹⁶⁰

V Process Outcome

The decision-making process produces two outcomes: the outcome of the process itself, and the actual foreign policy action (which will be addressed below). The outcome of the process itself indicates what happened in the course of the decision unit's deliberations. Six possible outcomes are distinguished: concurrence, mutual compromise/consensus, lopsided compromise, deadlock, and fragmented symbolic action.¹⁶¹ The outcome of the process is indicative of the preferences of those involved. The process outcome can vary in terms of different degrees of ownership of the choice that is made and different ways of monitoring the consequences of the decision.¹⁶²

VI Foreign Policy Action

The foreign policy action is what the government ultimately decides to do as a response to the occasion that called for a decision. Put differently, the content of the decision that resulted from the choice process and engendered the response.¹⁶³

157 Beasley et al., 'People and Processes in Foreign Policymaking', 223.

158 Ibid., 232-234.

159 March and Olsen, 'The Logic of Appropriateness', 690.

160 March and Olsen, 'The Logic of Appropriateness', 690, 694; Risse, "'Let's Argue!'".

161 For a detailed description of the various outcomes of the process outcome see: Hermann, 'How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy', 68.

162 Ibid., 68.

163 Ibid., 68.

The dynamic nature of decision-making and the dynamic and often changing nature of the decision group is very well encapsulated in Herman's model. Studying both the decision units engaged with the potential use of military means and their decision paths, is necessary and central to the field of international relations in order to be better able to understand, predict and maybe even control the use of military means as a response to instability within international relations.

2.5.3 The Propositions

The integration of the decision unit framework with the main concepts of civil-military relations and strategy results into the following propositions – based on the 'ideal type' as put forward in the theory discussed in this chapter:

- PI. The inputs into the DMP are instigated by political guidance on a foreign policy problem;
- PII. The decision-making dynamics reveal a process of interpretation in which the senior civil and military decision-makers perceive and deduce constraints and pressures imposed on them by the domestic and international environment;
- PIII. The output of the decision-making process is a strategy articulating the purpose of the use of the military means.

These propositions will guide the data gathering and analysis as will be described in the next chapter. The extent to which these propositions are, in fact, in line with the practices and decisions made by the group under study, will be dealt with in the concluding chapter.

To conclude, this chapter presented the major theoretical foundations of the three concepts foundational to this study: contemporary military interventions, civil- military relations and strategy. The unit of analysis, the civil and military decision-makers, were conceptualised as a decision unit. The analytical framework that will be applied in this study to reconstruct the activities and respective decisions of these decision-makers, largely builds on Margaret Hermann's work on decision units and foreign policy decision-making. It furthermore includes the conditioning mechanisms that derive from the institutional setting in which these actors are to come to a decision. The sequential phasing of the decision paths as outlined in the model is applied to structure the case studies. The theoretically informed propositions derived from the model and the concepts as discussed in this chapter, are put to the test when confronted with the data as put forward in the case studies.

3

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction: From Distinctions to Generalisations

The research objective of this dissertation entails focussing on a systematic comparison of the actions of the senior civil and military decision-makers whilst deciding to deploy their military forces. This study thus asks why and how these agents engaged in the use of military means for the stabilisation of South Afghanistan; if it was an anticipated response; what political objective(s) needed to be attained and how these objectives were converted into a military operation. Systematically reconstructing and comparing the activities of the senior civil and military decision-makers will allow us to reach a sound judgment with respect to whether the stated propositions presented in the previous chapter account for a convincing logic.

A contextualised approach is employed appreciating the idea that scientific knowledge about social phenomenon cannot be gained separately from the context in which the phenomenon occurs. Therefore, to unravel the mechanisms at play, the method of structured focused comparison is used, allowing an in depth analysis of the cases at hand. This chapter outlines the methodological aspects of the study. First of all, the unit of analysis is embarked upon, after which the multiple case study as a research strategy is explained, followed by a description of the applied method 'structured focussed comparison'. Subsequently, an overview of the techniques for the collection and analysis of the data is presented. The last section discusses the reliability, validity, and to what extent the study can be generalised. The chapter is concluded with an overview of the limitations of the study.

3.2 The Unit of Analysis

The act of deciding if and how military forces will be deployed lies at the heart of what is known as the strategic *civil military interface*. In this interface¹, the design and direction of the military operations is constructed by a group of senior civil and military decision-makers. The group of senior civil and military decision-makers under study in this research have been conceptualised as a *decision unit*. As described in the previous chapter, the primary feature

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1 The term *civil military interface* is used to describe the strategic level. It does not only include a level in the chain of command, but it also provides the funds, as well as the physical and conceptual directions that are necessary to implement the decisions of the political leadership. In this arena decisions are taken regarding the size, organization, materiel and deployments of the military are made. It is at this level where the campaign plans are created and implemented. See: Egnell, 'Explaining US and British Performance in Complex Expeditionary Operations, 1042, 1045, 1046.

of a decision unit is its ability to commit government resources. The conceptualisation allows a focus on how this group of actors acquired agency despite the different political arrangements in the nations under study.

The group of senior civil and military decision-makers in the Netherlands is best captured as an intergovernmental single group decision unit.² To be precise, the actors involved are: the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister for International Cooperation, the Minister of Defence and the members of the Steering Group Military Operations: the political counsellor of the MP³ the director general Political Affairs (MFA), the director general International Cooperation (MFA), the director general Security Policy (MFA), the director general Stability and Human Rights (MFA), the director General Policy (MOD), the Chief of Defence (MOD) and the Director Operations (MOD). Depending on the topic additional backbenchers from the respective ministries will sit in.⁴

The group of senior civil and military decision-makers in the United Kingdom is best described as a single group decision unit with a dominant leader. The Prime Minister holds a very dominant position and personally appoints his trustees and ad hoc groups. In the case under study, the Reid Group mandated by the Prime Minister, can be best described as a single group with a dominant leader.⁵ The group is referred to as an interdepartmental group entrusted to oversee the employment of British forces to South Afghanistan. The Secretary of State for Defence is in charge of the group who comprises of the Secretary of State for International Development, the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Depending on the topic additional backbenchers from the respective ministries will sit in.

It is worth noting that in both groups often – depending on the situation or topic on the agenda – special advisors, civil servants or military personnel would sit in and provide their advice or input to the decision-making process. Furthermore, throughout the decision-making the configuration of the units shifted as a consequence of the sequential decisions that were made to deploy the respective military forces, which required at times the inclusion or exclusion of other actors to safeguard a decision.

Nevertheless, the group of senior civil and military decision-makers that advanced the initial decisions by doing so initiating the deployment of military means remain to be the *prima* unit of analysis. The added value of closing in on this particular group of actors, highlights an informal decision-making process that conditions, shapes, and maybe even

2 Hermann, 'How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy'.

3 This person is delegated from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of General Affairs to assist the Prime Minister as his personal counsellor.

4 Information provided by the former secretary of the SMO, Pieter - Henk Schroor. Email correspondence 11-12 June 2013.

5 Hermann, 'How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy', 57.

lures the ultimate decision. The application of the framework to the different occasions for decisions linked to the ultimate action, namely the deployment of forces, allows a perspective on the twists and turns the senior civil and military decision-makers engaged in whilst they were trying to cope with the problem⁶ facing them. The multiple occasions for decision demonstrate the viability of the dynamics by focusing on the series of choices that are contained in many foreign policy problems. Understanding how results from one occasion for decision influence and/or intertwine with information from the (inter) national environment and as such shapes the nature of the next occasion for decision, offers insights about the decision-making process across time. Studying the decision paths of the senior civil and military decision-makers, enables an understanding about a government's strategy and ways of coping with the deployment of military forces at large.⁷

This approach is believed to reconstruct and provide insights into the decision paths of the civil and military decision-makers in a more detailed manner than by testing the relevance of theoretically informed hypotheses. Paraphrasing Norman Denzin, slightly extends the argument made here that traditional, post positivism, in terms of applying a soft quantitative grid (confirmability, hypotheses, credibility) to qualitative research does not in itself result in better scientific results.⁸ The premise here is that the explorative nature of this study intends to facilitate a better insight into the decision-making of senior civil and military decision-makers by carefully reconstructing their decision paths that led to the use of their military means. Consequently the applied model in itself will not be tested but will be employed as a useful vehicle for the reconstruction of events, decisions and for the conceptualisation of the senior civilian military decision-makers.

3.3 A Multiple Case Study

This study is a comparative case study, a research strategy which is often used in the field of political science and international relations.⁹ The research strategy contains similarities

6 A foreign policy problem is best defined as a specific occasion for decision that requires action. Beasley et al., 'People and Processes in Foreign Policymaking', 226.

7 Beasley et al., 'People and Processes in Foreign Policymaking', 227.

8 Denzin N. K., 'The elephant in the living room: or extending the conversation about the politics of evidence', *Qualitative Research*, 9 (2) (2009) 139-160: 149. See also: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln Y. S., 'The discipline and practice of qualitative research', *Handbook of qualitative research* 2 (2000) 1-28.

9 Dvora Yanow, Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Maria José Freitas, 'Case Study Research in Political Science' in: A.J. Mills, G. Durepos & E. Wiebe (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi and Singapore 2008) 108-114; Alexander L. George, and Timothy J. McKeown, 'Case studies and theories of organizational decision-making', *Advances in Information Processing in Organization* 2(1) (1985): 21-58; Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton 1994).

with both historical and experimental forms of research since it provides answers to ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions. These all deal with operational links which need to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence.¹⁰ However, it differs from these methods as well, since the case-study method studies a contemporary set of events (contrary to historical research) over which the researcher has little or no control (contrary to experiments).¹¹

An important benefit of this research strategy is its ability to study the events in-depth. Conducting a case study and searching for and identifying sources of variation in outcomes can potentially lead to richer models than a quantitative research strategy that ‘can easily use controls and randomization to build a wall separating a larger causal mechanism from a small number of variables of immediate interest’.¹²

The primary criterion for the case selection is its relevance to the research objective of the study.¹³ For this study the least-likely case selection was applied. This decision was founded with preliminary knowledge of the cases at hand, thereby allowing a stronger research design.¹⁴ In addition, least-likely cases are most appropriate for the verification of propositions.¹⁵

The two selected countries, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, represent two important Western European states and NATO members when it comes to providing troops for stabilisation missions but differ to one another to a great extent, especially with regard to their political system and with regard to their security posture within the international arena. While the British are often criticised or applauded for their ‘warrior proneness’, the Dutch are often criticised or applauded for their ‘soft’ and ‘a-military’ appearance. Generally put, one can distinguish a difference between Atlantic and European views about the purpose of the military, especially with regard to their role in foreign policy. The principal realist assumption that states use armed force to advance their security interests¹⁶ has been more appealing to major and medium military powers such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Small states like for example Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden have doubted whether armed force is a useful means for achieving security.¹⁷

10 Yin, *Case Study Research*, 9.

11 Yin, *Case Study Research*, 13

12 Timothy J McKeown, ‘Case Studies and the Statistical Worldview: Review of King, Keohane, and Verba’s *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*’, *International Organization* 53(1) (1999) 161-190, 174.

13 Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennet, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge 2005).

14 *Ibid.*, 24

15 Bent Flyvbjerg, ‘Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research’, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12 (2) 2006, 219-245. 234

16 John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens (eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* (Oxford 2010) 3.

17 This discourse on the utility of military means does have pacifist elements, but, as Mikkel Rasmussen has put it, it is basically a discussion about utility rather than morality. He claims the difference should be sought in how military force is understood, rather than the opportunities to use it. See: Rasmussen, ‘What’s the Use of It?’, 67. See also: Jan Angstrom and Jan Willem Honig infer the strategic choice of small powers to be more diversified than usually assumed. In particular,

The major difference with regard to the political systems of these states effecting the use of military means. The Netherlands is a so-called multi-party system more often than not ruled by a coalition government. Coalition governments by definition need very much to work on consensus building within their cabinet and in parliament and the senate in order to be effective. The Prime Minister is *primus interparis* (first among equals) and the role of government and the use of military means is laid down in the constitution.¹⁸ The United Kingdom is a so-called majority system, also known as the Westminster model named after the palace of Westminster in London, the location of the British parliament. The main characteristic of the model is that the Queen, the head of state is the nominal or *de jure* source of executive power while the *de facto* head of the executive is the Prime Minister. He exercises executive authority on behalf of the head of state. This system of government originated with parliamentary convention, practices and precedents and has never been formally laid out in a written constitution'.¹⁹

An aspect closely related to the different political systems of these states is the set of procedures underpinning the deployment of their troops. These differences are founded in the differences in their political systems. As where in the United Kingdom, the Prime Minister is endorsed with great powers to employ his military means, in the Netherlands, Parliament had acquired itself quite a prominent role in the endorsement of deploying military means.²⁰

Moreover, in the Netherlands, the use of the military is a sensitive and often debated issue in the Dutch parliament especially after the events that had evolved in Srebrenica.²¹ As a result, an assessment framework and consequently a parliamentary procedure was developed and implemented. The framework, as will be explicated in chapter five, consists of a series of political and military criteria that are used to consider the desirability and feasibility of contributing military resources to an international military operation.²² When applied, the Dutch government prepares an *Article 100 Letter*. On the basis of this letter, parliament can debate the issues involving the deployment. In order for the government to deploy its military forces, the majority of parliament members must endorse the proposal. Without a majority in parliament, the government could decide to deploy its forces anyhow but

Dutch and Danish internationalism is seems to reconcile the use of force in the national and international domains in contrast to Sweden and Norway where a sharp distinction between national interest and humanitarianism perseveres. Jan Angstrom and Jan Willem Honig, 'Regaining Strategy: Small Powers, Strategic Culture, and Escalation in Afghanistan', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 35(5) (2012) 663-687, 684.

18 See Arend Lijphart, 'Democratic Political Systems Types, Cases, Causes, and Consequences', *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 1 (1) (1989) 33- 48.

19 'Ministerial Responsibility Under The Westminster System', the Nassau Institute. See: <http://www.nassauinstitute.org/articles/article652.php?view=print> (last accessed 25 September).

20 These differences will be described in much greater detail in chapter five.

21 The fall of the enclave of Srebrenica will be outlined in great detail in chapter five.

22 The assessment procedure will be outlined in great detail in chapter five.

this is not viewed to be desirable.²³ The United Kingdom does not possess such a thorough and formal set of procedures when it comes to deploying their troops, which adds to the comparative advantage of the two cases.

An additional difference between the two states is the fact that the United Kingdom institutionalised a comprehensive approach to operations in its Post Conflict and Reconstruction Unit (PCRU) (now referred to as Stabilisation Unit). The interdepartmental unit jointly serves the Department for International Development (DFID), Foreign Common Wealth Office (FCO) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD). PCRU is to plan missions to fragile states, according to a single British aim and strategic framework. Consequently, they deploy civilian experts as well as military forces. The Netherlands has not institutionalised its interdepartmental cooperation, but coordinates the planning and execution of its military missions through the Steering Group Military Operations (SMO).

3.3.1 Process Tracing and Structured Focused Comparison: Linking Outcomes and Conditions

The data collected from the two cases will be analysed using the qualitative methods of 'structured focused comparison' and process tracing. The propositions as described in the previous chapter are theoretically informed and guide the data collection and analysis and provide the focus of the study. The structure is provided through 'semi structured' interviews in which the theoretical focus resonates but it also allows room for the interviewees to provide information on matters unique to their experience and matters they view to be important.

In case study research, a 'structured and focused comparison' stressing the systematic collection of data is a very useful method. The method is 'structured' by posing general theoretically founded questions that reflect the research objective. These questions are to guide each case under study and standardise the data collection, facilitating systematic comparison and accumulation of the findings. The method is 'focused' because it deals with, and scrutinises, particular aspects of the cases (the informal and formal decision-making of the senior civil and military decision-makers and their respective activities). A merely formalistic adherence to the format of structured focused comparison will negatively influence the results since the important device of formulating a set of standardised, general questions is grounded in both the theoretical and research objective of the study.²⁴

The case studies are structured in the following way: first of all, the context, largely describing why the senior civil and military decision-makers have chosen to engage their armed forces for the stabilisation of South Afghanistan. Secondly, the actions and events

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²³ This process will be described in great detail in chapter five.

²⁴ See: Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennet, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge 2005) 67-71.

featuring the complex political military interplay of launching a military operation and the articulation of its purpose, will be outlined. The cases are concluded when political approval for the operations was granted and the plans for the operations were delivered. As such, the timeframe of the case studies is limited to the duration of the military and political decision-making process which started in 2004 and was concluded in the first quarter of 2006.

3.3.2 Process Tracing

The data collected from the two cases will be analysed using the qualitative method of 'process tracing'. Within qualitative research, the process tracing method is quite regularly employed. Its goal is to obtain information about well-defined and specific events and processes.²⁵ The most profound proponents of the method of process tracing are Alexander George and Andrew Benet.²⁶ They continually fine-tuned this method, since the conduct of qualitative research was often criticised for its presumed lack of reliability.²⁷ Process tracing as a tool in particular, has been criticised for its use within a recursive setting.²⁸ If one is to use process tracing within an interpretative approach, it should be separated from discursive and narrative techniques.²⁹

The most distinctive feature of process-tracing styles of research is what John Gerring refers to as 'non comparability of adjacent pieces of evidence': all pieces are relevant to the central argument but they do not comprise observations in a larger sample. They are more correctly understood as a series of $N=1$ observations. It is the quality of the observations and how they are analysed, not the quantity that matters.³⁰

The framework of the decision unit is particularly suited for process tracing purposes since it facilitates isolating and examining the sequence of decisions that are made by breaking the sequence into parts. In the reconstruction of the flow of decisions and who was involved in which decision with what consequences to the decision process, actual choice comes to light.³¹

25 Tansy, Oisín, 'Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing: a Case for Non-Probability Sampling', *PS: Political Science & Politics* 40(4) (2007) 765-772, 766-768.

26 The method of process tracing was first introduced in 1979 by Alexander George and Andrew Benet. See: Alexander L. George, 'The Causal Nexus Between Cognitive Beliefs and Decision-Making Behavior: The "Operational Code" Belief System', in: Lawrence S. Falkowski, (ed.), *Psychological Models in International Politics* (Boulder, CO 1979) 95-124; Alexander L. George and Timothy J. McKeown, 'Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision-making', in: Robert F. Coulam and Richard A. Smith (eds.), *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations II* (Greenwich, CT 1985) 21-58. For the most recent insights see: George and Benet, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*.

27 See: Benoît Rihoux, 'Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Related Systematic Comparative Methods Recent Advances and Remaining Challenges for Social Science Research', *International Sociology* 21 (5) (2006) 679-706.

28 See: Jeffrey Checkel, 'Tracing Causal Mechanisms', *International Studies Review* 8(2) (2006) 362-370.

29 Checkel, 'Tracing Causal Mechanisms', 363.

30 John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (Cambridge 2007) 178-180.

31 Hermann, 'How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy', 54.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

As this study seeks to shed light on the decisions made the senior civil and military decision-makers that led to the use of military means, data on these actions has been collected through the earlier explained qualitative method. The data gathered for this study is composed of a large amount of primary and secondary documents and over a hundred semi-structured elite interviews with senior civil and military decision-makers. Document analysis, interviewing and observation, are structured by means of a set of broad topics and general questions reflecting the theoretical focus of this study.

The analysis of the cases employs both a deductive and an inductive method since existing theories on human action, decision-making, civil military relations, and strategy are guiding the propositions formulated for the collection of the data. However, possible explanations as to what accounts for current developments in the translation of political goals into a military operation follows an inductive logic – informed by combining the theoretical insights with the empirical findings.

3.4.1 Elite Interviews

The data collection for the reconstruction of the series of actions that resulted in the use of British and Dutch military means in South Afghanistan relies heavily on the technique of elite interviewing. Particularly in political science, process tracing frequently involves the analysis of developments at the highest level of government.³² Consequently, elite interviews can, through direct and focused questioning, shed light on decisions and actions that lay behind an event or series of events. Through the interviewing of key actors (the elites) detailed information about the process in question can be gathered since accounts are obtained from the actors involved in the events under study. The nature of interviewing also allows interviewers to probe their subjects and gather information about the underlying context and events that have cumulated into the decisions that were made.³³

By interviewing key players in the decision-making process, data about the debates and deliberations that preceded decision-making and action taking can potentially supplement official accounts with first-hand testimonies.³⁴ Hence, the most appropriate sampling procedures are those that identify key actors that have had most or important involvement with the decision-making process. As such, one is not to draw a representative sample of larger population actors that can be used as the basis to make generalisations about the population

32 Tansey Oisín. 'Process tracing and elite interviewing: a case for non-probability sampling', *PS: Political Science & Politics* 40.04 (2007). PP 768-769.

33 Tansey, 'Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing', 768-769.

34 Tansey, 'Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing', 773

as a whole, but to draw a sample that includes the most important or active players that have participated in the events under study. Consequently, random sampling runs against the logic of the process tracing method, as it creates a risk of excluding important respondents from the sample purely by chance.³⁵

Instead, the goal with process tracing is to reduce randomness as much as possible. The most important actors need to be identified and approached directly.³⁶ As opposed to surveys, interviewing allows researchers to ask open-ended questions and enables the respondent to talk freely, without the constraint of having to answer according to fixed categories. In this way one can gather rich details about the thoughts and attitudes of key actors concerning the actions under study.³⁷ By allowing researchers to communicate with key players directly, and by enabling them to frame that communication according to theoretical interests and priorities, interviews can facilitate the collection of data that is highly relevant and specific to the research objectives being pursued.³⁸

Moreover, elite interviews relate to particular gaps in archival documents, as interviews can compensate for both the lack and limitations of documentary evidence. Important decision-making processes often lack an accompanying body of documentation, for various reasons such as that written materials were not created due to a perceived lack of importance in documenting the actions or because certain actions were seen to be too sensitive to document in written form. In addition, important documents may also be lost, as they are unintentionally discarded or classification regulations can also warrant that key documents are withheld from public analysis.³⁹

While interviews may compensate for possible distortions in written sources, the interviewees themselves can misrepresent their own positions in ways that raise questions over the reliability of their statements. In particular, senior decision-makers may attempt to slant their accounts, and inflate or minimise their own role in an event or process depending on whether or not there is anything at stake.⁴⁰ In addition, as observed by Alexander George and Andrew Bennett policy-makers often have an incentive to skew their accounts in order to portray a 'careful, multi-dimensional process of policymaking' to the public.⁴¹

35 Tansey, 'Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing', 766-768. More on sampling for elite interviews see: Joel D. Aberbach and Bert A. Rockman, 'Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews', *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4) (2002) 673-676; Kenneth Goldstein, 'Getting in the Door: Sampling and Completing Elite Interviews', *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4) (2002) 669-672.

36 Tansey, 'Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing', 781.

37 *Ibid.*, 768-769.

38 *Ibid.*, 788.

39 Philip H.J. Davies, 'Spies as Informants: Triangulation and the Interpretation of Elite Interview Data in the Study of the Intelligence and Security Services', *Politics* 21(1) (2001) 73-80 cited in: Tansey, 'Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing', 774.

40 Tansey, 'Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing', 774.

41 George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 102 in: Tansey, 'Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing', 774.

It follows from this observation that one of the most employed critiques of the method of (elite) interviewing refers to the objectivity and reliability of the provided information by the interviewees. In particular, interviews are often conducted in retrospect. Consequently, lapses of memory can limit the utility of these interviews.⁴² In order to critically evaluate the data collected by these interviews, four questions, as listed by George and Bennet, were employed for the evaluation of the information: who is speaking, who are they speaking to, for what purpose are they speaking, and under what circumstances?⁴³

An important point of caution when conducting elite interviews is that the interviewer should consider the ways in which possible power relations between interviewer and interviewee can shape the production of the interview data.⁴⁴ This is particularly important for this research, since many of the military respondents in the Dutch case are superior officers higher up the chain of command in relation to the interviewer. However, the most important military actors in the Dutch case have retired from active duty. As such, a power relation between them and the interviewer did not exist. As far as the active duty military respondents are concerned, they in no way exercised their potential power. Some superior officers, frustrated with the events that had unfolded in the run up to the deployment to Uruzgan, voiced some emotional accounts. At times, the interviewer went back to them and showed the impact of their provided response and the great degree of frustration, often voiced towards persons. Since it is not the intention of this research to get into personal fights and the settling of scores, the interviewer did caution against including inappropriate accounts and provided the respondents with the possibility of nuancing their comments.

In-depth (semi-structured) interviews with the focus group of senior civil and military decision-makers listed below were executed. This decision unit is the main level of analysis since it is their task to provide guidance for the execution of military operations. The opinions of the interviewees are not only an important source for reconstructing the process, but their experience and beliefs about how and why military means were used for the stabilisation effort in South Afghanistan are crucial to this research as well. Their behaviour is supposedly based on their ideas on what would be acceptable to the constituents. Orientations such as internationalism or pacifism relate to public notions of national roles, and build upon the structuring of the publics' views by underlying core values.⁴⁵

Moreover, these strategically engaged agents must construct inferences about their counterparts in order to decide what best suits the achievement of their ends. Their own commitments, beliefs on the basis of which they are prepared to act, are located in the

42 See: Mark Kramer, 'Remembering the Cuban Missile Crisis: Should We Swallow Oral History?', *International Security* 15(1) (1990) 212-218 cited in: Tansey, 'Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing', 775.

43 George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 99.

44 See: Andras Bozoki, 'Elite Interviews', http://eurospheres.org/files/2011/04/10_Bozoki_Elite-interviews.pdf

45 Cantir and Kaarbo, 'Contested Roles and Domestic Politics', 11.

minds of these agents.⁴⁶ As Alexander Macleod points out, black-boxing senior decision-makers would be perfidious since their communication is usually the outcome of a collective process, involving power struggles, policy disagreements and partisan infighting.⁴⁷ As such, it is believed that the selection of this group of actors as the primary unit of analysis will best serve the possibility of reconstructing the events and activities.

The Interviews

General interviews were held during a pilot study which was executed to determine the focus and selection of cases. This pilot study was executed in September 2010 in Kandahar, South Afghanistan. Initially, the four countries operating in this region: Canada, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States and their experiences converting their political ambition to contribute to the stabilisation of the Southern provinces were to be included in the study. The outcome of the pilot however indicated the desired in – depth reconstruction of the activities and events to only be possible if the case studies were limited to two cases (see case selection). However, the interviews conducted during this pilot study have served for contextual purposes of the study.

The case related interviews were carried out with a selected group of actors within the senior civil and military decision-makers of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Generally speaking, the majority of them are working at the strategic level at either the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Ministry of Defence. This does not withstand that for specific parts of the reconstruction, such as the writing of the plan, actors that were employed at other levels within the respective organisations were interviewed.

General Interviews (Context)

1. Scholars
2. Politicians and military

Case related interviews

1. Politicians
2. Special advisors/political assistants
3. Military planners (strategic and operational level)
4. Diplomats
5. Military commanders (operational and tactical level)

46 Nicholas Onuf, 'Speaking of Policy', in: Vendulka Kubálková (ed.), *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World* (Armonk, NY 2001) 77-95, 79-80.

47 Alex Macleod, 'Just Defending National Interests? Understanding French Policy Towards Iraq Since the End of the Gulf War', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 7 (2004) 356-387, 364.

The interviews conducted for contextual purposes were primarily used in chapter five that discusses the foreign and security policy and the civil military relations in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom as where the case related interviews evidently served to reconstruct the cases (chapter six and seven). A list of all respondents is attached as an appendix to this dissertation.

3.4.2 Document Analysis

Document analysis was used to acquire detailed information on why and how the military instruments of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom were used for the stabilisation of South Afghanistan. This study relies on primary sources such as operational debriefs and reports, parliamentary reports, policy papers and secondary sources such as media coverage and academic publications.

Access was granted to the Defence archives in Rijswijk, the Netherlands by the Ministry of Defence. In close coordination with one of their primary researchers, Rokus van den Bout, the required information was sought and selected both from their digital and printed archives. Classified information was used as means of verification and/or informing additional questions to the interviewees as will be addressed below.

3.5 Reliability, Validity and Generalisability

Linking concepts to observations: connecting ideas with facts is a complex undertaking. During this process, an important question needs to be answered with regard to the measurement of validity about the concepts and facts, namely: ‘do the observations meaningfully capture the ideas contained in the concepts?’. This question addresses whether operationalisation and the scoring of cases sufficiently reflect the concept the researcher seeks to measure and as a result addresses both reliability and validity.⁴⁸

Although measurement of validity is interconnected with causal inference, it also concerns the relation between measurement validity and disputes about the meaning of concepts: ‘The clarification and refinement of concepts is a fundamental task in political science, and carefully developed concepts are, in turn, a major prerequisite for meaningful discussions of measurement validity. Contextual specificity of measurement validity—an issue that arises when a measure that is valid in one context is invalid in another’.⁴⁹

48 Robert Adcock, ‘Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research’, *American Political Science Association* 95(3) (2001) 529–546, 529.

49 Adcock, ‘Measurement Validity’, 529.

The conceptualisation of inquiry of data by definition includes a frame as to what is in fact the proper way to generate scientific insights. Taking into consideration that explorative qualitative research is habitually viewed to be of less standing than quantitative research the argument made here is that qualitative research does in fact fulfil a profound role in the process of requiring scientific knowledge. It should be noted that even though explorative research in itself does not evolve in 'definitive' knowledge nor does the testing of hypotheses. The testing of hypotheses is aimed at tentatively accepting or rejecting certain theoretical explanations of phenomena, not definite by nature.⁵⁰

The potential for generalisable results – albeit modest - for Western European states is believed to be included in the case study selection: both countries represent two important Western European states and NATO members when it comes to providing troops for stabilisation missions.

3.6 Limitations

The study does contain certain limitations. First of all, access to classified data – as has been allowed for the Dutch case - could not be arranged for the British case. Archive material was important for the triangulation of the gathered data through the interviews. However, many studies and reports about the decision-making process on the deployment to Helmand have appeared in the United Kingdom and public hearings have been conducted. As such, much secondary data could be collected allowing triangulation purposes for the British case as well.

Secondly, this study heavily relies on elite interviews and, as such, on the memories of the interviewees. In retrospect, the facts present in their minds might not be accurate or might even have been manipulated for self-serving purposes. By means of cross checking the data from these interviewees with other involved actors who were interviewed and by means of triangulation with archive material and other secondary data, the data collected with these interviews were carefully selected before being presented. This does not withstand a certain level of subjectivity present in the facts recollected from these interviews but the level of this potential subjectivity is believed to be validated by, as mentioned earlier, triangulation with other sources.

Thirdly, it is the essence of interpretive research to study the acts of social agents. Ultimately, observation is interpretation: social reality constitutes meanings and they cannot be studied in any 'objective' manner. This could be viewed as a limitation to this

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50 Swanborn, P. G., 'Kwalitatief onderzoek en exploratie', *Kwalon* (9) 2 (2004) 7-13.

study. However, the impossibility of objective observation should by no means justify not trying to pragmatically interpret social reality with as much detachment as possible. Finally, 'to know if social reality is really real makes no analytical difference: the whole point is to observe whether agents take it to be real and to draw the social and political implications that result'.⁵¹

Lastly, the fact that the author is an active duty officer comes with advantages and disadvantages. The chief advantage of being an active duty officer is her field experience and being in the privileged position of getting access to various (classified) operational documents and reports. This also constitutes the disadvantages of her position, namely she is 'part' of the instrument under study and much of the data she is allowed access to, is classified. By being aware that she already has some preconceived ideas based on her experience, she tried to keep distance and whenever needed received feedback from her supervisors. The classified information about both the planning and the execution of the mission and operational debriefs she gained access to, served to formulate the questions for the semi-structured interview lists as designed for the structured and focussed comparison. The information has been triangulated with the information gathered through the interviews and has served as a reliability test of the gathered qualitative data.

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51 Pouliot, 'The Essence of Constructivism', 328-329.

Part Two

Context, Cases and Analysis

4

Chapter 4 From Regime Change, to Peace Building, to Countering Insurgents: Stabilising Afghanistan

4.1 Introduction

Intervention of (Western) powers has a long history in Afghanistan. It is not without a great degree of pride and dignity that Afghans can refer to a history in which no occupying power has successfully conquered Afghan soil and its people for a long period in time. Throughout history, only some¹ have come close to claiming a long lasting victory over the Afghans, but military experiences of more recent times all resulted in disenchantments.² Against the background of these disillusioned military endeavours, one would have expected a certain degree of modesty with regard to what can be achieved.

Yet, many Western nations and their respective (military) organisations entertained ambitious goals in terms of changing the regime, beliefs and habits of the inhabitants of Afghanistan.³ In turn, the majority of the Afghans were not in favour of the imposition of foreign models of, amongst others, governance and development. As posited in Jonathan Steele's book, *Ghosts of Afghanistan: Hard Truths and Foreign Myths*, the Afghan people predominantly want to be left alone, leaving the presence of foreign troops likely to be one of the major causes of current instability.⁴

This chapter serves merely to set out the developments in Afghanistan since the intervention of the 'coalition of the willing': a formation of Western military powers led by the United States that invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 until NATO's expansion to the South of Afghanistan in the summer of 2006. As such, this chapter is designed to provide an understanding of the environment in which the Netherlands and the United Kingdom felt they needed to engage by contributing to NATO's expansion in this country.

- 1 Alexander the Great in fact reached a high degree of popularity in Afghanistan. In his quest for the country he did not experience a high degree of resistance. See: Jonathan Steele, *Ghosts of Afghanistan: Hard Truths and Foreign Myths* (London 2011). But also the Arabs, Mongols, and Persians have established long-lasting empires in Afghanistan. A point raised by Afghanistan expert Robert Johnson, personal conversation with author, Oxford, July 2014.
- 2 See: Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: a Cultural and Political History* (Princeton 2010); Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the War against the Taliban* (Philadelphia 2009); Robert Johnson, *The Afghan Way of War: Culture and Pragmatism: A Critical History* (London 2011); William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars* (New York 2009).
- 3 Astri Suhrke, *When More is Less: the International Project in Afghanistan* (London 2011).
- 4 Steele, *Ghosts of Afghanistan*.

4.2 Setting

The pursuit of stabilisation of Afghanistan has been hindered by the number of strategic goals set for the mission, as well as in the shift of priorities. The initial goal was defeating Al-Qaida and Taliban and by doing so eradicating their ability to threaten the West as well as regional neighbors (2001); this then changed to the development of the Afghan economy – the security and development agenda (2002 onwards); the building of good governance (2005); the creation of stability, possibly via deals or negotiation with the Taliban (2008), resulting in a reconsideration of the strategic priorities⁵ and, recently, to the planning of a way out without having achieved any of these goals.

As articulated in most writings about the current instability in Afghanistan, the ongoing insurgency is mostly addressed as the main hindrance to a lasting (political) settlement. When looking at Afghanistan, one can actually distinguish four of the strongest statistical predictors required for a successful insurgency: for one, large parts of the population are excluded from politics and estranged from the state authority; secondly, an unresponsive, inept, and corrupt government; thirdly, various militant groups of people (mainly referred to as insurgents) committed to destroying such government; and fourthly, a significant popular sympathy for the insurgents⁶, often engendered by either ethnical ties or unemployment.⁷

The insurgents in Afghanistan are comprised of various groups: the Taliban, Hezb-i-Islami, the Haqqani network, foreign fighters, criminal groups (often drug related) and various tribal militias, and, lastly, one should not overlook a large group of frustrated citizens who join insurgent groups hoping to ensure or to improve the quality of their lives, or defend particular, and sometimes nefarious, ‘interests’. Sometimes the actions of the insurgents are coordinated but usually they are isolated.⁸

The distinction between these insurgent groups is that the Taliban is seeking political power, groups like Hezb-i-Islami, the Haqqani network and the foreign fighters - such as Al Qaeda - are mainly there to fight the Western ‘infidels’, and the criminal groups and the militia are fighting to maintain the status quo in order to ensure their income and power base. According to Taliban expert Antonio Giustozzi, the Taliban has transformed itself into

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- 5 Christopher Dandekker. ‘From Victory to Success’ in: Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (eds.), *Modern War and the Utility of Force: Challenges, Methods and Strategy* (New York 2010) 16–38, 26.
- 6 David C. Gompert and John Gordon IV, *War by Other Means, Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency: RAND Counterinsurgency Study- Final Report* (Santa Monica, Arlington and Pittsburgh 2008) 13–14.
- 7 See: James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, ‘Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war’, *American political science review* 97 (1) (2003) 75–90; James D. Fearon, Kimulii Kasara and David D. Laitin, ‘Ethnic minority rule and civil war onset’, *American Political Science Review* 101 (1) (2007) 187–193.
- 8 Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: RAND Counterinsurgency Study IV* (Santa Monica, Arlington and Pittsburgh 2008). The point of defending particular nefarious interests was a point raised by Robert Johnson in a personal conversation with the author about the background of the conflict (Oxford, July 2014).

what he coins a ‘neo Taliban’ movement successfully aligning the clergy, the militants, and the populace as a result of abusive and factionalised local authorities.⁹ However, Cyrus Hodes and Mark Sedra refute the use of the term neo-Taliban. According to them, it is not accurate to talk about ‘neo-Taliban’, as the Taliban never disappeared but simply blended into the wider population and regrouped. As such, the Taliban-led insurgency is not so much a monolith but rather an amalgam of various groups with different motivations, from peasants fighting for a decent wage to madrassa-indoctrinated youths or villagers following the directions of tribal or clan elders, or even foreign fighters and Afghan exiles.¹⁰ Whether or not the Taliban has renewed itself, it has been very successful in establishing temporary coalitions between several deprived groups and powerbrokers threatened by the authorities and foreign forces. Consequently, the heterogeneity of the ‘spoilers’ challenging the Afghan state complicates the design of the counterinsurgency strategy, since various groups and issues need to be addressed.¹¹

In the Afghan insurgency, the competence - and, in some areas, incompetence - of the indigenous government and its security forces have been critical factors. Also, the legitimacy of the state has been questioned by many Afghans (especially the insurgents) due to the direct intervention by foreign forces who have installed the central government in Kabul. The weakness of state administration, excessive tribal-based government patronage and the varying levels of corruption among the Afghan police and military forces, other government institutions and administrators, has alienated large segments of the population and provided a breach for the Taliban to penetrate.¹² Moreover, the Taliban has been able to adapt quite fast and has become a learning organisation. Its adaptability has enabled it to gain the upper hand among the population in a number of key provinces.¹³ The fact that major Western military organisations have not been able to learn and adapt as fast as insurgents such as the Taliban creates a major disadvantage in their counterinsurgency operations. This does not withstand the fact, that in their response to the insurgent activities, the Western militaries adapted their tactics as well.¹⁴

The whole undertaking has been complicated further by the absence of an effective political strategy that envisaged at least the possibility of political accommodation with

9 Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York 2008) 231.

10 Cyrus Rhodes and Mark Sedra, ‘Chapter Two: Spoiler Groups and the Anti-government Insurgency’ in: Idem, *The Search for Security in Post-Taliban Afghanistan. The Adelphi Papers* 391 (London 2007) 17–34, 25. The point of Afghan exiles was a point raised by Robert Johnson in a personal conversation with the author about the background of the conflict (Oxford, July 2014).

11 Mirjam Grandia Mantas, ‘The 3D Approach and Counterinsurgency. A Mix of Defence, Diplomacy and Development. The Case of Uruzgan’ (Master thesis, Leiden 2009).

12 Austen Long, *On ‘Other War’, Lessons from Five Decades of RAND Counterinsurgency Research* (Santa Monica, Arlington and Pittsburgh 2002); Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 11–29.

13 Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 97–139.

14 See: Theo Farrell, Frans Osinga, and James Russell (ed.s), *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan* (Stanford 2013).

insurgents thereby treating military power as but one instrument among others for achieving strategic goals. Such an approach would have identified the obstacles to such an outcome, especially mutual mistrust and potential spoilers, and the available sources of leverage to establish a structured, multiparty dialogue. Yet, apart from the reintegration and reconciliation program, no such international efforts were made until 2011¹⁵, and a timetable for the withdrawal of American forces - the key Taliban demand - was instituted unilaterally, without any attempt to use it as leverage for a political settlement.¹⁶

Some argue the current instability, rather than being due to local traditions, is more the result of decades of conflict and the intentional dismantling of traditional structures in conflict, thereby leaving extremist groups to fill the social, political and security vacuum.¹⁷ However, most accounts of the battles fought in Afghanistan and about their 'ways of war', are troubled with stereo types and more often than not portray a Western perspective.¹⁸

4.3 Intervening in Afghanistan in Pursuit of Osama: The Coalition of the Willing (2001)

The initial intervention in Afghanistan was designed to retaliate for the attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon on American soil. The United States had asked NATO to invoke article five – which prescribes a joint effort of all NATO member states to regard an attack on one of its allies as an attack on all.¹⁹ Soon thereafter, a 'coalition of the willing'²⁰ was composed and started its joint (predominantly air) operations against Al Qaeda and its host, the Taliban. Using the Northern Alliance as its primary agent to take up most of the ground fighting, international special forces were operating in the bordering areas with Pakistan (Baluchistan) trying to locate and eliminate Al Qaeda and its leader Osama Bin Laden. Both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands provided personnel and equipment to support the mission albeit in different shapes and sizes.

15 Talatbek Masadykov, Antonio Giustozzi, and James Michael Page, 'Negotiating with the Taliban: Toward a Solution for the Afghan Conflict', Crisis States Research Centre Working Papers 66 (London 2010); Steven A. Zyck, 'Former Combatant Reintegration and Fragmentation in Contemporary Afghanistan: Analysis', *Conflict, Security & Development* 9(1) (2009) 111-131; Deedee Derksen, 'Peace from the Bottom-Up? The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program', PRIO Paper, Oslo, PRIO, 2011.

16 Waldman, 'System Failure', 835.

17 Masadykov and Giustozzi, 'Negotiating with the Taliban', 1-2.

18 Johnson, *The Afghan Way of War*, 1-2.

19 Waldman, 'System Failure'.

20 This initially was a coalition between American and British forces and Afghan militias, but soon thereafter reinforced with Special Forces elements from Norway, Canada, Germany, Australia and New Zealand.

Soon after the Taliban government was toppled at the end of 2001, the United Nations had convened a relatively diverse but unrepresentative group of Afghans in Bonn to agree on a power-sharing arrangement that would bring different Afghan factions into an interim administration led by Hamid Karzai. The Bonn Agreement was to facilitate the establishment of a centralised and democratic state and advance a more representative and legitimate administration. However, it 'imposed a victor's peace' on the country and excluded key Pashtun figures and Taliban supporters from any (political) role in Afghanistan.²¹ Furthermore, the modernisation goals as formulated by Western (donor) nations were highly ambitious and lacked the inclusion of the local perspective and understanding of the power politics at play.²²

Also, the reconstruction efforts of the international community were often poorly coordinated and in addition the financial assistance provided for various projects were frequently exploited by local power-holders. Hence, the financial resources provided by the foreign forces, especially the American funds that were made available, unintentionally engendered corruption and also reinforced criminal, patronage and insurgent networks.²³

The materialisation of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and a UN Special Political Assistance Mission (UNAMA) emerged out of the United Nation's Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1386) in 2001. This resolution provided Western powers the mandate to engage politically and militarily in Afghanistan.²⁴

In 2001, the United Nations desired a comprehensive nation building effort in order to reconstruct the country. By doing so, they insisted the foreign forces would assist with expanding the influence of the central government in Kabul throughout the rest of the country.²⁵ In fact, shortly after Hamid Karzai had been installed as the interim president of Afghanistan, UN officials, and others, called for ISAF to expand its operations beyond the central capital. However, American officials believed a traditional peacekeeping approach would be ineffective in Afghanistan. In addition, their European allies were unwilling to deploy large numbers of troops throughout Afghanistan. Thus, an alternative was provided by the Americans in the summer of 2002 as a response to the desire as voiced by the United Nations and the Afghan president to expand the legitimacy of the central governance; Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT).²⁶

21 James F. Dobbins, 'America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq', *Survival* 45(4) (2003) 87-110.

22 Rubin Barnett and Humayun Hamidzada, 'From Bonn to London: Governance Challenges and the Future of State Building in Afghanistan', *International Peacekeeping* 14(1) (2007) 8-25, 8; Suhrke, *When More is Less*.

23 Waldman, 'System Failure', 827.

24 Masadykov and Giustozzi, 'Negotiating with the Taliban', 1.

25 Robert Johnson, *The Afghan Way of War*, 277.

26 These teams were originally named *Joint Regional Teams*. On the request of President Karzai they were renamed into PRTs since he wanted to emphasise the importance of reconstruction. See: Michael J. McNerney, 'Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: are PRTs a Model or a Muddle?', *Parameters* 35(4) (2005) 32-46, 32.

The task for the PRTs was to expand the legitimacy of the central government of Kabul.²⁷ The first three PRTs were deployed by the United States between the end of 2002 and March 2003.²⁸ The PRT Working Principles, issued in February 2003, identified three areas of activity: security, central government support and reconstruction.²⁹ The teams consisted of 60 to 100 soldiers and Afghan advisors and representatives from civilian agencies like the State Department, the US Agency for International Development, and the US Department of Agriculture.³⁰

The international interest in Afghanistan and consequently the commitment of military forces quickly diminished as the United States and the United Kingdom were preparing themselves to invade Iraq in the first quarter of 2003. Suddenly, the earlier rhetoric that Afghanistan needed to be reconstructed in order to prevent another terrorist attack had become unpopular. The new threat was believed to have emerged in Iraq, and as such diverted all attention to Bagdad.

4.4 A Collective Effort Towards Building Peace: NATO's Arrival (2003)

Up until 2003, ISAF primarily operated in and around Kabul. The American-led mission Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in the rest of the country was aimed at countering terrorists. However, at the end of 2003, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), Lakhdar Brahimi, requested ISAF to move beyond Kabul and in fact assume responsibility for the whole of Afghanistan, be it in a phased manner. This request was also heavily influenced by the American need to relieve military troops for their operations in Iraq.³¹

27 A central point remains to be whether the central government of Kabul was granted with legitimacy amongst its constituents in the first place. This debate however carries well beyond the scope of this study.

28 The first three pilot PRTs were established in Gardez, Bamiyan and Kunduz in early 2003. Three more were then established in Mazar-i-Sharif (British-led), Parwan and Herat. See: Gerard Mc Hugh and Lola Gostelow, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Humanitarian– Military Relations in Afghanistan*. Save the Children 2004 London, 21.

29 Peter Viggo Jakobsen, *PRTs in Afghanistan: Successful but not Sufficient*. Danish Institute for International Studies (2005 Copenhagen) 11.

30 Michael J McNerney, 'Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan', 32. As described by McNerney: 'The initial PRT organizational chart focused on the military structure, with a dotted line connecting to "Afghan Government, government organizations (e.g. USAID), State Department, NGOs, and UN'. Later charts proposed integrating State and USAID, as well as the US Departments of Justice, Education, Agriculture, and other agencies. For many months, competing PRT organizational charts floated around Washington, US Central Command and Coalition headquarters'. See: McNerney, 'Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan', 36.

31 Astri Suhrke, 'A contradictory mission? NATO from stabilization to combat in Afghanistan', *International Peacekeeping* 15.2 (2008): 214-236

Hence, on 11 August 2003, NATO assumed command and coordination of ISAF. Two months later, the Security Council authorised Resolution 1510 (UNSC 2003) allowing the expansion of ISAF operations throughout Afghanistan. Consequently, the First German Netherlands Corps was sent to Afghanistan to prepare the ground for NATO's arrival.³² ISAF's expansion in terms of both geography and function advanced so gradually, unfolding into a particularly complex command structure, that the qualitative transformation of the mission went largely unnoticed.³³

The objectives of NATO as articulated in their plan were first and foremost to stabilise and reconstruct Afghanistan. Their tasks had derived from UN resolution 1386 which called upon NATO to disarm militias, reform the justice system, train a national police force and army, provide security for elections, and lastly, combat the narcotics industry.³⁴

These various different objectives however were not clearly delineated. Consequently, their inter-relationship and priority remained vague and had not been operationalised. In addition, the ISAF plan contained what Matt Cavanagh described to be, 'the classic strategic mistake of being neither one thing nor the other; neither light-touch and pragmatic nor full-blooded and properly resourced'.³⁵

The primary vehicle for NATO to achieve its stated ambition of extending its operations further throughout the country, were the PRTs. As such, in 2003, NATO adopted the American developed PRT concept³⁶. NATO's expansion was initiated by taking over command of the military component of the German-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Kunduz³⁷ in December 2003. Six months later, at the NATO summit meeting in Istanbul, NATO announced

32 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1510 (2003) see: http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/mandate/unscr/resolution_1510.pdf (last accessed 10.05.14).

33 Suhrke, 'A Contradictory Mission?'

34 See: Paul Gallis and Vincent Morelli, *NATO in Afghanistan: a Test of the Transatlantic Alliance*. Congressional Research Service (2008 Washington DC).

35 Matt Cavanagh, 'Ministerial Decision-Making in the Run-Up to the Helmand Deployment', *The RUSI Journal* 157(2) (2012) 48-54, 49.

36 There is no blue print for the PRTs in terms of size, composition and operational style but they do however share a number of common features: they are joint teams of civilian and military personnel consisting of 50-300 personnel, they are generally made up by military personnel (90-95 per cent of total), political advisors and development experts. The civil military configuration of the teams was designed to improve civil military coordination and enhance the quality of the military 'hearts and minds' campaigns by drawing on civilian expertise and facilitating the dispersal of government funds for relief and reconstruction projects and security sector reform. The level of civil-military integration varies between the PRTs and each PRT has been tailored to the mission requirements in their respective regions to ensure that they have the capabilities suited to the local situation. The purpose of the PRTs is to expand the legitimacy of the Afghan central authority to the various provinces and rural areas of Afghanistan. In order to achieve this goal the PRTs have to improve the security in the provinces by promoting the rule of law and to facilitate and support the (re)construction process. The first three PRTs were launched between December 2002 and March 2003. See: Jakobsen, *PRTs in Afghanistan*, 11-12.

37 The other eight PRTs operating in Afghanistan remained under the command of the American led Operation Enduring Freedom until 2006.

it would establish PRTs in North Afghanistan. This process was accomplished in October 2004, marking the conclusion of the first phase of NATO's expansion.³⁸

The positioning of PRTs to the north and west of Afghanistan had occurred within the framework of the formal expansion of NATO's command to areas outside Kabul – respectively, Stage 1 (to the north), and 2 (to the west).³⁹ However, the expansion of NATO-ISAF through a PRT network generated a new dichotomy in the sense that two different 'types' of PRTs with different mandates were operating in Afghanistan: US/Coalition-led PRTs with the support of (but no explicit mandate from) the international community and in fact at the request of the Afghan government and NATO-ISAF PRTs mandated through ISAF's mandate from the UN Security Council. This distinction reflects two separate legal 'regimes' for the different types of PRT (Coalition-led, and ISAF-led).⁴⁰

A further dichotomy advanced between the US lead operation Enduring Freedom and the ISAF operations led by NATO, since the American forces present in Afghanistan were primarily engaged with counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan. This seemed to drive a wedge between the two from the outset since the American style of operations was perceived to be working against the trust of the ISAF mission. Furthermore, the international community had been preoccupied with the events in Iraq and so the requirement of stabilising Afghanistan had lost momentum.⁴¹

However, the PTRs remained a primary vehicle for NATO nations to contribute to the stabilisation effort in Afghanistan. Countries like Germany, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, viewed their PRT operations in North Afghanistan as relatively successful.⁴² In March 2005, NATO announced its plans for Stage 3 of its operations in Afghanistan. This phase entailed assuming command over the most notorious regions: the Southern provinces, home to the Pashtuns and the Taliban. By this time, as will be evidenced in the following chapters, detailed planning concerning the deployment of military forces to South Afghanistan were well underway in Ottawa, London and The Hague.

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38 See: International Security and Assistance Force, 'About ISAF, History', <http://www.isaf.nato.int/history.html> (last accessed 10.06.2014).

39 Suhrke, 'A Contradictory Mission?'

40 Gerard Mc Hugh and Lola Gostelow, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Humanitarian – Military Relations in Afghanistan*. Save the Children (2004 London) 22.

41 Michael Clarke, 'The Helmand Decision', *Whitehall Papers* 77(1) (2011) 5-29, 10-11; Ali A. Jalali, 'Afghanistan: Regaining Momentum', *Parameters* 37(4) (2007) 5-29.

42 Mirjam Grandia Mantas, 'Provincial Reconstruction Teams', *Militaire Spectator* 179(10) (2010) 480-492.

4.5 Disillusionment: From Assisting to Fighting (2006)

The attention of the international community was directed towards Afghanistan yet again, by the time NATO decided to assume responsibility – as explained earlier - for the stabilisation of the whole country in a phased manner. In addition, the earlier voiced [2001] ideological concerns about Afghanistan as a safe haven for terrorists [directly positioning the country in the struggle against global terrorism] were reiterated. Also, there seemed to be an international sense of obligation to help reconstruct the war torn country. This engendered the resource to the use of military force to establish the required preconditions for economic reconstruction in line with evolving UN and NATO doctrines of peacebuilding.⁴³

Next to these ideological motivations, another less alluring but nevertheless very clear interest-based motivation surfaced: the credibility of the Alliance. The rationale of it entailed the credibility and future of NATO itself. Hence, the credibility argument was greatly used by governments that had already sent troops to the South and wanted other NATO members to reinforce their efforts as well. By publicly declaring NATO's expansion to the South to be the ultimate test of the Alliance's credibility and relevance, and consequently acquiring a combat role, NATO members were seen to provide the argument a self-fulfilling character.⁴⁴

NATO's expansion to South Afghanistan had instigated a debate about whether NATO was up to the job of conducting combat operations. It had taken on a complex mission of which the original mandate was vaguely defined as 'security assistance'. However, by dispatching combat troops and expanding its command to the Southern provinces, NATO had taken on the additional task of defeating the Taliban. This was in fact the first 'out of area' mission and, in addition to that, the first ground combat mission of the Alliance since its establishment.⁴⁵

However, the force contributing nations, committing their military troops for NATO's expansion to the South chose – perhaps unconsciously - to downplay the fact that they were going to war. This in itself was not surprising since after the Iraq invasion combat missions, initiated and requested by the United States, had become domestically sensitive in most European nations. Therefore the rationale for yet another battle, again in the Afghan theatre, was not as persuasive as it had been in the aftermath of 9/11. Moreover, the planned operations in the South were assessed to include a significant risk of casualties.⁴⁶

Since the fall of the Taliban in late 2001, the situation in Southern Afghanistan had remained relatively quiet. At least up until 2004, limited insurgent activity mirrored by a

43 Carl Robichaud, 'Remember Afghanistan? A Glass Half Full, on the Titanic', *World Policy Journal* 23(1) (2006) 17-24; Suhrke, 'A Contradictory Mission?'; Ali A. Jalali, 'The Future of Afghanistan', *Parameters* 36(1) (2006) 4-19.

44 Clarke, 'The Helmand Decision', 11-12 Suhrke, 'A Contradictory Mission?'

45 Gallis and Morelli, *NATO in Afghanistan: a Test of the Transatlantic Alliance*; Suhrke, 'A Contradictory Mission?'

46 Suhrke, 'A Contradictory Mission?'

very light Afghan government and American military presence best describes the situation. The region had, however, been the heartland of the Taliban from its emergence in 1994. The conservative Pashtun and rural nature of the region, dominated by the Tajiks and Uzbeks of the Northern Alliance, meant that its inhabitants were culturally and politically opposed to President Karzai's Kabul-based government. In fact, the foreign presence had intervened into an ongoing civil war between the Taliban and Northern Alliance, which although quiescent between late 2001 and 2003, had not been ended. On top of that, the severe economic underdevelopment and chronic neglect by central government of the region ever since 2001 had worsened the situation even more.⁴⁷

Perhaps naïve or maybe ignorant, the international military forces present in Afghanistan underestimated the Taliban's resurgence in the Southern provinces. Moreover, hardly any effective steps were taken to address regional dynamics that perpetuated the conflict, especially the sanctuary and support provided to the Afghan Taliban by Pakistan.⁴⁸ NATO had communicated that it expected to encounter resistance to its expansion to the South but believed it would be able to pacify the region through an integrated stabilisation effort.

This concept, now known as the comprehensive approach, at the time became the dominant approach within the field of stabilising (post) conflict states. It encompassed an integration of diplomatic, military and developmental efforts directed towards creating a sustainable stable state.⁴⁹ The concept adhered to various dominant normative beliefs about how Western states are to transform fragile states and promote democracy as stabilising cement.⁵⁰ It informed the way Afghanistan's future was discussed at the international conference 'Afghanistan Compact' held in London (31 January – 1 February 2006). At the

47 Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 60; Adam Roberts, 'Doctrine and Reality in Afghanistan', *Survival* 51(1) (2009) 29–60, 30–31.

48 See e.g. the leaked ISAF report, *State of the Taliban: Detainee Perspectives*. International Security and Assistance Force (2012 Kabul), which describes 'the Government of Pakistan's persistent and fundamental role in the Afghan insurgency' and records that 'senior Taliban leaders meet regularly with ISI [Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence] personnel, who advise on strategy'. See also the leaked US cable of 23.09.2009 from Ann Patterson, US ambassador in Islamabad: 'There is no chance that Pakistan will view enhanced assistance levels in any field as sufficient compensation for abandoning support to these groups [the Taliban and others], which it sees as an important part of its national security apparatus against India. Despite this, the US has given Pakistan a total of US\$24 billion of assistance since 2001', cited from Waldman, 'System Failure', 827; Seth G. Jones, 'Averting failure in Afghanistan', *Survival* 48(1) (2006) 111–128.

49 Mirjam Grandia Mantas, 'Shafer Revisited—The Three Great Oughts of Winning the Hearts and Minds: Analysing the Assumptions Underpinning the British and Dutch COIN Approach in Helmand and Uruzgan', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24(4) (2013) 731–750.

50 Astri Suhrke, 'Reconstruction as Modernisation: the 'Post-Conflict' Project in Afghanistan', *Third World Quarterly* 28(7) (2007) 1291–1308; Michael J. Williams, 'Empire Lite Revisited: NATO, the Comprehensive Approach and State-building in Afghanistan', *International Peacekeeping* 18(1) (2011) 64–78; Karsten Friis, *The Politics of the Comprehensive Approach: The Military, Humanitarian and State-building Discourses in Afghanistan*. NUPI Working Paper 773 (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2010).

conference, the donor countries committed themselves to the stabilisation of Afghanistan, outlined in a plan with a five year timeframe.⁵¹

ISAF implemented the final stage of its expansion in October 2006, by taking over command of the international military forces present in East Afghanistan from the American led operation Enduring Freedom⁵² It introduced a comprehensive approach to stabilisation, operationalised through the establishment of 'Afghan Development Zones'.⁵³ The purpose of the ADZs is to connect security with development and vice versa, providing a visible sign to the Afghans that the international forces and the Afghan government actually are delivering improvement in their daily lives. However, despite NATO's revised operational plan, advancing a greater role for ISAF throughout the country aiming to achieve stability in a comprehensive manner, it could not make up for the already flawed international engagement. This was primarily due to the fact that it had, yet again, not concerned itself with a political settlement of the problem.⁵⁴

4.6 Conclusion

The security and political situation in Afghanistan at the time when the Netherlands and the United Kingdom decided to reinforce their military effort was deteriorating. After initial enthusiasm of both the efforts of coalition forces, and, later on, of NATO forces to stabilise and reconstruct the country, momentum had been lost. This was compounded with a shift of attention of the international community towards Iraq. A reinforcement of international troops and resources in Afghanistan was communicated by 2005. At that time, NATO was preparing itself to further expand its presence throughout Afghanistan. In fact, its ability to do so was perceived the ultimate test for the Alliance. Their renewed approach to the stabilisation of Afghanistan had been informed by a comprehensive plan to bring about equilibrium through the establishment of the Afghan Development Zones.

51 Mike Capstick, 'The Civil-Military Effort in Afghanistan: A Strategic Perspective', *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 10(1) (2007).

52 See: <http://www.isaf.nato.int/history.html> (last accessed 10 June, 2014). However, as postulated by Rob Johnson OEF remained to have its own command and control structure until 2009 (Oxford, July 2014).

53 The ADZ concept is built on the assumption that, if a geographically defined area is made secure for the local population to live in providing time large-scale development projects and good governance, those residing outside the ADZ would also like to be part of a development zone. The focus lies on creating conditions in which the local population will cooperate with, or at least not fight against, the local government and the foreign forces. The ultimate aim of the strategy is to win hearts and minds and consequently undermining the basis for insurgent support. The means required to advance these objectives are not available in theatre, nor are they being made available in sufficient quantities to create success within a reasonable time-frame. See: Grandia Mantas, 'Shafer Revisited'; Peter D. Thruelsen, *NATO in Afghanistan - What Lessons Are We Learning and Are We Willing to Adjust?*. Danish Institute for International Studies (2007 Copenhagen) 10.

54 Clarke, 'The Helmand Decision'.



However, a lasting political settlement had not been part of the initial efforts of the international community when it drafted the Bonn agreement. In fact, by excluding the most important party to the (national) conflict, the Taliban, the foundations for a potential insurgency were sowed. It is against this background that the Netherlands and the United Kingdom were contemplating committing themselves to NATO's expansion to the Southern provinces of Afghanistan: a region that had been troubled for many years, and had no appetite for another foreign intrusion.

5

Chapter 5 The Strategic Context

5.1 Introduction

Once a state engages its armed servants into operations abroad, the assumption is that they are to attain a certain goal. A certain political objective, preferably deduced from the state's foreign and security policy, is to guide the effort. However, policy visions do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, policies need to be interpreted by official agents and implemented. This turns out to be a fairly complex endeavour, especially in an interdependent world. Hence, foreign and security policy is an area of government where 'delivery' is particularly difficult often resulting in situations whereby formal decision-making structures are bypassed¹ or become highly intricate.

In this chapter, a short overview of the foreign and security policy behavior of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom will be presented, mostly in reference to actions regarding the deployment to South Afghanistan since this is the period under study. Subsequently, the relations between senior civil and military decision-makers of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom will be introduced. All in all, this chapter serves as an introduction to the context in which the decisions were taken to engage in South Afghanistan.

5.2 The Netherlands: A Small Power with a Desire to Make a Difference

The Netherlands can be best characterised as a small power with limited military capabilities. Its economic relations benefit from stable international relations, and as such it strongly promotes the international rule of law, which is believed to be foundational for international stability. Consequently, the strategic cultural tenets present in Dutch security politics are to advance the international rule of law, project stability and use the military as an instrument to boost Dutch international significance, often in support of the major player in the international order: the United States.²

Even though it is problematic to identify a perpetual denominator in Dutch foreign politics, three pillars can be distinguished: Atlanticism, Europeanism, and multilateral

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1 William Wallace, *The Foreign Policy Process in Britain* (London 1975) cited in: Paul Williams, 'Who's Making UK Foreign Policy?' *International Affairs* 80(5) (2004) 909-929, 929.

2 Rem Korteweg, *The Superpower, the Bridge-BUILDER and the Hesitant Ally: How Defence Transformation Divided NATO 1991-2008* (Leiden 2011) 281.

activities in support of the international legal order as the common denominators on which Dutch foreign and security politics are founded.³

Some however argue not enough scientific evidence has been produced to be able to talk about a continuum in Dutch foreign policy.⁴ This could be explained by the fact that the earlier described aspects of Dutch foreign policy often lead to a ‘hedging strategy’.⁵ It allows the Netherlands not to be concrete about its choices and to neglect setting priorities.⁶ Or, as put by others, Dutch security politics are rather pragmatic, *à la carte*: whenever needed an idealistic argument is made but in turn all options are kept open.⁷

However, the one common thread throughout this *à la carte* behavior during the last subsequent Cabinets that ruled the Netherlands is that they all have unconditionally prioritised fulfilling the commitments of being a reliable NATO partner, also referred to as the ‘Atlantic Reflex’.⁸ Other alternatives like bolstering a collective security regime within the United Nations, or the European Union, were declined or mattered less to the political elite.⁹

Although the Netherlands has favored peace support operations, it has also accepted the need for high-intensity operations in order to remain relevant to the United States. This allowed the Netherlands to have a security policy acceptable both to Atlanticists as well as Europeans.¹⁰ Compounded with an increased role of the media and public opinion driven by moral considerations, the Dutch government often appears to be entrapped in its self-chosen rhetoric of international justice.¹¹

In a study addressing the behavior of the Netherlands political elite in the international arena when it comes to the distribution of foreign aid (from the perspective of the decision-makers), it is viewed to be ‘activist’ (43.4 %). The study also points to another role of the

- 3 Jan Rood and Marieke Doolaard, ‘Activisme als risico: buitenlands beleid onder Balkenende’, *Internationale Spectator* 64(11) (2010) 567–571.
- 4 Yvonne Kleistra, *Hollen of stilstaan : beleidsverandering bij het Nederlandse ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken* (Delft 2002).
- 5 Korteweg, *The Superpower, the Bridge-Builder and the Hesitant Ally*, 300.
- 6 *Aan het Buitenland gehecht. Over verankering en strategie van Nederlands buitenlandbeleid. Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid* (2010 Den Haag) 47, 55; Kleistra, *Hollen of stilstaan*.
- 7 Fred van Staden, ‘Nederlands veiligheidsbeleid en het Atlantische primaat. Over bekende ambities en slijtende grondslagen’ in: Segers, M.L.L., Hellema, D.A. & Rood, J.Q.Th. (eds.), *Bezinning op het buitenland. Het Nederlands buitenlands beleid in een onzekere wereld* (Den Haag 2011) 9–30, 28.
- 8 Commissie Davids, *Rapport commissie van onderzoek besluitvorming Irak* (Amersfoort 2010) via <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2010/01/12/rapport-commissie-davids.html>, 119; Staden, ‘Nederlands veiligheidsbeleid en het Atlantische primaat’, 9; Thomas Gijswijt, ‘De trans-Atlantische elite en de Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek sinds 1945’ in: Segers, M.L.L., Hellema, D.A. & Rood, J.Q.Th. (eds.), *Bezinning op het buitenland. Het Nederlands buitenlands beleid in een onzekere wereld* (Den Haag 2011) 31–46.
- 9 Staden, ‘Nederlands veiligheidsbeleid en het Atlantische primaat’, 9.
- 10 Korteweg, *The Superpower, the Bridge-Builder and the Hesitant Ally*, 300.
- 11 Bert Jan Verbeek and A. van der Vleuten, ‘The Domestication of the Foreign Policy of the Netherlands (1989–2007): the Paradoxical Result of Europeanization and Internalization’, *Acta Politica* 43 (2008) 357–377, 365.

Netherlands, namely a ‘powerbroker’ role (29.4 %).¹² The activist role, defined as perception of opportunity in an orderly environment, does seem to be an overall feature in Dutch foreign politics.

However, the activist role the Netherlands desires to play in the international arena is often ambitious but not necessarily an outcome of articulated goals in foreign and security policy. Apparently, the Netherlands is seen to lack a tradition to engage in farsighted policy making with regard to international politics seemingly resulting in tacit habitual reflexes and blind spots. Hence, there seems to be a profound belief amongst foreign policy makers that foreign policy is to be ad hoc and reactive by definition. In consequence, it would not require thoughtful analysis with a long term view. As such, one is unable to distinguish core values and interests in recent foreign and security policy papers. Only general terminology such as fostering international peace and security and the rule of law is found, but is not specifically related to a clear goal or objective or choice for that matter.¹³

In addition, the change of a set order of topics on the international agenda into a dynamic constantly changing series of events has seriously complicated the activity of policy making. The use of military means especially became less obvious because a clearly defined enemy and a comprehensible bi-polar system had ceased to exist since the end of the Cold War. This allowed for a stretching of the concept ‘security’ which enabled organisations like NATO to maintain their relevance.¹⁴ Consequently, senior civil and military decision-makers in the Netherlands started to readjust their view on the use of military means into a structure-focused understanding of interventions and a military emphasis on stability projection. The military would prefer not be deployed to fight wars, but rather contribute to stability in order to enable liberal institutions to take root.¹⁵

In the early nineties, the Netherlands started participating in UN-mandated peace operations, and afterwards all expeditionary missions were justified on the basis of its contribution to stability. It has led to an aversion to ‘waging wars’, preferring to term deployments ‘peace support’, ‘stabilisation’ or ‘policing’ operations instead. It has also contributed to ‘stability’ being an overarching objective of Dutch security policy rather than decisively removing threats.¹⁶ In 2004, a so called ‘Stabilisation Fund’ was founded by the

12 The study identifies four role nations can assume with regard to the provision of foreign aid assistance: 1. Good neighbor: combines perception of constraint in an orderly environment; 2. Merchant role: combines perceptions of constraint with those of an anarchic international environment; 3. Power broker role: combines perception of opportunity in an anarchic environment; 4. Activist role: combines perception of opportunity in an orderly environment. Both the rhetoric and actions of the Netherlands is studied from 1975 until 1991. Breuning, ‘Words and Deeds’.

13 Yvonne Kleistra, ‘Nederlands buitenlandbeleid als een donut’ in: Segers, M.L.L., Hellema, D.A. & Rood, J.Q.Th. (eds.), *Bezinning op het buitenland. Het Nederlands buitenlands beleid in een onzekere wereld* (Den Haag 2011) 123-150, 123, 137.

14 Kleistra, ‘Nederlands buitenlandbeleid als een donut’, 127, 141.

15 Korteweg, *The Superpower, the Bridge-Builder and the Hesitant Ally*, 291-292.

16 Korteweg, *The Superpower, the Bridge-Builder and the Hesitant Ally*, 300.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its main goal is to fund activities that lie at the cross roads of peace, security, and, development and additionally invests in a variety of countries that are either in conflict or threatened by it.¹⁷

The above mentioned characterisations seem to be confirmed by the government's strong tendency to frame its international military operations as moral undertakings, with reference to the Netherlands' constitutional aim of promoting the international legal order.¹⁸ The use of euphemistic idiom in order not to employ the term 'war' is a trend throughout Dutch history. In colonial times, the Dutch framed conventional offensives in Indonesia as 'police actions' and their objective was labelled as 'bringing justice and security'.¹⁹ For recent missions, like Iraq but also Afghanistan, stabilisation seemed to be the most employed idiom and was further exploited for the mission to Uruzgan²⁰ combined with the employment of terminology as 'the Dutch approach', a term commonly exercised ever since the Dutch mission to Iraq.²¹

It entails, as described by Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, 'a vaguely defined idea of a better, subtle, comprehensive and culturally aware national approach – a 'national way of war''.²² The concept has, as indicated by former Minister of Foreign Affairs Bot, been employed in the political arena to seek parliamentary approval and public commitment for the dangerous and controversial deployment to South Afghanistan'.²³

All in all, the security posture of the Netherlands, both nationally and internationally, is best captured as a medium power, pursuing good relations with the United States through, among other things, being a trustworthy member of NATO and projecting the international

17 Kleistra, 'Nederlands buitenlandbeleid als een donut', 131

18 Anamarija Kristić, *De Staten-Generaal en de inzet van de Nederlandse krijgsmacht. Een onderzoek naar de parlementaire betrokkenheid bij de besluitvorming over deelname aan internationale militaire operaties* (PhD dissertation, Tilburg 2012) 202.

19 Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, 'The Use and Abuse of the 'Dutch Approach' to Counter-Insurgency', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36(6) (2013) 867-897.

20 Brief van de ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken, van Defensie en van Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, Den Haag, Kamerstukken II, vergaderjaar 2005–2006. Dossier 27925 Bestrijding Internationaal Terrorisme, Kamerbrief 221.

21 See Soeters et al., 'Epilogue' in Jan van der Meulen, Ad Vogelaar, Robert Beeres and Joseph Soeters (eds), *Mission Uruzgan. Collaborating in Multiple Coalitions for Afghanistan* (Amsterdam UP 2012), 329–30; Joseph L. Soeters, 'Afghanistan Talks: Experiential Isomorphism in Afghanistan', in G. Caforio, G. Kümmel and B. Purkayastha (eds), *Armed Forces and Conflict Resolution: Sociological Perspectives* (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing 2008); Joseph L. Soeters, *Ethnic Conflict and Terrorism: The Origins and Dynamics of Civil Wars* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge 2005). For an overview contradicting the image of the Netherlands as a consensus-seeking, internationally legalistic, peaceful nation see Thijs Brocades Zaalberg and Arthur ten Cate, 'A Gentle Occupation: Unravelling the Dutch Approach in Iraq, 2003–2005', *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 23/1 (March 2012); Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, 'The Use and Abuse of the 'Dutch Approach' to Counter-Insurgency', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2013; Petra Groen, 'Colonial Warfare and Military Ethics', 277–97; Willem Klinkert, *Van Waterloo to Uruzgan and the contributions by Hans Blom, Martin Bossenbroek, Ben Schoenmaker and Arthur ten Cate in Jan Hoffenaar* (ed.), *Nederland en zijn Militaire Traditie* (The Hague: Instituut voor Militaire Geschiedenis 2003). For a perspective of military practitioners on the matter, see: Mirjam Grandia Mantas, 'The 3D Approach and Counterinsurgency. A Mix of Defence, Diplomacy and Development. The Case of Uruzgan'. Master thesis (2009) University of Leiden.

22 Brocades Zaalberg, 'The Use and Abuse of the 'Dutch Approach' to Counter-Insurgency', 3.

23 Interview Bot.

stability needed for its economic position. Its military instrument is one facet of pursuing this goal but its use is by no means easily decided upon as will be explained later on in this chapter.

5.2.1 The Senior Civil and Military Decision-Makers and Their Relations

The most prominent senior civil and military decision-makers at the strategic level in the Netherlands are the Minister of Defence, the Chief of Defence and his director of operations, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and his director of Political Affairs, and the respective (political) advisors of the Prime Minister. These actors are all aided by their respective civil or military staff officers. The role of the Prime Minister himself rather depends on his own interest in the matter, more than a predefined role to which he is to adhere. The Prime Minister at the time, Jan Peter Balkenende, did not seem acquire an active role in setting the agenda or guiding the decision-making with regard to Dutch military endeavours.²⁴ Like witnessed during decision-making events for military involvement in Iraq, he refrained from direct involvement and entrusted his Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence to plan the operation.²⁵

The relationships between the Dutch senior civil and military decision-makers has been heavily influenced by the events of Srebrenica. In a study conducted by René Moelker, civil military relations during the decision-making process of the deployment of Dutch forces to Srebrenica were scrutinised.²⁶ Ethics supposedly had the upper hand as the rationale or motive. Among the politicians, 'Gesinnungsethik'²⁷ was prevalent. These ethics - driven by good intentions and the wish to intervene in order to address humanitarian necessity - were dominant amongst the politicians whereas among the military a large group of persons was inclined to look at the consequences of possible outcomes of decisions. As such, they had

24 The Davids Committee was entrusted to investigate how and why the Dutch government had come to support the American-British invasion into Iraq. Amongst other things it concluded that the prime minister had not been in the lead during the decision-making process and had not concerned himself with the consequences of the decision: 'The Prime Minister took little or no lead in debates on the Iraq question; he left the matter of Iraq entirely to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Only after January 2003, did the Prime Minister take a strong interest in this issue. However, by that time, the stance defined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was firmly established as government policy'. See: Commissie Davids, *Rapport commissie van onderzoek besluitvorming Irak*, 529; the respondents, as will be shown in the next chapter, have indicated that in the case of Afghanistan, the Prime Minister had also refrained from acquiring an active role in the decision-making.

25 The Prime Minister took little or no lead in debates on the Iraq question; he left the matter of Iraq entirely to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. See: Commissie Davids, *Rapport commissie van onderzoek besluitvorming Irak*, 529.

26 Moelker, 'Culture's Backlash on Decision-making'.

27 The research report of NIOD, one of the sources used for the study by Moelker, refers to Weber and his differentiation between the two kinds of ethics exercised by civil and military agents. According to Max Weber, there are two kinds of ethics operating with bureaucracies: 'Gesinnungsethik' and 'Verantwortungsethik'. Agents acting on 'Gesinnungsethik' (ethic of intentions) presumably do not take the consequences of their decisions or actions into consideration but act on good intentions. Those agents who act on 'Verantwortungsethik' (ethic of responsibility) consider the consequences of actions, since they in the end are held responsible and will be asked to justify their actions. See: Max Weber, *Politik als Beruf* (München and Leipzig [1919] 2010).

voiced their grave concerns against the deployment of forces.²⁸ Yet, ever since the end of the last century, the relations between the civil and military senior decision-makers have evolved - especially since integrated missions to Iraq and Afghanistan - into quite a robust and professional level.

Decision-Making Process for the Use of Military Means

The use of military means has by no means been easily decided upon ever since the fall of the enclave of Srebrenica.²⁹ This was a defining moment for the Netherlands when it comes to the use of military means for international missions. In July 1995, thousands of Muslims, officially under the protection of the United Nations and its Dutch peacekeepers, were killed by Serbian militaries. The inability of the Dutch forces to prevent the massacre of these men has structured the Dutch views on use of force³⁰ and military interventions to a great extent.³¹ Ever since, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence have tried to carve out a new role for the Netherlands on the world stage and for their military.³² This recourse to rules and standard operating procedures is likely when consequential calculations have produced prior catastrophes³³ as has been the case with the deployment of Dutch forces to Srebrenica. The Netherlands wanted to contribute its forces – also showing off its newly established air mobile brigade – to restoring peace in the Balkans.³⁴ This was a decision in which costs and benefits were reflectively calculated, but it turned out to be disastrous.

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- 28 Moelker, 'Culture's Backlash on Decision-making', 16.
- 29 For the official report about the fall of the enclave see: <http://www.srebrenica.nl/Pages/OOR/23/379.bGFuZz1OTA.html> (last accessed 12.08.2013) and studies about the fall of the enclave: Erna Rijdsdijk, 'Lost in Srebrenica: Responsibility and Subjectivity in the Reconstructions of a Failed Peacekeeping Mission' (PhD dissertation, Amsterdam 2012); Christ Klep, 'Somalië, Rwanda, Srebrenica. De nasleep van drie ontspoorde vredesmissies' (PhD Dissertation, Utrecht 2008).
- 30 Jan van der Meulen and Joseph Soeters, 'Dutch Courage: The Politics of Acceptable Risks', *Armed Forces & Society* 31(4) (2005) 537-558.
- 31 The decision to become one of the main suppliers of troops for a peace mission moved many at the time. Dutch politics were dominated by the call to intervene on moral grounds. This humanitarian motivation, coupled with the ambition to improve Dutch credibility and prestige in the world, led the Netherlands to offer to dispatch the Air Mobile Brigade. By playing down the possible risks of the behaviour of the warring parties so much, a large circle of those involved in this policy, and in particular its advocates, took on a large responsibility for it. In practice, Dutchbat was dispatched: on a mission with a very unclear mandate; to a zone described as a 'safe area' although there was no clear definition of what that meant; to keep the peace where there was no peace; without obtaining in-depth information from the Canadian predecessors in the enclave (Canbat); without adequate training for this specific task in those specific circumstances; virtually without military and political intelligence work to gauge the political and military intentions of the warring parties; with misplaced confidence in the readiness to deploy air strikes if problems arose, and without any clear strategy for leaving. <http://www.srebrenica.nl/Pages/OOR/23/384.html> (last accessed 12.08.2013)
- 32 Verbeek and Vleuten, 'The Domesticization of the Foreign Policy of the Netherlands', 365.
- 33 March and Olsen, 'The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders'.
- 34 As outlined by Christ Klep and Donna Winslow: 'The Netherlands became involved in the peacekeeping efforts in the Bosnian War at an early stage. The Dutch sent observers, a communications battalion and a transport and logistics battalion in 1992. During 1993 discussions centred on the matter of sending a combat unit. Initially both the Minister of Defence and the Army Staff had strong reservations about the risks and usefulness of deploying a *combat* unit to a country still caught up in a major civil war. Also, the Netherlands Armed Forces were in the process of large-scale reductions and reorganisations

Hence, concrete standards on the basis of which government decides on the deployment of military means, are laid down in the so called 'Assessment Framework'. The framework consists of a series of political and military benchmarks that are used to consider the desirability and feasibility of Dutch participation in an international crisis control operation. The political facets of the framework take into consideration whether the purpose of a military operation is to create the conditions for reconstruction and/or delivering development aid. If so, then the analysis will take the provision of development aid into account. Secondly, the mandate is an important aspect of the political facets especially taking into consideration that deployment of Dutch military units has to be in accordance with international law. If the operation is not carried out at the request of the country involved, then it has to be based on a clear, preferably United Nation's security council's, mandate.³⁵ The mandate must therefore include the political and military objectives of the operation, and should clarify if the operation is being conducted under Chapter VI or Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. Also, the political aspects include a description of other participating countries and their role.³⁶

The introduction of this assessment framework is an addition to the framework for the decision-making process on the deployment of military forces as laid down in article 100 of the Constitution.³⁷ This notification procedure includes sending a so called 'Article 100 letter' to Parliament. In essence, the letter signifies Cabinet – after it has been probed by an international organisation or state – to notify Parliament about their intention to explore possibilities for a new military mission or to change an existing military mission in a drastic manner. By doing so, one can denote - at a relatively early stage – if the foreseen mission is to receive broad political support and by doing so prevent the genesis of all sorts of rumours and speculations about a mission playing into the hands of the opposition. On the basis of this letter, parliament debates the issues involving the deployment. In order for government to deploy its military forces, at least fifty percent of parliament has to endorse the proposal. Government could decide to deploy its forces without parliamentary approval but this is not viewed as desirable.³⁸

following the 1993 'Defence Priorities Review'. However, these objections were put aside by parliament, press and public opinion, all of whom demanded quick and decisive humanitarian intervention in the Bosnian War. This interventionism was strongly fuelled by very disturbing pictures from prison camps in Bosnia and scenes of ethnic cleansing'. See: Chris Klep and Donna Winslow, 'Learning Lessons the hard Way - Somalia and Srebrenica Compared', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 10(2) (1999) 93-137, 96.

35 Operation Allied Force contained the bombing of Serbian targets in order to refrain them from carrying out more hostilities against the Albanian Kosovars is an exception to this prescription.

36 Kristić, 'De Staten-Generaal en de inzet van de Nederlandse krijgsmacht', 177-180.

37 Ramses A. Wessel, 'The Netherlands and NATO' in: Juha Rainne, *Legal Implications of NATO Membership: Focus on Finland and Five Allied States* (Helsinki 2008) 137-161.

38 See: Kristić, 'De Staten-Generaal en de inzet van de Nederlandse krijgsmacht'; Christ Klep, *Uruzgan. De Nederlandse Militairen op Missie, 2006-2010* (Amsterdam 2011).

The assessment framework was developed with the best of intentions to prevent another (military) debacle. However, one could remain sceptical regarding its utility in practice. The framework is often referred to as a checklist not necessarily resulting in a deep analysis of the use of military means in pursuit of achieving political goals, nor does it itself seem to guarantee a constructive and rational decision-making process³⁹ or imply that a military mission will only be conducted if all components of the framework are efficiently dealt with.

The sensitivity with regard to military missions has, over the course of the years, resulted in an increase of parliamentary involvement with military missions. As such, Parliament has gained quite some additional but informal influence on military operations. In fact, the parliamentary involvement through the Article 100 letter encapsulates the diffusion between authority and accountability of deploying military forces.⁴⁰ The level of detail with which Parliament involves itself seems to be a consequence of the tendency present at the strategic civil military level to mainly describe tactical and technical activities in their advice about a possible mission instead of the objectives that need to be attained. In other words, not the why but the how – describing the kinds of activities that are to be executed - is explicated, providing no analysis on a strategic level, or even operational level for that matter.⁴¹ This is compounded by the same level of input provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which also focuses primarily on what kind of developmental and governmental projects it will finance, instead of outlining the political objectives that need to be attained.

Parliamentary involvement does trigger another component affecting coalition politics characteristic of the Dutch political system. This is the institutionally created position of junior parties within coalitions that offers a potential for lopsided influence with regard to the framing of the foreign policy action. Recent insights in political decision-making suggest that the ways in which individuals and groups represent a problem is key to understanding the policy choices that are considered and eventually chosen.⁴² In Dutch deliberations over sending troops to South Afghanistan, the junior coalition party, D66, attempted to frame a potential military contribution to the stabilisation of South Afghanistan as in fact a contribution to the American Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) which many Europeans associated with unlawful acts of torture and rendition. They argued that the military would

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39 Interviews Hartog and Bot; Marloes ten Dam, 'Uruzgan, Het CNN effect' (Master thesis, Utrecht 2012); Klep, *Uruzgan*; Moelker, 'Culture's Backlash on Decision-making', 33.

40 As indicated by Anamarija Kristić: 'parliament can play its own game and exercise influence on governments decision [...] knowing that government will appreciate wide political support for these very important and far-reaching conclusions [...] The political relationship between government and parliament appears to be of a much greater impact on parliamentary involvement than the constitutional framework and the exchange of information: Kristić, 'De Staten-Generaal en de inzet van de Nederlandse krijgsmacht', 233- 235.

41 Interviews Keij, Huijben, Klaarbergen, Noom.

42 Juliet Kaarbo, 'Coalition Cabinet Decision-making: Institutional and Psychological Factors', *International Studies Review* 10(1) (2008) 57-86, 67-68.

be forced to fight the Taliban and would end up in a war that was supposed to be the domain of OEF. Senior parties in the Cabinet tried to counter this by framing the decision in terms of international responsibility and being a good ally and tried to disentangle the NATO mission from OEF.⁴³

Also, coalition cabinets have proven vulnerable to the strategies of junior parties in influencing the decision-making processes.⁴⁴ Again, as will be showcased in the next chapter, the junior party of the coalition (D66) anticipated it could halt the desire of the major governing parties to deploy troops. Even though they did not manage to impede the deployment, they certainly managed to delay the decision-making process to a significant degree, causing a lot of nuisance both nationally and internationally.

Steering Group Military Operations

The official forum in which the senior civil and military decision-makers in the Netherlands meet and discusses the planning and conduct of military operations is the 'Steering Group Military Operations' (SMO).⁴⁵ The emphasis of this forum is directed towards fostering a dialogue on military missions between (initially) the departments of Foreign Affairs, and Defence. Later on, the group was extended to include representatives from the Ministry of General Affairs (to be compared with the Cabinet Office in the United Kingdom) and the Ministry of Development Cooperation.

With regard to the mission to Uruzgan, the group successfully encouraged a joint approach to the Dutch effort in Afghanistan. Generally speaking, judging from the views as provided by the respondents, the relations between the civil and military actors in this group can be described as rather good. However, their cultural differences in terms of habits - such as the military need for clear goals and objectives versus the civilian desire for vagueness - surfaced every now and then and were such as to require political space for manoeuvre.

The common ground between the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs seemed to be their dedication to providing military troops and resources for NATO's expansion to the South of Afghanistan. The policy adopted by both ministries in 2006 was based on the belief of integrating defence, diplomacy and development. This concept - contrary to claims made

43 Kaarbo, 'Coalition Cabinet Decision-making', 67-68; Jan van der Meulen and Mirjam Grandia, 'Brussels Calling: Domestic Politics under International Pressure' in: Jan van der Meulen, Ad Vogelaar, Robert Beerers and Joseph Soeters (eds.), *Mission Uruzgan. Collaborating in Multiple Coalitions for Afghanistan* (Amsterdam 2012).

44 Kaarbo, 'Coalition Cabinet Decision-making', 67-68; Hans J.P. Vollaard and Niels J.G. van Willigen, 'Binnenlandse steun voor buitenlands beleid' in: Duco Hellema, Mathieu Segers and Jan Rood (eds.) *Bezinning op het buitenland: Het Nederlands buitenlands beleid in een onzekere wereld* (Den Haag 2010), 193-216

45 The steering group was initiated in 2002 and aims to facilitate an interdepartmental approach to military missions. Its agenda setting is kept secret as well as its reports (information provided by the secretary of the SMO: Pieter - Henk Schroor).

in the media⁴⁶ - was already at the heart of both British and Canadian policy with regard to (post) conflict states.⁴⁷

The events that unfolded in Srebrenica very much influenced the relationship between the civil and military senior decision-makers. Only after the appearance of the NIOD⁴⁸ report commissioned by the Dutch government, which came out seven years after the fall of the enclave, were the politicians accused of having deployed their military without a proper mandate and without appropriate equipment. Until then, it had been the military who were primarily blamed for the fiasco which impacted the relationship between the two in the sense that the military felt left in the cold by the politicians who should have provided the preconditions. In turn, the politicians had become very careful with the deployment of the military. Hence, their enthusiasm had been tempered and ever since military deployments have been a result of critical analysis.⁴⁹

In conclusion, Dutch foreign and security politics are to a great extent focused on its trans-Atlantic pillar. The desire to be a trustworthy NATO ally has resonated throughout the last two decades, most prominently in its support of military undertakings in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. The initiation of military missions and the consequent decisions required primarily evolve in the Steering Group Military Operations. This forum has proven beneficial for the relations of the Dutch senior civil and military decision-makers. The steering group has shown to be a useful tool for keeping one another informed.

However, the use of the military in the Netherlands is by no means easily decided upon. First and foremost, this is attributed to the processes and decision-making tools as designed and implemented after Srebrenica and secondly, coalition politics by definition requires consensus. The need for this consensus consequently determines the political agendas of the political parties, as such potentially leaving the advancement of the decision-making process to a great extent in the hands of party politics.

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- 46 Jay Solomon, 'US takes Dutch military as role model in Afghanistan', *Wall Street Journal*, 30 April 2009; 'Nederlandse 'watjes' hadden succes in Irak', *Trouw*, 12 April 2007; 'Overleven in Uruzgan', *NRC Next*, 10 April 2007; 'Uruzgan, na vier jaar', *NRC Handelsblad*, 31 July 2010; 'The Dutch model: flower strewers partly vindicated', *The Economist*, 12 March 2009.
- 47 For Canadian policy see: Martin, Paul, 'Address by Prime Minister Paul Martin on occasion of his visit to Washington D.C.', Washington, D.C., April 29, 2004; *A Role of Pride and Influence in the World*. Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (2005 Ottawa) 20. For British policy on the matter see: *The Comprehensive Approach*. Joint Discussion Note 4/05. Joint Doctrine & Concepts Centre, UK Ministry of Defence (2006 Shrivenham)
- 48 In November 1996, the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies (then: Netherlands Institute for War Documentation) was instructed by the Dutch Government to carry out a study of 'the events prior to, during and after the fall of Srebrenica'. On 10 April 2002, this report was made public and consequently both the political and military establishment resigned acknowledging the great mistakes that had been made and had now been presented in this report. For a complete reading of the findings of the report see: <http://www.niod.nl/nl/projecten/srebrenicarapport>
- 49 An inheritance of the Srebrenica debacle was the eminence of air support. The lack of it had seriously complicated the ability of the Dutch forces to properly respond against the atrocities committed by the Serbian forces. The blurred lines within the chains of command through the UN and differences in opinion about mandate resulted in failing close air support. The legacy of Srebrenica has consequently resulted in the ever present strong national air component operating alongside the ground forces to prevent a recurrence of the tragic events in former Yugoslavia.

5.3 The United Kingdom: The Grandeur of a Great Power

The United Kingdom can be best described as a medium power with substantial military capabilities. A player in the major league of nations, the United Kingdom not only engages in operations as a loyal partner of the United States, but also tends to view itself as a 'force for good'. Ever since the First World War, a relative decline in British economic and military power can be observed. They nevertheless maintained their relevance on the international stage through the mobilisation of 'soft power' [diplomatic] resources.⁵⁰ The foreign policy rhetoric and policy behaviour of the United Kingdom is predominantly guided by a 'power broker' conception of their state's role in the international arena.⁵¹

Three traditional pillars can be distinguished in British foreign policy: multilateralism, Atlanticism and neo-liberalism.⁵² Multilateralism was not only consistent with the adherence of the governing party [Labour] to international institutions and their respective liberal values, but it also provided a chance to utilise the soft power capability to shape the rule-based international order.⁵³ In practice, Prime Minister Blair's consecutive Cabinets have utilised a combination of both formal and informal multilateralism: either a formal kind through established international organisations or through informal coalitions of the willing.⁵⁴

Atlanticism, or the often claimed 'special relationship'⁵⁵ with the United States, as the dominant approach within chosen foreign policy actions resonates in many studies analysing British foreign and security policy.⁵⁶ For many years, especially at the operational level, the British and American relationship featured degrees of intimacy and trust which has informed the notion that their bond is indeed special. Their political elites have continued to share a common internationalist worldview and cooperate diplomatically to advance a joint view of the global order of relations. Their collaboration, especially on defence policy [within NATO and bilaterally] and the integration of their intelligence operations has gone further than with any other state, unprecedented in its scale and trust.⁵⁷

50 Joseph S. Nye, *Soft power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York 2004).

51 Breuning, 'Words and Deeds', 235-254.

52 Wallace, *The Foreign Policy Process in Britain* cited in: Williams, 'Who's making UK Foreign Policy?', 929.

53 Tim Dunne, 'Blair's Britain and the Road to War in Iraq', in: Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield and Tim Dunne (eds.), *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases* (2nd edition, Oxford 2012) 419-440, 423.

54 Williams, 'Who's making UK Foreign Policy?', 926.

55 See: John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations from the Cold War to Iraq* (2nd revised edition, Basingstoke 2006).

56 Steve Marsh and John Baylis, 'The Anglo-American "Special Relationship": the Lazarus of International Relations', *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 17(1) (2006) 173-211.

57 David Hastings Dunn, 'UK-US Relations After the Three Bs-Blair, Brown and Bush', *Defense & Security Analysis* 27(1) (2011) 5-18.

In December 2003, both the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence published White Papers highlighting Britain's dependence on the United States in relation to defence, security, and foreign policy. Influenced by the conflicts that had transpired in the Balkans in recent history, the geopolitical framework for the British had expanded. However, the documents only addressed the means rather than the ends of British foreign policy.⁵⁸ To illustrate: the White Paper produced by the FCO, *UK International Priorities* described Britain's relationship with the United States as a 'vital asset...essential to achieving many of our objectives, especially in ensuring our security'.⁵⁹ The Defence White Paper, *Delivering Security in a Changing World*, stated that 'the most demanding expeditionary operations, involving intervention against state adversaries, can only plausibly be conducted if US forces are engaged, either leading a coalition or in NATO'.⁶⁰

Moreover, Prime Minister Blair believed he could be the 'bridge builder' between the European continent and the United States. This was a political balancing act in which he sought to be America's closest ally, and a committed European partner attempting to deliver Europe as a beneficial party to the table.⁶¹ Some have nuanced the 'special relationship' and 'bridge builder' view arguing that since the end of the Cold War, British governments have exercised little influence over American administrations and their respective 'shared values'. Also, the proclaimed British position as a bridge builder between the United States and Europe had been contested since European countries refused to have their relationship with Washington channelled through London.⁶²

The neo-liberal pillar in British foreign and security policy was most prominently discernable in its positions on trade, economic development, and international (development) aid by organisations such as the World Bank.⁶³ Also, the liberal views were prominently articulated as values that needed to be upheld to safeguard a stable international community.⁶⁴ In the late nineties, a so called 'ethical foreign policy' was introduced, concurrently with designing military forces ready for rapid and decisive action.⁶⁵ As articulated in the Labour party manifesto (communicated four years before the intervention

58 Hew Strachan, 'Conclusion' in: Jonathan Bailey, Richard Iron, and Hew Strachan (eds.), *British Generals in Blair's Wars* (London 2013) 327-346, 328, 332.

59 'UK International Priorities', Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2003). <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmselect/cmfaff/745/74507.htm>

60 *Delivering Security in a Changing World*, UK Ministry of Defence (2003). http://www.mod.uk/linked_files/publications/whitepaper2003/volume1.pdf.

61 Hastings Dunn, 'UK-US Relations After the Three Bs', 6.

62 William Wallace and Tim Oliver, 'A Bridge too far: the United Kingdom and the Transatlantic Relationship' in: David M. Andrews (ed.), *The Atlantic Alliance under Stress: US-European Relations after Iraq* (Cambridge 2005) 152-176, 152-156; Wallace, *The Foreign Policy Process in Britain* cited in: Paul Williams, 'Who's making UK Foreign Policy?', 55.

63 Dunne, 'Blair's Britain and the Road to War in Iraq', 425.

64 Jason Ralph, 'After Chilcot: the 'Doctrine of International Community' and the UK Decision to Invade Iraq', *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 13(3) (2011) 304-325, 309.

65 Jonathan Bailey, 'The Political Context: Why We Went to War and the Mismatch of Ends, Ways and Means', in: Jonathan Bailey, Richard Iron, and Hew Strachan (eds.), *British Generals in Blair's Wars* (London 2013) 5-26, 6.

in Afghanistan): ‘Labour wants Britain to be respected in the world for the integrity with which it conducts its foreign relations’ and it wants to ‘restore Britain’s pride and influence as a leading force for good in the world’.⁶⁶

During the decade in which Prime Minister Blair was in power, a doctrine of ‘liberal interventionism’ was developed in a quest for moral progress in a world facing many opponents of liberalism.⁶⁷ Consequently, the prominence of values in British foreign and security policy appeared to be validated in the emerging military threats against what was perceived as the ‘Western way of life’.⁶⁸ Blair’s liberal interventionism, publicly introduced in his famous Chicago speech,⁶⁹ evolved in various military engagements all over the world [Iraq, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan], all under the banner of ‘doing good’.⁷⁰

The ethical rhetoric of British security policy also resonated in the ideological framework of liberal internationalism applied to Afghanistan. National security objectives related to combating international terrorism were informed by a broader understanding of the significance of a normative international order in which countries like Afghanistan would be able to flourish and by doing so no longer provide assistance for terrorist groups. The British aim to seek for a greater balance between military, social, and, political objectives for the stabilisation of Afghanistan, was novel and perhaps even foundational for NATO in developing a ‘comprehensive’ approach.⁷¹

In conclusion, British foreign and security politics, especially as it emerged under the leadership of Prime Minister Blair, became well known for its ‘ethical’ components. Nevertheless, the transatlantic bond has remained a consistent feature in its strategic posture.

5.3.1 The Senior Civil and Military Decision-Makers and Their Relations

The most prominent senior civil and military decision-makers at strategic level in the United Kingdom are the Prime Minister and his staff; the civilian Ministers of the Ministry of Defence; and the members of the military Chiefs of Staffs Committee, principally the Chief of Ministry Staff (CDS). Supposedly, as posited in recent research, civilian officials from the Civil and Diplomatic Services in the Ministry of Defence (MOD), Cabinet Office, Foreign &

66 *Labour Party manifesto 1997. New Labour: Because Britain deserves better.* Labour Party (1997 London); See also ‘Robin Cook’s speech on the government’s ethical foreign policy. The speech by Cook that started it all’, *Guardian Unlimited*, 12 May 1997.

67 Dunne, ‘Blair’s Britain and the Road to War in Iraq’, 421.

68 Bailey, ‘The Political Context’, 7.

69 Tony Blair, ‘Doctrine of the International Community’, delivered at the Economic Club, Chicago, 22 April 1999, <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page1297.asp>. (last accessed 28.04.2014).

70 Oliver Daddow, ‘Tony’s War? Blair, Kosovo and the Interventionist Impulse in British Foreign Policy’, *International Affairs* 85(3) (2009) 547–560.

71 Williams, ‘Empire Lite Revisited’.

Commonwealth Office (FCO) and other government departments have a less evident and often underrated role than their military counter parts.⁷²

The roles and responsibilities of senior civil and military decision-makers are subject to bureaucratic intricacies, often not formalised in a widely accepted set of regulations. This in itself is a characteristic feature of the British constitutional and legal system, in which basic principles are formulated, expressed and adjusted less through fundamental texts than through precedent, practice and (especially) process. As put forward in the report *Depending on the Right People: British Political-Military Relations 2001-2010*:

Some key military decisions were also taken with insufficient political oversight. [...] These problems were the result of a situation in which there was no well-understood model for how Ministers, senior military officers and civil servants should work together. All interpreted their roles in different ways, with effectiveness depending on the quality of individuals and the personal relationships between them. In the phrase of Jonathan Powell, Tony Blair's chief of staff, good decisions depended on 'the right people' being involved and behaving in the right way. Although in theory the British model could be flexible and fast-acting, it brought incoherence, inconsistency and opacity. It was not resilient enough to deal with the extraordinary pressures of the Iraq and Afghanistan crises. It contributed to a continuing breakdown of trust between politicians and senior military officers, and disunity and division of purpose within the government.⁷³

In his book, *High Command*, in which many of the involved actors commented on the intricacies of the decision-making for the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, Christopher Eliot has put forward the suggestion offered by some of his sources that on occasions an 'executive of two' [consisting of Prime Minister Blair and his Chief of Defence Staff Walker] was running the decision-making. However, General Sir Michael Walker commented on this as an exaggeration whilst explaining that it was in fact the Secretary of State for Defence Reid who habitually led discussions with the Prime Minister. The confusion present both amongst senior civil and military decision-makers as to who actually had authorised a particular course of action was indeed endemic for the (lack of) accountability within the decision-making process.⁷⁴

As indicated above, relations between senior level military and civilian actors in the United Kingdom have been damaged in recent operations, Iraq and Afghanistan in particular. Flaws in the decision-making process to intervene in both countries have been the topic of

72 James de Waal, *Depending on the Right People. British Political-Military Relations, 2001-2010*. Chatham House Report (2013 London) 9.

73 *Ibid.*, VI.

74 Christopher Elliot, *High Command* (Hurst forthcoming) 267.

blaming either one of the two groups.⁷⁵ Some respondents argued that there seems to be an institutional overreliance on the military.⁷⁶ Others claimed civilian decision-makers were intimidated by the military. The author of the book *Losing Small Wars*, Frank Ledwidge, does believe the army to have been calling the shots when it came to the deployment to Helmand. 'The politicians were standing behind. The tactical structure was dictating the planning instead of the other way around.'⁷⁷

Former diplomat, Sir Sherard Cowper Coles,⁷⁸ who has been both British ambassador in Afghanistan and British special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, takes this line of argument a bit further as he states: 'the military are stuck and cannot stand criticism. People have not been very critical towards the military and politicians are afraid of military. No politicians have military experience'.⁷⁹

This is, according to some, exactly the reason why there is friction amongst civil and military actors. As explained by General MacKay: 'Complex civil military relations, a lot of friction. [...] The supremacy of civilians in the decision for the use of force has eroded' [...] most politicians do not have military experience and knowledge. However, the system needs to advise the politicians but there is a limited ability to understand the military process'.⁸⁰

Decision-Making Process for the Use of Military Means

Some of the inherent features of British politics rooted in their 'Westminster model'⁸¹ are the majority rule, the prerogative powers of the executive power and the absence

75 Michael Clarke (ed.) *The Afghan Papers: Committing Britain to War in Helmand, 2005-06. White Hall Paper 77* (London 2011); Waal, 'Depending on the Right People. British Political-Military Relations, 2001-2010'.

76 Interviews Korski, McKay.

77 Interview Ledwidge.

78 Sir Sherard Cowper Coles has heavily criticized the military for its attitude and behaviour with regard to the planning and execution of operations in Afghanistan. 'Many of the military think they are brighter than they really are. Look at their COIN campaign: are we working for good governance without a national (Afghan) political settlement?' Interview Cowper Coles.

79 Interview Cowper Coles.

80 Interview McKay.

81 The Westminster model 'is a short cut for the majoritarian democratic parliamentary system as used in the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth countries. It is named after the palace of Westminster in London, the location of the British parliament. The main characteristic of the model is that the Queen, the head of state is the nominal or *de jure* source of executive power while the *de facto* head of the executive is the Prime Minister. Historically, the Prime Minister was seen as *primus inter pares* (first among equals) but in modern times in fact leads a Cabinet of ministers which exercises executive authority on behalf of the head of state. Thus, the sovereign, who reigns but does not rule, is the focal point for the nation while the prime minister and his colleagues undertake executive decisions. In the United Kingdom, this system of government originated with parliamentary convention, practices and precedents but has never been formally laid out in a written constitution'. See: <http://www.nassauinstitute.org/articles/article652.php?view=print>. As Arend Lijphart has argued in his famous book *Patterns of Democracy* [in which he compares government forms and performance of thirty six countries] majoritarian democracies can potentially create sharp divisions between those in power and those who are not in power. This primarily derives from the fact that the model does not allow much influence for opposition over government policy: 'In the most deeply divided societies...majority rule spells majority dictatorship and civil strife rather than democracy. What such societies need is not a democratic regime that emphasises consensus instead of opposition, that includes rather than excludes'. See: Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven, CT 1999) 33. For more on British governance see: Roderick Rhodes, *Beyond Westminster and*

of a constitution. Given the fact that no constitution is in place, British politics are very much informed by traditions. As outlined by Mark Bevir and Roderick Rhodes in their interpretation of British governance: 'when unpacking the idea of tradition we must not reify traditions. Tradition is a starting point not something that fixes or limits future actions (...) are contingent, produced by the actions of individuals. The carriers of traditions bring it to life. They settle its content and variations by developing their beliefs and practices, adapting it to new circumstances, while passing it on to the next generation'.⁸²

This is an important aspect since it helps explain that actions of those engaged in the decision-making on the use of military means are likely to act in accordance with traditions, beliefs and habits. The use of military force in itself can be decided upon by the Prime Minister. His powers with regard to the use of military means are described in the Royal Prerogative Powers.⁸³ These are a series of powers officially held by the Queen that have been passed to the government of the day. They enable decisions to be taken without the backing of, or consultation with parliament. Yet, it is common for Cabinet to keep Parliament well informed on decisions that entail the use of force and about the progress of the military campaigns. This is achieved primarily through statements in the House of Commons and debates.⁸⁴ In practice, the active agreement of senior Ministers, and eventually the endorsement of parliament are viewed to be desirable.⁸⁵

The Royal Prerogative and lack of involvement of the British parliament in approving the deployment of armed forces has long been criticised for what is perceived to be an absence of democratic accountability of the use of force. In other words: a democratic deficit. The conflict in Iraq and subsequent arguments over the legality of military intervention, have contributed significantly to raising the political profile of this issue. Recently, there have been several attempts to establish an obligation for Cabinet to obtain parliamentary approval for the deployment of military forces.⁸⁶

The perceived lack of democratic accountability when it comes to the use of force also transpires in the secrecy that has traditionally masked the cabinet system and its surplus of subcommittees. Moreover, the basis of politics on conventions rather than strict rules made the use of force vulnerable to the vagaries of the respective Prime Ministers. Nevertheless, the members of Cabinet are expected to display collective responsibility and present a united

Whitehall: the Sub-Central Governments of Britain (London 1992); David Marsh, 'Understanding British Government: Analysing Competing Models', *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 10(2) (2008) 251-268.

82 Mark Bevir and Roderick Rhodes, *Interpreting British Governance* (London and New York 2003) 33-34.

83 See: Richard Heffernan, 'Prime Ministerial Predominance? Core Executive Politics in the UK', *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 5(3) (2003) 347-372, 357-358.

84 See: Paul Bowers and D. Annex. 'Parliament and the use of force', *World War II* 5 (2003) 2.

85 Heffernan, 'Prime Ministerial Predominance?', 357-358.

86 Claire Taylor and Richard Kelly, Parliamentary Approval for Deploying the Armed Forces: An Introduction to the Issues. Research Paper 08/88 House of Commons Library (2008 London). See: <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/research/rp2008/rp08-088.pdf>.

front. In order to do so, historically Cabinets have habitually attempted to reconcile internal divisions on their own terms before embarking upon a particular course of action.⁸⁷

In line with this tradition, Prime Minister Blair, like his predecessors, preferred to work in small ad hoc committees⁸⁸ composed of his most trusted civil servants, Ministers and advisers rather than with the cabinet as a whole.⁸⁹ His presidential style of policy-making generated rigorous criticism, with it even being dubbed as overly secretive, ad hoc, informal and susceptible to groupthink.⁹⁰ This will be further outlined below in the description of the Reid Group and its role in the decisions made with regard to the deployment to Helmand.

The Reid Group

In the particular case of Helmand, the Prime Minister chose to exercise his powers in terms of setting out a clear road regarding British involvement in Afghanistan but soon thereafter delegated the particulars to the Reid Group. Secretary of State for Defence John Reid was asked by Tony Blair to form a senior cross-departmental group, which was to supervise the planning for the deployment to South of Afghanistan. As such, the role of this particular group was to deal with the decisions that needed to be made with regard to British involvement in South Afghanistan.

As commented on by the Secretary of State for Defence John Reid himself: ‘We had established a group, learning the lessons from Iraq, which I chaired, unusually. It would normally been a Foreign Office lead but the Prime Minister asked me to lead it to bring together DfID, the Foreign Office, Treasury, MOD and so on, to work down from the concept, the strategic concept⁹¹, right down to the operational level’.⁹²

Across government, most Ministers and their efforts for the deployment to South Afghanistan were guided by either Blair or Reid. Only a few Ministers, like the chief of the Treasury, were sceptical, most were broadly in favour since Afghanistan was generally viewed as the ‘good war’ as opposed to Iraq. The argument which is believed to have swayed Ministers most was that Afghanistan was a job the international community had started and

87 Williams, ‘Who’s making UK Foreign Policy?’.

88 As described by Williams: ‘Britain’s cabinet system and its plethora of subcommittees has traditionally been cloaked in secrecy and based on conventions rather than strict rules. As a consequence, cabinet behaves differently under different Prime Ministers and it is difficult for outsiders to gain reliable information about how and where specific decisions are taken. On the other hand, regardless of whose cabinet we are analysing, its members are expected to display collective responsibility and present a united front to the outside world’, Williams, ‘Who’s making UK Foreign Policy?’, 917.

89 Anthony Seldon dubbed these groups as ‘denocracy’ because they tended to conduct their meetings in Blair’s office ‘The Den’. Anthony Seldon, *Blair* (London 2004) 692. Cited in: Williams, ‘Who’s making UK Foreign Policy?’, 916.

90 Williams, ‘Who’s making UK Foreign Policy?’, 917.

91 It is not clear to what strategic concept John Reid refers. His advisor Josh Arnold Foster could not recall such a concept either. John Reid had been approached twice for an interview for this study to present his views. He however declined the requests.

92 Evidence presented to CI by John Reid 3 February 2010. See: <http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/45011/20100203am-reid-final.pdf>.

should finish by consolidating the progress made so far, ensuring the investment was not wasted.⁹³

According to special advisor to the labour government, Matt Cavanagh⁹⁴, little debate had taken place. He described that in the beginning of the discussions about the deployment there was relatively little debate at Ministerial level, in the Reid Group or anywhere else for that matter, about the detail of the plan or troop numbers'.⁹⁵ Special advisor to John Reid, Josh Arnold Foster⁹⁶, like Cavanagh, remembered very little debate about the mission as such since the Prime Minister wanted it to happen.⁹⁷ Foster in fact referred to the words of Lord Hailsham, who coined the phrase 'elective dictatorship'⁹⁸ to describe the United Kingdom.

The lack of debate in the initial phase of the decision-making might have been instigated by not addressing the right questions whilst conducting the assessment of the task at hand. As pointed out by many respondents but also clearly articulated by Reid's private secretary in his writings about the decision-making process: 'Key questions were unanswered: Where was the grand strategy that previous Afghanistan campaigns had been fought on? What were the strategic objectives that could be honed into a convincing narrative worth fighting for? That was not for the military to define, and without a proper sense of what long-term influence we wanted in the region, we had little reference to measure our response'.⁹⁹

Special advisor to the Defence Minister Arnold Foster described his concern at the time to have been about the top-down approach. He believed the interdepartmental group could have been used by departments as a platform rather than genuinely working together. He describes most papers considered by the group as being referred to as DfID, Foreign Office, or Ministry of Defence papers.¹⁰⁰

93 Cavanagh, 'Ministerial Decision-Making in the Run-Up to the Helmand Deployment', 50.

94 Matt Cavanagh was a special adviser in the last Labour government from 2003, and worked on Afghanistan from 2005.

95 The discussion about the troop numbers will be dealt with in the UK case chapter 7.

96 Josh Arnold Foster was a special advisor to Defence Secretary John Reid from 2005- 2006.

97 Josh Arnold-Foster, 'Cross-Government Planning and the Helmand Decision, 2005-06', *The RUSI Journal* 157(2) (2012) 44-47.

98 Elective dictatorship is a phrase popularised by the former Lord Chancellor of the United Kingdom, Lord Hailsham, in a Richard Dimbleby Lecture at the BBC in 1976. It refers to the fact that the legislative programme of Parliament is determined by the government, and government bills virtually always pass the House of Commons because of the nature of the majoritarian first-past-the-post electoral system, which almost always produces strong government, in combination with the imposition of party discipline on the governing party's majority, which almost always ensures loyalty. In the absence of a codified constitution, this tendency toward executive dominance is compounded by the Parliament Acts and Salisbury Convention which circumscribe the House of Lords and their ability to block government initiatives. See: Lord Hailsham, 'Elective Dictatorship', *The Listener*, 21 October 1976. 496-500.

99 Nick Beadle, 'Afghanistan and the Context of Iraq', *Whitehall Paper* 77(1) (2011) 73-80, 73,74.

100 Arnold-Foster, 'Cross-Government Planning and the Helmand Decision', 45.

The Post Conflict and Reconstruction Unit

Although the Reid group was formed to oversee the planning of the stabilisation effort, another more permanent institutional construct had emerged with the aim of planning and coordinating comprehensive missions to (post) conflict states: the Post Conflict and Reconstruction Unit (PCRU).¹⁰¹ The unit was created in 2004 as a result of the absence of a civilian reconstruction and development capability in Iraq. However, the aspirations for the role of the PCRU were rapidly reduced since they were answerable to the Foreign Office, the Ministries of Defence and International Development, instead of the Cabinet Office. This weakened their mandate and influence since the Permanent Undersecretaries refused PCRU an operational role beyond being an inter-departmental facilitator and supplier of personnel for missions.¹⁰²

Furthermore, the PCRU was to facilitate cross-Whitehall divisions of labour, but this turned out to be complex since it did not play to departmental strengths. The impression of special advisor to the Defence Minister of the different groups of officials within the various departments was one of ‘all working on the same issue, but not necessarily going in exactly the same direction (...) while working-level officials seemed to cooperate well, more senior officials within all departments may not have been as joined up as they needed to be. Of course, it is all too easy for political figures to blame the failure to achieve truly joined-up government on bureaucratic in-fighting. The relationships between different officials will frequently reflect the relationship between their Ministerial masters.’¹⁰³

As such, the role of the PCRU was limited to providing stabilisation advisers and it provided, only upon invitation from its parent departments (FCO, DFID and the MOD), periodic planning support or facilitation.¹⁰⁴ Thus, in essence the unit was more engaged with the provision of personnel instead of truly planning and coordinating the stabilisation effort for Helmand.

In conclusion, British foreign and security politics, especially as it emerged under the leadership of Prime Minister Blair became well known for its ‘ethical’ components. Nevertheless, the transatlantic bond has remained a consistent feature in its strategic posture. The initiation of military missions and the consequent decisions required are by and large guided by the Prime Minister, notwithstanding a great role that was allowed for the military within the process. For this particular mission, a strategic group that was to

101 In 2007, the unit was renamed to Stabilisation Unit (SU).

102 Tom Rodwell, ‘Between Idea and the Reality: the Evolution and Application of the Comprehensive Approach. Hollow Men and Doctrine in Helmand?’ (MA Dissertation, London 2010) 11.

103 Arnold-Forster, ‘Cross-Government Planning and the Helmand Decision’, 45.

104 Gordon Stuart, ‘The United Kingdom’s Stabilisation Model and Afghanistan: the Impact on Humanitarian Actors’, *Disasters* 34(3) (2010) 5368-5387; King, A., ‘Understanding the Helmand campaign: British military operations in Afghanistan’, *International Affairs* (86)2 (2010) 311-332.

guide the deployment of military forces was ordered by Blair. A close trustee, his Secretary of State for Defence, was to chair the group. However, no coordinated effort embodied by an interdepartmental strategy materialised. All this illustrates that the use of military means is not bound by formal procedures. In fact, officially the Prime Minister by the rule of the Prerogative Powers can decide to employ military forces by himself. However, in practice, he often chooses to compose ad hoc committees and consensus is sought in Cabinet meetings prior to deciding on the actual act of deploying military means.

5.4 Conclusion

While describing the foreign and security policy of the two nations, outlining the relations between the senior civil and military decision-makers, and consequently describing the decision-making with regard to the use of military forces, the contours of why these actors decided to engage their forces in South Afghanistan surface. The motivations underlying the reasoning of the senior civil and military decision-makers of both nations have been named to be the most prominent and most consistent pillars of British and Dutch foreign and security policies: the desire to be both a trustworthy Alliance member and reliable partner to the United States.

At first glance, one can best define this desire to be rooted in a rationalist calculation of interest, namely maintaining relevance as a partner. However, taking a second look at the behaviour in the international arena by the United Kingdom and the Netherlands with regard to both NATO and the United States, the rationale appears to be more of a shared belief, at times even a habitual reflex. By themselves, the actions of the senior civil and military decision-makers were in line with these traditional pillars of foreign and security policy.

The foreign and security policy of both nations also contains a rather normative component, albeit more profoundly articulated in the United Kingdom consistently throughout the time Prime Minister Blair was in office. Ever since Labour had come to power in the United Kingdom the 'forces for good' became a driving force in their foreign policy not only rhetorically but in practice as well in the sense that their military forces were used to bring about security in places such as Kosovo and Sierra Leone. Also, the Netherlands, albeit less prominently, attained the posture of an active contributor to international stability through the deployment of military forces. Hence, both nations strongly adhered to an imposition of liberal values and frameworks in the belief this would bring about a safe and secure international community.

The relations between the senior civil and military decision-makers in the two countries differed in quality. Whereas in the Netherlands most of the senior civil and military decision-

makers commented on their relations as being rather good and professional, there seemed to be more mistrust between the British senior civil and military decision-makers. To a certain degree this can be explained by the failures of civil military cooperation in Iraq and the disappointing results of the operation overall. Prime Minister Blair's preference to 'wheel and deal' with the military caused quite some annoyance as well in the sense that the senior civilian decision-makers felt their opinion was of less importance.

The institutional differences between the two countries resulted in, amongst other things, different settings in which the actors met. In the United Kingdom mostly ad hoc committees were set up primarily featuring like-minded advisors or trustees of the Prime Minister; in the Netherlands the forum in which the senior civil and military actors meet is institutionalised. One could argue this official forum to better facilitate the development and implementation of military operations in the sense that a permanent dialogue at the civil military interface is guaranteed. However, that the PCRU could have performed the function of ensuring an institutionalised cooperation and hence dialogue between the senior civil and military decision-makers. However, the unit is more seen as a provider of civilian personnel for deployments and not so much as facilitating cooperation and dialogue, let alone providing strategic guidance.

Also, institutional settings have been proven to provide vocabularies that frame thought and understandings and define what are legitimate arguments and standards of justification.¹⁰⁵ Whereas a coalition system, by definition, requires a great deal of negotiation and communicative acts, this is less the case in a majoritarian system. As such, the language exercised by the senior civil and military decision-makers in the Dutch coalition system is seen to better portray the beliefs of the group as a whole. This is in opposition to the language exercised by the group of decision-makers in the British Westminster system. They habitually use the language that has been imposed upon them by their Prime Minister.

Now that the strategic context and the respective relations between the senior civil and military decision-makers in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have been outlined, the actions of these actors that ultimately resulted in the deployment of their military forces to South Afghanistan will be reconstructed in the following chapters.

■
105 Charles Wright Mills, 'Situating Actions and Vocabularies of Motive', *American Sociological Review* 5(6) (1940) 904-913.

6

Chapter 6 The Dutch Case

6.1 Introduction: Setting the Stage

The context in which the decision was taken to commit Dutch forces to South Afghanistan should largely be seen in relation to NATO's expansion to the South and the Dutch desire to acquire a greater role as a reliable NATO partner. The 'defining moments' of the reconstruction of the Dutch case were principally found in the determination of the director of operations (MOD), General Pieter Cobelens, in close cooperation with the director political affairs (MOF), Hugo Siblesz, to forge a prominent role for Dutch forces within NATO's expansion to South Afghanistan.

Throughout the whole process of deciding if and how the Dutch forces were to contribute to the stabilisation of South Afghanistan, several strategic decisions were not taken without being articulated at the political level. For one, the objective that needed to be attained, secondly, the selection of the province and thirdly, the number of troops. These decisions were taken at the military level, as such implicitly questioning the primacy of politics in the matter.

NATO's stabilisation operations and the Alliance's desire to expand its footprint is the setting in which the senior civil and military decision-makers anticipated and developed the activities that led to the use of military means for the stabilisation of Uruzgan.

6.2 The Foreign Policy Problem: The Logic of Participating in NATO's Expansion to the South of Afghanistan

The political context of NATO's expansion to South Afghanistan in a counter clockwise manner was decided upon in October 2003 through the adoption of UN Resolution 1510.¹ There was true desire to advance further stabilisation efforts through an expanding ISAF presence whereby the counter terrorist operations of the United States would be reduced. Not fully aware at that time about an upcoming insurgency in the South, most member states did envisage the Southern provinces to be less permissive than other regions in Afghanistan. It was evident that NATO needed to show its muscle in order to allow the United States to focus its attention on Iraq. Dutch foreign politics has, as described earlier, always placed a great emphasis on good relations with the United States and through being a trustworthy NATO member it would be able to display its dedication.

1 Resolution 1510 United Nations Security Council (13 October 2003), S/RES/1510 (2003).

From the perspective of most of the military and civil respondents of this study, both the relationship with the United States and ‘responsible alliance behavior’ were foundational for their respective choices with regard to the deployment of Dutch forces to Uruzgan. Some respondents indicated they believed the Netherlands was dedicated to making a true difference in Afghanistan and wanted to enhance its commitment to the facilitation of a stable Afghan state. Others pointed to the fact that the foreign policy of the Netherlands was indecisive about the posture it envisioned, complicating the formulation of goals when it came to employing its military instrument.²

With regard to the ambition to contribute military forces for NATO’s expansion to South Afghanistan, another issue surfaced, namely the desire to use the Dutch military in a high risk area and showing their ability to ‘do the job’ a desire very much rooted in the performance of the Dutch military during the fall of the enclave of Srebrenica.³ Furthermore, an implicit desire of the Netherlands to be a key player in the international arena could be fulfilled. By providing troops and other resources for the stabilisation of South Afghanistan, the Dutch were yet again a serious partner for important allies such as the United States and the United Kingdom. A feature which has constantly been underlined by the Dutch NATO secretary, general Jaap de Hoop Scheffer: ‘One needs to step up and take responsibility in order to be taken seriously within the international arena. The Alliance expects its members to act when needed and when they do so, they will experience a difference in treatment in general and by the United States in particular’.⁴

The observations of De Hoop Scheffer were emphasised by various military and political respondents who claim to have experienced that they ‘mattered’ to their international counterparts and, as a result, received a ‘seat at the table’.⁵ Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ben Bot, remembered: ‘Back in the days of Uruzgan, we were players in the major league [...] We truly belonged to the club of important nations and were invited to everything. We have clearly and painfully experienced the difference in treatment once it became clear we would end our mission in Uruzgan. We dropped somewhere to the last spot on the international rating list’.⁶

Most politicians and diplomats, and some military respondents as well, referred to the ‘responsibility’ of the Netherlands to contribute to a safer and better world. One of them was Minister of Defence, Henk Kamp. He felt very responsible as he explained: ‘There is a lot of

■
2 Interviews Nijssen, Swartbol, Noom, Van Oosterom

3 This event has been extensively described in chapter 5.

4 Interview De Hoop Scheffer *Translated from Dutch*

5 Interview Schaper, Godderij, Berlijn, Nijssen, Siblez, Cobelens, Swartbol.

6 Interview Bot. *Translated from Dutch*

suffering in the world. We have to act against those who cause this suffering and despair. By definition, intervention includes military means [...] we are obliged to contribute'.⁷

The director of the directorate general policy of the Ministry of Defence, Co Casteleijn, identifies the so-called 'burden sharing' factor within the NATO alliance as the primary reason for the Dutch participation in Phase III of NATO's expansion in Afghanistan. 'If NATO views the Netherlands as a serious contributor of troops for NATO missions, than we should provide our troops like a true committed ally. As such, we demonstrate our political leverage. Of course, being a reliable NATO partner is closely related to maintaining good relationships with the United States [...] At the time however, they were not at all exercising political pressure on us to commit our forces, that happened much later'.⁸

On the whole, respondents [civil and military] underlined the general tendency present in the Netherlands to downplay the existence of national interest in relation to the deployment of troops. Jack de Vries, political advisor to Balkenende, explains 'in the Netherlands it is quite hard to define our national interest because it is heavily entangled with party politics and a coalition government'.⁹ And, when acknowledged, it often occurs behind the scenes. Also in the case of Uruzgan, the term national interest was not part of the vocabulary used to either explain or promote the mission. This does of course not imply in any way the Dutch to not have national interests, but very much shows the normative disposition that in principle the Netherlands is to engage in stabilisation activities in support of international order and stability without a reference to their own interest.

6.3 Occasions for Decisions: Military Trilateral Initiative

Deliberations about a deployment had commenced in the autumn of 2004.¹⁰ These initiatives predated formal Dutch governmental confirmation of its intention to commit troops which occurred in February 2005.¹¹ Anticipating required troop contributions for the expansion, various nations, amongst them the Netherlands, had started their own multilateral talks with possible partners on a working level (directorates of operations of the respective Ministries of Defence). Hence, the initiatives developed by their director of operations did not come as a surprise to the military planners. The director of operations, General Cobelens,

7 Interview Kamp. *Translated from Dutch*

8 Interview Casteleijn. *Translated from Dutch*

9 Interview De Vries. *Translated from Dutch*

10 Interview Cobelens, NL LNO PJHQ, Van Klaarbergen.

11 Interview Cobelens, Kamp, Hartog, Keij, Huiben, Noom.

had been informed about the British plans via a Dutch liaison officer (LNO) stationed at the British Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) in August 2004.¹² In his letter to Cobelens, he outlined the British plans to deploy forces to the South and their interest in doing so in a multinational setting of likeminded nations.¹³

The director of operations was officially sounded out by the British somewhere in the autumn of 2004 with the idea of contributing forces for NATO's expansion to the South. In addition, Cobelens had already established various informal contacts with the Canadians and the Americans as well since he anticipated a possible mission in the South of Afghanistan. 'Within NATO, we were one of the only nations capable of conducting such a mission [high operations]. In addition, we had already deployed our special forces to the Kandahar region'¹⁴, Cobelens revealed the Minister was constantly informed by the Chief of Defence about the ideas and initiatives to deploy to the South. 'We fed the Minister of Defence with the various possibilities and options. As director of operations you do have a lot of power, and as such one has to have integrity and deliver reliable information'.¹⁵

The dynamics of the military bilateral talks¹⁶ of these likeminded nations reportedly took General Jim Jones, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) by surprise: 'They hammered out the whole thing without NATO's assistance, behind closed doors.... We were not aware of the details'.¹⁷

This finding supports the evidence found for this case where both the military and diplomatic head of the Dutch mission to NATO declared they were not in the loop when it came to the planning of the mission to Uruzgan. Both reported they were hardly – if ever – involved in either the informal negotiations or initial planning.¹⁸ Nor were they approached by partner nations' delegates to explore possibilities.¹⁹ The explorative talks about a mission had, as mentioned earlier, started between the two directors of operations of the respective

12 Based on archive DOPS, personal archive LNO and interview with NL LNO, 19 June, 2013, by phone Northwood – Breda

13 Interview NL LNO Norfolk – Breda, 18.06.2013

14 The British had already opted for Helmand. The archive of the operations directorate does reveal however, a American situation report about Uruzgan (delivered by the US PRT in Uruzgan) delivered to the British. It describes potential strengths and weaknesses of the province for the Brits. One of the anticipated weaknesses would be the low visibility of the province and political impact and profile. Also, it mentions the political kudos of allowing Canadians to have Kandahar.

15 Interview Cobelens. *Translated from Dutch*. This information is confirmed by Minister of Defence Kamp when he was interviewed. *Translated from Dutch*

16 In fact, there were trilateral talks since Canada was equally involved in this as well. However, this study only studies the deployment of the British and Dutch forces. As mentioned throughout this study, interesting parallels are also evident when looking at the Canadian case. See Matthew Willis, 'An Unexpected War, A Not-Unexpected Mission. The origins of Kandahar 2005', *International Journal* 67(4) (2013) 779-1000.

17 Willis, 'An Unexpected War, A Not-Unexpected Mission', 789.

18 Interviews Schaper and Godderij *Translated from Dutch*

19 When the Netherlands kept on delaying its formal political approval for the deployment of Dutch troops the Dutch delegation at NATO was approached various times by partnering nations, but until then they were not in the loop. In fact, as indicated by Godderij, he had to contact The Hague himself in order to stay informed.

defence staffs. Consequently, informal talks²⁰ on a working level at the three Ministries of Defence in Canada, the Netherlands, and, the United Kingdom were intensified.

These informal talks between the three nations carried great value in the sense that without this partnering, none of these nations would likely have deployed their forces. In addition, shared thinking and observations about available provinces and probable time-frames, amongst other things, are named to have figured in their calculations.²¹

The exchange of information on a military level received a more formal status once the steering group military operations was informed about the deliberations concerning a possible deployment to South Afghanistan somewhere at the end of January 2005. Both on national level and international level, various documents started to appear. Following up on the letter sent to the MOD in August 2004, the Dutch liaison officer at British permanent joint headquarters had sent another letter in March that year in which he had briefly set out the ongoing planning of the British and their intent to cooperate with the Netherlands and Canada in a trilateral framework and to set up joint planning and information systems.²²

The intensification and more formal communication appearing in March 2005 was logical given the upcoming NATO Stage 3 informal force generation²³ meeting, held in Brussels on the 16th of March. At this meeting, SACEUR intended to undertake early discussions with nations in the planning and force generation for operations. He was very well aware any national planning declared at the meeting had to be considered informal since most nations were still in, or had not even started, the process of obtaining parliamentary or governmental approval.

At this point, one could start to wonder if the military was in fact not marching too fast, given the fact that officially politicians had not been informed yet.

Some perspectives:

Political and military processes often evolve parallel of one another, but in this particular case, the political process had not even started. This is quite exceptional and as far as I know it is the first time it has occurred in this manner. I have not experienced this before. The military planning process began to dictate the political need [...] Foreign Affairs and the politicians rather easily bought into the plan. Personally (and as the counsellor of

20 As pointed out by operational military planner Keijj, 'Communications, even only on a military level, can never be seen as informal. It signals much more than just 'explorative talks'. His observation was underlined by the NL LNO at PJHQ who remembers how the UK was relying on NL's participation early on in the autumn of 2004.

21 Willis, 'An Unexpected War, A Not-Unexpected Mission', 780, pagina nummers uitzoeken

22 Interview Dutch LNO PJHQ, *Translated from Dutch*; and letter (19.08.2004) from LNO to DOPS

23 The procedure for staffing an operation or mission is often referred to as "force generation". This procedure ensures that Alliance operations or missions have the manpower and materials required to achieve set objectives. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50316.htm (latest modification 26.08.2014, last accessed 08.08.2013).

the Prime Minister), I believed the operations directorate was moving fast, too fast actually, since we still needed to assess the political sensitivities and determine our level of ambition.²⁴

Both [pol/mil] processes are intrinsically connected to one another thereby influencing each other as well. Through the course of political decision-making, more clarity about the preconditions of the deployment is likely to occur. Military planning and preparation can provide more insight and information about the vocal points of the assessment framework, thereby possibly acquiring a prominent role in the political decision-making process. The inherent tension between the processes remains. Military preparation and the needed international agreements facilitating a possible deployment [...] can result in irreversible consequences in the sense that the political decision-making will be reduced to [...] 'going through the motions' no matter how strongly this will be denied by the politicians.²⁵

Political and military processes, at the time when we are still exploring our options for a possible military mission, occur simultaneously. Being a military organisation, one tries to look ahead considering possible military contributions.²⁶

These provisional actions initiated at the military level were contingent on a response from the political level but their impact on the decision path that evolved was nevertheless far from limited.

6.4 Emergence of a Decision Unit: The Actions of a Single Group

The provisional initiatives of the director of operations - in response to the British informal request- were supported from the start by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by one of the most important players, the head of political affairs, Hugo Siblesz. Cobelens was very well aware of the need to have at least informal back up for his informal international explorations for

■
24 Interview Swartbol *Translated from Dutch*

25 J.A. van Reijn, 'De missie Uruzgan: politieke besluitvorming nader bezien', *Carré* 30(5) (2005) 20-24. Van Reijn's perspective is based on his extensive experience at the military political strategic level as amongst other positions, chief plans and director operations at the Ministry of Defence. His observations are also shared by some politicians, mainly from smaller opposition parties who describe the article 100 procedure as 'political theatre'. Verslag van een Algemeen Overleg van de vaste commissies voor Buitenlandse Zaken en voor Defensie, 22 februari 2006, Kamerstukken II 2005-2006, Dossier 27 925 Bestrijding Internationaal Terrorisme, nr. 207, 17, 31, 43.

26 Interview Cobelens. *Translated from Dutch*

a mission to South Afghanistan and approached Siblesz once he had been sounded out by the British.²⁷

At the time when I was contacted by Cobelens, the matter had not yet been discussed at a political level. [...] Since the risks of such a mission are political, we [MOF] have to be well informed about the risks and possibilities by the military. [...] We assessed a deployment of Dutch forces to be an interesting possibility for us to play a relevant role in Afghanistan. We defined our interests as contributing to NATO's expansion to the South. The military assured us they were up for the job. Soon thereafter, I informed our Minister [of Foreign Affairs].²⁸

Both Siblesz and Cobelens believed Dutch forces were well equipped and trained to take on the difficult task of stabilising one of the Southern provinces in Afghanistan. Within the military, there was a desire [especially within the army] to prove itself under true combat circumstances in order to make up for the damaged reputation it had acquired ever since Srebrenica. In addition, the ongoing cutbacks Defence was facing fed the desire to show the military's utility, often referred to as the 'use them or lose them' phenomenon. These lines of thought were known at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and they were supportive of the evolving idea to contribute Dutch forces for NATO's expansion in Afghanistan.²⁹

Initially, the informal explorations even occurred outside the scope of the steering group military operations. However, some months after the first talks, the steering group was informed about a possible contribution to NATO's expansion to South Afghanistan as well. After that, not only the key players in the steering group but also their respective key advisors and civil servants were actively engaged in the decision path that unfolded.

6.5 Decision Unit Dynamics: The Process of Interpretation

Even though the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs joined hands in the opportunity to commit troops to NATO's expansion to South Afghanistan, a common definition of the task at hand, had not yet surfaced. In fact, despite the military genesis of the activities to commit forces to South Afghanistan, the Defence staff also questioned

27 Interview Siblesz en Cobelens *Translated from Dutch*

28 Interview Siblesz. According to one of the involved diplomats the Minister of Foreign Affairs was informed at a rather late stage (summer 2005) as such contradicting the information as provided by Siblesz *Translated from Dutch*

29 Interview Siblesz, Nijssen, Van Oosterom *Translated from Dutch*

and at times even criticised the possible mission. There were quite some differing views on the possible mission at the Ministry of Defence. First of all, the directorate general policies supposedly held reservations against the mission. When confronted with this assertion, the director of the directorate general policy at the Ministry of Defence explained the role of the directorate:

Our role within the Ministry is to ask difficult questions. Some people may interpret our critical questions as opposing arguments, but we should rather be seen as the devil's advocate. It is our task to guard the Minister from issues that have not been investigated. As such, we ask those questions beforehand, in order to be truly able to support an initiative. This culture differs from the one at Foreign Affairs. There if a certain direction is taken, it is not done to voice criticism or start discussions. I personally believe, discussion are good [...] until the last moment, just before the final version of the military advice was presented we have asked difficult questions.³⁰

Secondly, there were military planners who questioned the advisability of the mission at times. Some of them did experience stark – personal – hesitations and reservations towards the deployment of troops to the Southern regions of Afghanistan. 'I have struggled with the mission and have had severe doubts. I wanted to be sure I had covered all possible risks [...] One has to study his conscience very well'.³¹ Another planner even stated he refused to sign the order he had to distribute for the planning directorate of the MOD. 'I felt the numbers of troops and equipment were insufficient to do the job'.³²

Notwithstanding critical remarks and hesitations, the majority of the senior and civil military decision-makers believed a possible Dutch contribution to NATO's expansion to the South of Afghanistan was feasible, thus the activities for a deployment advanced. However, the planning capacity at the Defence staff was limited to five planners who had to deal with both answering questions from Parliament and planning operations concurrently.

As explicated by one of the planners from the Afghanistan team, there was a 'split' between having to provide guidance for the operational commands and dealing with political matters such as questions from Parliament: 'Unlike the United Kingdom which has separated the political and strategic level of planning³³, we had to do both things at the same time. [...] All of us knew we needed a political goal and subsequently derive our military

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30 Interview Casteleijn. *Translated from Dutch*

31 Interview Van der Have. *Translated from Dutch*

32 Interview Huijben. *Translated from Dutch* The planner handed back the order - unsigned - to his superior.

33 The Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) is an adaptable and agile HQ created to command Joint and Combined military operations, and provide politically aware military advice to the Ministry of Defence. It is at the forefront of work throughout British Defence to further improve joint operational capability. UK Ministry of Defence, 'Guidance: The Permanent Joint Headquarters', <https://www.gov.uk/the-permanent-joint-headquarters> (last accessed 13.08.2013).

mission from it. But in this case, there was no political goal when we started planning. [...] joining the mission seemed more important than any other goal'.³⁴

Therefore, a so called 'upscaling construction' was launched to create additional planning capacity. All armed services were represented in the planning department of the Defence staff but the army provided additional planners from the army command. The army command was to provide the bulk of the personnel needed for the mission to South Afghanistan so in itself, as commented on by the military respondents, it was valid to reinforce the planning staff with mainly army planners.

The upscaling construction apparently did have some disadvantages. The planners of the Defence staff indicated it had been quite difficult for those who had come to reinforce them to catch up. This occurred primarily because they had missed the orientation and analysis phase of the planning process.³⁵

The supposed lack of professionalism and lack of quality of the military planning capability at the Defence staff has been noted by quite a number of military respondents. Apart from the presumed low level of expertise and training for providing both strategic and operational analysis needed for the notification letter to Parliament (based on the assessment framework as described earlier), the planning staff had been charged with having complicated the planning of the deployment by communicating a maximum number of troops beforehand. Normally, the strength of the force package would be the outcome of the planning process.

Yet, there is a tendency within the military, stemming from their anticipation of political approval for deployment of their forces, to keep their demands low. Consequently, the limitation in terms of troop numbers is often put upon themselves. In the case of Uruzgan, this was certainly the issue. The limitation of the troop numbers was described by many military respondents as a 'self-inflicted wound'.³⁶ Anticipating possible political rejection when requesting permission to compose a robust task force, the Defence staff had come up with a number of 1000 troops. Minister of Defence Kamp recalled this number to have been presented to him by the military staff and explained that once the number was communicated within the political levels, there was no way back.³⁷ As such, it became quite difficult to increase the number of troops when this was required by the appointed units.

34 Interview Hartog. *Translated from Dutch*

35 In a military planning process much information is collected during the so called orientation phase. This phase is to ensure the staff has a common understanding of the background and underlying causes of the problem and understand the political objectives. Afterwards, the staff is to acquire a clear understanding of the problem/task.

36 Interviews Vleugels and Keij.

37 Interview Henk Kamp. *Translated from Dutch*

Some reflections on the self-inflicted wound:

The discussion about the required number of troops was an artificial discussion. During a presentation by both Berlijn³⁸ and Cobelens, one could understand, when reading between the lines, they wanted to have more troops. I mean, be honest and realistic and present your true requirement instead of anticipating resistance while doing so. When you come up with a phased approach with regard to deploying troops, you only do so to safeguard political support for the mission. There was a true belief that the politicians would only approve a certain number of troops which resulted in debates about how to make sure this quantity would not be increased [...] over the course of years I have been annoyed about the troop numbers discussion in Parliament [...] one needs to be able to send the right number of troops when required.³⁹

During the political decision-making process additional limitations or conditions are put upon the deployment of forces. [...] [It is] Not the operational situation in the area where the forces are to deploy which dictates the planning, but the political situation in the Netherlands comes to drive the planning process. Ironically, a [any] limitation can result in an increase of risks for the deployed units, and a decrease in the effectiveness of the mission.⁴⁰

The Dutch Prime Minister did not engage that much with the preparations for the mission to Afghanistan, neither did he provide (additional) guidance. He had been informed about the matter but kept a certain distance. Some respondents implied that Jack de Vries, the Prime Minister's political advisor and assistant, was against the mission and to have cared more about party politics and the electorate. De Vries himself cannot recall he had been against the mission:

I do not believe I was against the mission but yes, I did care about how things would end up from an electoral point of view. It was my task to advise the PM on how things would develop within the coalition and within Parliament and to point the PM to possible political risks. This can partially be best described as party politics but I also had to guard the profile of the PM⁴¹

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38 The Chief of Defence.

39 Interview Casteleijn. *Translated from Dutch*

40 Reijn, 'De missie Uruzgan'.

41 Interview De Vries. *Translated from Dutch*

The Prime Minister was kept in the loop throughout the planning of a possible deployment which was taking greater shape every day. Consequently, Prime Minister Balkenende, and his Minister of Defence Kamp and Minister of Foreign Affairs Bot met at the Ministry of Defence on the 3rd of May 2005 to be briefed on the developments and progress. Three weeks later, an additional meeting about the possible deployment to the South was held with all senior civil and military decision-makers involved (represented in the steering group military Operations). It was there that it was decided Minister Bot would sound out the political factions with regard to their provisional support for the mission.⁴²

6.6 Occasion for Decision: Political Involvement

Strengthened by the support of Prime Minister Balkenende and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence, the provisional 'go ahead' for the planning of the mission was provided during another SMO meeting on the 8th of June.⁴³ The day before, a two day working conference had commenced in London dealing with Phase III of NATO's expansion to the South. At this meeting, Canada, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and their (potential) partners, Denmark, Romania and Australia shared their thoughts and insights on committing to stabilising the South of Afghanistan. The various representatives at the conference were divided into working groups which dealt with the various aspects of NATO's expansion to the South: operations, logistics, communication, information, medical, and, intelligence.

In order to properly continue their planning, now that more official commitments had been made on an international level, the Netherlands needed to select a province in South Afghanistan. During the various meetings and contacts between the three nations, Canada had expressed its desire to take on Kandahar and consequently the United Kingdom decided to assume responsibility for Helmand. The Netherlands needed to make up their mind about which province would suit Dutch capabilities best, hence Ministerial approval was sought to deploy a recce team to Afghanistan.

Inspired by the (internationally) held belief that the Southern regions needed to be stabilised in an integrated manner, combining diplomatic, development, and Defence efforts simultaneously, the Netherlands deployed a so-called joint fact finding mission on 14 June. The party comprised of three military planners, an intelligence and a civil military officer, a diplomat and a representative of the Ministry of Development Cooperation.

42 Lenny Hazelbag, *Politieke besluitvorming van de missie Uruzgan: een reconstructie*. Research Paper 90 (Breda 2009) 13.

43 Hazelbag, 'Politieke besluitvorming van de missie Uruzgan', 14.

Even though in the initial order it was envisioned having a civilian representative of the directorate general policy join the team, no such thing happened. According to the head of the directorate, this was a result of their, at that time, strong belief their personnel were not to engage with the details of the mission. This view changed throughout the course of events as the importance of the involvement of the directorate even on this level became apparent.

The following anecdote perfectly illustrates the shifting dimensions in terms of roles and responsibilities in civil military relations - albeit in this case for the conduct of reces - at the Ministry of Defence:

As a civilian strategist, I experienced what I coined the ‘Cobelens factor’, or put in other words, the ‘can do mentality’ as rather difficult. At the time of the fact finding mission to the South, there had been a discussion about the role of the DAB in these kinds of reces. One point of view [and my own opinion as well] was that regarding practical matters such as these, our directorate would not play an important role. However, eventually my people increasingly participated in reces. At one point in time, Foreign Affairs decided to include their own people in fact finding missions. This decision ultimately led to the participation of our directorate as well. However, the exact role of our directorate in this regard had not been that clear. Later on, we developed procedures for matters with regard to the reces to ensure a smooth cooperation. One really needs to be involved to be able to provide a sound judgment.⁴⁴

Officially, the fact finding mission had been – as stated earlier - executed to gather information about the most desirable province for the deployment of Dutch troops. But as one of the primary planners of the operation to Uruzgan [who was also part of the fact finding team] explains: ‘Formally, a strategic recce was conducted to provide advice about which province the Netherlands was to deploy its forces to. Informally, this decision [Uruzgan] had already been taken by the Director of operations. It would have been a lot easier if we could have known this up front; at least I was not aware of his preference’.⁴⁵ His view is supported by various military and political respondents.⁴⁶

Not all members of the fact finding mission agreed Uruzgan was indeed the best option for the Netherlands. One of the planners recalls, ‘With the limitations provided to us in terms of numbers of troops, the only logical outcome of the recce should have been Nimruz. However, it did contain the disadvantage of long logistical lines. On top of that, it would not

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44 Interview Casteleijn. *Translated from Dutch*

45 Interview Huiben, *Translated from Dutch*

46 Interview Klarenberg, Swartbol *Translated from Dutch*

have been fair to our counterparts – in terms of risk sharing - if we had assumed responsibility over a relatively small and benign province'.⁴⁷

Interestingly enough, initially [long before the fact finding mission] Kandahar had been the first choice of director of operations Cobelens. Casteleijn remembered this discussion well and commented: 'The fact that we wanted to deploy our forces to the province of Kandahar in hindsight truly illustrates our naivety. We thought it was manageable since we already had deployed our special forces to the region. There was a lot of uncertainty about which province would ultimately be the one where we would be in the lead. In the end, we even feared Uruzgan to be the most dangerous province of all'.⁴⁸

The planning of the mission had been very much influenced by the boundaries set to the Dutch deployment: providing stability in Uruzgan within a two year time frame, with a maximum of 1200 troops and a budget of 320 million euro's⁴⁹. This resulted in, according to those involved in the planning [with a sense of understatement], a 'challenging task'.⁵⁰

Consequently, the objectives informing the planning were not based on a proper assessment of the task but were driven by restrictions, partly put on themselves by the military [troop numbers], and partly put on the military planning process by the politicians [budget and time frame]. What needed to be achieved in Uruzgan, explaining why the Netherlands would commit its forces in the first place, was according to many respondents, not explicated. As such, various reasons for the deployment, like supporting the United States, prevention of terrorism on Dutch soil, the development of the Uruzgan, eliminating the Taliban, support for the facilitation of democracy in Afghanistan, etcetera, have been named by both the military planners as by the diplomats.

From the very beginning, it was evident to the military planners that an integrated approach to the stabilisation of Uruzgan was a prerequisite for sustainable results. The belief in an integrated approach had been expressed by Foreign Minister Bot in a speech he held at a conference on security and development in 2006, but was by no means a Dutch invention.⁵¹ The terminology and concept had already - as mentioned earlier - been developed in Canada

47 Interview Huiben, *Translated from Dutch*

48 Interview Cobelens. *Translated from Dutch*

49 Article 100 letter to parliament, Bestrijding Internationaal Terrorisme, brief van de Ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken, van Defensie en voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, Den Haag, vergaderjaar 2005 – 2006, 22 december 2005, Kamerstuk 27925, nr. 193, 6 (In Dutch).

50 One of the planners of the MOD had voiced his concern about the limit set to the amount of personell to be deployed to Uruzgan (Interview Huiben) *Translated from Dutch* Also, the commander of the Taskforce 1, expressed his concerns which eventually led to the commitment of additional troops (Interview Vleugels). *Translated from Dutch*

51 Minister Bot referred to the 3D approach as the trinity of politics, security and development - in reference to the Clausewitzian trinity of army, people and government-. 'In places where we are trying to strengthen democracy and the rule of law, our military efforts should support and be seen to support this overall effort. Where we are trying to win over the population for a more peaceful and stable order, our developmental instruments should support and be seen to support the overall effort'. Minister of Foreign Affairs Bernard Bot, 'The Dutch Approach: Preserving the Trinity of Politics, Security and Development', Speech presented at the SID and NCDO Conference on Security and Development, The Hague (7.04.2006). <http://cicam.ruhosting.nl/teksten/act.07.grotenhuis.speech%20Minister%20obot.pdf> (last accessed 15.08.2013).

as well as in the United Kingdom.⁵² Already in April 2005, during a meeting in The Hague where concepts of the nations who would deploy their forces to the South were discussed, the Canadians had presented their 3D approach. Their terminology, combined with the terminology provided by NATO in their fragmentary order about the creation of Afghan Development Zones (ADZ),⁵³ was included in the operations plan of the first task force.⁵⁴

Also, the use of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT)⁵⁵ as a focal point of the stabilisation effort, supported by a battle group, had been decided upon at the international working conferences. The PRT was seen as the embodiment of the integrated approach, facilitating the stabilisation of Uruzgan.

6.7 The Process Outcome: Provisional Consensus

Meanwhile, the planning of the mission had developed in a mature and well-prepared fashion, requiring political approval and guidance for further execution. The group of senior civilian and military decision-makers reached provisional consensus, but with still a lot of information needed to be collected on the details of such a deployment. In order to gain approval for their instigated provisional actions and to continue on the decision path that emerged, Parliament needed to be notified. This action signalled that subsequent decisions would be contingent on not only the inclusion but ultimately also confirmation of Parliament with the taken route.

6.8 The Action and the Subsequent Occasion for Decision : Notification of Parliament

On June 16th 2005, two days after the fact finding mission had left for Afghanistan, the Dutch Parliament was informed by the government about the latter's intention to deploy troops in the Southern part of Afghanistan, in a joint effort with the United Kingdom and Canada.

■ The term '3Dapproach' was first used by Canadians in 2004. See: 'Address by Prime Minister Paul Martin on occasion of his visit to Washington DC', 29 April 2004. The British have introduced the comprehensive approach in their joint discussion note 04/05 published by their Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre in 2005. See: UK Ministry of Defence, 'Comprehensive Approach, Joint Discussion Note 4/05 (January 2006)', http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCAQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.rrc.nato.int%2Fsystems%2Ffile_download.ashx%3Fpg%3D3313%26ver%3D1&ei=aX7GU8DmNKrH7Aa1n4GIBg&usq=AFOjCNEF5HllugtO_UUFuwzRhg7aludNtg&sig2=W4Bi3beSo1Jdqrw_cwZcAFA (last accessed January 2013).

53 For a description of Afghan Development Zones, see chapter 4, P 89-99.

54 Interview Van Klaarbergen. *Translated from Dutch*

55 For a description of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, see chapter 4, P 91-94.

Officially and formally, this so-called ‘notification’, is the starting point for finding out the desirability and feasibility of a military mission. But as already shown, in reality and for all practical purposes, the prospects and possibilities for the intended deployment had been under political, diplomatic and military scrutiny for over a year. In Brussels, as well as in The Hague, deliberations were well underway with all parties and partners involved, about how a robust contribution to ISAF’s next stage in the stabilisation of Afghanistan, could be envisioned.⁵⁶

The announcement was, due to political sensitivities, somehow hidden in a more general letter to parliament regarding a NATO meeting.⁵⁷ Anticipating political sensitivities regarding a possible deployment, both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs had already probed coalition party D66 [Liberal Democrats] and opposition party PvdA [Labour].⁵⁸ Consequently, both parties agreed to further explorations and planning to the South of Afghanistan.⁵⁹ However, some Members of Parliament had expressed their annoyance about the ‘concealing feature’ of the letter.⁶⁰

6.9 The Changing Configuration of the Unit: An (Inter) Governmental Coalition

The configuration of the decision group in which the senior civilian and military decision-makers had acted thus far had changed since parliament was informed about a possible deployment of forces. Now not only domestic politics came into play, but also the informal military working groups that were engaged with the details of the military endeavour acquired a more prominent status in the sense that the conditionality of the actions of the three nations further specified the interdependency of a joint approach.

Indeed, five days after Parliament had been informed, General Cobelens and some of his staff members⁶¹ left for another trilateral working conference. The objective of the

56 Lenny Hazelbag, ‘Political Decision-making of the Mission in Uruzgan, a Reconstruction’, in: De Weger, M, Osinga, F. and Kirkels (eds.) *NL-ARMS 2009. Complex Operations: Studies on Lebanon (2006) and Afghanistan (2006-present)* (Breda 2009) 251-276; Meulen and Grandia, ‘Brussels Calling: Domestic Politics under International Pressure’.

57 Brief van de Minister van Defensie, 16 juni 2005, Kamerstukken II 2004-2005, Dossier 28 676 NAVO, nr. 22.

58 The letter was supposed to initiate further consultation between the government and parliament, after which the article 100 procedure was to result in a decision about the deployment. However, opposition party D66 had already announced its point of view before the letter appeared. In a television broadcasting (*Buitenhof*) fraction leader Boris Dittrich expressed his sincere doubts the mission. Klep, *Uruzgan*, 23.

59 Klep, *Uruzgan*, 22

60 Hazelbag, *Politieke besluitvorming van de missie Uruzgan*, 15

61 The party included an operational planner, a communications officer and information officer

meeting held in Ottawa was to seek concurrence on a common approach to ISAF Stage III in preparation for NATO's force generation conference to be held on the 25th of July.⁶²

Apart from the national delegations of the three lead nations, there were also representatives from relevant NATO commands: Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), Joint Forces Command Brussum (JFCB), American commands and staffs: Central Command Tampa (CENTCOM), Joint Staff and Pentagon, and other potential force contributors for Stage III such as Romania and Australia.

Even though most nations had not yet concluded their operational analysis, a potential outline about the structure of forces required⁶³ for the region was presented. The Americans advised a minimum of one provincial reconstruction team and one battle group or taskforce per province and emphasised the need to train both the Afghan national police and army if one was to achieve long term stability and security.⁶⁴

On the 25th of July, the formal force generation conference for NATO's Stage III operations to the South of Afghanistan was held in Brussels. Following from the advice provided by the director of operations of the MOD, the Netherlands offered to assume responsibility over Uruzgan but did announce some preconditions adjunct to their bid. The Dutch commitment was first of all limited to force strength of around 1100 (excluding the F16 squadron). Secondly, the Dutch favoured a phased approach to stabilisation of the province and wanted to remain autonomous in their decision as to whether or not a new phase would be initiated (the so called incremental approach as explained earlier). Thirdly, the Dutch demanded that their fighter jets and helicopters to be stationed at Kandahar airport - so they would be able to provide air support⁶⁵ to the Dutch troops – before the Dutch would start their operations. The fourth precondition was the requirement of a partner nation to support the Dutch in Uruzgan. Australia had already announced its intention to support the Dutch provincial reconstruction team with 200 soldiers. The fifth condition attributed the requirement of NATO funding for the military base at Kandahar. The Dutch believed it would be unfair if the three lead nations would be the only ones financing this essential piece of NATO's infrastructure in the South. The last, and imperative aspect for the Dutch, as will be shown later on, was the de-confliction between the American counter terrorist operations under

62 The outcome of the working group meetings held in London on the 7th and 8th of June was discussed. The intent was to – after possible required adjustments - present the results to the operations directorates of Canada, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

63 During the meeting in Ottawa, the Dutch director operations suggested the force generation for stage III should focus on PRTs supported by a military structure versus a military structure supported by PRTs. A decision had to be made concerning which element would be in the lead, since this would inevitably influence the force structure.

64 The information provided in the paragraphs about the meeting in Ottawa contains an unclassified summary of the data collected from documents of the operations directorate at the MOD. In addition, lieutenant colonel Bert Keij (one of the members of the planning party) provided insights about the meeting. Interview Keij. *Translated from Dutch*

65 Ever since Srebrenica, where air support could/had not been delivered to the Dutch troops in need, the provision of air support for Dutch troops became a crucial factor for the conduct of international operations.

the mandate of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and the stabilisation operations headed by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).⁶⁶

Anticipating political approval would soon materialise, a warning order was sent to those military units likely to be deployed to Afghanistan on the 16th of August of 2005. Meanwhile, a third trilateral conference was to take place in The Hague on the 17th and 18th of August 2005. NATO was to include all developed concepts of the working groups on operational, logistical, informational, communicational and medical matters in their final operations order⁶⁷ for the expansion to the South. At the time of the conference, both Canada and the United Kingdom had received political approval for the participation of their forces in the stabilisation of respectively Kandahar and Helmand. Denmark – a partner of the British - was still awaiting political approval. Australia announced it investigated a partnership with the Dutch PRT in Uruzgan and expected to receive a decision in November. They had already decided however, to deploy a Special Forces unit of 350 men to Uruzgan, operating under direct command of the Americans from September 2005 onward.⁶⁸

Given the limitation to the Dutch mission in terms of troop numbers, it became paramount to find a suitable partner in order to be able to effectively expand coalition presence in the province. As such, the Australian deliberations to reinforce the Dutch PRT with at least 200 military were warmly welcomed by the Netherlands. It was agreed bilateral meetings would be initiated in close cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well.⁶⁹

6.10 Process of Interpretation: Domestic versus International Pressures

The process of interpretation was ongoing, at times requiring new decisions and inputs, but to a great degree continuing the activities as had unfolded from the outset. Thus, as preparations continued, a second recce was executed from the 8th to 14th September. The operational and logistic picture of the province needed enhancement and the developed concept of operations needed to be validated. On the whole, the team concluded the concept

66 Discussion note of Directorate General Policy, Directorate Operations on the NL contribution to the Force Generation Conference Stage 3 in Afghanistan directed to the Minister and his secretary of State, 21.07.2005. Keyfiles, Directie Operatieën (DOPS), disk 225, Semi Statisch Informatiebeheer Rijswijk.

67 NATO's operation order was to be presented at the NAC in October 2005.

68 Minutes working group meeting, 24.08.2005, Keyfiles, Directie Operatieën (DOPS), disk 225, Semi Statisch Informatiebeheer Rijswijk.

69 Minutes working group meeting, 24.08.2005, Keyfiles, Directie Operatieën (DOPS), disk 225, Semi Statisch Informatiebeheer Rijswijk.

of operations to be sustainable. The gathered information was processed in ‘first impression reports’ and distributed to the various military commands engaged in the planning.⁷⁰

On the 19th September 2005, the United Kingdom called for a bilateral consultation with the Netherlands at its embassy in The Hague. The meeting covered British plans⁷¹ for Helmand and the pending political approval for Dutch forces to deploy. The British emphasised their need for close coordination with the civilian part of the stabilisation effort in close coordination with the Netherlands and Canada, and proposed to establish a network of political advisors and to set up a monthly political-military video conference between the three capitals.⁷²

Quite some turbulence, doubt, and nuisance, about the feasibility of the mission to Uruzgan evolved at the Defence staff in October 2005. The main source of commotion was the information provided in a report about the province by the Dutch military intelligence service. The report was initially provided to the Defence staff since the intelligence estimate about the security situation and the possibilities of exerting influence on the spoilers in the region was needed to compose a proper military advice.

Apparently, an intelligence assessment and a supplementary intelligence report were circulating within the staff. Hence, it was not clear to the military planners which verdict about the security situation needed to be included in the military advice about the mission. As such, guidance was sought and the Minister and his Secretary of State were to decide on which formulation would best describe the level of insecurity in Uruzgan.⁷³

A day before the report was sent to the Defence staff, the director of operations, General Cobelens, had already expressed the Dutch concerns regarding the security situation in Uruzgan at the trilateral working conference⁷⁴ in Tampa, in the United States. Also, the deputy Chief of Defence and the director of political affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had conducted explorative talks with the Australians in Australia, trying to safeguard the presence of an international partner in Uruzgan.

On the 27th of October, the Chief of Defence presented the military advice, composed by his military planners and the directorate of general policy, to the Minister of Defence. As the head of the directorate remembered:

70 Recce reports, Directorate Operations, Ministry of Defence 2006, Defence Archives, Rijswijk. Liefst nog met vindplaats (archieffonds, inventarisnummer, ev. Folionummer)

71 The British elaborated on their plan for Helmand, outlining a phased presence of three year whereby they would focus on the development of good governance, security, and, social-economic development, and, the fight against the drugs in the region.

72 Interview Casteleijn.

73 Internal memo on the intelligence report on Uruzgan, Directorate Operations, Ministry of Defence, Defence Archives, Rijswijk archieffonds, inventarisnummer, ev. Folionummer

74 During the conference Cobelens emphasised the Dutch perspective that NATO should be able to make a visible difference from OEF. Cobelens stated that if partners will prolong the current working methods of operations, there is a concern that partners will miss a window of opportunity to change. Otherwise, OEF would be prolonged with a NATO flag on top of it. Sources: Directorate Operations, Ministry of Defence, Defence Archives, Rijswijk.

Military advice provided to the politicians about a possible mission requires a long way to appear in its definite form. It does take an enormous amount of time and effort to finally get the signature of the Minister for the military advice. And when it finally does appear in its final setting, the Minister, nor me, will tamper with it. However, in the case of this particular mission, the military advice was adjusted after the appearance of a report from our military intelligence service. At the end of October in 2005, a crisis appeared when this report disclosed the true dangers of the mission.⁷⁵

The day after the military advice had been presented to the Minister of Defence, the Council of Ministers conveyed but did not come to a decision about the mission. Shortly after, the Minister left for a visit to Afghanistan in a troubled state of mind with the information he had acquired about the security situation in Uruzgan. During this visit, he expressed his concerns about the feasibility of the mission and cast doubts as to whether the deployment was worth the risk. He especially referred to the fact that very likely counterinsurgency operations needed to be executed, something he was not a proponent of. He was cautioned to use such terminology by the directorate of general policy since it was assessed to create more opposition against the deployment. As such, it was decided to refrain from using the terms.⁷⁶

As a result of the information collected during the visit to Afghanistan and the information provided to him in the military advice, Minister Kamp had drafted a list of sixteen specific points he wanted to have explicated or guaranteed before he would deploy his forces. The drafting of this list anticipated possible questions and worries of Parliament about certain issues of the mission, like the separation of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and the NATO mission. The Minister preferred to have matters defined and arranged before he would present the mission to Parliament.⁷⁷

The most prominent issues on the Defence Minister's list included a need for American involvement in terms of troops and training activities in and around Uruzgan. He desired the continued presence of American forces in the North of Uruzgan since Dutch forces were unable – as indicated during a recce executed by the army staff⁷⁸ – to maintain the American firebases Anaconda and Cobra. Limited troop presence in the north of the province would

75 Interview Casteleijn, *Translated from Dutch*

76 Interview Kamp and reports of DOPS 2006 Directorate Operations, Ministry of Defence, Defence Archives, Rijswijk. *Translated from Dutch*

77 Interview Kamp and reports of DOPS 2006 Directorate Operations, Ministry of Defence, Defence Archives, Rijswijk. *Translated from Dutch*

78 In November 2005, a third recce was executed primarily by members of the army staff destined to deploy with the first rotation. The main finding of the recce was the worrying security situation in the north of Uruzgan. It is assessed the Dutch will not be able to maintain the American firebases, and it is also anticipated that more firepower and additional vehicles are needed to be able to perform in a sufficient manner. Source: Recce rapporten dated 13 November 2005 retrieved from Defence archives. *Translated from Dutch*

create further instability, as such requiring American reinforcement. In addition, American reconstruction and fighting capability was envisioned to be crucial in the South east bordering province Zabul. Moreover, the Minister wanted a continuing American engagement in the development and training of Afghan police and military capability.⁷⁹

Other points on the list encompassed the financing of airfield Kandahar by NATO instead of those nations executing operations in the Southern provinces and the provision of extra NATO troops if the Dutch required them. Furthermore, Kamp wanted the Afghan administration to provide capable administrators and police forces needed for the stabilisation of the province, and the Afghan government was to provide services for the Dutch troops to hand over captives in a responsible manner. Also, sufficient funding was to be allocated for the taskforce to be able to execute reconstruction activities.

The sensitive⁸⁰ matter of Dutch Special Forces operating in Kandahar province under the OEF mandate [one of the issues on the 16 bullet list of Kamp] was solved rather quickly by assigning the Special Forces to the task force in Uruzgan, which was to operate under the ISAF mandate. The disentangling of the Special Forces engagement from OEF was not without paradoxes since the Dutch government in chorus required guarantees for American support in case of emergencies. Yet the United States were not very keen on special bilateral agreements that exceeded what under the circumstances could be considered a normal kind of mutual assistance. It took some tough negotiating at the highest levels in Brussels to formulate a solution that satisfied The Hague.⁸¹ Looking back on how in general OEF and ISAF were formally defined as worlds apart, the former head of military intelligence, Major-General Van Reijn ironically remarked: 'Evidently, the operational reality in Uruzgan and the political reality in the Netherlands, do not always coincide'.⁸²

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence jointly tackled the issues as listed earlier and exploited their specific channels. Diplomatic channels were utilised to exert pressure on Afghan authorities to appoint trustworthy and capable administrators to Uruzgan; a demand also stressed by Foreign Minister Bot during a meeting with Karzai in Vienna on the 14th of November. At this meeting, the situation in Uruzgan was also discussed and possibilities for developing a Memorandum of Understanding between the Netherlands, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the Afghan government regarding the treatment of Afghan prisoners, were addressed. Minister Bot indicated President Karzai warned him about the worsening security situation in the province.⁸³

■
79 Interview Kamp and reports of DOPS Archive 2006. *Translated from Dutch.*

80 Separating ISAF's endeavors at stabilization and reconstruction from OEFs counter terrorism campaign, became a central issue in legitimising the deployment to Uruzgan

81 Meulen and Grandia, 'Brussels calling: domestic politics under international pressure', 22.

82 Reijn, 'De missie Uruzgan'.

83 Interview Bot. *Translated from Dutch*

The possible international repercussions on the lingering decision-making process were delivered in a letter from the head of the general policy directorate at the MOD to Defence Minister Kamp. He put forward several political considerations⁸⁴ the Minister was to consider before coming to a final conclusion. Meanwhile, the version of events with regard to the security situation [as presented in the military intelligence rapport] found its way to the public arena as the media started reporting on a possible Dutch mission to a dangerous area in South Afghanistan.⁸⁵

At the end of November, almost half a year after Parliament had been notified, a political decision was still pending. Several diplomatic activities⁸⁶ were carried out to somehow influence the troubled state of affairs of attaining political approval. Even though a decision was anticipated before Christmas, the last weeks of the year remained turbulent. A meeting with international partners scheduled in December, to further refine the planning of the deployment, was postponed until January and no orders were provided to the designated military units to advance their deployment activities.

Consequently, a long range of meetings and discussions were held with various political parties and authorities behind closed doors. The Council of Ministers discussed the mission three times⁸⁷ over the course of three weeks. At one of these meetings, the Chief of Defence even briefed the Council, something which had never happened before. He was also requested to brief Parliament about the intended mission to Uruzgan. As explicated by the director of political affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 'They wanted to see a uniform explaining what the mission was all about.'⁸⁸

However, the political mood had not changed quite to the benefit of providing the political endorsement it required.⁸⁹ At this point, the Dutch NATO Secretary General could no longer hide his frustration with the continuing delay of a Dutch political decision and publicly cast his doubts in the media.⁹⁰ He urged a quick and positive decision. According to the press, his intervention annoyed some of the Ministers. An anonymous source from

84 The main issues as addressed by Casteleijn in his letter to the Minister on the occasion of the military advice answer the political consideration regarding the division between OEF and ISAF, the threat of the Taliban, the tension between reconstruction and offensive operations, the suggested incremental approach and the troop number discussion, the rules of engagement, local Afghan government capacity and credibility, the finances of the mission and a plan B in case the Minister would decide not to deploy his forces to Uruzgan (Interview Casteleijn). *Translated from Dutch*

85 Dam, 'Uruzgan, The CNN factor'.

86 Meulen and Grandia, 'Brussels Calling: Domestic Politics under International Pressure', 21-22.

87 The deployment to Uruzgan was discussed at the board of Ministers at the 2nd, 9th and 26th of December 2005.

88 Interview Siblesz. *Translated from Dutch*

89 Again, formal approval of parliament is not needed. However, the desirability of gaining political support in terms of a broad parliamentary majority has become a trend ever since Srebrenica.

90 Meulen and Grandia, 'Brussels Calling: Domestic Politics under International Pressure', 21.

within the Cabinet was quoted as saying: ‘When things go wrong with this mission and people get killed, De Hoop Scheffer doesn’t have to do the explaining’.⁹¹

Meanwhile, international partners started to become slightly nervous. Even the British Minister of Defence, John Reid, started to delay his activities concerning the deployment of his own forces, while referring to the uncertainty of Dutch parliamentary approval. The British had already – given the planned start of their activities in Helmand in May 2006 – begun with their practical preparations such as shipping their material and goods. These ships were brought to a halt in international waters, now awaiting approval to carry on since they were stopped by the Minister of Defence. But even more worrisome, it was assessed by British officials, Reid would – in case the Dutch would not deploy – no longer present the British military and financial plans regarding their deployment to the House of Commons. If the Dutch argument about security situation in the South, defining it as too dangerous to start reconstruction activities, it was thought that the British Defence Minister would ask NATO to reconsider the possibility of the stabilisation of the Southern provinces in Afghanistan.⁹²

Pending a political decision, telexes between Ottawa, London, and, the Hague, were running overtime. The content of the correspondence indicated a potential political rejection of the mission would not only jeopardise the position of the Netherlands within the alliance, but would endanger ISAF’s expansion to the South, and as such would undermine NATO’s credibility as a whole. It was furthermore assessed that a Dutch rejection of the mission would also play into the hands of officials in Washington who already had expressed their severe doubts about the added value of multilateral institutions such as NATO.⁹³

Hastily, anticipating possible international diplomatic mayhem, the diplomatic posts of the Netherlands in Washington, Brussels, Canberra, Budapest, Copenhagen, Ottawa, and London were instructed with ‘lines to take’ with regard to the unfortunate delay of a decision. On the 23rd of December, messages were sent to the capitals referring to the political situation in the Netherlands, promising to send off a translated version of the Article 100 letter soon and anticipating a resolution of the matter by the beginning of February 2006.⁹⁴

6.11 Process Outcome: The Article 100 Letter and Its Delivery to Parliament

91 Amerikaanse topambtenaren naar Den Haag: Bert Bakker (D66); ‘Ik hel steeds meer over naar een Nee’, Het Parool, 30 November 2005. *Translated from Dutch*.

92 Diplomatic correspondence 20.12.2005. Brussels, Washington, London, Ottawa, The Hague, Defence Archives, Rijswijk.

93 Defence archives, diplomatic correspondence 20.12.2005. Brussels, Washington, London, Ottawa, The Hague, Defence Archives, Rijswijk.

94 Interview Nijssen, *Translated from Dutch*

The delivery of the Article 100 letter to parliament resulted in a deadlock which delayed the decision-making procedure to a great degree. However, before this episode is addressed it is important to discuss the drafting of the letter. As outlined earlier in this chapter, when it comes to the deployment of Dutch forces no easy or hasty decisions are made. Indeed, the assessment framework, foundational for the Article 100 letter, serves to balance the objectives set for the mission and attends to both political and military matters. On the basis of an analysis of the conflict, a judgement should be made about the means available to the international community (political, economic, and military) to stabilise the conflict.

Cabinet should elaborate on why it believes that the military instrument is the most suitable instrument (means) in terms of political desirability. Its judgement is heavily dependent on the advice provided by the Defence staff. The military advice answers questions like suitability and availability of military units since the contribution has to match the composition and character of the multinational armed force and must be tailored to the anticipated tasks. The development of the military advice is, as indicated by the military planners, to a great extent channelled through the use of the assessment framework. The planners referred to the assessment framework as a 'checklist'.⁹⁵

The most important review criterion for the mission would have been the government's assessment of the military deployment's utility. In the case of Uruzgan, the solution was found in pragmatic reasoning. The government acknowledged the process of state building and democratisation had to start from scratch and would take an undefined period of time to take root. This message however would be difficult to convey in political and military terms. It in fact implied a blank cheque in terms of commitments in time. Consequently, the Dutch effort was presented in the earlier mentioned manageable fashion of two years. This also fitted in the strategy of the international community directed to foster commitment for the Afghanistan by defining measurable results within set time frames.⁹⁶

As illustrated by one of the military planners:

We needed to get a political mandate for at least two years, but knew we needed more time to achieve the goals set for the mission [...] The political objective was to participate in ISAF [...] not difficult in terms of providing military advice but unsatisfactory. We joined the mission on the basis of incorrect thoughts; it was more important to provide troops for at least two years instead of achieving a certain objective like a stable environment.⁹⁷

95 Interviews military planners.

96 Klep, *Uruzgan*, 123-132; Article 100 letter to parliament, brief van de Ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken, van Defensie en voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, Den Haag, Kamerstukken II vergaderjaar 2005 – 2006, 22 december 2005, Dossier 27925 Bestrijding Internationaal Terrorisme, nr. 193.

97 Interview Hartog, *Translated from Dutch*

In order to acquire unanimous approval from the coalition partner D66, who had been against the mission from its outset, a gathering was held with a delegation of the party shortly before the mission was discussed in the Council of Ministers on the 16th of December. At the meeting, the Chief of Defence and the head of the directorate general policy of the Ministry of Defence were to brief them about the mission. Shortly before they met, the head of the party in parliament, Borris Dittrich, held a press conference in which he declared his party to be in opposition to the mission. His statement forced both D66 Ministers and Cabinet into an awkward situation. Hence, now that international agreements had been made and the Minister of Defence and Foreign Affairs had carefully worked on all the major issues possibly hampering the mission, party politics⁹⁸ seemed to stretch the matter more even before a Cabinet decision was taken.⁹⁹

At this point, in all likelihood, a political crisis was likely to arise regarding the deployment of Dutch forces to South Afghanistan. One of the opposition parties (PvdA) had also expressed its hesitations and was now sure the mission would not materialise as they did not expect D66's Ministers to oppose the position of its party in Parliament. On the 21st of December, the evening before the mission was to be presented at the Council of Ministers, Foreign Affairs Minister Bot tried to massage the Ministers of D66 into agreeing with the mission and offered them the possibility of changing the word "*decision*" in the article 100 letter into "*intention*". This was believed to facilitate a way out of the stalemate and both Ministers agreed on the issue.

It was however not foreseen that the employment of the term *intention* would in fact initiate another episode in the already difficult state of affairs. When, finally, after months of deliberation, Parliament was officially informed about a mission to Uruzgan on the 22nd of December, the content of the letter was not discussed, but the use of the word *intention* became the centre of attention. In fact, Parliament refused to debate the letter while the status of it was reduced to an *intention* instead of a *decision*.

It would take until the 13th of January 2006 for Parliament to deal with the matter. The main cause of the delay was rooted in the use of the term *intention*, but another reason was the material right Parliament believed it had acquired over the years in terms of delivering its consent about the deployment of forces. The time between the 22nd of December and the 13th of January was used to deal with all procedural matters regarding the way in which the

98 The hassle caused by the public statements of D 66 leader Borris Dittrich are attributed to as party politics. The prevalent reading of the course of events point to the power struggle within the party about its future leadership. Apparently, Dittrich anticipated the mission would not materialize (due to a lack of parliamentary support) and assumed his public performance shortly before the mission would be decided upon within the council of Ministers could potentially strengthen his position in the party. As soon as the D66 Ministers voted for the mission, his position became untenable and he resigned. He has admitted to having played a game and to have lost. The 'game' has been heavily criticized in parliament during the general consultation held on the 2nd of February. For an overview of the casted critique see: Verslag van een Algemeen Overleg van de vaste commissies voor Buitenlandse Zaken en voor Defensie, 22 februari 2006, Kamerstukken II 2005-2006, Dossier 27 925 Bestrijding Internationaal Terrorisme, nr. 207, 28 and 37

99 Hazelbag, 'Politieke besluitvorming van de missie Uruzgan', 20.

mission would be discussed in Parliament. It was agreed there would be a round of written questions, a hearing and a confidential briefing before a general consultation¹⁰⁰ would be held before matters could be forced to a conclusion.¹⁰¹ As explicated by Foreign Minister Bot:

In my years as Minister of Foreign Affairs I was amazed about the great level of detail Parliament involved itself with. There were tons of very detailed questions. Questions whose relevance and interest were unknown to me, and mainly served to promote either the respective Member of Parliament or the party itself. These questions made me sick. I know it is difficult to be a good Member of Parliament, but these questions no longer serve any purpose, instigate an inconceivable amount of work, and, in the end, nothing is done with the information' provided.¹⁰²

Meanwhile, the media exploited the Parliamentary interlude to advance the discussion initiated by the opposition as to whether the intended deployment was a reconstruction or a fighting mission. This binary representation had caused quite some nuisance amongst the senior civil and military decision-makers since the Article 100 letter had outlined both the importance of reconstruction, as well as the importance of advancing security through combat, also pointing to the risks of the mission. In fact, the objective of the mission was presented as supporting and strengthening the Afghan authorities, and by doing so enabling them to eventually provide their own security and stability:

In line with the ISAF mandate the Dutch detachment will focus on enhancing stability and security by increasing the support of the local population for the Afghan authorities, and decreasing the support for the Taliban and associated groups. Fostering good governance, efficient police and armed forces, enhancing the constitutional state, the execution of CIMIC and reconstruction activities, and the stimulation of reconstruction activities by others are important elements of this approach.¹⁰³

Nevertheless, even though the Article 100 letter carefully described both the fighting and reconstruction efforts that had to be undertaken by the taskforce in order to stabilise

100 For a detailed overview of the general consultation see: Kristić, 'De Staten-Generaal en de inzet van de Nederlandse krijgsmacht', 146-147. *In Dutch*

101 For a day to day reconstruction of the version of events between the 22nd of December until the 13th of January see: Hazelbag, 'Political Decision-making of the Mission in Uruzgan, a Reconstruction'.

102 Interview Bot, *Translated from Dutch*.

103 Article 100 letter to parliament, brief van de Ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken, van Defensie en voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, Den Haag, Kamerstukken II vergaderjaar 2005 – 2006, 22 december 2005, Dossier 27 925 Bestrijding Internationaal Terrorisme, nr. 193, *Translated from Dutch*.

Uruzgan, the reconstruction effort swayed most of political actors and the media.¹⁰⁴ Finally on the 13th of January, the third version of the Article 100 letter was debated in Parliament. By no means were the risks of the mission hidden or not explicated:

This is a mission with real military risks. It has to be noted that the armed forces have gained a lot of knowledge and experience with risky missions in places like Iraq and Afghanistan and that they have accomplished these missions successfully. Although it cannot be ruled out that on the Dutch side there will be casualties, the government is of the opinion that with the knowledge and experience gained, with the build-up and the size of the Dutch contingent, and with the assurances of help and assistance from NATO, the risks have been brought down in such a way that the mission is a responsible one. Stabilizing and reconstructing Afghanistan, in particular the South where the Taliban originate is of the utmost importance to furthering international lawful order as well as to combating the international terrorism that is a threat to Europe also. Especially because of the latter interest, the government considers the risks to be acceptable.¹⁰⁵

The main justification of the mission, as presented in the letter to Parliament, was the prevention of another terrorist attack by taking away their breeding ground in Afghanistan. This was an argument which had not been used earlier nor represented typical Dutch rhetoric such as contribution to relief of international suffering. Furthermore, no causal link between deploying troops to Uruzgan and by doing so preventing a possible terrorist attack in the Netherlands had been established in the minds of the Dutch population.¹⁰⁶ Interestingly enough, all parliamentary reports and correspondence from the outset of the planned mission throughout the deployment were filed in a dossier called 'Fighting International Terrorism'.¹⁰⁷

104 Articles focussing on the reconstruction effort: "Volgens Bos is de gevechtsmissie gescheiden van de wederopbouwmissie waar de Nederlanders aan zullen meedoen" cited in: 'Optimisme over doorgaan Afghanistan-missie', Elsevier, 31 januari 2006; "Nederland gaat deelnemen aan de ISAF-missie van de NAVO in de Afghaanse provincie Uruzgan. Deze missie is gericht op wederopbouw" cited in: NOS, 'Missie Uruzgan gaat door' (version 21.02. 2006), <http://nos.nl/artikel/54336-missie-uruzgan-gaat-door.html>; 'Vrijdag 3 februari heeft de Nederlandse Regering besloten definitief deel te nemen aan ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) stage 3. Medio dit jaar vertrekken 1200 militairen naar Uruzgan voor hun wederopbouwmissie' cited in: Ministerie van Defensie, 'Persbericht 03-02-2006', <http://www.defensie.nl/documenten/persbericht/2006/02/03/persmap-0>.

105 Article 100 letter to parliament, brief van de Ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken, van Defensie en voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, Den Haag, Kamerstukken II vergaderjaar 2005 – 2006, 22 december 2005, Dossier 27 925 Bestrijding Internationaal Terrorisme, nr. 193, *Translated from Dutch*.

106 Christ Klep, *Uruzgan*. 124.

107 All parliamentary documents related to the mission in Afghanistan are stored under file number 27 925, named 'Bestrijding Internationaal Terrorisme' (Fighting International Terrorism). See: http://www.parlement.com/9291000/d/uruzganbesluit_2005.pdf

6.12 The Foreign Policy Action: The Deployment of Forces

As delineated in the previous paragraphs, much of the planning of the mission had already occurred before a formal decision to deploy had been made; even political approval for explorations was sought quite late. The planning was very much influenced by the boundaries set for the Dutch deployment: providing stability in Urzugan within a two year time frame, with a maximum of 1200 troops and a budget of 320 million Euro's¹⁰⁸, resulted in – according to those involved in the planning with a sense of understatement - a 'challenging task'.¹⁰⁹

The stabilisation of Urzugan was communicated as an integrated effort, but it had not yet been caught in a joint plan. The military planners at the Defence staff had developed a concept of operations based on the information gathered at the international working conferences and during the recesses. Based on the acquired information, the planners assessed an incremental approach to best suit both the Dutch capabilities and the task of stabilising the province. The approach advocated a phased¹¹⁰ unfolding of troop presence throughout Urzugan allowing a fine alignment of the strengths and weaknesses of the units versus the anticipated risks. The concept and other documents such as NATO's operations order, and military estimates were provided to the assigned commander of the taskforce¹¹¹ and his staff in order to draft a plan.

Most (mainly military) respondents indicated the lack of a strategy - explicating the objectives that needed to be attained, which forced the staff of the first taskforce to formulate these objectives themselves. As explained by General Vleugels: 'We can deal with quite some vagueness when it comes to planning a military operation. But this was not a purely military operation. We were to stabilise the region with a set of actors. The coordination of that

108 Article 100 letter to parliament, brief van de Ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken, van Defensie en voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, Den Haag, Kamerstukken II vergaderjaar 2005 – 2006, 22 december 2005, Dossier 27 925 Bestrijding Internationaal Terrorisme, nr. 193 (In Dutch).

109 One of the planners of the MOD had voiced his concern about the limit set to the amount of personnel to be deployed to Urzugan (Interview Huiben, *Translated from Dutch*). Also, the commander of the Taskforce 1, expressed his concerns which eventually led to the commitment of additional troops (Interview Vleugels, *Translated from Dutch*).

110 In the operational concept, the following phases were distinguished: Phase 0: 'Build up'. The deployment taskforce is to assume their construction activities and a small forward detachment is to collect information and take over the projects of the American provincial reconstruction team; Phase 1: 'Containment'. The majority of the task force is to deploy and take over responsibility of the province from the Americans, but will still keep their presence limited to Tarin Kowt and Deh Rawood. The objective during this phase is to gain situational awareness and to create freedom of movement; Phase 2: 'Ink spot I'. Extra infantry capability in order to enlarge the Dutch presence and influence in the province; Phase 3: 'Ink spot II'. Additional infantry capability to further enlarge the Dutch presence and influence in the province. During this phase, the taskforce will be at its highest strength. It was explicated in the concept of operations only the Dutch would decide when a next stage would commence and it was even anticipated phase 3 would not occur within the provided time frame of two years.

111 Shortly before the letter was sent to parliament, brigadier Vleugels was contacted by the chief of Defence and informed he would be commanding the first taskforce in Urzugan.

effort, be it in either a plan or a guiding document, was not provided. As such, we had to deal with it ourselves.’¹¹²

The emergent feature of a strategy for Uruzgan, initiated from the operational military level, was commented on by respondents as inherently connected to the complexity of contemporary missions.¹¹³ A blatant contradiction can be found in the views provided by many of the same respondents. Most of them agreed a strategy should have been explicated, whilst they also pointed to the fact that they think a strategy would not have made a great difference in terms of the drafting of the concept of operations and the plan.¹¹⁴

Generally, the confusion seemed to arise from the understanding of what strategy is and is not. Some respondents believed strategic guidance provided by the Chief of Defence is strategy, others [mainly civil respondents] believed everything the Ministry of Foreign affairs does is strategy and some even claimed strategy to be a theoretical invention which does not appear in practice. Most civil respondents pointed to the fact that they were not accustomed to drafting strategies at all and, in addition, did not believe that setting concrete goals would be helpful since it would imply accountability.

Some perspectives:

Politicians do not like to be held accountable. Vagueness is part of their language [...] Missions like these need to be designed with a sense of pragmatism. Indeed, we did not have a clear interdepartmental strategy, but it was all new. Consequently, the planning was done in a pragmatic manner.¹¹⁵

Preferably the goals set in a campaign plan have to be identified by The Hague but if it is decided on grounds of ‘situational awareness’ that those who have most information and experience are to draft the plan, then this initiative should be backed up by The Hague. Only then can a true unity of effort of all activities be guaranteed.¹¹⁶

Composing a plan is a matter of experience. In The Hague, one focuses more on the broad issues. The big question is of course how one translates big political matters into a plan. The politics about and surrounding the deployment is more important than the plan. The

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112 Interview Vleugels, *Translated from Dutch*

113 Interview Bot, Kamp, Berlijn, Oosterom, Vleugels

114 Interview Berlijn, Vleugels, Vd Have, TNO planners, Huiben.

115 Interview Oosterom, *Translated from Dutch*

116 Interview Middendorp, *Translated from Dutch*

experience and information primarily resides with the military. As such it is not strange that the military came up with the plan.¹¹⁷

One has to be pragmatic with these kinds of operations. It is a fact of life. We did not receive many guidelines, if we had, our lives would have been easier [...] looking back the plan was too idealistic [...] no one provided us the parameters about what we were to achieve. The joint effort as such was not clear. It should have been the political level explicating the use of the effort.¹¹⁸

According to the Chief of Defence, an interdepartmental comprehensive campaign plan did in fact exist and he stated he does not understand the claim of its absence.¹¹⁹ However, most military and civilian respondents and the official government evaluation¹²⁰ conducted about the deployment to Uruzgan have indicated a lack of a comprehensive interdepartmental campaign plan. The planning staff at the Ministry of Defence drafted a Dutch operations order for Uruzgan. It derived from the NATO operations order but this was purely military in the sense that the other departments had not provided their input.¹²¹ This was despite the communicated message throughout government and parliament that it was to be an integrated mission attending to all three aspects: Defence, Development and Governance.

The so-called 'master plan'¹²² drafted by the staff of the first taskforce in the first quarter of 2006, was the first attempt to operationalise the propagated comprehensive approach. Although essentially a military plan, the master plan utilised an effects based approach. This approach encompassed a description of effects beyond the field of military expertise, such as developing governance and the rule of law. Consequently, Vleugels did feel the need to call for additional expertise, since the Dutch army had not until then exercised effects based operations. He had previously worked with operational analysts from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (TNO)¹²³ and believed in their added value, especially in their knowledge about measuring effects and called in their help. The two analysts both refer to the drafting of the plan as an interesting and pioneering event.¹²⁴

117 Interview Casteleijn, *Translated from Dutch*

118 Interview V.d Have *Translated from Dutch*

119 Interview Berlijn *Translated from Dutch*

120 See: Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Algemeen overleg, Eindevaluatie Nederlandse ISAF missie in Uruzgan', <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/vergaderingen/commissievergaderingen/details/index.jsp?id=2012A00340>.

121 Interview Huiben.

122 The master plan (classified document) outlined the mission of the task force.

123 TNO: Toegepast Natuurwetenschappelijk Onderzoek <http://www.tno.nl/index.cfm?Taal=2>

124 Interviews Smeenk and Gouweleeuw. *Translated from Dutch*

As acknowledged by various military planners¹²⁵, the civilian analysts,¹²⁶ the matter as to which goals needed to be achieved with the Dutch effort in Uruzgan remained largely unanswered. Cabinet acknowledged it would be rather difficult to answer this question. Various goals were formulated: the creation of rule and law, the development of the Afghan national army and police, but no concrete goals were set. All in all, the goals remained broad and vague.

The competing views, as to if and how a plan needed to be drafted to direct the efforts of the taskforce did cause some nuisance between some of the civil and military actors. Even though the civil military relations in the steering group military relations were commented on as rather good, those who had to do the actual planning did experience some difficulties, especially with regard to developing a joint approach and understanding of the approach to be taken in Uruzgan. The main point of discussion was the earlier mentioned absence of goals formulated by the three departments at the strategic level.¹²⁷

Some perspectives:

We [the planners] did have several meetings with the other departments [Development and Foreign Affairs] but neither of them plan their activities [...] neither of them is equipped to draft a plan so they outsourced the whole undertaking.¹²⁸

[During the writing of the plan] we already indicated to the Department of Foreign affairs and the Department of Development Aid that they had to take into consideration their responsibility for more than half of the effects to be obtained in Uruzgan.¹²⁹

The goals for the mission were not clear. [...] The [master] plan has [...] never attained a formal status.¹³⁰

While the planning staff of TFU 1 developed the master plan, they came to acknowledge they did not know enough about the situation in Uruzgan in terms of development and governance. As such, the planners asked for a civil assessment in order to be able to conduct a proper analysis. However, such a civil assessment was not available and time was running



125 Interviews Huiben, Noom, Gool, Kruitwagen, Klaarbergen, Van der Have.

126 Interviews Smeenk and Gouweleeuw

127 See: Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Algemeen overleg, Eindevaluatie Nederlandse ISAF missie in Uruzgan', <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/vergaderingen/commissievergaderingen/details/index.jsp?id=2012A00340>.

128 Interview Hartog, *Translated from Dutch*

129 Interview Van Klaarbergen, *Translated from Dutch*

130 Interview Noom, *Translated from Dutch*

out. They did include the civilian effects that needed to be obtained but was as described by the planners beyond their area of expertise.

Only a month before the deployment of the taskforce [one year after the initial assessments, subsequent reconnaissances, talks, meetings and research had been conducted] a civil assessment¹³¹ was drafted. The Netherlands Embassy in Kabul had initiated the writing of such an assessment using data collected by the Afghan (though Western sponsored Non-Governmental Organisation) Tribal Liaison Office (TLO) Uruzgan.¹³² It presented a social analysis of the region, addressing the three lines of operation of security, good governance and economic development and identified projects which would need to be executed in order to quickly establish the reconstruction effort. It did not however explicate how the mission was to be achieved in a comprehensive manner. Furthermore, the civil assessment was completed only when the first Dutch troops were already in theatre (July 2006).¹³³ As pointed out by most civil and military respondents, the civil assessment should have preferably been guiding the planning.

After the planning staff of TFU 1 had developed their master plan, it was delivered to the Ministry of Defence for approval and commitment. Since the developed campaign plan addressed all three lines of operation [development, governance, and, security] it was presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation, anticipating additional input or comments from their side. Explicated by many other involved planners, but fittingly formulated by chief army plans: 'Foreign affairs and development cooperation both portrayed the 'not invented here syndrome' when the plan was presented to them'.¹³⁴

The workings of the 'not-invented here syndrome', was commented on by most of the civilian respondents of the other departments as not being accustomed to planning in general and into a plan designed by the military in particular. The Department of International Development Aid especially believed the military was not going to address their input and was awaiting the civil assessment.

131 In this document, the tribal conventions foundational to formal government structures and the traditional social and political structures in Uruzgan were outlined. It articulated government institutions to not sufficiently represent the ethnic and political composition of the province and hence have limited influence and described local meetings to be controlled by tribal authorities and of great importance for the acceptance of government by the inhabitants of the province. Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Development Cooperation. Dutch Embassy, Kabul. 'Civil Assessment (unclassified version) (2006)' http://www.minbuza.nl/binaries/kamerbrieven-bijlagen/2006/10/o_368-bijlage-2.pdf (last accessed 02.02.2012).

132 Martijn Kitzen, 'Close Encounters of the Tribal Kind: the Implementation of Cooption as a Tool for De-Escalation of Conflict; the Case of the Netherlands in Afghanistan's Uruzgan Province', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 35(5) (2012) 713-734, 721.

133 Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Development Cooperation. Dutch Embassy, Kabul. 'Civil Assessment (unclassified version) (2006)', http://www.minbuza.nl/binaries/kamerbrieven-bijlagen/2006/10/o_368-bijlage-2.pdf (last accessed 02.02.2012); Brief van de Ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken, van Defensie en voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, Den Haag, Kamerstukken II vergaderjaar 2007 – 2008, 15 februari 2008, Dossier 27925, Bestrijding Internationaal Terrorisme, nr. 295 (in Dutch).; Brief van de Ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken, Van Defensie en voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, Den Haag, Kamerstukken II vergaderjaar 2005 – 2006, 21 juli 2006, Dossier 27925, Bestrijding Internationaal Terrorisme, nr. 221 (in Dutch).

134 Interview Van Klaarbergen, Translated from Dutch

Notwithstanding this, the master plan was not valued for its effort to fill the gap formed by an absent interdepartmental strategy or campaign plan. As commented on by one of the political advisors who later on deployed with the taskforce:

I was quite impressed by the master plan [...] It would have been better if the departments had managed to come up with an overarching plan whereby strategic guidance was provided. Nevertheless, both the master plan and the civil assessment did provide a basis to start from. [...] In theatre however, it proved quite a challenge to keep the civilians to stick to the plan.¹³⁵

Most planners believed the emergent planning and evolving trait of the campaign plan, characterized by bottom up initiatives, to have been inevitable for this mission. They refer to the fact that the lack of integrated planning with other departments and the vagueness about what it was the Netherlands wanted to achieve in Uruzgan to have been the main grounds of the emergent features of both the planning and the plan for the stabilisation effort in Uruzgan.

It nevertheless caused some difficulties and missed opportunities as well. The chief plans of the army command indicated a proper plan, available long before the task force was to be deployed, would have been much better for the planning and commencing of development efforts in particular:

We could have already applied for funding of projects. Through a joint analysis with the embassy, we could have started project planning months before the deployment and funds would have been available when arrived in Uruzgan. Now, we were faced with procedures of Foreign Affairs in the field, causing months of delay with regards to getting approval for projects and funding. So we were actually behind on reality [...] One of the reasons is the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not have that much experience with project planning nor the capability.¹³⁶

Throughout the course of events, the Dutch population had been informed by the media about the political struggles to gain approval for the deployment of Dutch forces to Uruzgan. The debate, which had primarily taken place within a smaller group of civil and military decision-makers, had now found its way to the public arena. Until November 2005, the

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135 Interview Messerschmidt, *Translated from Dutch*

136 Interview Van Klaatbergen, *Translated from Dutch*

media had reported in a very limited fashion¹³⁷ about the progress of planning activities and concerns about the feasibility of the mission.

It was not until the appearance of the military intelligence report about the perilous security situation and the public statements of D66's faction leader Dittrich against the mission that the media began to catch up with the events leading to the deployment of forces to Uruzgan. The main perspective was with reference to the security matters and the potential dangers of the mission, following the political lines of argumentation in the debate about the deployment of forces to Uruzgan.¹³⁸ The most interesting political communiqué was a statement from the Minister of Defence, publicly stating that he would withdraw his troops if the situation in Uruzgan did not allow them to carry out the tasks they were assigned to.¹³⁹

As described earlier, once the Article 100 letter was delivered to Parliament on the 22nd of December, a variety of articles and reports started to appear and the common tone remained a relatively negative one about the security in the province and the potential dangers of the mission, but also addressing the political tensions within the coalition and the use of the word *intention* instead of *decision*.¹⁴⁰

Subsequently, the debate in the media took two different directions: a focus on the precarious security situation but mainly with a positive judgement about the feasibility of the mission, thereby following the official line of argument as communicated by the government, and a focus on the political decision-making process and the occurred political row.¹⁴¹

When the third version of the Article 100 letter was sent to Parliament on the 13th of January, the media interest increased significantly, and most reports were in fact supportive of the mission but kept focus on the dangers of the mission.¹⁴² Interestingly, the debate in the media hardly paid any attention to the troubles in the province of Uruzgan and the purpose of and the need for the mission. According to a media analysis conducted on all articles of the four leading newspapers¹⁴³ about Uruzgan that appeared within the decision-making

137 A study from Marloes ten Dam, 'Uruzgan The CNN effect', investigating all media coverage about the political decision-making process (DMP) about the mission to Uruzgan from the notification on June the 16th 2005 until the ultimate decision taken on the 13th of February 2006 finds that it was not until the appearance of the report of the military intelligence report the media actually started frequently reporting about the mission. From the 82 articles which appeared in the leading newspapers (*Trouw*, *Volkskrant*, *De Telegraaf* and *NRC Handelsblad*) from the 16th of June until 22nd of December (the first phase of the political DMP), when the article 100 letter was sent to parliament., 76 appeared after the appearance of the intelligence report on the 17th of November 2005. In total of the 372 articles written about the mission within the earlier indicated timeframe of DMP, only 22.04% appeared in the first phase and most of them were 'ordinary' articles in the sense they were not cover news or opiated articles and in generally adopted a rather neutral perspective on matters. Ten Dam, 'Uruzgan The CNN effect', 67, 72-75.

138 Ten Dam, 'Uruzgan The CNN effect', 75.

139 Buitenhof, 30.04.2006. See: <https://www.google.co.uk/#q=uitzending+Buitenhof%2C+30+April.+2006>

140 In this second phase of the DMP, 28.9% of all articles that have appeared within the earlier indicated time frame of the political decision-making process were published in the leading newspapers. Ten Dam, 'Uruzgan The CNN effect', 76.

141 Ten Dam, 'Uruzgan The CNN effect', 83, 93.

142 Ibid., 84.

143 The four leading newspapers in the Netherlands are: *De Telegraaf*, *Trouw*, *De Volkskrant*, and *NRC Handelsblad*.

process, the reporting on the deployment to Uruzgan continued to focus on the political struggle in both Cabinet and Parliament.¹⁴⁴

Meanwhile, the political debate in Parliament allowed for several interpretations about what it was the Dutch were aiming to achieve in Uruzgan. Even though the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs seemed to be singing from the same hymn sheet, the opposition parties sparked the debate with their reading of events, topped with the opinions of experts and other authorities, and a Babylonian confusion was born.

There was a need for careful deliberation as to how a mission to the volatile South would be presented to Parliament and to the Dutch population. However, Cabinet was not able to steer the debate and many have argued this to be a result of the absence of a strategic narrative. The study *'Uruzgan and the CNN factor'* indicated the need for a clear communicated narrative to be a prerequisite to not only guide instruments of power, but also to engender popular debate.¹⁴⁵

As such, the Chief of Defence acquired public exposure in order to explain the mission to the Dutch population. This in itself was a novelty. As he explained:

The military has to deal with the whims of politics. This is a result of democracy and part of the societal contract. However, the military is part of the larger picture and of course politicians need to take into consideration and to include them in their communication to the populace [...] our missions are dependent on public support. I felt a true conviction [of the need] to communicate with the Dutch population about our deployment to Uruzgan. To explain to them what it was we needed to do in Afghanistan. Consequently, I briefed the media every two months in order to reach the Dutch citizens and to create understanding and support for our mission.¹⁴⁶

The most pressing argument needed for support was believed to lie in propagating the importance of bringing stability to poor and defenceless Afghans. This objective was to adhere to Dutch popular sentiments, but it was only just mentioned in the media. In fact, there was, as described earlier, a fundamental misconception about the type of mission Uruzgan was likely to be. This was compounded by the way the mission was presented to the public, namely in a binary fashion: a fighting or a reconstruction mission. This delineation had in fact not been made in the Article 100 letter. As commented on by the special advisor to the Prime Minister: 'There was major difference between what we prepared and discussed

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144 Ten Dam, 'Uruzgan The CNN effect', 107.

145 Ten Dam, 'Uruzgan The CNN effect'.

146 Interview Berlijn. *Translated from Dutch*

at the SMO and what the media made of it. It is all about perception. Particularly in this case, the narrative was paramount to opposition'.¹⁴⁷

All respondents involved in the planning of the operation signalled the gap between the political need to emphasise the development part of the mission (reconstruction) and the military understanding of the potential dangers and battles (fighting).¹⁴⁸ As explained by one of the special assistants to the Prime Minister:

The political sensitivities were evident. [...] The political decision-making did not evolve in the sense that it tried to sell a fighting mission as a reconstruction mission. There was a genuine objective of facilitating reconstruction in Uruzgan. At the same time, the risks of the mission have been attended to and been taken into account [during the decision-making process].¹⁴⁹

Some perspectives on the fighting and reconstruction debate:

We never employed the term 'fighting mission' due to our desire to reconstruct the province. Also, using words like counterinsurgency would have implied we were going to fight [...] We avoided using these terms because the mission would have been viewed through a different lens.¹⁵⁰

The story about the mission needed to be explained [in the Netherlands] as a reconstruction effort. As such, we needed to include reconstruction in the whole debate.¹⁵¹

After Iraq, we had learnt the lessons of the importance of political support. As such, one of our goals was to guarantee great popular support for this mission. The deployment was framed as a reconstruction mission; consequently the dangers have not been articulated in a sufficient manner. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence especially had framed the mission in too positive a sense. The Prime Minister did not engage actively in the framing of the mission. He had only expressed his wish and support to make the mission happen. To him, the provision of Dutch troops was a matter of common sense.¹⁵²

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147 Interview Van Oosterom, *Translated from Dutch*

148 Interviews military planners.

149 Interview Swartbol, *Translated from Dutch*

150 Interview Bot, *Translated from Dutch*

151 Interview Casteleijn, *Translated from Dutch*

152 Interview De Vries, *Translated from Dutch*

In conclusion, the necessity of the deployment was not easily apprehended by the Dutch audience. However, the need to tell the public why the mission in Afghanistan was worth pursuing has often been made by commentators, politicians and generals. Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer especially regularly acknowledged that somehow electorates refused to believe in the ongoing necessity of NATO's endeavors in Afghanistan. He blamed himself and all those politically responsible for failing to communicate the message. Looking back he ventured: 'We haven't been convincing enough'.¹⁵³

6.13 Conclusions

The context in which the decision was taken to commit Dutch military forces to NATO's expansion to South Afghanistan was greatly conditioned by military alliance politics. Hence, from its inception, the dynamics of coalition initiatives as emerged between Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have been vital. Their cooperation might have been habituated by Alliance politics in the sense that all three nations anticipated NATO's expansion to the South of Afghanistan. Nevertheless, neither one of them sat back nor waited to be asked by NATO to contribute their forces. As such, the often assumed pressure of NATO, dictating the actions of its member states is qualified as far more complex and nuanced.

The initiative for the mission and the initial negotiations with partnering nations was a distinct military undertaking. Even when put in the political context of NATO's expansion to the South and the Dutch desire to be a loyal and trustworthy NATO/US ally and to 'do good', the role of the director of operations, General Cobelens, undoubtedly shaped the decision to deploy a taskforce to Uruzgan. It was due to his ability to anticipate and react to international developments within both a political and military context, his network and persuasive ability, that the Dutch engagement was instigated in the first place. Most – if not all – respondents agreed, and even British respondents recall the person of Cobelens and his dedication to commit Dutch troops to the stabilisation of Afghanistan.

By himself however, even supported by partnering nations, Cobelens could not have initiated this mission. He was strengthened by the support of the highest diplomat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the head of the directorate of political affairs, Hugo Siblesz. Contributing to NATO's expansion throughout Afghanistan had not, by itself, been at odds with both departments' view on further Dutch commitment in Afghanistan; in fact especially within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a sincere belief was held that Dutch forces

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¹⁵³ 'De Hoop Scheffer: Nederland doet afbreuk aan de NAVO', *NRC Handelsblad*, 25 February 2010.

would implement a Dutch approach to stabilisation, a way of doing things that would ‘outdo’ the Americans.

The beliefs and ideas of the senior civil and military decision-makers in the Netherlands with regard to the use of their military for NATO’s expansion to the South of Afghanistan can be best described as complementary in the sense that they both envisaged benefits from committing troops, albeit for different reasons. In addition, the senior civil and military decision-makers were supportive of the idea of integrating diplomatic, military and developmental efforts. The foundations for a more integrated way of both planning and executing operations between the various departments had been laid in both operations in Iraq and North Afghanistan (Baghlan).

Preventing another potential military debacle¹⁵⁴ had very much structured the minds and practices of the senior civil and military decision-makers. As such, the development of the assessment framework was to prevent ill informed decisions made by politicians about the use of military means. However, the framework had acquired for itself the veneer of an instrument for rational decision-making but cannot in itself prevent teleological reasoning [reasoning towards an end or a goal].¹⁵⁵ Ideally, an intention to send troops for a mission should be the result of having assessed all facets of the assessment framework. Some argue the assessment framework is supposed to create the impression of having contributed to well-designed and thorough decision-making, but the practice of its use for past missions has showed a reversal of this procedure: first a decision in principle was made, followed by the use of the assessment framework in its political setting. This trend has persisted in the case of the mission to Uruzgan while a decision in principle had in fact already been taken (June 2005) after which the political arena was explored. In addition, the objectives to be attained [which are supposed to be foundational to the framework] were according to most civil and military respondents not clearly articulated. Consequently, the application of the framework did not result in a unanimous verdict from the political decision-makers about the feasibility of the mission.

Even though the respondents point to the logic of committing Dutch forces to NATO’s expansion to the South, the inevitability was not clearly articulated in a strategy designed at the political strategic level, nor was the propagated integrated approach embodied in a synchronised effort. As such, the steering group military operations had not acquired the ability to provide strategic guidance. Neither had it produced an interdepartmental approach to the initiation of an overall strategy that would best serve the comprehensive approach to operations. Instead, two documents were written: the master plan, written by the military including civil effects, and a civil assessment, written by the Dutch embassy in Afghanistan. Neither one of the documents guided the planning. In fact, the master plan appeared shortly

154 In reference to the events that had unfolded in Srebrenica

155 A point made by Moelker in ‘Culture’s Backlash on Decision-making’, 33.

before the deployment and the civil assessment appeared when the task force had already arrived in theatre.

The undisputed inevitability of the mission resulted in the working of a 'trap' in a very coercive manner. The mission was viewed to be too important, and in fact essential for the Netherlands for various reasons, like being a trustworthy NATO partner. As such, the logic of the deployment seems to have been dictating the course of events long before Parliament was notified. Even potential show stoppers such as the appearance of the intelligence report, or a clear justification in terms of formulating the ends, did not bring the intention to deploy military forces to a halt.

In fact, once the deployment was endangered by struggles in Parliament and party politics, it was due to the efforts of Foreign Affairs Minister, Bot, that the troubled and delayed decision-making procedure was massaged into a positive outcome. Not only did he come up with the solution of providing D66 with a 'way out' by juggling with the words intention and decision, he also used much of his time at the end of 2005 to facilitate a solution. So at the end, more political ownership of the decision-making process occurred.

When contrasting these findings with the propositions as put forward in chapter two, several issues come to light. For one, the inputs into the decision-making process on the use of military means for the stabilisation of Afghanistan were not instigated by political guidance on this particular 'foreign policy problem' as such (proposition I). Instead the initiation of the decision-making process seemed to be a military initiative. Even when put in the political context of NATO's expansion to the South and the Dutch desire to be a loyal and trustworthy NATO/US ally and to 'do good', the role of the director of operations, General Cobelens, undoubtedly shaped the decision to deploy a taskforce to Uruzgan.

The decision-making dynamics that consequently advanced indeed revealed a process of interpretation in which the senior civil and military decision-makers perceived and deduced constraints and pressures imposed on them by the domestic and international environment (proposition II). Within this process, it seemed that particularly the domestic constraints and pressure in terms of national politics and sensitivities prevailed. Once the decision-making process hampered and started to impact the deployment of NATO forces to South Afghanistan on the whole, international pressure increased.

The reconstruction of the decision-making has furthermore showed that a strategy articulating the purpose of the use of the military means has not been the output of the process in itself (proposition III). Instead, two separate documents, a military and a civilian document, were drafted and were to direct the Dutch stabilisation efforts in Uruzgan. No strategic ownership was acquired at the strategic level, nor were these documents integrated and employed to provide strategic guidance.

7

Chapter 7 The British Case

7.1 Introduction: Setting the Stage

The context in which the decision was taken to commit British forces should principally be seen in relation to the on-going deployment of British forces to Iraq and the unfolding logic of NATO's expansion to the Southern provinces in Afghanistan. The 'defining moments' of the reconstruction of the British case are largely found in the dedication of Prime Minister Blair to strengthen the United Kingdom's presence in Afghanistan, military alliance politics, and a self-enforcing belief amongst senior decision-makers at the political military level in the inevitability of a leading British role in NATO's expansion to the South of Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Blair had instigated a renewed British interest in Afghanistan and made sure his intent was clearly communicated by either him personally or by his trustees. However, two major strategic decisions during the decision-making procedure to deploy British troops to the South of Afghanistan were not initiated from prior coherent strategic guidance: the selection of the province, and the number of troops.¹

NATO's stabilisation operations, and the Alliance's desire to expand its footprint, is the setting in which the senior civil and military decision-makers anticipated and developed the activities that led to the use of military means for the stabilisation of Helmand.

7.2 The Foreign Policy Problem: The Logic of Participating in NATO's Expansion South Afghanistan

At the time a renewed interest in Afghanistan emerged, instigated by NATO's proclaimed counter clockwise expansion, the United Kingdom was still heavily engaged in the Iraq campaign. The deployment had put both British politicians and military in an uncomfortable position: the legitimacy of the campaign was questioned since intelligence on the presence of weapons of mass destruction had been wrought. Moreover, the war had been unpopular from the outset, and the already limited support was declining.²

1 Michael Clarke (ed.), *The Afghan Papers: Committing Britain to War in Helmand, 2005-06. White Hall Papers 77* (London 2011); Interview Cavanagh. Even though most individual actors relevant for the British case have been interviewed, the reconstruction of the case heavily draws on material as presented in the Afghan Papers and Britain's Afghanistan Deployment in 2006 a series of papers edited and/or collected by Michael Clarke, director of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) written by various political and military actors involved in the decision-making in the run up to the campaign. In addition, much evidence has been delivered to both the Iraq Inquiry and the House of Commons Defense Committee which has been very useful for the reconstruction of the UK case.

2 Steven Philip Kramer, 'Blair's Britain after Iraq', *Foreign Affairs* 82(4) (2003) 90-104, 90.

Across Whitehall, there seemed to be a drift towards denial of disappointing results in Iraq and a sense that redemption could be found in the proposed Afghanistan deployment.³ As recollected by Prime Minister Blair, military commanders had been disenchanted by the limitations of what they could achieve in Iraq and as such expressed their desire to focus more on Afghanistan than Iraq.⁴ In addition, the apparent success in the Multinational Division (South East) in 2003–04⁵ supposedly had encouraged the British Chiefs of Staff to conclude that operations in Iraq could be successfully maintained and accomplished, while, concurrently, planning [in conjunction with close allies] a deployment to South Afghanistan to further expand NATO's footprint during phase III.⁶

Furthermore, both civil and military respondents indicated there was a general feeling that Afghanistan was indeed a 'good war' since the international military presence had originated from a United Nations Security Council resolution⁷ and NATO troops had entered Afghanistan accordingly. This was a very powerful motive, given the debates about the contested legitimacy of the Iraq operation.⁸ The argument which supposedly had swayed British Ministers most was the proclaimed responsibility of the international community to finish its efforts started in Afghanistan, by consolidating the progress made so far and ensuring the investment was not wasted.⁹ In addition, the narrative voiced by politicians that this war needed to be fought for the Afghans and their future, seemingly had convinced large parts of the public as well.¹⁰

According to Prime Minister Blair, the United Kingdom had never turned its back on Afghanistan and referred to an ongoing commitment to the Afghan cause, even at times when operations in Iraq were not going smoothly.¹¹ As such, the renewed focus on

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- 3 Interviews respondents and Beadle, 'Afghanistan in the Context of Iraq', 79.
- 4 Tony Blair, *The Journey* (London 2010) 671.
- 5 Reportedly, pragmatism and minimum force played a key role in the success which British forces achieved in MND (SE). Also the political process, coupled with the threat of military action, increasingly pacified Shia-based elements of the insurgency such as al-Sadr and the Mahdi army was named to have played a crucial role. See *Iraq: An Initial Assessment of Post-Conflict Operations. Sixth Report of Session 2004–05* 1. House of Commons Defence Committee (2005 London), 29–35.
- 6 Robert Fry and Desmond Bowen, 'UK National Strategy and Helmand', *Whitehall Papers* 77(1) (2011) 68–72.
- 7 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1386 (2001) See http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/mandate/unscr/resolution_1386.pdf
- 8 Foreign Secretary at the time of the invasion of Iraq, Jack Straw provided evidence to the Iraq Inquiry that he had urged Tony Blair just a week before the war to 'explore all possible alternatives' to conflict. Richard Norton, 'Taylor Iraq war inquiry: Straw urged Blair to explore alternatives to conflict', *The Guardian*, 2 February 2011. [http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/feb/02/iraq-inquiry-jack-straw-regime-change-tony-blair-\(version-02.02.2011\)](http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/feb/02/iraq-inquiry-jack-straw-regime-change-tony-blair-(version-02.02.2011)). Furthermore, failure to find weapons of mass destruction as early as June 2003 had battered British support for the Iraq War from over 60% to less than a majority. By the summer of 2006, support for the war had fallen below 30%. Widespread public anger over the Iraq War likely declined support for the conflict in Afghanistan. See: <http://www.britannica.com/blogs/2010/10/assessing-british-support-for-the-war-in-afghanistan>
- 9 Cavanagh. 'Ministerial Decision-Making in the Run-Up to the Helmand Deployment', 50.
- 10 See: <http://www.britannica.com/blogs/2010/10/assessing-british-support-for-the-war-in-afghanistan>
- 11 Blair, *The Journey*, 671.

Afghanistan was framed as a continuous commitment to the war torn country. In a sense this was not completely incorrect as the British had engaged themselves in Afghanistan since the intervention of the ‘coalition of the willing’ in 2001. Initially, the British military efforts had concentrated around Kabul, but in the summer of 2003 they launched a PRT in Mazar-e – Sharif. Initially, the PRT originated under the OEF command, but was transferred to ISAF a year later. Simultaneously, a second PRT was launched in Meymaneh (Faryab Province).¹² Hence, the main focus of the United Kingdom in Afghanistan was directed to the relatively calm northern part of the country.

7.3 Occasion for Decision I: Blair’s Desire to Lead NATO’s Expansion to The South

At the NATO conference in Istanbul in June 2004, Prime Minister Blair announced that Britain would increase its contribution to ISAF by deploying the largely British-staffed ARRC headquarters to Afghanistan to lead the stage three expansion of ISAF.¹³ This announcement reportedly took General Dannatt, at that time commanding the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps¹⁴, by surprise: ‘Very quickly at the NATO summit in June, very quickly after that, an announcement was made which I was totally unaware of, that in the middle of 2006 or thereabouts the UK would take a major lead in an enhanced NATO operation in Afghanistan and that we, the UK, would be a significant player in that and that Headquarters ARRC would lead that. Wow, where did that come from?’¹⁵

Most likely, it had originated from Prime Minister Blair’s conviction that the United Kingdom needed to commit more forces to the NATO mission in Afghanistan. Consequently, he had offered the earlier mentioned deployment of the ARRC and showed great interest in a deployment of British forces to the South.¹⁶ The alteration of the British effort in Afghanistan from the North to the South was formally agreed to by the Chiefs of Staff and consequently articulated to NATO by the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, on the 10th of February 2005 at the NATO Ministerial conference in Nice.¹⁷

12 Eronen Oskari, ‘PRT models in Afghanistan’, *Civilian Crisis Management Studies* 1(5) (2008) 20.

13 James Ferguson, *A Million Bullets, the Real Story of the British Army in Afghanistan* (London 2009).

14 Headquarters Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (HQ ARRC) is ‘a highly capable multinational, NATO operational headquarters, fully ready for rapid deployment worldwide within five to thirty days, with dedicated and integrated support to sustain and protect the headquarters once deployed’. See: NATO ‘HQ ARRC’, <http://www.rrc.nato.int/alliedrapidreactioncorps.aspx> (last accessed, 10.05.2014).

15 Evidence delivered by general Dannatt to the Chilcot Inquiry, on the 28th of July, 2010. <http://www.iraginqury.org.uk/media/53218/Dannatt%202010-07-28%2051.pdf>

16 Fergusson, *A Million Bullets*; interviews respondents.

17 Cavanagh, ‘Ministerial Decision-Making in the Run-Up to the Helmand Deployment’, 54-55.

The respondents all indicated that the political context of NATO's expansion had seemingly informed the reasoning for committing British forces. It appeared as if it was a logical step in a direction already taken by Prime Minister Blair and his government and in line with NATO's plans to expand its area of operations to the South. Some even argued, if NATO failed in Afghanistan, the British strategic end would fail with it. In other words, the national strategic imperative became the renaissance of the NATO's campaign through a deployment of British forces to the South of Afghanistan. The deployment of forces would potentially serve as a catalyst for the completion of the NATO plan and, essentially, to a significant commitment of American forces which was assessed as a precondition for success as well.¹⁸

According to a special advisor to the government, Matt Cavanagh, the military came close to arguing that only Britain could assume responsibility over the South, thereby rescuing the campaign and prompting the Americans and other allies to reinforce their efforts and commit to the ISAF plan. Even though many military resources were still committed in Iraq, the deployment to South Afghanistan was considered manageable, he explained.¹⁹

The evidence as presented during the hearing [of those involved in the decision-making in the run up to the deployment to Helmand] in the House of Commons Defence Committee²⁰ and the Iraq Inquiry²¹ indicated the military did in fact provide the information, both in briefings and memos that the mission was do-able, [which will be dealt with in a more extensive manner later on in the chapter]. There was however often a reference to the deployment to Iraq, and the fact that this put a restriction on the number of forces and equipment available for Afghanistan.²²

As alluded to by Clarke: 'Whatever interpretation was made of the desire to re-engage in Afghanistan from around 2003, there can be little doubt that carrying it through at a time when operations in Iraq so dominated the minds of policy-makers, made strategic coherence extremely difficult to maintain by mid-2005. Critical military decision-makers at the time, including military service chiefs, struggled to recall any occasions on which a genuine strategic discussion of the upcoming Afghan commitment took place. Regular meetings and

- 18 Fry and D Bowen, 'UK national strategy and Helmand', 70; Michael Clarke, 'Conclusion', *Whitehall Papers* 70(1) (2011) 81-93, 84.
- 19 Interview Cavanagh; Cavanagh, *Ministerial Decision-Making in the Run-Up to the Helmand Deployment*, 50.
- 20 The Defence Committee 'is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Ministry of Defence and its associated public bodies. It chooses its own subjects of inquiry'. UK Parliament, 'Defence Committee', <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/Defence-committee/role/> (last accessed 10.11.2013).
- 21 The Chilcot inquiry [named after its chairman, Sir John Chilcot] 'is a public inquiry into the United's Kingdom role in the Iraq War. Prime Minister Gordon Brown, on 15 June 2009 announced with an initial statement that proceedings would take place in private. This decision which was subsequently reversed after receiving criticism in the media and the House of Commons'. The Iraq Inquiry, 'About the inquiry', <http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/about.aspx> (last accessed 10.11.2013).
- 22 See: The Iraq Inquiry, 'Evidence', <http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/transcripts.aspx>; UK Parliament, 'Operations in Helmand 2006' <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmdfence/554/55405.htm#n26>

transatlantic video conferences were overwhelmingly dominated by Iraq operations'.²³ Even more tellingly, as put forward by General Jackson, he had no idea why the UK had gone to Helmand, even though he was Chief of the General Staff at the time the decision was taken.²⁴

Furthermore, as indicated by the private secretary of the Secretary of State for Defence, a long-term strategy for the region in which British interests were spelled out for departments of state, had not been developed. Furthermore, the Foreign Office had difficulties articulating British long-term interests and relative priorities for Pakistan and Afghanistan.²⁵ Yet, as explained by the Permanent Undersecretary of Defence: 'The motives were clearly political [...] There was a strong and clear political and strategic rationale for the mission'.²⁶ His observation was underlined by Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (commitments)²⁷ Charles Style: 'The idea of deploying troops to the South was not bad. Both the UN and NATO had a real aspiration to 'do good'.²⁸ The rationale of, amongst other things, supporting NATO, had gained ground with the military planning circles as well. Chief plans at the Permanent Joint Headquarters called to mind: 'Given the reality of the NATO expansion to the South, I – and most people involved in the planning of the operation – never questioned the lack of clarity [about the mission] or raised any doubts about the political/military direction of the operation.'²⁹

However, some questioned the endeavour in terms of the desire to do good. One of them, former ambassador to Kabul, Sir Sherard Cowper Coles, claimed the only political objective for the United Kingdom sending troops to the South of Afghanistan was 'keeping up with the Joneses'. In other words, trying to be like the rest, in this case, a reliable NATO partner. 'We wanted to impress the Americans' he said.³⁰

23 Clarke, 'The Helmand Decision', 14.

24 Elliot, *High Command*, 254.

25 A view presented by Nick Beadle, private secretary in the Private Office of the Ministry of Defense from late summer 2005 to mid-2007 for respectively Defense secretaries John Reid and Des Browne. See: Beadle, 'Afghanistan and the Context of Iraq'.

26 Interview Tebbit.

27 Later on, the term for this post changed to deputy Chief of Defence Staff operations. The post entails the provision of oversight over upcoming and ongoing operations.

28 Interview Style.

29 Interview Chief plans PJHQ.

30 Interview Coper Coles.

7.4 Occasion for Decision II: NATO's Force Generation Meeting

In February 2005, a month before NATO's Stage III informal force generation³¹ meeting took place, Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon, announced his intention to deploy British forces to the South of Afghanistan in parliament. However, deliberations about a deployment to the South were already well underway. As already outlined in the Dutch case, informal meetings with partnering nations - Canada and the Netherlands – that had occurred since the summer of 2004, served to cater for an enhanced trilateral cooperation with the intention to assume responsibility for NATO's Stage III expansion.

These informal talks between the three nations carried great value because without this partnering, neither one of these nations would likely have deployed their forces. In addition, shared thinking and observations about available provinces and probable time-frames, amongst other things, are known to have figured in their calculations.³²

As explained by a senior government official: 'It was a grouping of people that thought they could be working together. This idea had emerged amongst the militaries of these countries. Personally, I do not recall or believe, the United States had initiated the idea of these countries working together in order to take on the counter clockwise expansion to the South [...]'.³³

Consequently, a military liaison process instigated these three partners to engage in South Afghanistan, rather than a political initiative. However, it followed a direction already explicated by Blair when he announced the United Kingdom was to play a larger role in Afghanistan and subsequently made the offer of deploying the ARRC at the NATO summit in the summer of 2004, as described earlier. This initiative was instrumental in shaping the subsequent process from then on.³⁴

Nevertheless, some argued the decision-making process mission for the deployment of British forces to South Afghanistan contained a democratic deficit. 'There ought to be something underneath military enthusiasm. Further down the system, there should be strategic literates to guide the effort. We should have said, well hang on, let's stop, let's think. By the time doubts were raised [in the autumn of 2005 MGM] reflection about what was going

31 The procedure for staffing an operation or mission is often referred to as "force generation". This procedure ensures that Alliance operations or missions have the manpower and materials required to achieve set objectives. NATO, 'Troop Contributions', http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50316.htm (last accessed 08.08.2013).

32 Willis, *An Unexpected War, A Not-Unexpected Mission*. PP 2, 8

33 Interview government official.

34 Matthew Willis, 'Canada in Regional Command South: Alliance Dynamics and National Imperatives', *Whitehall Papers* 77(1) (2011) 49-67, 56.

on was no longer possible. It has to be said though; there were opponents and supporters for the mission in both the civilian and military community'.³⁵

Some even argued NATO's expansion to the South of Afghanistan embodied political guidance and respectively approval in itself. As alluded to by a military planner: 'The very fact that there was an ISAF campaign plan in place, contradicts the suggestion that politicians were behind on the deployment of forces to the South of Afghanistan. This plan was NAC [North Atlantic Council] approved and as such is evidence that there was political approval and direction'.³⁶

7.5 Emergence of a Decision Unit: The Actions of a Single Group with a Dominant Leader

Prime Minister Blair had set out the decision path for a British engagement at the NATO conference in Istanbul. His dedication to revive the NATO mission in Afghanistan by committing British troops for its Stage III expansion had reportedly set the tone for the detailed planning that followed in the Ministry of Defence and subordinated military headquarters.³⁷

The closed features of the Reid group which was to oversee the planning for the mission to South Afghanistan were very much a reflection of Prime Minister Blair's personal style of leadership. According to a special advisor to the government, Matt Cavanagh, Blair was more practiced in questioning advice telling him he could not do something than he was in spotting the risks in advice reassuring him that he could. In fact, the Prime Minister already seemed to have made up his mind and envisioned a leading role in the expansion of the Afghan campaign.³⁸ It facilitated an emphasis on the accomplishment of the task that had been set out for them.

The relations within the Reid Group were furthermore heavily influenced by the Prime Minister's predilection for the military as his preferred institution. This engendered a dominant position of the military as a pivotal actor in the process: they were not only the providers of the majority of resources required for the task but also already heavily engaged in the preparations for the deployment within the trilateral military working groups.

As articulated by a high government official: 'Blair liked the approach of the military. They would tell him what they could do. Unfortunately, the military – in this case – made

35 Interview Clarke.

36 Interview Southall.

37 Interviews respondents

38 Cavanagh, 'Ministerial Decision-Making in the Run-Up to the Helmand Deployment', 50.

a rather bad judgment caused by over-enthusiasm about their own capability. As such, the question needs to be asked whether the military made the proper assessment as to what it was they were getting into'.³⁹ Hence, looming political desire articulated by Prime Minister Blair coincided with military enthusiasm to commence a novel endeavour.

7.6 Decision Unit Dynamics: The Process of Interpretation

The interpretation of the task at hand was very much geared in the direction of how to deploy instead of first thoroughly addressing the question of if a deployment had in fact to materialise. Yet the planning of the deployment at hand had already been considered, for all practical purposes, with important choices that had to be made. One of these choices was the selection of the province the United Kingdom were to deploy their forces to. A decision entailing strategic guidance, but in fact precisely that had been lacking.

Selection of the Province

In the first half of 2005, the British never intended to go into Helmand, presuming they would be lead nation and they anticipated being deployed to Kandahar due to its strategic importance.⁴⁰ The permanent joint headquarters had sent off a reconnaissance party to South Afghanistan headed by General Messenger, to provide them with recommendations about the Southern provinces. Messenger came back recommending Kandahar, but decided after another recce that British troops would have to deploy to Helmand.⁴¹ In April 2005⁴² the decision had been made to assume responsibility over the biggest opium producing province⁴³ of Afghanistan: Helmand.

The chief reason for the decision to deploy British forces to the province Helmand instead of another province appeared to be coalition military politics instead of a well thought through strategic political decision. In fact, according to senior military sources, the Director of operations at the Ministry of Defence had been sent to one of the working level planning

39 Interview senior government official.

40 Carl Forsberg, *The Taliban's Campaign for Kandahar. Afghanistan Report 3*. Institute for the Study of War (2009 Washington DC); Carl Forsberg, *Politics and Power in Kandahar. Afghanistan Report 5*. Institute for the Study of War (2010 Washington DC).

41 Interview Messenger.

42 According to Matthew Willis this decision to have been made in December 2004 since Canada announced the deployment of their PRT to Kandahar province. He argues the announcement would not have been made unless negotiations between UK and Canada would not have progressed to a final stage. Willis, 'Canada in Regional Command South', 60.

43 See: Jonathan Goodhand, 'Frontiers and Wars: the Opium Economy in Afghanistan', *Journal of Agrarian Change* 5(2) (2005) 191-216; Adam Pain, *Opium Trading Systems in Helmand and Ghor. Issues Paper Series*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (2006); Peter Dahl Thruelsen, 'Counterinsurgency and a Comprehensive Approach: Helmand Province, Afghanistan', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 19(2) (2008) 201-220.

conferences in Ottawa (June 2005) with the guidance to opt for Kandahar. He nevertheless returned with the message British forces were to deploy to Helmand.⁴⁴

General Richards was preparing to assume command over ISAF from May 2006 onwards and had assessed Kandahar as the centre of gravity of the insurgency and the vital ground of the campaign.⁴⁵ As explained by the general: 'Until today I do not understand why we deployed to Helmand since my guidance delivered to the Director of operations at the MoD was to assume responsibility for Kandahar'.⁴⁶

The explanation provided by those involved at the informal military planning conferences was that Canada had been granted responsibility over Kandahar because the United Kingdom wanted to safeguard the trilateral cooperation. Apparently, Canada had announced their troop contribution non-negotiable and conditional on being given Kandahar. The Canadian focus on Kandahar seemed to be founded in the fact that a Canadian battle group had already been present in Kandahar since 2002.⁴⁷ Hence, the British delegation had accepted responsibility for Helmand as a 'necessary concession' in the cooperation with its partners in South Afghanistan.⁴⁸

Some perspectives on the choice for Helmand province:

How then did we end up going to Helmand, rather than to Kandahar? I can offer nothing more as a reason than a failure to persuade the US to support us, as against the preference of the Canadians to go to Kandahar. The US rightly guessed we would go into Southern Afghanistan anyway. Ministers were advised not to try to reverse decisions that had been made in military circles some time previously. The tail was wagging the dog: coalition military politics were driving national strategic interest. With hindsight, my impression is that diplomacy and politics followed rather tamely. Notable commanders, including General Richards, instinctively understood the strategic significance of Kandahar, with its links to Quetta in less-troubled times. If our long-term strategic priorities are in Pakistan and our security interests lie in the border regions, then we should have pushed harder to be at the centre of gravity of the region.⁴⁹

How did our nations go about getting which province? There was no strategic foresight on where to go. Canada selected Kandahar because of its strategic importance. Other

44 Interview Richards.

45 Fergusson, *Million Bullets*, 231-233

46 Interview Richards.

47 Willis, *Alliance Dynamics and National Imperatives*, 60

48 The conference took place on the 21st of June 2005 in Ottawa.

49 Beadle, 'Afghanistan and the context of Iraq', 75.

provinces in the South such as Uruzgan were significantly important but not the most important. The UK made a strategic error in this case by choosing Helmand.⁵⁰

Consequently, the arrangement that had taken shape between the military and defence staffs in London, Ottawa, and The Hague was that the Canadians would send an enlarged battle group to Kandahar; the Dutch would send a battle group to Uruzgan province; and the British would deploy their forces to Helmand. The three partnering nations agreed to mutually support one another. Uruzgan was important for its 'stay behind potential' and training facility for insurgents⁵¹ but Helmand and Kandahar were deemed key in the strategic sense that they were at the centre of attention of both criminal and insurgent activities. Kandahar especially embodied the heart of the Taliban resurgence and needed to be secured.⁵²

Later on, the choice for Helmand was rhetorically repackaged in the sense that it would be consistent with the British counter-narcotics role in Afghanistan, a role Prime Minister Blair identified as vital for British interests. As recollected by Clarke, based on his personal interviews with the involved actors: 'The impetus for Downing Street to stage a deployment to Helmand was so strong that Blair would have redirected the decision if one would have chosen to assume responsibility for Kandahar'.⁵³ His observation is underlined by the Permanent Undersecretary for Defence, Tebbit, who described Blair's dedication towards the countering of narcotics to have been prevalent before 9/11. 'It has always been a strong British stand, even when we were chasing after Al Qaeda [during operation Enduring Freedom]'.⁵⁴

Some media reported on the presupposed relation between the drugs on the streets of London and the deployment to Helmand as imaginary. An article in the Guardian ironically stated: 'Lost in some Lawrence of Arabia fantasy, he is walking the fields of Helmand when he should be patrolling the streets of Glasgow. Offered a virtuous circle, he has opted for a vicious one'.⁵⁵

Interestingly enough, Prime Minister Blair himself hardly made any reference to the decision-making with regard to the deployment to Helmand or his interest in fighting narcotics on the streets of London as a reason for the British engagement in South Afghanistan in his biography.⁵⁶ However in all truth, the counter-narcotics pillar of the

50 Interview Southall.

51 As indicated by Sean M. Maloney small stay-behind groups were present in Uruzgan. Maloney, Sean, 'A Violent Impediment: the Evolution of Insurgent Operations in Kandahar Province 2003–07', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 19(2) (2008) 201–220.

52 Giustozzi, Antonio and Noor Ullah. 'The Inverted Cycle: Kabul and the Strongmen's Competition for Control over Kandahar, 2001–2006', *Central Asian Survey* 26(2) (2007) 167–184.

53 Interview Clarke.

54 Interview Tebbit.

55 Simon Jenkins, 'Blair's latest expedition is a Lawrence of Arabia fantasy', *The Guardian*, 01.02.2006.

56 The deployment to Helmand is even not named in the index nor are major players or committees as the Reid group mentioned in his writings about his time in office. Blair, *The Journey*.

ISAF campaign had been a British responsibility since 2002.⁵⁷ Soon thereafter, the counter-narcotics programs in Afghanistan became a Foreign Office priority. The department seemed to be even more determined to carry it out effectively when Helmand, the centre of Afghan opium production, became a British concern.⁵⁸

Force Package and Expenditure

The second strategic issue that needed to be dealt with was the size and composition of the British military contribution. Somewhere in August 2005, the 16 Brigade and 3 PARA regiment received a warning order about a deployment to Helmand which was due to commence in the beginning 2006.⁵⁹ This warning order to particular units confirmed that prior to any operational planning and formal appreciation of the task, the Ministry of Defence - very likely with the support of the Treasury - already decided to limit the size of the force to a reinforced battle group of 3150 men.⁶⁰ In addition, it was communicated to the planners that expenditure had been capped at 1 billion for a three-year deployment.⁶¹

Secretary of State for Defence, tasked by Prime Minister Blair to prepare the British deployment to South Afghanistan, asked for a more detailed plan for a force of approximately 3000 men. He and his Defence Chiefs acknowledged that 'the further down the planning route they went, the harder it would be to pull back'.⁶²

As recollected by General Messenger, the permanent joint headquarters presented the force estimate to the Ministry of Defence in August 2005.⁶³ This plan was then presented by the director of operations at the MOD to the Secretary of State for Defence in September 2005.⁶⁴ However, the planners at the permanent joint headquarters had not even begun drawing the composition of the taskforce. As explained by chief plans of the Permanent Joint Headquarters: 'The NATO plan was to send a taskforce. None of us knew what a taskforce was.

57 The 'lead nation' model of international assistance to Afghanistan was agreed to at a donors' conference held in Tokyo in early 2002. Five countries each agreed to assume lead coordination responsibility for assistance to a single area of security-related Afghan administration: the United States for the army, Germany for the police, Italy for the judiciary, the United Kingdom for counter-narcotics, and Japan for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of militias. The Afghanistan Compact, a formal statement of commitment by the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and the international community, finalized in January 2006, shifted responsibility from lead nations to Afghanistan itself. Steve Bowman and Catherine Dale, *War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Military Operations, and Issues for Congress*. Congressional Research Service (2010) 12.

58 Valentina Soria, 'Flawed Comprehensiveness: the Joint Plan for Helmand', *Whitehall Papers* 77(1) (2011) 30-48, 35

59 Rodwell, 'Between Idea and the Reality', 19; Interview Stuart Tootal.

60 Tom Rodwell, 'Between Idea and Reality', 19

61 Fairweather, *A War of Choice*, 224-225; Soria, 'Flawed Comprehensiveness'.

62 Fairweather, *A War of Choice*, 224.

63 Interview Messenger.

64 Fairweather, *A War of Choice*, 224-225

No doctrine was available. If that would have been the case, we would have understood the estimate of the composition and size of the taskforce better'.⁶⁵

At the trilateral working conferences, the United States briefed the three partnering nations about what should at least be included in the formatted taskforces. Of course, every nation remained autonomous with regard to the composition of the respective taskforces, but had in the back of their minds the suggestions about the composition of the task force as put forward by the American representatives.

In addition to the lack of understanding about the composition of the task force, the force package discussion was fraught with debates on reducing operational activities in Iraq. Also, the planning assumption of the campaign in Helmand was – according to most respondents – informed by the belief that the United Kingdom would deploy its forces to a relative benign region with a main focus on stabilisation and reconstruction activities.⁶⁶

The question remained whether the proposed size of the taskforce was indeed realistic. The estimate allegedly relied heavily on the already committed British forces in Iraq. However, political and military decision-makers believed these two operations could be carried out concurrently.⁶⁷ As explained by the Prime Minister; 'Afghanistan did not affect decisions on drawing down troop levels. Had it been said to me at any time in early 2003 that we could not fulfil our task because of shortages of troops, I would not have committed us'.⁶⁸

In various accounts⁶⁹ military commanders were accused of providing advice that politicians and civil servants wanted to hear, rather than the cold facts that might have led to a less enthusiastic political imperative about leading the NATO campaign into Southern Afghanistan.⁷⁰ One of the architects of the alteration from Iraq to Afghanistan was the director of operations at the Ministry of Defence, General Fry. Along with Blair's foreign policy advisor, Nigel Sheinwald, and the Chief of Defence, General Walker, he became instrumental in moving forward the deployment through Whitehall.⁷¹ General Fry dismissed suggestions that commanders had not provided straightforward advice to conform to the political mood, or out of fear of promotional prospects: 'That's not being spinelessly compliant with

65 Interview chief plans PJHQ.

66 Interviews Hill and McNeil.

67 Interview respondents; Fairweather, *A War of Choice*.

68 Statement delivered by Tony Blair to the Iraq Inquiry on the 14th of January 2011. Iraq Inquiry, 'Statement delivered by Tony Blair to the Iraq Inquiry 14.01.2011', <http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/50743/Blair-statement.pdf> (last accessed 15.11.2013).

69 Iraq Inquiry, Defence Committee Hearings on Afghanistan, media reports, amongst others: Deborah Haynes, 'They went into Helmand with eyes shut and fingers crossed', *The Times*, 9 June 2010. (version 09.06.2013) <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/Defence/article2547216.ece> (last accessed 06.12.2013); Waal, *Depending on the Right People*; Frank Ledwige, *Losing Small Wars: British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan* (New Haven, CT 2011); Sherard Cowper-Coles, *Cables from Kabul: The Inside Story of the West's Afghanistan Campaign* (London 2011).

70 Haynes, 'They went into Helmand with eyes shut and fingers crossed'.

71 Fairweather, *A War of Choice*, 224

what you know the political intentions are. It's taking upon you a responsibility for making judgments and recommendations which are properly yours. You don't delegate these things up to politicians who are probably less well qualified to make the judgments than you are'.⁷²

However, military officers working on the Afghanistan estimate expressed severe doubts about the feasibility of the mission and composition of the force and consequently chose to raise their concerns on various occasions. One of them was the chief planner at the permanent joint headquarters in Northwood. He and his deputy wrote a paper questioning the estimate that had been provided to the Ministry of Defence by PJHQ stating it to be sub-optimal because it had insufficient intelligence and other shortcomings. The general refers to the paper as 'not that mature in that it was long and needed further work but it commented that J2 [intelligence]⁷³ was inadequate. It commented that the proposed order of battle [ORBAT] and equipment table was inadequate. It proposed further Prelim Ops and strengthening of the ORBAT and equipment table including more weaponry and better armoured vehicles'.⁷⁴

The paper was consequently criticised by the Chief of Staff of PJHQ and the operations staff at the Ministry of Defence on the basis that if the shortcomings as mentioned in the paper, became a matter of knowledge to senior MOD staff and the Defence Secretary, they would not give permission for the deployment to go ahead. Consequently, the paper was not published.⁷⁵

The subsequent months were used by the Ministry of Defence to set about winning Treasury approval for a three year mission costing close to 1 billion pounds.⁷⁶ According to a civilian involved in the planning, the time frame of three years was questioned as well. 'We said the time frame didn't make sense. We got a huge push back from Whitehall, who wanted us to write something different for the Ministers'.⁷⁷

7.7 Process Outcome: Sequential Decisions

72 General Frye cited in: Haynes, *They went into Helmand with eyes shut and fingers crossed*.

73 Chief plans PJHQ felt left out of the cycle of crucial information since information collected by the preliminary ops team was with-held from the planning division by chief intelligence of PJHQ. He supposedly refused to attend planning meetings and reported separately to the higher echelons. Chief intelligence refers to this information as 'nonsense' and stated he did attend the meetings. He did however conduct regular sensitive reporting/discussions directly with CJO and Gen Wall eg on the SF reconnaissance preliminary operation PJHQ mounted to assess Helmand in more detail before main deployment (email correspondence general Newton, 13 December 2013).

74 Interview chief plans PJHQ

75 Interview chief plans PJHQ and email correspondence December 2013.

76 Fairweather, *A War of Choice*, 224

77 Civilian planner quoted in: Haynes, *They went into Helmand with eyes shut and fingers crossed*.

At this point, choices were made with regard to the size of the force, the expenditure, and the duration of the mission, but none of these choices were founded on a proper analysis of the task at hand. That is to say, a thorough understanding of what one could encounter in Helmand. The main planning assumption about the forthcoming mission was that the British anticipated a rather benign environment. Opinions differ about the planning assumptions of the operation to Helmand. As already referred to earlier, most respondents - most prominently those who executed recess to the province and those who were involved in the planning - indicated they had not anticipated an insurgency. Hence, the original assumption was that combat operations would only be conducted when necessary, since the main focus would lie on the stabilisation of the province through the implementation of reconstruction activities and the facilitation of 'good governance'.

Indeed, the Secretary of State for Defence told a reporter that 'if we came for three years there to accomplish our mission and had not fired one shot at the end of it, we would be very happy indeed'.⁷⁸ What was not highlighted by the media, however, was the fact that Reid had also said [during that same interview] that he expected the mission to be 'complex and dangerous' because 'the terrorists will want to destroy the economy and the legitimate trade and the government that we are helping to build up'. In addition, he added that 'if this didn't involve the necessity to use force, we wouldn't send soldiers'.⁷⁹

Even though the latest deployment to Iraq had taught the armed forces that intelligence in these kinds of operations was crucial⁸⁰, it seemed that yet again, the (lack) of intelligence was foundational for the underestimation of the task at hand. In retrospect, the intelligence community was criticised for failing to provide a reliable analysis of the real condition of the Taliban insurgency, which presumably led to an underestimation of the threat and fuelled a sense of misplaced confidence in Whitehall⁸¹ as to what could be achieved.⁸²

The situation in Helmand was discussed in Whitehall as General Fry presented the earlier mentioned plan about the size of the force and the budget in September 2005. At this meeting several critical questions were asked about the security situation and possible threats to the British forces, all of which were downplayed by General Fry. This was much to the frustration of secret intelligence service personnel and military officers present who were aware of information collected during a Special Forces reconnaissance mission earlier

78 See: BBC, 'UK troops "to target terrorists"' (version 24.04.2006), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4935532.stm> (last accessed 10.05.2014).

79 Ferguson, *A million bullets*, 21

80 Robert Jervis, 'Reports, Politics, and Intelligence Failures: The Case of Iraq', *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 29(1) (2006) 3-52; Davies, Philip HJ., 'Intelligence Culture and Intelligence Failure in Britain and the United States', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17(3) (2004) 495-520.

81 Whitehall is the popular term for the Cabinet Office.

82 Soria, 'Flawed 'Comprehensiveness'', 34,35, 40.

that year: an increase of coalition forces in the province could provoke a fight especially if the opium trade was endangered.⁸³

Others, however, suggested that the intelligence picture was as good as it could get but was certainly limited. When asked about the intelligence estimate with regard to Helmand, General Fry called to mind the British mission to Sierra Leone. ‘Even though we did not know what we would be facing in Sierra Leone, the operation turned into a success’.⁸⁴

Some chose to voice their disquiet about the limited intelligence. One of the military officers who attended the meeting questioned the General’s characterisation of the security situation in Helmand. Consequently, he confronted General Fry’s deputy, General Hughes, and told him that in fact they had no idea what they would find on the ground. He asked him to put his concerns forward to the Secretary of State for Defence, but General Hughes reportedly refused to do so.⁸⁵

Also, the secret intelligence service operative who was present at the meeting raised his doubts by delivering a formal letter of concern to Reid, but by then the Secretary of State for Defence seemed to have made up his mind.⁸⁶ Moreover, Air Chief Marshal Stirrup stated to the Defence Committee [which investigated the decision to move into the South of Afghanistan] that senior military staff was aware that Helmand was a hostile environment and halted their planning for a time because of this: ‘I personally said, We need to call a halt to our planning. We cannot possibly deploy UK Forces when we don’t know what the environment is going to be like and we don’t know who will be in the adjoining provinces, so we don’t know what the total picture will look like. We did halt for a time, but then concern grew within NATO, the Dutch resolved their difficulties and then at that stage we were seen by NATO as holding up the whole process. We were asked [by NATO] to step forward again, which we consequently did’.⁸⁷

7.8 The Process of Interpretation Continues

Strategic guidance was to direct the course of events in order to arrive at more definitive actions with regard to the deployment instead of the provisional decisions made thus far.

83 Fairweather, *A War of Choice*, 225

84 Interview Fry.

85 Fairweather, *A War of Choice*, 225

86 *Ibid.*

87 UK Parliament, ‘Operations in Helmand 2006’ (version 17.07.2011) <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmdfence/554/55405.htm#note37>.

In order do so, more information on the situation in Helmand needed to be collected. Hitherto, several recces were already conducted by, amongst others, teams of the Permanent Joint Headquarters in Northwood. However, limited information was available about the situation in Helmand since the only military activity on the ground in Helmand prior to 2006 had been the American led counter-terrorist operation Enduring Freedom. Its main focus was the search for al-Qaeda and while doing so attempted not to intimidate or alienate the local population or the Taliban. Hence, the American armed forces acted in a 'live and let live' way⁸⁸ resulting in a limited intelligence picture.⁸⁹ 'At that stage, it was not clear yet that it would turn into a counterinsurgency operation', recollected Messenger.⁹⁰

In April 2005, the Chiefs of Staff formally agreed to commence preliminary operations later that year. The deployment of this team had been a result of the requirement of good intelligence, since as explained by General Wall (director of operations at PJHQ), this had been one of the things that had not gone 'terribly well in Iraq'.⁹¹ Colonel Messenger had been appointed as head of the preliminary operations team [also known as advance force] in October 2005.

His appointment was much to the dismay of General Butler who was chosen to lead the initial deployment task force in Helmand. He himself would have preferred to have made the initial reconnaissance of the province and to draw up the operational plan accordingly since it was his troops who were tasked to do the job. Nevertheless, he had to accept he was to follow the dictates as provided by the permanent joint headquarters in Northwood.⁹²

Messenger was provided with the following orders: to write a comprehensive campaign plan, to conduct intelligence gathering operations, to supervise the building of the necessary infrastructure [for the incoming taskforce], and lastly to liaise with forward elements of other nations.⁹³ 'I had received political guidance in broad terms: it would have to be a stabilisation mission and it was not to last more than three years[...] but we did not have a view why we were there [...] Nobody, including ourselves, understood the challenge', recollected General Messenger, who had executed two recces to Helmand in early 2005.⁹⁴

88 Evidence delivered to the House of Commons Defence Committee by General Fry. UK Parliament, 'Operations in Helmand 2006' (version 17.07.2011 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmdfence/554/55405.htm#n34>)

89 Warren Chin, 'Colonial Warfare in a Post Colonial State: British Military Operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan', *Defence Studies* 10(1-2) (2010) 215-247, 230.

90 Interview Messenger.

91 Iraq Inquiry, 'Statement General Wall to Iraq Inquiry'. <http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/49687/20100106-wall-day-final.pdf>

92 Fairweather, *A War of Choice*, 225-226

93 Interview Messenger.

94 Interview Messenger.

Brigadier Mungo Melvin, director of operational capability of the Ministry of Defence, had executed an interim study of the mission to Helmand in the summer of 2006.⁹⁵ He had argued that a miscomprehension of the political situation, scope, and complexity of the threat facing British forces in 2006 had been instrumental in the meagre assessment. ‘The British disposition to thrive on managing crises, if not muddling through them, counts against a longer-term imperative to make plans well ahead and to resource them properly. Pragmatism is one of Britain’s national virtues, and is all very necessary. But expediency can prove self-defeating if one does not get the strategic idea right in the first place’.⁹⁶

Strategic Guidance

From September 2005 onwards⁹⁷, the Reid group was to provide strategic guidance to the planning of the Helmand campaign. Within the group itself, there appeared to be a systemic lack of understanding of the situation the United Kingdom was getting itself and their armed forces into.⁹⁸ This was compounded by the fact that there seemed to be a commonly shared belief, within government, and the military, that this deployment was going to happen. According to the Permanent Under Secretary of State, Kevin Tebbit, his superior was ‘to kick the MOD into action’. He described how there had been pressure on John Reid from Number 10 to undertake this mission. This pressure was reportedly heavily exercised by the special advisor to No. 10, Nigel Sheinwald.⁹⁹

Hence, the question was not if the deployment was to happen but more a question of how. This is an important notion because it indicates the existence of a single idea that seemed to dominate the whole political military system¹⁰⁰:

We failed to ask enough probing questions [...] Equally seriously, we were responsible for setting the tone which made other people in the system, military and civilian, who might otherwise have pressed harder on these questions, assume that to do so would be pointless or be seen as unhelpful [...] the senior military were equal partners in the failings in pre-deployment planning and after deployment they were equally slow to grasp the

95 Sean Rayment, ‘British troops in Afghanistan “on the brink of exhaustion”’, *The Telegraph*, 06.08.2006 (version 06.08.2006), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1525678/British-troops-in-Afghanistan-on-the-brink-of-exhaustion.html>.

96 Melvin, ‘Learning the Strategic Lessons from Afghanistan’, 59–60.

97 In the recollection of those respondents that have been involved in the Reid group, this committee had been initiated in September 2005.

98 Interviews Clarke, Cavanagh, Foster.

99 Interview Tebbit.

100 Interview Cavanagh.

full implementations of the new reality, losing sight of strategy in their determination to crack on and merely focusing on troop numbers.¹⁰¹

Des Browne, Chief Secretary to the Treasury [later on in May 2006 he became the Secretary of State for Defence] indicated the Treasury had been involved since they were represented in the Reid Group.¹⁰² 'I had the responsibility to ensure that we had the resources to be able to support that [the deployment] financially. [...] John Reid was very clear that he would not take to the Cabinet a recommendation that we deploy into Afghanistan unless the military advice was that we were able to do that with the resources that we had'.¹⁰³

Nevertheless, it was evident that assumptions existed in the Ministry of Defence about troops and equipment coming back from Iraq, which would allow some flexibility in the Afghan deployment. Senior officers, however, confirmed no detailed staff work had been done on this matter. If a drawdown of forces in Iraq had to be halted or delayed, no contingency planning had been done on how the two simultaneous theatres of operation would be manned and supplied.¹⁰⁴

Some members of the Reid Group, particularly Reid himself, were adequately concerned by the small number of troops needed relative to the size of the task and the consequent risk of overstretch.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, formal written reassurance was asked from the Chief of the Defence Staff acknowledging the feasibility of the deployment. Chief of Defence General Walker did acknowledge [in a letter to Reid] it would cause some logistical 'pain and grief' to specialist assets but that the plan for Afghanistan was not predicated on withdrawal of such capabilities from Iraq.¹⁰⁶

Supposedly other members of the Reid group, and within the various levels of the departments represented in the group, had decided not to speak up or question the information presented to them. Notably, the permanent undersecretary of defence, Kevin Tebbit, indicated he had been indeed seriously concerned about a new commitment and stated he felt it could be a mission too far, but at the same time admitted he had not pressed

101 Cavanagh, 'Ministerial Decision-Making in the Run-Up to the Helmand Deployment', 52-53.

102 Evidence provided to the Iraq Inquiry by Des Browne on the 25th of January 2010. Iraq Inquiry, 'Evidence provided to the Iraq Inquiry by Des Browne 25.01.2010' <http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/45531/100125-browne-final.pdf>

103 Evidence provided to the Iraq Inquiry by Des Browne 25 January 2010.

104 Clarke, *The Helmand Decision*, 21.

105 Rodwell, 'Between the Idea and Reality', 19.

106 On the 12th of September Reid had sent a personal memo to the Chief of Defence asking for a formal confirmation that the commitment in Iraq would be sustainable if a deployment to Afghanistan would be carried out simultaneously. Iraq Inquiry, 'Secretary of State to CDS about Iraq/Afghanistan commitments 12.09.05', <http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/54458/120905aps-pso.pdf>. He received an answer on the 19th of December in which the CDS confirmed the achievability of the deployment to South Afghanistan. Iraq Inquiry, 'CDS to Secretary of State about Iraq/Afghanistan commitments 19.09.05', <http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/44491/190905pso-aps.pdf> This correspondence was made public and declassified for the Iraq inquiry.

his objections fully. He had raised his concerns to his planning staff and the Chiefs of Staff but they told him the mission [to Helmand] was manageable. Another factor that had played into the decision of Tebbit not to press his objections to the fullest was his belief that if the United Kingdom did not come forward, nobody else would. He and others hoped for a 'snowball effect' to occur: the planning assumption was that other countries would follow the British initiative.¹⁰⁷

Also, Cavanagh stated he had spoken to several people within the 'system' who became silent witnesses to the process instead of voicing their concerns or critique.¹⁰⁸ Some chose to speak up later in the evidence they presented to parliamentary hearings or committees or in publications or interviews.¹⁰⁹

Besides the worries about the feasibility of the mission and the force configuration, another challenge had surfaced. Two objectives that had been set for the mission needed to be reconciled: the stabilisation of the province and the conduct of counter-narcotics operations. Given the fact that the majority of the inhabitants of Helmand were one way or another involved in the production or trading of opium¹¹⁰, one needed to come up with alternative livelihoods. However, no alternatives had been defined yet and thus the military had not been very enthusiastic about including counter-narcotics operations into their campaign plan.

As explained by Brigadier Ed Butler, commander of 16 Air Assault Brigade, the military 'took a tactical view that we couldn't get involved in those [counter-narcotics operations] because we could see that that was the quickest way of upsetting the ordinary Afghan farmer. We didn't want to turn the farmer into an insurgent, so counter-narcotics was another contradictory objective'.¹¹¹

All the concerns mentioned above were made public by the Secretary for Defence two months after he had been appointed to oversee the deployment to South Afghanistan. On the 14th of November 2005, John Reid made the following declaration to the House of Commons:

107 Interview Tebbit; Iraq Inquiry, 'Evidence delivered by Kevin Tebbit to the Iraq Inquiry on the 3rd of February 2010' <http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/transcripts/oralevidence-bydate/091203.aspx>

108 Interview Cavanagh.

109 See: Iraq hearing, <http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/transcripts.aspx>; House of Commons Defence Committee on Afghanistan, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmdfence/554/55405.htm>; The Afghan Papers on the decision –making on Helmand (RUSI).

110 Helmand holds a dominant position in Afghanistan as an opium producer, accounting for around 25 percent of the national opium poppy cultivated area in recent years. For more information see: Pain, *Opium Trading Systems in Helmand and Ghor*; Vanda Felbab-Brown, 'Peacekeepers among Poppies: Afghanistan, Illicit Economies and Intervention', *International Peacekeeping* 16(1) (2009) 100-114.

111 Evidence by Ed Butler to the HCD, *Operations in Afghanistan, Fourth Report of Session 2010-12 I*, House of Commons (2011 London), Evidence 102.

I will not announce the deployment to Helmand until I am satisfied that we have the military configuration that we ourselves need, and until we have the necessary back-up and resources across government here to provide alternative livelihoods to farmers whose current livelihood may be dependent on narcotics. To take away one form of income without substituting another would encourage insurgency rather than stability. Finally, I will not make that announcement until I believe that the multinational jigsaw has been put together and we have the necessary input from our NATO colleagues both in and around Helmand.¹¹²

In other words, he required more assurances that the costs of the mission would be met in full by the Treasury; that the Canadians would definitely be in place in Kandahar to the east of the British and the Dutch in Uruzgan to the north; and thirdly, that the Department for International Development (DfID) would provide sufficient resources for the nation-building activities that would have to follow immediately.¹¹³

Besides concerning itself with the configurations of the deployment, the Reid Group had been tasked with the provision of a strategic concept outlining the purpose of the deployment. However, most respondents and reports have indicated such a concept was missing. According to the Director of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) the decision [to deploy to Helmand] should be seen as a momentous example of the British¹¹⁴ problem with the formulation of a national strategy and carrying it through with military coherence. He refers to this problem as ‘strategic illiteracy’¹¹⁵ a theme put on the research agenda of the research institute ever since Chief of the Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, delivered a lecture claiming a lacking habit of thinking strategically among British Defence professionals in December 2009.¹¹⁶

Some perspectives on (the alleged absence of) strategy:

I am not quite sure you can call Helmand a strategic issue, more an operational issue. There should have been a strategy for [our involvement in] Afghanistan as a whole.¹¹⁷

112 UK Parliament, ‘Minutes House of Commons, 14.11.2005, column 683’, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/v0051114/debtext/51114-02.htm>.

113 Clarke, *The Afghan Papers*, 19–20.

114 In the series of papers published by the RUSI, the complexities of the formulation with strategy are dealt with within the British context. However, as addressed and discussed in Chapter 1, severe difficulties with the formulation of strategy are endemic in most Western countries that have deployed their troops in the setting of contemporary operations.

115 Clarke, ‘The Helmand Decision’, 6.

116 Annual Chief of the Defence Staff Lecture 2009 (version 03.12.2009), <http://www.rusi.org/events/past/ref:E4B184DB05C4E3/>.

117 Interview Foster.

Individuals had their own views and acted with the best of intentions. But the system as a whole seemed to have no strategic brain: no self-awareness of the full scale of the potential challenge, or a settled procedure for taking new challenges in its ride.¹¹⁸

There was no long term strategy. This is a difficult issue. You never know in the beginning what will happen in the end. One of the lessons we have learned is to have a stronger political goal before troops were sent off to Helmand. We did not really have that.¹¹⁹

Strategic guidance was provided by the political desire to commit troops to NATO's expansion to South Afghanistan. The respective NATO operational order outlined the purpose of the mission.¹²⁰

Yet the planning process had been complicated by additional factors. First of all, international planning between the three nations and concurrently NATO did not always occur in a coordinated manner. Secondly, the various national military commands, and Ministerial departments were engaged in their own respective planning.

The commander of the 16 Air Assault Brigade referred to the planning activities as a split planning effort: the American plan [including Operation Enduring Freedom] and planning by the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, the Permanent Joint Headquarters, the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign Office, the Department for International Development, his own headquarters and the allied commands and headquarters. Consequently, he described the mission he was to undertake as unclear because of the many players involved and proclaimed he and his staff had not known enough to come up with a coherent, long-term campaign plan.¹²¹

The split between the planning team and those who were supposed to implement the plan itself highlighted the dysfunctional nature of the planning process.¹²² Indeed, even though most – if not all at the time – involved actors were convinced by what seemed to be a self-evident logic of committing a British taskforce for NATO's expansion to the South of Afghanistan, a certain chaos had occurred when it came to the planning of the stabilisation effort.

Comprehensive Campaign Plan

Even though political approval had not been granted yet in the sense that the Cabinet had agreed to the deployment, a campaign plan needed to be written. In retrospect,¹²³ the plan

118 Clarke, 'Conclusion', 93.

119 Interview Jay.

120 Interview Southall.

121 UK Parliament, 'Operations in Helmand 2006' (version 17.07.2011) <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmdfence/554/55405.htm#note37>

122 Soria, 'Flawed Comprehensiveness', 33

123 Soria, 'Flawed Comprehensiveness'.

for the British deployment was assumed to be ‘joint’ from the start and described as an effort to promote a comprehensive approach to the stabilisation of Helmand. A proclaimed desire to do so was founded in the lessons of Iraq¹²⁴ and had certainly focussed governmental attention on the need for joined up governance for the stabilisation of (post) conflict states. In fact, in 2004, the post conflict and crisis response unit (PCRU)¹²⁵ was created with the aim of facilitating integrated missions abroad. However, from the outset, no one had called – despite the experiences from Iraq – for the drafting of a comprehensive interdepartmental plan for Helmand.

Actually, two different institutions had called for the development of a military and a civil stabilisation plan: respectively the permanent joint headquarters had ordered its preliminary operations team to draw up a plan and the Cabinet Office had ordered the head of the PCRU to draft a plan.¹²⁶ At that stage [October 2005] political approval had still not been granted.

Both teams¹²⁷ ended up at Kandahar airfield since there was no infrastructure available yet in Helmand and transportation means were rather limited as well. Etherington alluded to how the deployment of civilian personnel from the PCRU had not been popular among the three departments, but been pushed through by the Cabinet Office. He questioned to what extent there had been a true desire in London to make the deployment to Helmand a ‘civilian ends mission’. As he put it: ‘If this would have been the case, a civilian component should have been added to the planning team of the advance party from the start. Yet, there was an imbalance from the beginning’.¹²⁸

Even though neither the MOD nor Cabinet Office had envisioned the civilian and military team drafting a joint plan, they ended up doing so, both on their own initiative. The whole endeavour of drafting a joint plan in the end worked rather fittingly since Messenger and Etherington had served together in Northern Ireland and knew each other rather well. As explained by the head of PCRU: ‘I was lucky enough that I knew Gordon. As such, the relationship between my team and the military became less fractured when we started working at the military HQ [in Kandahar]. The military are well practiced and have many resources. This was in stark contrast with our civilian element. Most of us could not keep up with the planning. Therefore, Gordon deliberately slowed down his planning in order to use the quality of the civilian planners. And we of course benefited from them.’¹²⁹ Messenger

124 Amongst other things: the absence of a civilian reconstruction and development capability.

125 The Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit was renamed Stabilization Unit (SU) in 2007. Its role was limited to providing stabilization advisers, and only upon invitation from its parent departments (FCO, DFID and the MOD) did it provide periodic planning support or facilitation, in: Stuart Gordon, *Winning Hearts and Minds? Examining the Relationship between Aid and Security in Afghanistan’s Helmand Province*. Feinstein International Center (2011 Medford, MA) 32.

126 Interviews Messenger and Etherington,

127 Messenger and his team in September and Etherington in October 2005

128 Interview Etherington.

129 Interview Etherington.

underlined the beneficial venture of civil and military planning for the stabilisation of Helmand: 'due to our cooperation, the UKJPH was not military in its nature'.¹³⁰

Since no template for the plan had been provided, they decided to employ the format of British military campaign planning as a framework. Civilian aspects of the planning, such as rule of law and alternative livelihoods, were inserted accordingly and, as indicated by both of them, they shaped it [the process of writing the plan] themselves and as such composed the 'first genuine civilian military plan'.¹³¹ The documents that had informed their planning had primarily been NATO documents, amongst which the fragmentary order issued by commander ISAF, the British General Richards, calling for the establishment of Afghan Development Zones. The logic underpinning the creation of these zones was based on the famous ink spot philosophy.¹³²

While drafting the joint plan, Etherington and Messenger quickly agreed the boundaries that had been set to the British deployment [providing stability in Helmand within a three year time frame, with a maximum of 3150 troops and a budget of 1 billion pounds and the inclusion of counter-narcotics activities] seriously complicated the drafting of a workable plan. Furthermore, both of them recognised the intelligence gap resulted in a very limited understanding of the complexity and challenges of the province and envisioned that more time was needed for the task force to scan the horizon and collect additional information. As such, they incorporated the recommendation in their plan that initial operations of the task force should primarily be focused on the gathering of intelligence about, amongst other things, the social make-up of the province.¹³³

Shortly before Messenger was due to deliver his plan to Northwood, early November, he had persuaded the headquarters to allow him more time to incorporate the ideas of the civilian planners.¹³⁴ In that way, one single plan could be presented to both the military and civilian superiors. Shortly thereafter, Mark Etherington, in close coordination with Messenger, provided his initial estimate back to Whitehall before the end of November 2005 (three weeks after his arrival in theatre), articulating the practical impossibilities of

130 Interview Messenger.

131 Interview Messenger.

132 This approach builds on the British experiences in Malaya where development had fostered to winning the 'hearts and minds' of the local population. See: Paul Dixon 'The British Approach to Counterinsurgency: From Malaya and Northern Ireland to Iraq and Afghanistan' in: Idem (ed.), *The British Approach to Counterinsurgency: From Malaya and Northern Ireland to Iraq and Afghanistan* (Basingstoke and New York 2012) 1-48, 30. Originally, the ink spot philosophy is based on the 'touche huile'. For more on the foundation of counter-insurgency thought see: Paul B. Rich and Isabelle Duyvesteyn, eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency* (London and New York, 2012).

133 Interviews Messenger and Etherington.

134 Fairweather, *A War of Choice*:232

delivering results given the constraints provided by the Cabinet Office.¹³⁵ It called for an adjustment of either the aim of the mission or the constraints given to it.¹³⁶

Despite their advice, Cabinet Office ordered the production of a joint plan within the original provided constraints. Consequently, Messenger and Etherington produced a Joint United Kingdom Plan for Helmand (JUKPH) which was sent to London by mid December 2005. It did meet the overall strategic aim and tried to be as realistic as possible.¹³⁷ After the report was received at the Cabinet Office it was allegedly substantially rewritten before it was sent off to the Reid Group. As such, it remains unclear whether the final report as delivered to the Ministers was in fact the product as produced by Etherington and Messenger or Cabinet Office.¹³⁸

Once the plan was conveyed, it had a rather limited impact on the planning of the respective departments with regards to their activities. Various respondents have indicated there had been no strategic ownership of the JUKPH in Whitehall.¹³⁹ All involved departments selected their own 'piece of the pie'. There seemed a reported reluctance to work together primarily founded in a desire to maintain a position of institutional primacy.¹⁴⁰ Thus, the impression had arisen amongst those involved that the plan just needed to be delivered in London but not necessarily implemented in Helmand.¹⁴¹ In other words, the prerequisite for comprehensiveness needed to be satisfied, but appeared to be symbolic.

In addition, those who were to implement the plan and deliver the results, 16 Brigade and the civilian staff, had their own operational preferences and acted accordingly.¹⁴² The commander of 16 Brigade, Brigadier Butler, and his planning staff, had developed their own concept of operations. The joint plan had not informed their planning and notably not even the planning of their higher headquarters, the permanent joint headquarters, which had in fact delivered the earlier mentioned preliminary operations team.¹⁴³

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135 Both military and civilian planners identified various problems with the comprehensive approach. Etherington identified four flaws in the concept: (1) a lack of strategic expertise at the centre, (2) a competing culture between the three departments of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Department for International Development (DFID) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD), (3) a lack of overarching authority able to take a holistic overview, recognize deficiencies and correct them and, (4) a problematic civil/military relationship, further aggravated by a lack of government as oversight and incentives to work jointly. Etherington's views are shared by Gordon Messenger who signaled - amongst other factors - the lack of international ownership of the 'non- military effort' in coalition operations, and the difference in time horizons between departments, the scale of military effort and planning capability versus the capability of the civilian sector, and a lack of understanding of the concept of the comprehensive approach. Mark Etherington quoted and interviewed in: Rodwell, 'Between Idea and the Reality', 14; Gordon Messenger quoted and interviewed by Tom Rodwell, in: *Idem*.

136 Grandia Mantas, 'Shafer Revisited'.

137 Interviews Messenger and Etherington.

138 Williams, 'Empire Lite Revisited', 73.

139 Interviews Rachman, Etherington, Messenger.

140 Fairweather, *A War of Choice*; Soria, 'Flawed Comprehensiveness'; Interviews Cavanagh, Tebbit, Foster.

141 Interview Etherington.

142 Interview Rachman.

143 Interview chief plans PJHQ and Tootal.

The civilian element believed they could initiate and implement their activities on their own terms as well and had reportedly not employed the plan either. The Department for International Aid especially had been annoyed by the assumption they were to derive their tasks and respective activities from the plan.¹⁴⁴

In the last days of December and the beginning of January 2006, Cabinet discussions were ongoing to approve the deployment, but both Prime Minister Blair and Secretary of Defence Reid were finding it difficult to bring things to a decision-point - partly because Treasury Ministers had insisted on the condition of Canadian and Dutch commitment. Both Blair and Reid appeared wary of bringing things to a decision. As such, the upcoming international conference in London was used as a forcing device to precipitate a decision.¹⁴⁵

7.9 The Foreign Policy Action: The Deployment of Forces

With the international conference on Afghanistan in January 2006, *Afghanistan Compact*,¹⁴⁶ on the horizon Blair seemed to be determined to force matters to a conclusion. As the host of the conference, he wanted to commit first in order to encourage other countries to follow his example. Neither he nor the Foreign Office wanted to be in a position of hosting a conference that was meant to chart the way forward, while not being able to say with clarity what the British role would be. As a result, after the delays of previous months, things were brought to a head pretty quickly. Consequently, the decision¹⁴⁷ was pressed through the Reid Group and subsequently through the Cabinet in a matter of days.¹⁴⁸

In the early days of January 2006, the Secretary of Defence chaired a Cabinet meeting which was convened to vote about the mission to Helmand. A non-binding vote was held to decide if the deployment was to be supported. Several senior Ministers attended, amongst whom Des Browne, the Chief Secretary of the Treasury [later on Secretary of State for Defence]. Allegedly, Reid ran the Cabinet meeting imperiously in which not much room for

144 Interview DfID official.

145 Interview and email correspondence with Cavanagh (04.11.2013).

146 The aim of the conference was ensure international assistance for Afghanistan and link it to Afghanistan's national government planning for a period of five years. For more information about the conference see: United Nations Security Council, 'Security Council Unanimously Endorses Five-Year 'Afghanistan Compact' (version 15.02.2006) <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8641.doc.htm>

147 The decision to deploy British forces has been criticised by the House of Commons Defence committee in 2011. According to their judgement: 'the deployment could not have been deferred or delayed until the end of the fighting season in 2006, senior military advisers should have nonetheless have raised serious concerns about the unpredictable nature of the conflict on which they were embarking. This briefing should have drawn clear attention to the need for force levels to be sufficiently robust to cope with an unpredictable conflict. We believe that such concerns as were raised by the armed forces were inadequate at best, and that they were not raised, as they should have been, to the very highest levels of government'. *Operations in Afghanistan, Fourth Report of Session 2010-12* 1, 6.

148 Interview Cavanagh and Rodwell.

debate had been offered. The Chief Secretary of the Treasury, Browne, asked Reid whether he believed they knew enough about Helmand to be able to deploy their troops. The Secretary of State for Defence had waved away the consideration and asked Des Browne if he was to vote against the mission. Browne decided to abstain.¹⁴⁹

Finally, on the 26th of January 2006, just before the conference was to commence, Secretary of State John Reid announced British forces would deploy a taskforce of 3150 troops to Helmand for three years. The key Ministers seemed to believe in the clarity of the overall decision, it reinforced their sense that the military were happy with it and the military were reinforced by their sense that the politicians had made up their minds leaving them with no alternative then but to get on with it. All others in government (departments) either joined the consensus or kept quiet. Some alternatives, however, were presented, like a delayed deployment, a smaller force, or a more comprehensive intelligence picture. Nevertheless, these seemed all to be treated as problems to be handled rather than constraints considered on their merits, indicating the gathering momentum.¹⁵⁰

The official objective of the mission of the British forces to the South was to conduct security and stabilisation operations within Helmand and the wider Regional Command South, jointly with Afghan partners, other Government Departments and multinational partners. The intention was to support the Government of Afghanistan in improving governance and development. The initial objective in 2006 was to establish a central 'lozenge of security' around Lashkar Gah, Gereshk and Camp Bastion and then expand their presence as conditions permitted. Furthermore, British forces were to gather intelligence and gain a cultural understanding of the environment and, by developing a 'local envelope' of security, they would be able to help create the right environment for governance, build Afghan capacity, and, create capacity for economic growth.¹⁵¹

The objective of the mission illustrated, as described by Jack Fairweather in his book *War of Choice*, the political thinking and desire for 'a simple deployment, occupation and withdrawal', 'perfectly reflected the type of war the British military wanted to fight, but not the one they were going to get'.¹⁵² Blair's enthusiasm for the use of the military was questioned about a week after the Secretary of State for Defence had announced the decision to deploy British forces to Helmand. Until then, Blair had engaged his armed forces in five different conflicts around the world.¹⁵³ Some of his political opponents felt his enthusiasm

149 Fairweather, *War of Choice*, 235.

150 Cavanagh, 'Ministerial decision-making', 52.

151 UK Parliament, 'Operations in Helmand 2006' (version 17.07.2011) <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmdfence/554/55405.htm#note31>

152 Fairweather, *A War of Choice*, 235.

153 Iraq (1998 and 2003); Kosovo (1999); Sierra Leone (2000) and Afghanistan (2001). BBC, Announcement for the documentary 'Blair, the Inside Story' (version 22.02.2007), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/6361771.stm>

to employ the Royal Prerogative¹⁵⁴ which enabled him, amongst other things, to deploy the military needed to be limited. Hence, on the 6th of February 2006, just some days after the Secretary of State for Defence had announced the deployment of British forces to Helmand, David Cameron – leader of the Conservative party - spoke to Parliament to pledge consultation with Members of Parliament whenever armed forces were to be deployed. The leader of the Conservative party proposed the setting up of a democracy task force that would examine the Premier’s power to deploy military troops and whether or not these kinds of decisions should be subject to some form of parliamentary confirmation hearing.¹⁵⁵ In fact, a comparable procedure like that exercised in the Netherlands when it comes to the use force.

David Cameron’s proposal reflected both a growing political and popular mood in the United Kingdom, a reluctance towards military undertakings. Even though the service men and women themselves were genuinely supported by the majority of the populace, the use of military missions was questioned more and more. The aftermath of Iraq left many people wondering about the legitimacy and purpose of the interventions.¹⁵⁶

Consequently, the purpose of the deployment to Helmand needed to be communicated in a convincing manner. This had not occurred, leaving some military to publicly speak up about, amongst other things, the dangers of the mission. A senior officer of the advance party [who was interviewed by the media just some days after Reid had announced the deployment of forces to the South of Afghanistan] commented: ‘British troops being sent to lawless Helmand province in Southern Afghanistan will “stir up a hornets’ nest” and provide “plenty more targets” for insurgents’.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, other senior military officials expressed their concerns about the vagueness of the British mission and its accompanying difficulties of establishing stability in the troubled region.¹⁵⁸

Expressing one’s views to the media – particularly about the political context and objectives – is by itself not the task of a military person. However, some showed sympathy for this development since [according to a senior government official¹⁵⁹] part of the problem nowadays for politicians is to formulate a single message and having a military person

154 The Royal Prerogative are a series of powers officially held by the Queen that have been passed to the government of the day. They enable decisions to be taken without the backing of, or consultation with, Parliament. This form of power has been criticised for its ‘democratic deficit’.

155 George Jones, ‘Cameron seeks to limit Blair’s use of Royal Prerogative’, *The Telegraph*, 06.02.2006 (version 06.02.2006) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1509778/Cameron-seeks-to-limit-Blairs-use-of-Royal-Prerogative.html> (last accessed 22.11.2013)

156 See: Kings College London, ‘Public Perceptions of the Armed Forces Research Program’, <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/kcmhr/research/kcmhr/publicperceptions.aspx>.

157 Toby Harnden, ‘British troops will be targets in Afghanistan’, *The Telegraph*, 29 January 2006 (version 29.01.2006). <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1509071/British-troops-will-be-targets-in-Afghanistan.html> (last accessed 22.11.2013).

158 Toby Harnden, ‘British troops will be targets in Afghanistan’, *The Telegraph*, 29 January 2006.

159 Interview anonymous government official.

communicating the purpose of a military mission to the public seemed in itself not a bad thing to do.

The links between the media and the military were originally encouraged by the Blair government, which co-opted respected and authoritative military figures in order to build press support for interventions in Iraq and the Balkans in the late 1990s. Thus the government's principal military adviser became in addition one of the principal sources of military opinion for the press.¹⁶⁰

Not all agreed that military actors needed to assume a public role, certainly not engaging themselves in the public debate. In fact, the army was accused of being too closely linked to, and making use of, the media. Their supposed close ties are viewed as having caused problems for Whitehall since it had the potential to run a powerful and efficient communications operation not necessarily in line with the chosen political direction¹⁶¹, in this case questioning the purpose and feasibility of the mission.

Despite the public outcries of military officials in the media, the prospect of a deployment of British forces to South Afghanistan had not instigated a heated public debate as one would expect after the trouble the military [and politicians] had gotten themselves into after Iraq. In fact, the failures of Iraq seemed to be the unifying rationale for the mission to Helmand.¹⁶² As such, the nation bought into yet another deployment of their military forces.¹⁶³

7.10 Conclusions

The context in which the decision to assume a leading role in NATO's expansion to the South and subsequently the deployment of British forces was taken, showcased a fusion of international momentum for Afghanistan. It embodied the inevitability of NATO's Stage III operations, a political will to step up, and a military desire to facilitate a mission that was largely seen as a 'good war'. The Prime Minister's clear guidance on a prominent role for the United Kingdom in NATO's expansion to South Afghanistan and military alliance politics, were instrumental, especially as they occurred against the backdrop of disappointing results in Iraq.

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160 Waal, *Depending on the Right People*, 23.

161 *Ibid.*

162 Fairweather, *A War of Choice*, 233.

163 Supposedly, the reduction of British involvement in Iraq and reiterated claims by politicians across the ideological spectrum (using terminology such as the 'good war') supporting the need to stay the course in Afghanistan is the most probable explanation provided for this surprising trend. See: Douglas Kirner and Graham Wilson, 'Assessing British Support for the War in Afghanistan', 5 October 2010, <http://www.britannica.com/blogs/2010/10/assessing-british-support-for-the-war-in-afghanistan> (last accessed 10 June 2013).

The decision path that emerged soon after the Prime Minister voiced his preferences and the informal international military working groups, was directed to the deployment of British military forces to South Afghanistan. Indeed, the eminence of certain actors in the decision-making process was put forward in this case. Notably, Prime Minister Blair and some of his trustees such as the Secretary for Defence Reid played a major role within the political arena. Within the military establishment, the Director of operations at the Ministry of Defence, General Fry, had acquired himself a prominent role. In fact, he had been the main instigator of the trilateral military initiative and continued to be a great force throughout the decision-making process.

Despite the strong lead of the Prime Minister and his trustees, there was an absence of a meaningful strategic focus. This particularly surfaced when studying the decision that had to be made on the selection of the province and the force levels. Moreover, the planning process remained fractured, primarily because various levels within various departments had no direct desire to cooperate and sought ways out.

To conclude, it seems that the senior civil and military decision-makers did not concern themselves, or maybe did not even recognise the need, to identify strategic questions that needed to be addressed and answered before military forces were to deploy. The majority of the senior civil and military decision-makers acted in the belief that this deployment was inevitable and in their enthusiasm neglected to question the mantra of ‘a logical thing to do’. As commented on illustratively by secretary of Defence Des Browne: ‘We all had the best of intentions. We were part of a greater plan that everybody bought into’.¹⁶⁴

When contrasting these findings with the propositions as put forward in chapter two, several issues come to light. For one, the inputs into the decision-making process on the use of military means for the stabilisation of Afghanistan were initially very much instigated by political guidance (proposition I) as Prime Minister Blair went ahead and not only offered the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps to assume command over ISAF but moreover, envisaged a more robust role for British forces within NATO’s expansion to South Afghanistan.

The decision-making dynamics that consequently advanced indeed revealed a process of interpretation in which the senior civil and military decision-makers perceived and deduced constraints and pressures imposed on them by the domestic and international environment (proposition II). Within this process, it seemed that particularly the domestic constraints in terms of force packages and time lines (related to the on-going deployment in Iraq) impacted the formulation of a common definition of the task at hand. The external pressures mainly manifested themselves in the role the United Kingdom was seen to play with regard to NATO’s expansion to South Afghanistan.

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164 Interview Browne.

As witnessed, no clear strategy, articulating the purpose of the military mission (proposition III) to Helmand was put forward. Instead, the head of the military team that was tasked to design a military plan and the head of the civilian team who was assigned to draft a civilian plan, happened to be old acquaintances and on the basis of their shared history, decided to join hands. Their effort was hardly appreciated at the strategic level back in London. Once the UK Roadmap for Helmand reached the capital, no ownership was taken and the various government departments approached to deployment to Helmand as they saw fit.

8

Chapter 8 Cross-Case Comparison: A Powerful Idea Meets a Window of Opportunity

8.1 Introduction

The putative idea of deploying military forces to the South of Afghanistan materialised in an extremely powerful manner amongst senior civil and military decision-makers in London and The Hague. In fact, it came to dictate the course of events, driven by the implicit knowledge that a mission had to transpire. The workings of the actions undertaken and the decisions made by the senior civil and military decision-makers in both nations will be compared in this chapter. The findings will be structured along the lines of the propositions that have guided this study.

8.2 The Foreign Policy Problem

NATO's expansion to South Afghanistan was communicated in 2004 at the NATO summit in Istanbul. Thus, the intention of the international community to redirect their focus from Iraq to Afghanistan became apparent. This included both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The disappointing results of the British forces in Iraq very much shaped the way a possible commitment to NATO's expansion was conceived both at the political and military level. In the Netherlands, a possible commitment was considered by a small group of senior civil and military decision-makers and was initially not actually part of a wider political debate.

The foreign policy problem, the expansion of NATO to South Afghanistan and its need for reinforcement, presented itself as a useful 'window of opportunity'. It provided the opportunity to attain a set of interrelated objectives and ideas. The first objective for both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands was being able to manifest themselves as reliable partners to the United States and NATO. Their habitual response to foreign policy actions in support of the Alliance and its leading nation was, as showcased, apparent. Respondents from the United Kingdom and the Netherlands in fact indicated the relationship with both NATO and the United States to have been a foundational motivation for the deployment to the South.

The second prominent objective articulated was the Western responsibility to take Afghan society forward and so to fulfil its obligation to deliver the stabilisation it had promised during the initial stages of the intervention. This idea was very much in line with the moral

component present in both nations' foreign policies and consequently a role they very much liked to adhere to. Moreover, the common denominator in the rhetoric as exercised by the British and Dutch civilian and military actors reflected the normative demands they felt needed to be met; collective values about the provision of security and the rule of law.

However, the British case distinguished itself from the Dutch case in the sense that the moral component in its foreign policy was far more pronounced. The British Labour party presented the famous '*forces for good*' idea as a guiding principle in their foreign policy which was carried out by Prime Minister Blair with great dedication and enthusiasm. This kind of policy and rhetoric was not developed with the same dedication in the Netherlands, despite the Dutch tradition of employing moral components to its foreign policy.

The question remains, however, to what extent the rhetoric exercised in both nations truly accounts for the motivations of the senior civil and military decision-makers. Often an idealistic argument is made since it resonates better in the process of obtaining political approval and public support. This aspect of the reasoning practiced by the senior civil and military decision-makers will be considered later on in this chapter.

8.3 The Opportunity for Decision

The opportunity for decision in both nations was instigated by different actors in the civil military interface. In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Blair had clearly set out the leading role he would like his nation to play in NATO's expansion in Afghanistan. He had set the stage with regard to articulating his desire to take up a more robust role in Afghanistan, especially with regard to NATO's expansion to the South. He had even promised the employment of ARRC to lead the NATO headquarters during NATO's expansion to the South without consulting some of his primary military advisors.

In the Netherlands, no political guidance was provided prior to the emergence of the trilateral military initiative between Canada, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom with regard to a potential role for the Netherlands in the stabilisation of South Afghanistan. This facilitated the prominent role the director of operations at the Ministry of Defence, General Cobelens, acquired himself in the initiation of the decision path for the deployment of military forces to South Afghanistan.

Nonetheless, the most prominent similarity between the two cases is the role of the military, more specifically the trilateral military initiative, at a very early stage within the decision-making process, pre-dating a formal (political) decision. The fact that the trilateral military initiative reportedly even took SACEUR by surprise is telling. The ambition of those

involved in the military scheme seemed to be two steps ahead of national political obstacles that had to be overcome. Furthermore, they also kept ahead of NATO's force generation process in order to retain initiative in terms of deciding where to deploy their troops and in which configuration.

The dynamics of the trilateral military initiative occurred informally, but conditioned the course of events that ultimately led to the deployment of forces to South Afghanistan to a profound extent. Hence, the military directors of operations of both countries¹ were great driving forces behind the upbeat rhythm that emerged once the trilateral informal working groups were initiated.

8.4 The Emergence of the Decision Unit(s)

The principal actors entrusted with the leverage to assign government resources for the stabilisation of South Afghanistan (the Ministers of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Cabinet, and the Prime Minister) are, for this study, treated as a decision unit. The configuration of these units differed not only in the two nations, but also across time since the series of decisions that were taken, depending on the phase in the decision process, required different actors.

In the Netherlands, the interdepartmental Steering Group Military Operations concerned itself with the conditions of the deployment whilst the planning team at the Ministry of Defence carried out the planning. The members of the steering group got along rather well, but their loyalties resided with their respective departments. Interestingly, this did not seem to interfere with the advancement of their decision-making. Whilst preparing to inform Cabinet about an upcoming military deployment they acquired a shared sense of direction with an ability to resolve potential problems.

Even though the Netherlands was, at the time, ruled by a coalition government, the members of Cabinet could have acted autonomously in that they did not necessarily need to check back with the political leaders of their party whilst engaged in decision-making. It can, as in fact occurred in this particular case, result in tensions between the political leader of a ruling party and its Ministers in Cabinet. This in itself reflects the single group features of the Dutch Cabinet. As soon as their decisions are discussed in Parliament however, coalition features come into play again more prominently.

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1 Even though their position cannot be compared one on one due to the clear separation between the strategic and operational level in the British military structure (see chapter 6), for the sake of argument their respective positions in terms of power are viewed to be at the same level.

Whilst formally Cabinet is not required to obtain a majority of votes from Parliament to deploy their military forces, in practice it does so. Once Parliament was included in the decision path set out by the senior civil and military decision-makers, the configuration of the decision unit changed into a coalition of autonomous actors. Even though the group of senior civil and military decision-makers remained the focal point regarding the employment of its military means, the political sign off and consequent debates in Parliament were required to provide legitimacy to the military endeavour.

In the United Kingdom, the senior civil and military decision-makers advanced the series of decisions primarily through the interdepartmental Reid Group that was called into life by Prime Minister Blair. He maintained a prominent role in the decision-making whilst appointing Secretary of State, John Reid - a trustee of Blair – to run the group. Reid was instructed to deliver the mission to South Afghanistan. The relations in the group amongst the civil and military members were difficult as the Prime Minister favoured the military as his pivotal actor, not leaving much room for those would have liked to challenge the perspective of the military actors in the group. Consequently, conflict in the group was largely avoided.

(Inter) Governmental Coalition Decision Group

Besides the particularities of the decision groups of both nations in which the senior civil and military decision-makers acted, another dynamic came into play. From the outset, the civil military decision units in both nations acquired features of an (inter) governmental coalition decision group, since the conditioning activities of the trilateral military initiative instigated a dynamic of its own. The informal, but nevertheless shaping, trilateral military working meetings went into great detail, concerning themselves, for example, with the concept of operations whilst political approval still needed to be obtained. The workings of the (inter) governmental coalition group became most prominent during the last phase in the decision process in both nations.

In fact, both nations had made their deployment conditional on one another. At this point, the intergovernmental coalition feature of the civil military decision group which had been present all throughout the decision-making process acquired a more prominent stature: neither the Netherlands nor the United Kingdom could do something without checking back with the other nation. This represented a shift in the configuration of the decision unit: the initial single group (the senior civilian and military decision-makers) had changed into an inter-governmental coalition group. This group required not only the cooperation of various groups within their own society but also collaborative inputs from other nations.

Consequently, the Dutch delay in the decision-making stalled the decision-making process in the United Kingdom, since the Secretary of State for Defence had made the deployment of his forces dependent on the political decision of the Netherlands. The delay in the Dutch decision-making was caused by a prominent aspect of Dutch politics in general: the need for consensus, first in Cabinet, and subsequently in Parliament. The junior coalition party - D66 - stalled the decision-making process to a significant degree. The internal division that had occurred within their party needed to be co-opted in order to advance the decision-making. The consequent mincing of words, employing indistinct terms such as '*intention*' in the Article 100 letter were designed to accommodate a solution for the division within D66. However, once the letter was delivered to Parliament the use of the word '*intention*' resulted in political commotion. No longer were the content of the letter and the objective of the mission a point of debate, but a play on words to safeguard political support within Cabinet and beyond, became the centre of the debate. Even though, in the end, the deployment could not be halted the decision-making process had been severely hampered and delayed. This in itself, caused quite some distress at both the national and international level since NATO's expansion to South Afghanistan was dependent on the deployment of forces from Britain, Canada and the Netherlands.

This finding outlines and builds on the notion that a decision group, in response to a problem, in fact undertakes several different actions simultaneously. As such, they are often still interpreting one aspect of the problem whilst already initiating provisional action with respect to another aspect of the problem², as has been showcased by the workings of the trilateral military initiative on the one hand and the domestic features of the decision-making process for the employment of military means on the other.

8.5 The Dynamics in the Groups: the Process of Interpretation

The political situation never stood still after the possibility of a military engagement surfaced; indeed, it constantly challenged the senior civil and military decision-makers to make judgements. The complexity of the dynamics which occurred within this group of people can first and foremost be explained and interpreted by the configuration of the group. As witnessed in these cases, the operation of the respective decision units differed to a great

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2 Robert Billings and Charles F. Hermann, 'Problem Identification in Sequential Policy Decision-making: The Re-representation of Problems' in: Donald A. Sylvan and James F. Voss (eds.), *Problem Representation in Foreign Policy Decision-Making* (Cambridge 1998) 53-79, 61.

extent. This is largely attributed to the fact that different techniques were employed during the interpretation of the ‘foreign policy problem’, depending on the configuration of the unit.

The starting point of interpreting the task at hand was, as addressed earlier, in the British case clearly articulated by their Prime Minister. In addition, it was common knowledge that the military was his preferred institution. Even though within the group of senior civil and military decision-makers, they did not always seem to agree, the majority of them desired to remain loyal to their political leader. As such, an actual ‘open’ debate within the Reid Group questioning the intention of the deployment did not transpire to any great degree. As some of the participants commented, hardly any debate occurred as the common focus was to make the deployment happen.

In the Dutch case, the Dutch Prime Minister was not that engaged in military endeavors and as such recused himself from an active role. He delegated the decision-making to the Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs. They were informed about a possible Dutch mission to South Afghanistan several months after the first informal [military] talks had taken place between the British and Dutch directors of operations. Once they were informed however, they acquired for themselves a more prominent role in the decision-making process.

In the process of interpretation two prominent issues needed addressing: the force levels and the selection of the provinces where both nations were to deploy their troops. The military was to provide advice about the military feasibility of the operation and about the force structure. Interestingly, both militaries provided their political masters with a force level proposal that came back to haunt them. Their respective habitual responses, anticipating a political distaste for launching grand and expensive operations – especially in the light of ongoing operations at that time – turned out to be a miscalculation. Once the required troop numbers were communicated it became rather difficult to attain more troops needed for the task at hand.

Through convincing argumentation by military commanders lower in the chain of command - most prominently those who were to command the respective task forces - the force levels were increased. Interestingly though, the tendency amongst the military - both in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom - was to blame the politicians for having provided an untenable force level required for the mission, only to later conclude that the initial advice had come from the military establishment itself.

Another component of military advice required for an informed decision-making process was an assessment of the security situation in the respective provinces and the feasibility of troops stabilising the region. The provision of military intelligence is a crucial factor at this stage. The intelligence assessments that were distributed in both countries became the center of heated debates - interestingly, two different debates at different times within the decision-making process. In the United Kingdom, mostly in retrospect, the military has

been blamed for failing to conduct proper assessments and the lack of solid advice about the achievability of the deployment. In the Netherlands a rather skeptical report provided by the military intelligence service [which questioned the achievability of the mission and sketched a rather disturbing picture about the security situation and stated the likelihood of casualties] ultimately left the Minister of Defense and others to question the feasibility of the mission.

In the process of interpretation, the use of an assessment framework in the Netherlands at least generated a sense of informed and rational decision-making. But as evidenced in the Dutch case, despite the fact that some major questions, like the objective of the mission, and the attainment of goals were not sufficiently specified, the decision-making was not hampered by the lack of explicating these points in the assessment framework.

8.6 The Process Outcome

The outcome of the process itself indicates what happened in the course of the deliberations of the senior civil and military decision-makers. The outcome is inherently dependent on the configuration of the decision unit of which they are part.³ Since the process of deploying military troops in both nations contained sequential decisions, at times including a changing configuration of the decision unit, subsequent process outcomes came to light.

The insights as provided by the respondents in the British case pointed to groupthink as the dominant feature of their decision-making process. The Reid group to a great degree instinctively provided advice in line with what was communicated to them as the preferred course of action. Put differently, they habitually followed the lines of thought as explicated by their leader. As predicted by the decision framework, a single group with a dominant leader will very likely produce a tendency to avoid group conflict. This model of reasoning is coined by Hermann as ‘concurrence’⁴ and the hallmark of the model is groupthink.

The phenomenon of group think did not surface in the Dutch case. The most obvious explanation would be the institutional setting in which the decision-making took place. For one, the Prime Minister is truly a ‘*primus inter pares*’ and, as said earlier on, he did not concern himself that much with foreign politics, let alone outline a direction from which the senior military decision-makers were to generate certain actions. It would be too simplistic

3 For a detailed description of the various outcomes of the process outcome see: Hermann, ‘How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy’, 68.

4 Charles F. Hermann, Janice Gross Stein, Bengt Sundelius and Stephen G. Walker, ‘Resolve, affect or dissolve’ *International Studies Review* 3 (2) (2001) 133-168, 138

however to solely explain the absence of group think by pointing to the differences of the two different political systems and subsequently their decision units.

In the Netherlands also, the power of a dominant idea did come to dictate the course of events albeit in a slightly different manner. The main difference from the British case is the fact that the opponents of certain decisions were not afraid to speak up throughout the chain of command (civil and military actors). As indicated by some military planners, they felt that decisions about, for example, the selection of the province had already been taken and their reces were 'just cosmetic'. One of the planners who did not agree with the force package, arguing it would be of a too small size to deal with the tasks at hand, refused to sign off the operation order to the subordinated units.

The line of reasoning which occurred within the group of Dutch senior civilian and military decision-makers is attributed to the unanimity model. The benchmark of this model is the phenomenon of bureaucratic politics in which the struggles amongst group members, whilst advocating the preferences of their respective agencies, occurs. The existence of decision rules and norms can provide means for alternative decision outputs.⁵ The Dutch case has demonstrated this with the prominence of the assessment framework (rule) and its preference for a parliamentary majority before military forces are deployed.

The process outcome in the Netherlands featured characteristics of concurrence amongst the senior civil and military decision-makers and the way they came to decide that a deployment of military forces was to take place. However, when Parliament had to endorse the decision as presented to them, it refused to do so. The interesting aspect of it being that they declined to do so because of the fact it was not presented to them as a genuine decision. Aware of the sensitivities present amongst one of the governing coalition parties, the decision was delivered masked by a subtle change of wording, namely 'intention'. The usage of this word, rather than Cabinet taking full responsibility for their decision to employ military troops, caused a deadlock. This form of deadlock, also known as 'fragmented symbolic action',⁶ is a disagreement that explodes outside the decision unit. Consequently, the participants of the decision unit will take action by themselves, or even criticise the behavior of those who compromised their decision.

Once the senior civil and military decision-makers in both countries came to agree on the need to deploy forces to respectively Helmand and Uruzgan, the resources needed to implement the prescriptions of the task at hand needed to be made available. What did acquire quite a prominent status in the Dutch decision-making process was the list of ten bullets as set up by the Minister of Defence. It attempted, and ultimately succeeded in safeguarding political and popular support for the mission. In the United Kingdom, the

5 Hermann et al., 'Resolve, affect or dissolve', 139

6 Hermann, 'How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy', 68.

Secretary of State for Defence had drafted a similar list, stating three preconditions that needed to be accomplished before he would seek political approval from the members of Cabinet. He had clearly stated, as had his Dutch counterpart, that if these preconditions were not fulfilled, the deployment was to be halted. As such, both Ministers of Defence did acquire 'ownership' over the decision process albeit relatively late in the process.

Within the United Kingdom, much more debate during and after the decision-making process occurred at various levels and in various departments amongst the senior civil and military decision-makers. In the Dutch case the major debate occurred within Parliament, and initially concentrated more on the use of the word 'intention' than the mission itself. However, there had not been that much debate and/or difference of opinion between the senior civil and military decision-makers themselves. This is not to say none of the actors involved in the Netherlands had been questioning the utility or achievability of the mission, but the differences of opinion were less profound than in the United Kingdom.

The attainment of political approval mattered, as outlined earlier, to a great degree for the outcome of the decision-making process in the Netherlands, and as such influenced the course of events more than in the United Kingdom. The main explanation for this divergence is, as alluded to earlier on, the difference in political system: a coalition cabinet versus a majority cabinet.

Interestingly enough, the political purpose of the mission was neither at the centre of the debate in Parliament nor at the centre of public attention as expressed in the media. As such, the construction of a narrative underlying the interaction within the public sphere was less evident. Yet, strong arguments needed to be formulated due to the probing of Members of Parliament that took place in the last phase of the decision-making process in the Netherlands. Party politics had come to haunt the attainment of political approval from Parliament, delaying the decision for at least two months. Not because, as indicated earlier, of the content of the objective to deploy forces, but because of the procedure and the employed wording in the notification letter to Parliament.

In the United Kingdom, the Prime Minister does not formally require the obtainment of political approval, but in practice he did seek agreement of members of his Cabinet. In the Cabinet, the Secretary of State for Defence was to attain approval for the deployment to Helmand. In the meeting however, the Secretary of State waved away a critical question from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who then decided to abstain from voting. In contrast to the Dutch case, obtaining political approval from Cabinet in the United Kingdom is far less guided by consensus.

All in all, the process of obtaining political approval for the respective missions to South Afghanistan brought to light the rhetorical actions and strategic adaptation to external pressures (international, alliance obligations) resulting in what is known as 'argumentative

self-entrapment'.⁷ Ultimately, the Netherlands especially, but to an extent the United Kingdom as well, were put under pressure by internal and external actors to deliver military troops. The detailed planning that had occurred had instigated certain expectations, especially for the United States that subsequently exercised diplomatic pressure when the decision-making process halted.

An important outcome of the decision-making process was the drafting of an interdepartmental strategy guiding the stabilisation effort. It turned out to be a complex endeavor for both nations. Firstly, major decisions such as the selection of the respective provinces had not been taken at the strategic level, paving the way for the general bottom up approach illustrated by both cases. The window of opportunity in which the senior military decision-makers had initiated the trilateral working groups dealing with the specifics of the operation occurred with no or limited political guidance. Hence, a clear political objective had not been explicated but this did not seem to hamper the development of, for example, a concept of operations in line with the existing NATO order of operations.

However, the fact that both nations had called for a comprehensive approach to the stabilisation of the respective provinces implied a joint strategy to guide this intended integrated effort. The difficulties with the development of a joint strategy are illustrated by, first of all, the lack of habit of strategy making for complex operations in general and more specifically with comprehensive strategies in particular.

In the United Kingdom, Secretary of State for Defence John Reid had supposedly called for a joint plan, and two separate civil and military teams had been sent to South Afghanistan to draft a plan. In fact, the PCRU was tasked with designing a strategy for the British stabilisation effort in Helmand, but so was a military team from the Permanent Joint Headquarters. No strategy had been delivered to these teams, just some general guidelines about the timings, force compositions and available funds. The fact these two teams joined hands and came up with a joint plan was the result of serendipity: the head of the civil and military teams were old acquaintances, got along well and shared mutual beliefs about the importance of a joint plan.

This pragmatic approach, albeit on another level, was also adopted by General Theo Vleugels and his staff. In search for a comprehensive campaign plan, he decided to not only develop one himself but to include a team of civilian experts. By doing so, he did not only acknowledge the need for an inclusive approach but also sought to include the other departments. However, mandated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Dutch Embassy in Kabul had started drafting a civil assessment. This document was to guide the civilian effort of the campaign. Like in the United Kingdom, the initial attempts to deliver a comprehensive



7 Risse, "Let's Argue!", 32.

plan were everything from joint from the outset, and, in contrast to the British case, had ultimately not become joint at all.

This also brings to light that despite institutional arrangements which are designed to guarantee a joint approach (the SMO and the PCRU), these arrangements are by no means a guarantee that a comprehensive approach to operations actually occurs. One does however need to take into consideration the - at that time - novelty of these kinds of operations. Even though both nations had experimented with their respective comprehensive approaches to operations in both Iraq and North Afghanistan, the comprehensive approach remained rather novel.

Consequently, the plans developed in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom had to be 'owned' by the respective task forces assigned for the deployment. In the Dutch case, this was not difficult since they themselves had written the plan. In the British case however, this ownership turned out to be more complex. Neither the commander of the first task force nor his planning staff had been included in the writing of the plan. As a result, their habitual response to the product was to ignore it and carry on in whatever way they saw fit.

Within this phase of the decision-making process, the actual writing of the campaign plans and the size of the force package had become an issue high on the agendas of the civil and military actors involved. Both the British and Dutch task force commanders had time and time again expressed their severe concerns about the number of troops that had been assigned to them. However, some tended to forget the fact that this had been a so called 'self-inflicted wound' instigated by the top of the military establishments in both nations. Hence, they directed their frustrations at the political level, blaming them for the composition of the task force and, therefore, putting the relations under strain. One could argue this to have been a habitual response toward those (the political class) who are traditionally viewed as having no clue about the military and military operations.

8.6.1 The Foreign Policy Action: The Deployment of Forces

The ultimate action that was to come about from the sets of decisions made by the senior civil and military decision-makers in London and The Hague was the deployment of their military forces. Despite the high profile of the deployment that had taken root in their reasoning, the provision of a strategic narrative capturing the nature of the mission proved to be a complex enterprise. Thus the nature of the mission remained a source of controversy in both nations. The most prominent reason for this controversy turned out to be a fundamental misconception about the reconstruction aspect of the mission. Both London and The Hague emphasised the reconstruction aspect of the mission since it was believed to facilitate more popular support than emphasising the possibility of getting engaged in fighting activities.

Arguments therefore needed to be selected that would sway the national audiences and gain their support.

Thus, once political approval was obtained, senior military decision-makers in both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands engaged themselves with the crafting of a strategic narrative. The Dutch Chief of Defence sensed the sensitivities amongst the Dutch audience about the potential 'fighting mission' that he was about to engage his forces in. This role was not quite in line with the belief that the Dutch military was to engage in peacekeeping. He understood that if one was to gain public support for an 'a-typical' mission, the strategic framing was crucial. Consequently, a careful juggling with words occurred, trying to emphasise the reconstruction effort of the mission whilst not downplaying the possibilities of armed engagements.

Although the British audience was far more accustomed to having its troops deployed to remote and dangerous places, the mission to Helmand was first and foremost presented to the public as a 'stabilisation mission'. The Secretary of State for Defence, John Reid, was in-famously (mis) quoted time and time again about the presumed low fighting intensity of the mission.

All in all, in both nations the senior civil and military decision-makers faces several difficulties with constructing a convincing narrative. Not surprisingly, the audiences in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom were not that convinced about the purpose of the mission, leaving the deployment controversial. Consequently, the controversy about the mission left room for widening the gap between the two opposing views of the goals of the nature of the mission. This in fact occurred because of a lack of a convincing narrative. In other words, the process of argumentative entrapment that had taken the senior civil and military decision-makers down the road of deploying their forces, did not seem to have the same effect on their national audiences.

8.7 The Propositions

After having described how the sequential decisions of the senior civil and military decision-makers culminated in the ultimate action of the deployment of military forces, the propositions that have steered both the data collection and analysis will be further scrutinised below.

The first proposition engaged with the initiation of the decision-making process that ultimately resulted in the deployment of forces. It presupposed that inputs into the decision-making process to use military means were instigated by political guidance on a foreign policy problem. This assumption derived from the prescriptions as put forward in theory

on civil military relations and strategy. As presented in both cases, the trilateral military initiative between Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom carried great value in a sense that without this partnering, none of these nations would have deployed their forces. The catalysing effect of this partnership is an essential finding of the study with regard that it proves the utility and importance of (multi) lateral military relations as breeding grounds for the deployment of forces. It challenges the classic belief of the military following politically initiated goals. Even though the political context of NATO's expansion to South Afghanistan shaped the minds of the military high command, NATO in itself remained rather passive and at no point took the lead, either as an organisation or through the permanent missions of the two nations in Brussels.

The driving forces behind the trilateral military initiatives were the directors of operations, General Cobelens (NL) and General Fry (UK). The resemblance between these men, in terms of their ability to act beyond their prescribed roles, is significant. The reasoning of these two men was shaped by their own respective ideas on how to potentially claim a role for 'their militaries',⁸ in the stabilisation of Afghanistan, whilst knowing that NATO would eventually call for their assistance. In this way they could keep the initiative instead of having to sit back and wait. In this way they identified a window of opportunity: it combined calculation of their interest with shared ideas amongst the group of senior civilian and military decision-makers, namely the desire to be a good ally to both NATO and to the United States.

Furthermore, the practical experience of both directors of operations informed their strategies for convincing others through their personal communicative encounters. Both men were known for their charismatic personalities but also for their dedication to 'making things happen'. Their ability to do so was largely a result of their convincing argumentation. Their communicative skills are the primary attribute in the way these men swayed major actors like the Director of Political Affairs (NL case) or the Permanent Under Secretary of State (UK case). But without the feel for the political game, i.e. familiarity with the 'rules of the game' neither one of them would have been able to initiate the scheme of events.

Interestingly, the roles assigned to the directors of operations required them to fulfill a less weighty posture. Despite the fact that both theory and societal norms require the military to refrain from the initiation of missions and policy respectively, these two men nonetheless went ahead and acted as they saw fit. Nevertheless, the Ministers of Defense of both nations indicated that they required their military chiefs of operations to be two steps ahead and to anticipate possible future missions. The question remains as to whether the activities developed by these two directors can in fact be described as a pro-active approach,

■
8 Also known as the 'use it or lose it' argument

or something beyond that. Without a doubt, as indicated by the respondents as well, their role in the shaping of events has been large.

Furthermore, the institutional differences between the British and Dutch and their impact on the provision of political guidance during the respective decision-making processes are prominent. The main features and distinctions between the two political systems are the role and position of the Prime Minister and certain facets of coalition politics and procedures. The British case has evidenced Prime Minister Blair's influence on both the decision to engage and the course of events resulting in the deployment. This particularly emerged from his personality, his personal preference for small advisory committees, his preference for employing military means in pursuit of the attainment of political goals in the international arena, and his preference for the military 'can do mentality' which he viewed as diametrically opposed to the attitudes of civil servants.

The fact that the Dutch Prime Minister did not play a major role in the decision-making process leading to the deployment of Dutch forces cannot be solely explained by his position within the political system as a *'primus inter pares'* (a first among equals). Here, the interests of Prime Minister Balkenende have to be taken into consideration. For one, he had never engaged himself much with military endeavours as a way to implement foreign policy goals, leaving most of the decisions to be taken, from a very early stage onwards, to the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs. Secondly, as explained by his special advisor, he was more engaged with domestic politics, which were assessed to have a greater impact on him and his party's achievements.

The dominance of the military in the decision-making process in the run up to the deployment caused far more nuisance in British civil military relations than it did in Dutch civil military relations. True, some Dutch diplomats felt the military was moving too fast, but most of them tellingly stated this was feasible because they had been provided with great room to maneuver in accordance with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The question remains as to whether Foreign Affairs had really consciously provided the military with the room to maneuver or if they neglected to acquire an active role themselves at an early stage. Some diplomats have argued that the military was far ahead of a political situation that needed time for deliberation.

Even though historically the senior civil decision-makers of the United Kingdom have been faced with a proactive military and public support for military missions, they now felt themselves to have less and less influence on the deployment of military forces. As indicated by some of the political advisors who acted in and around the decision group entrusted with the deployment to Afghanistan, civilians who allegedly had great concerns about the mission only spoke up briefly or remained silent throughout the process, only to comment on the course of events later on.

The second proposition put forward the decision-making dynamics to reveal a process of interpretation in which the senior civilian and military decision-makers perceive and deduce constraints and pressures imposed on them by the domestic and international environment.

As the cases have evidenced, this occurred in both nations. In addition, the (normative) pressures imposed upon the senior civil and military decision-makers conditioned the language that was exercised both in the formulation of the goals that needed to be attained and in the accompanying rhetoric. As a result, slowly but distinctively, a discursive exchange of arguments transpired whereby all actors tried to establish some common definition of the situation. The argument that had swayed domestic interest was the need for both nations to employ their militaries and the international argument was to uphold NATO's legitimacy and to live up to the expectations that were created by the international community to take Afghanistan forward. This argument coincided with the international pressure that was felt, especially in the Netherlands, to deliver troops and ensure NATO's ability to expand its presence to South Afghanistan.

The primary constraint that featured the processes of interpretation in both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom were the limitations with regard to the force packages and the time frames of the deployment.

Within the process of interpretation, especially in the Netherlands and less so in the United Kingdom, the senior civil and military decision-makers accepted each other as valid interlocutors. Eventually, they established some common definition of the stabilisation of South Afghanistan and agreed on the norms guiding the situation. Hence, argumentative rationality took over and both governments that started moving down the road of arguing eventually matched words with deeds⁹: the deployment of troops to respectively Urzgan and Helmand. The dynamics in fact featured the working of what is known as 'argumentative self-entrapment'. The process of argumentative 'self-entrapment' commences as rhetorical action and strategic adaptation of governments to external pressures. Governments are seen as not entering the process of arguing on a voluntary basis but are in fact forced into a dialogue by the pressures of fully mobilised domestic and/or (trans) national networks.¹⁰

The third proposition suggested that the output of the series of decisions on the deployment of military forces was a strategy articulating the purpose of their use. Like the first proposition, this proposition was informed by theoretical prescriptions. The study brought to light the delivery of strategy as a complex endeavour in the sense that the purpose of the use of military means remained vague. Furthermore, the creation of a strategy did not derive from a political objective that has been put forward but in fact was very dependent on bottom up initiatives. A pragmatic approach to the formulation of strategy, allowing room for these initiatives, would not be as worrisome as many theoretical purists would like to believe. It becomes problematic however if no strategic ownership is assumed over the strategies that are in fact guiding the military efforts.

9 This line of thought is taken from Risse, "Let's Argue!".

10 Risse, "Let's Argue!", 7, 34.

Unfortunately, this is what occurred in both nations: room was allowed for bottom up initiatives in the drafting of a plan, but little strategic ownership was acquired. The main reason, as brought to light by the respondents, was the bureaucratic infighting amongst the departments about who would be responsible for what. Whilst all of them acknowledged the need for a comprehensive approach, it now seemed to be more of an artefact than a reality. In fact, the lack of ownership acquired the features of ‘fragmented symbolic action’. This is in fact a deadlock where disagreement explodes outside the decision unit.¹¹

The lack of strategic ownership that occurred in both states seriously hampered not only the articulation of a narrative that was to facilitate public support but more so caused friction at the military operational level. The friction that occurred was paradoxical in nature: on the one hand the military asked for clear objectives and guidelines on the other hand, given the limited information and intelligence that was available about the regions they were to deploy to, they felt they were the only ones able to draft a reasonable plan.

To conclude, confronting the propositions with the collected data it becomes apparent that the theoretical prescriptions on civil military relations and strategy have not been as prevalent in the practices of the senior civil and military decision-makers of these case studies as one would supposedly expect. The decision unit dynamics and interpretation process of the problem during the decision-making as described in Hermann’s model however does seem to reflect very much the realities as discovered in the case studies.

8.8 Conclusions

The decision of both nations to deploy troops to South Afghanistan was based on an emergent case that largely built itself. One of the most prominent findings is the dynamics of the trilateral military initiative that occurred at the level of the directorates operations at the respective Ministries of Defence. The cooperation between the three NATO partners was commented on by the respondents of both nations as a logical step since they viewed one another as like-minded and shared thinking about how to best stabilise the Southern Afghan provinces as well as feasible time-frames. The habitual response that informed the trilateral cooperation between Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom in fact created agency which ultimately led to the deployment of forces to the South of Afghanistan.

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11 Hermann, ‘How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy’, 69

Without the partnering of any one of these three states, none of them would have been likely to have deployed their forces.

This military initiative demonstrates the emergence of agency at a level not commonly expected and illustrates the gap between civil military theories and practice. Moreover, it exposes the multiple roles and the variety of alternative rules assigned to the senior civil and military decision-makers. It furthermore reveals that an apparent clarity of political goals that needed to be attained in South Afghanistan seemed to be predominantly founded in a combination of the various demands put upon the senior civil and military decision-makers in both states. These demands were at times difficult to reconcile as the decision-makers engaged in a series of decisions in response to the foreign policy problem. Whilst involving themselves in several different actions simultaneously, some of the senior civil and military decision-makers would at times still be interpreting some parts of the problem, whilst others were in the midst of already initiating provisional action.

In establishing a common definition of the task at hand, the Dutch and British senior civil and military decision-makers were predominantly led by their desire to matter to both NATO and subsequently the United States. That is, they habitually followed their traditional foreign political strategies which required them to maintain good relationships with the United States and its preferred alliance NATO. Secondly, there was the normative demand derived from the language exercised in the international arena with regard to the Western responsibility to 'finish the job' it had started in Afghanistan. These two demands needed to be captured in a convincing strategic narrative that was to provide guidance for the planning of the mission and was to facilitate public support.

The dictating prominence of the belief in deploying military forces to South Afghanistan acquired features of groupthink, more so in the United Kingdom than in the Netherlands. This can be primarily explained by the different institutional settings of the two nations, foremost the role of the Prime Minister in the United Kingdom, which effected the configuration of the decision unit in which the senior civilian and military decision-makers operated. He had articulated his desire for a prominent British role in NATO's expansion in Afghanistan and due to this open preference, most senior civil and military decision-makers focussed on the task that was set out. Moreover, the senior military decision-makers were in favour of the mission, seeking a way out of Iraq.

In the Netherlands, a dominant idea had not been communicated top down and had to be developed. However, as witnessed in the British case as well, a coinciding of mutual interests between the senior military decision-makers served to permit the series of decisions. Even though the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had not instigated the initial undertakings for the employment of forces to South Afghanistan, it did provide its support - albeit initially only at working level - to the activities as initiated by the senior military decision-makers.

The course of events in both nations seemed to emerge within a dynamic that, at times, transcended institutional peculiarities. This can be best explained by three striking features: personal initiatives of authoritative (military) personalities, the convincing logic of a dominant idea, and the lack of strategic guidance during the decision-making process, resulting in bottom up initiatives. These workings seemed to matter far more than the institutional differences between the countries or the different configurations of the decision units that were engaged with the deployment of forces.

A remarkable aspect of the comparison of the political oversight provided during the decision-making phase is the fact that even though the Netherlands applied the assessment framework developed to prevent political and military fiascos when deploying military means, the outcome of the decision-making process in both nations was the same: the forces were deployed in the way that was put forward in the international military working groups. This implies that regardless of the existence of such a framework and the requirement of parliamentary approval, the course of events remains the same. This is an interesting finding in the sense that it falsifies assumptions held in both countries on the use and non-use of such frameworks and regulations.

In both nations, the question was raised by respondents as to whether sufficient political oversight was delivered throughout the decision-making phase of the deployment of troops to South Afghanistan. In itself, as stated earlier, the sheer fact that military agents proactively sought opportunities to employ their means is not a novelty. It is a rational tactic if the military is to prove the ongoing need for its existence. In addition - as alluded to earlier on - a shared belief was present amongst most of the senior civil and military decision-makers in maintaining good relationships with the United States and its preferred alliance NATO. That is, they followed their habitual traditional foreign policy strategies which prescribed them to do so: a role enactment that had proved beneficial many times before.

To conclude, the governing idea of the need to deploy military forces to South Afghanistan, as brought about in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, showcased the working of a trap. The momentum created by the internationally agreed NATO expansion to the South was captured by a like-minded group of senior military decision-makers acting as agents of their states. Their actions were – albeit to some degree much later than one would expect – supported by their political masters, who joined them in the workings of a self-enforcing logic, at times habitual, at times reflexive. The interesting aspect is that despite the differences in the British and Dutch decision-making process and the divergence in the configuration and dynamics of the decision unit(s) in which the senior civil and military decision-makers acted, the eminence of the deployment remained. As such, the ultimate foreign policy action, the deployment of military forces, as had been envisioned from the outset, came about in both cases.

Part Three

Conclusions and Recommendations

9

Chapter 9 Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, the questions that instigated and guided this research will be answered. First of all, the question of why the senior civil and military decision-makers in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom decided to provide military means for the stabilisation of South Afghanistan will be answered. Secondly, the question as to how this political ambition was converted into a military operation will be answered, followed by theoretical deductions, inductions, and recommendations. Subsequently, avenues for future research will be proposed for advancing the findings of this study. The contribution of this study is believed to enrich both theoretical and empirical findings on the decision-making of senior civilian and military decision-makers on the use of military means.

9.2 Why and How: Inescapable Entrapments?

In order to understand *why* the United Kingdom and the Netherlands engaged their military forces for the stabilisation of Afghanistan, both the foreign policy problem and the opportunity for a decision on the matter were scrutinised. The pressing nature of the deployment that took root in both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom featured prominently in both cases. It strongly suggests the power of a dominant idea instigated by a shared belief in the possibilities the deployment to South Afghanistan could offer to both politicians and the military.

In fact, a window of opportunity occurred in which the dynamics of a military initiative came to steer the course of events. In both nations, the militaries needed redemption from their poor reputation (acquired in Iraq and Srebrenica) and, moreover, the fear of further cut backs very likely figured their calculations as well. This seemed to be a perfect match with the rhetoric exercised by NATO and the international community that a reinforcement of troops in Afghanistan was ‘the right thing to do’ for Western nations. In fact, the iteration of the moral obligation came to underpin NATO’s expansion to the South of Afghanistan.

In order to understand *how* it was decided to commit troops for the stabilisation of South Afghanistan, the interpretation of the matter and the subsequent actions of the senior civil military decision-makers were investigated. Firstly, as showcased, whilst trying to establish a common definition of the task at hand, the senior civil and military decision-makers were dealing with various accounts of information of how best to do this.

Whilst doing so, the main focus was on how to launch the military campaign which involved the selection of provinces and the force levels. In fact, these strategic issues were dealt with quite quickly even before political approval was sought. The military initiative that came to drive the course of events was only much later followed by the political process that was needed to provide the political legitimacy and subsequent public support required for the deployment.

The interplay between the senior civil and military decision-makers during the decision-making process was very much nurtured by bottom up initiatives. Within this interplay, the actors at times computed costs and benefits but also habitually followed their respective political strategies along the lines of traditional pillars of foreign policy. All this was compounded with the earlier mentioned normative demands put upon the senior civil and military decision-makers instigated by rhetoric exercised within the international arena about collective values such as the responsibility to take the Afghan society forward.

The emergent bottom up plans that materialised in both nations were never truly signed off as the official strategy for the military operations, nor were they 'owned' at the strategic level. This actually engendered the difficulties both governments subsequently faced in trying to communicate the purpose of the mission. A strategic narrative about the stabilisation and reconstruction of these provinces was not apprehended by their national audiences. Most possibly, this was because the primary purpose of the need to stabilise these provinces, had in fact never been at the heart of the initial decisions taken to engage to start with.

In conclusion, the senior civil and military decision-makers applied inescapable entrapments, prompted by the utter virtue of seeing no way out. Both their actions and decisions resulted in a *deadly embrace*: a deployment of forces was imminent without having asked or answered the most pressing question to the degree it deserved to be analysed and answered: what is the purpose of this engagement? Instead, the primary activities of the senior civil and military decision-makers were directed to catering for the deployment and as such the questions that surfaced predominantly addressed the *how*.

9.3 Theoretical Deductions, Inductions and Recommendations

The emergence of agency has been prevalent throughout this study. Instead of assuming agency of senior civil actors at the strategic level instigating the use of military means, this study has brought to light a more complex understanding of agency. Thus, one of the recommendations would be altering current approaches to investigating the use of military means that often assume agency on the abstract state level instead of unravelling the events

through the actor approach and the actions taken during the decision-making process. The approach taken in this study allowed for distinguishing the creation of agency throughout the process. By doing so, it downgraded the notion that agency can be identified prior to the instigation of events and makes it person and context dependent.

The study demonstrated the pronounced role of the military in the instigation of the engagement to South Afghanistan. Military involvement in, or even as a driving force of, policy has long been an anathema in both academic and practitioner circles. It is the theoretical prescriptions in Western societies that have nurtured the closely guarded line circumscribing military involvement in policy making. The question remains if this approach is in fact still beneficial for modern day operations in which the blurring of these lines might imply that the boundaries are more artificial than supposed, and are in fact in need of addressing in order to advance civil military relations.

Deducing from theoretical prescriptions on civil military relations and strategy making, the appropriate courses of action for the senior civilian decision-makers would have been to first of all to answer the question of what the political objective of a possible engagement would be, and secondly to answer the question of whether the use of military means was indeed required, and lastly, in what way the necessary means were to be assigned. Even though the prescriptions carried weight in the sense that they were constitutive to their formal approach on the matter, in practice a combination of the shared interest and a window of opportunity surfaced in which the traditional roles assigned to the senior civil and military decision-makers were not adhered to.

If the line of analysis that has been followed in this study is correct, scholars and senior civil and military decision-makers who seek keys to understanding, possibly even wanting to improve the process of deciding if and how military means are to be used, could very well be helped by the outcome. The prescriptive vigour about civil military relations and strategy have proven to be less (if at all) foundational to the roles acquired and actions initiated by the senior civil and military decision-makers.

These arguments challenge traditional prescriptive arguments about civil military relations and the use of strategy. Most of all, the analysis as presented in this study gives rise to a more realistic approach to upholding practices in the field. These practices go beyond an invented theoretical world in which the dynamics of the logics at play in the minds of agents are often downplayed, ignored, or denied. While doing so, the normative undertaking within this discipline remains dominant - all the more reason to call for a shift of attention to the entrapment that seems to occur between the senior civil and military decision-makers and the path dependency that seems to evolve out of their decisions and consequent actions. Furthermore, as this study indicates, nowadays – if it were in fact ever the case - military operations are not an outcome of a linear process in which political objectives are set and

subsequently means are selected. A complex interplay in which the military acts as an agent of the state, anticipating demands put upon the states, and in which they can profile themselves, adheres to the dictum of an emergent circular process of strategy making.

The dynamics that surfaced during the advancement of the intended military deployment in fact featured the working of what is known as ‘argumentative self-entrapment’, a phenomenon advanced by Thomas Risse.¹ The process of argumentative ‘self-entrapment’ commences as rhetorical action and strategic adaptation of governments to external pressures. Governments are not seen as entering the process of arguing on a voluntary basis, but are in fact forced into a dialogue by the pressures of fully mobilised domestic and/or transnational networks. They might also face economic or political sanctions by the international community. The initial ‘forced dialogue’ ultimately culminates into argumentative behaviour. Within this process, argumentative exchange takes place by which both sides accept each other as valid interlocutors, try to establish some common definition of the situation, and agree on the norms guiding the situation. That is, they behave as if they were engaged in a true moral discourse.²

9.4 Recommendations for Future Research

This study outlined why and how British and Dutch senior civil and military decision-makers have employed their military means. It illustrated the emergence of a powerful, hardly contested idea that engendered a path dependent reasoning which senior civil and military decision-makers joined hands. Furthermore, the findings bring to light the emergence of agency at a level which is believed to be unlikely. It would be of interest to enrich the findings of this study by investigating the Canadian case as well. As mentioned earlier, due to reasons of time, money and feasibility, examining the decisions made by the senior civil and military decision-makers in Canada was not possible. However, the dynamic of the trilateral military initiative that acquired such a prominent role in the course of events would be scrutinised even more comprehensively by including the Canadian case.

In addition, investigating the case of Denmark: a nation which – when it comes to the use of its military means – is very similar to the Netherlands and investigating the case of the United States: a nation that more often than not seems to employ its military means, would further enrich this study. Would the presence of agency be as prevalent as was showcased in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands?

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1 Risse, “Let’s Argue!”, 7, 34

2 Risse, “Let’s Argue!”, 32

It would be of further interest to, in terms of broadening the scope of the findings, to include the decision-making process of a NATO member state that decides not to engage (not limited to the intervention in Afghanistan) but did initially show an interest to do so. Why did they decide not to engage, was the absence of a military working initiative or a strong political leader with a prominent view on the use of military means the most dependent variable? Expanding the research with such a case would test the findings of this study, especially with regard to the emergence of agency.

Decision-Making Framework

Decision-making approaches are well suited to contribute to further advance international relations theory especially with regard to better understanding of the black box of decision-making dynamics with regard to using military means. Traditionally, the field of foreign policy analysis aims to do so. In fact, the concept of decision units and their decision paths heavily builds upon the insights as provided by FPA. It would therefore be logical to further test the propositions of the model of Hermann. The testing of this model was not the objective of this study, rather the intention was to use the model as a vehicle to reconstruct the activities of the group under study. However, it will be valuable to enrich the usefulness of this study by deducting theoretical inferences from it and by doing so further advance the efficacy of the model.

A subsequent line of inquiry advancing the findings of this study would be testing the premises of the decision unit framework as developed by Margaret Hermann. The most prominent premise of the framework is that the configuration of the decision unit will shape the nature of that decision. As has been showcased in this study, despite the fact that the configuration of the civil and military decision unit in both nations and the process differed, ultimately the foreign policy action was very similar, if not identical: a deployment was eminent. The objective of this study was not to test the propositions of Hermann's model, but to use it as a vehicle to structure the decision-making process and to conceptualise the group of senior civil and military decision-makers. It would be of great value, though, to use the gathered data for this study and test whether the proposed accounts, as put forward by Hermann on the effects of the decision units, does in fact provide an adequate explanation for the course of events. Indirectly, some parts of the propositions as laid down in the model are tested, but a more comprehensive account would provide greater insight.

Furthermore, the outcome of this study challenges the belief that formal codes and procedures and decision-making processes improve the ultimate decision. In fact, recommendations have been made to develop a decision-making process on the use of force

in the United Kingdom subject to a formal code, approved by Parliament³, similar to the Dutch assessment framework. Ultimately, this code ought to define the process through which decisions are taken, and the roles and responsibilities of those involved. Supposedly, it would facilitate the political impartiality of the armed forces, underscoring that their advice must be based on their professional military assessment. It would also aid accountability by showing who gave what advice, when and why. Further more, the code would improve the quality of decisions by providing a firm framework upon which policy-makers can rely when under pressure.⁴

These recommendations assume that the use of formal codes, regulations and decision-making tools would ensure objective, coherent qualified advice when deciding on the use of military means. This assumption can be questioned based on the evidence as put forward by the Dutch case. The use of these kinds of tools and regulations does not ensure an enhanced decision-making process, or civil military dialogue for that matter. Moreover, the findings of this study, illustrate the limited deviance, particularly with regard to the outcome, that is likely to occur.

Logics of Social Action

One of the shortcomings of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) still needs to be advanced in a more comprehensive and rigorous manner, namely the fact that it often fails to properly include the structures that shape the behaviour of the actors in its actor - oriented approach. In fact, it hardly attends to how agents potentially influence structures. The application of the logic of action within the field FPA could possibly fill this void.

Employing an analytical framework that largely builds on the theory of social action allows switching between two levels of analysis since it accounts for both individual and group behaviour. Within the theory of social action⁵, several logics of human behaviour are identified. Each mode of action/logic can be thought of as an ideal type that rarely occurs in pure form in real life. The controversies mainly focus on how far one can push one particular logic of action to account for observable practices and further explain which logic dominates a given situation.⁶

According to the four most prominent logics, individuals act on calculating costs and benefits (consequences), abiding by identity-constituting rules (appropriateness), generating

3 De Waal, *Depending on the right people*.

4 De Waal, *Depending on the right people*.

5 Giddens, *Central problems in Social Theory*; Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*; Jessop, 'Interpretive Sociology and the Dialectic of Structure And Agency'.

6 Risse, "'Let's Argue!'", 1- 3.

a convincing argument (argumentation), or following tacit common-sense (practice).⁷ The use of these logics in the field of FPA is to interpret the actions and practices of the senior civil military decision-makers. Potentially this could be done in an integrated fashion instead of separating them, since drawing from all four logics of action allows a more dynamic analysis of the actions of civil military decision-makers. Thus the human element of decision-making processes cannot be grasped into orderly scholarly boxes since this element is very much instigated by the creativity of the actors themselves. They use their imagination to compose views of the world that make it comprehensible to them. In addition, it could very well be that during the different phases of the decision-making process actors come to make up their minds using different logics.⁸ It would therefore be of interest to study the logics at play in the minds of the agents by trying to identify not only when what logic comes into play during the decision-making process, but also how these logics intermediate with one another.

Underlying Uncontested Assumptions

Within the interpretation phase of the decision process, actors are faced with the challenging task of 'asking the right questions'. Many respondents commented that in hindsight one can wonder if in fact the right questions were asked. This particularly included the underlying assumptions of the concepts that were driving their interpretation and possible solution of the problem.

The British and Dutch experience in both the planning and the execution of operations in the Southern provinces of Afghanistan did vary in terms of their assessments, views, and activities. Nevertheless, the underlying assumptions of their respective stabilisation strategies did not differ. Both countries believed the mix of defense, diplomacy and development aimed at strengthening the fragile government of Afghanistan could bring about stability.

The evaluations and debates about the Dutch and British mission to the South of Afghanistan primarily centered on the decision-making, and closely analysed the (in) sufficiency of the provided capacity and resources. Hardly ever were the assumptions of the applied concepts questioned. Consequently, difficulties in stabilising South Afghanistan seemed to be mainly addressed in terms of implementation difficulties.

As was stressed more than two decades ago by Michael Shafer, one needs to understand the environment in which one is to operate, and consequently the nature and sources of the

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7 Kornprobst, 'The Agent's Logics of Action', 71.

8 *Ibid.*, 74-76

conflict.⁹ Both countries were convinced about the possibilities of advancing the expansion of the credibility of the Afghan government and viewed this as a realistic aim to pursue in the first place. As proclaimed agents of change, the British and Dutch governments and their forces were committed to the cause, advocating to ‘put an Afghan face’ on their activities in support of the (local) government. The willingness to ‘Afghanise’ their efforts does illustrate their awareness with regard to sustainability through local ownership, but it disregards the fact that ‘the face’ of the (local) authorities whose legitimacy they were to enhance was disputed by the populace in the first place. Hence, acting in the name of the central and local government, whilst trying to install a democracy founded in the neo-liberal peace-building ideology, may have complicated matters even more.

Leaving this aside, the cases of the British and Dutch experiences with regard to the design of their respective stabilisation efforts in South Afghanistan have shown hearts and minds prescriptions, which were challenged and criticised by Michael Shafer, to still dictate contemporary operations. Thus, the citation used in the concluding chapter of his book, continues to capture the experiences of Western nations today.

One is bound by one’s commitments; one is committed even by one’s mistakes. The¹⁰ (...) may be free to avoid new and mistaken entanglements in the future. It is not free to tear out of its scrapbook the political misjudgments of the past. Nor is it free to avoid entanglements altogether.¹¹

This citation alludes to what seems to be the inescapable – especially when put in the context of current stabilisation operations – persistence of familiar ideas that remain despite their deficiencies. The experiences of the British and Dutch illustrate the uncontested ideas of how outsiders could support and potentially even stabilise an insurgent threatened state. It seems to be indicative of a Western perseverance in ‘asking the wrong questions, turning to the wrong analysis, and, thus in end provoking the wrong results’.¹² This seems to be a hard habit to break, resulting in inescapable entrapments that may time and time again result in a central focus on *how* to intervene before sufficiently addressing *why* to intervene.

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9 Michael. D. Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms: The Failure of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy* (Princeton 1989); Michael. D. Shafer, ‘The Unlearned Lessons of Counterinsurgency’, *Political Science Quarterly* 103(1) (1988) 57–80; Grandia Mantas, ‘The Three Great Oughts’.

10 In this case the United States, but it could be applied to many states

11 Stanley Hoffmann, ‘Restraints and Choices in American Foreign Policy’, *Daedalus* 91(4) (1962) 668–704, 678.

12 Stanley Hoffmann, *Gulliver’s Troubles, or the Setting of American Foreign Policy* (New York 1968) 165.

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List of Respondents

Nr	Name	Position	Date	Type of study
1	Lieutenant Colonel De Koning (NLD)	J9 NLD MOD	14.06.2010 The Hague	Pilot
2	Professor Jan Pronk (NLD)	Professor ISS/former minister Development Aid	08.01.2010 13.09.2010 The Hague	Pilot
3	Lieutenant Colonel O'Donoghue (USA)	Dep Chief Stabilisation Division RC South Kandahar AFG	26.08.2010 Kandahar, Afghanistan	Pilot
4	Ltcom Borgartz (NLD)	Planner Stabilisation Division RC South Kandahar AFG	26.08.2010 Kandahar, Afghanistan	Pilot
5	Major Drinan (AUS)	Knowledge manager Stabilisation Division RC South Kandahar AFG	26.08.2010 Kandahar, Afghanistan	Pilot
6	Dan Murphey (UK)	POLAD/UK CIVREP	31.08.2010 Kandahar, Afghanistan	Pilot
7	James Fischer (AUS)	POLAD/AUS CIVREP	31.08.2010 Kandahar, Afghanistan	Pilot
8	Lieutenant Colonel Novak (USA)	Dep Chief Joint Effects and Assessment Cell RC South Kandahar AFG	31.08.2010 Kandahar, Afghanistan	Pilot

9	wishes to remain anonymous (UK CIV)	Operational Analyst Joint Effects and Assessment Cell/RC South Kandahar AFG	27.08.2010 Kandahar, Afghanistan	Pilot
10	Lieutenant Colonel Gourlay (UK)	Chief Joints Effects and Targetting Cell/RC South Kandahar AFG	31.08.2010 Kandahar, Afghanistan	Pilot
11	Colonel McLay (UK)	Chief PRISM/RC South Kandahar AFG	27.08.2010, 31.08.2010 Kandahar, Afghanistan	Pilot
12	Air Commodore Van Duuren (NLD)		31.08.2010 Kandahar, Afghanistan	Pilot
13	Political Advisor (NLD)	POLAD RC South Kandahar AFG	31.08.2010 Kandahar Afghanistan	Pilot
14	Colonel Creighton (USA)	C CTU	29.08.2010 Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan	Pilot
15	Commander Higgs (USA)	C PRT Uruzgan	29.08.2010 Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan	Pilot
16	Bernard Philip (AUS)	Senior Civilian Representative/ Director PRT	29.08.2010 Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan	Pilot

17	Specialist Amos (USA)	CA PRT	29.08.2010 Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan	Pilot
18	Major Peace (AUS)	PRT/MRT	29.08.2010 Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan	Pilot
19	Bart Beltman (NLD)	DEVAD PRT	29.08.2010 Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan	Pilot
20	Michel Rentenaar (NLD)	former CIVREP TFU	18.10.2010 Brussels	Respondent
21	General Van Uhm (NLD)	Director Operations SHAPE/ former commander TFU (?)	18.10.2010 Brussels	Respondent
22	Lieutenant Colonel Lobbezoo (NLD)	Commander 100 CIMIC Battalion	21.10.2010 Breda	Respondent
23	Lieutenant Colonel Brouns (NLD)	J9 NLD MOD/former functie TFU 6	28.10.2010 The Hague	Respondent
24	Major General Middendorp (NLD)	DOPS NLD MOD/former C TFU 6	28.10.2010 The Hague	Respondent
25	Lieutenant Colonel Van Broekhoven (NLD)	C Geniebat Havelte/ Former commander PRT 8	01.11.2010 Havelte	Respondent
26	Struan Macdonald (UK)	MOD UK Strategy Unit	06.12.2010 London	Respondent

27	Ed Ferguson (UK)	Afghanistan team UK	07.12.2010 London	Respondent
28	John Kane (UK)	FCO UK team Afghanistan	07.12.2010 London	Respondent
29	Daniel Korski (UK)	RUSI	07.12.2010 London	Respondent
30	Jannet Rogan (UK)	FCO UK	08.12.2010 London	Respondent
31	Imogen Parson (UK)	DFID UK	08.12.2010 London	Respondent
32	Theo Farell (UK)	King's College UK	08.12.2010 London	Context
33	David Betz (UK)	King's College UK	08.12.2010 London	Context
34	Colonel Hill (UK)	DCOS J5 PJHQ/ former planner PJHQ UK mission to AFG	10.12.2010 Northwood	Respondent
35	Colonel Mc Neil (UK)	DCOS J3 PJHQ/ former planner PJHQ UK mission to AFG	10.12.2010 Northwood	Respondent
36	Professor De Hoop Scheffer (NLD)	Professor University Leiden/former Secretary General NATO 2005-2009	01.03.2011 30.05.2011 The Hague	Respondent
37	Major General Van Osch (NLD)	Director Military Staff European Union EUMS	04.03.2011 Brussels	Context
38	Joep Wijnands (NLD)	1 st CIVREP TFU 6	07.03.2011 by phone Vilnius- Breda	Respondent

39	Major General (bd) Cobelens (NLD)	Former DOPS (2005) and former chief MIVD	20.06.2011 Breda	Respondent
40	Major (bd) Huiben (NLD)	Former planner J5 NLD MOD (2004-2006)	29.06.2011 Zandvoort	Respondent
41	Stuart Gordon (UK)	Co-writer UK Campaign Plan Helmand Roadmap	01.07.2011 By phone Breda-London	Respondent
42	Lieutenant General (bd) Berlijn (NLD)	Former CHOD NLD (2004-2009)	04.07.2011 The Hague	Respondent
43	Lieutenant Colonel Kruitwagen (NLD)	Planner J5 NLD MOD and former planner J5 MOD (2004-2006)	04.07.2011 The Hague	Respondent
44	Lieutenant Colonel Loveniers (NLD)	Planner J5 NLD MOD and contributor to evaluation report mission Uruzgan	04.07.2011 The Hague	Respondent
45	Lieutenant Colonel Haverman (NLD)	Evaluator Mission Uruzgan	05.07.2011 The Hague	Context
46	Lieutenant Colonel Hartog (NLD)	Former planner J5 MOD (2003-2007)	05.07.2011 The Hague	Respondent
47	Henk Kamp (NLD)	Former Minister of Defence (2002-2007)	07.07.2011 The Hague	Respondent
48	Lieutenant Colonel Van Gool (NLD)	Planner J5 NLD MOD, contributor to evaluation report mission Uruzgan	18.07.2011 The Hague	Respondent

49	Rochus Pronk (NLD)	Head Team Afghanistan DFA NLD and former POLAD TFU 1	19.07.2010 The Hague	Respondent
50	Marleen Monster (NLD)	Contributor to evaluation report mission Uruzgan DFA NLD	19.07.2010 The Hague	Context
51	Lieutenant Colonel Van Klaarbergen (NLD)	C DIVI, former chief plans CLAS	28.09.2011 The Hague	Respondent
52	Rudi Gouweleeuw (NLD)	TNO, operational analyst and co-writer Masterplan TFU 2006	13.10.2011 The Hague	Respondent
53	Karel Van Oosterom (NLD)	Former special advisor PM Balkenende	14.10.2011 The Hague	Respondent
54	Anonymous (NLD)	Military authority	24.10.2011 Rijswijk	Respondent
55	Lieutenant Colonel Van der Have (NLD)	C 12 Bat. Co-author Masterplan and former Chief Plans TFU 1	28.10.2011 By phone Breda- Schaarsbergen	Respondent
56	Ben Bot (NLD)	Former minister of Foreign Affairs	14.11.2011 The Hague	Respondent
57	Colonel Van der Woerd (NLD)	Former J9 NLD MOD	25.11.2011 Utrecht	Respondent
58	Rob Swartbol (NLD)	Former special assistant to PM Balkenende 2005	21.11.2011 The Hague	Respondent
59	Major General De Kruijf (NLD)	former commander RC South ISAF	25.11.2011 Utrecht	Respondent

60	Belinda Smeenk (NLD)	former co-author Masterplan	25.11.2011 Utrecht	Respondent
61	General Vleugels (NLD)	Former commander TFU I	24.11.2011 Utrecht	Respondent
62	General Sonneveld (NLD)	Former Deputy Chief of Defence	28.11.2011 The Hague	Respondent
63	General Messenger (UK)	Head Preliminary Operations Team UK	12.01.2012 London and 27.06.2012 London	Respondent
64	Anonymous (UK)	Government Authority	13.01.2012 London	Respondent
65	Sir Sherard Cowper Coles (UK)	Former UK ambassador and Special Convoy to AFG/PAK	13.01.2012 London	Respondent
66	Lieutenant Colonel Southall (UK)	Former planner team general Richards ARRC	11.01.2012 Swindon	Respondent
67	Ben Lovelock (UK)	Civ Mil specialist UK	11.01.2012 Swindon	Context
68	Sebastiaan Messerschmidt (NLD)	Political Advisor TFU II	16.01.2012 The Hague	Respondent
69	Joost Flamand (NLD)	Representative MFA in recce team for Baghlan	16.01.2012 The Hague	Context

70	General Godderij (NLD)	Former Head Military Delegation PMV Brussels 2006	09.02.2012 and 02.08.2012 Breda	Respondent
71	Professor Michael Clarke (UK)	Director RUSI	20.02.2012 London	Context
72	Professor Theo Farrell (UK)	Scholar/Helmand SME	23.02.2012 London	Context
73	Frank Ledwidge (UK)	Writer/former UK officer	23.02.2012 London	Context
74	General van Loon (NLD)	Former Commander RC South 2006	09.03.2012 and 19.03.2012 Breda	Respondent
75	Joop Nijssen (NLD)	MFA rep in initial recce team to Uruzgan January 2005	05.03.2012 The Hague	Respondent
76	Major General Kennet (UK)	Former deputy Director J5 PJHQ	27.03.2012 London	Respondent
77	Lieutenant Colonel Tootal (UK)	Former Commander 3 PARA Op Herrick 4	28.03.2012 London	Respondent
78	Rear Admiral Style (UK)	Former Dep Chief Defence Commitments Operations Officer	28.03.2012 London	Respondent
79	Hew Strachan (UK)	Historian/ Strategy expert	29.03.2012 Oxford	Context
80	Desmond Bowen (UK)	Former Policy Director MOD	02.04.2012 London	Respondent

81	Sir Kevin Tebbit (UK)	Former Permanent Under Secretary of State (MOD)	02.04.2012 London	Respondent
82	General Fry (UK)	Former Deputy Chief of Defence Staff	02.04.2012 London	Respondent
83	Colonel Knaggs (UK)	Former C PRT and C TF Helmand Op Herrick 4	03.04.2012 Andover	Respondent
84	Major General Mackay (UK)	Former C TF Helmand	05.04.2012 Edinburgh	Context
85	Babu Rachman (UK)	Stabilisation Unit	25.06.2012 London	Respondent
86	Josh Arnold Foster (UK)	Political advisor Blair	26.06.2012 London	Respondent
87	Lord Des Brown (UK)	Former Minister of Defence	27.06.2012 London	Respondent
88	Tom Rodwell (UK)	Government Official/ researcher	27.06.2012 London	Respondent
89	Lord Jay (UK)	Former Permanent Under Secretary Foreign Affairs	27.06.2012 London	Respondent
90	Robert Fox (UK)	Defence correspondent	28.06.2012 London	Respondent
91	Herman Schaper (NLD)	Former Head permanent NL diplomatic mission to NATO	13.08.2012 New York – Breda (by Phone)	Respondent
92	Mark Etherington (UK)	Former Head Stabilisation Unit	14.08.2012 London – Breda (by Phone)	Respondent

93	Lo Castelijn (NLD)	Former Director General Policy	14.09.2012 Rijswijk	Respondent
94	Rupert Smith (UK)	Military Writer and former military commander	17.09.2012 Brussels	Context
95	Hugo Siblesz (NLD)	Head Political Affairs	19.02.2013 The Hague	Respondent
96	Lieutenant Colonel Keij (NL)	Operational Planner	08.10. 2013 Amersfoort	Respondent
97	Matt Cavenagh (UK)	Special Advisor Labour Government	13.10.2013 London	Respondent
98	Lieutenant Colonel Eland (NL)	Former NL LNO PJHQ	20.03.2012, 22.03 .2012,12.06.2012, 20.06.2012 email correspondance Breda- Northwood	Respondent
99	General Newton (UK)	Former Head Intel PJHQ	13.12.2013 email correspondance Breda -Exeter	Respondent
100	General Melvin (UK)	Director Operational Capabilities MOD	24.07.2014 Oxford	Respondent

Timeline for key decisions and list of key players for NL case

August Letter about UK engage with South Africans sent from LNO to NL, MDD September Director Kingdom and Operations gets sound PIQ in UK	10 February Recent Operations inform the SNO about United Kingdom and Operations request to SNAF stage 3 in South Afghanistan	9/10 June NATO-defence ministers' Canada, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands brought forward a proposal for committing their forces to South Afghanistan 16 June Minister Kamp notifies parliament about plans to deploy forces	27 October Chief of Defence presents military advice to Minister of Defence	31 October until 2 November Afghanistan after bulletin list 14 November Minister Kamp meets in Vienna to discuss potential Dutch deployment	2 December Council of Ministers discusses the mission (no decision) 9 December The cabinet discusses the mission again. On Tuesday the CDS presents the mission supported by minister Kamp and Bot (no decision) 22 December Council of Ministers meeting Subsequently, parliament is informed about the mission through the article 100 letter 27 December Parliamentary questions on the use of the word 'intention' instead of 'decision' forces the involved ministers to communicate later to parliament that they have already made a decision to take a decision without using that word.	13 January Parliament receives a letter from the article 100 letter from Cabinet. It tries to explain it before a decision on the deployment of the forces to South Afghanistan but refrain from mentioning the word 'decision' 17 January Parliament receives the copy in which the mission will be discussed is established	2 February A parliamentary majority approved the mission to deploy a mission to Iraq. 1 February The decision was confirmed in the meeting of Cabinet	Feb 2005	June 2005	July 2005	Oct 2005	Nov 2005	Dec 2005	Jan 2006	Feb 2006
Pre 2005	Feb 2005	June 2005	July 2005	Oct 2005	Nov 2005	Dec 2005	Jan 2006	Feb 2006							

Prime Minister	Jan Peter Balkenende
Minister of Defence	Henk Kamp
Director General Policy	Lodewijk Casteleijn
Chief of Defence Staff	Dick Berlijn
Director Operations	Pieter Cobelens
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Ben Bot
Head of Political Affairs	Hugo Siblesz
Special Advisors	
Personal Political Advisor PM	Jack de Vries
Political Advisor Seconded from MFA	Karel Van Oosterom

Timeline for key decisions and list of key players for UK case

June 2004 Prime Minister Blair announces the UK's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps will be deployed to the NATO HQ in Kabul during the initiation of phase III.	Secretary of State for Defence announces UK will provide military forces to South Afghanistan	July 2005	Oct 2005	Nov 2005	Dec 2005	Jan 2006 26 January Secretary of State for Defence Reid announces the deployment of British forces to Helmand	Feb 2006
Pre 2005	Jan 2005	Feb 2005	Oct 2005	Nov 2005	Dec 2005	Jan 2006	Feb 2006

Prime Minister	Tony Blair
Secretary of State for Defence	Geoff Hoon/John Reid/Des Browne
Director General Policy	Kevin Tebbit/Bill Jeffrey
Chief of Defence Staff	Michael Walker
Director Operations	Rob Fry
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Jack Straw/Margaret Beckett
Head of Political Affairs	Michael Jay
Special Advisors	
Personal Political Advisor PM	Josh Arnold Foster
Political Advisor to government	Matt Cavanaugh

Samenvatting (Dutch)

Samenvatting

Nederlandstalige samenvatting behorende bij het proefschrift “Deadly Embrace? The Decision Paths to Uruzgan and Helmand”

Het doel van de inzet van militaire middelen voor de stabilisatie van post - conflict staten is een bron van discussie. Hoewel de theorie voorschrijft dat er een duidelijk politiek doel moet zijn en er een strategie ten grondslag moet liggen aan de inzet, is de praktijk vaak weerbarstiger. Wat gaat er vooraf aan de fase dat er daadwerkelijk wordt overgaan tot het lanceren van een militaire operatie? Wie zijn de mensen die zich bezig houden met de besluitvorming omtrent de inzet van militaire middelen?

Kijkende naar het vraagstuk aangaande de besluitvorming over de inzet van militaire middelen, richt de aandacht zich op een groep senior civiele en militaire besluitvormers. Zij houden zich op het strategische niveau bezig met de besluitvorming omtrent de inzet van de krijgsmacht. Als casus is er gekozen voor één van de meest besproken missies van de afgelopen decennia, Afghanistan. In het onderzoek wordt specifiek gekeken naar de uitbreiding van de NAVO naar Zuid Afghanistan, een zogenaamde stabilisatie missie. De context van deze uitbreiding in combinatie met de retoriek van stabilisatie van post- conflict gebieden is de setting waarin besluiten moesten worden genomen door NAVO lidstaten om deel te nemen of niet.

Er wordt in deze studie gekeken naar de besluitvorming omtrent deelname aan deze missie naar Zuid Afghanistan in zowel Nederland als het Verenigd Koninkrijk. Er is gekozen voor deze twee landen vanuit de vooronderstelling dat de besluitvormingsprocessen van elkaar zouden verschillen omdat de landen een ander politiek systeem kennen en andere procedures hanteren die ten grondslag liggen aan de inzet van hun militaire middelen. Daarbij voeren beiden landen een andere buitenlands- en veiligheidspolitiek als gevolg van hun positie op het wereldtoneel. De vraag die centraal staat in dit onderzoek is waarom en hoe de senior civiele en militaire besluitvormers in Nederland en het Verenigd Koninkrijk zijn gekomen tot de inzet van hun krijgsmacht voor de stabilisatie van Zuid Afghanistan. Deze key players zijn voor deze studie geconceptualiseerd als een ‘decision unit’. Een decision unit beschikt over de mogelijkheid om middelen van de staat in te zetten.

Het onderzoeksdoel van dit proefschrift is zowel empirisch als theoretisch. Empirisch in de zin dat er gebruikt wordt gemaakt van tientallen interviews met key players en archiefmateriaal en theoretisch in de zin dat de proposities zijn gebaseerd op theoretische inzichten over civiel militaire relaties, strategie en besluitvormingsprocessen aangaande buitenlandse politiek. De integratie van de theoretische voorschriften en inzichten hebben geleid tot de volgende drie proposities:

- PI. De inputs in het besluitvormingsproces zijn geïnitieerd door politieke sturing over een buitenlands politieke kwestie;
- PII. De dynamiek van het besluitvormingsproces onthult een proces van interpretatie waarin de senior civiele en militaire besluitvormers beperkingen en druk ervaren die ze is opgelegd zowel op nationaal als internationaal niveau;
- PIII. De output van het besluitvormingsproces is een strategie die het doel van het gebruik van militaire middelen uiteenzet.

De *decision paths* van de senior civiel en militaire besluitvormers zijn in de cases gereconstrueerd aan de hand van de verschillende fasen in de besluitvorming aangaande buitenlands politieke kwesties. Allereerst wordt er gekeken naar de kwestie die vraagt om handelen, vervolgens wordt er gekeken naar de totstandkoming van de *decision unit* (die gaande het besluitvormingsproces kan veranderen), dan wordt het proces van interpretatie van het probleem in ogenschouw genomen en ten slotte wordt de uitkomst van het besluitvormingsproces en de uiteindelijke actie beschreven.

Er is gebruik gemaakt van een zogenaamde ‘gecontextualiseerde aanpak’ wat inhoudt dat bij de uitvoering van het onderzoek heel duidelijk de nadruk is gelegd op de context waarin de activiteiten en beslissingen hebben plaatsgevonden in de wetenschap dat alleen het verzamelen van feiten zonder hun context tot een beperkt en wellicht foutief beeld zouden kunnen leiden. Om zo accuraat mogelijk de mechanismen te kunnen identificeren die een rol hebben gespeeld tijdens de besluitvorming, is er gekozen voor een *structured focussed comparison* die een diepgaande analyse van de cases faciliteert. De studie een is vergelijkende case studie die gebruikt maakt van interviews met de key players en archief onderzoek om zo goed mogelijk te kunnen reconstrueren wat er in de ‘black box’ van besluitvorming omtrent de inzet van de krijgsmacht is gebeurd.

Het onderzoek toont aan dat, wanneer de bevindingen van de cases worden geconfronteerd met de proposities, de theoretische prescripties op het gebied van civiel militaire relaties en strategie een zeer minimale - wellicht zelfs geen rol – hebben gespeeld bij de ontplooiing van de activiteiten van de senior civiele en militaire besluitvormers. De belangrijkste bevindingen van het onderzoek laten zien dat de ‘agency’ zowel in termen van de voortrekkersrol die bepaalde (militaire) individuen hebben gespeeld als wel de dynamiek van het trilateraal (CAN, NLD, UK) militair samenwerkingsverband, een prominente rol speelt. De bevindingen van dit onderzoek tonen ook aan dat, hoewel de landen zijn geselecteerd op basis van hun verschillende politieke systeem, verschillende procedures ten aanzien van de inzet van hun krijgsmacht en een ander buitenlands- en veiligheidsbeleid, de

uiteindelijke uitkomst van het besluitvormingsproces hetzelfde was: hun krijgsmacht werd ingezet voor de stabilisatie van Afghanistan.

Acknowledgements

My first and great sense of gratitude is directed at the Royal Military Army. It has provided me with the prospect of developing myself into an 'officer scholar': mixing practical experience with theory and academic insights. Moreover, it has funded the complete PhD project including numerous foreign trips required to collect data and to present my work at conferences, and a fellowship at the University of Oxford. The Ministry of Defence has provided access to the archives. This might be in contrast to an enduring held prejudice about the military as a non-critical, self-censored and a-intellectual organisation. By enabling me to do this research they have in fact proven to be - at least in this case - far from that.

However, I would not have been able to complete this trajectory without a prominent team of supervisors: Isabelle, after having past the critical tests you threw at me in the initial stages of my PhD, you provided me with your trust, encouragement, and scientific insights. These have been invaluable to me on the road to my doctorate. Besides this, you have been the first person who showed me one can be a nurturing mother and a hard working professional in chorus: devoted to both. Jan, as a sociologist you often questioned the position of the scientist and the use of idiom exercised in the various fields of science. The scholarly art you produce whilst writing has been of a grand level only few can obtain. The most lasting example of your capturing language is confined in the title of this dissertation: a metaphor that came to mind after having read the first versions of the cases. Niels, as a political scientist you focussed on the theoretical underpinnings of the dissertation and demanded for methodological rigour applied to the analysis. We go back to the times when you were my supervisor for the bachelor project. The eminence of theory and the ability to apply it pragmatic though consistently has been a learning process instigated by you. Also, your trust and belief in a successful conclusion have been of great value.

This dissertation could not have provided the insights it offers without the willingness and support of all the interviewees. They provided me with an unique chance to reconstruct the course of events. Thank you all for your time and insights. Moreover, the coming together of this dissertation could not have materialised with the continual support of all the staff of the library, the multi-media [a special thank you to Merel] and reproduction section of the Netherlands Defence Academy, Marianne our administrative assistant, Rokus, archivist of the Defence archives and the editorial support of Jeremy, Jessica and Roland.

Various discussions and cups of coffee with numerous people at conference and seminars I attended over the last four years have undoubtedly shaped the sharpening of the arguments. Also, various phone calls and/or email correspondence with scholars whose work played a major role in the construction of the analytical framework have been invaluable. The comforting nature of the countless talks with fellow PhD candidates (Roy, Irene, Esmeralda, Martijn, Julia, Marion, Jacqueline and Sabine) who all had to suffer, or are still suffering, the various motions one comes across while writing a dissertation have helped me endure. In addition, many talks with civil and military colleagues have helped put things into perspective. Throughout the writing of the dissertation, I often needed assistance in managing a PhD project, a household, and two children. A dear circle of (grand) mothers Marian (mama), Effi (jaja), Krisha, Karin and Marian have stood by me to look after the children. By doing so, they enabled me to have a pause one sometimes craves for in search of the last missing pieces of the puzzle that needs to be solved. Above all, a great group of family, friends, and colleagues have been dear and valued throughout the process in one way or another. However, some of them stand out. First of all I want to thank my parents, in particular my mother. Whereas the lengthy debates with my father since childhood have undoubtedly formed my reasoning and logic needed in this trajectory, without my mother's support in promoting to advance my career in these latitudes and her everlasting willingness to look after Zoë when I needed to travel to collect the needed data or present my work abroad, has been invaluable. Moetsels and Paat, thank you for expressing your support, pride and joy for the road taken. Secondly, Seef, soul mate and god mother of Costis, as so tellingly formulated by yourself [translated from Dutch]: 'we are carved out of the same piece of wood'. Not only do we share over three decades of laughter, pain and sorrow, we have almost concurred anything that has crossed our path with our life motto 'niet lullen maar poetsen' best translated into English as 'carry on'. Thirdly, my husband Georgios. You barely seemed to understand the complexity of the whole endeavour since in your reasoning I can do anything. Thank you for your everlasting belief in me and my undertakings. And lastly, but most importantly, my children Zoë and Costis. The greatest gift of life and the principal source of inspiration, dedication, love, and detente are the two of you. Because of you, anything, even writing a dissertation, can be put in perspective.

Curriculum Vitea

Mirjam Grandia Mantas (Arnhem, March 13, 1976) acquired her secondary education at Hervormd Lyceum Zuid in Amsterdam (1988-1994). After obtaining her bachelor's degree in Journalism at the Academy for Journalism in Utrecht (1994-1998), she joined the military as a so-called officer specialist (recruited for their specific field of expertise) after an officer training at the Royal Military Academy in Breda (1998-1999). Initially, she served at the first German Netherlands Corps in Münster (Germany) as a press and information officer but after a deployment to Bosnia (2000) decided to pursue a professional career in the military.

She moved into the field of civil military cooperation (CIMIC) whilst also specialising in psychological and information operations. In this feature she was deployed to Kabul (Afghanistan) as Chief CIMIC liaison officer in 2003/2004 and as a CIMIC planner to Kandahar (Afghanistan) and CIMIC augmentee to the American Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Tarin Kowt (Afghanistan) in 2006.

After a short posting again at the German Netherlands Corps, this time as a planner at the Intelligence branch, she attended staff college. Her further development as a 'officer – scholar' (between 2004-2009 she obtained both a bachelor and master degree in political science from Leiden University), materialised when she was granted by the Netherlands Army with four years to pursue a PhD. In these four years she has, besides her field work, written various conference papers, book chapters and (inter) national publications. Shortly before the end of her research, she was a visiting fellow at the Changing Character of War Programme at the University of Oxford.

After the completion of the PhD project, major Grandia Mantas took up the position of CIMIC planner at NATO's Joint Forces Command in Naples (Italy). It is her distinct desire to further establish herself as an 'officer – scholar': combining practical operational experiences with academic insights, research, and publications.

