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# Foreign Policy in America's Backyard: Dutch and American Responses to the December 8th Murders in Suriname<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This paper addresses the question of the relative influence of two northern states, the Netherlands and the United States, on one southern, dependent state, Suriname. At first glance, it would seem logical to assume that US preferences structure the policies of both since it is the more powerful state. However, the reactions to the December 8th murders in Suriname illustrate that the Netherlands took the lead in formulating a policy response. The paper draws on the literatures on power, national attributes and capabilities as well as dependent foreign policy behaviour to explain the inter-relationships in this foreign policy triangle.

## 1 Introduction

The United States has claimed Central and South America as its "backyard" since the Monroe Declaration of 1823. Events in this part of the world are often argued to have special significance to US interests. In one corner of that backyard lies Suriname, which gained independence from the Netherlands in 1975. The latter, it can be argued, has a special relationship with Suriname: the post-colonial relationship is structured by: one, an extensive aid package that was part of the independence agreements; and two, the Dutch citizens of Surinamese descent who have an interest in developments in their country of origin and who also keep the colonial legacy alive in the Netherlands.

All this means that the Netherlands has a substantial interest in a corner of America's self-proclaimed backyard. Dutch policy-making with regard to Suriname is therefore likely to be interdependent with Dutch relations with the United States. This expectation acknowledges the different status of the two states. Some argue that the Netherlands is a small state; others refer to it as a middle power (Pratt 1990; Stokke 1989; Katzenstein 1985; Voorhoeve 1985; Wels 1982). In either case, Dutch foreign policy is generally under more constraint than US foreign policy-making.

The Netherlands, Suriname, and the United States can be said to function in a *foreign policy triangle*, with each state's decision-makers aware of the interests of the third parties in their actions toward the second party. However, most foreign policy research has focused its attention, implicitly or explicitly, on dyadic relationships: one country's foreign policy toward another. This paper proposes to move the study of foreign policy beyond dyads and into triangular interactions. This brings much greater conceptual complexity to the study of foreign policy, but also provides a more realistic picture of foreign policy-making for many states. In conceptualizing these more complex relationships, the study will build on two literatures: first, work on power, national attributes and capabilities; and second, work on dependent foreign policy. Both sets of literature recognize that states face external constraints in formulating and carrying out their foreign policy, although both do so in very different ways and for different purposes.

The Dutch and American reactions to the December 8th murders in Suriname are used here as an illustrative case study. The case is interesting because the Dutch suspension of aid represented an unusual foreign policy response for the Netherlands, and it led to the suspicion that the United States, for which such a policy response is more common, influenced the reaction (Verloren van Themaat 1989a). However, this paper will show that there is no evidence that the US attempted to influence the Dutch decision to suspend aid.

## 2 A three-dimensional foreign policy puzzle

By claiming that the Netherlands' foreign policy-making with regard to Suriname is interdependent with the former's relation with the United States we introduce the puzzle of foreign policy triangles. The study of foreign policy has, for the most part, concentrated on dyadic interactions rather than more complex arrangements. Constraints on foreign policy-making have been acknowledged in these efforts and have been incorporated into theory at both the system and state levels of analysis: 1. As a function of a state's position in the international system, national capabilities, and power; 2. As the central concept in the study of dependence and dependent foreign policy.

The fact that a state's position within the international system structures its foreign policy behaviour is not a new observation. Many centuries ago, the Athenians impressed upon the Melians that "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must" (Thucydides 1982, V, 89). This adage has been widely accepted by Realist scholars (Morgenthau 1985 [1948]; Waltz 1954; Keohane 1986). In slightly different ways, the claim holds at both the system and state levels of analysis: at the systems level, structure shapes outcome; and at the state level, the system acts as a constraint on behaviour. This



recognizes that the ability of some states to influence others is a function of asymmetric interdependencies (Keohane and Nye 1989, 10-12; Caporaso 1978, 28). Thus, national attributes and capabilities shape the parameters within which foreign policy decision-makers operate, as they structure a generalized ability or inability to exert influence on other states (Goldmann and Sjostedt 1979; East 1978, 126). The literature on small or "weak" states, in particular, has been concerned with the patterns of behaviour of less powerful actors (Handel 1981; Barston 1973; East 1973; Singer 1972; Rothstein 1968). However, the small state concept is ultimately unsatisfying. Baehr points out that states – and not only small ones – face constraints regularly enough that "[f]ull independence, in the sense of governments making their own decisions without being subject to any influences from beyond the borders of their territory, simply does not now exist, if it ever did" (1975, 464; see also Keohane 1969). In short, the small state concept was an attempt to grapple with foreign policy-making under constraints.

The literature on dependence and dependent foreign policy is similarly concerned with constraints and may be seen as a subset of the literature on power, national attributes and capabilities. Its focus is, however, on the implications of the unequal relationship for the less powerful state. This can be understood at both the system and state levels of analysis. In the first case, dependence is a generalized condition, in which a state's behaviour and decision-making must be understood in the context of an enduring asymmetric pattern of interactions. Dependence does not rest with "the leverage that one actor has over another" (Caporaso 1978, 29), but with a structural condition within which the dependent state finds itself. In other words, the structure determines that (the decision-makers of) dependent states have a lesser capability to assert themselves. The main difference between this literature and that on national attributes is a focus on those whose constraints are most severe. At the state level, the dependent relationship is envisioned as a dyad in which one powerful state has the capacity to affect the foreign policy behaviour of one dependent state (Armstrong 1981; Caporaso 1978; Richardson 1978). Factors that determine the degree of dependence are: the magnitude of reliance of state B on state A; and the inability of B to alter the magnitude or exclusivity of reliance on A. The magnitude of dependence may be determined by reliance on exports to, or investment or aid from a specific country (Richardson 1978, h.4). This last point is of importance, because the greater the extent to which a dependent state is able to "diversify" its dependence, the less susceptible it becomes to pressure by any one of the many other states upon which it relies (Armstrong 1981, 402-404). In other words, the greater the severity of B's dependence, and specifically the severity of dependence on state A, the more B is likely to be compelled to act in compliance with A (Armstrong 1981, 408). Although this proposition follows logically from

Realist assumptions about power, it ignores the possibility that the dependent state's behaviour is driven by domestic considerations rather than its position within the international structure (Moon 1985; see also Biddle and Stephens 1989).

Hey's (1995) comprehensive typology takes this into account. She organizes dependent foreign policy behaviour into a fourfold scheme, which is structured by the motivations that guide the decision to engage in a particular type of behaviour. Consensus-oriented foreign policy is the product of voluntary policy alignment, whereas compliant foreign policy behaviour is the result of pressure by the more powerful state (Hey 1995; Moon 1985; Moon 1983). In both these cases, the resulting foreign policy is in line with the desires of the more powerful state. Dependent states may also structure their foreign policy in opposition to the more powerful state, in the form of either counterdependence or compensation. Counterdependence represents a hostile reaction to dependence (Hey 1995; Singer 1972), whereas compensation is driven by the need to respond to domestic discontent with the condition of dependence (Hey 1995; Biddle and Stephens 1989). The dependent relationship acts as a constraint in only two of these four cases, and then in opposite ways: compliant and counterdependent foreign policy are both reactions to the external environment, which specify that states may react either by accepting – the response the Realist perspective would predict – or by fighting against the severe constraints imposed by dependence. Consensus and compensation, on the other hand, are driven by domestic considerations.

These literatures have contributed important insights to our understanding of foreign policy behaviour: 1. Structural constraints set parameters for behaviour, but do not do so in a straightforward manner. Large versus small is less useful than a more detailed knowledge of how one state constrains the behavior of another. 2. Behaviour is not a straightforward guide to motivation, as, e.g., consensus and compliance both express themselves in behaviour that is in agreement with the wishes of the more powerful state in the relationship. 3. States may react to the severe constraints which dependence imposes by either compliant or counterdependent behaviour. 4. Domestic imperatives cannot be ignored. External constraints interact with domestic policy imperatives to produce responses to specific situations.

However, these literatures concern foreign policy behaviour in either the context of a generalized external environment or of a specific dyadic relationship. The reality of foreign policy decision-making is often more complex: states are generally not constrained by an abstract awareness of their relative power position, but by a particular actor (or actors) whose interests intersect with theirs in specific policy-making situations. In addition, the constraining party is not necessarily part of a foreign policy dyad, which consists of an actor and a recipient of the action. Thus, foreign policy relationships are structured



not only by the relative capabilities of actor A to influence actor B, but by the constraints actor C's interests in B place on actor A's foreign policy options. For example, actor A's foreign policy is formulated within the shadow of its relationship with C and its knowledge of C's interests in B.<sup>3</sup> The assumption here is that although A and C are not equally powerful, they are also not in a dependent relationship in the sense that this concept has been utilized in the literature. More properly then, although A generally may be constrained to a greater degree by C than vice versa, both states have cognizance of the other's interests in B and are expected to act in such a manner as to preserve their relationship with one another in their dealings with B. The policy towards B thus becomes an opportunity for A and C to signal to one another, as Anderson underlines with his argument that "the expectations others will develop constrain what counts as an acceptable alternative in foreign policy decision making" (1981, 741). The desire to structure the expectations of others is the basis for consistent behaviour. This type of signaling is especially relevant to theorizing about triangular foreign policy relationships, as "states have often cared about specific issues less for their intrinsic value than for the conclusions they felt others would draw from the way they dealt with them" (Jervis 1970, 7). Although this does not imply that the content of policy toward B is unimportant for either A or C, it does entail that A's awareness of the conclusions C is likely to draw from its behaviour (and vice versa) are at least as important as what A hopes its action will accomplish with B.

In the conceptual language of dependent foreign policy, A and C would be expected to display either consensus or compliance with one another regarding their policies toward B. Consensus would entail that no evidence can be found that either of the two influenced the other. In that case, either domestic imperatives or a similarity in (perceived) national interests guides behaviour. Compliance, on the other hand, would presume that A or C engaged in attempts to influence the other regarding the policy they pursue vis-à-vis B. In short, the concepts of consensus and compliance are employed here to facilitate understanding of the interactions between two states which are *not* in a dependent relationship with one another, but which both act toward a state which is dependent. Moreover, whether or not A or C engaged in overt attempts to influence the other's behaviour toward B, it is likely that the state which acts first structures the behaviour of both (Brams 1994, 216). In the absence of explicit statements that show which state took the lead, the timing of their actions can provide important information.

Given the assumed structural parameters that C is more powerful than A, it might be expected that C will set the tone for both C and A's policy toward B. However, this can be classified as a "naive realist" position. In understanding the dynamics between A, C, and B, it is important to not only understand the relative position of each in the international structure, but also the relation-

ships of each to B, and possibly B's relative dependence on A and C. Foreign policy is not conducted in response to some objective status of relative power and capability, but as a function of the state's (perceived) interests. Although the most powerful actor in the triangle, C, may *in the abstract* be able to structure A's policy toward B, whether it does so is a function of additional characteristics of the triangle. In particular, it is hypothesized that:

1. If C's interests in B are greater than A's interests in B, then C is expected to structure both C's and A's policy toward B.
2. However, if A's interests in B are greater than C's interests in B, C is likely to defer to A in its policy-making toward B.

Although this study is concerned in the first instance with A and C's policies toward B, these policies do not emerge in a vacuum but in response to actions taken by B. Hey's (1995) typology is useful here: it seems unlikely that consensus or compliance behaviour on the part of B would lead to very notable reactions on the part of A or C. However, both compensation and counterdependence behaviour by B might compel A and/or C to react. The domestic roots of the former are less likely to draw a strong reaction than the latter's hostility toward the dependent condition. It is therefore expected that the hypothesized policy interactions between A and C should be especially evident when they are reactions to a counterdependent policy or other actions that may be interpreted in the context of a counterdependent stance.

In the case study employed here, the Dutch and American responses to the December 8th murders in Suriname, the Netherlands assumes the role of the hypothetical A, the United States is C, and Suriname B. This case study is especially compelling because Suriname is located on the northern coast of Latin America, (it is one of the three Guyanas), and hence in what America has claimed as its "backyard". The United States, therefore, has a special interest in this part of the world. However, the Netherlands also has a special interest in Suriname, as it is a former colony which did not gain independence until 1975. At the time of the December 8th murders, the post-colonial relationship was just seven years old and the Dutch maintained a generous foreign aid programme which had been part of the "golden handshake" with which the colonial relationship had ended (Gillies 1996, 66; Buddingh' 1995, 299; Kuitenbrouwer 1994, 148; Boerboom and Oranje 1992, 13; Mhango 1984, 8). Given this configuration of mutual claims to interests in the area, it is not a priori clear whether the Netherlands or the United States has the greater interest in Suriname, although it could be stated that the former's interests are more specific and the latter's more generalized.



## 3 Post-colonial Suriname

Suriname became an independent state in 1975, not so much because the leaders of that country demanded it, but because the government in the Netherlands judged it necessary. This does not mean that there was no voice in Suriname favouring independence; but the speed with which it came was in part determined by the fact that the Netherlands was quite ready to grant it (Gillies 1996, 65-66; Buddingh' 1995, 299; Verschuuren 1991, 104; Mhango 1984, 14). The decolonization of Suriname is unusual also because the population of the country was not wholly convinced it was a good idea (Buddingh' 1995, 289-290; Hellema 1995, 277; Dew 1994, 7-9; Boerboom and Oranje 1992, 13; Verschuuren 1991, 104). It was greeted positively by the Creole elite and with apprehension by the Hindu and Javanese populations.<sup>4</sup> In short, Suriname did not struggle for its independence, nor did a sizeable independence movement ever exist within the country (Mhango 1984, 14).

The country had enjoyed autonomy since 1954 and had its own, elected government (Hellema 1995, 197; Buddingh' 1995, 281; Verschuuren 1991, 84-85). Yet, for many in Suriname, independence heightened the urgency of the question whether the differences between the various ethnic groups could be managed peacefully.<sup>5</sup> Suriname has a very heterogeneous population (see Table 1) and political groups were organized along ethnic lines even prior to obtaining self-government (Buddingh' 1995, 279; Dew 1994, 1-2). Consociational arrangements initially ensured a measure of stability. Although the Creoles polled slightly better than their share of the population in the sixties and early seventies, election results largely reflected the relative sizes of the ethnic groups (Buddingh' 1995, 282-289; Dew 1994, 4-5). Under such conditions, what happens at the ballot box "is not an election at all, but a census" (Horowitz 1991, 116), because the outcome is predetermined by individuals' ascriptive ties.

Table 1 Ethnic groups as a percentage of the population in Suriname

Ethnic group	1964 census	1971 census	1980 census
Creoles	35.46	31.35	34.70
Hindustanis	34.74	37.65	33.49
Javanese	14.95	15.20	16.33
Bush Negroes	8.54	9.44	9.55
Amerindians	2.25	2.12	3.10
Chinese	1.65	1.59	1.55
Europeans	1.33	1.05	0.44
Others	1.08	1.60	0.84
Total population	324,211	379,607	352,041

Source: Europa World Yearbook. Various years. London: Europa Publications Ltd.

Even prior to independence, the consociational arrangement proved tenuous and there was an increased polarization between especially the main Creole and Hindustani political parties (Dew 1994, 3). On 25 February 1980, democracy ended abruptly as a group of sixteen Creole officers staged a coup (Gillies 1996, 61). Dew (1994, 46) notes that the perception in Suriname at the time was that the coup was motivated more by a desire to "clean house" than by ethnic politics. The consociational system of old had led to an extensive patronage system, which many viewed as corrupt (Dew 1994, 2).

Desiré Delano Bouterse emerged as the leader of the group (Dew 1994, 37; Verschuuren 1991, 110). He appointed a cabinet which provided a civilian façade to military rule and which promised elections to be held around October 1982 (Dew 1994, 50; Boerboom and Oranje 1992, 25; Verschuuren 1991, 114). Although basic human rights were increasingly violated (Gillies 1996, 62-63), Bouterse initially maintained a semblance of the rule of law. As he consolidated his power, Bouterse on several occasions claimed to have discovered planned coups and jailed his opponents (Dew 1994, 53 and 75; Boerboom and Oranje 1992; Verschuuren 1991, 114-118). In late 1982, the Moederbond trade union called for a series of strikes to put pressure on the government to hold elections.<sup>6</sup>

After 1975, Suriname's leaders soon discovered that political independence did not necessarily change the country's economic situation. As part of the independence agreement, Suriname was to receive 3.2 billion guilders (approximately \$ 1.7 billion) in foreign assistance from the Netherlands. This golden handshake was unique in the history of decolonization, not only because of the size of the aid programme, but also because it was agreed upon in a legally-binding treaty between the two countries (Gillies 1996, 66; Mhango 1984, 8). Mhango (1984, ch.3) argues that the treaty was structured in such a way as to increase rather than decrease Suriname's dependence on the Netherlands and, moreover, that "Suriname in essence sacrificed tightening up or pioneering relations with neighboring countries much similar to her... To put it differently, this agreement meant a virtual perpetuation of Suriname's isolation from her Caribbean and Latin American neighbors" (1984, 30).

Much of that isolation can be explained on the basis of the principal commodities exported by Suriname. As Table 2 illustrates, bauxite and the semi-manufactures alumina and aluminum together account for about three quarters of export earnings. Such a substantial dependence on a single resource explains a trade pattern that favours industrialized nations as the destination for exports. It also made Suriname vulnerable: during the 1980s newly developed bauxite reserves in other parts of the world started to compete with Surinamese exports and, in addition, world market prices for this mineral declined (Gillies 1996, 60; Dew 1994, 12; Verschuuren 1991, 108).



Table 2 Economic dependence on a single resource

Exports	1965	1975	1979	1984	1990
Bauxite, alumina, and aluminum per cent of total)	73.2%	68.8%	76.8%	79.0%	82.2%
Total exports (in million Suriname Guilders)	110.1	495.0	792.7	650.7	843.6

Source: Author's calculation using figures from Europa World Yearbook. Various years. London: Europa Publications Ltd.

Although Suriname trades with a variety of countries, its largest trading partners are the United States and the Netherlands. As illustrated in Table 3, the US has been the destination of most of Suriname's exports, although its importance has decreased since the coup and the December 8th murders. The events may be unrelated, however, as a drop in the price of bauxite and aluminum on world markets, coupled with the exploitation of resources elsewhere, affected the Surinamese economy. Exports to the Netherlands show a reverse trend, with Suriname becoming somewhat more dependent on it in recent years. In addition, both the US and the Netherlands are the sources of considerable amounts of imports.

Table 3 Exports to and imports from the Netherlands and the United States

	1965	1970	1977	1979	1984	1990
<i>exports</i> (per cent of total)						
to the Netherlands	3.7	13.4	25.0	16.4	22.0	28.8
to the United States	61.6	39.1	69.5	28.2	27.6	11.4
<i>total</i> (million Suriname Guilders)	110.1	252.4	585.0	792.7	650.7	843.6
<i>imports</i> (per cent of total)						
from the Netherlands	18.3	22.2	21.3	21.4	13.7	23.5
from the United States	36.7	35.3	30.6	30.6	30.0	41.0
<i>total</i> (million Suriname Guilders)	179.7	217.7	710.0	709.9	699.0	842.5

Source: Authors calculations using figures from Europa World Yearbook. Various years. London: Europa Publications Ltd.

In sum, these figures illustrate that Suriname is a very dependent country. Moreover, it is dependent primarily on two countries: its former colonizer, the Netherlands, and the United States. An important difference is that the dependence on the latter is mostly a trade dependence, whereas dependence on the Netherlands is structured by aid, trade, and the colonial legacy. It is possible that, from the Surinamese perspective, the last factor in particular coloured the relations between the two countries. The Dutch became increasingly concerned about how the aid was being spent (Verschuuren 1991, 109; Verloren van Themaat 1989a, 186). Yet there were no overt changes in policy (Hellema 1995, 312). The concerns were communicated through diplomatic channels. In Gillies' (1996, 66) estimation, this only served to worsen the relations between the two countries. Dutch quiet diplomacy was perceived as meddling and interference.

At the time of the December 8th murders, the golden handshake had become an albatross. About 54 % of the original Dutch aid commitment had been fulfilled, and most of the remaining funds had been earmarked for specific projects.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the Netherlands had a newly-elected centre-right coalition under the guidance of Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers. Both he and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hans van den Broek, were Christian democrats, while the post of Minister for Development Cooperation was held, for the first and to date only time, by a Liberal, Eegje Schoo. This government had been in office for just over a month when its relations with Suriname reached a crisis.

#### 4 The December 8th murders

The first reports to reach the Netherlands and the United States regarding the events of the night from 8 to 9 December 1982 were conflicting and incomplete. It was initially unclear how many opponents of the Surinamese military leadership had been shot and whether the victims were the same individuals who the Surinamese state radio claimed had lost their lives while trying to escape imprisonment.<sup>8</sup> It would later become evident, that the story of the attempted escape had been the regime's portrayal of the very same executions (Gillies 1996, 58; Boerboom and Oranje 1992, 7). Although the Surinamese leaders continued to insist on the "attempted escape" story, the Dutch government explicitly dismissed this explanation of events.<sup>9</sup>

There was quite a bit of confusion not only over the number but also the identity of the victims. The first list published in the Netherlands included 20 names, but noted that the death toll might be higher. The *New York Times* initially reported that, while the Dutch government had put the death toll at 13, other reports claimed it might be as high as 24 or even 32.<sup>10</sup> It later became evident that 15 opponents of the regime had been executed, together representing



Table 4 Victims of the December 8th murders

Profession	Name	Past and/or Present Role
Military officers	Surindre Rambocus	Co-leader of alleged coup attempt in March 1982. One of the 16 officers who staged the 1980 coup.
	Jiwansingh Sheombar	
Lawyers	John Baboeram	Defended Rambocus in trial regarding attempted coup.
	Kenneth Goncalves	Head of Bar Association. Finland's Honorary Consul in Paramaribo.
	Eddy Hoost	Former Justice Minister.
	Harold Riedewald	Counsel to former Prime Minister Henck Arron (prior to 1980 coup).
Businessmen	Andre Kamperveen	Owner of radio station. Former Minister of Culture and Sports (Chin A Sen cabinet, after the 1980 coup). Leader of Progressive Socialist Party prior to 1980 coup.
	Robbie Sohansingh	Businessman in Paramaribo.
Labor Union Leader	Cyrill Daal	President of Moederbond Trade Union Federation
Journalists	Bram Behr	Author of book regarding a case of violation of human rights in Suriname. Leader of Communist Party prior to 1980 coup.
	Leslie Rahman	
	Jozef Slagveer	Formerly Bouterse's spokesman.
	Frank Wijngaarde	(Dutch citizen)
Academics	Gerard Leckie	Chair of the Social Science Faculty of the University of Suriname.
	Suchrin Oemrawsingh	

Sources: Dew 1994; Boerboom and Oranje 1992; AFP and Sunday Chronicle in FBIS-LAM-VI, 13 December 1982, pp. U1-2; CANA in FBIS-LAM-VI, 15 December 1982, pp. U2-3.

a cross-section of the Surinamese elite (Gillies 1996, 57; Buddingh' 1995, 331-332; Dew 1994, 84; Boerboom and Oranje 1992, 8 and 64). The group included military officers, lawyers, a labour union leader, businessmen, journalists, and academics. A number of them had held political office or had otherwise been connected to the political process (see Table 4).

These individuals had been arrested because they were supposedly planning a counter-coup, which was to be carried out around Christmas. Bouterse later claimed he had confessions of two of the participants, the televised confession by Jozef Slagveer and the radio confession by former minister Andre Kamperveen. These confessions were most probably coerced.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the continued insistence by the Surinamese leadership that the detainees had been shot while trying to flee, this explanation was never accepted. Eventually, the Nederlands Juristen Comité voor de Mensenrechten (NJCM, or Netherlands Juridical Committee on Human Rights) produced a report based on eyewitness accounts which stated that the wounds of the victims showed they had not been killed while fleeing.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, in subsequent months reports emerged that Bouterse himself had been involved in the killings.<sup>13</sup> Five years later, he would admit that this had indeed been the case (Dew 1994, 83).

Most of this information was not immediately known to decision makers in the Netherlands, the United States, and elsewhere. Irrespective of all the uncertainty about the details, it was immediately clear that the military leaders had been responsible for these deaths and that this constituted an end to any pretension to due process within Suriname. Even though the country had been under military rule since the coup and the constitution had been suspended since August 1980 (Gillies 1996, 73), an expectation that there would be some kind of legal process still existed. The events of 8 December 1982 were especially shocking because so very few within Suriname believed this could happen in their country (Boerboom and Oranje 1992, 50 and 73).

## 5 The Dutch reaction

The Dutch reaction was swift and came within two days of the events. On December 10, after their weekly cabinet meeting, the Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers announced that the government had decided to freeze all development aid to Suriname – including social, economic, and military aid – and suspend any consultations on the continuation of aid. Lubbers stated that the Dutch government was horrified at the reports of the executions and said it was in conflict with the most elementary principles of constitutionalism. The decision had been made, he said, because development cooperation



could never entail support for repressive regimes nor complicity with the serious violation of human rights. This reasoning was repeated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hans van den Broek, during a parliamentary debate about the events.<sup>14</sup>

Earlier, the three main political parties, the Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA or Labour Party), the Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (vvd or Liberal Party), and the Christen Democratisch Appel (CDA or Christian Democrats), had all registered their horror at the events, and the PvdA and vvd had called for a parliamentary debate within the week to decide whether or not development aid to Suriname should be suspended.<sup>15</sup> All three, including the opposition Labour Party, supported the government's decision. Verloren van Themaat (1989a, 180) notes that few if any questions were asked to ascertain what the aid suspension was to accomplish or how it was to contribute to those goals.

During parliamentary debate on the matter the Minister of Development Cooperation, Eegje Schoo, laid out the conditions under which aid could be resumed: as soon as there was a return to democracy.<sup>16</sup> This was unusual, because the Dutch government do not generally make democratization or the existence of democracy a prerequisite for development cooperation (Verloren van Themaat 1989b, 196). The basic claim by the Dutch Government at this point was that events in Suriname called into question whether the prerequisites existed for an adequate execution of the development cooperation treaty. They were supported in this by a well-respected international legal scholar, who argued that although the treaty did not contain a clause specifying that the Surinamese Government was obligated to respect fundamental human rights, the treaty could be understood to imply such a condition.<sup>17</sup>

The disagreement about whether the Netherlands had rightfully abrogated its treaty relationship with Suriname caused considerable tensions between the two states. Although the Dutch Government expressed attaching great importance to a maintenance of relations with the Surinamese leadership and, decided, therefore, not to recall its ambassador from Paramaribo, it also viewed Bouterse as being engaged in "politics of confrontation".

Nevertheless, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hans van den Broek, declared that the Dutch were hesitant to mobilize other states against Suriname's government because of the potential adverse effects of such an action. Despite the conciliatory rhetoric, the events in Suriname were discussed among the European Community's foreign ministers, who jointly declared their "deep indignation" about the murders, their shock at the lack of due process, and called on the Surinamese regime to respect human rights and restore democracy forthwith.<sup>18</sup> The EC did not, however, suspend its aid to Suriname. Furthermore, Gillies reports that, subsequent to the suspension of aid, "Dutch policy quickly focused on a diplomatic offensive to isolate Bouterse through cooperation with other donors, particularly the United States, in order to hasten a return

to democracy" (1996, 71; see also Mhango 1984, 148-149). The Dutch government trusted that their aid could not easily be replaced with funds from elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> In short, irrespective of the Minister's statement, there appears to be evidence that there was indeed an effort to isolate Suriname in an attempt to affect its domestic politics.

The Dutch decision to suspend aid appears surprising in light of both the aforementioned absence of a policy of conditioning aid on democracy or democratization. In addition, other recipients of Dutch aid had comparable or more severe human rights problems, but their aid was not suspended. Verloren van Themaat (1989a, 183 and 187) suspected that two factors were important in singling out Suriname for aid suspension. First, there were personal ties between the victims and the Dutch political elite. In other words, the victims were not anonymous individuals to Dutch decision-makers. Second, the possibility that Suriname would become enmeshed in the east-west conflict as a result of Bouterse's left-leaning politics. This was perhaps of greater concern to the United States than the Netherlands and, as a result, Verloren van Themaat (1989a, 188) speculates about possible American influence on Dutch policy.

## 6 The American reaction

Soon after the State Department had become aware of the events in Suriname, it summoned Suriname's ambassador to express the United States' indignation over the killing of prominent citizens who had been in government custody.<sup>20</sup> A State Department spokesperson announced that the "entire relationship with the Government of Suriname is under review, including our aid program," although no specific steps had yet been taken.<sup>21</sup> It was not until 17 December, that the United States finally announced the suspension of their aid to Suriname – a programme of \$1.5 million over two years, the agreement for which had only been signed in September. The suspension was to be in effect until the country had given the US an explanation for the recent events and explained which political direction the country now intended to take.<sup>22</sup> There was no requirement or call to restore democracy.

The American decision to suspend aid thus came *after* the rather expeditious decision by the Dutch Government, supporting the notion that the latter structured the foreign policy reactions of both. More importantly, the State Department acknowledged that it did "not have other means to put increased pressure on the military regime in Suriname" and that the Dutch influence on that country was much bigger than its own.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the State Department expressed appreciation regarding the quick reaction of the Dutch government to the bloodbath.<sup>24</sup> The Netherlands thus received both a pat on



the back and the acknowledgment that the United States perceived it to have greater interests in Suriname and deferred to Dutch judgement.

This is underlined by another incident, news of which emerged much later. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had apparently hatched a plan to overthrow the government of Suriname (Buddingh' 1995, 332-333). When the House Select Committee on Intelligence was notified of this plan late in 1982, it objected strenuously, arguing that "the Administration had not demonstrated that Suriname posed a threat to United States interests."<sup>25</sup> The Reagan Administration subsequently dropped the plan, which had been formulated in response to concerns about Cuban influence in Suriname.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, although the CIA was required to inform Congress, there was no legal obligation for it to heed Congressional objections to its planned covert activities. The fact that it did so indicates that the risk of the planned action was greater than whatever American interests might have been served.

Rumours about Cuban influence in Suriname kept surfacing, not only in the United States but also in the Netherlands. Although Dew (1983, 7) held that no such presence was ever confirmed, other authors made note of Cuban influence as a matter of record (Buddingh' 1995, 333; Verschuuren 1991, 119; Brana-Shute 1990, 193-194; Sedoc-Dahlberg 1990, 18). In any case, the State Department remained concerned about the developments in Suriname, which it saw as a potentially destabilizing influence on the surrounding countries.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, that did not change the fact that, in the view of the US, Suriname was in first instance a Dutch responsibility.

The overt American deference to Dutch decision-making belies Verloren van Themaat's (1989a, 188) speculation regarding the former's influence on Dutch policy. Although it is possible that the Dutch government acted in anticipation of American preferences, that seems a rather unsatisfying explanation: the personal connections with the victims and, more importantly, Dutch dissatisfaction with Suriname's use of its aid are equally plausible explanations. Add to that the Netherlands' stronger ambassadorial presence in Suriname, and it becomes very likely that the United States did indeed follow the Dutch lead.

## 7 Suriname's response

Suriname's reactions to the Dutch and American actions were initially full of belligerent rhetoric, which only gradually was toned down to include more conciliatory language. The loss of Dutch aid had a substantial impact, but also emboldened Bouterse's stance. He tightened relationships with Maurice Bishop of Grenada and Fidel Castro of Cuba, and expressed his intention to become a member of the Non-Aligned Movement.<sup>28</sup> In the meantime, the

Dutch government appeared convinced that Bouterse's grip on power was secure and that the situation was unlikely to change in the immediate future.<sup>29</sup>

Suriname quickly charged that the Dutch suspension of aid constituted interference in the country's domestic affairs and an abuse by the Dutch of their position as a foreign aid donor.<sup>30</sup> Suriname's Foreign Minister, Harvey Naarendorp, denounced the aid suspension at a meeting of the non-aligned countries and called on them for support: "The Government of Suriname will maintain its policy of non-alignment... Especially in these moments, when we feel most strongly the direct dependence on and blackmail from the Dutch ex-colonial power and from the United States, we are counting on international solidarity to strengthen our national sovereignty."<sup>31</sup> Time and again such language surfaced. Speaking at a revolution anniversary rally on February 25 1983, Bouterse stressed the need for Surinamers to become more self-reliant: "We have to understand that development aid is a modern instrument for exploitation. The purpose of this aid was never to improve the living standards of Surinamers. No country is a philanthropist."<sup>32</sup> For Bouterse, the practice of aid tying meant that the bulk of the funds contributed by the Netherlands returned to its point of origin.<sup>33</sup>

Despite all the belligerence, Bouterse also claimed to attach great importance to the restoration of good relations with the Netherlands.<sup>34</sup> He was, however, unwilling to comply with the main condition for the restoration of aid and declared that so long as he led the country, there would never be a parliamentary democracy. In his view, that form of democracy had never functioned in Suriname.<sup>35</sup> Instead, Bouterse said he aimed to establish a true people's democracy in Suriname.<sup>36</sup>

The first break came when the Surinamese Ambassador to the United States, Henk Heidweiler, spoke to the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. Dutch diplomats found his speech especially interesting for what the Ambassador did *not* say: he did not accuse the Dutch of interfering in domestic affairs, and he did not claim that the fifteen victims were shot while trying to flee. In addition, he expressly stated he had not come to cover the events up and did not challenge the above-mentioned report by the NJCM, which was submitted to the UN Commission.<sup>37</sup>

A more radical change came after the US invasion of Grenada, which started on October 25 1983. The following day, Bouterse severed ties with Cuba and ordered the Cuban ambassador to leave the country. Apparently, Bouterse feared his government might be subject to a similar action.<sup>38</sup> In the same time period, Bouterse also communicated his willingness to concede to a number of Dutch demands on the condition that there was the "prospect of the restoration of development cooperation."<sup>39</sup> In addition to economic problems, Gillies (1996, 70) judges Bouterse's loss of popular legitimacy to be an important motivation for seeking a rapprochement with the Netherlands. The fruits of



such negotiations did not emerge quickly and, in the meantime, Bouterse sought to win support elsewhere. He found it in Brazil, which had its own reasons for granting it: the need to contain Cuban influence and facilitate the integration of a neighbouring country into Latin America.<sup>40</sup>

### 8 Theorizing about foreign policy triangles

The December 8th murders constituted a particularly heinous violation of human rights that drew a strong response from both the Netherlands and the United States. How can this reaction be explained? Above, it was argued that these two states and Suriname found themselves in a foreign policy triangle, i.e. the Dutch reactions to the murders must be viewed in the context of its relations with not only Suriname, but the U.S. as well. Although the US, as the most powerful state in the triangle could be assumed to elicit a compliant Dutch policy toward Suriname, it was argued that this constitutes a "naive realist" position. It was hypothesized that the state with the greater interests in Suriname would structure the policy of both toward that third state. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that such interdependent foreign policy-making is most likely when the third state in the triangle engages in compensation or counterdependent foreign policy behaviour – with the latter yielding the most evident cases of policy interactions between the two dominant states. I will turn to the latter point first.

Although the December 8th murders themselves are perhaps not easily explained in terms of counterdependent behaviour – the immediate cause was the regime's perceived need to assert power by crippling the opposition – the event is best understood within the context of a leadership that sought to assert itself vis-à-vis its former colonizer. Whether or not the victims were indeed involved in planning a coup, Bouterse and his group were in a precarious position. The regime was drawing increasing criticism at home. The elections which had been promised shortly after the 1980 coup were not forthcoming. During October and November the Moederbond Labor Union had organized a series of strikes. Moreover, this union had organized a rally which took place simultaneously with one the regime had organized and at which Grenada's Maurice Bishop, who was in Suriname on an official visit, was scheduled to speak. While Bouterse and Bishop had an audience estimated at 1,500, the union had managed to draw a crowd about ten times that size (Dew 1994, 80-81; Boerboom and Oranje 1992, 47-48).

Although the source of the initial action was more directly related to the regime's position domestically, it utilized the reactions the event drew internationally to position itself more clearly in a manner that very much coincided with behaviour expected in the context of counterdependence. It may have

been the international reaction rather than the murders themselves which spurred the counterdependent stance, although Suriname's leader, Bouterse, had been moving left. The fact that a domestic event drew such a strong reaction does not quite fit the expectations formulated earlier – it was hypothesized that counterdependent behaviour would be more likely to draw strong reactions from the more dominant states in the triangle. Yet, counterdependence does play a role: the Bouterse regime was at that time moving in the direction of a left-leaning ideology and spoke of turning Suriname into a "people's democracy" (Buddingh' 1995, 328; Dew 1994, 91; Verschuuren 1991, 116). It is not unfair to judge that such a regime would readily perceive "imperialist designs" in the actions of the former colonizer and would react belligerently against its condition of dependence. Suriname's leaders certainly did that in reaction to the attempts by the Netherlands and the United States to use the leverage they presumed their aid to have.

One explanation for the strong reaction to the December 8th murders is that it represented an attempt to preempt the move to the left and the counterdependent policy that might be expected from such a regime (see Hey 1995). However, such an explanation would be much more plausible had the United States structured the reaction rather than the Netherlands, given the greater apprehension the former has traditionally displayed regarding left-leaning regimes in Latin America. The behaviour of the Dutch leadership in reaction to this event points to a different explanation, one which includes the increasingly strained post-colonial relationship between the Netherlands and Suriname.

As alluded to above, two expectations were formulated regarding the behaviour of the two more powerful countries in the triangle. One, given the *United States'* position as the most powerful actor in the triangle, *it* could be expected to guide the response to the murders. Two, given *the Netherlands'* greater and more specific interests in Suriname, *it* could be expected to take the lead in the response to this event. The case study shows that the United States explicitly deferred to the Dutch decision in this case. On the surface, this appears surprising. The United States had accounted for a greater share of Suriname's exports and imports than the Netherlands, but had only a small aid commitment. In addition, it viewed Latin America as its "backyard" – implying that whatever happened there was of relevance to the US. Yet, its economic ties with Suriname could easily be replaced by others as bauxite reserves in other parts of the world were developed in the 1980s (Gillies 1996, 60; Dew 1994, 12). In other words, its interests in Suriname were not strong because the US did not depend greatly on obtaining bauxite from this specific source. The "greater interests" hypothesized above thus translate to an inelasticity of the trade relationship or, in other words, a dependency on a specific exporter for a specific resource or a specific market for one's products.



Interestingly, the Dutch economic ties were not strong either (Gillies 1996, 73). Nevertheless, the Dutch government clearly perceived an interest in this former colony. Whether or not it was indeed trying to solidify that country's economically dependent relationship, as Mhango (1984) claims, it nevertheless clearly played a major role in Suriname. Moreover, the Dutch were politically invested in Suriname as well: when the Netherlands granted the country its independence, it anticipated a "model" decolonization. The generous aid package was part and parcel of an attempt to allow this process to take place smoothly and harmoniously (Buddingh' 1995, 296; Boerboom and Oranje 1992, 13; Verschuuren 1991, 104-105). After all, in the 1970s it was not popular to possess colonies. In its rush to turn a colony into a sovereign country, however, the Dutch government overlooked the fact that the independence agreement committed it to send a sizeable sum of money, yet gave it very little control over how the money was to be used (Kuitenbrouwer 1994, 60). It was not long before the Netherlands became concerned about corruption, economic stagnation, and other ills it associated with a poor utilization of the development aid, which it had, in its own estimation, so generously provided (Hellema 1995, 312; Kuitenbrouwer 1994, 61). To this must be added the increasing radicalization of the Surinamese leadership and its decreasing willingness to heed Dutch advice and warnings. It must have been very frustrating for a country that prided itself in its Third World-friendly role in development cooperation (see, e.g., Breuning 1995). However, beyond frustration with a recalcitrant former colony, the Dutch government was also guided by a desire to avoid "guilt by association" for the murders (Gillies 1996, 70-71). Its decision to suspend aid not only communicated resolve, but also that the human rights of a political elite and opposition cannot be violated with impunity.<sup>41</sup>

In short, the Netherlands had a much more specific connection with Suriname than the United States. The fact that the Netherlands clearly took the initiative in the reaction to the December 8th murders, coupled with the US willingness to concur, suggests that a smaller state can influence, or at least set the tone for, a more powerful state's policy toward a third, dependent state, provided both agree that the smaller state has greater or more specific interests in that dependent third country. It remains possible that the Dutch policy response was formulated in anticipation of expected American preferences, although this can not be substantiated. Yet, the American concurrence with its actions clearly recognized that the Dutch were to tend to this little piece of America's backyard.

## 9 Conclusion

The Dutch and American reactions to the December 8th murders in Suriname imply that power in the abstract is not generally a good predictor of behaviour. Nor is an abstract notion of "interest" a clear-cut guide. The sort of foreign policy triangles discussed here represent indeterminate games (Brams 1994). In such games, the order in which A and C act importantly structures the outcome. This case shows that the state with the more specific interest is likely to take the initiative, whereas the state with the more generalized interest has less incentive to "stick its neck out" and is likely to follow the lead of the former. However, such "more specific" interests are not necessarily easy to quantify: neither the US nor the Netherlands depended significantly on Suriname's resources. Despite the difficulty that this presents regarding reliable measurement, this case study does suggest that a smaller state's foreign policy-making can take on significance beyond the immediate recipient of the action. To be precise, it may determine the reaction of the other, more powerful, state in the triangle. In the case of the December 8th murders, the Dutch action may have been unusual within the scope of its foreign (aid) policy, but the United States might not have reacted as strongly had the Dutch not set a precedent with their decision to suspend aid. After all, Suriname was on the whole a rather insignificant spot in America's backyard.

This study has been an initial attempt to theorize about, and empirically evaluate, foreign policy relationships of greater complexity than the traditional dyad. As such, it addresses the question: who influences whom and why? Attempts to disentangle foreign policy triangles still do not fully capture the complexity of influence in the international environment. However, foreign policy triangles do show that smallness and power are relative and must be understood in their proper context. It was argued many years ago by Keohane (1969) and Baehr (1975) that the small state concept was essentially an attempt to grapple with foreign policy-making under constraints. A next step along that path is to recognize that all states face constraints: the resources and capacities of no state are unlimited and choices must be made. Scarce resources are generally devoted to areas and situations where specific interests are at stake. It has long been recognized that small states rely on allies and international organizations to supplement their own foreign policy-making resources. This case study hints that larger states may not be all that different in this regard. To assume that an objectively more powerful state always dominates a foreign policy triangle is to disregard the question of what interests are at stake in a given situation. On occasions, a smaller state has a greater interest in a specific situation or outcome. In such cases, even small states can make their mark.



## Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Toronto, Canada, March 1997. The author wishes to thank John T. Ishiyama, Natalie Frensey, Allison Astorino-Courtois, and the editors of *Acta Politica* for helpful comments. Steven Liebowitz and the staff of Pickler Memorial Library, especially Sheila Swafford, provided valuable research assistance and I wish to thank them for their efforts.
2. See Caporaso (1978) for a similar interpretation.
3. This example begins to outline the specific type of triangular relationship which is the subject of this study. I acknowledge that triangular relationships might be structured in many different ways, but the preliminary nature of this investigation precludes a full outline of the various possibilities.
4. Jan Gerritsen, "Belangen van Nederland en Suriname op een noemer brengen," *NRC/Handelsblad*, 16 December 1982.
5. Ibid.
6. Caribbean News Agency (CANA) in Foreign Broadcast Information Service - Latin America (FBIS-LAM), VI, 9 December 1982, p. U2; Agencia TELAM (Argentina) in FBIS-LAM, VI, 9 December 1982, p. U3.
7. "Minister wil hulp aan Suriname snel hervatten," *NRC/Handelsblad*, 17 December 1982.
8. "Aantal gearresteerde critici Surinaamse legertop gefusilleerd," *NRC/Handelsblad*, 10 December 1982; "Dutch say Suriname executed at least 13," *New York Times*, 11 December 1982.
9. "Van den Broek: Bruut optreden in Suriname komt voort uit angst," *NRC/Handelsblad*, 16 December 1982.
10. "De lijst met doden," *Algemeen Dagblad*, 11 December 1982; "Dutch say Suriname executed at least 13," *New York Times*, 11 December 1982; see also "Werk hervat in Paramaribo, 14 doden begraven," *NRC/Handelsblad*, 14 December 1982; Agence France Presse (AFP) and Sunday Chronicle in FBIS-LAM, VI, 13 December 1982, p. U1.
11. "Militairen Suriname zochten lang dekmantel voor fusilleringen," *NRC/Handelsblad*, 14 January 1983; see also CANA in FBIS-LAM, VI, 10 December 1982, p. U1.
12. "Ooggetuigen bevestigen moord op Surinamers," *NRC/Handelsblad*, 15 February 1983.
13. "Bouterse nam zelf deel aan executies," *NRC/Handelsblad*, 11 April 1983.
14. "Regering bevriest ontwikkelingshulp," *NRC/Handelsblad*, 11 December 1982; "Surinaamse leiders ontkennen executies tegenover Den Haag," *NRC/Handelsblad*, 15 December 1982; "Dutch say Suriname Executed at Least 13," *New York Times*, 11 December 1982.
15. "Haagse reacties vervuld van zorg," *NRC/Handelsblad*, 10 December 1982.
16. "Minister wil hulp aan Suriname snel hervatten," *NRC/Handelsblad*, 17 December 1982.
17. "Opschorten verdrag met Suriname verdedigd," *NRC/Handelsblad*, 21 December 1982; P.H. Kooijmans, "Verdrag met Suriname is wettig opgeschort," *NRC/Handelsblad*, 14 December 1982; S.K. Girjasing, "Surinaams bewind moet niet eenzijdig worden

- afgestraft," *NRC/Handelsblad*, 21 December 1982; J. van der Straaten, "Opschorting hulp aan Suriname was enige weg voor Nederland", 3 January 1983; "Surinaamse 'deskundigen' keuren opschorting hulp af", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 23 December 1982; see also Gillies 1996, 66.
18. "EG diep verontwaardigd over 'Suriname'", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 15 December 1982.
19. "Den Haag houdt hervatting hulp aan Suriname open", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 27 December 1982; "Schip met springstof niet te keren", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 17 December 1982.
20. "U.S. halts Suriname aid because of killings", *New York Times*, 18 December 1982.
21. "U.S. might cut aid to Suriname over killings", *New York Times*, 12 December 1982; see also "Suriname assailed for Dec. 9 killings", *New York Times*, 15 December 1982; "vs 'geschokt' door executies in Suriname", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 14 December 1982.
22. "Washington reageert op executies Suriname met opschorting hulp", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 18 December 1982; see also "U.S. halts Suriname aid because of killings", *New York Times*, 18 December 1982; "Brazil negotiating trade and aid deal with Suriname", *New York Times*, 12 June 1983.
23. "vs zijn verbaasd over reacties op 'Suriname'", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 23 December 1982.
24. Ibid.
25. "C.I.A. reported blocked in plot on Surinamese", *New York Times*, 1 June 1983.
26. Ibid. See also "Brazil negotiating trade and aid deal with Suriname", *New York Times*, 12 June 1983; "CIA wilde Bouterse ten val brengen", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 1 June 1983; Hilversum International Service in FBIS-LAM, VI, 2 June 1983, p. U1. It is not clear from these reports whether the CIA's activities were planned independent of or in response to the December 8th murders. See further Boerboom and Oranje 1992, 107-108.
27. "Suriname assailed for Dec. 9 killings", *New York Times*, 15 December 1982; "vs zijn verbaasd over reacties op 'Suriname'", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 23 December 1982; "Surinamers herdenken woordvoerder Communistische partij Suriname", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 14 December 1982; "Werk hervat in Paramaribo, 14 doden begraven", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 14 December 1982; "Geen aanwijzingen dat er Cubanen in Suriname zijn", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 14 December 1982; "Van den Broek: bruut optreden in Suriname komt voort uit angst", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 16 December 1982.
28. *NRC/Handelsblad* in FBIS-LAM, VI, 13 January 1983, p. U2; CANA in FBIS-LAM, VI, 18 May 1983, p. U1; CANA in FBIS-LAM, VI, 24 May 1983, p. U1.
29. "Bouterse vast in het zadel", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 13 January 1983.
30. "Suriname noemt bevrozing hulp 'politiek misbruik'", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 20 December 1982; see also "Bouterse sluit herstel parlementaire democratie uit", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 30 December 1982.
31. CANA in FBIS-LAM, VI, 17 January 1983, p. U1.
32. CANA in FBIS-LAM, VI, 28 February 1982, p. U1-2.
33. CANA in FBIS-LAM, VI, 4 April 1983, p. U1.
34. De Volkskrant in FBIS-LAM, VI, March 1983, pp. U2-3; see also Hilversum International Service in FBIS-LAM, VI, 2 March 1983, CANA in FBIS-LAM, VI, 8 March 1983, p. U1.



35. "Bouterse sluit herstel parlementaire democratie uit", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 30 December 1982; Bouterse repeated the statement later, see "Suriname feitelijk zonder president", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 7 January 1983; see also "Foes of Suriname's Leaders seek to organize", *New York Times*, 2 January 1983; AFP in FBIS-LAM, VI, 30 December 1982, p. UI.
36. "Chef van luchtmacht Suriname vlucht, volksmilitie uitgebreid", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 13 January 1983.
37. "Nederland kreeg meer dan verwacht", *NRC/Handelsblad*, 2 March 1983.
38. Trans World Radio in FBIS-LAM, VI, 25 October 1983, p. V2; see also CANA in FBIS-LAM, VI, 4 November 1983, p. UI.
39. *NRC/Handelsblad* in FBIS-LAM, VI, 1 November 1983, p. UI; see also *Volkskrant* in FBIS-LAM, VI, 4 November 1983, p. UI.
40. "Brazil negotiating trade and aid deal with Suriname", *New York Times*, 12 June 1983.
41. Whether or not the Dutch government action entailed a stance on human rights has been widely debated. Although human rights violations in other states which receive development aid have received merely verbal admonitions, this case involves the rights of a political elite and opposition.

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## Book Reviews

Mark Bovens & Paul 't Hart, *Understanding Policy Fiascos*. Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, NJ, and London 1996

In this already much-acclaimed book Mark Bovens and Paul 't Hart tackle an important subject in a systematic fashion: how to explain the occurrence of, and increase in, so-called policy fiascos. The short-cut answer to this question lies in the definition of a policy fiasco that they employ: "performance defects [that produce] situations of (...) subjectively significant social change, that (...) are highly politicised" (p.15). First of all, policy fiascos are a social construct: different actors perceive various policy outcomes in different ways at different moments. An evaluation of events and the causal chain producing these events is an essential part of their perception. Second, however, policy fiascos are also political issues: the stakes actors have, are also affected by the question of which events eventually are widely defined as policy fiascos. Fiascos may improve the positions of some, but weaken those of others. A policy fiasco, therefore, is primarily a political issue that is not only rooted in interests, but also in views of the fabric of society.

According to Bovens and 't Hart this Janus-faced character of policy fiascos can be grasped by posing four questions. First, which social and political biases are at work in determining what events are perceived as a fiasco? Different contexts in terms of time, space, and culture account for different evaluations. At the same time, politicians and the various media all have their own incentives to portray some events rather than others as clear failures (p.21-52). The second question that a researcher should pose is whether outcomes can indeed be attributed to individual agents. Indeed, the notion of fiasco carries with it the idea of man-made disaster. Interestingly, Bovens and 't Hart argue against an analysis that would be limited to a top-down perspective of the policy process. Such a view of subsequent stages of the policy process is likely to attribute the occurrence of fiasco to a mismatch between strategy and implementation and to leave it at that. Instead, they favour a bottom-up approach that starts with the executioners of the policy that failed. This procedure is more likely to trace the causal chain back to managerial and organizational problems, or to bureaucratic infighting. Their main conclusion is that any analysis of cause and effect will entail elements of social construct and political interests (p.53-72). The third issue they address is, once agents have been identified, how should the specific choices they have made be