The battle within

An evaluation of personnel retention policies at the Royal Netherlands Army

Master Thesis Crisis and Security Management

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The exodus of military staff at the Dutch Ministry of Defence puts the organisation at risk of inoperability. Currently, the average filling of all four Armed Forces is below combat readiness. In response to the issue, the Programme Retention and Recruitment was initiated in 2017. A number of policy measures in the programme aim to limit the irregular outflow of personnel. This explorative study looks specifically to the influence of the programme on military staff with a temporary contract (FPS phase 2) at the Royal Netherlands Army. According to statistical evidence, this group is most likely to leave the organisation prematurely. The single case study points out that the effectiveness of the retention measures is questionable. Most measures are targeting retention are postponed to the installation of a new HR model. The only retention project that takes from the programme budget targets civilians, instead of military staff. The financial measure of binding bonuses seems to have a perverse effect, as it causes division among those who receive it, and those who don't. Moreover, it is not decisive in the consideration to leave the organisation. Therefore, the Programme Retention and Recruitment does not seem to influence the retention of military staff at the Royal Netherlands Army.

INTRODUCTION

Research problem

With 9.250 vacancies on a total of 40.000 military employees, the staffing shortage at the Dutch Ministry of Defence has reached an all-time high at the end of 2019 (Ministerie van Defensie 2020; Keultjes 2020). This development is also influenced by organizational growth with the addition of 3000 military vacancies in 2018 and 2019. The overall military personnel filling of the Armed Forces dropped from 86,4 per cent in 2017 and 78,7 per cent in 2019. In juxtaposition to filling of regular civilian functions, which grew from 97,4 per cent in 2017 to 104,3 per cent in 2019 (Ministerie van Defensie 2020, 20-21). The staffing shortage is most significant in the largest component of the Armed Forces, the Royal Netherlands Army. On January 1, 2020, the organization had more than 3000 vacancies on top of 15.000 military employees, with a filling percentage of 76,2. This is the lowest filling across the whole organization (Ministerie van Defensie 2020, 20-21; Sanders 2020).

Recruitment and retention of personnel have been a point of concern ever since the suspension of mandatory military service in 1997 (Soeters and Bos-Bakx 2001, 230). In essence, the staffing shortage is the result of lower inflow and higher outflow of personnel. The latter is a particularly harmful development for the organization. First and foremost because valuable knowledge and experience are lost. The swindling number of employees and growing amount of vacancies results in a greater workload for the remaining staff members. This might result in dissatisfaction, eventually leaving to premature departure (Hennis-Plasschaert 2017). In addition, the replacement of personnel is a costly endeavor that weighs on overall production, because new employees have to be trained on the job (Thijssen 2017). Therefore, retention of staff is a more urgent aspect to the staffing shortage than recruitment.

On September 19, 2017, former minister of Defence Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert sent a letter to the House of Representatives to inform its members on the staffing shortage at the Ministry of Defence. The letter mentions five measures to enhance retention of military staff: (1) investing in material readiness and training to increase motivation; (2) guiding aspiring military staff that fail the initial training to other functions; (3) delegating staff matters to lower levels; (4) broadening the possibility for military staff to work outside their own unit; and (5) customizing career counselling. To ensure effectivity, the Secretary-general formed a project

team to monitor the policy measures. This is the official start of the Programme Retention and Recruitment.

In March 2018, the Ministry of Defence published the Defense note 2018 – investing in our people, strength, and visibility (*Defensienota 2018 – Investeren in onze mensen, slagkracht en zichtbaarheid*). The note explicitly mentions that investments are made first and foremost in people, as the organization wishes to restore their trust to keep them for the organization. The document refers to how strategic personnel policies aim for new ways of retention. Moreover, the current personnel policies in the form of the Flexible Personnel System (FPS) will be adjusted as soon as possible to limit outflow. Finally, retention bonuses are introduced for military staff in FPS phase 2 (Ministerie van Defensie 2018, 13-23).

On May 5, 2018 the personnel report of 2017 with mention of the Plan of Action Retention and Recuitment (*Plan van Aanpak Behoud en Werving*) was published. "With the execution of the Plan of Action Retention and Recruitment and the measures from the Defence Note, we want to increase the number of military staff that completes a FPS phase 2 contract." This is done by increasing career possibilities, improving the allowance system, temporary outflow possibilities, adjustment of the personnel system and improving bases. In addition, certain categories of military staff will receive a retention bonus if they stay in FPS phase 2 for longer (Ministerie van Defensie 2018, 10).

A few months later, in October 2018, the House of Representatives received an update about the progress of the Programme Retention and Recruitment. As the plan has a large degree of flexibility, successful measures are intensified and less successful measures are cut. At this point, there are four measures aimed at retention: (1) guiding recruits that drop out in the initial training to a different function; (2) delegation of personnel policies to the eligible commander; (3) more customization in career (counseling); (4) the implementation of a financial measure. In Royal Netherlands Army the retention bonus is available for Sergeants in technique and for the ranks Sergeant and Sergeant 1 in the categories medical, ICT, and cyber. The bonus builds up six years before the maximum duration in rank. Entitled staff members receive the sum of money three years before they reach the maximum duration in rank. Over the course of three years, the usual length of a military function, military staff in scarce functions receive €1.000 gross for the first year, €2.000 gross for a second year, and €3.000 gross for a third year. Military staff members in certain categories that are not offered a permanent contract ("phase 3") will receive an additional bonus of €2.000 gross for the first and second year after that decision (Ministerie van Defensie 2018, 4).

In a third letter to the House of Representatives on May 15, 2019, the Secretary of State Barbara Visser responds to a motion of member Belhaj to formulate clear goals, a time path and a budget of the Programme Retention and Recruitment. Visser also points out that the Programme Retention and Recruitment continues until 2021, with €72 million available from the 2019 Defence budget and €15 million from the Defence nota. A table adjoined to the letter gives insights to the implementation of the policy measures and, if possible, the effects and results since the start of the programme at the beginning of 2018. The table mentions a number of developments regarding the policy measures. First of which is exploring the possibility of maximum duration in rank under temporary contract ("FPS phase 2"). In addition, the financial measure to keep people in FPS phase 2 is intensified. A pilot offering external career perspectives had been started. The measures the possibility to work outside of one's function within the organization had been formalized into the Re-Employment Programme REP. Finally, the commander received more room for retention policies, as "Commander in Power" (Visser 2019).

Despite the efforts made, the outflow remains high. Most of the outflow is irregular: unpredicted and unplanned. The regular outflow entails foreseeable developments, such as retirement or redundancy (Ministerie van Defensie 2020, 43). In 2017, 2.365 military staff members left the organization unplanned. Two years later, the irregular outflow dropped with 18 percent to 1.926 people. Though 46 per cent of the unexpected departures occur at the Royal Netherlands Army with 881 people leaving in 2019, it is an increase in retention comparison to 1305 (55 per cent) in 2017. According to the 2019 personnel report, the total irregular outflow in 2019 consisted for 66,8 per cent of military staff with a temporary FPS phase 2 contract. This is an increase compared to 2017, when 57 per cent of the irregular outflow consisted of FPS phase 2. In absolute numbers: 1348 in 2017 and 1286 in 2019. Voluntary requests to dismissal occur often when staff members do not expect to receive a permanent contract, FPS phase 3. An incentive for departure among Privates and Corporals is the maximum duration in rank (Ministerie van Defensie 2019, 23).

In 2017, the top three reasons for voluntary dismissal included the lack of career perspectives (48 per cent), insecurity about the future (48 per cent), and the way the organization is governed (40 per cent). Over time, the prevailing reasons for departure also changed. Currently, the three most common reasons to leave among military staff in FPS phase 2 is the way the organization is governed (41 per cent), followed by career perspectives and development (36 per cent), and work-life balance (31 per cent) (Ministerie van Defensie 2019,

12). The way the organization is governed remains an important incentive to quit the Ministry of Defence. Meanwhile, career perspectives and room for personal development seem to have become a less common reason for departure. However, this could also be due to a different method of measurement for the personnel report. In addition, the faith in the future has not entirely been restored in 2019, as 47 per cent adheres to a positive outlook on the organization.

In conclusion, empirical evidence shows that the staffing shortage at the Ministry of Defence is growing. The most important aspect to this issue is retention of military staff. Personnel reports show that outflow is the highest for people with a temporary FPS phase 2 contract. The most common reason to leave remains "the way the organization is governed." Though the organization makes an effort to address the problem through the Programme Retention and Recruitment, it is the question whether the policy measures fit the context into which they are implemented.

Research objective and research question

Due to organizational growth, the total amount of vacancies at the Ministry of Defence grew and the average filling dropped. Irregular outflow was reduced with 18 per cent and the reasons for departure changed slightly. However, the percentage of military staff that leaves before the end of their temporary phase 2 contract increased to 66,8 per cent. Moreover, one of the most important reasons for departure remained unchanged: "the way the organization is governed." This explorative study aims to uncover if and how policy measures from the Programme Retention and Recruitment impacted the retention of military staff, and what other factors might have contributed to the continuing outflow of military staff. It is a practical endeavor applying scientific methods to a single case study. For the sake of focus, the scope is limited to military staff with a temporary contract (PFS phase 2) at the Royal Netherlands Army.

In essence, this is a policy evaluation comparing the measures from the programme (theory and intended mechanisms) to the reasons of departure between 2017 and 2019 (outcomes), placed in perspective of organizational development (context) to explain how the programme worked (mechanisms). Empirical evidence gathered from documents and interviews are combined to identify the factors that contribute to the continuing outflow of personnel. At the same time, this challenges the assumption that the measures from the Programme Retention and Recruitment should have worked within the context of the Royal

Dutch Army. The underlying research question is therefore: *how does the Programme Retention and Recruitment influence retention of military staff with a temporary contract at the Royal Netherlands Army?*

Societal and academic relevance

Ultimately, the staff shortage impedes the Ministry of Defence of obtaining its organizational goals as described in the Constitution. Article 97 describes three tasks of the armed forces; (1) to defend the territory of the Netherlands and its allies; (2) to maintain and promote international rule of law; (3) and to provide assistance to the government by maintaining the rule of law, support in crisis situations and humanitarian aid. In order to carry out these tasks, the armed forces are supposed to be "combat ready". Combat readiness is composed of material readiness, training level and personnel readiness. The last aspect is currently not met, due to the high number of vacancies and low filling. For the Netherlands, combat readiness means that the four armed forces are at least staffed for 80 per cent, with an average filling of 90 per cent. If necessary, vacancies are temporarily filled with employees from the army reserves (Hennis-Plasschaert 2017). According to the most recent personnel report, the average filling 78,7 was per cent in 2019. The Royal Netherlands Army is suffering the greatest with an overall staffing of 73,3 per cent in 2019 (Ministerie van Defensie 2020). Hence: it is questionable whether the organization can "protect what we value", ultimately affecting the whole of society.

The Ministry of Defence took action against the personnel problems, but do the measures of the Programme Retention and Recruitment suffice? Programmes are a product of policy-makers whose vision rarely coincides with the programme subjects. According to Turner (1976, 379) the complexity of administrative organizations can lead to the development of an internal organizational disaster when a number of unnoticed events accumulate and pressurize the culturally accepted beliefs and routines. As administrative organization face ill-defined and complex issues, problems are often redrawn and simplified to fit a degree of certainty. Solutions are therefore impeded by the bounded rationality of the people that need to address these problems. Policies are ought to be adequate as long as the problem seems contained (Turner 1976, 378-379). But what if the programme only combats the symptoms? This exemplifies the need for timely evaluation of policies, in avoidance of failure of foresight. Evaluation can be particularly useful in the field of crisis and security management, where policy evaluation

should be regarded as a form of risk analysis of a known problem. Evaluation often occurs to late, when the problem has already emerged. Tardy evaluations can therefore lead to simplifications, such as "the crisis was foreseeable" and "the risks were underestimated" (Boin and 't Hart 2020). Since the goal of evaluation is to learn from reality in which measures were implemented, it seems logical to do this in due time so the feedback can be implemented to avoid further harm to the organization. Reflection is ultimately the first step on the way to improvement.

Reading guide

The following chapter places the study in the standing body of knowledge, to create a basic understanding of the "playing field". This also allows to explain the complex organizational structure of the Ministry of Defence. Finally, the chapter "Body of Knowledge" provides insights in the theory underlying realist evaluation. This theory is further operationalized in the chapter "Methodology". It justifies the selected case of personnel retention at the Ministry of Defence and sets out how data is gathered and analyzed. Furthermore, it addresses the limitations and validity of this study. The chapter "Analysis" addresses to the context of the Royal Netherlands Army and the mechanisms of the Programme Retention and Recruitment. This knowledge is combined to explain the perceived outcomes. Finally, the research question is answered in the Conclusion.

BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

The Body of Knowledge serves to gain understanding of the concepts used in this study. The policy-making cycle helps to identify the weaknesses of each step in policy-making. The final step in the cycle is policy evaluation, the objective of this paper. The importance of evaluation is explained, after which the specific model of realist evaluation is specified. To gain a deeper understanding of the military organisation, Moskos' Institutional-Occupational model offers relevant angles on how the Army can be perceived. Finally, the governance of the Ministry of Defence is addressed to, to provide necessary context.

Policy-making cycle

Policy-making is the process of articulating and matching the goals and means of an actor (Howlett and Cashore 2014, 17). The generally accepted definition of public policy entails "a course of action or non-action taken by a public actor with regard to a specific issue" (Knill and Tosun 2012, 4). Or as Dye (1972, 2) simply put it: "Anything a government chooses to do or not to do." Public policy leads to measures, interventions, or a programme of coherent activities that consciously attempt to influence reality with a certain objective. Most commonly policies look to change human behaviour, ranging from the individual to the collective (Swanborn 1999, 16-17).

In practice, policy-making is often a complex process that involves numerous actors. To simplify reality, the policy-making cycle serves as a structured analytical tool. Though there are many theories about the steps in the policy-making cycle, only one is presented for the sake of unambiguity. The four phases include: (1) problem definition and agenda setting; (2) policy formulation and adoption; (3) implementation; and (4) evaluation with the possibility of reformulation or termination (Knill and Tosun 2012, 9).

Policy-making is no easy endeavour. Every phase of policy-making knows its own impediments. Problem definition and agenda-setting are subjected to the interpretation of a situation, which is hardly ever objective. A social problem can only turn into a political problem if it receives enough attention, the number of people that demand action is large enough, and if the government is able to address the problem (Knill and Tosun 2012, 119). The struggle for power continues in policy formulation and decision making, as the design of policies depends heavily on the preferences of the actors involved. Bureaucrats, experts, and interest groups all

act to promote their own wellbeing in this phase (Knill and Tosun 2012, 132-145). The implementation of government policies further complicate matters, as it is likely that a policy passes a chain of actors in order to be carried out. The effectiveness of implementation depends on the choice of policy instruments, policy design, control structure, institutional design, administrative capacity and social acceptance (Knill and Tosun 2012,151-172). In the evaluation phase, complicating factors include the identification of policy goals, the appropriate definition and measurement of performance, isolating policy effects from other factors, and the political context (Knill and Tosun 2012,175). Bearing this in mind, the policy-making cycle also serves as a tool to understand how government policies can fail.

Policy evaluation

The last step in the policy cycle is crucial, as it is a moment of reflection: did the implemented policies contribute to solve the problem? Evaluation is a form of practical research, which helps to guide organisations to obtain their goals. According to D.L. Stufflebeam; "The most important purpose of evaluation is not to prove, but to improve." Evaluation in government organisations requires a reliable method to measure the impact of policies. After all, taxpayer's money should be spent wisely. Scientific evaluation research has a number of essential ingredients that make it transparent and replicable. It needs a clearly formulated research problem, a well thought out research design, a systematic method of data collection and analysis, and report on the scope and limitations of the research question (Swanborn 1999, 14-15). The most common form of social research is to divide the research subject into an experimental group and a control group. The first group is subjected to an intervention, whereas the latter is not. This would allow for a comparison between the two, to determine the impact of the policy (Swanborn 199, 19-21).

In practice, policy interventions are mostly implemented without testing them first. It is not always possible or desirable to experiment with policies on people. In addition, reality is too complex to compare if policy measures have a direct effect on the experimental group as opposed to the control group. Different context variables will influence both groups and the measures imposed on the experimental group might well have unforeseen side effects (Swanborn 199, 19-21). Once again, this exemplifies the importance of policy evaluation.

For a long time, classic evaluation served to determine whether policy worked or not. It stems from the simple idea that the effect of an intervention is measured by comparing the before situation (*ex ante*) to the after situation (*ex post*). A situation of "policy on" and "policy

off". But since the circumstances *ex ante* and *ex post* are hardly ever the same (*ceteris paribus*), the idea of classic evaluation is misleading in the sense that it assumes a direct effect of an intervention. It only shows a correlation between the policy and the intended goal. Moreover, a classic evaluation does not help to understand how an effect was achieved, limiting the contribution to policy learning. It also disregards side effects, positive or negative, and the influence of social systems (Pattyn and Verweij 2014, 261-262). Whereas classic evaluation looks at attribution, realist evaluation focusses on contribution.

Realist evaluation

Realism is one of the dominant paradigms in modern European thinking. One of its key features is its emphasis on the mechanics of explanation. It allows to build models of generative causation, focused on the conditions that activated the internal potential of a system. To illustrate: gunpowder has the potential of explosion. The causal mechanism is enabled by the conditions that literally trigger a reaction. If the conditions are not right, the gunpowder will not explode (Pawson and Tilley 1997, 55). Hence, policies will only work if the context allows them to.

The way that a realistic evaluation is done is very similar to classic research methods in the social sciences. A theory provides hypotheses, which are empirically tested. Falsification can make or break a hypothesis. In realistic evaluation, theories are perceived as models for change, based on science, common sense, experience, and results of former evaluations. The model for change aims to uncover what mechanisms (M) are activated through an intervention, and in what context (C) it delivers a certain outcome (O). The key to a realist evaluation is uncovering the Context-Mechanism-Outcome configuration. A mechanism is installed with the intention to invoke an intended effect. The mechanism consists of both intervention resources and stakeholder reasoning. Or: what measures are implemented and how do the stakeholders react to it? A mechanism can only be triggered in the right context. However, the mechanism is place in a pre-existing environment, the background. Therefore, the central question in realist evaluation is "What works for whom in what circumstances?" Thus, realist evaluation focusses on what is it about a social programme that makes it work.

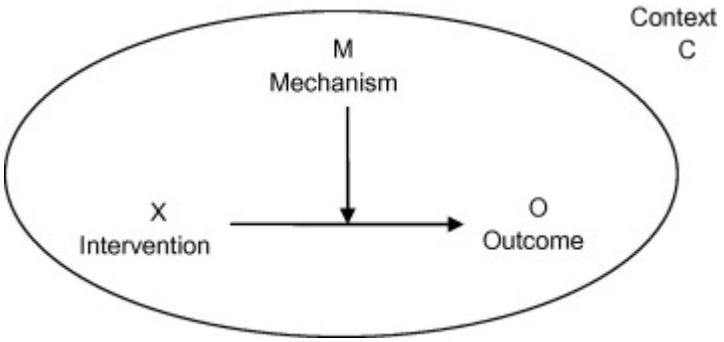

Figure 1. Context-Mechanism-Outcome configuration.

According to Pawson and Tilley, the starting point of an evaluation is the social programme. Social programmes are "undeniably, unequivocally, unexceptionally social systems, and they are composed, as is any social system, of the interplay of individual and institution, of agency and structure, of micro and macro social processes" (Pawson and Tilley 2004, 2). To understand how and why policy measures work, one must first go back to the ideas about how they are meant to work. Realist evaluation is theory-driven in the sense that it looks towards the theory that underlies a programme. This is a useful starting point of the evaluation, the causal mechanism in which X is supposed to make Y happen (Pawson and Tilley 20013, 407-408).

The outcome of a social programme can be explained by the mechanisms that makes them work. The outcomes consist of intended and unintended effects, based on the interaction between the context and the mechanism. This relationship is not linear, but influenced by the context. Hence, resources from the programme will trigger a reaction or response from the stakeholders. It is likely that a mechanism only works in a certain context. This is known as the context-mechanism-outcome pattern configurations. Social programmes are always introduced in pre-existing social systems, an environment which enables or disables the intended mechanisms. All stakeholders contribute to the context in which a programme is placed. The context ultimately determines whether a programme will be a failure or a success. The context is ought to be understood in all its layers, ranging from values, competencies, individuals, institutions and infrastructures (Pawson and Tilley 2004, 6-9). It stretches out over the micro, meso and macro level. It ranges from physical factors, to culture and characteristics of a certain group. The context highlights the complexity of the system in which an intervention is introduced (Verweij and Pattyn 2014, 262-264).

Moskos' Institutional-Occupational Framework

The military is an autonomous social organisation that diverges from broader society. Military service is generally marked by deployments, 24-hour service availability, fixed terms of enlistment, frequent moving, subjection to military law, and the inability to strike. In addition, the job comes with significant risk as danger is inherent to military manoeuvres and combat operations (Moskos 1977, 41-42). In the article *From Institution to Occupation: Trends in Military Organization* Charles C. Moskos presents the Institutional-Occupational Framework (I/O or I-O Framework) to understand trends in military organization. The underlying hypothesis was that the military was moved from an institution to an occupation, based on the transition from conscription to an all-volunteer model in the United States. Though Moskos' initially viewed these orientations as mutually exclusive, he later concluded that elements from the institutional and occupational model could co-exist. The conceptualization of I/O has been proved useful in research on Western military organizations (Moskos 1986, 377).

Table 1 summarizes the differences between I/O in the interface between the military and society. The Institutional model is highly divergent from civil society, whereas the Occupational model converges with civilian structures. Though civilian society and the armed forces are never entirely separate or entirely integrated, the models display the interface between the military and society (Moskos 1986, 377-378).

Table 1

Military Social Organization: Institutional versus Occupational

Variable	Institutional	Occupational
Legitimacy	Normative values	Marketplace economy
Role commitments	Diffuse	Specific
Basis of compensation	Rank and seniority	Skill level and manpower
Mode of compensation	Non cash or deferred	Salary and bonuses
Level of compensation	Decompressed (low)	Compressed (high)
Residence	Adjacent	Separate
Spouse	Integral part of community	Removed from community
Societal regard	Based on service	Based on compensation

Reference groups	Within organisation	External to organisation
Evaluation	Holistic and qualitative	Segmented and quantitative
Legal system	Military justice	Civilian justice
Post service status	Veteran's benefits	Same as civilian

The military organisation as an *institution* emphasizes the role of values and norms. It's members transcendent their individual self-interest in pursuit of the greater good. They are driven by altruistic motto's such as "duty", "honour" and "patriotism". In essence, military service is a calling in the Institutional model. Role commitment within the organisation is diffuse, as people are expected to perform tasks beyond their job description. As a result, job evaluation relies heavily on qualitative and subjective information, taking "the whole person" into account. The remuneration for members of the institution is below market wage and based on rank and seniority. To compensate, the organisation offers a range of noncash benefits: food, housing, uniforms, medical care, facilities on the base, and retirement benefits. Residency on the base is enhanced. Reference groups are found within the organisation, the conditions under which people work and live bind them together. This creates a sense of identity, based on belonging to the organization. Institutional membership is associated with self-sacrifice, which often results in high esteem from civilian society. The military community extends to spouses, who are expected to initiate or take part in social activities. Hence, military families are supportive of the organizational goal. Members of the institutional military are subjected to military justice, a system beyond the civilian legal system. After service, the prior military status integrates in civil life through a veteran status (Moskos 1977, 42-43; Moskos 1986, 378-381).

According to Moskos, the Institutional model was dominant in the United States military until the 1970's. After the abolishment of conscription and the introduction of the all-volunteer military, the institution moved towards an occupation. This development is in line with the philosophy of the marketplace, where supply and demand became considerable aspects of military service. Employees expect approximately the same salary and working conditions regardless of the employing organisation. In the Occupational model, the emphasis lies on self-interest rather than the interest of the greater good. In practice, this means that their job is specialized and salary and bonuses should be linked to the difference in skills of the individual service members. Evaluation is mostly segmented to the prescribed tasks and quantitative. The level of compensation is generally high and forms the basis for social regard. The occupational

military is organized in a horizontal way, which means that people identify with others who have a similar job and similar pay. Individuals articulate their interest in trade unions and reference groups are likely to be found outside of the military organisation. In an occupational military, the organization is not concerned with the worker's behaviour outside of work, as long as it does not affect job performance. Residence is often separate from the base and spouses are not integral part of the military community. In the occupational military, offenders are likely to be tried by civilian courts. Moreover, their post service status is the same as the status of civilians. In essence, there is no analytical distinction between the military and non-military organisations in the occupational model (Moskos 1977, 43-44; Moskos 1986, 379-380).

The Ministry of Defence and the Royal Netherlands Army

The Dutch Ministry of Defence consists of seven organisational parts: four operational Armed Forces, two supportive organisations and a Central Staff. The four armed forces services include the Royal Netherlands Navy (*Koninklijke Marine*), the Royal Netherlands Army (*Koninklijke Landmacht*), the Royal Netherlands Air Force (*Koninklijke Luchtmacht*), and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (*Koninklijke Marechaussee*). These are the operational units that ensure combat readiness in terms of material readiness, training level, and personnel readiness. The Joint Support Command (*Defensie Ondersteuningscommando*) and the Defence Material Organisation (*Defensie Materieel Organisatie*) provide the armed forces with products and services to obtain combat readiness. The Central Staff (*Bestuursstaf*) makes the defence policies. It sets out the main focal points, divides the budget, and checks the expenditure. The Central Staff also advices the minister as a member of the Cabinet. The commanders of the Armed Forces are responsible for the implementation of Central Staff policies within the operational units. They are led by the Chief of Defence and the Deputy Chief of Defence, the most important military advisors of the minister. The Ministry is led by both a Minister and a State Secretary. The latter is mainly involved with personnel, material, safety, and business operations (Ministerie van Defensie n.d.).

Since the Ministry of Defence is an executive organisation, rather than an administrative organisation, the emphasis of the Ministry's governance does not lie on policy-making. Nonetheless, the Central Staff is accountable for Defence policies. The organisational department is divided into a number of thematic executive boards (*Hoofddirecties*) led by the Secretary-General: Policy (*Hoofddirectie Beleid*), Finance and Control (*Hoofddirectie*

Financien en Control), Business Operations (*Hoofddirectie Bedrijfsvoering*), and Staff (*Hoofddirectie Personeel*). The executive boards Finance and Control and Staff are placed within the executive board Policy. This means that they are not directly represented in the executive council (*Bestuursraad*), consisting of the Secretary-General, the head of Policy, the head of Finance and Control, and the Chief of Defence. The executive board ultimately decides what policies are implemented within the organisation.

Policy-making at the Ministry of Defence follows the four phases of the policy-making cycle. In the first phase, problem definition and agenda-setting, an issue is detected within the organisation, or by outsiders such as the media. If the problem is perceived as "urgent enough", civil servants at the responsible executive board will do internal research to define the problem at hand. Subsequently, these officials will formulate a number of possible solutions. This is part of the policy formulation phase. The executive council or the Minister decides what policy is adopted. This decision is explained in a letter to Parliament to inform the political institutions on the prospective policies. The document often also serves as a basic programme plan, describing which policy measures are to be executed within the armed forces or the supportive services. Hence, policies are formulated and adopted on the level of the Central Staff in The Hague, whereas it is ought to be implemented on the decentralized level of the operational units.

Policy-making is perceived as difficult within the Ministry of Defence. Policies for the armed forces are made at the top, and implemented at the bottom. Nonetheless the executive branches are always engaged in policy-making, albeit to a limited degree. When policies are formulated, representatives from relevant parts of the organisation are involved to express their ideas. This often occurs in a working group on a certain theme. However, these are not the people that have to implement measures. A commonly heard phrase is that the Ministry of Defence is a "water head organisation". The many bureaucrats in the top decide the course of action for the armed forces (Den Drijver). As a result, policies are often met with scepticism and resistance, slowing down the whole policy-making cycle.

The Royal Netherlands Army is a governmental organisation tasked to (1) to defend the territory of the Netherlands and its allies; (2) to maintain and promote international rule of law; (3) and to provide assistance to the government by maintaining the rule of law, support in crisis situations and humanitarian aid. The organisation is led by Army Commander, who is responsible for preparing, leading and ending operations. These military or civilian operations are led on request of he Commander of the Armed Forces General Rob Bauer. In order to carry out his superior's order, the Commander has multiple fighting units, logistical units and

supporting units at his disposition. The Royal Netherlands Army often cooperates with other components of the Armed Forces or with foreign units (Koninklijke Landmacht, n.d.).

METHODOLOGY

This chapter specifies how an answer to the research question will be formulated. Since this is an inductive and explorative study, data is gathered on the context, mechanisms and outcomes of the Programme Retention and Recruitment in the Royal Netherlands Army.

Case selection and justification

Though the staffing shortage at the Ministry of Defence is felt across the entire organization, the problem seems most significant for the Royal Netherlands Army. The average personnel filling has dropped to 76,9 per cent in 2019, below the organizational threshold for combat readiness of 80 per cent. It is expected that the policy measures from the Programme Retention and Recruitment have a different effect on all four Armed Forces as they are autonomous in the implementation of policies. The scope of this study is therefore limited to the measures that look to increase retention of military staff in the Royal Netherlands Army, where the issue is currently most critique. Since most outflow is experienced among people with temporary contracts, FPS phase 2, this group is targeted in specific.

Data collection

Data for this study is retrieved from a duo interview with policy makers and nine interviews with military staff members that left between 2017 and 2019, three letters to the House of Representatives, and two personnel reports for 2017 and 2019. The interviewed respondents come from the researcher's personal network, after which the snowball method of referral is applied to gather more eligible respondents. Ex-military respondents were deemed eligible if they left the Army between 2017 and 2019, while having a FPS phase 2 contract. At the moment of departure, they ranked between Corporal and Sergeant-Major. The former military men were questioned for their Army work experience, motivation to leave, and the impact of the retention measures. Questions about a number of the variables from the I-O Framework contribute of a thick description of the context. The duo-interview focuses on the Programme Retention and Recruitment, the formulation and implementation of the retention measures, and how they were ought to work. With regard to the current situation with Covid-19, the interviews are held over Microsoft Teams or through a phone call. The interview guide is found in the Appendix.

The documents were available online, through the websites of the House of Representatives (*Tweede Kamer*) and the Central government (*Rijksoverheid*).

Data analysis

This study combines qualitative research methods, to determine the programme theory and the context-mechanism-outcome configuration. The programme theory is tested through empirical observations that inform the CMO configuration: environment + (intervention resources + reactions / response) = effect. There are four sources of data: (1) nine interviews with ex-military staff; (2) a duo interview with policy-makers; (3) three letters to the House of Representatives; and (4) two personnel reports.

Internal statistics on personnel outflow, overall filling and employee satisfaction from the 2107 and 2019 personnel reports provide empirical data about the impact of the Programme Retention and Recruitment (outcomes). Three letters to the House of Representatives present the retention measures (mechanisms). These are further explained through a duo-interview with two policy makers. This combination is also used for insights in the programme as a perceived model of change based on science, common sense, experience, and results from former evaluations (programme theory). The interviews with former military staff contribute to an outset of the context in which the retention measures were introduced.

The data for the context is analyzed in accordance to the I-O Framework for the purpose of structure and potential explanations.

Table 1

Military Social Organization: Institutional versus Occupational

Variable	Institutional	Occupational
Legitimacy	Normative values	Marketplace economy
Role commitments	Diffuse	Specific
Basis of compensation	Rank and seniority	Skill level and manpower
Mode of compensation	Non cash	Salary and bonuses
Level of compensation	Decompressed (low)	Compressed (high)
Residence	Adjacent	Separate
Spouse	Integral part of community	Removed from community
Societal regard	Based on service	Based on compensation
Reference groups	Within organisation	External to organisation

Evaluation	Holistic and qualitative	Segmented and quantitative
Legal system	Military justice	Civilian justice
Post service status	Veteran's benefits	Same as civilian

The interviews are loosely based on the Moskos' I-O Framework, to give structure to a thick description of the context of the Royal Netherlands Army. Not all variables have been taken into account. It is already known beforehand that the basis of compensation is rank and seniority. Modes of compensation are both cash and non-cash. Military service in the Netherlands is not only rewarded through salary and allowances for exercise, deployment, and living at the base, but also in non-cash or deferred, such as housing and facilities at the base, health insurance, health care, and pension. Questions addressing the role of the spouse and social regard are not used for the analysis, as they don't contribute to the contextualization of the social environment of the Royal Netherlands Army. The mode of evaluation is holistic, as role commitment is generally speaking diffuse. Most people in the Army are generalists. Moreover, military staff is always subjected to military justice and they do not enjoy veteran's benefits.

In the interviews, level of salary is questioned in terms of satisfaction. Though the salary of military staff in the Netherlands is generally low in comparison to other Western countries, sufficiency portrays a subjective experience of the level of salary. The reference group of the respondents was established by asking about their connection to their colleagues, the military organization, and if they experienced a similar connection outside of the Ministry of Defence. In addition, the respondents were questioned about the positive and negative aspects of their military job. This broadens the scope of the context beyond the I-O Framework.

Validity and reliability

First and foremost, it is important to be aware of the fact that evaluation is always partial. The focus of this research lies on the operational units of the Royal Netherlands Army. As interviews portray personal experiences, the generalizability is relatively low. Particularly since the number of respondents in this study is small and they have been gathered through the snowball method. This means that the population is not random. In addition, the interviews are held via telephone, which makes it less of an interpersonal exchange of information which could make the input more superficial. Nonetheless, the data gathered does suffice to gain insights on the effect of the Programme Retention and Recruitment for the Royal Dutch Army, as the

interviews are held until the answers to the questions saturated. Hence, no new information is discovered. This means that the internal validity is high, whereas the external validity is low due to the fact that the results can't be generalized for the other armed forces.

Limits and pitfalls

The researcher is central to the research process with qualitative methods. An interview is ultimately a conversation between two or more people, in which the respondent is at grace of the interviewer. Therefore, it is the task of the researcher to be aware of biases, subjectivity and limited representativity.

This study is limited to the specific case of retention of military staff with a temporary contract at the Royal Netherlands Army. Due to cultural and organizational differences among the four Armed Forces, the results cannot be generalized. The study only focuses on the particular effect of retention measures, leaving the possible impact of recruitment out of scope. Moreover, other factors that might enhance retention are not taken into account, as they are not part of the Programme.

ANALYSIS

The objective of this study is to evaluate how the retention measures from the Programme Retention and Recruitment affected the retention of military staff with temporary FPS phase 2 contracts at the Royal Netherlands Army. This chapter entails a thick description of the Context-Mechanism-Outcome configuration, as explained in the previous chapters. First, the pre-existing social system is mapped out. The military is an autonomous organization that diverges from broader society. Moskos' describes two perspectives on the organization: institutional and occupational. Though the Institutional-Organizational Framework formed the basic structure for the interviews with former military staff members, other that topics surfaced in the assessment of the context are deemed more explicit. Therefore, the environment is sketched in accordance to the prevailing themes. Subsequently, the mechanisms are presented and illustrated with reactions to them from the stakeholders. Finally, the intended and unintended effects are explained as the outcomes.

Context

A job in the military comes with significant risk, inherent to military maneuvers and combat operations. The interviews indicate that every single respondent was intrinsically motivated to join the Army. Their line of reasoning include mentions of "childhood dream", "calling", "teamwork", "adventure", "challenge", "action", and "seeing the world". Two respondents add occupational motivations, such as "little other options", "difficult home situation", and "immediately earning a salary". This indicates that a institutional perspective of the military organization prevailed among its former employees.

After 25 years of budget cuts, the Ministry of Defence slowly started to invest in the organization again. However, the effects of the budget cuts are still present in the minds of the military staff. All except for one out of the nine respondents, state that they were affected by the budget cuts. This was mostly noticed in material: unavailable, incomplete, broken, or inadequate. "You had to work with what you had." In addition, the military men mention less exercises and less ammunition during exercises. One respondent states how they had to shout: "Pinda, pinda!" at some point, to simulate gunfire. Ultimately, the budget cuts took the toll on

the staff in multiple ways. During exercises, weekends and nights became unpaid. Meanwhile, more people would leave because their trust in the organization diminished. The remaining personnel would feel underappreciated for their effort, while the work load and work pressure rose. "So many people were already gone, because of the budget cuts. The loyalty of the employees, every half a year, they would ask more from us. You had to be more loyal, while you already put in all your effort." This divide was explained by another respondent as: "The higher the officer, the less we want to talk to him."

Critique on the way the organization is governed is a reoccurring topic in the interviews. The respondents state that questionable decisions about the operational units were made by "stubborn people in The Hague". Particularly in relation to material and personal gear. "Someone in The Hague, who spends every day at the office, will decide what shoes are best for me." At some point, it became customary for military staff to buy their own gear to replace the "Ali Express quality" gear from the Ministry of Defence. "At the time I thought a good employer gives his employees what they need, especially Defence, because it's a matter of life or death, and all we got was junk." On respondent states that he had little trust in the organization: "You are just a number."

Moreover, one respondent explicitly mentioned how his life was put at risk, simply because the organization does not seem to be self-learning. He illustrated this claim by with the story of Kevin and Henry, two military men who died on a mission in Mali because of an accident with unsound ammunition in 2016. One year later, said respondent was also deployed to the area. Here, he slept in a tent close to a shipping container that stored ammunition. When the ammunition technicians paid a visit, they said that it was a life threat. The military staff on site had to improvise to make the situation safer for them. Hence, it appeared as if the organization had not learned from the incident in 2016.

The personnel system is another major point of concern. On January 1, 2008 the Ministry of Defence installed the flexible personnel system (FPS) to influence the structure of the workforce. The organization has a relatively young population, because many people leave after a number of years in service. The FPS enhances a more balanced workforce with a system of three phases. In the first two phase, employees receive a temporary contract. The third phase is a permanent contract (Hennis-Plasschaert 2017, 1-2). For three respondents, it was a reason to leave the organization. As a result of the budget cuts, less people in the rank of Corporal were allowed to become non-commissioned officers. They had to partake in the Zelda programme, a point system to designed to meet certain requirements in order to go up in rank. Meanwhile,

inflow of non-commissioned officers from civil society was encouraged because of the lower wages for new recruits. At the same time, the influx of new staff posed a change in culture. Since the minimum rank for a permanent contract is Sergeant, it also became harder for people to obtain FPS 3. There are also negative connotations to the people in phase 3, "they stay because it is safe", "nobody pays attention to them" and "people that did not function were promoted to go elsewhere." The totality of the FPS system derived employees from a sense of job security. Particularly since the all ranks have a maximum duration. If it is not possible to go up in rank, the only option left is to resign. Ultimately, this was very demotivating, which led people to leave the organization.

The salary of military staff in the Netherlands is generally low, in comparison to other Western countries. The height of the salary is based upon rank and years in service. All but one respondent state to be satisfied with their income at the time. However, this is mainly for the basic salary, as exercise allowance were explicitly appointed as insufficient by half of the respondents. In addition to their salary, the Dutch military provides its employees with health care, health insurance, housing and facilities at the base, and a pension. Other benefits come in the form of bonuses, most often a gratification of satisfaction. However, this does not form a major incentive for the military staff. The amount of money is too little to make a difference for an individual. The basis on which the gratification is given out is also questioned. "Yes, you did your work well, we have a jar that needs to be emptied and we gave that one something already, now it is your turn." One respondent reports of receiving a coin from Admiral Rob Bauer, Commander of the Armed Forces. This did invoke a sense of appreciation in the recipient.

One of the most salient aspects of military life, is living at the base. All respondents except one lived on the base for the largest share of their service. This lifestyle is perceived as "fun" in the beginning of a military career. As a Private or a Corporal you share a room with others, which forges a bond. However, the social aspect also changed due to the recent installation of internet and the introduction of the "Playstation and chips generation". "Before we would go and have a beer, but now everyone was in their room playing on the PlayStation. The good atmosphere was gone." With time, living at the base became an obstacle for all respondents. They mention that "it was a motivation to leave", "there was nothing there", "you get fed up after a few years". One particular respondent stated that he "lived for way too long" at the base, which resulted into social isolation. Living at the base seems to drastically impact

the work-life balance. However, most respondents were obliged to live on the base, because of the distance to their home.

The work of military staff in the operational units mostly consists of training. The training schedule follows a cycle of 5 levels, that takes three years. “After three years the practice schedule starts over again, you start from scratch again. And if you are lucky, you are deployed.” All respondents mention that the training to deployment ratio was inadequate. “Training just for training and then no deployment, that slowly started to annoy me.” It also diminishes a sense of meaning in the professional life: “I think I was lucky to be deployed twice. […] Like, I’m just training, training, training, and I never do my job.” Ultimately, it also contributed to the decision to leave the organisation for one respondent: “I was done with training, with level five, sleeping in the field, pretending, every time there were new people, so we had to start a level from scratch every time.” Seven out of nine respondents have been deployed at least one time to Iraq, Afghanistan, Mali and Lithuania. All former staff members that were deployed refer to this experience as the highlight of their career.

Despite the disadvantages of military life, all except for one respondent look back with a positive attitude. People feel as if the military made them into the person they are today, equipped them with discipline and physical abilities. Moreover, all respondents express a sense of pride about their former military status. When asked about the connection to their colleagues at the time, it becomes apparent that this is a main advantage of the job. “At Defence, you have mates, in civil society you have colleagues.” Terms as brotherhood, comradery and family are mentioned in relation to the question. This was specifically the case for deployments, as a deployment really creates an unbreakable bond.

Mechanisms

A letter to Parliament in 2017 states that technological, demographic, economic and societal developments have changed the job market. The policy makers of the Programme Retention and Recruitment point out that the organization follows a cycle, in which the staffing shortage peaks with certain regularity. When the job market is tight, this is favorable for the Ministry of Defence as more people apply to the organization. Therefore, programmes to combat the staffing shortage are reoccurring. Before the current programme, there was a similar programme

"Action Plan Recruitment and Retention" that ran from 2008 until 2011. Eventually it was stopped due to budget cuts. In the current programme, the emphasis is on retention.

The Programme Retention and Recruitment was initiated after the realization that "the shortages were really getting out of hand". A trend that has been growing since the abolition of conscription in 1997 and the professionalization of the military organization. In 2017 the problem became urgent and it was answered with an institutional decision (*instellingsbeschikking*) to free up a number of full-time staff members to formulate the programme.

To improve retention of military staff members, the Ministry of Defence formulated a number of policy measures between 2017 and 2019 in the Programme Retention and Recruitment. As the programme in constantly in development, measures were added and lost over time. Moreover, policies from other programmes or projects can also influence the staffing shortage. To limit the scope, this study only takes the policies specific to the Programme Retention and Recruitment, which are part of the programme until now. According to the two policy-makers, the most important retention measures from the programme are the Re-Employment Programme and the binding bonuses. The others are forwarded into the new HR model.

First of all, decisions about rank, duration in function and age of recruitment were delegated to the responsible commander (Hennis-Plasschaert 2017, 2-3). For the Royal Netherlands Army, this concerns the way functions are appointed to military staff. Accordingly, because lower levels of management have a better idea of the issue at hand and need freedom to accurately combat the staffing shortage (Visser 2018, 3). In the programme, this measures is known as "Commander in Power".

In addition, the possibilities for military staff to work outside of their own unit were broadened. This enables effective use of scarce categories, it increases the exchange between the Armed Forces and variation in work, and offers career perspectives. This was ultimately formalized into a project: Re-employment, or REP.

A third measures entailed customized career counselling to cater the needs of employees in terms of personal development and work-life balance (Hennis-Plasschaert 2017, 1-2). From the interview with the policy-makers, it becomes clear that this has to do with the current FPS system. As military staff rotates every few years, they experience insecurity because they have troubles aligning their private life with work. Though the measures changed title over time, the policy-makers indicate that this is mainly about the role of career counselling.

In 2018, a financial measure was added: the binding bonus for Sergeants in technique and for the ranks Sergeant and Sergeant 1 in the categories medical, ICT, and cyber. It aims to prevent people from leaving the organization before they obtain a permanent contract, if ever. (Visser 2018, 4). This was deemed an obvious tool by the policy-makers, since it is easily implemented. Moreover, it is a way of competing with businesses and other sectors.

In short, the Programme contains 4 measures that target retention of military staff:

1. Delegation of decisive power to lower commanders;
2. Re-employment;
3. Customized career counselling;
4. Binding bonuses.

Outcomes

The outcomes of retention measures are partially informed by a comparison of irregular outflow and reasons for departure between 2017 and 2019. The results are illustrated with in-depth information from the interviews with the former military staff and policy makers at the Programme Retention and Recruitment.

As set out in the introduction, the irregular outflow of military staff remains high with 2.365 departures in 2017 and 1.926 in 2019. Most people that left did not have a permanent contract, adding up to 57 per cent in 2017 and 66,8 per cent in 2019. Within the studied time frame, career perspectives seem to have improved as it is a diminishing reason for departure. The way the organization is governed remained a primary incentive for about 40 per cent of ex-military staff members. Work-life balance has become increasingly more important, though this was not mentioned at all in the personnel report of 2017. A study of the work experience shows that the levels of motivation (70 per cent in 2017 and 75 per cent in 2019) and satisfaction (61 per cent in 2017 and 66 per cent in 2019) are slowly rising across organization. Faith in the future grew more significantly from 38 per cent in 2017 to 52 per cent in 2019. The work experience specific to military staff seems a little lower than the organizational averages, which includes civilians as well. For the year 2019, 72 per cent was motivated, 62 per cent was satisfied, and 47 per cent had faith in the future. There are no statistics available for the work experience of military staff in 2017, nor specifications for the Royal Netherlands Army for both years.

When asked about the outcomes of the Programme Retention and Recruitment, the policy makers indicated that it is actually difficult to measure these. “It is always a coherence

of factors that play a role." They make a comparison between the Navy and the Army to explain the difference in implementation of a central decision. As the Army is much more centralized, that imposes a very strong direction of sense from the central Army staff. Moreover, the fact that the job market is more tight might also play into the slightly reduced retention. When asked about the specific retention measures, it appeared that these are not as rigid as they appear. Most importantly because retention will become an essential part of the new HR model. It is currently under development and it is unclear when it will be due.

The measure "commander in power" (*Commandant in zijn kracht*) is also included in the new HR model, but has already been implemented to a certain extent. Commanders are empowered, but they feel restraints when it comes to budgets, regulations and the way that the organization is equipped. The policy makers also point out the differences between the organizational units of the Ministry of Defence. Accordingly, head of Human Resources at the Royal Netherlands Army General de Rijke stated: "It can't be the case that the commander of the special forces will decide everything himself." The policy makers are both military staff members of the Royal Netherlands Navy, which has a different outlook on the Royal Netherlands Army. They explain the difference by the fact that the Army is larger but decentralized, hierarchical, bureaucratic and viscous. Therefore, the implantation of "commander in power" has not reached its full potential and could be better.

The Re-employment initiative REP is aimed at civilians, instead of military staff. According to the policy-makers, because military staff rotate functions every certain amount of years. Military staff can participate, but it is not known if there have been participants in the project. As far as the policy-makers are aware, only civilian staff members make use of this possibility.

The retention measure that looks to offer military staff more career perspective is also postponed into the new HR model. Opportunities of customization were applied more actively in 2019, but on a small scale. Five former military staff members that sought out help from a career counsellor, all mention that this was on their own initiative. None of the respondents are positive about this experience. One respondent is particularly negative, as he felt he was willfully obstructed in looking to become a Sergeant. Another respondent, who wanted to follow an education for his function as a mechanic, was not helped by the career counsellors. He had to arrange the study himself, and eventually pay for it as well. A similar story comes from a respondent that asked about an HBO study, to which the career counsellor replied: "We don't need officers." He eventually studied in his spare time, which was problematic when there would be exercises.

The outcome of the binding bonuses is questioned by the policy makers and the former military staff alike. The budget for the binding bonuses is 35,3 million. However, there is not interaction between the policy makers and the people that receive a binding bonus. Because policy is not evaluated, it is difficult to establish of the financial measure is effective. Out of 9 respondents, only one received a binding bonus. However, this did not make a difference in retention, it was eventually a short extension because the decision to leave had already been made. A binding bonus is a temporary measure that would terminate at some time. As a result, people did not perceive it as a bonus, but a correction for their market value. It ultimately does not seem to change the incentive to leave the organization, but rather to prologue their stay for a short period of time. Hence, it is not a measure for the long term. One respondent that did not receive a binding bonus, mentioned that: "They would not have kept me with a bonus anyway." According to the policy makers, the binding bonuses are not part of the Programme Retention and Recruitment. These were pre-existing measures, implemented by the operational units. Hence, the Royal Netherlands Army can spent a maximum sum in the form of a binding bonuses. Often, these bonuses are attributed to scarce categories, such as specialized function groups and crucial ranks such as Corporal or non-commissioned officer.

One of the policy-makers concluded "that there are not that many real retention measures in the programme, at least not revolutionary new ones." Looking back to the pitfalls of the policy-making cycle, it become apparent that the Programme Retention and Recruitment has encountered numerous difficulties. First of all, the problem at hand seems ill-defined. It has not been narrowed down to retention of military staff, which resulted into measures taken to limit outflow of civilians. All the while the filling of this group is currently over 100 per cent. Moreover, it seems as if the agenda-setting might be impeded by the fact that the military staff feel unheard by the Central Staff. As for the policy formulation, the policy-makers admitted to re-using pre-existing measures, and not innovating. A list of measures was compiled by the HDP, complemented by representatives of the different Armed Forces in counsel informing the programme. Commitment to the programme seems relatively low, as meetings occur every half a year now. Moreover, the Armed Forces are responsible for the implementation of the measures. This is particularly harmful for the Royal Netherlands Army, as this is perceived as a hierarchical and bureaucratic organization. Finally, no evaluation of the policies have been made thus far.

CONCLUSION

The central question in this explorative policy evaluation is: *how does the Programme Retention and Recruitment influence retention of military staff with a temporary contract at the Royal Netherlands Army?* Though it is difficult to isolate the effect of the programme in relation to other factors, outflow has been reduced slightly. However, as it appeared from the outcomes, only one measure specifically aimed at the retention of military staff in FPS phase 2 had been implemented. This is the financial measures of binding bonuses, which targets specific ranks and functions that are perceived as scarce. The effect of the bonuses is questioned, and the impact has never been evaluated by the organization. Data from this study indicates that the bonuses might have a negative effect, as it creates a system of division among staff within the Army. The possible positive effect of a bonus seems to be temporary, perhaps slowing down outflow, but not stopping it.

The other measures from the programme are either aimed at the outflow of civilians, implemented on a small scale, or postponed into the new HR mode. Moreover, the programme budget was predominantly used for recruitment measures. A small sum of the budget was spent on the creation of a full-time function in the re-employment project. However, this project is not aimed at military staff, while there is currently a staffing excess of civilians.

This explorative evaluation concludes that the Programme Retention and Recruitment does not seem to address the retention of military staff with a temporary contract at the Royal Netherlands Army. Further research should be aimed at the evaluation of financial measures. Another avenue to explore, is the effect of the Programme Retention and Recruitment on the other Armed Forces: the Navy, the Military Police, and the Air Force.

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APPENDIX I – INTEVIEW GUIDE EX-MILITARY STAFF

[Establishing rapport through chitchat]

First of all, thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. As mentioned before, I am researching the motives of former military staff in FPS phase 2 to leave the Royal Netherlands Army between 2017 and 2019. This is a policy evaluation of retention measures taken in 2017, that looks specifically to the context in which they are implemented. This might provide an explanation of the success of the programme. Your contribution is anonymous and voluntary. The whole interview will take about 30 minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

[…]

OK, let's start!

1. When did you join the Royal Netherlands Army?
2. What education did you have before?
3. Why did you join the Army?
4. What ranks and functions did you have in the Royal Netherlands Army?
5. Were you deployed?
6. Did you think your salary was sufficient?
7. Did you enjoy other benefits from Army service?
8. Did you ever receive a bonus?
9. Did you feel connected to your colleagues?
10. Did you feel connected to the organisation?
11. Did you ever experience such a connection outside of the Army?
12. Were you proud of you work in the Army?
13. Did you experience esteem from society for the fact that you were in the Army?
14. What aspects of your work did you experience as positive during your time in the Royal Netherlands Army?
15. What aspects of your work did you experience as negative during your time in the Royal Netherlands Army?

16. When did you leave the Army?
17. Why did you eventually leave the Royal Netherlands Army on your own initiative?
18. Did the Royal Netherlands Army make any effort to keep you within the organisation?
19. Did you have an exit conversation?
20. Do you have any recommendations to improve retention in the Royal Army?

Thank you very much for your participation. I appreciate your openness and frank input. This is very valuable for my research. Before we hang up, I would like to ask you if you have any questions with regard to the interview or the study.

[…]

OK, thank you once again for your time and input. I wish you a pleasant day. Bye bye!

APPENDIX II – INTERVIEW GUIDE POLICY-MAKERS

[Establishing rapport through chitchat]

First of all, thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. As mentioned before, I am researching the effect of the Programme Retention and Recruitment at the Royal Netherlands Army. Your contribution is anonymous and voluntary. The whole interview will take an hour maximum. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. What is your role in the Programme Retention and Recruitment?
2. How did the Programme Retention and Recruitment come about?
3. How was were the retention measures formulated?
4. What are the most important retention measures in the programme?
5. How did you expect these policy measures to work?
6. How were the policy measures implemented?
7. Does the outcome of the policy measures live up to your expectations?
8. What difficulties did you encounter in the implementation of the programme?

Thank you very much for your participation. I appreciate your openness and frank input. This is very valuable for my research. Before we hang up, I would like to ask you if you have any questions with regard to the interview or the study.