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Do the Dutch "rally 'round their flag"?

The effect of military and non-military crises on the Dutch public opinion

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Introduction

Immediately after the terrorist attacks on the eleventh of September 2001 polling organizations registered one of the steepest upheavals of a president's popular support among American voters in modern history. George W. Bush his approval rates went up dramatically after these dramatic attacks on American soil took place[1]. His job approval rating increased with 35 percentage points – from 51 percent prior to and 86 percent after the attack on the World Trade Center. Scholars considered it to be one of the most obvious examples of Mueller's "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect (Mueller 1970; Baum 2002; Hetherington & Nelson 2003).

In the early 1970's this phenomenon was introduced by Mueller, who anticipates that "international crises and similar phenomena will give a President a short-term boost in popularity" (1970, 20). Even before Mueller introduced the phenomenon, scholars have acknowledged the effect of international crises on presidential popularity. Early in the twentieth century, Matthews found that crises or wars can bring about a certain stability to the political arena. During such a period of relative stability, political elites refrain from partisan activism, or even let go of their tendency to exert control over the policy of executive parties (Matthews 1919, 213). In other words, such events can move members of the opposition to 'put politics aside'.

There are, however, some peculiarities to this sudden state of conciliation between political elites. First of all, there is no perfect sense of unanimity. The policy stances of coalition and opposition parties remain the same, regardless of the crisis. The only difference is that these policy differences are latent as soon as the crisis takes place. Besides that, the political stability that appeared after a crisis is only temporary. After a particular period, elites become more likely to differ on the policy how to solve the crisis or conflict (Matthews 1919, 214). Subsequently, the public updates its opinion as soon as more information about the crisis and the actions of the government reaches media agencies. The details that become transparent, ultimately used by the opposition to confront the government, may conflict with the information coming from the administration. This leads to an evaporation of the initial public support for

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[1] Gallup Polls, September 7-10 and 14-15, 2001. Other major polling organizations recorded similar approval ratings (e.g., 86% in a poll held on September 13, 2001 by *ABC News/Washington Post* and 84% in a September 13-14, 2001, *CBS News/New York Times* poll).

the incumbent, perhaps even falling back below pre-crisis levels (Brody 1984; Brody and Shapiro 1989).

This point seems to be reached in the Netherlands in the aftermath of the crash of flight MH17, the commercial airplane brought above Ukraine supposedly brought down by Russian separatists[2]. In the beginning of 2015, more than six months after the crash, opposition parties openly question the specifications of the crisis and have come to openly criticize the decisions made by the government prior to and directly after this dramatic event. In a parliamentary debate in February this year, several ministers who were involved in the decision-making process were called to, among other things, account for the considerations of the government to prohibit commercial flights on the particular route flight MH17 took on the 17th of July last year[3]. Opposition parties accused the government to have ignored warnings of NATO-officials who stated that pro-Russian separatists were practicing with rocket launchers west of the boarders of Ukraine, right beneath the flight route of MH17.

This belated assertiveness of the opposition parties regarding the incident should draw the interest of scholars specializing in the field of the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect. Such behavior of members of the opposition, and the subsequent critical sentiment in the reports of the media on the disputes in Parliament, is one of the acknowledged characteristics of a "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect (Brody and Shapiro 1989; Brody 1991; Hetherington and Nelson 2003). Until now, few studies on phenomenon have been done outside the United States to make claims on its workings in other political systems, in which the incumbent holds less responsibility than in the presidential system the United States have. Recent events involving the Netherlands, thus make it relevant to ask the question: is the 'rally-round-flag'-effect a product of the political system or is it a generic phenomenon in other types of political system as well? In

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[2] On the 17th of July a commercial flight of Malaysia Airlines crashed above Ukraine on its way to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Among the 298 passengers on board of that plane, including a large number of Dutch citizens, there were no survivors. Although not confirmed by an official investigation task force, a missile of Russian separatists in Ukraine hit the plane. Until the day this thesis is final no official international investigation has been launched in which possible perpetrators are being prosecuted for taking part in the takedown of flight MH17. Volkskrant. Dossier rampvlucht MH17. http://www.volkskrant.nl/dossier-rampvlucht-mh17/
[3] Volkskrant. 5th of February 2015. 'Ministers houden vol dat zij niets wisten van risico voor MH17'. Last consulted on February 17th of 2015.
http://www.volkskrant.nl/politiek/ministers-houden-vol-dat-zij-niets-wisten-van-risico-voor-mh17~a3845493/

other words, do crises involving the Netherlands have an impact the public opinion although it has a parliamentarian system and responsibility is considered to be more scattered?

To learn more about the workings of this phenomenon, it is relevant to transplant the existing ideas of the rally-effect in previous studies to a political system in which the clarity of responsibility is not as centered as in presidential systems, but power is considered to be more diffused over different political institutions instead. With this effort to study the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect in the Netherlands, more can be stated about the workings of the phenomenon in other political systems than the presidential system. This study therewith aims to be a useful supplement of the literature on the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect and hopes to stimulate studies in other countries, and thus political systems.

Besides its effort to complement the scholarly literature on the theory, it is socially relevant to investigate how the electorate reacts following from different types of dramatic events. Although polling agencies are inclined to relate upheavals in approval ratings or support to certain political events, it remains difficult to solidify where sudden leaps in approval or support are coming from. Measuring the effect of multiple rally-events throughout present history would help to interpret dramatic changes in approval ratings of the incumbent. Measuring to what degree the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect is applicable to the Netherlands should also prevent one from making slender claims about the functioning of incumbents. It would, namely, be too premature to state that these sudden changes in approval ratings are caused by specific performances initiated by the incumbent. As will be discussed in the theoretical framework, the evaluations of incumbents simply increase because they simply are the leader at that time. This study should give an indication of the events that could have caused for such changes in polls.

Theory & hypotheses

Fundaments of the "rally-'round-the-flag"-literature

Mueller, as the first scholar who operationalized the 'rally-round-the-flag'-effect in the early 1970's, stated that crises have the potential to elicit a sense of unification of the public. One of the subsequent reactions of the public after a crisis is that it rallies around the President. According to Mueller, a potential rally event must meet three characteristics: it "(1) is international and (2) involves the United States and particularly the president directly; and it must be (3) specific, dramatic, and sharply focused" (1973, 209). According to Mueller, the reason why apparent spikes in presidential popularity emerge after international crises is that the electorate is afraid to constrain the nation's chances of success in the midst of the crisis if it would not support him.

Basically all relevant follow-ups of Mueller's introduction of the phenomenon agreed with Mueller that international events directly involving the United States indeed evoke the public to change its stance towards the incumbent (Lee 1977; Kernell 1978; MacKuen 1983; Wittkopf & De Haven 1987; Ostrom & Simon 1985; Marra, Ostrom & Simon 1990). Others, on the other hand, said to have found enough reason to doubt the direct impact of rally-events on fluctuations in presidential popularity, as the rally-effect for a substantial number of cases has found to be influenced by the extent to which media pay attention to the particular event (Blechman & Kaplan 1978; Brody & Shapiro 1989; Edwards 1990; Hugick & Gallup 1991; James & Oneal 1991; Brody 1991; Lian & Oneal 1993; DeRouen 1995; Oneal & Bryan 1995). The press mediates the influence of leaders after a certain event and is therefore claimed to be an important determinant in whether rally-events will affect evaluations of the incumbent.

In the early studies on the phenomenon, only minor refinements on the workings of the theory itself have appeared (Lee 1977; Kernell 1978; MacKuen 1983), confirming that international crises could cause for a short-run increase of presidential popularity unrelated to the success of his policies. The early literature on the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect was rather unanimous in concluding that rally effects were substantial, automatic and short-run responses from the public to an international crisis, increasing the popularity of the incumbent regardless of the popular support for his

views. Polsby (1971, 112) states that "Invariably, the popular response to a President during international crises is favorable, regardless of the wisdom of the policies he pursues."

While early literature on the rally-effect considered rallies to be products of reflexive patriotic reactions of the public opinion, later studies have found that the contextual nature of the rally-event taking place, such as opinion leadership, media coverage and the characteristics of the public determine whether a "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect appears and, if so, the degree of the impact on the public (Baker and Oneal 2001; Brody and Shapiro 1989). Moreover, more recent studies have found that reactions of the public on different types of events vary, concluding that the impact of military events is rather small (Baker and Oneal 2001; Brody 1984; Brody 1991; Jentelson 1992; Jentelson and Britton 1998; Lian and Oneal 1993; Oneal and Bryan 1995). Baker and Oneal (2001), for example, performed a substantive investigation on the rally-effect in the United States by investigating 193 militarized disputes during the period of 1933 and 1992 from the Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) data set. They conclude that the overall rally-effect during this extensive time span was nearly zero. Moreover, they have found that when military events did affect evaluations of the incumbent, the changes were small and context-dependent. The magnitude of the rally-event was dependent on the prominence of media coverage, the level of hostility, public statements by the incumbent about the crisis, the support the opposition was willing to provide, the level of approval of the incumbent and the country that initiated the military dispute (Baker & Oneal 2001).

Besides determining when rally-effects have occurred, other scholars have focused more on mechanisms of the phenomenon. Brody and Shapiro (1989) investigated why the attention of the media, the public and other societal institutions is directed immediately to the incumbent after a particular rally-event takes place. They argue that, immediately after the crisis, the incumbent has a monopoly on information about the specifications of the event. The opposition therewith lacks crucial intelligence on the event and is, therefore, unable to criticize the public fearing to come across as uninformed. Apart from its political goals, the opposition is left with no other choice than to stay silent, or even show a sense of support, temporarily. The partisan debate that is normally featured and emphasized in democratic systems, is replaced by a

bipartisan elite unification. This causes for the public to form its initial opinion based almost solely on statements of the incumbent or his administration.

It is, however, only a matter of time that more information becomes available on the specifications of the crisis and the privileged position of the president and his administration erodes when it comes to intelligence. Media and opposition leaders become encouraged to present their views on the specific crisis using the new information that is gathered through approaching other sources than the official channels of the government. Opposition leaders take a more critical stance on the president's performance, evaluating his actions before, during or after the crisis and his policies as whole. Accordingly, the electorate is confronted with more complete, and in most cases conflicting, information coming from all kinds of sources and updates its evaluation on the performance of the incumbent. The initial public support for the incumbent decreases gradually, perhaps falling back to pre-level crisis (Brody 1984; Brody and Shapiro 1989).

The influence of systemic differences on the rally-effect
When examining the substantial scholarly work on the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect, it becomes clear that the United States is the homeland of the phenomenon. Since Mueller (1970) has found that wars and international crises can have an instant impact on approval rates of presidents, conceptual refinements and empirical research on the phenomenon have been mainly focusing on the United States (Brody & Shapiro 1989; Brody 1991, Oneal & Bryan 1995, Hetherington & Nelson 2003, Entman 2004).

A plausible reason why most studies on the phenomenon have taken place in the United States is that the specifications of the theory fit particularly well in its presidential system. Power is namely highly centered on one individual: the president. Contrary to leaders in other political systems, the directly elected incumbent in the United States is both head of state and head of government. In presidential systems, executive power is therefore highly centered on the president and the ministers in his government are advisers to the president rather than coequal participants with a clear portfolio for which they are personally responsible (Lijphart 1999, 105). Presidents of the United States are mandated to make important decisions with or without this

advice from his ministers, while major decision-making processes in other systems rather is a joint task of members of government (Lijphart 1999, 118).

The effect of systemic differences on the ability of voters to assign responsibility to political institutions is widely acknowledged in scholarly literature (Whitten and Palmer 1999; Nadeau 2002; Hellwig and Samuels 2008). The ability of the electorate to express evaluations of the incumbent is determined by the question whether voters can differentiate between political actors. As the responsibility to govern in presidential systems, such as the United States, is clearly appointed to the president, rally-effects are most likely to be reflected solely in his approval ratings. In parliamentary systems the clarity of responsibility issue is more complex as the institutional design allows multiple political institutions to be in the limelight than in presidential systems. Contrary to presidential systems, voters are therefore more likely to hold more than one political actor, besides the Prime Minister, responsible in times of international crises.

As a marginal part of the studies on the rally-effect has been conducted in other cases than the United States, little is known about the workings of the phenomenon in other political systems. The strong focus of the existing literature on the United States makes it hard to determine whether the American political system and the political status of the United States in the international system or the institutional environment that gives rally-effects the opportunity to arise and accelerate relatively quickly. This issue requests for more focus on the workings of the rally-effect in parliamentary systems.

Chawonietz (2011) is one of the few scholars who have initiated observations on the effect in four parliamentary European countries. He investigated how terrorist attacks in four European countries, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Spain, caused members of opposition to behave differently in relation to the incumbent. Through executing a content analysis of media attention on terrorist acts, he found that rally-effects in these countries were stronger when the magnitude of the event was more substantial and national symbols were targeted (2011, 12). Chawonietz's study draws these conclusions by observing whether opposition parties became able to compromise with the government in these countries and measures potential rally-

effects by analyzing media reports on the event. Both the angle and the methodology used in the study, however, limit Chawonanietz (2011) to draw any conclusions on how the media attention on the crises to which these countries have been exposed have affected the electorate's evaluations on the incumbent.

Despite the fact that the literature on the phenomenon outside the United States is small, most studies on the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect in other systems have been done in the United Kingdom. It makes sense to refer to the findings from studies in the United Kingdom when one wants to study the phenomenon in the Netherlands, as their political systems of these countries show more resemblance than with the United States. The Falkland War, a territorial dispute with Argentina, has drawn the interest of scholars to investigate the workings of the phenomenon in the United Kingdom. Norpoth (1987 a/b), for example, concluded that this war earned Thatcher, as well as the Conservative Party, with a substantial increase in support, which was also found to decay slowly after a certain period of time. In contrast to Norpoth, Sanders, Ward and Marsh (1987) found that economic factors were rather at the root of the surge in Thatcher's approval ratings than the Falkland Wars, as the Conservatives were already on the upswing at the time the Falkland War broke out.

When examining the literature executed in the United Kingdom, it becomes clear that the parliamentary political system has encouraged scholars to focus on multiple indicators when measuring a rally-effect. Morgan and Anderson (1999) make claims on the occurrence of rally-effects in the United Kingdom by comparing records of government approval and support for government parties in times of international crises in the forty years after World War 2. They acknowledge that institutional environment of the United Kingdom, a parliamentary system, blurs the clarity of responsibility in times of crises, as Britain has a tradition of government by cabinet rather than government by the president (1999, 811). Decision makers in parliamentary systems are collectively accountable, which scatters the effect of the rally in times of a crisis over more than one executive.

Expectations: dependent variable – scattered responsibility

As the Netherlands is a parliamentary system as well and the executive power is diffused over more than one institution, it is expected that rally-events in the Netherlands has a more diffused effect over multiple executive institutions than in presidential systems. The differences in the clarity of responsibility between presidential and parliamentary systems, briefly summarized before, show the discrepancy in the clarity of responsibility and advocates for a broader focus when investigating rally-effects in parliamentary systems. According to Bronski and Way (2003) there are three relevant institutions to look at when examining rally-effects in parliamentary systems. Due to the scattered clarity of responsibility in these systems, it makes sense to investigate approval ratings of Prime Minister, the government and electoral support for ruling party or parties (2003, 13).

Although the distribution of power in parliamentary systems is found to be dispersed over more than one institution, other scholars have found that the role of the Prime Minister in parliamentary systems has become "presidentialized". By studying this phenomenon in the United Kingdom Lanoue and Headrick (1994) found that party support has increasingly been driven by the popularity of the Prime Minister. This development is considered to presidentialize the role of the country's leader. Scholars that have studied the personalization of politics in the Netherlands, however, are more reluctant to draw the same conclusion (Poguntke & Webb 2005) or even deny that personalization has been a trend over the past years but conclude that leaders are subordinated to the party (Van Holsteyn & Andeweg 2008). The alleged presidentialization that has been found in other parliamentary systems is therefore not assumed to have increased in the Netherlands over the past years. Following that logic, rally-effects in the Netherlands, in contrary to presidential systems, are likely to be reflected in approval of the government. In other words:

H1: Rally events in the Netherlands do not only have an impact on the approval ratings of the Prime Minister, but also on general approval ratings of the government.

Besides the alleged presidentialization of politics in the United Kingdom, Bronski and Way address another potential issue with measuring potential point of thought about rally-effects through analyzing fluctuations in party support in parliamentary systems

(2003: 14-5). Voting intentions that are used to assess party support, namely, address ideology more than support for the government. Although they acknowledge that voting intention and government support are related, Bronski and Way state that there is a difference in being satisfied with the incumbent and the willingness to actually vote for them in the next elections (2003, 14). Having a preference for a certain party, operating in government or in the opposition, says little about the degree to which voters approve or disapprove actions of the incumbent. Therefore the scholars do not consider support for the governing parties to be a valid indicator to measure a rally effect.

This does not mean it is irrelevant to observe fluctuations in party support to measure rally-effects in the Netherlands. Although the political systems show resemblance, the party systems of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom differ. While the United Kingdom, traditionally, has a two-party system, multiple parties are seated in the Dutch Parliament. This means that two parties represent two ideological blocks. Voters in the United Kingdom affiliate with one ideology and are not likely to switch from one to another. In the Dutch multiparty system multiple parties are part of an ideological block. The threshold for voters to switch their party preference within an ideological block is lower than in a two-party system and, therefore, encouraging Dutch voters to regularly do so (Mair 2008). It can be stated that voters in the Netherlands are more likely to switch their preference from an opposition to a coalition party than in the United Kingdom. The plurality of the Dutch party system along with an increasingly volatile Dutch electorate could make voters who did not support the party of the incumbent feel more affiliated by one of the parties in government as a consequence of a rally event. Therefore, the third hypothesis will be the following:

H2: *Rally-events in the Netherlands are likely to have an impact on support for both governing and opposition parties.*

Although the role of the party is found to be more prominent than the role of the leader of the party (Van Holsteyn & Andeweg 2008), it remains undisputed that the actions of the Prime Minister affect support for his party. Contrary to what has been found in precedent studies in the United Kingdom, Clarke (et al. 2000) concluded that

actions of the Prime Minister are likely to affect support for the specific party in government. Logically, the impact of Prime Ministers on party support varies from one to the next (Clarke et al. 2000, 269). The same can be expected from the Dutch Prime Minister as he or she is chairman of the Council of Ministers and is first representative of the Netherlands internationally[4]. As being the 'first among other ministers', the Prime Minister is likely to make a statement on behalf of the government after a rally-event takes place. Therefore, support for the party of the Prime Minister is more likely to change than support for the other party or parties in government:

H3: Rally-events are likely to have a greater impact on the support for the party of the Prime Minister than the support for other governing parties.

Expectations: independent variables – pre-event approval/support

In studies, mostly conducted in the United States, pre-crisis popularity is found to have an impact on the magnitude of the rally-effect (Kernell 1978; Lian and Oneal 1993; Baker and Oneal 2001; Bronski and Way 2003). Of course, a core of strong partisan supporters of the opposition will always be dissatisfied with the way things are going in the particular country and blaming the incumbent for this perceived misery. This partisan electorate who unconditionally supports the party that is not in office is, therefore, unlikely to adjust its evaluations of the incumbent. Besides this relatively small group of radical partisan voters, the majority of voters is sensitive to positive images of the incumbent created by events involving the country. In times of crises, popular incumbents find it rather difficult to benefit from it, as his electoral potential is already at a high level before the particular event. Unpopular presidents, however, (re)gain relatively easy in approval from rally-events. Increases in party support could mostly be explained by the swing of voters who formally supported the president but disagreed with his policy in office or the attraction of uncommitted swing voters. The same will be expected for all three political institutions observed in this study:

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[4] Core tasks of the Prime Minister in the Netherlands according to the official website of the Dutch government: (1) Chairman of the Council of Minister, (2) Minister of General Affairs, (3) responsible for the actions of members of the Royal family, (4) representative of the Netherlands internationally. http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/az/organisatie/organogram/minister-president

H4: Unpopular Prime Ministers, governments or governing parties are more likely to benefit from rally-events than popular ones.

Expectations: independent variables – type of event

Bronski and Way's study shows that rallies are clearly apparent throughout history in the United Kingdom - a parliamentary system - but work differently than in the United States - a presidential system. The magnitude of rallies is found to be highly variable and context-dependent (2003, 33). Shortly after that, Lai and Reiter (2005) concluded that public opinion in the United Kingdom is more inclined to rally when the international crisis poses a direct threat to the national interests, such as the Falkland war and the Gulf Wars.

Studies on the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect in major powers thus focus solely on the effect of military disputes on the public opinion of the country involved. Bronski and Way analyze what effect military disputes throughout the postwar history of the United Kingdom on the public, by using all events from the Military Interstate Disputes (MID's)-data set (2003, 12). However, the size and status of the Netherlands in the international system are relatively limited and therefore Dutch international, military initiatives are usually executed in a multilateral set-up, mostly coordinated by the United Nations or NATO[5]. Logically, some of the Dutch interventions – with a lower level of hostility, such as peacekeeping efforts in instable regions in the Balkans, Africa and the Middle East - have been less threatening to the Netherlands than those with a higher level of hostility, such as the efforts in Afghanistan to expel the Taliban. When examining the workings of the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect in the Netherlands, these relatively threatening events are the only military events to focus on.

The specifications of the plane crash of flight MH-17 in Ukraine, on the other hand, gives reason to believe that non-military events are also, or even more, likely to rally the Dutch public and thus can be considered to be as rally-events. According to Mueller, a rally-event can be recognized by the international scope of the crisis (1), by the involvement of the country's executive (2) and by its specific, dramatic and

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[5] idem

sharply focused nature of the event (3) (Mueller 1970, 20). The involvement of multiple states shows the international scope of the crisis. The plane has crashed in the Ukraine, Russia is accused of having provided pro-Russian Ukrainians with the rocket system with which the plane is assumed to be taken down and a large share of the passengers on the plane, of which none survived, were Dutch. Moreover, the prominent role of multiple members of the Dutch government in the aftermath of the crisis shows the involvement of the country's leaders in the crisis. Third, the number of Dutch victims in the crash illustrates the tragedy of the crisis. Finally, as discussed earlier, media and opposition parties have come to recently criticize the actions of the government before, during and after the crisis. The extent to which this non-military event fits Mueller's definition of a rally-event provides gives reason to expect that non-military events have rallied the Dutch public more than the limited number of military events the Netherlands have experienced over the past fifteen years. In other words:

H5: Non-military events in which the Netherlands are involved are more likely to rally the Dutch public than military events.

Method

Operationalization of the independent variable

Bronski and Way (2003) use the MID-data set in which all military disputes initiated by the United Kingdom between 1950 and 2001 are outlined and provided with contextual figures per event. Ideally, a comparable approach would be used in this study, but the absence of such data sets of military activities together with the absence of necessary polling data at the time of the crises make a replication of this approach impossible. Since polling data on the three specific indicators are available from 2000 and onward, this study makes focuses on rally-events since the beginning of the twenty-first century.

As discussed earlier, it is debatable whether a focus on military events initiated by the Netherlands, comparable to the approach of Bronski and Way (2003), would provide useful lessons about the workings of the "rally-round-the-flag"-effect in the Netherlands. The relatively small size and status in the international system has encouraged the Netherlands to selectively undertake military action in cooperation with other states under the flag of NATO or the United Nations. Mostly, armed forces have been employed for humanitarian reasons, which are not assumed to have provoked any sentiments in the public opinion that could make it rally around its leader. Therefore only specific events prior to and during three military missions abroad with a relatively high level of hostility – ISAF in Afghanistan, MINUSMA in Mali and the participation in the coalition of the willing to strike ISIS in Iraq - that took place in the past fifteen years have been included in this study.

Besides the few military events that might have rallied the Dutch public around the incumbent, this study focuses on non-military events as well. Unfortunately, a database of crises in which the Netherlands have been involved in, such as the MID-data set for military disputes in the United Kingdom, that could be used to select rally-events for this study has not (yet) been compiled. In absence of such a compilation, the first step was to compile a number of crises that could have caused for the public to rally. Scholars who focused on the phenomenon, like Chawonietz (2011), use the amount of media attention on a particular event to define the size of the rally-event. The more attention a particular crisis has drawn in national media, the more likely the crisis could be considered as a rally-event. To select particular non-

military crises that have the potential to rally the Dutch public opinion, a simple content analysis is executed. By counting the number of articles in national media that have paid attention to the particular crisis events, it is possible to identify potential rally-events.

LexisNexis, the academic search engine widely used for content analyses, is used to measure the number of articles in national media for a particular crisis. First, a pre-selection of non-military crises is made on the basis of the output of articles in national media between the start of the twenty-first century until now after searching on general terms that refer to crises, attacks, assaults or disasters[6]. To make sure the events referred to the articles are appropriate potential rally-events, they are filtered on the basis of the Mueller's characteristics of a rally-event (1970). Subsequently, the number of articles per event is counted by searching on one or a combination of two terms that are characteristic for the particular event. For example, to expose the media attention shortly after the crash of flight MH17, a combination of the terms "MH17" and "vliegramp"[7] is used to expose the number of national newspaper articles that covered the event from the 17th of July – the day the plane crashed – and a week after that. A total of thirteen potential, non-military rally-events have been identified using this logic.

On the basis of the selection criteria above, a total number of twenty-one potential rally-events have been identified and are presented in table 1. The table also provides information, such as the date, the number of articles in the media shortly after the event and the degree to which the events meet with the characteristics of a rally-event constructed by Mueller (1970). As is presented in the table, some non-military events are not particularly international – one of the characteristics of a rally-event according to Mueller (1970). However, looking at Mueller's justification of this criterion raises doubts on whether it should apply on every rally-event. He argues that "it (i.e. a rally-event) must be international because only developments confronting the nation as a whole are likely to generate a "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect. Major domestic events-riots, scandals, strikes- are at least as likely to exacerbate internal divisions as they are to soothe them" (Mueller 1970, 21). Some of the crises, such as the explosion in a

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[6] Terms searched on, in Dutch: "ramp", "crisis", "aanslag", "aanval", "tragedie".
[7] Dutch translation of "crash"

fireworks storage causing 23 deaths and about 950 people wounded, are as unlikely to have exacerbated societal divisions as international events such as the crash of MH17. This applies to multiple domestic events in recent Dutch history, which make them worthwhile to investigate in this study.

Table 1: potential rally-events in the Netherlands, 2000-2015
Amount of media attention and characteristics of a rally-event according to Mueller (1970)

Events	When	Media attention (# of articles)	International?	NL involved?	Dramatic?
Non-military					
1 Explosion SE-fireworks Enschede	13-May-00	515	No	Yes	Yes
2 Pub fire Volendam	01-Jan-01	232	No	Yes	Yes
3 Attack WTC NY	11-Sep-01	331	Yes	No	Yes
4 Murder Fortuyn	06-May-02	891	No	Yes	Yes
5 Murder Van Gogh	02-Nov-04	682	No	Yes	Yes
6 Fire Schiphol Detention Center	27-Oct-05	146	Yes	Yes	Yes
7 Nationalization ABN/FORTIS	03-Oct-08	144	Yes	Yes	Yes
8 Crash Turkish Airlines	25-Feb-09	127	Yes	Yes	Yes
9 Attack Dutch royal family Apeldoorn	30-Apr-09	328	No	Yes	Yes
10 Earthquake Haiti	12-Jan-10	307	Yes	Yes	Yes
11 Crash Afriqayah Airways	12-May-10	213	Yes	Yes	Yes
12 Shootings mall Alphen a/d Rijn	09-Apr-11	239	No	Yes	Yes
13 Crash MH17	17-Jul-14	603	Yes	Yes	Yes
Militairy					
14 First attack US Iraq	20-Mar-03	97	Yes	Yes	Yes
15 Approval Dutch parliament ISAF-mission	02-Feb-06	85	Yes	Yes	No
16 First soldier killed in combat during ISAF	20-Apr-07	11	Yes	Yes	Yes
17 Intensification ISAF-mission	18-Dec-07	97	Yes	Yes	No
18 Son of highest commander killed in combat	18-Apr-08	58	Yes	Yes	Yes
19 Approval parliament MINUSMA	01-Nov-13	69	Yes	Yes	No
20 Approval parliament anti-ISIS mission in Iraq	24-Sep-14	139	Yes	Yes	No
21 Crash helicopter in Mali - 2 soldiers killed	17-Mar-15	20	Yes	Yes	Yes

While observing potential rally-events over the past fifteen years, contextual phenomenon could bias the effect. The most prominent ones are the 'halo' and the 'honeymoon'-effect. During the first few months after the inauguration of a new cabinet, the electorate is likely to have high hopes following from the promises and prospects made by the winning parties prior to the election (Kernell 1978). During

such a period, the incumbent generally experiences relatively high levels of approval. A rally-event that takes place during such a period is unlikely to improve approval ratings of the incumbent even more (Bronski and Way 2003). It will, however, not be possible to test this assumption as no rally-events have taken place during such periods over the past fifteen years.

Operationalization of the dependent variable

To investigate whether rally-effects have occurred in the Netherlands over the past fifteen years, this study analyzes job approval ratings of the Prime Minister, government and support for the parties in office when the above-mentioned events took place. Obviously, the most ideal way to measure the emergence and the magnitude of a rally effect is by monitoring day-to-day changes in the public opinion. As it is impossible for polling agencies to execute surveys in such a frequency, this study will use available monthly data on party support and the popularity of leaders before and after the particular event.

In the Netherlands, Ipsos frequently measures party support by surveying a representative sample of the country's electorate from its own panel[8] and asks voters to evaluate political institutions such as party support, job approval of the Prime Minister and the government. Ipsos measures the approval of the Prime Minister's together with all other ministers in the cabinet. To acquire proper and useful evaluations, respondents are asked to indicate which of the ministers in government they know beforehand. The question "if you had to evaluate the following ministers on a scale from 1, which is very bad, to 10, which is excellent, what grade would you give them for their current performance" presented if respondents know the particular ministers[9]. The public's approval of the current government is measured by asking the question: "On a scale from 1, which very bad, and 10, which is excellent, what grade would you give for its current performance". Finally, Ipsos measures party support by means of asking respondents: "If parliamentary elections would be held today, what

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[8] Ipsos Netherlands surveys approximately 1.000 respondents, of which the results are weighted on socio-demographic characteristics to the Dutch population of 18 years and older. Ipsos Netherlands invites respondents to participate in an online survey. The respondents are pooled out of their own market research panel, for which respondents can register to participate in all sorts of studies.

[9] Translated from Dutch to English. Original question in Dutch: "Als u de onderstaande ministers met een rapportcijfer zou moeten beoordelen waarbij 1 zeer slecht is en 10 uitmuntend is, welk cijfer zou u dan geven?"

party would you vote for?" In this study, the focus will solely be on fluctuations in support for the governing parties.

To calculate whether rally-effects have occurred, this study compares approval ratings and party support before and after a particular event. To measure effect of the rally-events on the indicators used in this study, the last poll conducted before each event will be subtracted from the first poll conducted after event took place (Bronski & Way 2003, 15). The changes of the indicators show the particular effect. In accordance with the order of the five hypotheses stated earlier, the changes in the indicators will be presented and compared in tables and graphs. To be able to make claims about the strength of the effects on the indicators, the changes in approval and support will be tested by means of an independent sample t-test. These tables should indicate whether some of the expectations can be confirmed.

Besides the initial analysis of the available polling data, a linear regression model will be executed, in which it is investigated whether the type of event – non-military or military – explains variations in rally-effects. The first goal of performing such an analysis is to see if it is possible to make claims on whether the Prime Minister, the government as a whole or the party benefits more than the other from different types of events, and if so, which of those institutions benefits most from a particular event. The regression test also provides the opportunity to measure whether pre-crisis level of approval and party support has an effect on each of the indicators. By including the pre-crisis levels of approval and support, it should be possible to determine whether relatively unpopular entities actually do benefit more from rally-events than relatively popular ones.

Descriptive analysis of changes in approval and support

This section presents a first descriptive analysis of rally-effects of the military and non-military events since the beginning of the twenty-first century outlined above. This section will first present and interpret the results on approval ratings of the government and the Prime Minister and subsequently look at changes in support for the governing and opposition parties at times of crises. At the end of this first section it is possible to make statements about the effect of rally-events on the three indicators, but also expose whether military or non-military events have influenced the Dutch public opinion the most.

Government approval

Table 2 reports the effect of the rally-events on government approval in the Netherlands from 2000 until now, first for all rally-events and subsequently for each government. Of the non-military rally-events that took place during the first three governments led by CDA-Prime-Minister Balkenende have only had little effect on evaluations of the Dutch public concerning the government. Only during the last government led by Balkenende, government approval ratings have increased – with 0,4 on a scale from one to ten - after the fatal crash of a Afriqayah Airways-plane with numerous Dutch citizens on board. Another substantial rally-effect appeared after the crash of MH17, as approval for the government improved with 0,6 while Rutte led his second government. Only one military rally-event – the parliamentary approval of the Dutch participation in MINUSMA – have changed government approval ratings significantly (+0,3).

The variance in the number of rally-events during each government is also quite large. The fourth, and last, government led by Balkenende experienced the most rally-events (8) while the previous government, also led by Balkenende, experienced none. Logically, the number of rally-events per government is heavily dependent on the period the particular government is in office. The number of rally-events per government, however, does not necessarily determine the strength of the rally-effect per government. For example, while Balkenende IV was in office the Netherlands suffered from eight rally-events, alternating the government approval rating with +0,06 on average. The mean of rally-effects during Rutte II, however, is substantially

higher (+0,24) than during Balkenende IV, despite the fact that the Netherlands suffered from less rally-events while Rutte II is in office (4).

Table 2: Changes in government approval and approval of the Prime Minister for each event

Events	When	Government	Change in government approval	Change in approval of the Prime Minister
Non-military				
1 Explosion SE-fireworks Enschede	13-May-00	Kok II	+0.22	+0.41*
2 Pub fire Volendam	01-Jan-01	Kok II	+0.12	+0.21
3 Attack WTC NY	11-Sep-01	Kok II	+0.31*	-0.12
4 Murder Fortuyn	06-May-02	Kok II#	+0.12	-0.13
5 Murder Van Gogh	02-Nov-04	Balkenende II	+0.1	-0.22
6 Fire Schiphol Detention Center	27-Oct-05	Balkenende II	+0.23	-0.13
7 Nationalization ABN/FORTIS	03-Oct-08	Balkenende IV	+0.24	+0.43*
8 Crash Turkish Airlines	25-Feb-09	Balkenende IV	-0.21	+0.11
9 Attack Dutch royal family Apeldoorn	30-Apr-09	Balkenende IV	+0.11	+0.41*
10 Earthquake Haiti	12-Jan-10	Balkenende IV	+0.2	-0.43*
11 Crash Afriqayah Airways	12-May-10	Balkenende IV	+0.41*	+0.41*
12 Shootings mall Alphen a/d Rijn	09-Apr-11	Rutte I	+0.31	+0.42*
13 Crash MH17	17-Jul-14	Rutte II	+0.61*	+1.01*
Mean change per indicator			+0.13	+0.18
Military				
14 First attack US Iraq	20-Mar-03	Balkenende I#	+0.21	+0.52*
15 Approval Dutch parliament ISAF-mission	02-Feb-06	Balkenende II	+0.12	-0.23
16 First soldier killed in combat during ISAF	20-Apr-07	Balkenende IV	-0.14	-0.31
17 Intensification ISAF-mission	18-Dec-07	Balkenende IV	-0.11	+0.34*
18 Son of highest commander killed in combat	18-Apr-08	Balkenende IV	+0.12	+0.11
19 Approval parliament MINUSMA	01-Nov-13	Rutte II	+0.33*	+0.22
20 Approval parliament anti-ISIS mission in Iraq	24-Sep-14	Rutte II	+0.11	+0.31*
21 Crash helicopter in Mali - 2 soldiers killed	17-Mar-15	Rutte II	+0.12	0
Mean change per indicator			+0.09	+0.1

One event took place after the government resigned and became a caretaker government
* Significant change in pre-event en post-event means (t ≤ .05)

Approval of the Prime Minister

Table 2 also reports the changes in approval of the Prime Minister due to rally-events that took place over the past fifteen years. In comparison with the changes in government approval ratings, rally-events appear to have affected approval of the Prime Minister quite often. Of the non-military events, significant rally-effects have occurred following from the fireworks explosion in Enschede (+0,4), the nationalization of ABN AMRO/FORTIS (+0,4), the attack on the Dutch royal family (+0,4), the earthquake in Haiti (+0,4), the crash of a Afriqayah Airways-airplane

(+0,4), the shootings in Alphen aan de Rijn (+0,4) and the crash of flight MH17 (+1). Other events have caused for only limited change in approval ratings for the Prime Minister.

Of the Prime Ministers in office over the past fifteen years, approval ratings of Rutte have improved the most from rally-events. On average, his approval ratings in times of rally-events during his last two terms improved with 0,5 on a scale of one to ten. On the other hand, change in approval ratings of Balkenende after rally-events during his terms in office has been limited (+0,08). Finally, approval ratings of Kok improved with 0,09 on a scale from one to ten.

In addition, three out of six military rally-events have caused for a significant impact on the Prime Minister's approval rating: the first attack initiated by the United States to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq (+0,5), the decision of the Dutch government to intensify the military efforts in Uruzgan/Afghanistan (+0,3) and the decision of Dutch parliament to participate in the anti-ISIS coalition in Iraq (+0,3). Focusing on the different governments, none of them have benefited more from military events over the past fifteen years than others.

Difference approval ratings for types of events
When comparing the mean changes in government approval due to non-military and non-military events, it shows that the mean change in government approval due to non-military events (+0,13) is higher than the mean change for government approval due to military events (+0,09). This is less applicable to the mean change in approval of the Prime Minister. Although approval ratings of the Prime Minister increased more due to non-military events (+0,18) than due to military events (+0,14), both means have improved insignificantly. Although some individual events have caused for significant rally-effects, the average change in approval ratings due to non-military events is only indicative.

Of the non-military events only three events have increased approval ratings of the government: the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York in 2001, the crash of Afriqayah Airways above Tripoli and the crash of flight MH17 above Ukraine. The crashed planes of the Afriqayah Airways and Malaysia Airlines had numerous Dutch

people on board, of which almost all lost their lives. The dramatic fate of the Dutch citizens on board of these airplanes is likely to be a prominent explanatory factor for the quite substantial rally-effects. The increase in government approval ratings due to the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, however, is remarkable, as the Netherlands were not directly involved in this particular event. Only one out of six military rally-events – the approval of the Dutch parliament to participate in MINUSMA in Mali - has had a significant effect on government approval ratings.

Figure 1: Mean change in government approval and approval of the Prime-Minister due to military and non-military events
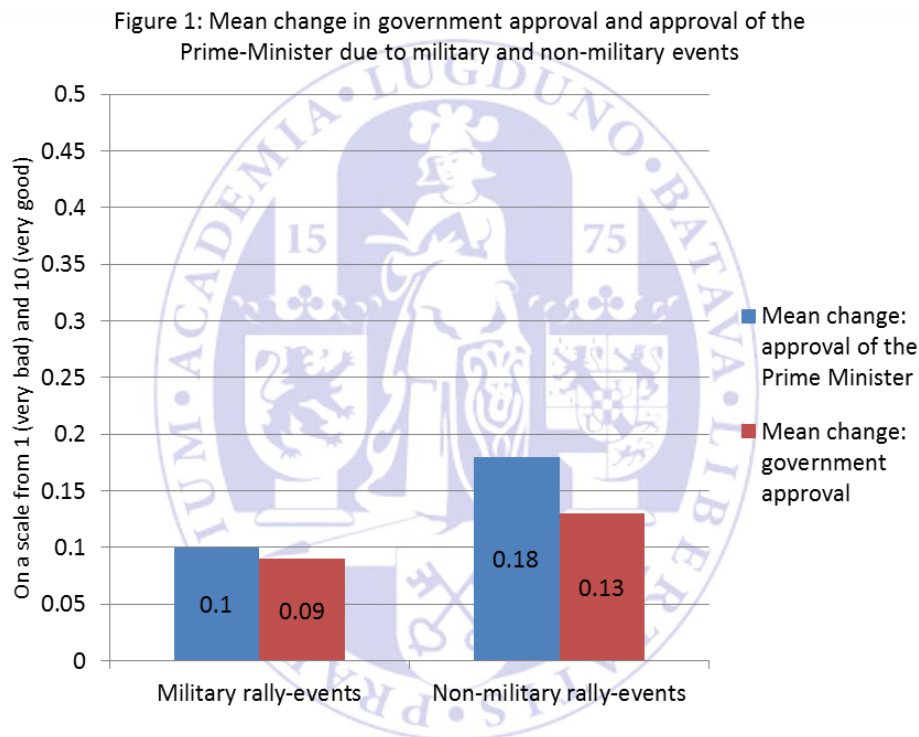
However, whereas two of the four rally-events have increased government approval, they did not have an effect on approval of the Prime Minister. The terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York as well as the decision of Dutch parliament to participate in MINUSMA did not alter approval ratings of the Prime Minister. Both plane crashes that had a significant effect on government approval ratings, on the other hand, have had a similar effect on the approval ratings of the Prime Minister. This congruence in the impact of these events strengthens the assumption that these events have actually rallied the Dutch public. Again, however, the mean changes due to both military and non-military events did not change significantly. To illustrate the differences in magnitude of military and non-military events on government approval and approval of the Prime Minister over the past fifteen years, the mean changes are

presented in figure 1. Despite the number of rally-events that have caused for significant changes in approval ratings, the mean changes indicate that non-military events, on average, hardly have a greater impact on both approval ratings than military events.

Party support: government vs. opposition

The third and last indicator that is expected to be affected by rally-events is support for parties in Parliament. Scholars investigating the magnitude of the phenomenon in other cases have mainly focused on fluctuations in support for the incumbent. As for the governing and opposition parties, changes in party support are likely to be a zero-sum game. Governing parties gain support when the opposition parties lose in support and vice versa. This makes it relevant to look at changes in support for both governing and opposition parties when measuring the effect of rally-events.

Table 3 presents changes in support for the governing and biggest opposition parties due to the rally-events since 2000. Looking at the changes in party support for the governing parties, it shows that the most substantive mutations have occurred due to the murder on Fortuyn and the crash of MH17. In times of the former, governing parties have suffered quite dramatically (-11 seats) while the biggest opposition parties in parliament, on the other hand, gained 8 seats in support. Contextual factors, however, demonstrate that the dramatic changes in party support are unlikely to be caused by the murder of Fortuyn. First of all, the event took place in the run-up to the, already sensational, General Elections of 2002. A variety of events could have affected party preferences of voters in this crucial phase of the campaign, alternating the stakes in the polls. In addition, Kok II operated as a caretaker government at the time Fortuyn was assassinated. The discrepancy between the effect on approval ratings of the government and the Prime Minister, presented earlier in this study, raise serious doubts on whether the Dutch public rallied after the murder of Fortuyn as well. Clearly the Dutch electorate had reason to change party preferences, but not change its evaluation of the caretaking government and Prime Minister at that time[10].

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[10] On a scale from 1 to 10, government approval changed with 0,12 and approval of Prime Minister Kok altered with -0,13. Both changes have been insignificant.

To a lesser extent, the same can be assumed on the helicopter crash in Mali, in which two Dutch soldiers lost their lives. Approval ratings of the Prime Minister and the government hardly changed, whereas support increased for the governing parties (+6 seats) and support for the opposition parties slightly diminished (-2). The changes in party support are more likely to be derived by events in relation to the Provincial Elections that took place the day after the crash took place than by the rally-event itself. Comparing the effects on all three indicators, therewith, turns out to be a useful way to interpret and appreciate changes after the events took place.

Table 3: Changes in party support for each event

Events	When	Government	Change in support: gov' parties	Change in support: opp' parties
Non-military				
1 Explosion SE-fireworks Enschede	13-May-00	Kok II	0	0
2 Pub fire Volendam	01-Jan-01	Kok II	0	0
3 Attack WTC NY	11-Sep-01	Kok II	-2	+2
4 Murder Fortuyn	06-May-02	Kok II#	-11	+8
5 Murder Van Gogh	02-Nov-04	Balkenende II	-1	-4
6 Fire Schiphol Detention Center	27-Oct-05	Balkenende II	+2	-2
7 Nationalization ABN/FORTIS	03-Oct-08	Balkenende IV	+1	-2
8 Crash Turkish Airlines	25-Feb-09	Balkenende IV	+2	-4
9 Attack Dutch royal family Apeldoorn	30-Apr-09	Balkenende IV	0	-1
10 Earthquake Haiti	12-Jan-10	Balkenende IV	+2	-2
11 Crash Afriqayah Airways	12-May-10	Balkenende IV	-4	+4
12 Shootings mall Alphen a/d Rijn	09-Apr-11	Rutte I	0	-3
13 Crash MH17	17-Jul-14	Rutte II	+5	-5
Mean change support (incl. murder Fortuyn)			-0.46	-0.69
Mean change support (excl. murder Fortuyn)			+0.41	-1.42
Military				
14 First attack US Iraq	20-Mar-03	Balkenende I#	0	0
15 Approval Dutch parliament ISAF-mission	02-Feb-06	Balkenende II	0	0
16 First soldier killed in combat during ISAF	20-Apr-07	Balkenende IV	0	0
17 Intensification ISAF-mission	18-Dec-07	Balkenende IV	-1	+3
18 Son of highest commander killed in combat	18-Apr-08	Balkenende IV	0	-1
19 Approval parliament MINUSMA	01-Nov-13	Rutte II	-2	-1
20 Approval parliament anti-ISIS mission in Iraq	24-Sep-14	Rutte II	+5	-6
21 Crash helicopter in Mali - 2 soldiers killed	17-Mar-15	Rutte II	+6	-2
Mean change support (incl. crash Mali)			+1	-0.88
Mean change support (excl. crash Mali)			+0.29	-0.71

One event took place after the government resigned and became a caretaker government

Because the General Elections of 2002 and the Provincial Elections of 2015 are likely to have affected party support more than the rally-events that took place prior to these elections, table 3 presents two types of mean changes in party support due to military and non-military events: one in which the mutations of the two events are included and one in which these are excluded. Focusing on the mean changes in support due to non-military events, it shows that governing parties, on average, benefit slightly more in support (+0,41 seats) without the murder on Fortuyn. On the other hand, opposition parties lose (-1,42 seats) more when the murder on Fortuyn is excluded from the compilation. When the crash of the military helicopter in Mali is excluded from the calculation, the mean changes in party support due to military events indicate a smaller impact of these events on party preferences.

Difference party support for types of events

Focusing on the rally-effects per event, it shows that recent events, taking place during one of the governments led by Rutte, have had a stronger effect on party support than events that took place during prior governments. These include the crash of MH17 (non-military event), but also for the Dutch participation in the joint anti-ISIS mission in Iraq (military event)[11]. Figure 2 clearly illustrates the degree of rally-effects for both non-military and military events. The difference in mean changes between military and non-military events for the governing parties turns out not to vary much. Both military and non-military events have improved support for the governing parties only slightly. On the other hand, the average support for the bigger opposition parties diminished somewhat more due to non-military events than due to military events. This only applies, of course, when the dramatic changes in support after the murder of Fortuyn and after the crash of the helicopter in Mali are excluded from the compilation. This loss in support for the opposition parties, however, should be considered as indicative taken the size of the scale – 1 to 150 seats in parliament - into account.

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[11] Party support also mutated at the time of the crash of the helicopter in Mali, but, as discussed earlier, these changes after the event are more likely to be explained by the campaign events prior to the Provincial Elections that took place shortly after the event.

Figure 2: Mean change in support for the governing and the biggest opposition parties due to military and non-military events

The murder of Fortuyn and the crash of a military helicopter in Mali are excluded from the compilation of rally-events
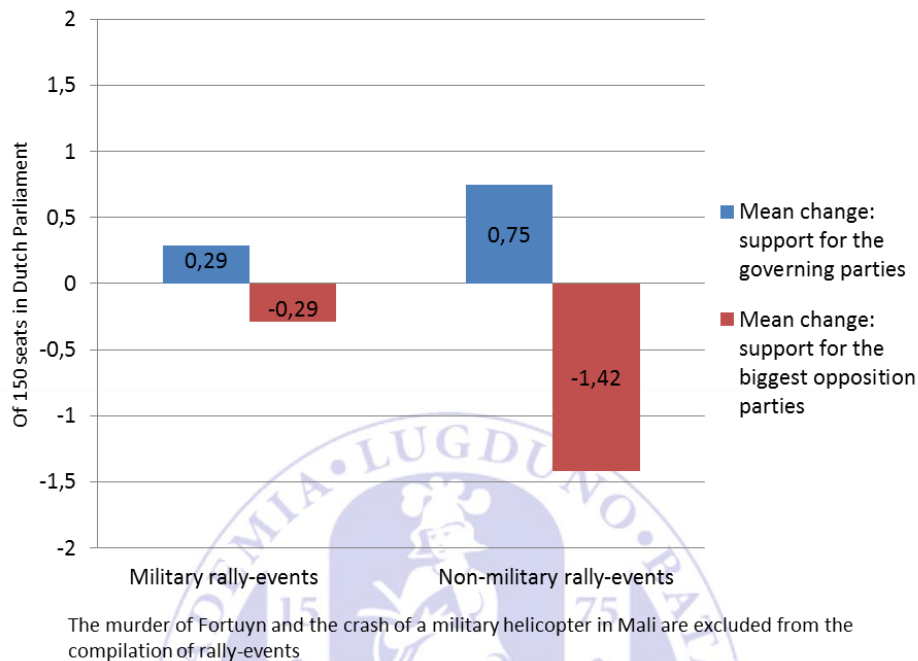
Party of the Prime Minister

From the data in table 4, it is also possible to see whether the prominent position of the Prime Minister in his government has an influence on the changes in party support. In other words, does the party of Prime Minister profit more from rally-events than other governing parties? Despite the fact that the Dutch Prime Minister is theoretically equal amongst other ministers, he or she is formally the chairman of the Council of Ministers and the first representative of the Netherlands internationally[12]. After a rally-event, the Prime Minister is, therefore, likely to make an initial statement. Of the parties in government, the party of the Prime Minister is most likely to be affected more by a rally-event than the other party or parties in government.

First of all, table 4 shows that there is some variance in the magnitude of the change in support for the party of the Prime Minister compared to the other governing parties. Gaps between the changes for the governing parties are demonstrated for to the murder of Fortuyn, the crash of a plane of Turkish Airlines, the crash of a plane of Afriqayah Airways, the crash of flight MH17 and the crash of the military helicopter

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[12] Core tasks of the Prime Minister in the Netherlands according to the official website of the Dutch government: (1) Chairman of the Council of Minister, (2) Minister of General Affairs, (3) responsible for the actions of members of the Royal family, (4) representative of the Netherlands internationally. http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/az/organisatie/organogram/minister-president

in Mali. As is stated in the previous section, however, the presented possible changes in party support due to the murder of Fortuyn and the crash of the military helicopter in Mali should be called into question because of other contextual factors that are more likely to cause for changes in party support.

The other, remarkably all crashes of passenger flights in which Dutch citizens have been injured or in which they have lost their lives[13], show to have caused for some incongruence in growth of support for the governing parties. After the crash of a Turkish Airlines-plane near Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam the party of Prime Minister Balkenende, the CDA, gained three seats while the other governing parties remained unaffected (PvdA: -1, CU: 0). During the same term, the CDA lost four seats after the crash of the Afriqayah Airways-plane. Contrary to the party of the Prime Minister, the other governing parties again remained unaffected (both PvdA and CU: 0). The results for this airplane crash thus indicate to have diminished support from the party of the Prime Minister. In contrast, the crash of flight MH17, taking place during the second government led by Rutte, seems to have benefited the party of the Prime Minister most. The VVD gained four seats, while the other governing parties did not manage to take advantage of the crisis.

In table 4 the mean changes in support for each governing party due to rally-events have been calculated. As discussed, the effect of two events on party support is considered as debatable, which means that the changes after these events can be excluded from the calculation. Focusing on these calculations for military and non-military events, it can be concluded that, over the past fifteen years, rally-events have hardly affected the party of the Prime Ministers more than the other governing parties. The average change in support for the Prime Minister due to non-military events is -0,08 of the 150 seats in parliament, while the second and third party respectively changed with +0,33 and +0.18 on average. Moreover military events have changed

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13 Crash MH17: 196 Dutch citizens lost their lives
http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2015/04/30/bergingsmissie-mh17-afgerond-na-finale-laatste-slag/
Crash Afriqayah airways: 70 Dutch citizens lost their lives
http://www.rtlnieuws.nl/nieuws/binnenland/monument-vliegramp-tripoli-nieuwegein
Crash Turkish Airlines: took place on Dutch soil, three American passengers, and Boeing employees, lost their lives, unknown number of passengers injured
http://web.archive.org/web/20110915124844/http://www.boeing.com/news/releases/2009/q1/090227d_nr.html

the party of the Prime Minister with -0,29 on average, while support for the other governing parties changed with 0,43 and 0,2 on average.

Table 4: Changes in party support for each event
Governing parties and biggest opposition parties (on the basis of the most recent General Elections results)

Events	Governing parties	Changes in party support (of 150 seats in Parliament) - Governing and biggest opposition parties					
Non-military							
1 Explosion SE-fireworks Enschede	Kok II PvdA, VVD, D66	**PvdA: +2**	VVD: -1	D66: -1	_CDA: -1_	_SP: 0_	_GL: +1_
2 Pub fire Volendam	Kok II PvdA, VVD, D66	**PvdA: -1**	VVD: 0	D66: +1	_CDA: 0_	_SP: -1_	_GL: 1_
3 Attack WTC NY	Kok II PvdA, VVD, D66	**PvdA: -1**	VVD: -1	D66: 0	_CDA: 2_	_SP: 0_	_GL: 0_
4 Murder Fortuyn#	Kok II PvdA, VVD, D66	**PvdA: -9**	VVD: -2	D66: 0	_CDA: +8_	_SP: +2_	_GL: -1_
5 Murder Van Gogh	Balkenende II CDA, VVD, D66	**CDA: -2**	VVD: 0	D66: +1	_PvdA: -1_	_SP: -2_	_LPF: -1_
6 Fire Schiphol Detention Center	Balkenende II CDA, VVD, D66	**CDA: +1**	VVD: -1	D66: +2	_PvdA: -3_	_SP: 0_	_LPF: +1_
7 Nationalization ABN/FORTIS	Balkenende IV CDA, PvdA, CU	**CDA: 0**	PvdA: +2	CU: -1	_VVD: -1_	_SP: 0_	_PVV: -1_
8 Crash Turkish Airlines	Balkenende IV CDA, PvdA, CU	**CDA: +3**	PvdA: -1	CU: 0	_VVD: -2_	_SP: -1_	_PVV: -1_
9 Attack Dutch royal family Apeldoorn	Balkenende IV CDA, PvdA, CU	**CDA: -1**	PvdA: +1	CU: 0	_VVD: -1_	_SP: 0_	_PVV: 0_
10 Earthquake Haiti	Balkenende IV CDA, PvdA, CU	**CDA: 0**	PvdA: +1	CU: +1	_VVD: -1_	_SP: -2_	_PVV: +1_
11 Crash Afriqayah Airways	Balkenende IV CDA, PvdA, CU	**CDA: -4**	PvdA: 0	CU: 0	_VVD: +4_	_SP: -1_	_PVV: +1_
12 Shootings mall Alphen a/d Rijn	Rutte I VVD, CDA, PVV	**VVD: -2**	CDA: +2	PVV: -1	_PvdA: +1_	_SP: -1_	_D66: -1_
13 Crash MH17	Rutte II VVD, PvdA	**VVD: +4**	PvdA: +2	_CDA: -1_	_PVV: 0_	_SP: -1_	_D66: -3_
Mean change in support governing parties (incl. murder of Fortuyn)		-0.77	+0.15	+0.17			
Mean change in support governing parties (excl. murder of Fortuyn)		-0.08	+0.33	+0.18			
Military							
14 First attack US Iraq#	Balkenende I CDA, VVD, LPF	**CDA: +1**	VVD: -2	LPF: +1	_PvdA: +1_	_SP: -2_	_GL: +1_
15 Approval Dutch parliament ISAF-mission	Balkenende II CDA, VVD, D66	**CDA: -1**	VVD: +2	D66: -1	_PvdA: +1_	_SP: -1_	_LPF: 0_
16 First soldier killed in combat during ISAF	Balkenende IV CDA, PvdA, CU	**CDA: -2**	PvdA: +1	CU: +1	_VVD: +4_	_SP: -3_	_PVV: -1_
17 Intensification ISAF-mission	Balkenende IV CDA, PvdA, CU	**CDA: -1**	PvdA: 0	CU: 0	_VVD: 0_	_SP: +3_	_PVV: 0_
18 Son of highest commander killed in combat	Balkenende IV CDA, PvdA, CU	**CDA: -2**	PvdA: +2	CU: 0	_VVD: -3_	_SP: +1_	_PVV: +1_
19 Approval parliament MINUSMA	Rutte II VVD, PvdA	**VVD: 0**	PvdA: -2	_CDA: 0_	_PVV: 1_	_SP: -1_	_D66: -1_
20 Approval parliament anti-ISIS mission in Iraq	Rutte II VVD, PvdA	**VVD: +3**	PvdA: +2	_CDA: 0_	_PVV: 0_	_SP: -3_	_D66: 0_
21 Crash helicopter in Mali - 2 soldiers killed	Rutte II VVD, PvdA	**VVD: +4**	PvdA: +1	_CDA: +1_	_PVV: -2_	_SP: -2_	_D66: 0_
Mean change support (incl. crash Mali)		+0.25	+0.5	+0.2			
Mean change support (excl. crash Mali)		-0.29	+0.43	+0.2			

\# Event took place after the government resigned and became a caretaker government
Bold parties: governing party of the Prime Minister
<u>Underscored parties</u>: other governing parties
Italic parties: opposition parties

Pre-crisis popularity

In scholarly literature on the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect it was found that unpopular presidents in the United States benefited more from rally-events than relatively popular presidents (Kernell 1978; Lian and Oneal 1993; Baker and Oneal 2001; Bronski and Way 2003). To measure the applicability of this finding in the Netherlands over the past fifteen years, the pre-crisis levels of approval and support have been distinguished in three categories: low, medium and high. The categories have been constructed by means of the distribution of the pre-crisis levels of approval and support. Consequently, the mean changes per category are calculated.

Table 5 reports the mean changes due to rally-events per pre-crisis level of approval or support for each indicator. Whereas the mean changes for approval of the Prime Minister and the government do not vary, the mean changes in support for the governing parties indicates a pattern as expected from what scholars have found. Governing parties that are relatively popularity on average do not benefit from rally-events. On the other hand, relatively unpopular governing parties, on average, win slightly from rally-events. The mean changes, however, are not significant and should therefore be considered as indicative.

Table 5: rally-effects per indicator categorized by unpopular vs. popular

Pre-crisis level of approval/support	Change in approval of the Prime Minister (1-10)	Change in government approval (1-10)	Change in support for the governing parties (1-150)
High	+0.08 (7)	+0.14 (5)	-0.43 (7)
Medium	+0.06 (5)	+0.44 (5)	+0.14 (7)
Low	+0.17 (7)	+0.07 (9)	+1.8 (5)

Categorization of pre-crisis approval/support:
Approval of the Prime Minister – high: 6-6.4, medium: 5.5-5.9, low: 4.9-5.4
Government approval - high: 6-6.5, medium: 5.2-5.9, low: 4.6-5.1
Support for the governing parties - high: 70-90, medium: 61-70, low: 40-60
(): number of events in the group

Regression analysis

Type of event and pre-crisis popularity

So far, this study has presented how each of the events has affected approval ratings and support for governing institutions. The proportionally high number of significant changes per event indicates that non-military events have rallied the Dutch public to a greater degree than for military events. On the other hand the mean changes due to military and non-military events do not present a significant difference between pre- and post-crisis levels of approval and support. A linear regression test will be executed hereafter to determine to what degree the changes in approval and support can be explained by the type of rally-event. Moreover, the regression test will decide whether the pre-crisis level of approval or support has an effect on the change in approval or support due to rally-events.

Table 6 reports the outcome of the linear regression for all rally-events except for the murder of Fortuyn and the crash of a Dutch military helicopter in Mali. As discussed in the previous section, the changes in approval and support that are reported after these events are likely to be stimulated by contextual factors other than these crises. With these events excluded from the model a total of nineteen events are regressed, distinguishing twelve non-military and seven military events. In the regression model the non-military events are labeled with 1, whereas military events have been labeled as 0.

Starting with the results for the approval of the Prime Minister, it shows that a low share of the total variation can be explained by the type of event (non-military versus military). The R square value reported in the table implies that the type of event is accountable for approximately 8 per cent of the variation in approval ratings of the Prime Minister. The table also shows the value of the intercept and the regression coefficient. The equation is, therewith, change in approval of the Prime Minister = 1,190 + 0,087 * (type of rally-event). Considering that non-military events were labeled as 1 and military events as 0, the values in the equation imply that non-military events have a slightly more positive impact on approval of the Prime Minister than military events.

Dependent variable	Regression values	
Approval of the Prime Minister		
- R square	0,078	
- Unstandardized Coefficients:	B	Std. error
• Intercept	1,190	0,948
• Type of event	0,087	0,159
• Pre-crisis level of approval	-0,186	0,170
- N	19	
Government approval		
- R square	0,284	
- Unstandardized Coefficients:	B	Std. error
• Intercept	0,991	0,375
• Type of event	0,058	0,082
• Pre-crisis level of approval	-0,164	0,067
- N	19	
Support for the governing parties		
- R square	0,272	
- Unstandardized Coefficients:	B	Std. error
• Intercept	5,415	2,231
• Type of event	0,632	0,965
• Pre-crisis level of support	-0,080	0,033
- N	19	
Support for the opposition parties		
- R square	0,366	
- Unstandardized Coefficients:	B	Std. error
• Intercept	6,651	2,618
• Type of event	-1,262	1,056
• Pre-crisis level of support	-0,114	0,038
- N	19	

The results for the murder on Fortuyn as well as the crash of the military helicopter in Mali have been excluded from the model for aforementioned reasons.

On the other hand, the *beta*-value for the control variable shows to impact approval ratings of the Prime Minister negatively. The equation is as follows: change in approval of the Prime Minister = 1,990 + -0,186 * (pre-crisis level of approval). This indicates that approval ratings of the Prime Minister are less likely to improve when he or she is rather popular before a crisis takes place. However, both independent variables – type of event and the pre-crisis level of approval – do not affect approval

of the Prime Minister significantly[14]. The null-hypotheses for both relationships, therefore, can neither be confirmed nor rejected[15].

The R square value for the changes in government approval is somewhat higher than the value of the same test for the approval of the Prime Minister. 28 percent of the total variation in government approval ratings can be explained by the type of event. Although the independent variables explain more when it comes to variation in government approval, this outcome is still rather low. Following on with regression coefficients for government approval, the values show some resemblance with those of the approval of the Prime Minister. Again, non-military events have a slightly more positive effect on government approval ratings than military events[16]. However, the beta-values for government approval do not expose a significant relationship[17], which means the null-hypothesis can neither be confirmed nor can it be rejected[18].

Besides that, the regression coefficient for the effect of the pre-crisis level of government approval display a high resemblance with what is found on approval of the Prime Minister. The higher the pre-crisis level of government approval, the less likely the particular government seems to benefit from a rally-event[19]. The significance test for pre-crisis government approval and change in government approval suggests a significant (negative) relationship between this independent and the dependent variable[20]. In other words, the null-hypothesis for this relationship can be rejected[21].

Moving on with the test results for the support in governing parties, the R square shows the independent variables to not explain very much – 27 percent – of the variation in support for the governing parties. This is comparable to the R square value for the change in government approval. The slope of the regression line for the type of event indicates a minor effect of this independent variable on change in

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[14] p-value for the type of event on change in approval of the Prime Minister: 0,591. p-value for the pre-crisis level of approval of the Prime Minister and the change in approval of the Prime Minister: 0,288.
[15] H0: The slope of the regression line of the independent variables is equal to zero.
[16] Equation: changes in government approval=0,991 + 0,058*(type of event)
[17] p: 0,941
[18] H0: The slope of the regression line of the independent variables is equal to zero.
[19] Equation: changes in government approval=0,991 + -0,164*(type of event)
[20] P: 0,026
[21] H0: The slope of the regression line of the independent variable is equal to zero.

support for the governing parties. On a scale of 1 to 150 seats in Dutch parliament, non-military events cause for a slightly larger growth in support (0,6 seats) than military events, which is statistically insignificant[22]. Herewith, the null-hypothesis for this relationship is to be confirmed[23].

Comparably to the beta-values for the other dependent variables, the pre-event level of support for the governing parties has a slight negative effect on support for the governing parties. The higher the pre-crisis level of support for the governing parties, the more the slope of the regression line for support for the governing parties decreases with 0,080 due to rally-events. Although this seems to be a minor impact, the p-value for this relationship indicates a statistical significant relationship between this independent and dependent variable[24]. Therewith, the null-hypothesis can be rejected[25].

Contrary to party support for the governing parties, support for the biggest opposition parties is expected to decrease after a rally-event occurs. The R square value implicates that the independent variables explain 37 percent of the variation in support for the opposition parties. This is somewhat higher than the values for the other dependent variables but still rather low in absolute sense. The beta-value for the type of event (-1,262) indicates that non-military events have a more negative effect on support for the opposition parties than military events. The significance test, however, indicates an absence of a statistical significance between this independent and support for the opposition parties[26]. Therewith, none of the dependent variables in the model seems to be explained by the type of event.

On the other hand, the other independent variable – the pre-event level of support for the biggest opposition parties – affects the dependent variable significantly[27]. This would mean that the higher the pre-crisis level of party support for the bigger opposition parties, the more opposition parties suffer after a rally-event. The implications of this relationship for the applicability of the "rally-'round-the-flag"-

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[22] P: 0,552
[23] H0: The slope of the regression line of the independent variable is equal to zero.
[24] P: 0,027
[25] H0: The slope of the regression line of the independent variable is equal to zero.
[26] P: 0,25
[27] P: 0,09

effect in the Netherlands are, however, limited as the influence of this independent variable is only relevant for the variables concerning the government.

Conclusion

Does the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect fit particularly well in the United States due to its political system and culture? What happens if the phenomenon is transplanted to political systems other than the presidential American institutional design? Is there a way to exploit the phenomenon to a parliamentary system in which the clarity of responsibility is lower than in a presidential system? When going through the scholarly literature on the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect, one would discover that the workings of the phenomenon have been tested mostly, if not solely, in the United States. With the sudden leap in president Bush's approval ratings after 9/11 as paragon, studies on the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect so far have presented spectacular examples of rally-events that have caused immediate changes in public opinion. However, this 'Americentrism' of the scholarly debate limits the ability to gain insights on the workings of the phenomenon outside the United States.

This study has been an attempt to break through this limited scope of the scholarly debate on the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect so far. It has investigated whether the phenomenon can be applied to a parliamentary system, the Netherlands. The distribution of power in the Netherlands over the political institutions is less straightforward than the presidential system of the United States. The absence of a politically active head of state, the limited role of the Prime Minister, the extensive mandate of each minister in government and the prominence of parties in the Netherlands advocated for a wider scope of the dependent variable – the rally-effect. Three indicators have therefore been observed: approval of the Prime Minister, government approval and support for the governing and bigger opposition parties.

Moreover, the size and status of the Netherlands have caused the country to be less militarily active than the United States. Whereas most studies on the rally-phenomenon have solely considered military disputes as rally-events, this study has also introduced non-military crises as potential rally-events. A number of these events in the past fifteen years have drawn a relatively substantial amount of media attention. The crash of MH17 is a recent example of a non-military event with an extensive

societal impact. Besides eight military events, this study has included thirteen non-military events to investigate.

In the first section of this study on the applicability of the rally-effect in the Netherlands, the main goal was to expose whether rally-events in the past fifteen years have affected three indicators: government approval, approval of the Prime Minister and party support. To see whether rally-events have provoked sudden changes in public opinion, a descriptive analysis of polling data over the past fifteen years have been executed. Subsequently, a linear regression analysis has been executed to demonstrate whether changes in approval and support could be explained by the type of the rally-event (non-military versus military events). The pre-crisis levels of approval and support have been used as a control variable, to see whether it has been easier for unpopular Prime Ministers, governments or parties in government to benefit from rally-events.

To determine and appreciate the impact of rally-events, it is necessary to focus on possible coherences between the changes of these three indicators that are caused by the rally-events. On the basis of these interpretations, it will be discussed hereafter what can be concluded with regard to the hypotheses outlined in the beginning of this study.

H1: *Rally events in the Netherlands do not only have an impact on the approval ratings of the Prime Minister, but also on general approval ratings of the government.*

The results for the change in government approval due to rally-events indicate that rally-events have had a moderate effect on evaluations of the Dutch public on the government. First of all, after four out of twenty-one rally-events significant changes in government approval ratings have occurred. Three of these were non-military events; one was a military event. The limited number of significant changes due to the twenty-one rally-events causes the average rally-effect on government approval to be minor. On a scale from one to ten, government approval ratings, on average, improved with 0,13 for non-military events and 0,09 for military events.

Following on with the changes in approval ratings of the Prime Minister, a number of rally-events have provoked the Dutch public to improve its opinion of the incumbent. Ten out of the twenty-one events have increased approval ratings of the Prime Minister significantly. This is relatively high compared to the number events that have caused for significant changes in government approval ratings. However, the mean changes for both non-military and military events are rather minor. On a scale from one to ten, the average grade due to non-military events improved with 0,18, whereas military events caused approval ratings for the Prime Minister to increase with 0,1.

This leaves to conclude that although some of them have had a significant impact on the approval ratings, the average effect of rally-events on both indicators is limited. Comparing the number of events that have caused for a rally-effect, approval of the Prime Minister seems to be more sensitive rally-events than government approval. The absence of substantial mean changes implies, however, that insufficient empirical evidence can be to confirm the first hypothesis. On the basis of data for the past fifteen years, it can be stated that the Dutch public does not significantly alter its evaluations of the government and the Prime Minister.

H2: *Rally-events in the Netherlands are likely to have an impact on support for both governing and opposition parties.*

For testing the second hypothesis, this study has looked at mutations in both support for the governing and bigger opposition parties due to rally-events. The mean changes in party support due to non-military events demonstrate that governing parties, on average, benefit slightly more in support (+0,41 seats) without the murder on Fortuyn. On the other hand, opposition parties lose more (-1,42 seats) when the murder on Fortuyn is excluded from the compilation. When the crash of the military helicopter in Mali is excluded from the calculation, the mean changes in party support due to military events indicate a smaller impact of this type of events on party preferences. On a scale of 1 to 150 seats in Dutch parliament, the average impact of rally-events on party support can be considered as indicative, but not significant. This means that it cannot be stated with confidence that governing parties in the Netherlands benefit from rally-events.

H3: *Rally-events are likely to have a greater impact on the support for the party of the Prime Minister than the support for other governing parties.*

Subsequently, this study hypothesized that rally-events could provoke Dutch voters to show their appreciation for the Prime Minister by supporting his party more than other governing parties. As the results for changes in support for governing and opposition parties turned out to be rather unspectacular, the changes for the individual governing parties are unsurprisingly minor as well. The average change in support for the Prime Minister due to non-military events is -0,08 of the 150 seats in parliament, while the second and third party respectively changed with +0,33 and +0.18 on average. Secondly, military events have changed the party of the Prime Minister with -0,29 on average, while support for the other governing parties changed with 0,43 and 0,2 on average. Although some events have caused for some incongruence in effects on governing parties, the mean changes demonstrate that this is certainly no systematic reflex. On the basis of these results, the third hypothesis should be rejected.

H4: *Unpopular Prime Ministers, governments or governing parties are more likely to benefit from rally-events than popular ones.*

To test the fourth hypothesis, this study relied on two types of analysis: descriptive data analysis and a linear regression test. For the former, the pre-crisis levels of popularity for each indicator are categorized into low, medium and high on the basis of the distribution of pre-event levels of popularity for each event. For approval ratings for the government and the Prime Minister, no difference in rally-effects was discovered between the three pre-crisis levels of approval. A moderate pattern was revealed in the changes in support for the governing parties, but the incongruence in effects is small.

The results for the regression analysis demonstrate the same for approval of the Prime Minister. Although high pre-crisis approval ratings have had some negative impact on the magnitude of the rally-effect, the results show to be insignificant. Although the regression coefficient does not vary much from the coefficient for approval of the Prime Minister, the pre-crisis popularity of the government appear to negatively

impact changes in government approval. The same can be concluded for party support. The slope of the regression line for governing parties develops moderately but statistically significant.

The results for the descriptive and regression analysis are thus not very convincing. It appears pre-crisis popularity does not determine the magnitude of rally-effects when it comes to approval ratings of the Prime Minister. In other words, unpopular Prime Ministers did not benefit more from rally-events than popular ones. The results for government approval and party support call for a more restraint interpretation. Both an analysis of the data and a regression test demonstrate some (negative) impact of pre-crisis popularity, but the relationships appear, however, to be very moderate.

Whether the fourth hypothesis applies in the Netherlands is, therefore, hard to decide. Although some of the expected patterns are discovered, the results are too fragile to make confident claims about the effects of pre-crisis popularity on rally-effects. A plausible reason for the indecisiveness of the analyses in this study seems the limited disposal of historical data on rally-events. To learn more from this relationship, this analysis should be expanded with more data of rally-events before the start of the twentieth century.

H5: *Non-military events in which the Netherlands are involved are more likely to rally the Dutch public than military events.*

Again, a descriptive analysis of existing data and a regression analysis were used to learn more on the effect of the type of event on approval ratings and party support. By averaging the changes per indicator for the two types of events, the magnitude of effects became visible. For approval ratings of the Prime Minister and the government, some variance in effects were apparent. Both indicators improved somewhat more due to non-military events (+0,18; +0,13) than due to military events (+0,1; +0,09). However, the change in means turned out to be insignificant. The same can be concluded from the regression analysis. None of the indicators presented significantly improving regression slopes, indicating that differences in rally-effects cannot be explained by the type of event. This means that non-military events are not

more likely to rally the Dutch public than military events and the fifth, and last, hypothesis cannot be confirmed.

Implications

The findings of this study indicate that the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect has been operating in some occasions. Ultimately, however, it must be concluded that this study has not found structural evidence in the data that alert to the applicability of the phenomenon in the Netherlands. In the context of the scholarly literature conducted mostly in the United States, the results conducted in this study demonstrate to be quite unspectacular. What does that tell us about reflexive tendency of the Dutch electorate after radical events take place? And what are the implications for the "rally-'round-the-flag"-phenomenon itself?

The first plausible explanatory factor for these rather platonic results has to do with the systemic characteristics of the Dutch political system. Whereas public responses in presidential systems quite easily find their way to the president in office, the relatively complex institutional design of the Dutch parliamentary system is likely to diffuse reactions of the public to crises. As presented earlier, multiple scholars have addressed the low clarity of responsibility in parliamentary systems (Whitten and Palmer 1999; Nadeau 2002; Hellwig and Samuels 2008). The findings of this study might point out that Dutch voters find it particularly difficult to appoint the most responsible political entity after a crisis, mainly because the distribution of roles of political institutions in political situations is fragmented. This demonstrates that the phenomenon is likely to have a different impact in diverse political systems. To test this assumption a comparative study should be executed in which rally-events are included that have direct impact on countries with different political systems. Such a scenario, however, is rather unlikely to appear as in most rally-events only one country is directly involved.

Another suggestion for explaining the findings of this study is a possible cautiousness of the Dutch public to automatically reward political institutions for dramatic events in which the Dutch are involved. Instead of ending up in an emotional rash of patriotic enthusiasm and rewarding political institutions after crises take place, the Dutch public might process these happenings more critically or seeks other ways to

process dramatic events diminishing the significance of statements from political institutions. Despite the inadequate knowledge of the specifications of events, the Dutch public may adopt a reasonable and prudent stance towards the political involvement in the event. This line of thought is also used in recent studies on the applicability of the phenomenon in the United Kingdom, another parliamentary system (Bronski and Way 2003). Because this is merely an assumption, more in-depth research is required to learn more about the characteristics of the Dutch voter.

The limited availability of useful appropriate historical data on the indicators used in this study is the third, and final, possible explanation for the findings in this study. Compared to other studies on the "rally-'round-the-flag"-effect, the timespan of fifteen years on which this research has focused is rather incomprehensive. Although it is no certainty that a more comprehensive study, with more rally-events included, will show different results, the findings deriving from such a study would solidify statements about the workings of the rally-phenomenon in the Netherlands and in parliamentary systems in general. Although this study is confined by some limitations, it can be considered as the first serious attempt to observe potential reflexes to crises in the Netherlands.

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